

# Highfields CENTER FOR COMPOSTING

## Closing the Loop 2009 in Compost

Annual Report



# Closing the Loop!

## 2009 in Compost

Our work is creating  
**food and soil security for communities**  
while **protecting air, water, soil and family farms.**

**Vermonters** across the state are **participating**

☞ Almost **3 million pounds of food scraps** composted through Highfields' affiliated programs

**Improving the climate**

☞ **5 gallons of food scraps**, composted instead of landfilled, **prevents** greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to burning over **1 gallon of gasoline**

☞ **Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions** this year, through Highfields' affiliated programs, is equivalent to **Not Burning 130,000 gallons** of gasoline!



Our **mission** at Highfields is to **close the loop** on community-based, sustainable food and agricultural systems, thus addressing **soil health, water quality, solid waste, farm viability, and climate change.**

We research, educate, provide technical services for on-farm composting, and develop comprehensive community-based food scrap composting programs.

# Letter from the Executive Director and Board Chair

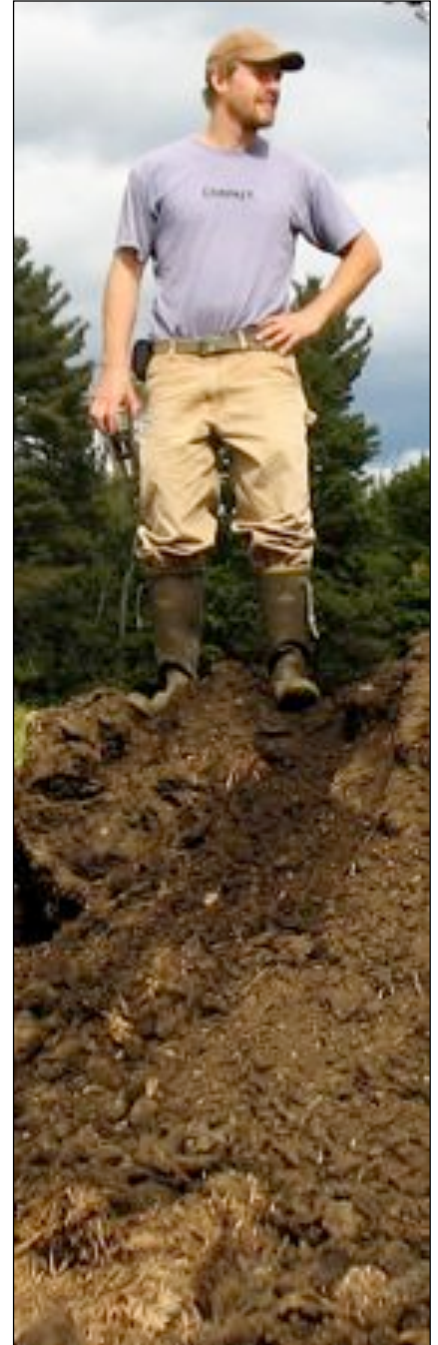
Greetings!

Closing out one year and moving into the next always provides a moment of pause to take stock of the work that was accomplished over the past 12 months. What an incredible year it has been. We have added staff, expanded programs, provided services to over 17 farms, and worked to turn ever more food “waste” into a precious agricultural resource--compost.

While reflecting on last year’s activities is satisfying, more than anything, these successes energize us as we look forward. The robust and dynamic food system movements emerging in Vermont give us great confidence that the ecologically and socially regenerative food systems we have set out to create are well within reach. Vermonters have not only clearly articulated their commitment to local food and economy, but we are building the food system of tomorrow, today. And of course, no food system can be sustained without effective mechanisms to recycle organic materials to nourish plants and soil. Highfields’ Close the Loop! Community-composting programs are spreading like a prairie fire, and we are well poised to implement a statewide network of local composting programs with our partners and local communities throughout Vermont and beyond.

We are thrilled to have your partnership as we work to Close the Loop in Vermont and elsewhere, expand our knowledge about the use of compost to suppress crop diseases, and nurture agricultural soil health. Thanks for a great year past and, in advance, for a great year ahead.

For detritus!  
Tom and Nick



Tom Gilbert

## Dedication to Jamie Cherington

*This past winter the agricultural community of Vermont, and beyond, lost a wonderful ally, partner and friend when Jamie Cherington passed away. Jamie was widely appreciated throughout Vermont for her role on the Vermont Sheep Breeder’s Association Board of Directors, her capacity representing the John Merck Fund, helping develop the VT Institute of Artisan Cheese, and as a sheep producer. Jamie was a humble, accessible and supportive advocate for sustainable, local agriculture. Jamie was a believer in, and advocate for, the work of Highfields, and we have benefited from her insights and leadership immensely. Jamie will be deeply missed.*

# Close the Loop Vermont!

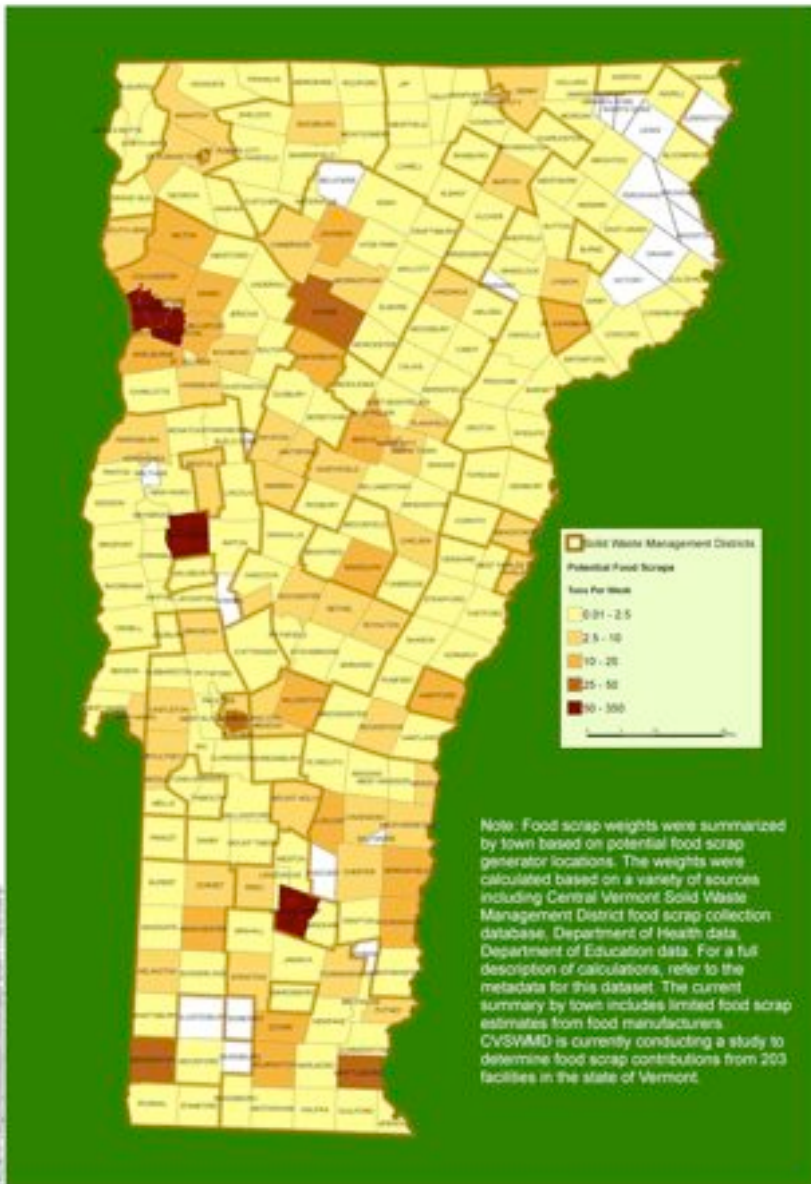
Healthy soil grows healthy food  
Healthy food is good for the whole community

## Close the Loop Programs

Highfields designs and implements **community-based food scrap composting programs**. In each region we train a **local farmer** to compost (including permitting, designing and siting a facility), train **schools** and **restaurants** to collect food scraps, and train a **hauler** to transport the scraps to the farm. Compost produced is used to **build soils** and **grow food** to be served in local schools and restaurants—where again food waste is collected and turned back into soil to grow more healthy food—**Closing the Loop on the food system**.

## Close the Loop Vermont!

is our statewide campaign to build the infrastructure and collection systems capable of diverting Vermont's food scraps (~**120,000 tons annually**) from landfills for composting by 2017.



Potential Food Scrap Generation Per Town

Statewide Compost and Biogas Feasibility Projects Funded by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and the Waste Management Division, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation through the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District



## Mapping

**Stone Environmental**, in partnership with the VT Sustainable Jobs Fund, the VT Department of Environmental Conservation and the Central VT Solid Waste Management District, developed this map showing the concentration of potential food scrap generators (businesses and schools) around the state. This is a valuable tool as we move forward with Close the Loop VT!

## Capitol Region

As part of our ongoing partnership with the *Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD)*, Highfields staff **doubled** the number of businesses participating in their Organics Program (food scrap collection).

We also worked with CVSWMD to expand services into **Waterbury, Stowe and Waitsfield**—partnering with the Mad River Solid Waste Alliance and the Lamiolle Regional Solid Waste Management District.

# Close the Loop St. Albans!

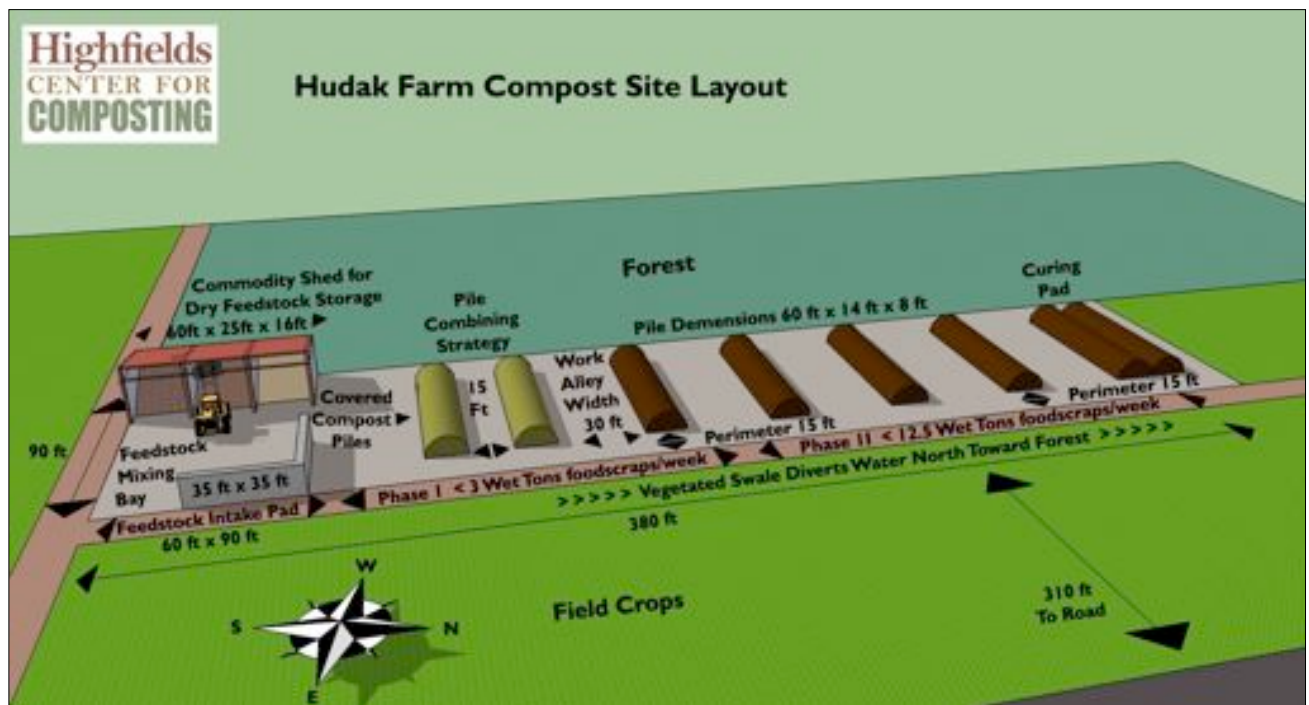
Close the Loop St. Albans was initiated by a **call from a student at Bellows Free Academy (BFA) looking to start a composting program at her school.** We have made that happen, with plans to take the program to the entire region. Partnering with the Northwest Solid Waste Management District, Brian Jeroso of Waste Not Resource Solutions, teachers at BFA and the Hudak Farm we have brought phase I of **Close the Loop St. Albans** full circle.

## MILESTONES

- Over 3 days in September 2009 Highfields staff **trained over 1,300 students** at BFA in the how, why and big picture of participating in composting programs
- BFA students** have diverted **7.5 tons** of food waste from the landfill to the Hudak farm for composting
- Permitting and site design for the **Hudak Farm**
- Compost produced at the Hudaks will be use to fertilize fields to grow vegetables to be sold back to the community starting this summer (2010)

**Phase II of CTL St. Albans!** We are working to bring businesses and elementary schools in the region into the program—turning many more tons of food scraps into soil.

**Join the CTL network,** let us know if you want to bring our program to your community or school.



# Compost Demonstration and Research Site



*Compost 101 Workshop participants examining a sample pile*



*Students from Lamoille Union School learn about the role of compost in the food system on a field trip to Highfields' site.*

## 2009 Milestones at the Compost Site

- ☞ Launched the first (that we know of) **Community Supported Compost** program with a **Compost Cabaret**. The CSC will help finance the development of a new research and education site
- ☞ Hosted **school** and **community groups** from around Vermont
- ☞ **Gave Compost 101** and **Mortality Composting Workshops**
- ☞ Established the **Compost Access Fund** to provide compost to low income, community and school gardens
- ☞ Completed **mortality composting trials**
- ☞ Continued **applied research** in best management practices for food scrap and mortality composting
- ☞ Featured on shows about the Hardwick Food System: **Dan Rather Report**, **Diary of a Foodie** (Gourmet's show) and the **Emeril Green show** (he spent a week in the area. (View all on our website)



# Technical Services

Another great year for providing services to **Vermont Farms** on a **sliding scale** thanks to the support of the *John Merck Fund*.



- ☞ Provided **critical, timely technical assistance, labor, equipment & wood chip** to a local family to compost mortalities from a devastating barn fire (100 animals dead)
- ☞ **Served** over 20 farms, schools and commercial composters; 17 farms and one school received services for free or at reduced rates
- ☞ Helped design and obtain state **composting permits** for two new larger composting facilities. Both sites are partners in our Close the Loop! programs. These facilities will be critical to building soil and food security in their regions.
- ☞ **Technical materials** are being accessed by farmers and composters in the US and Canada as well as around the world. Available as free downloads on our website

# On-site School Composting

## **Ferrisburgh Central School (FCS)**

is on a role, developing an enviable campus ecology that includes abundant gardens, wind power, and now.....

**Composting!** Under the leadership of parent Nick Patch and science teacher Judy Elson, Ferrisburgh Central School has contracted with Highfields for the design and management planning of an on-site composting system to handle all of the school's food scraps, leaves and garden residues. In the fall of 2010 FCS will have effectively closed the loop on campus – growing food, eating it, and composting the residuals to feed their gardens and grow more food!



*Enclosed composting system for Ferrisburgh Central School under construction*

## Do it yourself Windrow Turner Design

We have continued research and development on our build it yourself **windrow turner design**. This piece of equipment was originally designed and built in partnership with local fabricators, VT Technical College and local farmers. The design manual, available as a free download on our website, was developed to make specialized composting equipment more affordable. We have received feedback from composters, domestic and abroad, who have used our designs to build their own turner. In turn we are now improving our design with modifications made to some of these units. Our design costs about \$3,500 to build, a commercial turner is around \$35,000.



# Compost Only!

## Compost Program Training Video

For High School Students and Beyond



### Compost is cool!

In need of a compost program training video for high school students we partnered with the Hazen Union School Drama Club, and local film-maker Meredith Holch, to produce “Compost Only.” *Triple Threat*, a band of 3 talented students, wrote and played the sound track for the video.

We deeply appreciate the time and inspiration the Drama Club, Marc Considine (Drama Club Coach), Meredith Holch and musicians Andy Gagnon, Jay Besett, and Johnny Flood, put into the video. It has been a hit with students and adults—bringing informative fun to our trainings. Check it out on our website.

[www.HighfieldsComposting.org](http://www.HighfieldsComposting.org)

## Website

&

## Media



*Cameraman for the Emeril Green Show enjoying a potato baked in a compost pile.*

Full of **videos** and **articles** Highfields’ website is a **fun resource** for learning about **composting’s** role in making **food systems sustainable**. See Highfields on the **Dan Rather Report**, the **Emeril Green Show**, and Gourmet’s show—**Diary of a Foodie**. Read articles in Vermont **papers, Vermont Life, Seven Days, and Eating Well**. Find a link to Ben Hewitt’s new book **The Town That Food Saved**, which explores the Hardwick food system and features a chapter on Highfields. Listen to **radio reports** featuring Highfields’ work and staff on **VPR, the CBC and WDEV**. Lastly, check out the link to the **Vermont Art Council’s Art of Action** project to see work by Vermont photographer, **John Miller**, featuring Tom Gilbert an other Hardwick area food system movers and shakers.



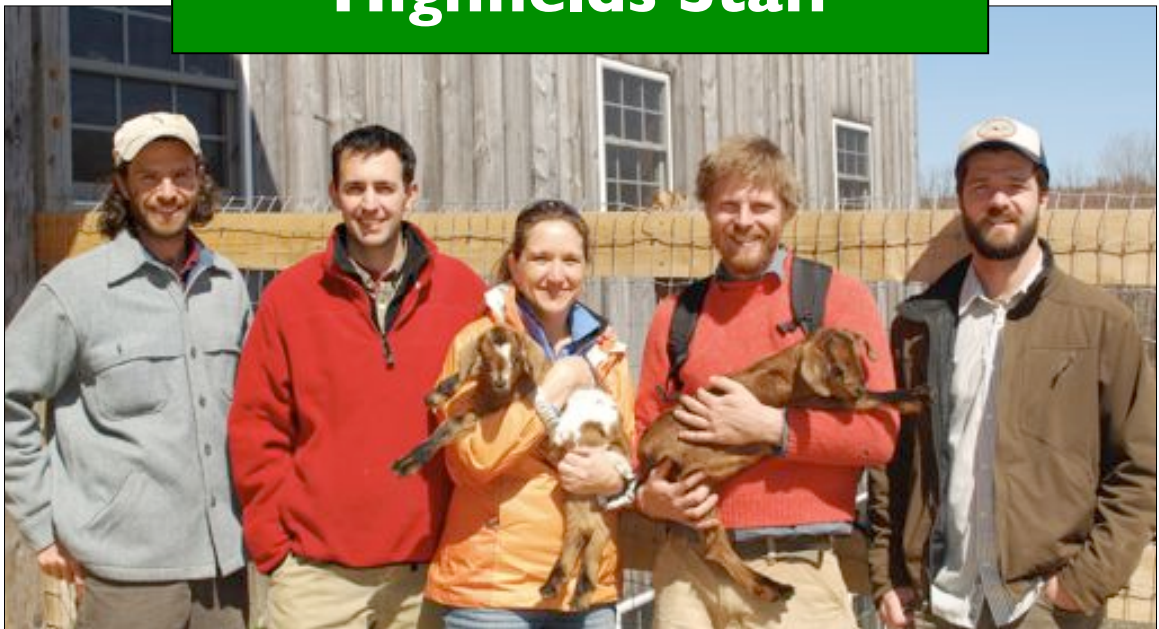
## Highfields' Board of Directors



**Highfields' Board at the Green Mountain Girls Farm**

*Left to right: Tom Gilbert—Highfields' Executive Director, Susan Alexander-Treasurer, Nick Comerchi-President, Mari Omland, Fletcher Dean-Secretary, Grace Gershuny, and David Healy*

## Highfields Staff

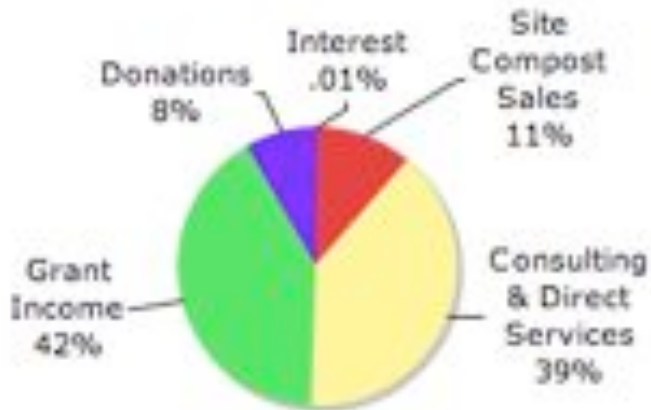


**Highfields Staff on retreat at the Green Mountain Girls Farm**

*Left to right: Andy Purdy –Compost Site Assistant, Josh Kelly-Close the Loop VT Project Manager, June Van Houten-Director of Marketing & Development, Tom Gilbert-Executive Director, James Mc Sweeney- Compost Specialist and Site Operator.*

# Financial Summary

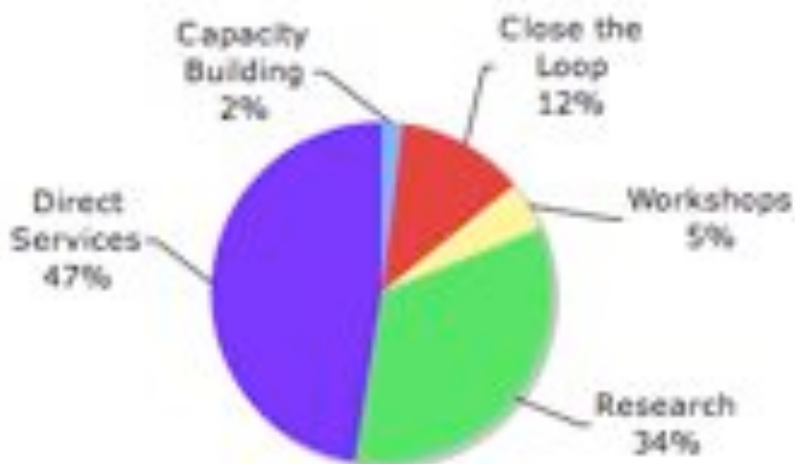
## Highfields Income \$242,473



## Highfields Expense Summary Total: \$238,923



## Highfields Program Expenses Total: \$178,827



# Supporters

**We deeply appreciate the generosity of our supporters  
and commitment of our partners.**

**Thank you for joining us in our efforts to build the foundation of a  
sustainable food systems for all Vermonters!**

Ben & Jerry's Foundation ~ John Merck Fund ~ Vermont Community Foundation ~ The Holborn Foundation ~ The Windham Foundation ~ The Blittersdorf Foundation ~ The Harris and Frances Block Foundation ~ The High Meadows Fund ~ The Davis Greenewalt Charitable Trust ~ Canaday Family Trust ~ Chittenden Bank ~ Concept 2 ~ Ben & Jerry's Community Action Team ~ Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District ~ Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District ~ Northwest Solid Waste Management District ~ Skidaway Island Foundation ~ Composting Association of Vermont ~ United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development ~ Agency of Natural Resources ~ Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education ~ Center for Sustainable Agriculture ~ Northeast Organic Farming Network VT ~ Waste Not Resource Solutions ~ University of VT ~ Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund ~ Center for an Agricultural Economy ~ individual donors

Many thanks to the talented local performers who made our  
**Community Supported Compost – Compost Cabaret** fun and successful.

Alan Greenleaf & the Doctor ~ The Drumatics ~ The Roaring Dandelions ~ Rob Mermin Geof Hewitt ~ Good Old Wagon ~ Patti Garbeck & Kristina Michelsen with David Gaillard Brent McCoy & Maya Curvelo ~ and Master of Ceremonies—Anson Tebbits.

**To become a CSC member call or e-mail us at:  
472-5138 x 201 or [james@highfieldscomposting.org](mailto:james@highfieldscomposting.org)**



**PO Box 503 (21 Mill St. Suite#1) Hardwick, VT 05843  
802-472-5138 [HighfieldsComposting.org](http://HighfieldsComposting.org)**