



The Center for the
ENVIRONMENT
SAINT MICHAEL'S COLLEGE

New and Noteworthy from the Center

Semester Opening | Fall 2021

**use the live links in the Table of Contents to navigate your way through this resource.*

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Welcome Back to YOUR Campus, OUR Campus

While challenging, our very warm and rainy summer has nourished our outdoor classrooms so deeply. It is my hope that they will in turn nourish and replenish you all as you return for another school year after our year of deep challenges.

The Center continues to evolve and collaborate across campus and our community with great success. Most recently, **we have moved to St. Edmund's Hall, room 119** to bring together all of our programs and create a space to gather and explore and develop a library of resources to support cross-sector and interdisciplinary teaching, learning, knowing and doing. Come visit!

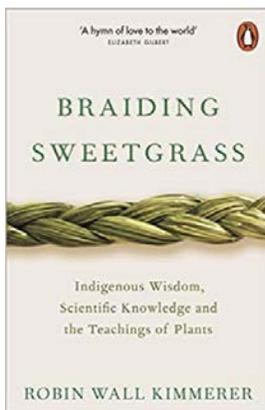
Late Spring and into early Summer, under Prof. McCabe's guidance, we conserved the most of the **Natural Area** and the funds received from the conservation have fueled an endowment for the site and some of the work the Center will do in coming years. This work allows us to partner with other state and national agencies. It also allows us to pursue the development of a covered classroom space this spring in the Natural Area.

Our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program through our **Farm** supported 40 members for 18 weeks over the spring and summer and is set to resume the 2nd week in September for the fall. [There are 10 more CSA slots available for students this fall.](#) Thanks to generous Farm patrons and CSA members, we've been able to gift 4 CSA memberships to our campus community. And, the farm isn't a farm in the summer without Salad Days or our regular volunteer days to make everything fun and centered on our community.



Finally, we began our dedicated focus on deliberately evaluating our programming, resources, and outreach materials with the goal of making them more diverse, equitable, and inclusive to ensure that our environmental work is also **just work for our BIPOC community members**.

Our summer intern, Juana Lopez, lead this work with the consultation of Sarah Childs, director of CMAS (Center for Multicultural Affairs), as well as her peers from the MLK Society and the Diversity Coalition. This work and more will continue this fall with the Racial Justice Task Force and support our **First Year Seminar Program** as students and faculty explore the common read, Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Kimmerer asks and coaches us in her text to not only explore and identify the ecological components of the land, but to develop a relationship with the land. This approach is one



woven into the fabric of the culture of our indigenous ancestors and carried forth by our Elders. Kimmerer leads us to investigate this relationship through the gifts of asters, goldenrod, strawberries, squash, salamanders, algae and sweetgrass. I encourage you to begin your own investigations through the Natural Area, **Teaching Gardens**, and the Farm to make a physical connection with most of these gifts. All but sweetgrass can be found in these classrooms. When you encounter them, consider Kimmerer's rules for "taking", consider an Honorable Harvest.

1. **Don't just grab & never take the first, this ensures you are never taking the last.**
2. **Ask permission**
3. **Then, listen for the answer**
4. **Take only what you need**
5. **Minimize harm in doing so**
6. **Use everything you take**
7. **Be grateful; give thanks**
8. **Share with others**
9. **Reciprocate the gifts**

(Adapted from Bioneers 2014 Keynote Address: Mishkos Kenomagwen: The Teachings of Grass <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cumEQcRMY3c>)

Kimmerer speaks of these gifts from the land, she speaks of a reciprocal relationship rather than one of consumerism. Our first year students will grapple with these ideas in their First Year Seminars, however, this is where I ask each of us, employees, students and visitors alike, to consider this not SMC's campus, but our campus. I ask you to think about how you are a steward in your day to day activities of our resources and the reciprocal relationship of us to the resources. I ask you to consider contemplation and intention as participants and collaborators rather than consumers of place.

Join me in welcoming the Class of 2025 to our community, and join me this year in exploring the interlocking relationships of a small community of people and place!

Peace,

Kristyn

Director, Center for the Environment

Events

- [Move In to YOUR Campus](#) – August 27th, 28th, & 29th
- Nursery Mulching with Green Up & Prof. Stanger on August 31st from 3:30-5:30.
- Self-serve Farm Stand, Every Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm until mid-October, STE 119, cash, check & Knight Card for payment
- Open Air Farm Stand – Thursdays beginning 9/2 at 1:30-5:15, outside Café Cheray, Rain location, St. Ed's Lobby
- Salad Day, Tuesday 9/7, 11:30-1:00 on farm.
- Open Farm Fridays with OVE – every Friday beginning 9/10, 2:00-5:00pm
- Club Fair on September 11th from 1-4pm to join Green Up, OVE, or any of the other programs on campus!
- Family & Alumni Weekend, 9/17 & 9/18
 - a. Friday 3:00-5:00 Special Farm Stand in Dion
 - b. Saturday 9:30-11:30 Special Service Day on Farm
- Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer, Virtual Speaking Event, 9/27 at 7pm
- [BCorp Event](#) – An alumni panel discussion on BCorps. ***B The Change You Want To See In The World: Working for B Corps*** - Wednesday October 6th, 5pm, Roy Room

Staffing

New

Welcome to Christine Gall!



Christine comes to St. Michael's from Kids Gardening in Burlington, most recently. Christine has served farms in Maine and Vermont over the last 10 years with a strong mix of farm-based education and diversified vegetable farm management. She has worked with school food programs in Burlington and is eager to build the “food” part of our Farm & Food Program here at SMC. Christine has recently completed her Master of Science from Prescott College in Sustainable Food Systems with a concentration in sustainable diets and biodiversity. Her capstone project was to write a curriculum for K-5 classroom cooking programs and was the inspiration for her thesis: *Supporting Farm to School Initiatives in VT through the Design of K-5*

Classroom Cooking Resource. Please welcome Christine to the role of Assistant Manager, Farm & Food Program!

Faculty Coordinators/Advisors

- Mark Lubkowitz & Valerie Bang-Jensen, Faculty Advisors for the Teaching Gardens; Professors of Biology & Education, respectively
- Declan McCabe, Faculty Coordinator for the Natural Area; Professor of Biology
- Trevien Stanger, Faculty Advisor for Green Up; Instructor of Environmental Studies
- Kristyn Achilich, Director of the Center for the Environment and the Farm & Food Program; Instructor of Education

Students

- Emily Krumm, Education & Outreach Coordinator for the Farm & Food Program
- Jess Edmonds, Crop & Field Coordinator for the Farm & Food Program
- Gina Atkinson, Farm Team Member
- Matt Leveroni, Farm Team Member

- Sam Belanger, Data Systems Coordinator for the Center for the Environment
- Sarah Newton, Lead Steward for the Teaching Gardens
- Elizabeth Crotty, Lead Steward for the Natural Area

- Anna Beach, Shannon Harty, Samantha Callaway, Tallis Diehn & Tim Strzepa, Leadership Team for Green Up

- Anna Beach, Shannon Harty, & Sam Belanger, Leadership Team for Outdoor Volunteer Efforts through MOVE



Initiatives

Classroom Updates

Farm

The Farm has harvested just over 2000 pounds of this spring and summer. We have over 50 different crops growing on our farm and have harvested 29 of those crops to date. The summer team of 6 students stewarded the farm to this point and served our 40 CSA members and self-serve farm stand over the summer. We hosted 2 salad days and will have a 3rd next week, September 7th. This fall, look forward to:

- a. Farm Stand – outside of Café Cheray every Thursday from 1:30-5:15.
- b. Self-serve Farm Stand – every Monday through Friday 9am to 6pm in the Center’s office, STE 119.
- c. CSA – we have 10 more spots for students. You can register [here](#), first come first serve.
- d. Open Farm Days – Friday’s, 2pm to 5pm, come straight to farm or meet at MOVE to walk down together. This event happens on the farm, but is lead through MOVE’s Outdoor Volunteer Efforts program.
- e. Final Salad Day – Tuesday, September 7th, 11:30-1:00
- f. Alumni & Family Weekend
 - i. Friday Special Farm Stand 3:00-5:00pm at the Activities Fair in Dion
 - ii. Saturday Special Service Day on Farm 9:30-11:30

Teaching Gardens

The Teaching Gardens are in their prime this time of year. Use them for group meetings, classes, a casual walk & read. A beautiful series of book walks will be up this Fall!

Help celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Word Garden in October! There will be a haiku contest, refreshments, and the placing of 35 new stones in memory of Instructor Emeritus of English, Will Marquess.

Natural Area

Trails and Trees: Summer storms brought down seven trees that temporarily blocked trails in the Natural Area. Like all organisms, trees have a life cycle, and those cycles vary. In the lower floodplain, box elders are common and they have shorter lifecycles than many tree. So it is not surprising to find that most of the fallen trees in that area were box elders. Some of the fallen were easily handled using hand saws and loppers. But many of the trees required some subtle chainsaw surgery to reopen the trails and we are grateful to Ryan Longe and Scott O’Brien from Facilities for tackling those tasks. The fallen trunks were tossed out into the former field to continue to provide essential habitat for insects and the birds such as woodpeckers that critically depend upon the insects found in rotting wood.

Profs. Stanger and McCabe spent some time in early summer weed whacking around the trees and shrubs planted by students this spring. The greater majority of trees and shrubs looked healthy and were leafing out. Weed whacking is not strictly speaking necessary, but it can give newly planted trees a fighting chance, particularly when they are planted among reed canary grass that can grow to 8 feet tall and shade out the growing trees. But the trees are in it for the long haul and will eventually produce tall

canopies that will shade out the invasive grass. We planted them at high density in anticipation that some would not make it, but enough will survive to found a more diverse community than the monoculture they are replacing.

Finally, Jeff Vincent has been busy keeping the herbaceous vegetation off the trails. In the early part of summer he used his personal riding mower to keep the trails open, but the terrain proved too rough for a machine designed for maintaining a smooth lawn and it died during one of his mowing runs. More recently, Jeff has been using a college-owned machine that is better suited to the task and his efforts have paid off. We have once again, four miles of open trail ready and waiting for returning students.

Beavers and Flooding: The main trail leading between the compost and the floodplain has been flooded ankle deep for most of the summer. The rainy weather is only part of the explanation. Beavers have moved in downstream of the low point in the road and their dams are backing the water up to the point of flooding our entrance to the floodplain. Beavers are not new to the area and we have certainly seen evidence of their work for many years. Ryan Crehan from US Fish and Wildlife has been working on our site and has notched seven beaver dams downstream of our trail in an attempt to reduce some of their impact on our ability to use the trail. This work happened this week and we will see if it is effective in lowering the water level. I guess it is not called a “floodplain” for nothing.

Earthwork and Invasives: Work on blocking a culvert that was part of the Natural Area’s agricultural legacy will commence shortly. The trail intersection below the compost will be temporarily blocked as the contractor moves earth to plug the drain and raise the old road bed. This work is intended to increase the hydroperiod, or the length of time that standing water persists in the wetland just east of the trail. This wetland has historically been artificially drained to make more of the site accessible for agriculture. Under the terms of our new conservation easement, agriculture is in our past, and our collaborators from the Natural Resources Conservation Service are managing projects like this to restore wetland function on site.

An additional part of this work will be to start controlling some of the invasive species that have decided to make our land their home. This work will also begin shortly is designed to minimize impact on pollinator species.

New Signs: We intend to install directional signs at Natural Area trail intersections. Because the area has the potential to contain Native American artefacts, we sought permission for this work. NRCS sent their archeologist out to the site and he graciously dug the holes we needed, inspecting the soil as he went. No artefacts were found and so we can proceed with sign posting in the coming semester. We purchased the posts and also the plastic laminate needed to add arrows, trail names etc. These signs should be in place by mid semester.

This Fall, stay tuned for community engaged projects in the Nursery & Natural Area with Green Up & Profs. Stanger & McCabe as well as our Natural Area Stewards.

Sustainability

STARS Rating – After a lot of hard work by Prof. Karen Talentino and the EcoReps as well as a number of Sustainable Campus team members this spring, St. Michael's has once again earned our Silver Rating through the AASHE STARS program. This is a testament of our efforts coordinating sustainable education, outreach, and practice here at the college. Our work in the Natural Area, Bee Campus, Farm, Green Up, Print & Mail, and in many academic departments contributes to this rating. Read more about this work [here](#).



Campus Sustainability Tips

A graphic titled "Campus Sustainability Tips" with a green background and white text. It lists five categories of tips: Solid Waste Reduction, Compost, Water Reduction, Energy Savings, and Eat Fresh Food. Each category has a small icon and a list of specific actions. At the bottom, it says "Go Green for the Environment" and "Join the Sustainable Community".

Solid Waste Reduction
Reduce, reuse, reuse, recycle!
• Properly dispose of paper and unnecessary packaging
• Recycle when you can. Recycle bins are located throughout campus.
• Reusable water bottles are available for purchase.
• Recycle the green! Use compostable containers and fresh produce containers, reuse, reuse, reuse!
• Use the recycling bin for all other materials.

Compost
Compost is a natural, nutrient-rich soil amendment that improves soil health and reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers.
• Use the compost bin for all food waste and yard trimmings.

Water Reduction
• Turn off the faucet if you're not using it.
• Use the water bottles at the campus bookstore.

Energy Savings
• Turn off the lights when you're not in the room.
• Use the energy-efficient light bulbs.
• Turn off the computer when you're not using it.

Eat Fresh Food
• Buy local produce.
• Choose organic when you can.
• Choose the Sustainable Community.

We have many resources on campus to support our employees in making sustainable choices. Check out the [brochure here](#). Many of these are also available to our students.

Finally, here are a few tips to help you on your own stewardship path living and/or working here on campus.

Summer Research Updates

Meghan Geouque



Meghan brought together her two majors, Environmental Studies and Philosophy, and explored environmental movements through Martin Heidegger's work. Heidegger, a German philosopher of phenomenology and existentialism, allowed Meghan to explore the changing human relationship with nature. The goal is to contribute intellectual and contextual work to sustainable development now and in the future. She brought her questions and investigation to the Farm and Farm Team this summer.

"My time on the farm not only allowed me to visualize a practical application of philosophy, but also brought an even deeper meaning to my project and its connection to our community."

Meghan is planning to submit her work to this undergraduate journal, Cura Terra: <https://gucuraterra.org/>. She will also share her work with Prof. L'Hote's intro philosophy courses and, in that way, introduce her peers to environmental philosophy.

Read more about Meghan's work, written by Laura Hardin '22, [here](#).

Cailey Comiskey



Cailey conducted field research this past summer at the Elizabeth Mine in Strafford, VT. The Elizabeth Mine opened in the middle part of the 19th century and closed in 1958. It was added to the EPA list of National Priorities in 2001 because of the high levels of metals emanating from the mine site. Cailey took soil and water samples from the mine and the adjacent environment. These samples were analyzed in our Chemistry lab for heavy metals using our Inductively Couple Plasma Optical Emission Spectrometer (ICP-OES). Her results show levels of contamination in several metals that remain above safe levels of exposure for humans and wildlife.



Picture 1: One of the point sources of pollution from the Elizabeth Mine. This point source is from water overflowing from an abandoned air shaft now filled with rainwater.

Picture 2: Sample collection by students in the Ompompanoosuc River next to the Mine.

Student Opportunities

Jobs

The Center will be hiring for 3 positions this fall. Postings soon on the Portal, Center's IG page, this listserv, and the Daily Digest. Brief descriptions follow.

- Administrative & Outreach Coordinator – This is an advanced position for a student with a background in marketing, education, and event coordination.
- Stewards – these are entry level positions for first year students. They will join an experienced employee in each of the two areas below.
 - 1 in the Teaching Gardens
 - 1 for the Natural Area

Internships

ECHO has a few open fall internships posted now. <https://www.echovermont.org/join-support/intern/>
There might be one that matches a student's interests or even if the role isn't directly in line, it could be a great way to get exposure to the museum as a whole.

Common Roots www.commonroots.org has reached out often. Carly Guelli had a great experience there. Lots of info on the website.

Contact

Jennifer Sutton
Internship Coordinator
Common Roots
(802) 310-4998

NASA DEVELOP National Program – a capacity building program for students for the applied sciences. ([full flyer here](#)) *DEVELOP* projects apply Earth observations and remote-sensing technology to application areas that highlight NASA Earth observation capabilities relative to environmental issues for enhanced policy and decision making. These areas include:

- Health & Air Quality
- Disasters
- Transportation & Infrastructure
- Urban Development
- Water Resources
- Ecological Forecasting
- Energy
- Food Security & Agriculture

How to Collaborate

1. Consultation – Reach out to Kristyn (kachilich@smcvt.edu) to set up an initial meeting to brainstorm connections of our work to class themes, resources, events, or activities to plug into or co-develop.
2. Guest Speaker – Contact your interested Center-affiliated member or Kristyn to request/coordinate a guest speaker in class about any of our initiatives.
3. Work Days – Use work days as extra credit opportunities for classes or a resource for student observation either for process or content.
4. Special Projects – Work with the Center to craft a special project for your course.

Follow Along

- [Website](#)
- Social Media
 - [Center](#)
 - [Farm](#)
 - [Teaching Gardens](#)
 - [Natural Area](#)
 - [Green Up](#)
- [Listerve](#) – found on left side of portal, click “mailing lists”, scroll to “CenterForTheEnvironment”