

Preserving Our Agricultural Heritage

By Doug Burnell and Linda Comeau

Unique among the rivers of New England, the Saco River of the Bartlett, Conway and Fryeburg area meanders through thousands of acres of flat and fertile intervale. These fertile floodplain soils are, in fact, some of the best in New Hampshire and Maine if not the entire country.

Originally known as Pequawket, the region was once home to the Pequawket tribe of the Abenakis, who lived in villages along the Saco River and fished, hunted and farmed the land. After Captain John Lovewell's famous battle of 1725, at the site of present-day Fryeburg, the tribe abandoned their villages and moved north to Canada, leaving the area to be promptly settled by English colonists.

Hearty homesteaders were lured north by land grants to populate the early proprietary townships. For example, the township of Fryeburg was granted in 1762 to Colonel Joseph Frye of Andover, Massachusetts. Colonists called it Pigwacket, a corruption of its former name. Settlers of Fryeburg were required to build a house, fill it with a

good family, and clear seven acres of pasture within four years or forfeit their grants back to Colonel Frye. These reverter provisions worked well at getting the land into the hands of committed homesteaders instead of real estate speculators. It was a hardscrabble existence, and except for a few essential provisions such as molasses, salt and rum, these first settlers lived entirely off the land.

Among Conway's original homesteaders was the Lucy clan, and their story is typical of many of these early settlers. John and Polly Lucy left Nottingham, NH with all of their worldly possessions piled high on a sled and arrived at their new home on Christmas Eve 1814. Chester and Lydia Lucy currently live on the original John Lucy Homestead on West Side Road in Conway. *A Family History, Six Generations as Stewards on the Same Land* (Chester B. Lucy, 2002) tells of this more than two-century saga, an integral part of Conway's 250-year history.

The Land Trust is privileged to be working in partnership with the Lucy family to protect the original homestead and nearly

all of the property not already protected by conservation easements generously donated by Chester and Lydia Lucy to the Society for the Protection of NH Forests. Demonstrating the statewide significance of our Lucy Family Farm Project, we have received funding from the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), along with grants from the Town of Conway and the Gibson/Woodbury Foundation.

Other farmland protection success stories to date include our Earle Family Farm, Simonton (Chamberlain Farm), Kennett, Jenkins (Upland Orchards), Hussey (Cross Farm), Albany Town Forest and Weston's Rivercroft Farm conservation easements.

It's no mistake that preserving land for farming comes first and foremost in the Land Trust's mission statement. By preserving farmland today, we hope to ensure that our community will always have the resources to produce food locally, much in the spirit and tradition of the area's forebears.



Lucy Barn/Linda Comeau



Preserving Land for
Community Benefit

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USVLT President's Message



A Building Year

By Doug Burnell

Caught up in the natural ebb and flow of conservation projects, characteristically both frenetic and methodical, the Land Trust occasionally finds itself in a "building year." What we have consciously been building in this, just such a year, are plans - for both managing our own assortment of preserves and helping owners steward their lands conserved with us - and the capacity for doing so with more staff and volunteers. Also, our current quest for accreditation with the national Land Trust Alliance is aimed at assuring that the practices and systems used by our personnel in carrying out our stewardship plans are sound and based on the experience of others who have followed a similar path.

As the town of Conway celebrates its 250th anniversary, my and Linda Comeau's article herein features a retrospective of agriculture along the upper reaches of the Saco River. The uniquely fertile floodplains of the Saco supported thriving and self-sustaining villages of native-American farmers,

followed by many generations of settlers' farmsteads that have seemingly been on a long, slow decline as we have literally gotten away from our roots. In this building year, USVLT has reaffirmed that it is indeed a priority to help preserve our working farms, and in so doing, commit to restoring the now-diminished ability to feed our selves locally.

Another article focuses on the at-once creative and sustaining nerve center of our organization, which we somewhat unimaginatively call our Development Committee. Our "developers" have in their ranks a diversity of wise and talented people, and I am constantly amazed at their energy and productivity. Especially in this building year, we have been seeking even more developmental wisdom and talent, so, if the shoe fits....

We hope you find these articles informative, and sufficiently inspirational to renew your support for our efforts. And thank you so much for your past contributions to the cause.

Welcome Our Newest Board Member



Tyler Ray

When Chris Meier decided early this spring to step off the Board after seven years of service and continue to support USVLT as a volunteer, we were concerned we were losing an

excellent legal resource to help inform the Board in decision-making. The Land Trust was very fortunate that Cooper Cargill Chant had recently hired another attorney, Tyler Ray, whose personal and professional interests dovetail well with USVLT needs and was interested in volunteering.

Tyler grew up in Bridgton, Maine and graduated from Lake Region High School. He comes with excellent credentials, having received his B.A. from Hobart College, J.D. from Roger Williams University School of Law, and M.B.A. from Bryant University. More recently he spent 10 years as a successful and well-regarded business attorney in Providence, RI.

Moving to North Conway and much closer to home provides Tyler and his wife, Anne, a wonderful location to raise their two young sons. It also

allows them to work where they play since they enjoy biking, hiking and skiing.

While in Rhode Island, Tyler was recognized as a Rising Star, New England Super Lawyers (2012-2014) and received the Providence Business News "Forty under 40" award for career accomplishments and community service (2013). His community involvement included forming Farm Fresh Rhode Island, a non-profit founded to manage urban farmers' markets, connect farms to schools, restaurants and hospitals, and develop a nationally recognized distribution hub for transport of fresh produce. The non-profit transformed into a multi-million dollar organization during Tyler's 9 years on its board, all of which he served as Secretary.

USVLT is now very fortunate to have Tyler as part of our team.

Volunteer Focus



The life-blood of any non-profit is its volunteers. USVLT is lucky that people who share our passion and interest in preserving land for community benefit are willing and happy to give freely of their time and skills. One such person is Nels Liljedahl (above left), District Conservationist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's Conway office. Consider-

ing that Nels works every day in the conservation field, the fact that he gives of this same knowledge and experience in his free time is extraordinary!

Over the years, Nels has served the Land Trust in a number of capacities, including on the Board of Directors and the Development Committee. These days, Nels helps plan and lead Easement Exploration Series outings.

As a Fryeburg resident, he focuses primarily on Maine or Saco River related events. In advance of canoe or kayak trips, he'll scout possible put-ins and take-outs and paddle the proposed course to investigate water levels, portages, strainers, and other difficulties of passage. If it's a snowshoe or cross-country ski, he coordinates with the landowner, investigates the trails, and even provides grooming if necessary. The day of the event he serves as the leader and makes sure that everyone has a safe and enjoyable time. His knowledge of each location and his conservation experience make each outing informative and memorable.

It's great to have Nels as part of the USVLT family. We thank him for his many contributions.

Do you have a skill from which the Land Trust could benefit? If so, come join us as a volunteer, too!

Accreditation

A Commitment to Quality and Transparency

If you've worked in a manufacturing environment or a medical device or drug company, you have been exposed to Quality Systems, like ISO 9000 (International Standardization Organization). A quality system defines the organizational structure, policies, procedures, processes and resources needed to run a quality operation, be it a for- or non-profit. Because these systems require documentation and auditing, they allow organizations to identify problems and self-correct as well as provide transparency to external folks as to how they are run.

Within the world of land trusts, the Land Trust Alliance, a national association, has developed a quality system known as the Land Trust Standards and Practices. From its very beginning, USVLT has used these LTA standards and practices to define how we do business. USVLT is now pursuing accreditation, which is an audit of our systems by a third party, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. Accreditation is the single-most important step the land trust community has taken in the last decade

to advance the quality of its members' operations and secure the public's trust.

A first-time accreditation is a time-consuming process with the following steps:

- Developing and documenting the needed policies and procedures that fit the organization and its available resources.
- Completing the pre-application questionnaire and attachments, which help assess readiness for accreditation.
- Completing the main application and attachments, which steps include giving public notice and compiling and shipping off project documentation.
- Preparing for and participating in a phone call with the commission review team, following an agenda provided by them.
- Submitting follow-up materials if any are identified during the call.

It takes over a year from pre-application to an accreditation decision. So why would a Land Trust with limited staff, volunteer and time resources make this commitment?

- Donors want to give to effective, well-run organizations. Accreditation assures them that your land trust is a good investment.
- Landowners want to know that a land trust will be able to carry out their conservation vision. Accreditation shows that you have what it takes.
- Funders often set strict requirements for grant recipients — and two-thirds of accredited land trusts say accreditation makes it easier to meet these requirements.
- Almost all land trusts improve their policies and programs as they apply for accreditation — with 96% of accredited land trusts saying that the process made them stronger.
- A stronger organization is less risky to insure; accredited land trusts can get discounts on insurance, among other benefits.

Accreditation is not a one-time action; re-accreditation is required every five years. Accreditation will become a tool to foster continuous improvement and reinvigorate our commitment to quality. We trust that you, our members and financial supporters, will continue to view our land conservation work as a wise investment for the future.



Dragon Meadow Brook/William Abbott

Meet Our New Staff



Jesse joins USVLT as Office Administrator. She is responsible for a broad range of tasks, including: processing accounts payable, managing the website and social media, coordinating periodic mailings, and managing office technology. Jesse received a BS in Business Management from Babson College. You may

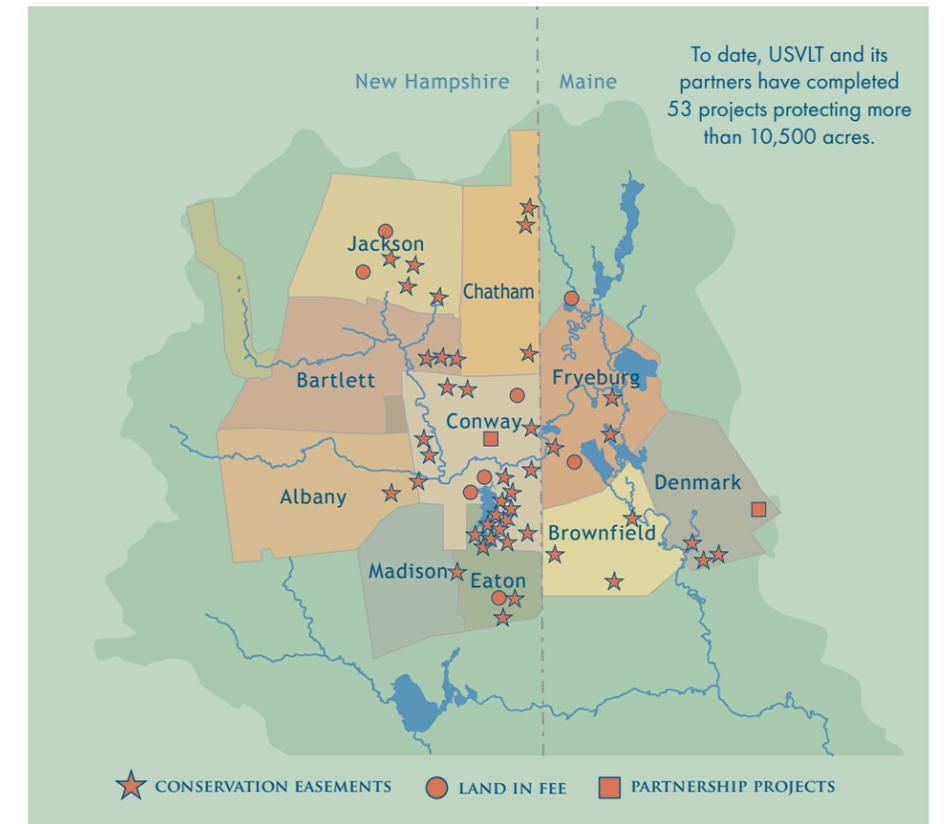
have met her working at May Kelly's Law School (expected Fall 2015). With limited free time, she has also served as a volunteer with Visiting Nurse and Hospice Care of Carroll County. Jesse can be reached via email at: info@usvlt.org or by phone at: 603-356-9683.



As USVLT grows with more conservation easements and fee lands preserved, the day-to-day work of managing those properties and identifying new prospects increases. Joining the Land Trust recently on a half-time basis are Susan Beane and Jesse Wright.

Some of you may know Susan from her role as Development Coordinator for Tin Mountain Conservation Center or her volunteer work at The Dinner Bell. She also has a strong educational background, with a Bachelors Degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies from the University of Southern Maine and a Masters of Public Policy and Management from the Muskie School of Public Service (USM). Susan joins the Land Trust as a Development Associate, playing a critical role in day-to-day fundraising, membership and business partnership development, outreach, and communications. Susan's focus on increasing USVLT's resources and her passion for the land and our community will certainly help to strengthen the organization. Susan can be reached via email at: sbeane@usvlt.org or by phone at: 603-356-9683.

have met her working at May Kelly's Cottage as a Bartender/Server while she completes her Masters in Environmental Law and Public Policy from Vermont



Partner Profile Cafe Noche

Key contributors to preserving land for community benefit are our business partners. Cafe Noche has been a valued USVLT Contribute to Place™ participant for more than five years. Since launching the program, their customers have contributed almost \$38,000 to the Land Trust, \$1 at a time. That's incredible!

Contribute to Place is a program of the Maine Land Trust Network (MLTN) that fosters partnerships in communities between local businesses and an area's conservation organizations. As a member of MLTN, USVLT

operates the program in its eleven-town service area, which straddles the Maine-New Hampshire border. It is a unique giving vehicle, whereby the patrons of participating businesses help support local land conservation through small donations (\$1 or less per transaction).

Tom Kugel of Cafe Noche says that the program takes them about five minutes a month to administer and that the vast majority of customers contribute to it. In conversations with many of those customers, they express appreciation that Cafe Noche offers Contribute to Place. The program is designed as an opportu-

nity for visitors to the valley to contribute to conservation and preserve the beautiful vistas, farmland, and woodland they choose to visit year after year.

For businesses for which Contribute to Place isn't a good fit, USVLT has a general Business Partnership Program offering other opportunities to contribute to and to benefit from the program. If your business is interested, please contact Susan Beane at 603-356-9683.

Our sincere thanks to Cafe Noche for their years of partnership and service to the Upper Saco River Valley; we hope to share many more.

How About You?

If you're reading this, we already know you're committed to the goals of USVLT, but if you enjoy writing, editing, or graphic design, there's a great opportunity for you to take that support just a little bit further. The same is true if you have good organizational skills, experience with social media, surveys, sales or marketing.

You see, if one or more of these skills apply to you, you would be a great fit for the Development Committee.

To best accomplish our mission of preserving land, each of our volunteers focuses on projects that match his or her skillset. USVLT has six different committees where each volunteer can bring expertise or hone skills: Execu-

tive, Personnel, Finance, Strategic Action, Development and Land.

The Development Committee develops, coordinates and implements the strategies that allow USVLT to stay on a strong financial footing. It's responsible for membership growth and the public perception of the Land Trust, which includes external communications like newsletters, the annual report, website and social media. These efforts bring many different skills together: from writing content, securing good visuals, and editing, to working with graphic design, planning production, and interacting with a printer. The Development Committee works with USVLT staff to develop the look,

feel, themes and strategies for all external communications.

Community engagement is key to building support, and the Development Committee does this through planning and executing events like the Easement Exploration Series, our annual meeting, a booth at the Fryeburg Fair, the annual fundraising dinner at Flatbread Pizza, and other seasonal events. If you like to plan and/or support events, can manage a project from start to finish, would enjoy working with landowners and taking small groups for tours out on the land, you have skills that would be very valuable.

Come join us!



Foss Mountain/Hannah Kiesler

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Our supporters include YOU and the following businesses and foundations. Together we ensure our region remains a beautiful place to call home or visit.



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Many of our business partners participate in Contribute to Place™ (a program of the Maine Land Trust Network) where their patrons can make a small contribution that supports conservation.



Each donation may be small, but together they have a huge impact. To learn more, please call us at 603-356-9683.

We are extremely grateful to the following for their support: Alkalay & Smillie, Anonymous Foundations (2), Cooper Cargill Chant, HEB Engineers, Pequawket Foundation, Robert & Dorothy Goldberg Charitable Foundation, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Woodland Acres Campground

WAYS YOU CAN HELP



YES! I want to help the Upper Saco Valley Trust preserve land for community benefit.

BECOME A MEMBER!

Please accept my membership contribution:

- \$2,500 \$500 \$125 \$35
 \$1,000 \$250 \$75 Other

USVLT is a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Name(s) _____

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GIVE A GIFT MEMBERSHIP!

YES! I want to introduce a friend or family member to the great work of USVLT.

Your Name: _____

(Please put recipient's name and mailing address above.)

DONATE ONLINE!

www.usvlt.org 

MAKE PLANS!

Have you considered including USVLT in your estate plans, or are you interested in donating securities? Please call (603) 356-9683 or email info@usvlt.org for more information.

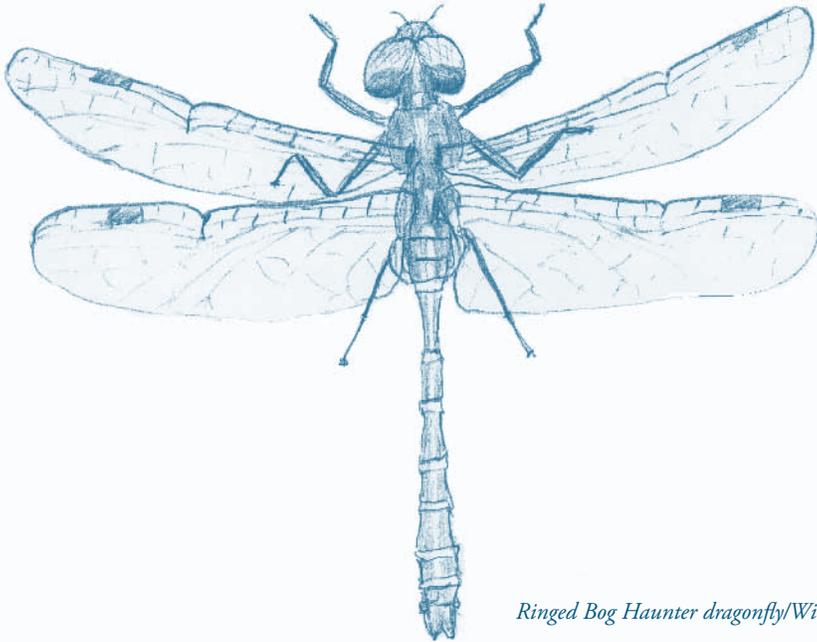
VOLUNTEER!

It's boots on the ground that make land preservation happen. To become a volunteer monitor or help with public events, please call (603) 356-9683 or email info@usvlt.org.

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The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust...



Ringed Bog Haunter dragonfly/William Abbott

...is a private, non-profit organization working with local landowners to permanently protect the lands and waters that define our communities and enrich our quality of life.

USVLT serves northern Carroll and western Oxford counties including the communities of Bartlett, Jackson, Conway, Albany, Hart's Location, Madison, Eaton, Chatham, Fryeburg, Brownfield, and Denmark.

"Once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price."

ANSEL ADAMS

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