

Stewarding History: Pine Hill Community Forest

In March 2018, USVLT hopes to be the proud new stewards of the 450-acre Pine Hill Community Forest. This property in the middle of Conway brings with it a rich trove of local history. From cornfields to a Victorian resort, the land that comprises the new Community Forest has lived many lives over the centuries.

The Kennett Family purchased the parcel a hundred years ago from seven different original proprietors' lots. The proprietors' lots were of the second and third divisions of the 1765-chartered town of Conway. Ensuing development followed the course of the White Mountain Highway, as well as Routes 113 and 302, though the area surrounding Pine Hill itself remained relatively untouched. A portion of Route 16 is now the western boundary of the proposed Community Forest, Route 302 the far-eastern boundary, and the Saco River itself the southern boundary, while the hilltop remains unscathed, above the fray.

On the eastern flank of Pine Hill, springs erupt and coningle with the waters of Cold Brook, a perennial stream flowing through a small valley into a 125-acre wooded swamp, all of which constitute one of Conway's most significant wetland complexes, visible along Route 302 near the intersection with East Conway Road. From the large wetland, the flow leaves the property via culverts, under the great dike of fill put in for the early 1970's relocation of Route 302, and empties into the Saco near a Town-owned boat launch and recreation path trailhead. Officially named the Smith-Eastman Landing, the recreational access point honors the builders of the covered bridge which for 130 years spanned the river there.

Near the current Route 302 bridge over the Saco River, a series of abrupt little ledges form a scenic summer spot (even as the ledges are the bane of low-water canoeists). This rocky spill was called Odell Falls after the Odell

brothers, pioneer settlers of the nascent abutting town of Fryeburg, Maine. Thinking they were still in Fryeburg, the brothers were allowed to stay even after discovering they had settled well into New Hampshire when the state line was properly surveyed. Still home to one of the oldest continuously operating Saco River flow-gauging stations of the US Geological Survey, the Falls also formed an early fordway, and was the site of another ill-fated covered bridge erected and then immediately taken out by freshets in the early 1800's.

The proposed Community Forest also nearly surrounds the 65-acre Kennett High School and Vocational Center campus. More than a century ago the site was widely known as Mineral Springs, home to the White Mountain Mineral Spring Company founded by William Shepard Nash and J.A. Carlton in 1882. The pair built the Nash House, which served as a bottling plant, as home to the Nash family and to guests during

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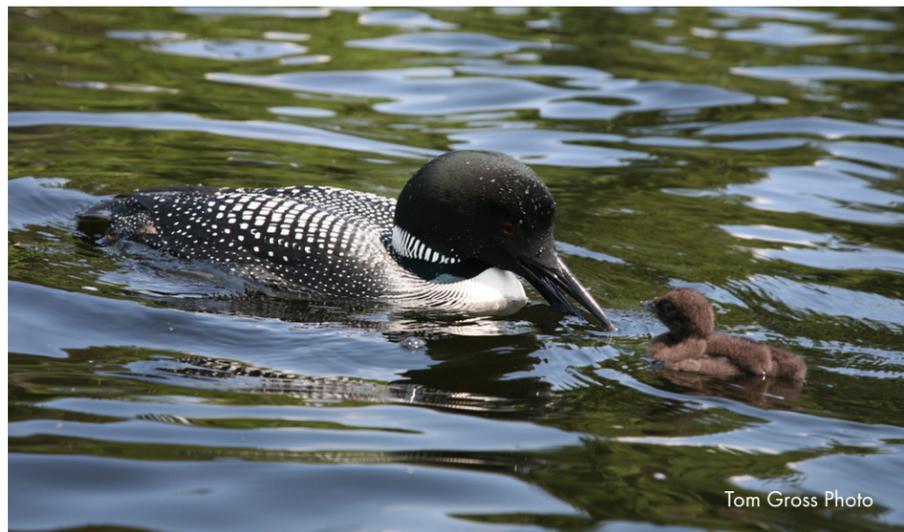
With the shorter days upon us, perspectives sharpen and shadows lengthen. For me, fall is always a time of transition, retooling, and reflection.

For the Land Trust, 2017 has also been a year of transition, retooling, and reflection. We are in the midst of our most ambitious campaign in the organization's history, preserving over 540 acres in Conway and Albany, in partnership with Tin Mountain (detailed on page 1). At the same time, Erika Rowland was hired as our new Conservation Lands Manager, and Linda Comeau will be stepping away from her long-held staff position (see page 3). Following detailed discussions and careful thought, in June, the Board adopted a long-awaited revision to our Strategic Organizational Plan. And in a few weeks' time, USVLT hosts its first ever Fields on the Saco dinner event, an opportunity to celebrate our conservation stories alongside stories focused on the region's rich agricultural tapestry. Leaves are "turning" in more than one sense – change is in the air!

In the midst of the past year's political upheaval, as well as our own orga-



nizational changes, USVLT remains steadfast, centered, and optimistic. With 60 land conservation projects now completed, and more than 11,000 acres now guaranteed to be there "for the long haul," our perspective is long, too. Future work, as detailed in the revamped Strategic Organizational Plan, will continue to include essential land conservation projects in all 11 towns we serve. Efforts will focus on increased public access, signage, and community outreach, to ensure it remains relevant to the folks, like you, who make it happen. Thank you for being there, with us, for the long haul.



Tom Gross Photo

Transitions



Passing the baton...

In 1999, I was trying my best to see the symbiotic relationship between beavers and their environment at one of my favorite roadside beaver ponds when my friend Dave Thurlow came pedaling along on his bike. He told me that a local group was interested in starting a land trust, and asked if I'd be interested in helping out. Of course I said yes! The work we've accomplished in 16 short years since our first project – the 2001 Harding easement – is beyond any expectation or hope Dave or I may have had.

As a board member and then staff, USVLT has allowed me to do what I love: get outside, tromp through the woods, meet landowners, and have a lasting impact on this landscape that I treasure. It's been a privilege working here, knowing that the projects I do today will last for generations. As much as I have enjoyed the last 17 years, it is time for me to pull back from my work commitments. I won't be far away, and hope to continue to be involved with the Land Trust as needed.

I am delighted to be "passing the baton" to Erika Rowland, who comes to USVLT after years of experience in local, regional and national conservation issues. A former stewardship manager for Blue Hill Heritage Land Trust in

Maine, Erika then worked for the Wildlife Conservation Society (based in Bozeman, Montana) where she was charged with looking deeply at questions related to climate change adaptation. She has recently returned to Maine to live closer to family, and now has a chance to reaffirm her love of older, East Coast mountains. As our new Conservation Lands Manager, I trust that she will carry on our young, and impressive, legacy of conserving land for community benefit. —Linda Comeau

Starting a land trust in the Mount Washington Valley was Linda Comeau's thesis project while earning a Master's degree at Antioch New England. A year later, she was one of the founding board members of USVLT. Over the years, she has spearheaded more than 70 grant applications and secured more than \$2M in grants; trained more than 40 volunteer monitors; and walked every boundary line of every Land Trust property.

Erika Rowland has worked in conservation for decades, earned degrees from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (MS in Quaternary Studies/Botany) and University of Maine (PhD in Forest Resources), and most recently worked extensively with the Wildlife Conservation Society on climate change resiliency. She currently lives in Bridgton with her husband and two children.



Joining the Board

With the addition of Dan Stepanauskas this past May, the Land Trust board grew in depth and breadth. A veteran forester who has long made Mt. Washington Valley his home, Dan also brings a wealth of experience serving on non-profit boards.

A 1978 UNH graduate, Dan initially worked for the US Forest Service as well as in private industry, and has for 35 years had his own forestry consulting firm. Over time Dan's work has attracted a wide array of clients, he manages numerous tracts of land in Carroll, Coos, and Grafton Counties, and in the process has worn out four pairs of Limmer boots. Among those properties are Castle in the Clouds, the Redstone Quarry lands (much of which is now The Nature Conservancy's Green Hills Preserve), 3,000 acres for the Eaton Conservation Commission, and recently, the lands of Tin Mountain Conservation Center. He serves as the town forester for Tamworth and Moultonborough.

For twelve years Dan also consulted with Scientific Certification Systems of Emeryville, California, where he certified that state, industrial, tribal and private forests adhere to the sustainable forest management standards set forth by the Forest Stewardship Council. Recently, he has also worked on his first forest carbon sequestration project in New Hampshire.

Dan has served on the Tin Mountain Board, the Carroll County Extension Advisory Board, and was a founding member of both the Green Mountain Conservation Group's board as well as the Forest Stewards Guild.

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the summer. Travelers came by carriage along the old Mineral Springs Road (it's still there on Route 16 – just south of the entrance to Lamplighters Park), passing through thick woods (now developed as part of the Tech Village) and admired the old Washington Boulder just off the edge of the road. The boulder was once thought to be the largest glacial erratic in New Hampshire, until it was surpassed by the discovery of the Madison Boulder. Now it is in foundation block pieces and supports the Conway Library, among other local structures.

Once they arrived at the Mineral Spring, adjacent to the present day high school structure, travelers were treated to rest, relaxation and mineral spring water in a Victorian setting. The naturally sparkling, Mineral Spring water was considered cathartic and curative, and was bottled and shipped to local hotels and for use on ocean-going voyages.

In 1920, William C. Kennett bought the spacious residence and defunct bottling plant, plus 268 acres of land surrounding them from Nash family offspring. The spacious residence gradually fell into disrepair, and around 1970 was burned down as part of a fire department training exercise.

The Mineral Spring today consists of an ornate hexagonal spring house, covering a granite-enclosed sandy pool where air bubbles still flit to the surface, restored and annexed onto the high-school property.

Since announcing the Community Forest project, we have heard many stories about connection to land, whether it's a brief glimpse of a bald eagle flying over the wetlands, days spent studying the excellent deer hunting grounds on the south slope of Pine Hill, or of rambles through the undeveloped wild lands out the "back door." This landscape is where Conway residents and visitors alike have learned to hunt or fish, or where they blew off steam between the school bus and dinnertime. Most want to keep the land just the way it is: "back land" that is rough around the edges, with plenty of room to explore and get lost, to find a moment of peace and quiet, or to reminisce about those who have gone before.

The Year in Review



Stewardship

Leita Monroe Lucas Preserve

There has been a flurry of stewardship activity on the Leita Monroe Lucas Preserve this summer, including parking lot construction, NRCS-funded forestry work designed to improve habitat for songbirds and other wildlife, and a brook trout stream restoration project. It required many hands to accomplish all of this, including interns from both USVLT and Tin Mountain Conservation Center. An AMC trail crew worked onsite for a week in mid-August, pro-bono. Thank you to all.

Signage

Starting this fall, USVLT will be installing new signs on conservation land.



Summer intern Evan McNaught helped with the design of several different templates that celebrate the permanence of USVLT work. Look for them in some of the most scenic spots in the Mount Washington Valley that we are honored to have conserved.

Initiatives



The Farms of Carroll County

Your guide to local NH farms & food!



Agricultural Advocacy Work

USVLT has been working side-by-side with the Mount Washington Valley Eaters & Growers (MWVEG) to promote the good eats available through local farms. Look for our colorful advertisements in the *Conway Daily Sun Dining Guide*. Staff member Jesse Wright has also been working in partnership with UNH Cooperative Extension on the publication of several guidebooks, including *Farms of Carroll County*, *a Chef's Guide to Local Farms*, and a directory of farms that have Community Supported

Agriculture (CSA) programs. Looking forward, we'll be implementing "scaling up" workshops for farmers interested in growing their businesses, and we'll continue to advocate on behalf of farmers at the county and statewide levels. To find out more about this work or to get involved, email Jesse at jwright@usvlt.org

Water Quality Work



Last spring, USVLT received a \$20,000 grant from New Hampshire's Department of Environmental Services to help address pollution in the region's waterways, including potential groundwater pollution. Water quality issues in Mount Washington Valley region stem from many various pollution sources both above and below ground. We've been charged with helping to pinpoint any of these unidentified sources of pollution, as well as reaching out to our communities to explore if and how they might modify their aquifer protection ordinances to help protect valuable groundwater. FB Environmental, a consulting firm based in Portland and Portsmouth, has been engaged to do the pollution identification work on our behalf and assist with community outreach regarding ordinances.

Community Outreach



Easement Exploration

The 2017 Easement Exploration series was once again a rich mix of education and adventure. From learning about NRCS-funded conservation practices on the Dundee easement, to a springtime ephemeral wildflower walk in the floodplain forest, to introducing supporters to Pine Hill land (slated for acquisition this winter), participants covered a lot of ground.

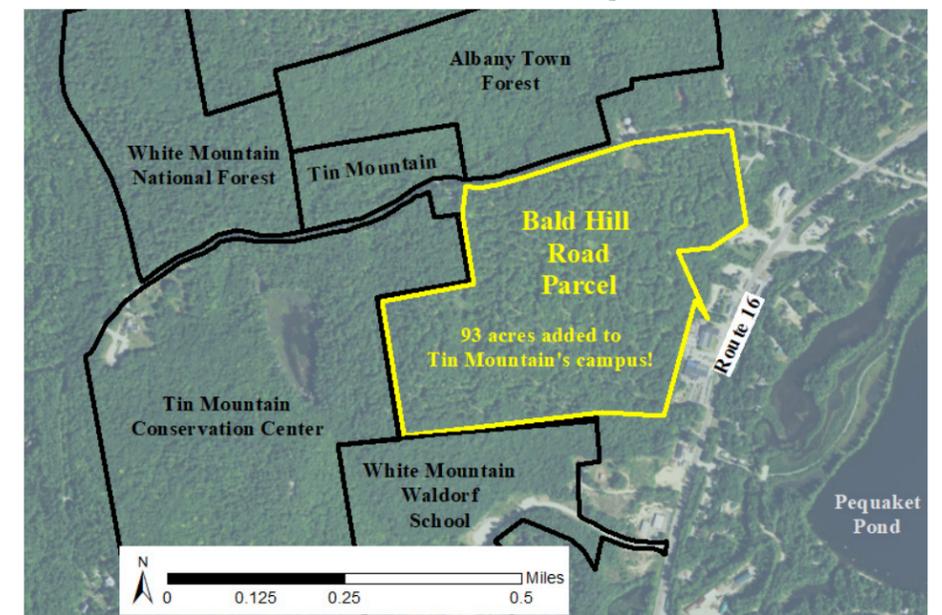
Fields on the Saco

In 2017 USVLT became the new stewards of an event that brings together regionally renowned chefs, local farmers, and conservation advocates: the Fields on the Saco. Previously, the event has benefitted the MWV Green Team and Slow Food Saco Valley Chapter, and USVLT will carry on the legacy. The 2017 dinner will feature Mount Washington Valley Eaters and Growers member farms, as well as chefs from many of Valley Originals restaurants.



Tin Mountain Conservation Center

We are proud to be working with Tin Mountain on the Pine Hill Community Forest and Bald Hill Road land projects. Together these two properties will conserve over 540 acres in Conway and Albany. While USVLT will own the Pine Hill land "in fee" and manage it as a Community Forest, 90+ acres along Bald Hill Road in Albany, which sits adjacent to the White Mountain Waldorf School, will be added to the Tin Mountain Conservation Center's main campus.



2017 Stewardship Intern Perspective

You learn a lot about yourself while pushing through thick brush on a remote property where boundaries have long faded. Swatting at hordes of mosquitoes and picking ticks off by the dozen can make a person question their own sanity. Realizing you are not where you thought you were may conjure up images from perilous survival stories. I've experienced all of these challenges and more this summer and loved every single one of them.

Each experience taught me something new about conservation and about myself as a person. It was always right before giving up on a boundary line quest when I would break through a wall of vegetation to be greeted by a stunning blueberry field or sparkling river overlook. Almost immediately the bugs would subside and finally allow me a chance to appreciate the magnificent properties the Land Trust has

in easement. It is a reassuring to know that these places will be stewarded and cherished into the future.

During my summer internship I came to realize how much I enjoy all aspects of conservation work, and also how necessary it is. Some of my favorite memories from the summer include playing boundary line detective with Linda, learning Doug's two golden rules for field work (that you are never where you think you are, and that you always have to "add an hour"), following Jesse to all of our events (Dundee was the best), and crashing through moose territory with William on our Monroe Lucas property. It is with bittersweet feelings that I say goodbye to the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust and the White Mountains. As I head back to Philadelphia I have a very strong sense that I won't be away for long.

—Evan McNaught



2017 BUSINESS & FOUNDATION SUPPORT

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- Jackson Historical Society
- Northeast Snowmobile Rentals
- Riverside Inn
- Tamarack Construction
- The Echo Group
- The Other Store
- White Mountain Hotel

Foundation & Municipal Support:

- Anonymous Foundations (2)
- Conway Conservation Commission – LCHIP Match Fund
- Davis Conservation Foundation
- Fields Pond Foundation
- Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)
- Maine Community Foundation
- New Hampshire Charitable Foundation:
 - Anonymous Fund
 - Marshall Family Fund
 - Richard A. Ware Family Fund
 - Westmeadow Fund



- Newman's Own Foundation
- NH Fish & Game: Small Grants Program
- Pequawket Foundation, an advised fund of the NH Charitable Foundation
- Robert and Dorothy Goldberg Charitable Foundation
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services

Great New Ways to Gift in 2017

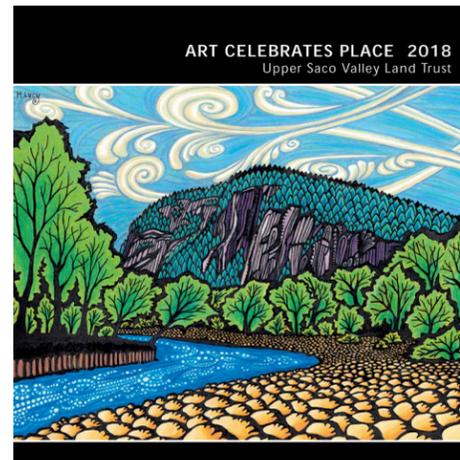


USVLT water bottles for sale at Bagel's Plus

This past year USVLT expanded its effort to increase community awareness about who we are and what we aspire to do. Knowing that everyone

loves to represent their favorite non-profit through wearable merchandise, Land Trust gear has been added to our proverbial shelves. Now members can support USVLT through the purchase of a water bottle, wool winter hat, and canvas tote bags. These products are not only the perfect conversation starter but made of the high-quality materials from brands we know and trust: L.L. Bean, Nalgene, and Ibex. Get a jump on your holiday shopping at: www.usvlt.org/usvlt-merchandise/.

The 2018 Art Celebrates Place calendar has arrived for its second annual appearance. Take one home today by visiting one of the following locations: White Birch Books, Soyfire Candle, MWV Chamber of Commerce, the Met Coffeehouse and Art Gallery, Jackson



Art Studio & Gallery, Dutch Bloemen Winkel, Spice & Grain, Edge of Maine Gallery, Vintage Frameworks, or the USVLT office (located above Olympia Sports in North Conway). A full online preview of the calendar is available at www.usvlt.org.



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PLANNED GIVING

You can always have a future with the Land Trust. Include Upper Saco Valley Land Trust in your estate planning, when finalizing your will, or establishing an annuities trust. Call us 603-356-9683 for more information.

VOLUNTEER!

It's boots on the ground that makes land preservation happen. From monitoring easement properties to trail maintenance, Upper Saco Valley Land Trust has something for you!



THE 10TH ANNUAL

Fields on the Saco

FARM TO TABLE DINNER

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22

THE BARN AT MERRILL FARM INN
CONWAY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

STARTS AT 3:00 PM RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
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THE CHEFS

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MICHAEL BEERS • THE BARN AT MERRILL FARM INN
JEFF FOURNIER • THE THOMPSON HOUSE EATERY
LIZ JACKSON • LIBBY'S BISTRO AND SAALT PUB
JONATHAN SPAK • THE OXFORD HOUSE INN
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