

New Life in Progress for Fryeburg's Historic Jockey Cap

By Mark Dindorf, Interim Executive Director
& Abby King, Conservation Director

Photo: Don Houde

A unique collaboration between the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, the Town of Fryeburg, and the Access Fund, a national organization working to conserve access to rock climbing locations, is underway in Maine, with the goal to protect the iconic Jockey Cap property in Fryeburg. A favorite destination of locals and visitors alike, Jockey Cap combines an in-town location, accessibility, stunning views, rare pitch pine habitat, rock climbing and bouldering routes, and a rich history, all contributing to its ongoing allure.

The 15.6-acre property features an enormous granite outcropping located on the outskirts of Fryeburg Village. A long ridge trailing away to the north offers beginner-friendly hikes to its rounded open-ledge summit, while the steeper faces are coveted by rock climbers for their top-rope sport climbing and

bouldering below. Jockey Cap's central location also enables its use as an outdoor classroom for the abutting public elementary and middle school, as well as nearby Fryeburg Academy. The property has a unique ecology, containing about six acres of rare pitch pine woodlands, as well as a scrub oak and early-succession mixed hardwood forest.

Jockey Cap has pre- and post-colonial historical significance. Molly Ockett, likely the last member of the Pequawket Tribe (western Wabanaki confederacy) to live locally, is rumored to have resided onsite in a namesake boulder cave. The open summit hosts a granite pedestal and bronze rangefinder erected in memory of arctic explorer Admiral Robert Peary, a spot overlooking the Great Bend of the Saco and the signal for a portage used by the Pequawket tribe to shorten their journey down-

river by 30 miles. And for two short winters spanning 1936 to 1938, Jockey Cap was also home to Maine's first rope tow for downhill skiing. Skiers rode the ski train from Portland along the Mountain Division Line to the station in Fryeburg, where they were then given rides to the ski hill by local farmers with empty pickup trucks.

In spite of its compelling history and extensive natural and recreational resources, Jockey Cap has suffered years of neglect, attributable to a 50/50 public-private ownership structure which prevented either party - the Town of Fryeburg and the private landowner - from managing the property's resources and making infrastructure investments. But USVLT developed a creative plan to overcome this challenge and has begun to implement it as follows:

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President's Message



Photo: Ann Bennett

Where did another summer go? We are left once again reflecting in this fall newsletter on our challenges and successes, sending our gratitude to all of USVLT's generous donors, indispensable partners, dedicated volunteers and staff.

Amazing generosity and the power of partnerships stand out with our latest land-protection projects. The addition of key acreage and road frontage to the Pine Hill Community Forest in Conway earlier this year is enabling construction of a carefully planned new parking area and multi-use trail to the top of Pine Hill. Closing in November is the 1250-acre Dundee Community Forest project in Jackson and Bartlett, thanks to successful collaborations with the Trust for Public Land and the State of New Hampshire, as well as grants and donations from a wide array of foundations and benefactors (both the Dundee and Pine Hill expansion were part of our recent highly successful Capital Campaign).

The largesse of the Burt and Lloyd families has given us much to celebrate: on the part of the Burts, title to a valuable house and lot (now under contract for sale to finance other conservation projects) and the Menotomy Preserve on the Saco River

in Fryeburg; and by the Lloyds, a conservation easement on their iconic Mountainside Farm, abutting the Dundee Community Forest in Bartlett. Also on the horizon is completion of our endeavor to preserve the beloved Jockey Cap in partnership with the Town of Fryeburg. And our commitment made last fall, to own and steward the replicated wetlands of the Pequawket Peninsula Preserve in Albany and Conway, has provided mitigation of the construction impacts of the phase of the Mount Washington Valley Recreation Path being completed this fall.

Perhaps a sign of the times, staffing changes have been a theme this year. While transitions present challenges, with the arrival of new staff and positions, there are fresh ideas and perspectives in the office, as well as new energy. We are now looking forward to greater organizational capacity and staffing stability. We also look forward to refining our future conservation priorities with help from our new GIS-powered Strategic Conservation Plan, and to enjoying its resulting collaboration opportunities with our service-area towns.

Enjoy this edition, and thank you again for your continued support, in all its forms!

A Conservation Vision for the Decade Ahead

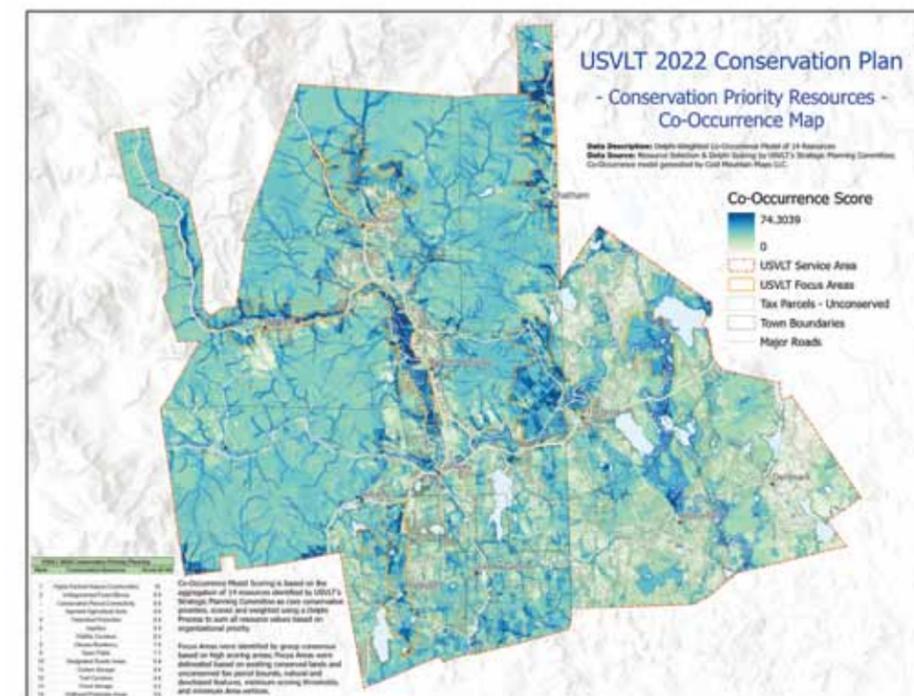
Often the most valuable piece of any strategic plan is not the end-product maps and data, but the larger collective process of stepping back to take in the bigger picture, reflecting on past work, reassessing values, and moving forward with new perspectives and strategies. Such has been the case during the Land Trust's Strategic Conservation Plan (SCP) revision, as we map the course for the organization's next ten years.

USVLT's goal for the 2022 Plan was not only to update its 2011 Natural Resource Inventory and priority Focus Areas, but to make conservation planning data more accessible to staff, towns, and the broader public. Another goal for this year's fresh look was to identify high-value conservation resources that have yet to be protected.

Grant funding for the project was secured from the State of NH Conservation Commission Moose Plate program and the Open Space Institute. To lead the project, we contracted with Peter Howe, a GIS expert at Cold Mountain Maps and former USVLT Land Steward.

Determining the project deliverables was a necessary first step to obtaining grant funding, and monthly discussions at Land Committee meetings refined the desired type of interactive map. We reviewed story maps from conservation groups across the country and settled on a user-friendly, public-facing version that highlights USVLT's conservation priorities, with an additional parcel-based layer that staff can use to sequence future projects.

A Strategic Conservation Planning Committee (SCPC) was convened in the spring, combining expertise from the Land Committee, staff, and board to guide the project through its next steps. The SCPC identified 14 Conservation Resources in four distinct categories as core conservation priorities:



- **Water Resources:** Watershed Protection, Aquifers, Flood Storage and Wellhead Protection Areas
- **Ecological Integrity:** High-Ranking Natural Communities, Wildlife Corridors, Unfragmented Forest Blocks, Conservation Parcel Connectivity, Climate Resiliency and Carbon Storage
- **Farmland Protection:** Important Agricultural Soils, Open Fields
- **Public Access & Scenic Value:** Trail Corridors, Designated Scenic Areas

Through the process the committee delineated Focus Areas that reflect unprotected regions of high conservation priority within USVLT's 11-town service area. The resulting graphic highlights those focus areas in a multi-layer format.

The first phase of the 2022 SCP is nearing completion. Once totally finished, the SCP will give USVLT new tools to guide our conservation priorities in the decade ahead. Findings will also be presented to community groups, public officials, and private landowners within our service area to enlist support and create common ground, all with a goal of greater collective action around conservation efforts in the upper Saco Valley.

"This project was supported through the Open Space Institute's Land and Climate Catalyst Planning Program, which is made possible with major funding from the J.M. Kaplan Fund and Jane's Trust Foundation, with additional support from generous individual contributions."

Land Project Updates

Conservation projects each have their own individual timelines; some are finalized in a few months, while others bump along for a number of years before concluding successfully. All are made possible through the generosity of landowners and donors, and the tenacity and commitment of Land Trust staff who shepherd these initiatives from inception to completion. Multiple exciting projects are underway in 2022, including the following:



Photo: USVLT

Mountainside Farm Conservation Easement - Acquired

- Donated to USVLT by the Lloyd Family in honor of their father, Lewis Lloyd
- This conservation easement is located in Bartlett and protects 128 acres of forestland
- The parcel is part of a 941-acre unfragmented wildlife corridor which in turn includes a portion of the abutting Dundee Community Forest.
- “With the decision to put their land in a conservation easement, the Lloyd family demonstrated their commitment to future generations as well as the rural character of Dundee Road,” stated board vice president Ann Bennett. “USVLT is deeply grateful for their foresight and generosity.”

Bun Lucy Farm Project - Ongoing

- Owned by Nat & Marianne Lucy, formerly by their uncle Herbert “Bun” Lucy and his family, and by many generations of Lucys before that.
- 38.5 acres of aquifer-underlain, prime Saco River floodplain farmland and upland forest on upper West Side Road in Conway.
- USVLT is working with two organizations: the NH Department of Environmental Services and the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund (DWGTF) to obtain grants for an agricultural easement.
- The land is currently used by the Lucy family for maple sugaring and haying, contains habitat for rare native plants and animals, and is surrounded by other Lucy-family conserved lands.

Menotomy Preserve - Acquired

- USVLT has held the Benecchi Conservation Easement at the end of Menotomy Road since 2012, and we are pleased to announce the property was generously donated in fee to USVLT by the subsequent owners, the Burt family, in July 2022.
- The 95.5 acres fronting on the Saco River and the Bog Pond wetland complex will now be managed as a natural preserve.
- Potential conservation possibilities exist on adjacent large parcels, all in a key USVLT focus area.



Photo: USVLT



Photo: Dan Houde

Jockey Cap - Ongoing

- Unique partnership between the Town of Fryeburg, USVLT, and the Access Fund, a national organization that works to conserve and protect rock climbing sites around the country.
- Small but mighty total of 15.6 acres including the historic landmark outcrop overlooking the sweep of the Great Bend of the Saco River and Fryeburg Village.
- Provides hiking and outdoor classroom space to several adjacent schools, unique rock climbing crags and routes, a rare pitch pine habitat, comes with a commitment and funding to improve access and eroding hiking trails by the Town as landowner and USVLT as conservation easement holder.



Photo: USVLT

As a conservation organization with a mission to preserve land for community benefit, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust has a responsibility to acknowledge that the portion of New Hampshire and Maine in which we operate is the unceded ancestral homeland of the Wabanaki (meaning “People of the Dawn”), including the Pequawket, Ossipee, and Abenaki. The sacred relationship of the Wabanaki to this land and these waters stretches beyond time immemorial, more than 12,000 years.

Community Forests Update

2022 has been an eventful year for USVLT’s community forests. The Pine Hill Community Forest Expansion closed in January, adding 134 key acres to the original 460, bringing the total acreage to 594. This summer, the Pine Hill Management Committee and the USVLT Board of Directors approved an upgraded master trail plan designed by Matt Coughlin of ReCon Trails and enabled by the expansion, as well as a contract to begin phase one trail construction to the delightful summit of Pine Hill. Implementation of phase one has begun and will continue through the fall, building a graded hiking and uphill biking route to the summit and a descending loop trail. The summit trail and the recently completed and critically acclaimed Ravine Trail will become better accessible in 2023, when a central parking lot is completed on Eagles Way.

USVLT’s ownership of the Dundee Community Forest is now slated to become a reality in November of 2022. The 1250-acre project is nearing completion, with final federal appraisal review currently underway. Finishing extensive boundary-survey work around the Forest’s four separate units, eliminating and mitigating encroachments, and resolving title issues—all being shep-

herded by our expert project partner, the Trust for Public Land—delayed the anticipated June 2022 closing date until this fall. Last spring, a Multi-Resource Management Plan was finalized and approved by the NH Division of Forests and Lands, clearing the way for funding from the state-administered federal Forest Legacy Program. Backed by studies of the property’s important natural habitats and forest communities, the comprehensive plan will guide USVLT’s oversight and stewardship of the mountainside Community Forest for the next ten years.

Baseline documentation is another of the final steps being completed by USVLT prior to closing. By detailing the diversity of ecological and cultural conditions existing on the ground, this report will facilitate USVLT’s ability to track changes over time.

Since the Dundee Community Forest is the largest and most complex land project in USVLT’s 22-year history, its completion will be a moment worthy of celebration as well as a legacy and achievement in which all our members, donors, staff, board, and volunteers can take great pride. The community forest projects could not have happened without you.



Designed by: Aimee St.Germain & Carissa Milliman

Saco River Brewing Company debuted a special edition IPA in September, with proceeds pledged to help the fundraising effort to conserve and protect historic Jockey Cap in Fryeburg. Be sure to stop by the brewery and thank them – and maybe have a Jockey Cap IPA while you’re at it!

Newest Members of the USVLT Community

Board of Directors

Upper Saco Valley Land Trust welcomed two new board members at May's annual meeting, Tim Scott and Sean Wadsworth. In August Jennifer Pribble, who has strong professional experience in the conservation community, also joined the board. They collectively bring a breadth of experience to the board, for which we are very grateful.



Longtime Jackson resident Tim Scott has worked in non-profit fundraising since graduating from the University of Maine in 1977. During his career, Tim has consulted with or been employed by over ninety organizations with an emphasis on long-term donor stewardship and capital campaigns. In addition to his current work with the Country Consulting Group, Inc., Tim also served for 15 years as Director of Development at Fryeburg Academy. Locally, he chaired the North Conway Community Center's successful capital campaign in 2015, and worked with the MWV Rec Path, USVLT, Jackson Ski Touring, and the New England Ski Museum on their respective recent fundraising initiatives.

Sean Wadsworth's childhood years were guided by his parents volunteering at the Beaver Lake Nature Center in upstate NY, where he later worked on the grounds and trails, and as a youth camp counselor. He attended UNH to study Environmental Conservation and Political Science, and worked for a decade as a technician in air-quality research and engineering. Sean and his wife Rachel Hamilton and their two boys moved to Albany in 2013, where Sean currently serves on both the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. He volunteers as the monitor for the Land Trust's World Fellowship easement, and is grateful to support and serve the mission of USVLT.



Jennifer Pribble is dedicated to land conservation because access to fresh air, clean water, local food, and open spaces are critically important for individual, wildlife, and community health. A Midwesterner with a degree in Communication and Culture from Indiana University, Jennifer hopes to use her non-profit marketing and communication experience to further engage members and strengthen USVLT to continue to grow and steward existing lands – now and for future generations. Jennifer and her family enjoy trail running and Nordic skiing on conserved trails near their home in Jackson.



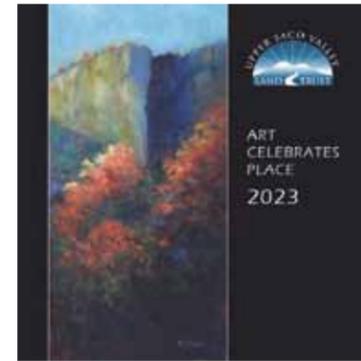
USVLT also added two new staff members in 2022, Greg Bjork and Carissa Milliman. Greg's background is in forestry, land management and conservation, while Carissa brings experience in communications, PR, education and public service.

Greg joined USVLT as Land Steward in the spring of 2022. He obtained a Forestry degree at the University of New Hampshire and his career has spanned forest ecology, land management, and conservation with organizations such as the Maine Forest Service and Maine Audubon. As a member of the Land Trust team, Greg is excited to collaborate on current and future multi-use projects. He is an avid backpacker and Nordic skier and has been recreating in and around Mount Washington Valley for several decades. Greg is happiest wandering the woods in search of giant trees and looks forward to many new discoveries!

Carissa Milliman joined the team this summer as the Outreach and Development Coordinator. She brings a background in communications/journalism as well as experience as an educator in the public school system. Carissa's focus will be outreach, fundraising, and event planning and execution. She has experience in higher education, recreation, promotion and service. Carissa moved to the Valley a few years ago with her partner and their three-legged Pomsy, Doggo, after spending years living in and exploring various corners of the US. You can find her hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, doing yoga, splitboarding (precariously) and following various partners up ice climbs.

Art Celebrates Place

USVLT's much-loved event, Art Celebrates Place, re-surfaced in a different format this year, when the Land Trust staged a mid-summer art show and open house at its Conway office. USVLT Celebrates Place, the July 8 event, was a memorable gathering of artists, friends, and community members on a perfect summer afternoon. After the long dry spell of pandemic isolation, the chance to gather was meaningful and festive. Thank you to all participating artists and to everyone who turned out.



USVLT's Art Celebrates Place calendars are now ready to hit the stands. The featured artwork in a variety of mediums captures how truly special these lands are to this community. A huge thank you goes out to Linda Gray for launching the calendar seven years ago, and for continuing to shepherd the production process. Thank you as well to participating artists, and to the business sponsors who keep the metaphorical lights on for this venture - Computer Port, Jim Doucette Real Estate, Minuteman Press, Spice and Grain, and White Birch Books.

2022 offers a new opportunity to appreciate ACP artwork in a different form. Notecards featuring the prints of the artists who participated in USVLT Celebrates Place are on sale individually or in sets. As the days get colder, and the holiday season approaches, remember to get your calendar and notecard gifts early. You might also think about a USVLT blanket, fleece vest, or water bottle for the folks on your holiday giving list. All are available at the Land Trust office, or can be purchased online by visiting usvlt.org.



2022 Easement Exploration Series

In its seventh season, USVLT's Easement Exploration Series continues to offer educational and fun guided explorations of our preserved lands and conservation projects. The 2022 Easement Exploration series featured a Wildflower Walk in collaboration with Tin Mountain Conservation Center, a hands-on invasive species workshop led by USVLT Land Steward Greg Bjork and Ibis Wildlife Consultant Ellen Snyder, a relaxing July float down the Saco River with Land Trust board member Megan-Mack Nicholson at the helm, and a September Hawk Watch. October's program is a walk of the old road from the Ham House in Jackson, and the November program will focus on climate change and resilient forest management practices, led by USVLT board member and forester Dan Stepanauskas. Thank you to all who share their knowledge, time, interest, and enthusiasm to make these explorations possible.

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- **Phase One:** USVLT purchased the 50% private interest in the property.
- **Phase Two:** USVLT raised money to enable the Town of Fryeburg, in turn, to purchase this 50% interest from USVLT, which when added to the Town's existing 50% interest, now makes it the 100% owner of Jockey Cap.
- **Phase Three:** The Town of Fryeburg will then grant a conservation easement to USVLT, to preserve and improve public access for low-impact recreation, and protect the rare natural features on-site.

Funding from the Land for Maine's Future program, the Maine Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Kendall C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation, and the Clarence E. Mulford Trust has already been secured. Ongoing fundraising will complete the purchase and seed a stewardship fund for trail and other management projects.

Mason Irish, owner and brewmaster at Saco River Brewing Company, located across Route 302 from Jockey Cap, also recently joined forces with USVLT to help support the undertaking. In September, Saco River Brewing debuted a special edition Jockey Cap IPA at a rollout party at the brewery, with proceeds pledged to help the fundraising effort.

Fundraising, acquisition, and conservation are just the first steps. Once conserved, the important work of stewarding Jockey Cap can begin in earnest. Priorities during this phase will be improving the eroding hiking trails and access routes to rock climbing areas, as well as relocating the trailhead and expanding the parking area. USVLT plans to partner with the Access Fund and Friends of the Ledges, a local volunteer organization dedicated to stewardship of local climbing areas, in doing this work.

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