



1989  
2009

# Notes

Spring/Summer 2009 Volume 17 No. 3

*Conserving special places for all*

## SNOWSHOE HIKE AND POT LUCK LUNCHEON

The first event to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mahoosuc Land Trust was a snowshoe hike and pot luck luncheon, attended by 40 energetic folks on February 7th. Some took the high road, a hike up First Mountain in Shelburne, NH, while others took the low road, a great hike along the Androscoggin River in Shelburne. Ginger Lawson and Larry Ely hosted the pot luck luncheon at their home at the base of First Mountain and also guided the hikes. The cold and crisp, but sunny February morning was perfect for enjoying good company and healthful exercise.

On July 25th we will host a blueberrying hike up Rumford Whitecap. In September we will host another outdoor activity, a choice of a land or river hike (canoeing or kayaking). We will email event details. If you have not received any event emails from us in the past, email [info@mahoosuc.org](mailto:info@mahoosuc.org) so we have your email address.



## WALTER HATCH RECOGNIZED BY GOVERNOR BALDACCI

Walter Hatch is the recipient of a Governor's Exemplary Service Award and was honored at a ceremony on April 21<sup>st</sup> at the Hall of Flags in the State Capital Building in Augusta. The event honored Maine's most dedicated volunteers.

The Mahoosuc Land Trust nominated Walter for the award for his volunteer activities as a Board Member, Treasurer, stewardship monitor for the Greaves Property, caretaker for the Gateway Property, and also caretaker for the State of Maine's Frenchmen's Hole.

Letters of support were offered by the many organizations that Walter volunteers for, including, the Bethel Conservation Commission, the Rotary Club of Bethel, West Parish Congregational Church, Western Mountain Senior College, Bethel Historical Society, and Androscoggin Home Health and Hospice. Thank you, Walter, from all of us that you serve so well.

## BOHRS - LEAD DONORS 25/25 CHALLENGE

Ken and Gwyneth Bohr, charter members of MLT, have made a very generous lead donation to kick off our 25/25 Challenge. Last fall, the land trust was chosen to participate in the Maine Community Foundation (MCF) challenge to raise \$25,000 for our endowment fund, which MCF will match when we achieve that goal. Thanks to the Bohrs and the generous commitment of our board, and in conjunction with our 20 years of conservation work, we have stretched our endowment goal. Building our endowment will support our conservation work in perpetuity.

As a side note, the very first donation ever made to the MLT endowment fund was given in honor of the Bohrs by one of their good friends. Sometimes, life makes a full circle. We are grateful for their help and for the generosity of the Maine Community Foundation.

## VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS NEEDED

As you read the history of the land trust in this newsletter, MLT hopes that you will be inspired to help with the conservation work the land trust carries out by volunteering your time. We have a myriad of volunteer opportunities and would like to add your name to our volunteer list. The accreditation process will require many hands. Also, we have taken on additional outdoor maintenance responsibilities with our office move to the front of the US Forest Service Building. We have flower beds and lawns to maintain and we welcome gardening talents.

Contact us at 207-824-3806 or at [info@mahoosuc.org](mailto:info@mahoosuc.org) with Volunteer as the subject.

# President's Message

Thanks to all of you, our members, donors, volunteers and friends, the Mahoosuc Land Trust has continued to be immersed in conservation and economic development work throughout the winter season. In addition to work on pending and potential new easements, planning for upgrades to boat launches and trails, preparing to begin the next extension of the Bethel Pathway, and hosting informative Local Knowledge presentations, we have begun a list of new initiatives that you will read about in this newsletter.

The office has moved from the back room of the Forest Service building in Bethel to the much roomier quarters in the front of the building, and we are now greeting members and visitors at the front door!

Our membership in the Mahoosuc Initiative continues to open up new opportunities for us to serve our wider community through

collaborative efforts in landscape scale conservation, research into wood energy projects that may well suit local public buildings and new and exciting partnerships throughout the region. These efforts will enable us to build the Trust's capacity to work with local landowners for their benefit and the benefit of the public and the resources of the area.

Thank you for your energy, time and financial support given to this work!

*Steve Wight, President*

*P.S.* Enclosed with the newsletter is a membership envelope. I hope you will use it for your own membership if it is time to renew, or you can help us by recruiting a new member for the land trust. Memberships make great gifts for special occasions.

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## Noteworthy

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### LOCAL KNOWLEDGE 2008-09

Board member Ken Hotopp began the series in January at Telstar High School and spoke about the effect of climate change on our local plants and animals, especially Maine's 'signature' animal, the moose. At the town hall in Shelburne, Paul Cormier, a noted area mountain guide and climber, presented slides and fascinating commentary on several of his climbs in Bolivia. Ginger Lawson and Larry Ely arranged and hosted the event and provided excellent snacks! The venue was so popular that we plan to use it again next year.

David Brown returned for another program on winter tracking, and this time we added an outdoor workshop the following morning. Those who went saw otter tracks along with other interesting signs. Most recently, John Bunker, noted pomologist, gave a program on the apples of Maine. Again, we had many new faces, and the information generated much interest and conversation.

Since the planning for next year's program has begun, we would love to have suggestions. [info@mahoosuc.org](mailto:info@mahoosuc.org)



*David Brown and Winter Tracking Workshop participants.*

### BUSINESS PARTNER

We would like to acknowledge our business partner *W.J. Wheeler* for the generous annual appeal challenge and support of our local knowledge series.

### LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION

"Accreditation? For the Mahoosuc Land Trust, it's like the Good Housekeeping seal of approval," said MLT Board Chair Steve Wight. "It will increase our credibility with funding sources and with governmental agencies we work with."

Last fall, the land trust applied for and received a grant to help ready itself for accreditation. The grant is being administered by the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, whose expertise is known statewide. The first step in the process was an organizational assessment of MLT policies and practices. These have now been compared to those required for accreditation and a work plan is being finalized to guide the land trust in reviewing, revising and creating key standards and using them in ongoing work.

While the task at first sounded daunting, MLT was pleasantly surprised to find that most of the work will involve expanding current policies and practices to include more definitive practices in the administrative, land and stewardship activities. Staffer Jolan Ippolito observed, "The timing couldn't be better. Through our success in the Whitecap project, we've learned how great our potential is. The organization is maturing and the accreditation process provides a sound framework for further growth." The land trust will work on these activities over the next 18 months. The work will require help from our many volunteers and the grant will give us access to professionals for those areas that need expertise beyond those normally available to MLT.

The accreditation process is being overseen by a team of MLT board members: Landon Fake, Bonnie Pooley, Bob Iles, Ginger Lawson, Bob Stewart and Steve Wight. Pooley, who coordinates the team, observes: "Meeting accreditation standards will give MLT the opportunity to tighten and test all our systems, becoming, in the process, a better organization."

### 2009 SUMMIT SOCIETY

The Summit Society was launched in 2008 to recognize members who donate \$1,000 or more to our annual operating funds. We were thrilled to have 20 Summit Society charter members in our first year and we had a great time at several events held last year. The Summit Society is a fun way to meet fellow conservationists and attend several interesting events. This year we will be visiting a private conservation property as well as two historic farms that are in the midst of several conservation areas. We'd love to have you join us. Please contact the land trust for more information.

## MAHOOSUC LAND TRUST DONORS • January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008

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# MAHOOSUC LAND TRUST: 20 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

I know it began in September, 1988, at my kitchen table on Elm Street, although I was not there. Around the table were Kirk Siegel, Marcel Polak, Ken Bohr, and Bill Pooley. All were captivated by an idea which had been born at the 1988 Bethel Community Conference; they wanted to create a land trust which would have as its goal the protection of lands which were held dear by the Bethel community. The land trust concept was a new one in our area; the few established trusts were far larger and wealthier than these four people sitting around a kitchen table. Undeterred, the four began to reach out to others with a passion for land guardianship.

The first Board consisted of Kirk, Ken, Marcel, Bill, Sally Taylor, Marie Hickey, Keith Hodsdon, Tim Carter, Jim Yarnell, Betsy Cooper, and Andi Colnes. They met at the Hammons House, Sally's Bed and Breakfast on Broad Street, where they drew up by-laws and made an application for 501C3 status as a non-profit organization. Kirk Siegel was chosen as the first president of the Board of Directors. At the first Annual Meeting at the Moses Mason House approximately 35 people attended, and the organization elected its first official board, adding Eric Wight, Trudy Akers, Jeff Mills, and Jim Sysko to the original names. Soon, interest in an organization which could help people decide what to do with their family property grew. The first land the trust received was a gift from Eva Schools, a beautiful landing on the north side of the Androscoggin River. This was soon followed by Becky Kendall's gift of Kendall Island and then the Scruton Family easement in Upton, Buster Williamson's Tree Farm easement on his forested land next to the Sunday River Inn, and the Philbrook Islands.

In 1994, we tackled our first large project. The 14-acre triangle of land we have since named The Gateway came up for sale. Fears of insensitive development of this lovely hayfield with its backdrop of the Mahoosuc Mountains galvanized our Bethel friends and neighbors. I remember digging postholes in the field to put up a huge handpainted sign which read, HELP US BUY THIS LAND. CALL 824 3806. (The sign looked particularly poignant when the field flooded, leaving it standing in a sea of water.) At the time we worried that raising the asking price of \$210,000 was far beyond our capacity. However, the support of the community was fierce, and the owner was willing to negotiate. In the end we not only met the appraised price of \$60,000 but also had funds to support the stewardship of this wonderful acreage. In 2000, the property above the field, the area of tall pines, became available and was added to our holdings. Presently, the Trails Committee of MLT is working with the Town of Bethel MLT to extend a walking pathway through the field so walkers and joggers can enjoy Bethel's Gateway.

In the early 1990s, another group with interest in the Androscoggin River was headed by Steve Wight. Called the Friends of the Androscoggin, this group had the goal of promoting the river, now cleaner than it had been for many decades, for recreational boating and fishing. Steve quickly realized that a partnership between the Land Trust and the Friends could only benefit both. Small town that we are, many people belonged to both anyway. On the Eva Schools Landing project, the two groups began working together and gradually merged into one. The concept which cemented the merger was our focus on a River Trail with boat launch sites placed along the river from Shelburne to Rumford. Each autumn, the Fall Flotilla still celebrates our connection with our scenic river.

As we grew, the need for paid staff and office space also grew. For several years, starting in the fall of 1991, Marcel Polak served as a part time executive director. We found office space behind Mt Mann Jewelers, which we quickly outgrew, moving into a larger room in the same building. With a three-year grant from the Betterment Fund, we were able to take the giant step in 1995 of hiring Jim Mitchell as our part time and subsequently full time executive director. He has now held this full time position for five years, allowing our organization to take on more complex and larger land protection projects.

As confidence in MLT has grown, so have our land projects. We have now protected 2542.65 acres, owning 1349.65 and holding easements on 807, with the remaining 386 acres a collaborative project with the Maine Department of Conservation. Our largest single gift was the Stewart Family Preserve of 486 acres on Puzzle Mountain, donated to the trust by Bob Stewart in 2005. Our most exciting achievement to date, stemming from the perseverance and courage of Bob and Lida Iles, has been the protection of the iconic Rumford Whitecap with help from the Land for Maine's Future fund and from hundreds of generous contributions from friends both far and near.

Now, as we celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009, we are among the oldest and most respected land trusts in the state. We are growing into a regional organization as we take on our first projects in New Hampshire. Partnering with other organizations has become a key strategy, as our work with the Mahoosuc Initiative clearly demonstrates. In addition, we are receiving helpful support from the Land Trust Alliance and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust as we move into the national land trust accreditation process. Our spacious offices in the former Forest Service building often buzz with activity as both staff and volunteers work to further our mission. We can all be proud of this organization created by our dreams. As Sally Taylor said to me at the store today, "Sometimes those seeds we plant actually do grow!" *-Bonnie Pooley*

<b>BOARD OF DIRECTORS</b>	Joe Aloisio
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## 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

20 years of conserving special places for all! The Mahoosuc Land Trust will celebrate this exciting anniversary at our annual meeting on October 17 at 7pm at the University of Maine 4-H Camp and Learning Center (formerly the Maine Conservation School) in Bryant Pond.

After a brief business meeting Bernd Heinrich, award-winning scientist, writer and ultramarathoner, will be our guest speaker. Heinrich has authored numerous books, including Winter World, Mind of The Raven, Why We Run, Ravens in Winter, A Year in the Maine Woods, and Bumblebee Economics, which was nominated for the National Book Award. A professor-emeritus of biology at the University of Vermont, he divides his time between Vermont and the forests of western Maine where he has done much of his field research and training for ultramarathons.

Following his presentation refreshments will feature an anniversary cake. The evening will conclude with a book sale/signing. The public is welcome at no charge to attend our 20<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Save the date.

### FINANCE NOTES

Thanks to our generous members and supporters, MLT carried out its mission in 2008 with good financial strength. In brief, we had

General contributions	66,501
Grants	57,611
Other income	8,994
Funds reserved in 2007	12,689
Operating income	\$145,795
Operating expenses	\$145,795

This good showing is the direct result of a 40% (\$19,163) increase in combined Annual Appeal and Membership dues. Thank you!

(And if you'd like to know details about MLT's finances, please call or email our treasurer, William Andrews 824-2607; wda@megalink.net).

### LANDSCAPE FOR LAND SAKE

The Mahoosuc Land Trust was chosen by The Banks Gallery to be the honored recipient of part of the proceeds generated from an Exhibit and Sale of fine art work that was displayed at Sunday River Real Estate over the February Vacation Week. The sale generated a very generous gift, as well as bringing fine artists and their work to our area of Maine. The exhibit opened with a reception on Sunday evening. There were over 40 paintings from many artists who enjoy using the Mahoosuc area to inspire their work. The land trust is hopeful that we will be able to continue this honored relationship with The Banks Gallery. The Banks Gallery is located at Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, NH.