



# Mahoosuc Land Trust News



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Conserving the Mahoosuc Region since 1989

Summer 2021



Photo Credit: M

# *Summer!*

# MLT Vision on Trial: 2020-2021

Kirk Siegel, Executive Director

Before the ink had dried on MLT's latest strategic plan last spring, new tests emerged for MLT and our region. How does our vision that *care and passion for our natural world inspire, engage, and sustain communities* stand up in the face of global crisis? Big words and ideas, but how does that really work?

The "care and passion" vision comes in many forms. The core volunteer group that raised funds to acquire Shelburne Riverlands --and is now ensuring the community goal of respectful use--embodies that vision. And in Shelburne, the conservation commission asked for MLT support, and the select board unanimously supported the project, a strong indication that our work would "sustain communities."

Visions are only useful if they haven't been reached. Failure must be possible, or we've set too low a bar. We will achieve our vision when no one misses the vital connection between the care of our natural places and our well-being. In 2020, visitors from here and from away walked our trails at Valentine, hiked to our mountaintops, and filled our parking lots. When our vision is fully realized, each person will not only visit and enjoy but be inspired to find a way to turn care into action and engagement.

That's starting to happen in our region and in your backyards. Yes, conserving lands via our Campaign for the Androscoggin and with our project partners on the 15,000-acre Chadbourne Tree Farm is vital to sustaining our natural resource-based economy and our quality of life. But in the end, individual acts will matter more. Two places where MLT is creating such opportunities are in your woodlots and gardens.

MLT forest lands are places of learning for you. This past year, MLT partnered with the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF), whose ecologist worked with our forester to plan an ecologically-based harvest at McCoy-Chapman Forest. We are improving habitat for multiple species by creating a more complex forest and fighting climate change by increasing carbon storage. Like many of you, we're pretty picky about understanding how a harvest will improve forest health before any tree comes down.



MLT forests also teach about letting nature take its course. Not all forestland needs management. MLT is setting aside areas which we believe should be as free from human disturbance as possible while allowing respectful exploration. These lands can serve as a benchmark for measuring environmental change and provide habitat for species requiring undisturbed forest. MLT has established a Wildlands Fund dedicated to acquiring and caring for such areas, inspired by and in memory of Ken Hotopp, conservation biologist, MLT board member, and passionate advocate for wildlands. We hope to bring you into the conversation about how we keep wild places.

Finally, like our forests, our gardens are teachers. We are in year four (!) in the Habitat For All Garden, started in a weedy field with aspirations to create a habitat garden that becomes the model for changing gardening practices. Enthusiastic gardeners work to define a balance between increasing wildlife biodiversity and using plants that can adapt to changing local conditions. We are inspiring and providing the skills for people to take action and re-imagine the habitat potential of backyards and public spaces.

We're excited to work with you where you choose--whether it is on an MLT preserve, your garden, or a woodlot. Together we will inspire and sustain our communities and the region and be part of global solutions!

# Energy and Passion for Land Conservation

Article and picture by Katie Stuart, MLT member

Suppose you know Ginger Lawson and Larry Ely. In that case, you may know their interesting and diverse back-

grounds, and you have likely been struck by their energy and passion for land conservation, most recently witnessed in the Shelburne Riverlands project in Shelburne, New Hampshire. They have a history of land conservation in Shelburne, including protecting their 130-acre “First Mountain” property in 2009, MLT’s first conservation easement in New Hampshire. Following this success, they were instrumental in making

the 800-acre Philbrook Farm (NH Fish & Game) and the 240-acre Crow Mountain Farm (MLT) conservation easements reach fruition in 2009 and 2013, respectively.

As conservation puzzles go, it takes a team with distinct talents and the right skill sets to make the pieces come together. When the Shelburne Riverlands opportunity arose in late 2019, members of the Shelburne Conservation Commission, The Conservation Fund, and the Mahosuc Land Trust, along with Ginger and Larry, formed the nucleus of the team to make the 880-acre project of islands and shoreline along the Androscoggin River a reality. The lands include 14 miles of river and stream shoreline, with significant wetlands and wildlife habitat. The nine mainland parcels will provide future recreation opportunities for quiet trails and winter cross-country ski routes in collaboration with the Shelburne Trails Club.

Ginger brought her skills in developing relationships and connecting with people to help the conservation project succeed. She reached out to many potential donors, raised over \$57,000 in individual and corporate donations, and brought new Summit Society members to MLT. In addition to successful collaboration on New Hampshire’s Land and Community Heritage Investment Program and the Department of Environmental Services Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund grants, her business, writing, and fund-raising expertise also generated a \$200,000 grant from a private donor fund, a critical piece of the necessary project funding.

With counsel from Ginger, Larry used his technical skills to develop two stunning videos of the Riverlands project, which included many of his photographs and created rich

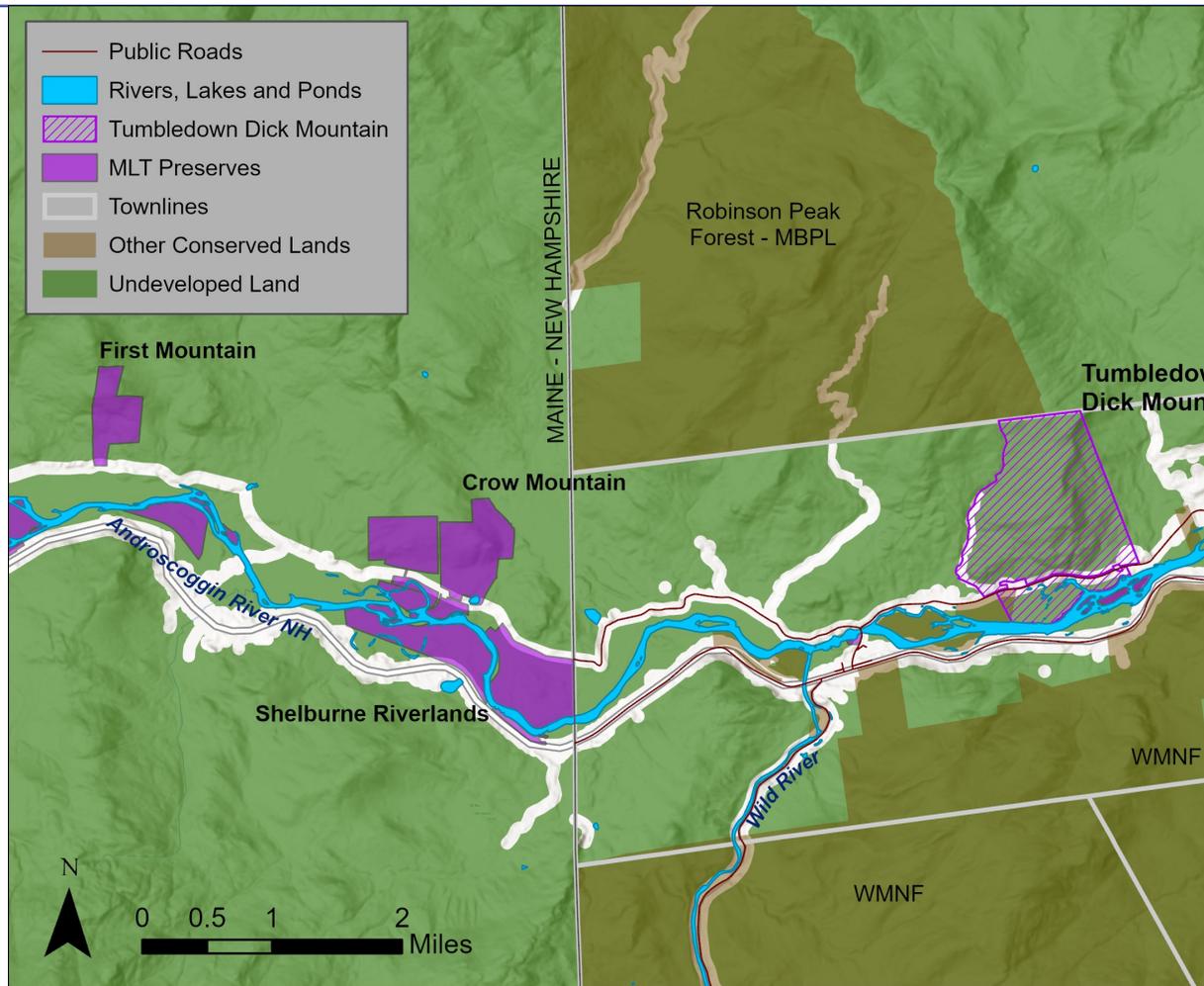
musical visuals of paddling and nature on the River. Larry is Chair of MLT’s Stewardship Committee. He is also leading the new Shelburne Riverlands Stewardship Subcommittee, working on a management plan to guide recreation, wildlife, watershed, and forestry activities in the future. Larry’s involvement with the Shelburne Conservation Commission and the Shelburne Trails Club linked MLT with organizations that make conservation projects like the Shelburne

Riverlands happen. Larry also recently finished the extensive and comprehensive Shelburne Riverlands Property Condition Report for MLT, which provides the due diligence and initial condition assessment of the property required before the closing transaction.

Together, Ginger and Larry have introduced numerous interested parties to the Shelburne Riverlands by hosting paddling, walking, and driving tours, sharing the beauty and potential of conserving these extraordinary lands, and bringing a new appreciation of conservation efforts in our region. With countless hours in virtual and on-the-ground presentations, meetings, writing, media, fieldwork, and more, this dynamic duo have been crucial to the success of Shelburne Riverlands. Together, they are a couple of MLT’s volunteer leaders moving us toward ecosystem health and inspiring us with their care and passion for the natural world.



Photo by Larry Ely



*The North Road Corridor has been identified as an Area of Focus for the MLT. The potential for riparian habitats with forested uplands, and linking existing*

The Biden Administration has recently announced its support of the 30 X 30 (“30 By 30”) campaign, a goal long held by conservationists the world over. Behind the catchy title is a simple and well-reasoned target to fight the intertwined crises of Climate Change and Species Extinction: conserve 30% of native habitats and undeveloped land in the United States by the year 2030.

Accomplishing this goal requires the identification and conservation of an additional 440 million acres, that’s 2 Texas, 4 Californias or 20 Maines. This goal cannot, nor should it, be accomplished through a handful of new mega-Parks and Monuments. Political differences aside, in our current national conservation paradigm alpine areas of snow, ice, and rock already are disproportionately represented, as so many National Parks and Monuments were created to preserve striking mountain beauty. And while these fast-changing ecosystems are indeed critical habitat to endangered species, the overall diversity of at-risk species and shrinking ecosystems is too great to be captured within the boundaries of a few simple, albeit very large polygons. If 30 X 30 is to be successful, the result will look like so many of our towns and cities already do (but without the buildings): a patchwork of core, edge, and transitional habitats stitched together with navigable wildlife corridors. For the Mahoosuc Land Trust 30 X 30 coincides with our existing goals, and confirms many of the objectives of our 5-year strategic plan. And if this is starting to sound familiar, it's because it is another iteration of Think Globally and Act Locally. Yes, it really does work!

# an Conservation Pie



*Central Tumbledown Dick Mountain preserve sits in an important intersection connecting  
g conversation lands across a North-South gradient in the process.*

## Where to Start?

As much as I'd like to picture a blindfolded Joe Biden dizzily navigating the Oval Office with two Texas boundaries to pin on a map of the US, this is not how 30 X 30 will go down. So in the ultimate game of 52-card pickup, how do we re-assemble the 100, 1000, and 5000 acre crumbs back into 440 million acre pie? And how does the Mahoosuc Land Trust know its place in that effort? From this author's perspective the answer is GIS.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a computer program that deals with the What and the Where. At the fundamental level, this mapping software draws true-to-scale shapes and keeps track of data that describe those shapes. In practice, GIS creates a map by assembling layers, and layers can represent real objects on the ground, think roads or structures. Or, more intangible areas like political boundaries, speed limits, or areas subject to less light pollution. Additionally, GIS can derive new data from existing data.

Any area greater than 5 miles from a paved road? Check. Forested areas? Check. Northern Long-eared Bat habitat? Check. The intersection of these three? Done. (Continued on next page)



## How Does MLT Fit In?

The Mahoosuc Land Trust can use existing layers to assist our targeted conservation planning. The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Landscapes ([maps.tnc.org/resilientland/](https://maps.tnc.org/resilientland/)) offers a nationwide survey of landscape diversity, identified biodiversity, and connectedness. Taken together, this data seeks to answer the questions: Where is species diversity clustered now? Where will species diversity migrate in a changing climate? What is more, the TNC's dataset splits the United States into ecoregions, like states, but with boundaries determined by dominant ecosystems. On a national level, this gives the Biden Administration a full-color palette, with the idea that our future will be painted with a little from each. For the curious among you, our region sits on the border between the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion and Lower New England/Northern Piedmont, and much of the land around us is **both** resilient and connected

For a nationwide dataset, the TNC's Resilient and Connected Landscapes has impressive resolution. At its finest detail, it can differentiate down to 30 square meters or about a 1/4 acre. For projects or questions working on an even smaller scale, the State of Maine offers a number of layers built from data recorded by state biologists. The Beginning with Habitat Map Viewer offers users map layers identifying deer wintering areas, inland wading bird habitat, rare plant and animal habitat, stream-road intersections (remember, they are actually 4-way crossings), as well as existing conserved lands and undeveloped blocks (think roadless areas). Combine these datasets with the Resilient and Connected Landscapes data, and you can imagine how we can identify priority conservation areas or assess a proposed conservation property, and begin to identify the critical crumbs in our area for the larger conservation pie. And for you landowners, you can also identify the conservation value of your property, and the Mahoosuc Land Trust can help you.

To zero in on the important conservation work in our eco-regions, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a branch of the federal Department of Agriculture, ranked the former Chadbourne timberlands as the 8th most important conservation project in the entire United States. In response to The Conservation Fund's purchase of Bob Chadbourne's timberlands, a workshop was held with the MLT Board of Directors. Using TNC's datasets, the intended purpose of the workshop was to identify areas, within the thousands of acres of forested land, that carried an increased conservation value and the biggest bang for our buck. The result was Tumbledown Dick Mountain.

Situated on the north side of the Androscoggin River, downstream of the new Shelburne Riverlands and upstream of McCoy-Chapman Forest. the 978 acres of the Tumbledown Dick property would serve as a central anchor in the conservation of the Upper Androscoggin Corridor. The Tumbledown Dick property includes Androscoggin River frontage and also abuts Maine Public Lands to the north. On a landscape scale, this property could create a critical linkage between White Mountain National Forest and the extensive Northern Acadian Forests north to the Quebec border. Furthermore, the rugged topography of Tumbledown Dick makes it a more climate resilient area in itself, and one offering exceptional scenic and recreational value.

## In Memory of Walter Hatch

Walter Hatch, a beloved community member passed away on May 27th. There really are no words to describe how special Walter was.

Walt and his wife, Carol began vacationing in the area in the 1970's and moved here in 1987. They came because of their love for the beautiful natural surroundings and the small town feel. With Carol, or one of the five daughters, Walt could often be found paddling the river, hiking the trails, or, with Carol, going to Frenchman's Hole each week during the summer months for monitoring and cleanup work.

Walt joined Mahoosuc Land Trust in the early days, became a member in 1997 and treasurer in 2000. Later, he did quarterly reviews and internal audits for MLT. His meticulous attention to finances, philanthropic philosophy, stewardship work, and mentorship played a large role in making MLT the reliable and credible land trust it is today.

When asked why he donates his time and money so generously, Walter replied that he wanted to see the beauty of the area conserved and resources such as clean water and wildlife protected.

Thank you, Walter, for your very special gift to our communities. You are greatly missed.



## Real Estate Gifts for Conservation Program

MLT's Real Estate Gifts for Conservation Program provides for the acceptance of gifts of homes, undeveloped house lots, and commercial properties. With the donor's permission, these properties are then re-sold at fair market value. There are numerous potential benefits, including: a charitable income tax deduction, alleviation of capital gains taxes on the sale of property, reduction of the taxpayer's assets for inheritance taxes, elimination of carrying costs such as property taxes, insurance premiums, utilities, and maintenance expenses, and avoiding broker's fees on the sale of the property.

In 2020, William and Margaret McMorrow made an offer to MLT to receive a house and 35 acres in Andover, Maine. The net proceeds of the sale will go towards conserving more land, taking care of our current holdings, and funding unexpected educational opportunities.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact Kirk Siegel, Executive Director



## Calendar of Events

To learn more visit [www.mahoosuc.org/events-calendar](http://www.mahoosuc.org/events-calendar)

Saturday, July 23 3:00 PM	New Hampshire Day at Valentine Farm	Valentine Farm
Saturday and Sunday August 7,8 9:00-noon	Build A House for the Pollinator Protectors	Valentine Farm
Sunday, August 15 12:00—1:00 PM	Annual Meeting	Valentine Farm
Sunday, August 15 1:00-4:00 PM	Monarch Festival and Open House	Valentine Farm

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