



# Mahoosuc Land Trust News



www.mahoosuc.org

Conserving the Mahoosuc Region since 1989

Winter 2020

## Habitat For All

*Creating Connections Between People and Nature*

We would like to announce a new program at MLT.

*Habitat for All* is an educational initiative that is focused on looking closely at where animals live and how humans can help them. Pollinator and bird populations are in decline worldwide, and, as a land trust, we want to do something about it.

Join us as we transform the landscape of Valentine Farm into a living laboratory, showcasing opportunities you can take to improve the long-term survival of songbirds and pollinators. As the program evolves, you will be able to participate in hands-on workshops, lectures and field days to learn the skills needed to rejuvenate your backyard and our public spaces.

Here are some of the features of *Habitat for All* at Valentine Farm:

- Creation and improvement of habitats for pollinators by planting shrubs, annuals and perennials, creating nesting boxes and spaces, and installing water features.
- Installation of additional

signage will allow more passive learning.

- Promotion of on-site workshops and volunteer opportunities.
- Expansion of our bird program to help people foster a deep appreciation for the birds around us. This will include field trips, bird walks, beginning birding workshops and possibly a bird festival in 2021.

This multi-year effort compliments our land conservation efforts, and will evolve with time. To get us started, though, these activities are planned for 2020:

- A six-part Habitat Gardening series will cover both vegetable and ornamental gardening.
- Our amazing pollinator garden will expand to 10,000 square feet this year.



Photo by Mike Murphy

- Forestry for Birds workshop and field day will explain how forestry practices can improve bird habitat.
- How can you get involved? Watch for upcoming classes and events, visit us at Valentine Farm and tell your friends.



# Volunteers, Donors Make McCoy-Chapman Forest a Success!

**"Both Ginny and her husband, Sam, considered these woods precious and wanted them to be preserved for others to enjoy." John Laban, Forester**

**Thanks to you,** McCoy-Chapman Forest is now conserved permanently. So many of you did so much! The new Esker Loop was completed through a project led by Eagle Scout, Carter Richmond (pictured below). Students and staff from the Region 9 School of Applied Technology built a steel-framed, hemlock-decked bridge across a challenging stream crossing on the McCoy-Gray Birch Trail which leads toward Bethel's Bingham Forest. Other super volunteer crews included Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, Maine Realtors Association, Gould Academy Outing Club, Prime Time Ski Club, and dozens of MLT's members, friends and neighbors.

**48 donors generously contributed \$138,730,** and along with significant grant funding enabled MLT to raise the necessary funds to acquire the property, pay off \$50,000 in loans, create a stewardship fund to care for the property in perpetuity, and create initial trails, signage, bridges, and a parking lot slated for construction this spring. Inspired by Ginny McCoy's love for her land and the efforts of her family, a volunteer campaign committee worked capably for over six months to reach out to donors small and large.

***"The most rewarding part about being the leader was congratulating someone on doing a great job."--Carter Richmond, Eagle Scout***



**If you haven't discovered the 493-acre McCoy-Chapman Forest,** trails start from the North Road, not far past the Bethel-Gilead town line. Check out the clear waters and cascades of Chapman Brook, mature oak forests along the Androscoggin River, and a 2.25-mile climb to views of the Presidential Mountain Range and the valleys below. Additional, unmarked woods roads lead hikers or backcountry skiers to other recreational parcels in the area, including the 980-acre Bethel Community Forest and 2411-acre Bingham Forest.



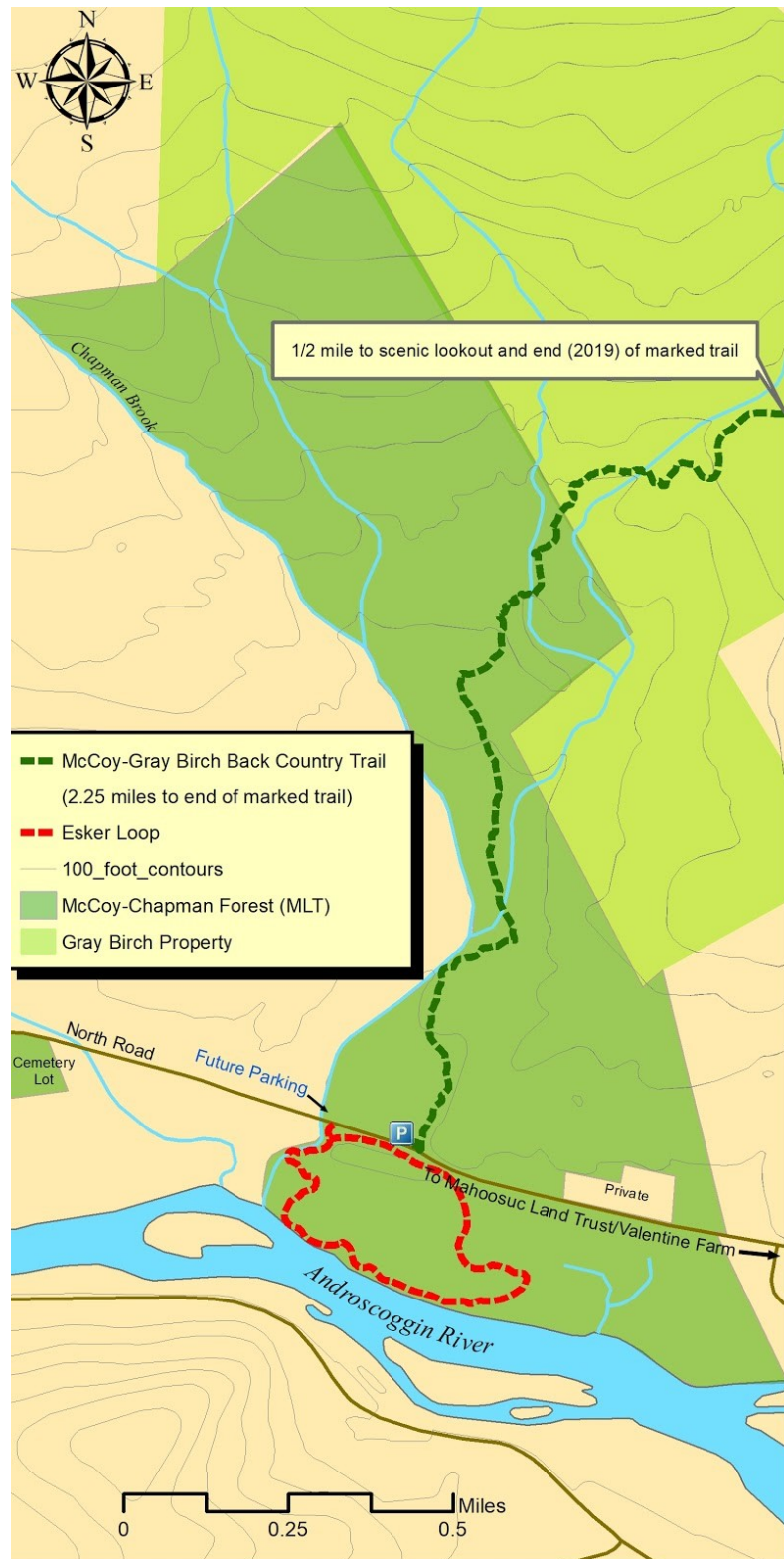


*The McCoy-Chapman Forest project is creating the County's longest Androscoggin River trail, opening recreational access to 5000 acres of conservation land, and conserving critical wildlife corridors.*

Each year, as our communities add needed housing and development, we lose the chance to interconnect natural lands to allow for the movement of wildlife and people across the landscape. The McCoy-Chapman Forest is a critical area between the developed part of Bethel and the mountain peaks north and west of town. It is uniquely placed to serve community and habitat needs.

Stretching from the Androscoggin to 1600' in elevation on the Riley Township line, the land squarely supports MLT's major goals to conserve large connected areas, wildlife corridors, special places, and lands that allow sustainable, economically productive use. MLT is working with ecologists and foresters to use the latest science to advise us on strategic timber harvesting to restore old-growth forest characteristics in a shortened time frame, and to enhance habitat for desired wildlife species. At the same time, significant areas of the property will be set aside for minimal human interference with natural processes.

**Volunteers will take charge.** Do you have specialized knowledge or just like to clear trails? There is a place for you in the management of this property. Volunteers will implement the management plan (written by a volunteer team), and create trails, signs, bridges, and features for public enjoyment. For more information or to be a McCoy "Preserve Partner", please contact Glenn Saller [gbsaller@verizon.net](mailto:gbsaller@verizon.net). To volunteer at another MLT property you can contact Larry Ely, [first-mtn@aol.com](mailto:first-mtn@aol.com) or call MLT at 207-824-3806.



Bob Withrow and Ken Hotopp





# Volunteer Spotlight—Steve Smith

I spent my professional career teaching biology and chairing the science department at two excellent public and private high schools. With the aid of two separate National Science Foundation grants I was able to explore the world of oceanography, a subject that deeply interests me and through another NSF grant I was able to do graduate work at the University of Maryland for experienced science supervisors. I spent the final 15 years of my first career as a high school principal where I also served as chairman of the ski committee of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association and president of the Andover Ski Club. After my first retirement, I joined an educational consulting firm and retired for good at age 70.

My family (wife, Lee, and daughters, Shannon and Katrina,) have always enjoyed outdoor activities, particularly alpine and nordic skiing. We skied Sunday River when T2 was really a T-bar. We decided to get a vacation/retirement home around Sunday River. We found a wonderful spot on Songo Pond in 1988 and began the 30+ year project of building our home while playing in and around it. With the girls grown and retirement achieved



we came to Maine fulltime in 2014.

I have been on the MLT board since 2017. I joined because Bethel is surrounded by a huge, uninterrupted, temperate forest that does not exist elsewhere. Its future must be planned for. MLT's thoughtful acquisition of

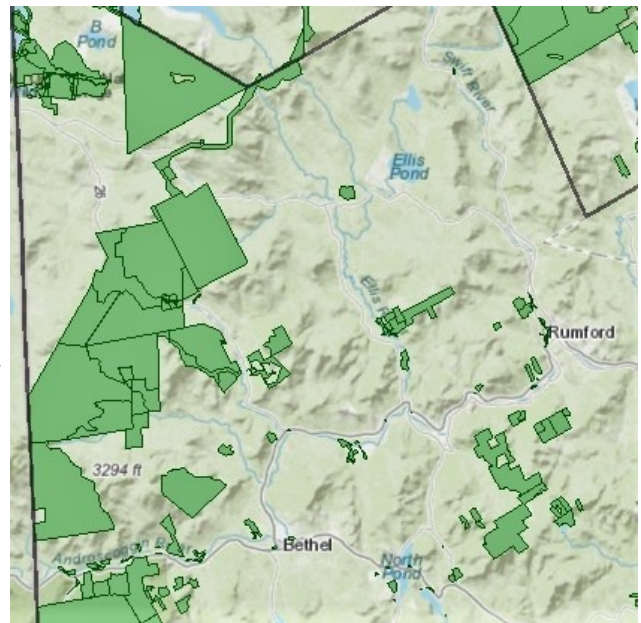
critical parcels of land and the use of that land, for education, recreation, and conservation inspired me to get involved. My goal is to help grow an endowment fund for MLT that will support an expanded staff without dependence on an annual campaign. Fundraising can then focus on growing infrastructure to support our educational programs and to acquire and care for more critical properties.

When I am not busy with MLT, I serve on the boards of the Western Mountains Senior College, and the Bethel Rotary Club. I am also a member of the Prime Time Ski Club. I also enjoy skiing, hiking, sailing, windsurfing, biking, pickleball, and woodworking. My wife, Lee, has just been appointed as the representative from Oxford County to the Land Use Planning Commission.

## MLT RECEIVES CONSERVATION PLANNING GRANT

Mahoosuc Land Trust has received a \$4800 grant from the **Fund for Maine Land Conservation** of the **Maine Community Foundation** to aid MLT staff and board in identifying, prioritizing, and conserving conservation projects that will most effectively advance the land trust's mission to provide benefits to the region. The project will also be part of a regional conservation planning initiative led by Maine West, a partnership of local and regional organizations dedicated to addressing systemic rural challenges and enhancing community well-being in western Maine through increased collaboration across the economic, education, health, and conservation sectors. MLT and Maine West will share a conservation planner to produce action plans by July.

"This grant will help us be responsive to the communities we serve," said Bob O'Brien, MLT president. "Coordinating our efforts with regional partners stretches our ability to provide public benefits."



**Green: Maine Conserved Lands**

# Legacy Gifts

## A Long History with Mahoosuc Land Trust

By Barbara Murphy

I wish I had known Beckie Bailey. She was a local food and zero waste advocate long before these terms became trendy. Fifteen years ago, she was the first person to leave a bequest to MLT in her will. Her gift confirmed her intense interest in nature and her desire to keep beautiful land free from development.

After moving 21 times and serving in WWII (Beckie served in the WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), Beckie and her husband Bruce moved into the Sears homestead on what is now called Bailey Road. In 1954, Bailey Road was a dirt road that meandered through dense woods, was a muddy quagmire in spring, and was lined by poles carrying only a telephone line. At the end of that mile-long road was a large open pasture with their old, distinctive, dark wood house, which had green shutters and a porch overlooking a view of distant mountains. The porch had a hammock and rocking chairs; Beckie was a sun-worshiper and spent many hours on that sunny porch.

Their choice to live out on the Bailey Road was prompted by a decision to live simply, to minimize the need for outside work and to enjoy the beauty and complexities of day-to-day life. In the house, their limited electricity came from a generator, which Bruce used from time to time to pump water from their well for kitchen and bathroom use. All lighting was by candles or kerosene lanterns that could be carried from room to room. However, there was at least one very bright kerosene lamp, with a delicate mantle, that was used for their evening reading needs. Both Beckie and Bruce read prodigiously, kept up on world and local news (they had the NY Times delivered daily), and loved having visitors of all persuasions so they could discuss many topics. Beckie belonged to a book club for 45 years.

The Baileys were very frugal and inventive. Bruce was a capable carpenter (he did the work to rehab an old camp and turn it into a home) and a blacksmith. Beckie tended

a large garden and put up the harvest. One of her favorite vegetables was asparagus. Following a rain, or even a morning dew, when the asparagus had gone to seed and produced high, fuzzy greenery, she enjoyed running between the planted lanes to “get her morning shower.” The old house had running water but no shower, only a bath-

tub. She also knew mushrooms well and could identify what they were and whether they were edible by their spores.

One day they had an unexpected call from a gentleman representing the Portland public broadcasting TV station. He asked if the Baileys would consider allowing PBS to install a TV tower on an open rocky high

point behind the house. He stated the need for better TV reception in the Bethel area. Bruce and Beckie realized that such an installation would bring many changes affecting their sylvan, quiet, approach road and also, of course, their privacy. It would mean widening of the road for installation of new tall poles to carry electricity and eventually new houses instead of handsome woods. The fact that they would also get an electric line to their own house did not seem to make any difference to them, and Bruce never started that process. After consideration, they felt that better TV for Bethel would benefit the community, and so they did agree to the plan, but they reserved the right to save their wooded view by buying the first two house-lots nearest to their property.

Bruce passed away in the 1990s and Beckie passed in 2003. Their love of the land and community spirit live on in her bequest that benefitted many individuals and organizations in the area including Mahoosuc Land Trust.



A great deal of thanks to Nancie Coan and Sandy Dennis for talking to me about their friendship with Beckie, and to Marilyn Sahlberg, for lending me a copy of *Celladore*, the book Beckie wrote about her first 10 years on Bailey Road.



## The SECURE Act And Qualified Charitable Donations

April 15<sup>th</sup> will be here soon, and MLT wants to remind you of an important tax benefit available to those over age 72 who receive “required minimum distributions” (RMDs) from their IRAs in 2020. These RMD distributions are generally taxed as ordinary income on your US Form 1040. The payments are distributed to you by the bank or investment company holding the IRA funds. This law prevents you from indefinitely delaying receipt of taxable income from IRAs and forces a portion of the IRA balance to be distributed and taxed.

However, the US tax law also allows you to designate some, or all, of these RMD payments as a charitable donation, thus directly reducing your taxable income from RMDs. This type of donation is called a Qualified Charitable Donation (QCD) and is paid directly from the IRA to a qualified non-profit charity like MLT at the direction of the IRA’s owner. These donations reduce your taxable income from an RMD even if you are below the Standard Deduction limit.

Also, a new provision in the RMD tax law allows you to make a QCD at age 70½, even before receiving an RMD. This allows you to maximize your QCDs and reduce your income tax before receiving RMDs. Lastly, there are changes in the IRA inheritance rules which could increase your beneficiary’s overall tax from an inherited IRA. QCDs are an option for reducing this higher tax burden.

Naturally, you should consult your tax advisor about the taxation of RMDs and the tax benefit of such a donation. You should also consider these new rules in connection with your estate plan. If you will be receiving Required Minimum Distributions in 2020 and you are planning to make charitable donations, please consider reducing your taxable income by naming Mahoosuc Land Trust as a beneficiary of your generosity.



## Bethel Pathway to Extend and Connect

A unique collaboration between the Town of Bethel, Maine Adaptive Sports and Recreation, Mahoosuc Land Trust, and Mahoosuc Pathways will result in the popular Bethel Pathway being extended by 2/3 of a mile this summer. The Pathway currently starts at Davis Park and ends at the former Big Adventure Center North



Road. The extension will continue the trail and connect to the Universally Accessible Trail at Mahoosuc Land Trust’s Valentine Farm.

This extension represents nearly ten years of effort and it is a major milestone for increasing trail access for everyone. Future goals include extending the Pathway to Angevine Park and Telstar High School. The Pathway extension will be constructed to be uni-

versally accessible. The final surface will be crushed stone, 6 feet wide with occasional wider “bumpouts” for easier passage or rest.

The Pathway extension is made possible by funding from a State of Maine Recreational Trail Program grant, an appropriation from Bethel taxpayers at the June 2019 town meeting, and a gift of the Bethel Rotary Club on behalf of the Jim Monahan Fund. Bids will go out from the town in early spring with construction anticipated to begin in early summer.





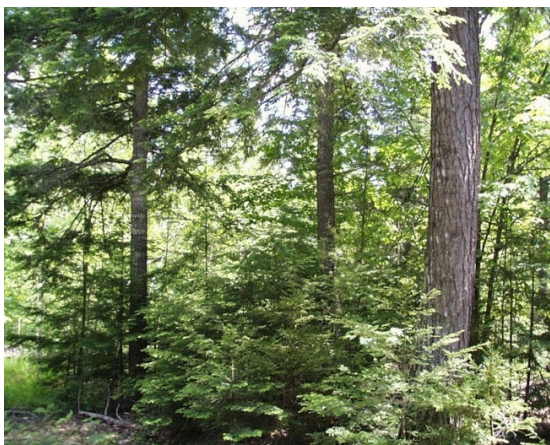
# Forest Management—An Evolving Science at MLT

With 89% and 81% forest cover respectively, Maine and New Hampshire are the most heavily forested states in the United States. Being sparsely populated helps keep Maine and New Hampshire wooded, and a long tradition of forest management has played a critical role in our number one status.

Historically, forests were managed for their wood—pulp for the paper mills and lumber for construction. However, as we better understand the complexity of forest ecosystems, we have come to learn that well-managed forests contribute many benefits to the economy, provide important wildlife habitat and promote the health of our planet.

To reflect this evolving science, Mahoosuc Land Trust created a forest management policy committee composed of landowners, foresters, biologists and land trust staff. Together, this group is crafting policies based on current ecological thinking and the best available science. Large forest parcels are composed of different forest types, soils, and hydrology, and each parcel may contain several management prescriptions under a forest management plan. Currently, two major management approaches have been identified for MLT lands:

- **Actively Managed Forest Areas:** In general, actively managed candidate areas will focus on broadly based forestry goals that encourage structural complexity and foster native species using the best available science. All management activities in the Actively Managed Forest Areas will also utilize practices that enhance wildlife habitat and protect the natural resource values present.
- **Native Habitat Areas** are parts of Mahoosuc Land Trust preserves dedicated to the protection and restoration of the region's biodiversity. Management may include creating large areas of wild forest, advancing old growth forest, restoring natural disturbance regimes, combating non-native pests and plants and restoring native plant species, and improving degraded hydrological features such as stream channels and wetlands.



For example, the newly acquired 496-acre McCoy-Chapman Forest contains both types of management areas. As plans are refined, a portion of McCoy-Chapman will be harvested to encourage the development of an uneven aged-stand, to remove a large stand of diseased beech, and if possible, to provide an economic return to MLT. Within the McCoy-Chapman Forest, approximately 156 acres are currently designated as Native Habitat

Areas and will be protected from disturbance. MLT is also researching the property's ability to sequester and store carbon and investigating programs that measure and provide financial incentives for carbon capture and accounting.

In addition to identifying ecological values within a forest and protecting the forest's ecosystem services (cleaning and cooling water, purifying the air, cooling air temperatures, and hosting a myriad of life forms), MLT has been inspired by "Exemplary Forestry," a landscape-scale approach to management created by the New England Forestry Foundation. Exemplary Forestry is designed to accomplish three goals: enhance the role forests can play to mitigate climate change, improve wildlife habitat, and grow more and better-quality wood.

This forest management policy is an ongoing group effort. Thanks go out to the committee, and valuable input of Jesse Mohr, Consulting Ecologist of Native Geographic, Carla Fenner of NEFF and forester Sherman Small.



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## **Late February and March Events You Won't Want to Miss**

(for full details, changes and cancellations visit [www.mahoosuc.org/events-calendar/](http://www.mahoosuc.org/events-calendar/))

<b>What</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>When</b>
Writers and Artists Speak Out on Climate Crisis	Bingham Auditorium, Gould Academy, Bethel	Thursday, February 20 6:30 –7:30 p.m.
Granite Backcountry Alliance Film Festival	The Gem Theater Cross Street, Bethel	Saturday, February 22, 6:00 p.m. social hour 7:00 p.m. film
Where The Wild River Flows	Shelburne, NH town office 74 Village Rd., Shelburne	Friday, February 28 6:00 p.m.
Big Adventure Big Challenge and Zero Single-Use Plastic	McLaughlin Auditorium, Gould Academy, Bethel	Wednesday, March 11 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Forestry For Birds	Valentine Farm 162 North Road, Bethel	Wednesday, March 25 5:30-7:00 p.m.



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