

# Highlights from the Region

## 2023 Annual Report



# Highlights from the Region

## Let's take a moment to admire the determination of water.

Over countless years, it wears away rock and soil, working its way ever downward and making a lasting impression on the land. Through every mountain stream and rushing river flows a lesson about dedication and how steady progress can transform a landscape. The Monadnock Conservancy's work protecting this land we love is also steady and transformative. In 2023, we helped to conserve farmland vital to family farm businesses and the availability of healthy, locally grown food; protected forests and wetlands that connect and expand other large blocks of conserved land, held new events to support and engage our community, advocated for the land at the highest levels of government, and did the hard work of trail maintenance and soil remediation.

Your dedication to this land provides the momentum we need to make lasting change. Thank you. In the following pages, we invite you to see the progress we made in 2023. Every acre conserved reflects significant and vital support from you and hard work from our team—a partnership between your commitment and our expertise. Like the mountain stream, our collective, steady progress creates impact that will benefit generations to come.



## Want to conserve your land?

By donating or selling land or a conservation easement to the Monadnock Conservancy, individuals and families make a significant impact on protecting the region's rural character. If you'd like to begin the conversation about how to conserve land, please contact Anne McBride, land protection director, at [Anne@MonadnockConservancy.org](mailto:Anne@MonadnockConservancy.org) or 603-357-0600, ext. 102.

## Thank You

2023 funding to buy conservation easements was generously provided by the Thomas W. Haas Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; the Town of Marlow Conservation Commission; the Town of Alstead Conservation Commission; New Hampshire Farm Future Fund; New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's MCF Conservation Assistance Fund; the Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership; and other private and anonymous donors.



## PETE'S STAND

7.3 Acres ~ Walpole, N.H.



*Pete's Stand is a locally owned and operated farmstand on Route 12 in Walpole.*

## Farming in the Monadnock region is an essential and difficult job.

Essential, because these hardworking small farmers provide the locally grown food that is available in our stores, restaurants, and farm stands. Difficult, because fertile farmland—already scarce in the area—is rapidly disappearing to development, profit margins are thin, and extreme weather can threaten fields and harvests. Conservation can help small farmers by ensuring that farmland remains affordable and farmer-owned, and by providing a financial lifeline through the purchase of a conservation easement.

Pete's Stand in Walpole is an iconic and beloved local business. Owned and operated by John and Teresa Janiszyn (John's family has operated the stand for three generations; Pete was his grandfather), Pete's Stand sells locally grown vegetables from their roadside stand on Route 12. 2023 wasn't an easy year for the Janiszyns, or any local farmer. Over the summer, extreme rains flooded their fields, destroying crops and endangering their livelihood. Even worse, many neighbors' fields that John's family farmed for generations are no longer available to them—they're now under box stores and parking lots.

In October of 2023, aided by an outpouring of community support, the Conservancy finalized the purchase of a conservation easement on 7.3 acres of land owned and farmed by the Janiszyns. By purchasing the easement, the Conservancy and the Janiszyns have ensured that this property will remain farmland and not disappear to development. Thank you to everyone who donated to the project and made it possible.

## READ

92 Acres ~ Peterborough, N.H.

## In December of 2023, the Conservancy was honored to accept a donated conservation easement

on 92 acres of forests and wetlands, courtesy of Peter and Suzanne Read. This property was especially attractive for conservation efforts because it abuts a 112-acre conserved property to the south, which, in turn, abuts another 195-acre property protected by the Monadnock Conservancy. The Read's additional 92 acres helped create a 399-acre block of conserved land in Peterborough. Contiguous blocks of conserved land are particularly valuable for conservation efforts, as they store a lot of carbon in trees and soil and allow wildlife to adapt naturally to climate change. Special bonus: Our staff has seen as many as nine active heron nests on the property (constituting a heron "rookery"), as well as evidence of beavers and other wildlife. The picture here shows one of those majestic birds on its way back to its nest.



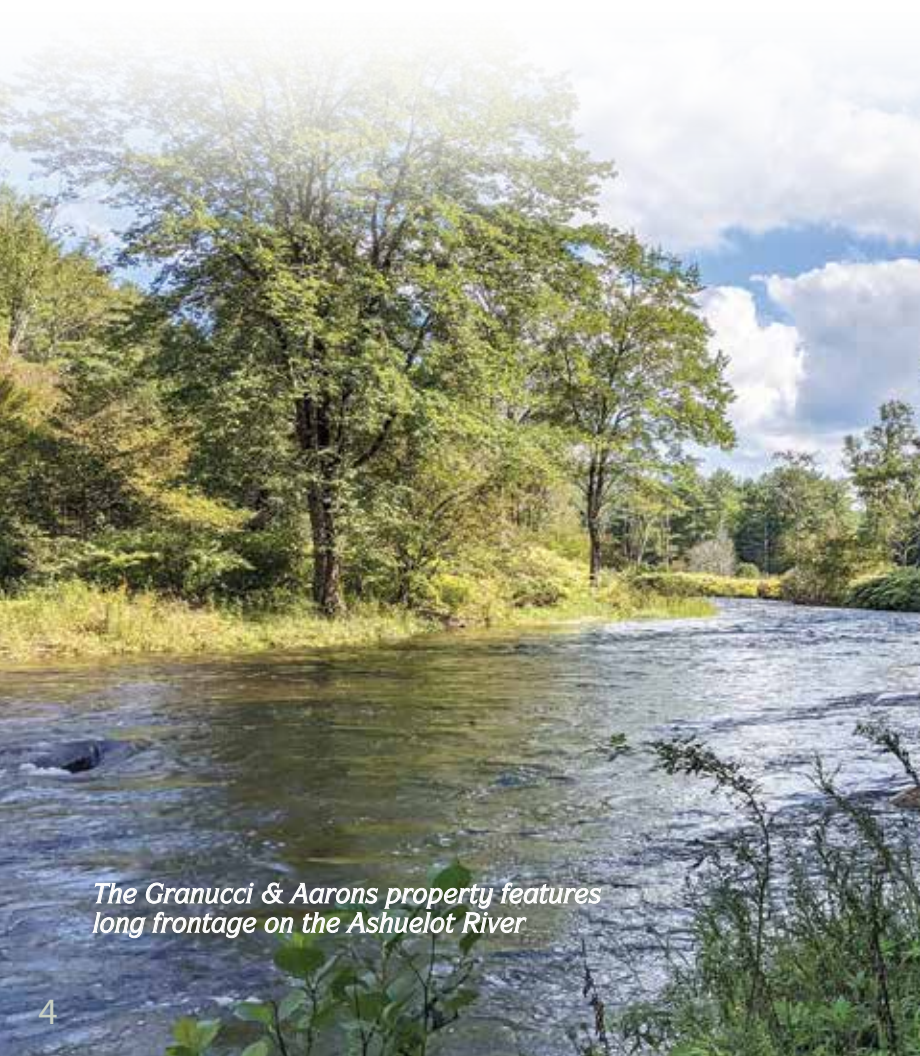
*A heron takes flight across 92 acres of conserved land in Peterborough*

## GRANUCCI & AARONS

185 Acres ~ Gilsum, N.H.

**185 acres of forests, fields, and wetlands were forever conserved** in the Hammond Hollow area of Gilsum in late 2023. We are so grateful to Peter Granucci and Paula Aarons for donating a conservation easement to keep this critical land safe from future development. The property adds to nearby conserved tracts, creating an over 3,000-acre block of protected land.

“Working with the Monadnock Conservancy was a very rewarding experience. In this world where space for nature, in all its wild forms, is shrinking by the hour, we knew we wanted to place our land into a conservation easement but had no idea how to start, what questions to ask, or what was involved. The Monadnock Conservancy made it understandable and doable...This world needs to be loved; this natural, wild space needs to be given the respectful allowance it needs to flourish. Putting our land in easement abutting so much other preserved land does that - it's the way we felt we could truly do something to help that mattered.” – Paula Aarons



*The Granucci & Aarons property features long frontage on the Ashuelot River*

## KROKA EXPEDITIONS HEADQUARTERS

67 Acres - Marlow & Alstead, N.H.

**Farming, adventure, and love for the outdoors converge at Kroka Expeditions**, a wilderness expedition school in Marlow that offers a variety of educational programming for youth of all ages, both onsite at their Marlow headquarters and further afield in locations across the globe. In 2022, we protected 11 acres of prime farmland in Alstead used by Kroka to grow food for their campers, students, and staff. In 2023, Kroka granted a second conservation easement that protects an additional 56 acres comprising their main campus in Marlow and Alstead. We thank Kroka for working with us to conserve their farm and headquarters and hope they will continue to inspire the next generation of conservationists.

“It is only fitting that we partner with the Monadnock Conservancy to ensure that Kroka's land will be secured as a long-term agricultural and recreational resource for our neighborhood”

– Nathan Lyczak, Executive Director, Kroka Expeditions.



*Kroka Expeditions headquarters in Marlow*

## Celebrating our community

**Conservation can be many things, and one of them is just plain fun.** In 2023, we reimagined our Annual Celebration to make it just that – a celebration of the Monadnock Conservancy, the land, and the community that makes conservation possible. We threw the party at Archway Farm in Keene, a local pasture-raised pork and beef farm owned and operated by

Conservancy trustee Mark Florenz. The event attracted a wide cross section of the community, and we were especially happy to see new faces along with old friends. Attendees enjoyed a food truck, music, farm tours, nature activities for kids, and more. It was a great day for making and deepening connections, and we can't wait to do it again in 2024!



*The Annual Celebration at Archway Farm in Keene*

# Stewardship

**The job of the Monadnock Conservancy stewardship team** is to monitor our conserved properties to ensure that not only are usage restrictions upheld, but also that publicly accessible trails are safe and enjoyable. In 2023, once again in partnership with the Student Conservation Association, we repaired and improved the wetland boardwalk and multiple log bridges along the Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail in Peterborough. It was a big project that called upon multiple volunteers and staff, and we are thankful to everyone who pitched in to help keep this trail in top condition.

There was more work to be done on the Calhoun Family Forest in Gilsum, home of the Porcupine Falls Trail. We had discovered a patch of Japanese knotweed, an invasive species that can spread quickly and choke out native plants, on the banks of White Brook. Eradicating knotweed is a difficult job. As shown in the pictures here, it required us to isolate the affected area, remove by hand all

contaminated soil and all traces of the plant down to the tiniest root, replant native species, and monitor the site for months afterward. Fortunately, with the hard work and vigilance of our staff and great support from volunteers, we were able to stop this troublesome species in its tracks.



*Student volunteers finalize a new log bridge on the Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail in Peterborough*



*A soil remediation project to remove Japanese knotweed from the Calhoun Family Forest in Gilsum*

# Stories About This Place 2023

**Stories About This Place returned in 2023** for its ninth iteration and the first in-person gathering since 2019. It was an amazing night featuring local storytellers and world-class music. The evening began with Alan Rumrill of the Historical Society of Cheshire County, who told an intriguing story of an old house he would visit as a child. He augmented his personal memories with research about the colorful people who had lived there. We also heard from Lila Thorne, a Monadnock region native who talked about her experience moving back to the area from the west coast. We also had the pleasure of hearing from Chief Paul Bunnell of the Ko'asek (Co'wasuck) Traditional Band of the Sovereign Abenaki Nation, and Mary Ann Kristiansen, the Executive Director of the Hannah Grimes Center, who talked about how she came to create the Center and the Hannah Grimes Marketplace. Throughout the evening, celebrated local pianist and composer Ben Cosgrove played his original songs in between the speakers, and then at the end of the evening told his own story about how the natural landscape of the region inspires his music.

## 2024 Stories!

**Stories About This Place** returns for its tenth year on March 22nd, 2024 at the Peterborough Town House. Speakers include author Ernest Hebert, NHPBS host and author Rebecca Rule, farmer Tyler Rich, Juliana Stevens, and Bob Brown. Ben Cosgrove will again regale the audience with his beautiful and original compositions for piano. We hope to see you there, and please stay tuned for registration information and announcements.



## A life built from, and for, the land

**This year, we are honored to highlight  
Monadnock Forever Society member  
Sharon Phennah.**

Sharon has made an incredible commitment to support the Conservancy in the future by making plans to donate her house upon her death. Sharon, and those like her, are vital to our organization's longevity, and her generosity will have a positive impact for generations to come. When the house comes to us, we will have the freedom to use it for a programmatic purpose, or we can sell it and use the proceeds to advance our mission.

Sharon Phennah's life in New Hampshire is a story of hard work, persistence, and an unbreakable love of the land. She first came to the region in 1973 from Philadelphia and purchased a 45-acre farm replete with a chicken house, barns, and stables in New Ipswich. Having been raised in rural New Jersey, Sharon had a lifelong dream of returning to New England, where much of her family was from. The farm flourished under her ownership, and Sharon flourished under the work of repairing it. She dug sand out of



*Sharon Phennah and her late dog Violet at Madame Sherries in Chesterfield*

the well, endured winters with no insulation, and did the constant work of maintaining an historic home. To make ends meet, she worked as a waitress and started an in-home dog grooming business. When her husband realized that the country life was not for him, they parted ways amicably, and Sharon continued to work the farm, renting out some of her fields, raising chickens and pigs, and renovating the house both inside and out. Along the way, her love of the region deepened. She made many friends and learned a lifetime's worth of carpentry skills. Though no longer under Sharon's ownership, the farm operates to this day; locals may know it by its current name, the Amazing Flower Farm.

In 1983, Sharon moved from New Ipswich to Dublin, a better location for her growing business. She purchased six acres and became very interested

in passive solar home construction. She took a course at the Sharon Art Center and immediately went to work building her new, environmentally friendly home and attached greenhouse. For 12 years she lived there until her own aging parents drew her to North Carolina, where she resided until 2015. Her heart remained in the Monadnock region, however, so she returned in 2015, purchasing four acres of forest in Alstead. She spent three years clearing the land, demolishing a derelict cabin, and building a small house. Again, her passion and forward-thinking nature were on display in the construction. She took a course at Yestermorrow, a sustainable design/build school, on tiny-home construction and built her new residence in that style. As Sharon says, the house is "great for one person, good for two who really like each other."

Whether it's a great house for one or two, donating this property is certainly a great way to support our work. Most people don't think of this type of donation as an option, but you may be surprised at the benefits. Not only is property donation an efficient way to support causes you believe in without having to access stocks or cash, you can also potentially reduce inheritance and capital gains taxes and eliminate broker fees. Best of all, it is a way to ensure that your love of the land will have impact even after your death.

When asked what she loves about this region, Sharon's words will resonate with many who feel a deep connection to this place: "When I look out my windows, I see trees, hear birds, am occasionally graced with turkeys, a fox, or bobcat passing through. I don't need to look at my phone to see the weather, and, among the trees, it is all beautiful."

We are honored to be the recipients of Sharon's generosity. Thank you, Sharon, for supporting this community for generations to come.

## Advocacy

**In the spring of 2023**, the Monadnock Conservancy's executive director, Ryan Owens, and board president Peter Kenyon visited Washington D.C. as part of the Land Trust Alliance's annual Advocacy Days. Their mission was to speak with New Hampshire's congressional delegation about robust federal land conservation funding and related policy issues. Advocating for legislation that increases the pace and permanence of conservation is an important part of our mission.

"Although I prefer a sturdy pair of hiking boots to my one and only business suit, my visit to Washington was productive and fulfilling. As I met with colleagues from land trusts from across the country, I was struck by how lucky the Monadnock Conservancy is to operate in a state where land conservation is still valued by policy makers on both sides of the aisle."

– Ryan Owens, Executive Director



*Executive Director Ryan Owens and Board President Peter Kenyon meet with Senator Jeanne Shaheen in Washington, D.C.*

### Would you like to be a part of the future of conservation?

If you are interested in joining the Monadnock Forever Society, please contact Lindsay Tafas, development director, at [Lindsay@MonadnockConservancy.org](mailto:Lindsay@MonadnockConservancy.org) or **603-357-0600, ext. 113**. Please also contact her if you have already included the Conservancy in your estate plans so you can be appropriately acknowledged.

# Cheshire Walkers

The Cheshire Walkers, our outdoor walking program aimed at seniors or anyone who prefers a slower pace of hiking over gentle terrain, returned in 2023 for both the spring and fall seasons. It's been three years since we inherited the program from Cheshire Medical Center, and we are so pleased that the weekly excursions remain well-attended by a spirited group of adventurers. We hosted 20 outings in 2023, many guided by Conservancy staff naturalists and forestry experts. As always, we went all out for the last hike of the season, providing some sweet treats, and even sweeter fiddling by Stewardship Director Alex Metzger! The Cheshire Walkers

will be back in the spring of 2024. If you or someone you know might be interested, email Kate Sullivan at [kate@monadnockconservancy.org](mailto:kate@monadnockconservancy.org).



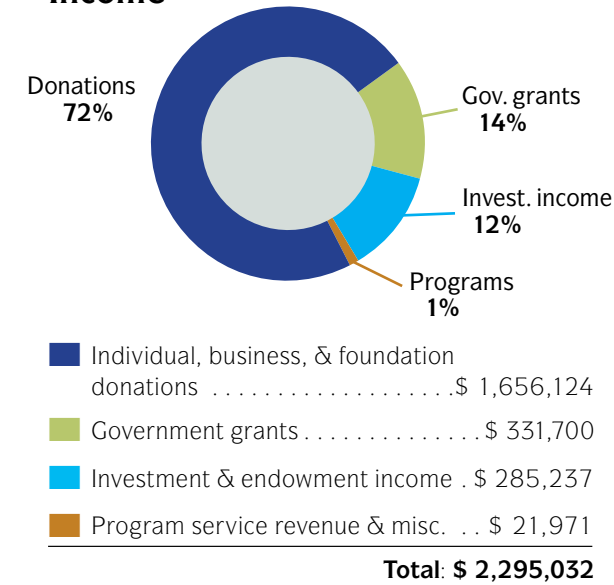
Stewardship Director Alex Metzger broke out the fiddle on the last day of the Cheshire Walkers' fall season



Just some of the passionate walkers who came out for the Cheshire Walkers season in 2023

# Your Support Matters

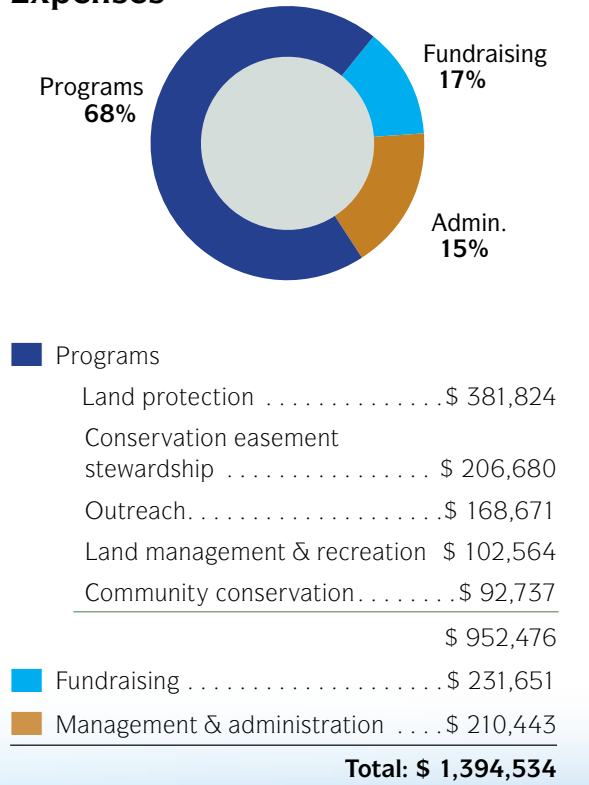
## Income



Individual, business, & foundation donations	\$ 1,656,124
Government grants	\$ 331,700
Investment & endowment income	\$ 285,237
Program service revenue & misc.	\$ 21,971

The Monadnock Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) organization.  
 These numbers reflect the 2023 fiscal year (October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023).  
 Complete audited financial statements are available upon request.

## Expenses



Programs	\$ 952,476
Land protection	\$ 381,824
Conservation easement stewardship	\$ 206,680
Outreach	\$ 168,671
Land management & recreation	\$ 102,564
Community conservation	\$ 92,737
Fundraising	\$ 231,651
Management & administration	\$ 210,443





Together, protecting forever  
the land we love

PO Box 337 Keene, NH 03431-0337  
603-357-0600  
[Info@MonadnockConservancy.org](mailto:Info@MonadnockConservancy.org)

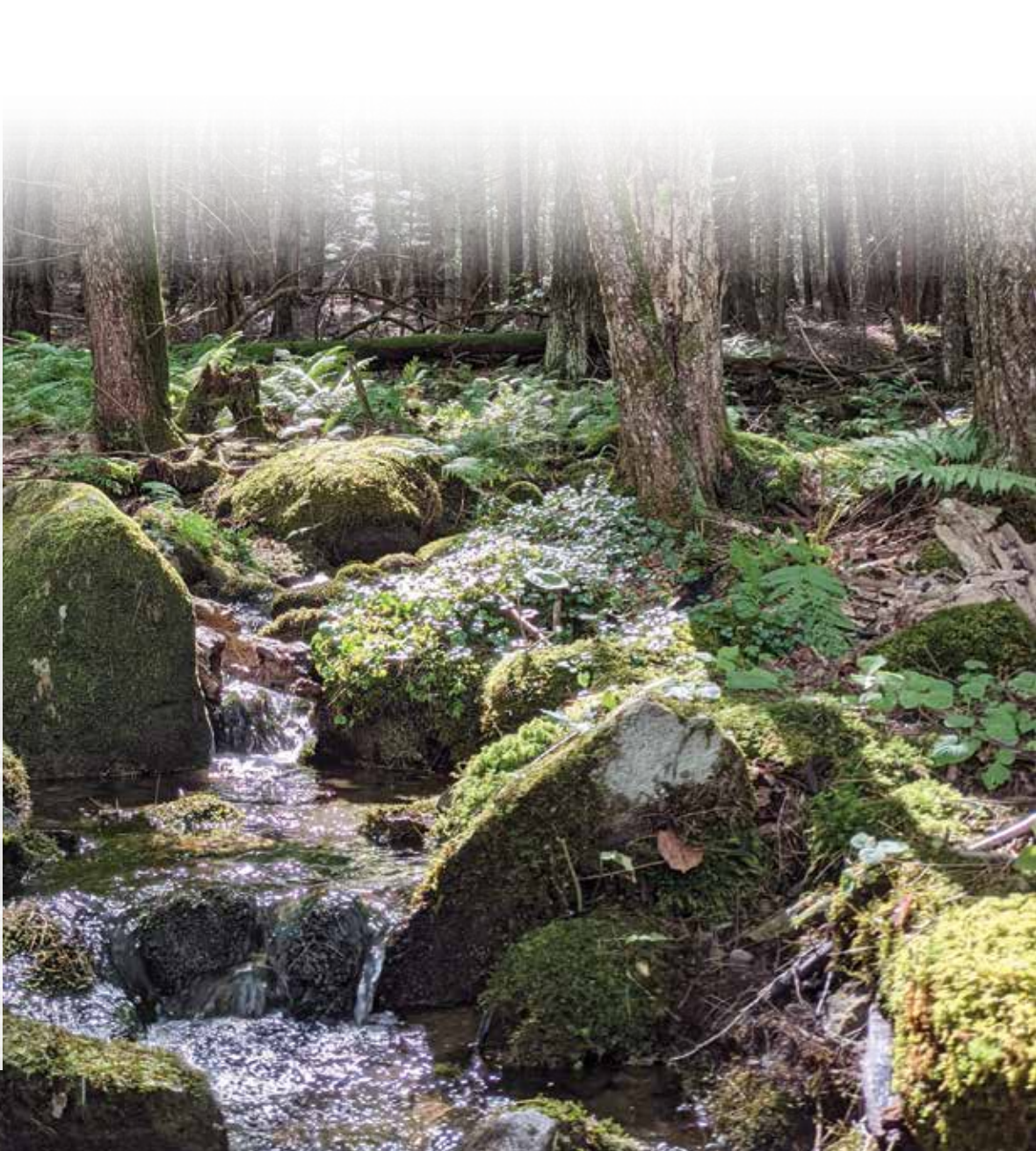
NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 1  
PUTNEY, VT

Founded in 1989, the Monadnock Conservancy is a nonprofit land trust working with you and your neighbors in 39 towns throughout the Monadnock region to protect the land and water of southwestern New Hampshire.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Peter Kenyon**  
*president, Dublin*
- Peter Hansel**  
*vice president, Keene*
- Brad Malt**  
*treasurer, Peterborough*
- Jeanne Thieme**  
*secretary, Swanzey*
- Dennis Calcutt, Frankestown**
- Richard Drew, Richmond**
- Mark Florenz, Keene**
- Matt Kelly, Keene**
- Sarah Kossayda, Harrisville**
- Tiffany Mannion, Swanzey**
- Archie McIntyre, Dublin**
- Doug Sutherland, Hancock**
- Wendy Webster, Jaffrey**
- STAFF
- Ryan Owens**  
*executive director, Walpole*
- Lacy Gillotti**  
*deputy director*
- Anne McBride**  
*land protection director, Nelson*
- Peter Throop**  
*conservation project manager, Keene*
- Alex Metzger**  
*stewardship director, Manchester*
- Richard Pendleton**  
*stewardship coordinator, Peterborough*
- Lindsay Tafas**  
*development director, Jaffrey*
- Kate Sullivan**  
*operations and development manager, Princeton, Mass.*
- Martin Royle**  
*communications and marketing director, Walpole*
- Janine Marr**  
*land and recreation manager*



Stay connected year-round! Follow us on social media, and sign up at [MonadnockConservancy.org](http://MonadnockConservancy.org) for our monthly e-newsletter.

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper using soy-based inks