



# MONADNOCK CONSERVANCY

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2011

NUMBER 48

### Cooper Hill Community Forest Decades-long efforts pay off in the protection of this iconic property



Emily Hague

Many passersby stop to take pictures of this scenic field along state Route 101 in Marlborough.



Emily Hague

Anytime you drive state Route 101 between Marlborough and Dublin, you pass it. This property, formerly the Robinson Farm and later the site of an equestrian center, is across from the American Legion and next to the state highway department barn on the south side of Route 101. It's hard to miss; the open field comes right up to the road. Cooper Hill, one of the highest points in Marlborough, rises from the southwest corner and showcases the change of seasons, especially the soft spring greens and the vibrant fall colors.

"[It] has long been seen as a unique property. It has the rare, just-right combination of meadow and forest. The hills form a perfect backdrop for the field. In the fall it is not unusual to see cars parked along the fence and pictures being taken," John Northcott, Marlborough board of selectman chair who was involved with the project, wrote in an e-mail to us.

The Town of Marlborough attempted a number of times over the years to protect this 329.5-acre property, once trying to buy the land but losing the opportunity. Numerous previous owners have pursued large-scale commercial and residential development, and though none were successful, now it's guaranteed that the two-thirds mile of undeveloped frontage on Route 101 will remain as such thanks to a unique partnership between the town, two non-profit conservation organizations, and a private landowner.

Landowner Matthew Iorio purchased the property about five years ago. When Matthew recently made the decision to sell the land (he was relocating to Massachusetts to manage his family's business) he wanted to see the land protected for future generations, allowing for active forest management and agriculture.

Matthew wondered if the town would be interested in protecting the property.

The town, not surprisingly, was motivated to make this opportunity a conservation success. The property was identified as a high priority for conservation in the town's Cornerstones project, the 2001 Master Plan, and the 2005 Open Space Plan. It's not only the scenic quality of this roadside property that's of local value, but also the natural resources such as open farmland, water supply, and unfragmented forest.

Just beyond the scenic fields is long frontage on Robbins Brook, a tributary of Minnewawa Brook, which flows through Marlborough village. There is a broad spectrum of wildlife habitat types, from wetlands and open fields to steep rocky slopes and managed timberlands.

"The property also abuts other properties in conservation and contributes to the larger and varied environments," wrote John Northcott in his recent e-mail.

The Town of Marlborough and the Monadnock Conservancy worked together to purchase the conservation easement, securing monies from bonded conservation funds, the Monadnock Land Protection Assistance Fund administered by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and generous private donors. Transaction funding for the project was provided by the Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership, a public/private effort to protect the Monadnock Highlands of western New Hampshire and north central Massachusetts. (To learn more, visit [www.q2cpartnership.org](http://www.q2cpartnership.org).)

Simultaneously, Matthew Iorio sold the land. The New England Forestry Foundation purchased the underlying property ownership at a below-market rate with its own funds and

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## 'My Support Stays Close to Where I Live'



Dan Hall, spry with his hiking poles and sneakers, sets a brisk pace. When I visited him last summer, I was challenged to keep up as he led me to a dense stand of trees on his family's property on a hill in Alstead.

The son of a clergyman, Dan and his family moved frequently in his youth. Yet Alstead was a constant. "It was really the only permanent home I ever had," he proudly said.

"This place was essentially an abandoned farm when we started coming here in the twenties," he remembered, gazing at the trees. "My father, with guidance from the county forester, worked with my uncle and the local kids to plant thousands of white pine seedlings right here in a pasture. His goal was for the timber to fund our educations, but he didn't realize that kids grow a lot faster than trees." The kids, he chuckled, were off to college long before the trees reached merchantable size.

In time, Dan and his late wife, Nancy, came to own the property, which they expanded and continued to manage. Good forest stewardship was a priority, as it was for Dan's parents, and in the 1970s the Halls joined the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Later they donated a conservation easement on the property to the Forest Society (the Monadnock Conservancy was not yet active in Alstead). "It just seemed to make sense," said Dan of their decision.

More recently, Dan joined the Conservancy. He became particularly invested in our work when the Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership began working with the town of Alstead to develop an Open Space Plan. Dan was an active participant in the process, and now hopes to convince his neighbors to conserve their lands. First step: he gave them all gift memberships to the Conservancy as a way for them to learn more about good stewardship.

Dan's support of local conservation goes beyond the here and now. A few years ago Dan

set up a charitable gift annuity to benefit the Conservancy. "It always seemed like a worthwhile and effective organization," he said of his choice of the Conservancy. "Plus, the annuity income is good, and I like the fact that my support stays close to where I live."

The annuity is managed on our behalf by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Dan's initial gift allowed for an immediate tax deduction, and from the annuity he receives guaranteed regular payments for the rest of his life. After that, the remaining principal of the gift is added to the Conservancy's endowment, helping us meet our obligations to the land in perpetuity. Dan's actions will ensure Alstead and the Monadnock Region remain a great place to live. Now that's good stewardship. 🌲



Dan Hall recognizes that the costs of protecting land for eternity do add up. As one of the original members of our legacy society, Dan knows his gift will provide long-term support.

When you make a planned gift to the Conservancy, we want to honor you too as a Monadnock Forever Society member. We can work with you to craft a strategy that matches your objectives with our mission and may provide tax advantages for you or your heirs.

If you have already included the Conservancy in your estate plans, please tell us so we may thank you and list you as a Monadnock Forever member.

For more information about how you can make a gift, contact executive director Ryan Owens at [Ryan@MonadnockConservancy.org](mailto:Ryan@MonadnockConservancy.org) or (603) 357-0600.



Emily Hague



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Emily Hague

## Creative Vision Turns Conservation into Reality

### Tippin Rock Farm Now Protected Thanks to Family, Local Leaders

Tippin Rock Farm, at the junction of Swanze Lake Road and Warmac Road, is well known in Swanze. Bob and Lois Domina grow sweet corn and sell it at their farm stand. Hewes Hill is highly visible from many points in town including Swanze Lake.

“When the [Swanze] Open Space Committee initially walked the Tippin Rock Farm property it was not even a question that this parcel was special. After that walk the excitement on the committee just grew and grew,” said Jeanne M. Thieme, chair of the Open Space Committee. “We thought of all possible ways to get the community involved so that this beautiful parcel could be appreciated and enjoyed by our town’s residents.”

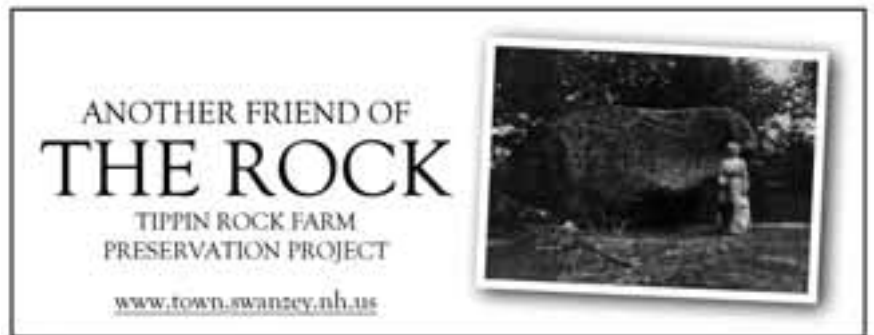
Bev Bernard, Open Space Committee member, organized a hike last fall to introduce residents to the trails on the property. This will now be an annual event. Jeanne donated the proceeds from the sales of her art prints featuring Buck the ox, Swanze’s ambassador of open space.

“This project seemed to have a life of its own with the Open Space Committee members pushing a little further after every successful grant or precious \$5 bill donation,” said Jeanne.

“Another Friend of the Rock” placards were proudly displayed around town. More than fifty people showed up for the corn-o-meter unveiling. Nearly the entire town followed the progress of the board as color slowly but steadily filled in the kernels, tracking the progress of donations.

In early March of this year, the Dominas signed the paperwork with the Conservancy forever protecting Tippin Rock Farm. Every residence in town received a beautifully designed postcard announcing the completion of the project.

In late April, the Swanze Open Space



postcard images courtesy  
Swanze Open Space Committee



Committee hosted their annual party at which the Domina family was recognized for conveying the conservation easement on their land. The Dominas were presented with a hand-turned bowl filled with Swanze-made goodies and a painting of the Tippin Rock by Deb Crowder.

Tippin Rock Farm has been protected with assistance from the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, Town of Swanze conservation land acquisition account and conservation commission fund, Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership, Fields Pond Foundation, and private donors. 🍁

Go online to view a slideshow, read our press release, and get a topographic map of Tippin Rock Farm: [www.MonadnockConservancy.org/html/what\\_current\\_projects.html](http://www.MonadnockConservancy.org/html/what_current_projects.html)



The Cooper Hill property abuts over half a mile of state Route 101 that will never be developed.

## 15,000-Acre Conservation Goal Reached

With the acceptance of the Cooper Hill Community Forest conservation easement, the Monadnock Conservancy has now protected 15,000 acres since the land trust was founded in 1989.

"We look forward to protecting the next 15,000 acres," said executive director Ryan Owens.

The Conservancy holds permanent easements on 14,971 of the 15,000 acres currently protected and owns 259.2 acres in fee simple. Almost a third of the total acres (4,041.5 acres) has been conserved since Ryan took the helm in March 2008.

*Cooper Hill*  
continued from page 1

donations from several generous private donors. Together, the ownership of the land by the New England Forestry Foundation and the conservation agreement with Marlborough and the Conservancy will allow for water protection, wildlife habitat, working lands, and public access—now and for future generations.

"Forming partnerships has become critical in land-protection projects throughout the region," said Whitney Beals, director of land protection for the New England Forestry Foundation. "Protecting the Cooper Hill Community Forest as a working woodland and wildlife habitat available for recreation became possible through a convergence of interests: the town, the Monadnock Conservancy, the New England Forestry Foundation and a conservation-minded landowner. We are pleased to be part of such a worthy community-based effort."

NEFF plans to use the woodlands as a demonstration and educational forest, offering walks to learn about forestry. NEFF also hopes to encourage public use of the property by establishing a parking area, adding signs and kiosks, and maintaining and expanding existing trails.

"We'll be working with a local farmer to manage the meadowlands as part of the project, too," Whitney said. 🍄



## Welcome to our New Members!

Bob Allen, New Ipswich  
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth G. Appel, Harrisville  
Marcia Barrett, Keene  
Bradford and Lisa Bates, Dublin  
Ken and Lynn Bergman, Keene  
Charles and Sue Bingham, Walpole  
Brian Bishoff, Rindge  
Bob and Lynne Borofsky, Spofford  
Hunter Carbee, Bristol  
Larry and Debbie Crowder, East Swanzey  
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Tom Sintros, Alstead  
Norman Spicher, Keene  
Mary C. Vallier-Kaplan, Peterborough  
Mr. & Mrs. Alex Vogel, Dublin

**Do you know someone who would like to become a member, or do you want to give a gift membership? Join online: [www.MonadnockConservancy.org/html/who\\_please\\_join\\_us.html](http://www.MonadnockConservancy.org/html/who_please_join_us.html)**

**The Alliance Signs Paperwork to Create Conservation Defense Insurance**

The Land Trust Alliance recently filed the organizational documents for their new conservation defense insurance program. The new entity, which has been named “Terra Firma,” is a risk retention group that will be owned and managed by the land trust community. The Monadnock Conservancy is one of the first groups to commit to the program. The Alliance expects to launch Terra Firma next year, at which point all of our easements and fee-owned lands will be enrolled. We will then be able to better defend our conservation lands from violations and legal challenges.

**Conservancy Hires Second Project Manager**



Emily Hague

Rocci Aguirre joined the staff in early March as a conservation project manager. He comes to the Conservancy from the Finger Lakes Land Trust in Ithaca, New York, where he was director of land protection. He has fifteen years of experience within the

conservation and environmental community, including working with federal land management agencies and various nonprofit conservation organizations such as Trout Unlimited. Rocci has a Bachelor of Science in recreation and leisure studies and a Bachelor of Arts in history. He is currently a master’s degree candidate in Antioch University of New England’s Resource Management and Conservation program.

**Fourth Annual Conservation Leadership Training Graduates Twelve**

The Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership this spring again offered a conservation leadership training to teach people about land conservation in the region and how to effectively support efforts in our local communities. The program was held Thursday evenings over the course of four weeks. Participants covered topics such as conservation methods, evaluating projects, stewardship, and landowner outreach.

**Selected to Present at Rally 2011**

Trustee Tom Duston and stewardship manager Emily Hague will be leading a session at Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this October. Tom and Emily will talk about their work on the California Brook Trail (soon to open) and the challenges they encountered with balancing conservation values and recreation goals.



**Cheshire County Farm Study Moves Ahead; Funding from Putnam Foundation**

The Cheshire County Farm was established in the mid 1800s and largely used inmate labor to operate it. Today, the dairy operation has ceased and inmates are sent to the new jail in Keene. Cheshire County legislators are now faced with deciding what should happen next with this approximately 640-acre complex located on River Road in Westmoreland. The Monadnock Conservancy, Land For Good, the Cheshire County Conservation District, and other conservation and agricultural partners have been invited to research the feasibility of various new uses for the property, which includes some of the most productive soils in the country. The study will be completed over the next year and will largely be funded by a \$50,000 grant from the Putnam Foundation of Keene.

**Staff Workshops at Saving Special Places Conference**

Attendees to this year’s annual conference for the New Hampshire conservation community benefited from the expertise of two of our staff members. Pete Throop offered a workshop about building support for conservation through public engagement. Emily Hague, along with Leslie Ratley-Beach from the Land Trust Alliance, presented “Running the Marathon: Finding Solutions to Common Challenges” and co-led a discussion with Paul Doscher of the Forest Society on stewardship issues.




Emily Hague



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*Save the Date*  
**22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting**  
**Saturday, August 27, 2011**  
Jaffrey Meetinghouse  
Jaffrey Center, NH  
9:30 a.m.–1 p.m., including lunch  
Field trips to follow

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**About the Monadnock Conservancy**

Founded in 1989, the Monadnock Conservancy is the only land trust dedicated exclusively to the thirty-five towns of the Monadnock Region in southwestern New Hampshire. Our mission is to identify, promote, and actively seek protection of significant natural, aesthetic, and historic resources in the area; and to monitor and enforce the protection of lands in the trust. Based in Keene, the Conservancy has protected more than 15,000 acres of forest, farmland, shoreline, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and public recreation trails in the region.

**The Numbers:  
Cooper Hill  
Community Forest  
Conservation  
Easement**

- 329.5** total acres conserved
- 15.5** acres of wetlands
- 4,500**-foot section of Robbins Brook runs through the property
- 26** acres of open fields
- 288** acres of mixed forest, mostly hemlock-hardwood-white pine stands
- 46** acres are highly ranked by the state Wildlife Action Plan
- 3,500** feet of frontage on Route 101 will forever remain scenic
- \$395,000** total cost, which includes purchase price and acquisition fees such as survey, legal, appraisal, and stewardship endowment



Anne McBride

Learn more about the Cooper Hill Community Forest ... see story on page 1.