

MONADNOCK CONSERVANCY

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2011

NUMBER 50

Betsey Harris

A Woman whose Work Grounds this
Organization through the Years

By Ben Cosgrove



Ned Thermen

Bill Elliott, Betsey Harris, Richard Ober, and Bob Boynton look at a map of Greenfield, New Hampshire.



Editor's note: Betsey Harris, one of three co-founders of the Monadnock Conservancy, was honored at our annual event, August 27. Please also see story on page 4.

Throughout the history of the Monadnock Conservancy, few individuals have been as regularly or as passionately involved in all the minutiae of its operation as Betsey Harris of Dublin. She has served on and off the board of trustees for nearly all of its existence, in nearly every position “except, mercifully, treasurer.”

At one time or another, she has done basically everything. As president of the board from 1995 to 1998, Harris oversaw the hiring of the first full-time land protection specialist, negotiated the move of the Conservancy offices from Dublin to Keene, and presided over a period of dramatic growth for the organization. She has secured countless significant donations. She has negotiated easements. She has edited these newsletters. After the professional graphic designer hired for the job fell short of her expectations, she even designed the logo that the Conservancy has used ever since.

In a way, Harris was primed from birth for work with a land trust. She was born in Lincoln, Massachusetts, which has a rich heritage in country living and land conservation. Her father was the chair of the local conservation commission and her mother chaired the town planning board. “I suppose I was doomed from the start,” she said, smiling.

Betsey and her husband, John, had rented in Peterborough during the summer for years and fell in love with the area. They purchased Stonewall Farm as a permanent summer home in 1961, while living in New York City. They moved full-time to Stonewall Farm and the Monadnock Region in 1980.


“I like the scale of the Monadnock Region—physically and socially,” she said. “Physically it’s

sort of like England—not overwhelming mountains and distances, but everything on a human scale. Socially, it’s small enough that one can get to know people and really make a difference, even with no professional training. Wonderful people have lived here for generations and set some pretty good standards for civic participation.”

After moving here in 1980, she served on the Dublin Conservation Commission, the Dublin Planning Board, and the Southwest Region Planning Commission. “I was certainly going to jump into something,” she said.

Aware that the state’s conservation activities through the Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) would end when the program expired in 1992, she began working with Bruce McClellan, a local lawyer, and Abe Wolfe, LCIP’s Dublin representative, to found a smaller organization that would be able to deal more comprehensively with local conservation concerns. This group quickly became the Monadnock Conservancy. “The late ‘80s were a time of terrific development; land around here was being gobbled up like mad, so the pressure was on for us to do something about it, and fast,” she said.

In 1991, the Harris family were the first people to donate a conservation easement to the Conservancy. The Stonewall Farm easement is a tract of 79 acres, including crucial wetlands and a historic mill site, that was described by one trustee as “a magnificent first building block for our local land trust.”

“I love the land and I like working with people to make something happen,” she said when asked what led her to the work she’s done. “And anyway,” she continued, expertly hiding a smile, “I suppose they’re not making any more of it, don’t you think?” 

Strategic Listening



Emily Hague

Every few years the Monadnock Conservancy staff and board come together to write a new strategic plan. The plan outlines our goals, objectives, and activities for the coming years: what kinds of land we'll conserve, how to ensure exemplary stewardship of protected lands, how to engage communities in the work and benefits of protecting land, and, of course, how to pay for it all. It tells us, in short, what to do when we come to work every day.

In the past, strategic planning has been a staff- and board-driven process, but this time we're going about it differently. As we serve thirty-five towns in the Monadnock Region and, ultimately, it is these communities that enable our work, we set out this year to write our next strategic plan with a solid foundation of diverse community input.

We started by listing every constituent group from which we wanted to hear: farmers, young professionals, retirees, hunters, educators, parents, lawyers, foresters, business leaders, hikers, snowmobilers, community activists, wildlife advocates, municipal officials, physicians, natives, newcomers—anyone with a stake in the region's future. We then put names to those groups, drawing on the networks of board and staff. Many names, of course, were friends of the Conservancy, but just as many had

no previous relationship with us or even to land conservation. This was really the point—we wanted to know what was on the minds of not-yet friends. All told, we invited 245 people to participate either in a small group discussion or in a one-on-one interview. More than one hundred people participated, and nearly fifty percent of respondents had no previous Conservancy affiliation.

Though we are still compiling and analyzing our notes, several themes are beginning to emerge from our conversations. First and foremost, people love this region, in large part due to its rural character, outdoor recreational opportunities, and sprits of community interdependence and involvement. When they look to the future, they hope for these characteristics to persist, but there's a worry that lack of opportunity for young people, lack of equitable economic prosperity, and apathy may threaten what we have now. Participants favor the Conservancy continuing with the same core programs we've traditionally pursued, but they also suggested new roles as educator, convener, advocate, collaborator, and promoter.

Perhaps most enlightening is that much of the public perceives the Conservancy in ways that run counter to what we seek to portray. Many people know little to nothing about us, all of which suggests a need for increased visibility, particularly among younger people. Even with those who are familiar with us, many described us in terms of what we do—protect land—but fewer defined us by why we do it. If we are to establish relevance with more people, we may need to get better at promoting the ends of land conservation rather than the means.

We'd still like you to participate in these conversations. We've created a simple online survey that you can complete at your leisure—you can find a link to it on the events page of our website: www.MonadnockConservancy.org.

How Much Will You Protect?

\$84 protects one acre
(valued at \$2,000)

Contribute to the 2011 Annual Fund

Call Pat Payne, development and membership manager, at
(603) 357-0600 or donate online at www.MonadnockConservancy.org


**MONADNOCK
CONSERVANCY**
PO Box 337
Keene, NH 03431
(603) 357-0600



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tom Hanna, President, *Westmoreland*; **Ken Stewart**, Vice President, *Keene*; **Michael Krinsky**, Treasurer, *Marlborough*; **Story Wright**, Secretary, *Dublin*; **Suzanne Whittemore**, Immediate Past President, *Swanzey*; **Victoria Reck Barlow**, *Swanzey*; **Karen Bennett**, *Antrim*; **Stephen Gehlbach**, *Jaffrey*; **Kenneth Goebel**, *Marlborough*; **Nancy "Pooky" Hayden**, *Marlborough*; **Rhett Lamb**, *Keene*; **Jeff Miller**, *Marlborough*; **Richard Pendleton**, *Peterborough*; **Sheldon Penoyer**, *Greenfield*

STAFF

Ryan Owens, Executive Director, *Walpole*; **Emily Hague**, Stewardship Manager, *Keene*; **Anne McBride**, Conservation Project Manager, *Nelson*; **Rocci Aguirre**, Conservation Project Manager, *Harrisville*; **Peter Throop**, Project Director, Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership, *Keene*; **Rick Brackett**, MCCC and Stewardship Assistant, *Fitzwilliam*; **Katrina Farmer**, Communications Associate, *Dublin*; **Patricia Payne**, Development and Membership Manager, *Hancock*; **Chris Watkins**, Bookkeeper, *Keene*

www.MonadnockConservancy.org

Info@MonadnockConservancy.org



Bruce Barlow

From Land to Table: 22nd Annual Meeting and Celebration of Local Agriculture



Katrina Farmer

Roger Swain, one of three featured speakers

On a warm, sunny, late-summer morning, and despite a tropical storm forecasted to arrive later in the day, more than 150 people gathered for our annual event. It was held at the Jaffrey Meetinghouse in Jaffrey Center on Saturday, August 27, with a focus on using the land for agriculture as well as celebrating the ongoing work of the Conservancy.

Three local farmers shared their stories. Tracie Smith, an energetic young woman and farmer-owner of Tracie's Community Farm in Fitzwilliam, spoke about her appreciation for land conservation. The previous owners of her property donated a conservation easement, which made it an affordable option for her to establish a farm here. If it weren't for this, she said, "I may not be farming right now."

Farmer-owner Sam Canonica of Manning Hill Farm in Winchester saw farms in his childhood home of Essex County, Massachusetts, divided up and made obsolete. Now as a dairy farmer and breeder of beef cattle, he's realized it takes a lot of land to raise grass-fed cows. He's afraid the sustainability of such operations is in jeopardy without conservation.

"It's only a matter of time for the urban sprawl to get out this way and none of the land is conserved," said Canonica. "The land along the Connecticut River is some of the best in the country, if not the world."

Roger Swain, "the man with the red suspenders" and former host of PBS's *The Victory Garden*, is also concerned with sustainability—at a personal scale. He believes that gardening is a skill everyone should learn, and he wants to see a renaissance in backyard gardening. "Our future is in the land... If we save these hills acre by acre, we'll be alright," Swain said.

Smith, Canonica, and Swain's comments were inspirational and entertaining, and left many feeling hopeful for the future of agriculture in our region. Talking about farming fits well with the Conservancy's shifting attitudes about land conservation. Now there's more of a focus on "value-added" conservation—the idea that the inherent benefits of natural land can be enhanced through careful planning and active use where appropriate, thereby providing more value to more people.

"We are seeking projects that will make the importance of open space more real and more lasting to more people," said Ryan Owens, Conservancy executive director. Owens also announced the imminent donation to the Conservancy of Bingham Hill Forest in Gilsum by the heirs of John C. Calhoun Jr., a well-known Monadnock Region forester who passed away in 2010. The forest, which is protected by a conservation easement held by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, will be a model of value-added conservation, protecting not only wildlife habitat and scenic views, but also producing forest products, sustained income to the Conservancy, and public recreational opportunities.

Outgoing board president Suzanne Whittemore thanked retiring trustees Rick Church, Tom Duston, Diane Schott, and Carol Thompson; and welcomed to the board Victoria Reck Barlow, Ken Goebel, and Rhett Lamb. Two conservation leadership awards were presented (see story at right, page 4).

The morning was followed by a Local Farmers' Market and a light lunch. Optional field trips in the afternoon highlighted area farms—both from the past and present. 🍁

THANK YOU! Special thanks are due to the following people, organizations, and merchants who donated their time or products: **Bruce Barlow**, *Swanzy*; **the Jaffrey Center Village Improvement Society**, *Jaffrey*; **Echo Farms**, *Hinsdale*; **The Works Bakery Café**, *Keene*; **The Mountain Corporation**, *Marlborough*; and the **Monadnock Conservancy board of trustees**. Our Local Farmers' Market featured **Farmer John's CSA**, *Dublin*; **Great Brook Farm**, *Walpole*; **Manning Hill Farm**, *Winchester*; **Maple Moon Sugar House**, *Hancock*; **Nubanusit Neighborhood CSA**, *Peterborough*; **Ridgehill Farm**, *Swanzy*; **Tracie's Community Farm**, *Fitzwilliam*; and **Wichland Woods**, *Keene*. **Kimberly Peck Photography**, *Peterborough*; **Ace Rental Place**, *Keene*; **Norway Hill Orchard**, *Hancock*; **Sunflowers**, *Jaffrey*; and the **Town of Jaffrey** also supported the event. Thanks as well to **Betsey and John Harris**, *Dublin*; **Dan and Travis Shattuck**, *Jaffrey*; **Tracie Smith**, *Fitzwilliam*; and the **Town of Jaffrey** for hosting our field trips.

Conservancy Honors Harris, Newcombe



Erin Castor



Katrina Farmer

John Newcombe (far left) and Betsey Harris (at left) were presented awards as part of the program, held in the Jaffrey Meetinghouse (below).

Two awards were presented at this year's annual event: the Founders' Award and the Abe Wolfe Land Protection Award.

Carol Thompson of Jaffrey, former Conservancy board president, presented the Founders' Award to Betsey Harris of Dublin. In introducing Harris, Thompson said, "Every successful organization needs someone who provides the spark that ignites a flame and then works with every ounce of her being to make it flourish."

Harris has served on the Conservancy board of trustees and standing committees for nearly all of the organization's existence. She and her husband, John, were the first to donate a conservation easement to the Conservancy in 1991. In 2007, they made another donation that helped establish a 731-acre greenbelt of working forests, fields, wetlands, and shoreline near the base of Mount Monadnock. Harris also established a fund to help pay project costs for prospective easement donors.

The Founders' Award is presented to an individual who has contributed substantially to the success, stability, and capabilities of the Monadnock Conservancy over a sustained period of time.

John Newcombe of Keene was honored with the Abe Wolfe Land Protection Award.

Named for a founder of the Monadnock Conservancy, the Abe Wolfe Land Protection Award is presented to an individual, group, or organization that has shown outstanding leadership in land protection in the Monadnock Region.

Newcombe, owner of Monadnock Appraisal Company, was an early member of the Conservancy's board of trustees. A well-respected real estate appraiser, he has helped guide conservation transactions for countless landowners and conservation organizations. He most recently played this pivotal role in helping to protect significant acreage in the Silver Lake watershed of Harrisville and Nelson. 🍁



Katrina Farmer



Bruce Barlow



Bruce Barlow

Featured speakers Tracie Smith (above) and Sam Canonica (right) talked about how land conservation makes farming feasible for young farmers. Below: A working farm since 1761, Great Brook Farm of Walpole makes its message clear.



Katrina Farmer

MCCP Project Director Featured Speaker at Sharon Town Picnic

Pete Throop, Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership project director, gave a talk at the annual Sharon Town Picnic about how the landscape contributes to the abundance and diversity of wildlife observed locally. Throop highlighted how the town serves as an important refuge for a variety of species including bear, moose, coyote, and bobcat, as evidenced by maps and information from the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan and the town's natural resource inventory. By combining this information with survey data of the local places residents' most treasure, the Conservancy recently helped the Sharon Conservation Commission develop a map of lands with important conservation values and a plan for encouraging voluntary conservation of these lands. Picnic attendees were very enthusiastic about the results of the planning effort and expressed their appreciation for the Conservancy's support.

Conservancy Connects Landowners with Feds to Protect Land

Two properties in Jaffrey Center have been protected with conservation easements through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), a program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The WRP promotes the protection and restoration of wetlands through the purchase of easements and enhancement activities. The Conservancy referred the landowners of the two properties, on Route 124 and Great Road respectively, to the program because both properties had significant wetland resources on them and both landowners needed to sell the easements. The easements are held by the USDA rather than the Conservancy. For more information about the WRP, go online: www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/Farm_Bill/WRP/WRP.html

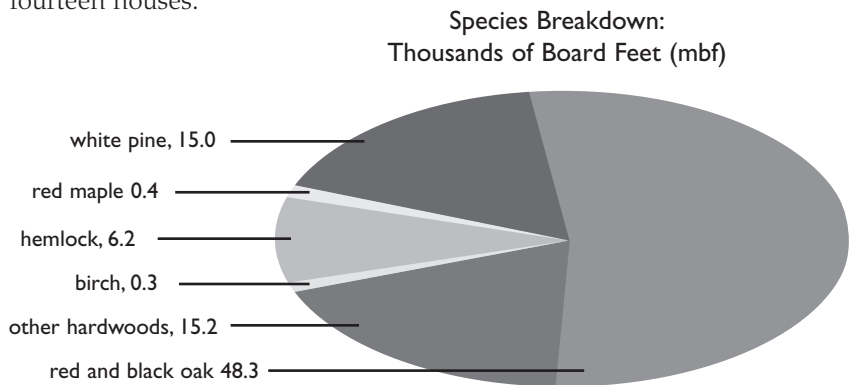
California Brook Trail Gets a Boost

This summer, C&S Wholesale Grocers and the Conservancy partnered on a leadership development project. Thirteen young business recruits spent time improving sections of the California Brook Trail in Chesterfield and Swanzey. C&S had helped fund the initial round of conservation easements in the area where the trail is located and was eager to lend a hand once again. Volunteers cleared and marked a one-mile section of trail connecting non-maintained roads. Their efforts contribute to the creation of a trail from Keene to Pisgah State

Park, traversing many protected lands. The time spent in the field not only advanced the mission of the Conservancy, but also provided first-hand experience of the importance of community involvement for the incoming cohort at C&S (part of the C&S mission is to support employees who volunteer).

Maynard Forest Harvest Produces 85mbf

As part of our ongoing research about forest productivity, Conservancy stewardship manager Emily Hague recently reviewed licensed forester Charlie Koch's timber harvest reports on our Maynard Forest property. Numbers show that six different species of trees were harvested from a total of thirteen acres last year. Harvest volumes are typically broken down not only by species, but also measured in thousands of board feet (notated as mbf, where m stands for mille, the latin root for thousand). A board foot is the volume of a one-foot length of a board one foot wide and one inch thick. The total number of board feet harvested from Maynard Forest was about 85,000 (or 85mbf). To get a sense of that scale, think about how much lumber is in a house: a 1,000-square-foot house typically has about 6,000 board feet (6mbf) of lumber in it. By that scale, the Maynard Forest harvest provided lumber for the equivalent of fourteen houses.



Annual Grants from Amy Sandback Fund Begin

The Conservancy received the first annual grant from the Amy Sandback Fund at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (NHCF) in July. The fund was created in 2007 when Amy Sandback donated to the Conservancy the two adjacent Sandback Wilderness conservation easements in Rindge totaling 209 acres, and then donated the underlying ownership of one of the parcels to the NHCF, which resold it in 2010 as protected land. The sale proceeds are managed by the NHCF to provide perpetual support to us for stewardship expenses of the Sandback easements and other protected properties in Rindge.




PO Box 337 Keene, NH 03431
Info@MonadnockConservancy.org
www.MonadnockConservancy.org

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #1
Putney, VT



Volunteers from C&S Wholesale Grocers joined stewardship manager Emily Hague (second from right) for a trail work day this summer; learn more on page 5.

 printed with soy-based inks on
100% recycled, FSC-certified paper



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.

Upcoming Events

Wildlife Action Plan Implementation Workshop

Sunday, November 6, 1–3 p.m.
This hike at the Bingham Hill Forest in Gilsum will provide an overview of wildlife habitats designated in New Hampshire's Wildlife Action Plan. Co-sponsored by UNH Co-operative Extension and the Harris Center.

Conservation Strategies Workshop

Thursday, November 17, 7–9 p.m.
This forum held at the Harris Center in Hancock will help landowners, town officials, and others interested in estate planning and tools for permanently protecting open space. Co-sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension and the Harris Center.

Beech Hill High on the Now-Enhanced Trail System

Sunday, December 4, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
The Beech Hill ridgeline is a great place to enjoy conserved land and views. This moderately strenuous hike—but no bushwhacking—will introduce you to the network of trails now open to the public on the Beech Hill conservation easement in Dublin. Co-sponsored by the Harris Center.

Register for any of these events by contacting Emily Hague, stewardship manager, at (603) 357-0600 or email Emily@MonadnockConservancy.org. Get more info online: www.MonadnockConservancy.org/html/events.html



Bingham Hill Forest, Gilsum, NH

Emily Hague