

Highlights from the Region

2024 Annual Report



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2024 was a milestone year for the Monadnock Conservancy:

We celebrated our 35th year in operation, launched the Building a Resilient Future capital campaign, said goodbye to our beloved executive director of 16 years, Ryan Owens, and continued the vital work of conserving farmland, wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitats in this special region.

Thanks to your steadfast and generous support, the Conservancy has thrived. Thank you for helping to fund the future health and wellbeing of the Monadnock region. In the following pages, you are invited to learn more about the land that was conserved in 2024, our plans for the future of conservation in this region, and take another look at last year's fun and impactful events. Thank you for being on this 35-year journey with us!

Thank You

2024 funding to buy conservation easements was generously provided by the USDA's Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program, the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), the Thomas W. Haas Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, The Monadnock Food Co-op Farm Fund, The New Hampshire Farm Future Fund; and many other private and anonymous donors.



Photo by Steve Gehlbach

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 or 603-357-0600, ext. 102.**

PICADILLY FARM

21.9 acres – Winchester



Picadilly Farm, a highly productive, certified organic farm, was conserved in 2024.

Picadilly Farm in Winchester is a certified organic farm that sells directly to local stores, including the Monadnock Food Coop and the Brattleboro Food Coop, among others. In 2024, the Conservancy finalized the purchase of a conservation easement on 21.9 acres of the farm, which includes 14 acres of "prime" farmland soil, a designation reserved for the most fertile soil in the nation. An older conservation easement held by the State of New Hampshire already conserved 46 acres of the farm, meaning the entire farm is now protected and can remain available to farmers for generations to come.

Every conservation easement is unique, and for Picadilly Farm our team included a special provision designed to support farming in the Monadnock region into the future. Under the terms of the deed, if the farm ever goes up for sale outside the owner's family, the Conservancy will have the right to purchase the property at its reduced agricultural value and resell it to a farmer who will continue to operate it as a commercial farm. The purpose of this provision is to ensure the land stays in production and remains affordable to future farmers. Though a first for the Conservancy, this mechanism is common in farm conservation in Vermont and Massachusetts, where the purchase option is rarely exercised because sellers nearly always choose to sell to other farmers without any involvement from the easement holder.

SCHOOLHOUSE MEADOW

5.3 acres – Temple

For many years, Schoolhouse Meadow has welcomed Temple residents and visitors alike.

In addition to its historic schoolhouse, this town-owned property also boasts important natural resources, especially water. A drinking water well on the property taps a groundwater aquifer – a deep layer of sand and gravel that holds water – and serves several nearby village buildings, including the town hall, post office, church, and library. The land is also located next to or near hundreds of acres of other conserved land to the northwest and east. Community support for protecting Temple's Schoolhouse Meadow forever is strong, and residents voted at the March 2023 town meeting to place a conservation easement on this special space. We thank all Temple residents and officials for trusting the Conservancy to be their partner in conserving the property.

The next time you drive into Temple village, we hope the scenic rural character welcomes you as warmly as the town welcomed our involvement.



Visitors to Temple will recognize Schoolhouse Meadow – now conserved through a permanent conservation easement!

Photo by Scott Hecker.

KERMIT A. SCHOTT FOREST PRESERVE

216 acres – Frankestown

Diane Schott was one of the Conservancy's earliest champions, serving multiple terms on the board of trustees, including as president. Before she and her husband John passed away, the Schotts made plans to establish the Kermit A. Schott Forest Preserve in honor of their son, who died in 2010. Today, the Conservancy is honored to own and be stewards of this special place, and we are grateful to Diane and John's surviving children, Jared and Jennifer, for working with us to make their parents' wish a reality.

The preserve consists of 216 acres along the northern boundary of Frankestown, on the eastern edge of the Monadnock region. With 1,400 feet of shoreline on scenic Shattuck Pond – the last remaining unprotected corner of the pond – and 45 acres of wetlands, water is the star of the Preserve. The land also connects and enlarges to more than 1,000 acres of previously conserved land, and nearly the entire property is classified as top-tier wildlife habitat by the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

Conservation can be many things at once – in this case, a way of both honoring family and leaving a legacy for future generations.



We are honored to now own the Kermit A. Schott Forest Preserve.

The Future of Conservation

The natural landscape of the Monadnock region has always been vital to the health and quality of life enjoyed by the people who live here. However, climate change, poorly planned development, and poor access to outdoor recreation threaten this way of life. To meet these challenges with effective solutions, we are proud to announce a bold initiative: Building a Resilient Future, a capital campaign for the land, climate and people of the Monadnock region.

This historic campaign seeks to maximize the impact and accelerate the pace of land conservation in our region in two ways: First, by increasing the Conservancy's staff capacity to protect and steward more land, and second, by funding a new, permanent home for the organization on donated land in downtown Keene, NH. This campaign is the largest in the organization's history, with a total goal of \$6,800,000.

With thanks and gratitude to a few early supporters, the campaign is off to an impressive start. To date, nearly \$5,500,000 has been raised towards our goal. This total includes a \$500,000 grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission, a highly competitive federal grant program.

You are invited to support the campaign with a donation to help meet this urgent moment. Thanks to a grant from an anonymous foundation, each new donation will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$500,000! Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks about how to donate. In the meantime, donations are

welcome on the Monadnock Conservancy website – monadnockconservancy.org/resilientfuture. Campaign funds will be used to hire additional staff and build permanent headquarters for the Conservancy in Keene – and we're making progress! We have hired one of the four positions and the remaining three are underway.

While fundraising for the campaign continues, the design and construction of the new headquarters marches forward. The building will be an energy efficient, net-zero building on a beautiful piece of land adjacent to Ashuelot River Park. This gift of land is remarkable not just for its value, but because the headquarters will be right in the heart of Keene.

We have hired a construction management firm, Chapman Construction, and we are finalizing design plans with our architect, Sheldon Pennoyer of Sheldon Pennoyer Architects, a firm that specializes in sustainable design. We have also been working closely with the City of Keene to finalize these plans – they have been incredible partners, and we thank them for their support of this project. We are aiming to break ground in early summer of this year. We are excited to welcome all of you to the new headquarters in the coming months!



EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE 01

Stories About This Place

2024 was our 35th year in operation, a big milestone! Last year was also the 10th anniversary of our Stories About This Place event – a wonderful evening of stories and music where locals talk about their connection to the land. An engaged and excited audience joined us at the Peterborough Town House to hear from a notable group of locals including author Ernest Hebert, NHPBS host and author Rebecca Rule, farmer Tyler Rich, friends of the Conservancy Julianna Stevens and Bob Brown, along with pianist and composer Ben Cosgrove.

Each story brought a new perspective on what it means to love and care for the land. Some speakers drew inspiration from this place to create unique works of fiction, music, and humor, while others told the crowd what drew them to this area, and how it has impacted their lives. This event shows how the land, and our connection to it, can be expressed in so many ways, from works of art to growing the perfect cucumber.

Pictured: Local farmer Tyler Rich tells the audience about his decision to become a farmer in the region.



Stories 2025 !

If you haven't had a chance to enjoy our Stories About This Place event, 2025 is shaping up to be another great year. Join us on March 28th at the Peterborough Town House for a chance to hear from artists, farmers, and other passionate locals. Watch our social media and email newsletters for more information including registration.



Forest Stewardship Summer Series

We love providing our community with opportunities to learn about the best ways to manage forests and wildlife on their land.

In 2024, the Conservancy, in collaboration with the Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD), Distant Hill Gardens, UNH Cooperative Extension, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), presented the Forest Stewardship Summer Series – a series of educational outings led by forestry and wildlife experts. Throughout this series attendees learned about managing invasive species, ways to restore a fish habitat, techniques to protect water resources and prevent erosion, and so much more. Thank you to everyone who attended and to our partners who made this event possible.

ANNUAL CELEBRATION

On October 5th, 2024, we celebrated the 35th Annual Celebration of the Monadnock Conservancy. It was a warm autumn day in Ashuelot River Park, and more than 120 of our friends were in attendance.



In addition to catching up with friends new and old, the team from Monadnock Paddle was on hand to give guided kayaking tours of the Ashuelot River, children's author Heidi E.Y. Stemple provided stories and activities for kids, Bud Winsor regaled us with his famous tree tour, and a special reception to honor current and former trustees made for a fun-filled day. Thank you to those who joined us, and we look forward to seeing many more friends next year.



Attendees of our Annual Celebration paddle through Ashuelot River Park.



Cathie and Taylor Sage pay it forward

The Conservancy is grateful for every dollar donated to protect and conserve the land in this special place. Some supporters go the extra mile and work with our team to donate portions of their estate to this work after their death. This program is called the Monadnock Forever Society, and it is a great way to ensure that what you love about this region will remain for future generations.

Cathie and Taylor Sage joined the Monadnock Forever Society in 2024 and although the wildlife and land can't thank them, we can! We interviewed Cathie to get her thoughts on why this region means so much to her and her husband, what they hope to see in the future, and how their interest in duck hunting led them to work restore duck habitats. Enjoy!

What is your personal history in the Monadnock region?

Taylor came to the area in the 1960's and attended Nathaniel Hawthorne College in Antrim and I came to NH in the early 80's attending Franklin Pierce College. We owned and operated Sage Auto Supply in Peterborough in the 80's and 90's and later Sage with Thyme Catering in the 2000's. Since then, we have supported and served on the boards of several non-profit organizations in the Monadnock Region.

What do you love most about living here?

We are so fortunate to live in such a culturally rich and beautiful area! We have such close access to the arts, a good hospital, state parks, seemingly endless trails to hike and explore, an involved community, area non-profits providing resources for folks; things for which people in other communities have to travel great distances to enjoy.

Why did you decide to support the Conservancy by planning to donate to this mission after your death?

NH is stunning! Access to forests, fields, mountains and streams is in everyone's best interest. Making sure there is a balance between developed and protected land is key to the future of our community. It means that protected land will be here for future generations and will draw folks from outside the community to spend time here as well.

If you could say something to future generations about supporting conservation, what would that be?

Think wisely and strategically about the future. Nature, our forests, plants and animals depend on us for their future. It is an enormous responsibility protecting their environment and, in turn, ours. We already see the effects land development has on our wildlife. Land conservation protects their precious habitats and protects our access to it. It's a win for all of us.

We know that you and Taylor are helping to build duck houses on some of our properties in partnership with Ducks Unlimited. What made you interested in this work? How will these duck houses help our web-footed friends?

We have been duck hunters all our lives. While duck hunters are obviously interested in protecting the wetlands ducks inhabit, it's not just about hunting. Some of our greatest memories are sitting by a pond early in the morning and watching the sun come up or an afternoon overlooking a marsh in a duck blind or picking up decoys after watching the sun set. It's about seeing wildlife, birds flying and flocking, breathing fresh air, camaraderie, and just being in nature for a few hours.

Monadnock Ducks Unlimited seeks to conserve and protect wetlands for waterfowl in our area. The intention with the duck boxes is to provide wildlife education and a project for the local cub scouts who built the boxes while encouraging protected nesting to local Wood Ducks so their population will thrive. We partnered in 2024 with The Harris Center placing several boxes on their land. We have more boxes to install and are working with Monadnock Conservancy to find appropriate spaces for them.

If you are interested in joining the Monadnock Forever Society, please contact Lindsay Taflas at 603-357-0600, ext. 113 or email Lindsay@monadnockconservancy.org.

Cheshire Walkers

Cheshire Walkers, our walking group for seniors (or anyone who prefers a slower walking pace), enjoyed another heartwarming season in 2024.

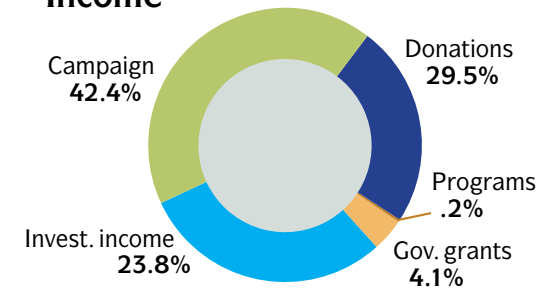
We took the Cheshire Walkers group on eight walks in the spring, and an additional seven walks in the fall, visiting trails we own and manage, as well as discovering other gorgeous and conserved trails managed by partner organizations. For many of the walks, our naturalists were on hand to point out the wonders that surround us in the Monadnock region. Stay tuned to our social media and email newsletters for the Cheshire Walkers 2025 spring schedule.



The Cheshire Walkers enjoy a tour of Kroka Expeditions in the spring of 2024.

Your Support Matters

Income



Resilient Future Campaign	\$ 2,094,221
Individual, business, & foundation donations	\$ 1,454,222
Investment & endowment income	\$ 1,175,825
Government grants	\$ 202,257
Program service revenue & misc.	\$ 10,604

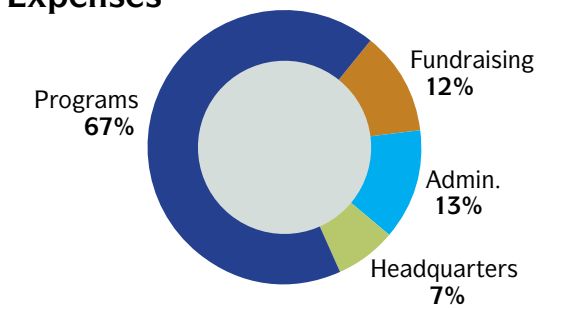
Total: \$ 4,937,129

The Monadnock Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) organization.

These numbers reflect the 2024 fiscal year (October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024).

Complete audited financial statements are available upon request.

Expenses



Category	Amount
Programs	
Land protection	\$ 593,626
Conservation easement stewardship	\$ 208,779
Outreach	\$ 176,558
Land management & recreation	\$ 108,647
Community conservation	\$ 86,302

Programs Subtotal: \$ 1,173,912

New Headquarters	\$ 124,792
Fundraising	\$ 211,359
Management & administration	\$ 232,990

Total: \$ 1,743,052





Together, protecting forever
the land we love

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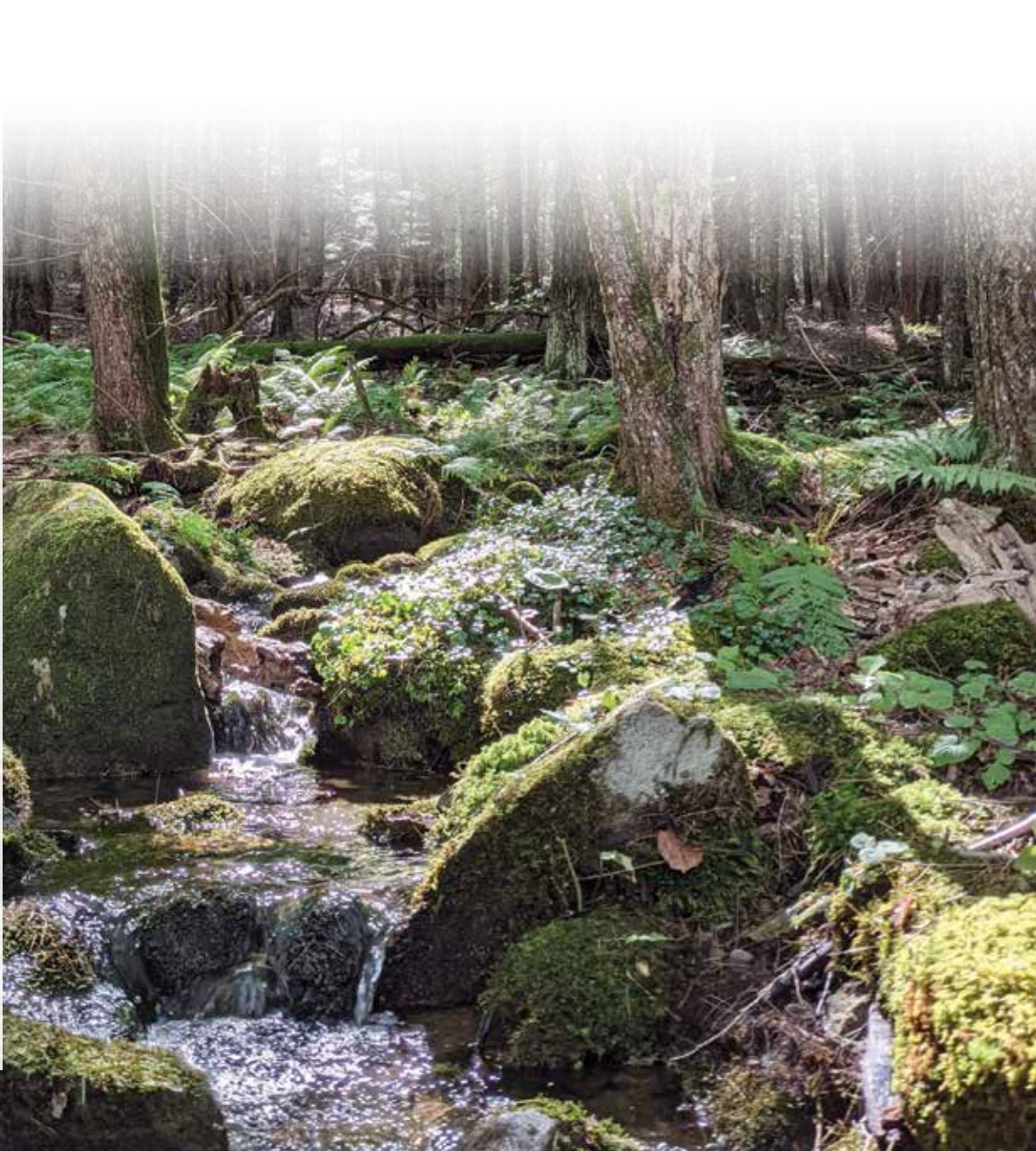
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