



Together, protecting forever
the land we love

Newsletter

FALL/WINTER 2024

Seasons Change

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We love this time of year. The trees, with vibrant certainty, declare summer has ended and falling temperatures remind us that winter is around the corner. We know, as do you, that change is a natural cycle that brings new adventures and opportunities.

The Monadnock Conservancy has been going through its own changing of the seasons. As you may know, Ryan Owens, who has served faithfully and passionately as our executive director for the past 16 years, is leaving the Conservancy to lead the New England Forestry Foundation. While we are sad to see Ryan go and will certainly miss him, we are extremely proud of him. In his place, we have a passionate and knowledgeable staff, a dedicated board of trustees, and an experienced interim executive director. There’s so much work to do – thank you for walking into this new season with us. When life gives you snow, make snow angels!



Kayakers enjoy the day at the Conservancy’s annual celebration.

Schoolhouse Meadow

In Temple, the Schoolhouse Meadow is an iconic property that has welcomed residents and visitors for generations. 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 is strong – 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.



A welcoming scene! Schoolhouse Meadow in Temple is now forever conserved.

Picadilly

Picadilly farm is a highly productive organic farm in Winchester. Owners Bruce and Jenny Wooster work tirelessly to supply many of our local stores, including the Brattleboro Food Coop and the Monadnock Food Coop, with locally grown fruits and vegetables. To ensure this farm stays in the hands of farmers for generations to come, the Conservancy is proud to have finalized the purchase of a conservation easement on 21.9 acres of the farm. This conservation easement includes 14 acres of “prime” farmland soil, a designation reserved for the most fertile soil in the nation.

This conservation easement includes 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 and to a non-farmer, the Conservancy will have the right to purchase the property at its “agricultural value” and resell it to a farmer who will

continue to operate it as a commercial farm. Thank you to Bruce and Jenny for working with us to find the right solution for this precious piece of the Monadnock region’s food landscape and to the 113 individuals who supported this project.



Picadilly farm in Winchester, conserved farmland that supplies many of our local stores.



35 years and going strong

The **Monadnock Conservancy** began around a **kitchen table** in Dublin, N.H. in 1989, by local people who wanted to protect something special to them. By 1991, with only a small and dedicated team, the young organization had conserved 80 acres. By the end of the 1990's, 1,500 acres had been conserved. That number grew as communities came together to protect places they loved, different organizations collaborated to conserve important spaces for our local environment, supporters like you donated to projects and our work, while watersheds, wetlands, working farms, and wildlife habitats were forever conserved. Although the impact of conserved land can't be expressed in a number, today we stand at nearly 24,000 acres conserved.

Our supporters, partners, and donors have made it possible for us to conserve many local gems. We are proud and grateful for every acre. The Cunningham Pond project in Peterborough stands out as an example of a community rallying to protect a beautiful pond with exceptional trails and pristine wildlife habitats (including documented sightings of blanding turtles). Another collaborative effort, the West Hill project brought many stakeholders together in 2015 to conserve nearly 700 acres of the California Brook Watershed in Keene, Chesterfield, and Swanzey. Many precious wildlife species have been sighted on this property, including moose, bear, and great blue heron. More recently we worked with the children of the late Diane and John Schott and other stakeholders to create the Kermit A. Schott Forest Preserve, a 216-acre parcel that, along with connected conserved lands, created a 1000-acre stretch of wildlife habitat.

Your support has also made it possible to conserve working farmland. Farmland is disappearing due to development in our region, threatening the locally grown and raised food we enjoy, and once the good soil of a working farm is paved, or left idle, it is gone forever. We have made it a vital part of our mission to conserve farmland like the 7.4 acres used by beloved local farm stand Pete's Stand in Walpole, or the 21.9 acres that make up Picadilly farm in Winchester, which supplies many of our local stores including the Brattleboro Food Coop and the Monadnock Food Coop. We love our local farmers – thank you for helping us to keep the Monadnock region's farmland working and productive.



Beautiful farmland, wetlands, and wildlife habitats are so important, but nothing is more important than connecting with our community and helping our community connect to the land. The Cheshire Walkers program, which we gratefully inherited from the Cheshire Medical Center in 2019, gives seniors the chance to socialize while enjoying the beauty of our local hiking trails. In 2020, we collaborated with the Winchester Learning Center to create a nature park for their students and the greater Winchester community. From 2015 to 2020 we partnered with local farms to provide the Kids Connect! program, which brought students of diverse backgrounds to experience farm life.

We couldn't do it without your support and passion for the open spaces of the Monadnock region. When we meet with landowners and passionate supporters, we are heartened to hear about their experiences on the land and how it has shaped them, the changes they've seen, and their vision for the future of this region. Your passion, combined with our expertise and 35 years of experience, opens a window of hope for our region and the challenges it faces. Thank you.



The Kid's Connect! program brought students from diverse backgrounds to experience farm life.

Building a resilient future

What will the future look like here in the Monadnock region? Will this area with its local farms and abundant green spaces succumb to the pressures of development and the effects of climate change? Can we continue and even expand our work conserving and protecting this place, all the while encouraging new and diverse groups to connect to the land?

We know the answer is an enthusiastic "yes!" Your support has given us 35 years of impact, and we know your support will take us into the future. In that spirit, this fall we are excited to unveil a new campaign to protect what we love about this special place for generations to come. We call it, Building a Resilient Future: A campaign for this region's land, climate, and people.

The demand to conserve land is increasing and at the same time, we have a responsibility to monitor and improve the land we have already conserved. Our conservation easements are forever documents, so we must be a forever organization. To do both jobs successfully – expanding our impact and monitoring the land we have conserved – we plan to hire four full-time staff members. With these new hires, combined with the team already in place, we will be in a great position to conserve more land in a strategic manner.

In addition to hiring new staff, we are also constructing a new, permanent headquarters for the Conservancy on a donated parcel of land adjacent to Ashuelot River Park. This building will be constructed using the latest

sustainable construction techniques and materials, reflecting our values as an organization. This new space will also serve as a hub for conservation efforts in our region and as a resource for our community.

Will you help this region by donating to the Building a Resilient Future campaign? Any donation of any size can make a huge difference. With your support, we can leave our children and grandchildren a more verdant and inclusive world. Visit our website to learn more!



A vision of the future - an image of the Monadnock Conservancy's future headquarters!



Kermit A. Schott Forest Preserve

Ryan Owens: A life of impact continues

As most of you already know, our former executive director, **Ryan Owens**, left the Conservancy to take a new position leading the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF). We are so proud of everything Ryan accomplished at the Conservancy – overseeing an expansion from 6,000 acres conserved to nearly 24,000 acres, building a small organization into a conservation powerhouse – but his greatest accomplishment is the goodwill he built up over his 16 year tenure as executive director. His calm demeanor, paired with his deep expertise of all things land conservation, will be sorely missed by everyone. We are also so proud that he is moving on to lead NEFF, an organization whose mission closely aligns with our own. We know that he will continue to be a great leader, and we thank him for setting the Conservancy up for long-term stability and success.



Ryan Owens, who has served as the Conservancy’s executive director for the past 16 years, left the organization at the end of October.

Below is Ryan’s letter he wrote about his time at the Conservancy, which captures his love for this region. Also, Ryan wanted us to let you know that he will still be living in Walpole and cheering on the Conservancy from the sidelines. Congratulations, Ryan!

My first experience of the Monadnock region was decidedly inauspicious.

On a bright summer day in 2002, I was unceremoniously kicked off the summit of Mount Monadnock by a state park employee. My offense? Soliciting petition signatures for a campaign to expand wilderness areas in the White Mountain National Forest. I probably deserved it, even if I was giving out free candy. A newly minted conservation outlaw, little did I know that, four years later, the protection of the region named for that mountain would become my profession and my heart’s work for the next 18 years.

I couldn’t have asked for a better place than the Monadnock Conservancy to write the first chapter of my conservation career. The landscape of southwest New Hampshire is undeniably spectacular, but it’s the people of the region who gave my work true meaning. The Yankee farmers who allowed us to earn their trust over the years and through countless stories told across the tailgate. The elegant, sharp-tongued retired ladies “from away” who knew the pain of losing a special place and weren’t about to let it happen again, by God. The sons and daughters determined to honor their parents’ legacies at any cost. The gentle doctor. The forester poet. To the hundreds of people whose knowledge and love of the land inspired and humbled us, I am forever grateful.

My decision to leave the Conservancy was one of the hardest I’ve ever made, but I’m excited for the next chapters, both mine and the Conservancy’s. The New England Forestry Foundation feels like a logical next step for me, and I’m drawn to their pioneering work at the intersection of sustainable forestry and climate action. I also think new leadership will be healthy for the Conservancy, which I will leave in the very capable hands of Lacy Gillotti as interim executive director.

Meet Lacy, the Conservancy’s interim executive director

Lacy Gillotti has served as the Conservancy’s deputy director for the past four years. Upon the departure of Ryan Owens, the board of trustees were confident that she was the perfect person to lead us through this leadership transition. Lacy came to the Conservancy with deep experience in the nonprofit sector, bringing with her a Master’s degree in nonprofit administration, seven years of experience leading a division of a large nonprofit, and another decade working to build and shape teams in collegiate athletics. Lacy has guided the Conservancy’s day-to-day operations for the past four years and has been instrumental in expanding the Conservancy’s impact to new and diverse members of our community. And fun fact: In addition to being a great leader, Lacy is also the only member of our staff who gets picked first for sports, having played collegiate softball and (according to reports)



Lacy Gillotti, a four-year veteran of the Conservancy, has been promoted to interim executive director.

absolutely killing it in her basketball league. She’s a true team player. Welcome Lacy!

A very happy birthday!

We wanted to take a moment to thank everyone who attended our Annual Celebration at Ashuelot River Park in Keene! We met so many supporters and new friends, all of whom believe in the mission and longevity of this organization. This was a true celebration, and a special thanks is owed to Monadnock Paddle for leading guided kayaking tours, Don Dawson for the beautiful music, Heidi E.Y. Stemple for bringing her art to the kids in attendance, Sheldon Pennoyer and his team for giving tours of our future headquarters, and Bud Winsor for doing what he does best, showing us the intricate

beauty of our local trees. It was an amazing day that filled our hearts.

Thank you!



Attendees listen to outgoing executive director Ryan Owens speak at the Annual Celebration.



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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.



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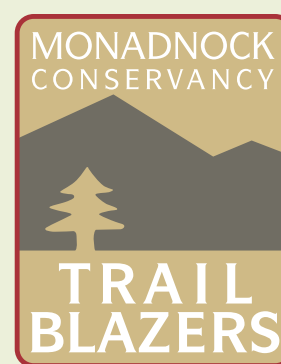
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THANK YOU!

Donors who give a monthly or quarterly donation help sustain the Conservancy's momentum. These supporters, affectionately called "Monadnock Trailblazers," provide a reliable, ongoing stream of income, ensuring there are always funds available to advance critical land conservation projects.

You can join the Trailblazers by making a monthly or quarterly gift of as little as \$5, and you'll be surprised how fast that impact adds up. Visit MonadnockConservancy.org/donate or contact Lindsay Tafas, development director, at Lindsay@MonadnockConservancy.org or 603-357-0600, ext. 113.



Thank you to our current Monadnock Trailblazers for their ongoing and vital support!

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