



Together, protecting forever  
the land we love

Newsletter

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

# Celebrate Summer On Conserved Land

Conserved land helps to mitigate the effects of climate change, protects wildlife and habitats, supports the viability of local farms, and preserves the rural character of this region. Conserved land is also a gateway to joy: The joy we feel when we experience nature on our own terms, see the next generation learning about the outdoors, and savor locally grown food produced by the Monadnock region's farmers. → pg 3



# Mr. Owens Goes to Washington

*By Ryan Owens, Executive Director, the Monadnock Conservancy*

**Having worked for a land trust for the past 17 years,** I am no stranger to climbing hills in springtime. This April, I had the opportunity to climb *the Hill* in Washington, D.C. to meet with New Hampshire's Congressional delegation to discuss important federal land conservation legislation and policy issues. I went to Capitol Hill with three goals: To express my gratitude for the support New Hampshire's land conservation community receives from our federal lawmakers; to urge them to support robust conservation funding in the next Farm Bill, now up for five-year reauthorization; and to educate them about what is and is not working in the federal conservation programs we use most.

I was not alone. Along with about 70 land trust colleagues from across the country, my visit was part of Advocacy Days, a week of in-person federal land conservation policy advocacy organized by the Land Trust Alliance. I also had the pleasure of being joined by Peter Kenyon, president of the Monadnock Conservancy Board of Trustees. Peter and I met with three lawmakers and members of their staffs – Senators Maggie Hassan and Jeanne Shaheen, and Congresswoman Ann McLane Kuster.

Our first job was to thank the senators and congresswoman for their consistently strong support for the many federal laws and programs that facilitate land conservation. For example, all three have long supported the income tax deductibility of donated conservation easements, which serves as a key incentive to landowners to conserve their land. We expressed particular gratitude for their support of the Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act, which stamped out a certain kind of abusive, fraudulent conservation easement donation scheme that enabled promoters and investors to turn conservation into a profit-making venture. Despite well-funded opposition, the law passed, and it now protects those of us doing legitimate conservation from being pulled down by a few bad apples. The offices of Senators Shaheen and Hassan and Congresswoman Kuster are deeply knowledgeable about these programs and laws, and Peter and I delivered our message of gratitude to willing and interested ears.



The timing of our visit was strategic, as Congress is just beginning negotiations on the Farm Bill – a massive package of legislation that funds nearly every facet of food production in the United States, from farm to fork. For reference, the 2018 Farm Bill called for approximately \$428 billion in spending over its five-year life span. While the vast majority of Farm Bill spending is for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), of particular importance to land trusts are billions in appropriations for farm and forest conservation programs, including the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which we utilize extensively to fund farmland conservation in the Monadnock region. Because they have seen firsthand how important conservation is to New Hampshire's quality of life, the senators and congresswoman readily agreed to advocate for strong funding for this and related conservation programs in the new Farm Bill.



Because our Congressional delegation was already so supportive of and knowledgeable about land conservation, we had the chance to dig deeper into other topics that affect our work, including where we see room for improvement. For example, the slow pace and frustrating bureaucracy of grant programs like ACEP mean that many of our conservation easement projects drag on for years before completion. Such delays pose grave risks of projects collapsing, as some landowners simply can't afford to wait to be paid for their conservation easements, sometimes due to ill health or financial distress. We expressed the need for more streamlined and efficient processes, and we learned that much of the problem is due to too few federal employees to administer the programs. Overall, while we are currently blessed with an abundance of government funding for land conservation, there are increasing signs that the federal and state governments lack the capacity to deploy it on the ground in a timely manner. Nevertheless, the lawmakers and staffers with whom we met were highly receptive to our concerns and willing to seek solutions, both in the Farm Bill itself and in the agencies through which it is implemented.

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 politicians on both sides of the aisle. Other states are seeing a trend toward land conservation being dragged into existing political and cultural battles. As with many political fights, the truth gets hidden behind reductive talking points, but the reality is that land conservation is completely voluntary and not a government land grab. Most importantly, land conservation benefits everyone – hikers and hunters, young and old, farmers and city dwellers. We thank all lawmakers of any political party who recognize that conserving land is a gift to our children and grandchildren.

## Celebrate Summer, *continued from front*

This summer, we invite you to be joyful—to put your boots in the mud and your kayaks in the water, safe in the knowledge that these experiences are protected for you and for the next generation. In the spirit of joy, on October 14th, 2023, we invite you to our Annual Celebration. This year's event will focus on conveying the joy of our work and engaging younger generations in the importance of conservation. It will also be a party, and everyone is invited to celebrate what we've accomplished, together, in a family-friendly setting.

More details will be coming in the following months. In the meantime, we hope this newsletter will show you just some of the joyous ways we are serving the community. In the last seven months, we have conserved important wetlands, deep forests, and small farms. The Conservancy is also a voice for the land, and we are proud to show how we advocate for conservation at the highest levels of government. As you will see, our team, and our impact, are growing. Like anything that grows, we could not survive without your support and care.



# A Legend Passes

## Honoring Betsey Harris, a founder and driving force behind the Conservancy.

**Elizabeth “Betsey” Harris was a woman of vision and determination** – a force of and for nature. The Monadnock Conservancy owes our existence and much of our success to her devotion to the cause of conservation.

Betsey and two others founded the Monadnock Conservancy in 1989 to conserve land in the towns surrounding Mount Monadnock. She quickly became a leader and catalyst, coordinating with other groups and individuals to multiply the nascent Conservancy’s effectiveness. Before her first term as trustee had expired, Betsey had led the organization to the point where it could and did hire its first employee, a land protection specialist. During her second term, the Conservancy protected an additional 10,000 acres, growing the total area then conserved by the organization to more than 12,000 acres. In 2009, Betsey received the Sarah Thorne Award, given by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests to recognize individuals who have made a major



contribution to the protection of the New Hampshire landscape, and who, in the course of their own conservation efforts, have also enhanced the capacity of others.

We will miss Betsey’s love for this region and her unmatched ability to inspire and persuade others. She was always kind of heart, but she never minced words on important matters; when Betsey spoke, people listened. Although we mourn the loss of a legend in New Hampshire conservation, we are heartened that the mission she believed in is alive and well. For the community, the climate, the wildlife, and for Betsey, we conserve.

# Getting Our Hands Dirty

## Mud Season Brings Trail Work

**For our Stewardship team**, spring is the time to do the important work of trail and property maintenance on the 2,200+ acres we own and manage for public access. In addition to monitoring the land to ensure it is not being abused, the team also gets their hands dirty ensuring our trails are safe and passable. Whether it’s clearing a fallen 100-year-old pine from the Calhoun Family Forest (as pictured here), replacing bridges over muddy wetlands, or simply removing branches from paths, this team has its work cut out for it once the snow melts and mud season begins – especially after this winter’s heavy snows. These trails and properties need to be regularly, and perpetually,



maintained and repaired. It is just one example of how the Conservancy must grow to keep pace with the demand for, and responsibilities of, conservation.

# Water, Wildlife, and Legacy

## 56 acres are forever conserved in Jaffrey

**We often talk about how the land we conserve is effective** at storing carbon, offering a natural solution to climate change. For many in the Monadnock region, land also stores memories. Nan and Cal Sholl moved to the region in the 1970s and fell in love with the natural landscape and wildlife. When Nan died in 2020 and Cal in 2021, their children saw conserving the family land in Jaffrey as a way to honor their parents' memory and help the region preserve a vital piece of wetland and forest.

Wetlands make up more than half of the 56-acre property that the Sholl children donated to the Monadnock Conservancy. A stratified-drift aquifer – a critical and highly productive groundwater resource – underlies almost 16 acres. Along with over 2,400 feet of streams and a connection to 941 acres of previously conserved land to the



east, the Sholl Wetland is an ideal habitat for wildlife. The Monadnock Conservancy is proud to help the Sholl family honor their parents and forever conserve an important water and wildlife resource.

# A Win for Students of Nature

## 67 acres conserved in Marlow & Alstead

**Farming and love for the outdoors converge at Kroka Expeditions**, a wilderness school in Marlow that offers a variety of educational programming for youth of all ages, both onsite at their organic farm and further afield in locations across the globe. The Conservancy is proud to announce that a second conservation easement has been placed on land owned by Kroka! The first easement, granted last spring, protected 11 acres of prime farmland in Alstead. This new easement will conserve an additional 56 acres that comprise Kroka's headquarters in Alstead and Marlow. 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.

# Going Farther Together

## 250 acres conserved in Keene

**We are fortunate** to operate in a state with so many impactful conservation organizations. With shared vision, incredible progress is possible. For years, the City of Keene and numerous conservation groups wanted to conserve a 250-acre forest in northern Keene along Old Gilsum Road. In 2022, the Conservancy finalized the purchase and now owns and manages this property. Maynard Forest III helps to form a contiguous block of conserved land, connecting the City of Keene's 1,044-acre Goose Pond Forest with the Conservancy's 267-acre Maynard Forest in Gilsum. The property is also part of a larger landscape of nearby conserved lands, including Surry Mountain Lake, owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and The Nature Conservancy's 1,368-acre Surry Mountain Preserve. It's cause for optimism that so many different organizations are working together to protect these spaces for current and future residents of the Monadnock region.



## Welcome Janine Marr!

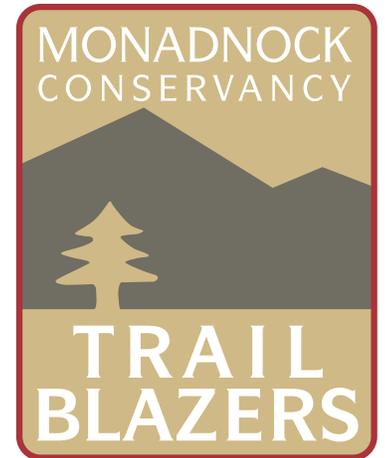
When Rick Brackett left the Conservancy after 15 years to work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, we weren't sure we would ever be able to fill his shoes (and boots). Thankfully for us, we continue to attract big talent to our little land trust. Janine Marr has joined the Conservancy as our new Land and Recreation Manager. Janine worked as an adjunct professor at Antioch University New England's Environmental Studies department and as a lead researcher for Antioch's Center for Climate Preparedness and Community Resilience. Prior to earning her PhD in Environmental Studies at Antioch, Janine was a forester apprentice for Garland Lumber, and she served as Chair of the Gilsum Conservation Commission, helping conserve the town's largest land parcel, the Surry Mountain Preserve. We are thrilled to have Janine join our growing team!



# Trailblazers Forge a Path Forward

**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.

We're so grateful to all the new people who have become Trailblazers. You can join them by making a monthly or quarterly gift of as little as \$5. You'll be surprised how fast that impact adds up. It's easy to start a recurring gift: just visit [MonadnockConservancy.org/donate](http://MonadnockConservancy.org/donate) or contact Lindsay Taflas, development director, at [Lindsay@MonadnockConservancy.org](mailto:Lindsay@MonadnockConservancy.org) or 603-357-0600, ext. 113. Recurring gifts can be established through a direct debit from your bank account, credit card, or debit card.



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

Maureen Ahern, Dublin

Bob Allen, New Ipswich

Laura Andrews, Keene

Francis McBride & Pamela Armstrong, Jaffrey

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## Thank You

The Monadnock Conservancy now oversees **more than 23,000 acres** of permanently conserved forests, wetlands, and farms. It is our duty and privilege to be the stewards of this land, but we could not do it without the support of donors. Your donations help ensure we have the staff, tools, and expertise to seize conservation opportunities when they arise. Whether you care about the local economy, clean water, wildlife habitat, or beautiful views, the Conservancy works to ensure that these resources are here for you and for future generations.



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