

# Piscataquog News

THE PISCATAQUOG LAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER



## Securing a Forest's Future in Brookline

*Photos by Tom Jones*

Continuing the partnership that began with 2017's Nissitissit land conservation project, PLC and the Town of Brookline are working together to place a conservation easement on more than 430 acres of town conservation land known to locals as Hobart-Fessenden Woods. The land was acquired by the town over a period of years using town funds, but it is not currently subject to a conservation easement or other outside restriction that guarantees its permanent protection. The conservation easement held by PLC will ensure the public's investment is protected, and that a future town vote cannot change the land's open space status.

Hobart-Fessenden Woods is a remarkable asset to the people of Brookline. The land features gently rolling forest, over two and half miles of streams, and more than fifty acres of wetlands. It is roamed by bear, bobcat, and moose, and hosts an active Great Blue Heron rookery. Public recreation is encouraged via an extensive trail system for hiking, trail running, bicycling and snowmobiling. The local snowmobile club constructed and maintains some of the trails, and monitor their use in coordination with the town (motorized wheeled vehicles are prohibited). The property features trailhead kiosks and a

picnic shelter constructed by Girl Scouts as their Gold Award projects. Last but not least, Hobart-Fessenden Woods directly abuts lands held by the Beaver Brook Association, and when combined comprise over a thousand acres unbroken by roads or development.

A warrant article authorizing the town's donation of the easement to PLC had the unanimous support of Brookline's Board of Selectmen, and was passed overwhelmingly by Brookline voters on Town Meeting day. PLC and the Brookline Conservation Commission are now working to raise \$73,000 in private contributions to complete the conservation easement, including deed drafting and baseline documentation, survey,



Great Blue Heron nest.

environmental assessment, legal review, and funding for perpetual monitoring and stewardship.

Drew Kellner, a Brookline Selectman and longtime Conservation Commission member, says "it is wonderful to see the town of Brookline stepping forward to ensure their investment

in Hobart-Fessenden Woods will be protected in perpetuity. The town's partnership with PLC has solidified our commitment to conservation and we look forward to successfully completing the current project with the public's help."

### Please make a donation to the Hobart-Fessenden Easement Project

To make a tax-deductible donation, make your check payable to the Piscataquog Land Conservancy, and include "Hobart-Fessenden" in the memo line.

Contributions can also be made securely online at [www.plcnh.org](http://www.plcnh.org)



# From My Corner

by Chris Wells, PLC President/Executive Director

## We put a man on the moon.

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

– President John F. Kennedy, 1961

Recently my wife and I went to a Sunday matinee of *Apollo 11*, a documentary about the first manned moon landing in the summer of 1969. On the eve of returning to earth, mission commander Neil Armstrong was asked if he had any message for the people of the world. He gave simple, self-effacing thanks to the thousands of people who labored for eight years to conceive, build and test the fragile vessel that achieved the impossible, and carried him and his shipmates safely home.

That same weekend I was browsing in my local bookstore, and happened upon *Drawdown*. Published in 2017 by a group of scientists and economists, the book compiles and ranks one hundred specific actions that humankind can take to stop the rise in greenhouse gasses in earth’s atmosphere by 2050. What’s great about *Drawdown* — in addition to engendering hope instead of despair — is that it is concrete, comprehensive and full of unexpected priorities. For instance, the #1 ranked solution is recycling or otherwise containing refrigerants from worn out refrigerators

and air conditioners. Who knew? The #3 priority is reducing food waste (think landfill methane). Other more familiar solutions like wind turbines (#2), preserving rainforests (#5) and rooftop solar (#10) are all high on the to-do list.

As with reaching the moon in the 1960s, reaching peak greenhouse gases by the middle of this century is an enormous challenge, but it is solvable if approached the

same way. Americans made it to the moon in 1969 first and foremost because we decided we *could* do it, and that as hard as it would be, it would bring out the best in us. Thousands of people then broke the problem down into manageable pieces, and solved each with sustained and coordinated human effort. Despite the continuing partisan battles over climate change, huge progress is being made on many of the solutions outlined in *Drawdown*, especially in the last decade.

But what does any of this have to do with the work of a local land trust in southern New Hampshire? Well, #12 on *Drawdown*’s priority list is conserving and managing temperate forests. *That’s us*. PLC has been protecting the forests of our corner of North America since not long after Apollo 11 returned home, and year in year out, the good work continues.



Photo by Gabriella Nissen

PLC’s 5th Annual Rose Mountain Rumble (RMR) hits the dirt roads of Lyndeborough and surrounding towns on Saturday, August 24th, 2019. Last year’s Rumble attracted 150 riders and we’re capping this year’s registration at 200. The RMR welcomes riders of every ability, offering a variety of loops

from a 20-miler for more casual riders to a full 100K course to challenge the most hardened gravel grinder. All routes are marked and cue sheets are provided to every rider (GPX files can also be downloaded from the RMR website). The ride begins and ends at Lyndeborough Center Hall. Discounted “early bird” registration of \$70 per rider is open through May 31st. Regular registration of \$90 per rider begins June 1st. Registration includes our legendary post-ride lunch prepared by the Wilton-Lyndeborough Women’s Club and an RMR tee-shirt while supplies last. Net proceeds benefit the Piscataquog Land Conservancy. To learn more about the Rumble and to register, visit [www.rosemountainrubble.com](http://www.rosemountainrubble.com). Not riding but would like to participate? We need volunteers! We have a variety of fun and easy volunteer jobs, and time slots in the morning, midday, and late afternoon. So come have some fun, support local land conservation, and meet some great people. If you time it right, you’ll even get an amazing lunch! Interested? Contact Doria Harris at [doria.harris@gmail.com](mailto:doria.harris@gmail.com). Get ready to Rumble!

**Want to be a business sponsor of the Rose Mountain Rumble? Call Chris Wells at 487-3331.**



# Land Protection Updates

Meadowsend property. Photo by Karen Broemme

## PLC Projects in Weare and Goffstown Awarded State Grants

In December 2018, PLC was informed that two of PLC's current land conservation projects had been awarded major grants by the state's Aquatic Resources Mitigation Fund (ARM). PLC's acquisition of the 205-acre Meadowsend property in Weare has been awarded a \$185,000 grant, which represents nearly two-thirds of the funds we need to complete the project. PLC's 52-acre Jennings easement project in Goffstown has also been awarded \$94,000 by the ARM program. When added to funds already committed by Town of Goffstown, the grant gets the Jennings project to full funding. Administered by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the Aquatic Resources Mitigation Fund focuses on the conservation and restoration of wetlands and other aquatic resources. Its funding comes from mitigation payments made by building or transportation projects that impact wetlands. PLC is deeply grateful to the ARM program for its generous support of our land conservation work.

## Fundraising Continues for Meadowsend Land Purchase

As we head into spring, the Piscataquog Land Conservancy is working furiously to complete due diligence tasks and raise the remaining funds we need to complete our purchase of the Meadowsend property in Weare. The tract comprises 205 acres of ecologically rich forest and wetlands bordering our Ferrin Pond Preserve. PLC has until June 30, 2019 to raise \$300,000

and complete the purchase of the property, and as this newsletter went to press, we had already secured \$250,000 in funding commitments from the state's Aquatic Resources Mitigation (ARM) grants program (see next story), the Emma Sawyer Trust, and the Merrimack Conservation Partnership. To close the remaining gap, we will be seeking additional grants, and also hope PLC members and local residents in Weare will help us get across the finish line. To make a tax-deductible donation to the project, please make your check payable to the Piscataquog Land Conservancy, and include "Meadowsend Project" in the memo line.

## Expanding Riverfront Protection in New Boston

PLC is working to acquire new land along the Middle Branch of the Piscataquog River in New Boston. The owners of the property are preparing to sell their home and land, but before doing so they are dividing the western thirty acres from the forested property and selling it to PLC. Located off of Middle Branch Road, the land abuts our 55-acre George Thomas Wildlife Sanctuary, and is also close to PLC's Tuthill Preserve and



Houghton property. Photo by Tom Jones.

town forest land. The new acquisition would protect another seven hundred feet of frontage on the Middle Branch, which flows along the property's southern boundary. PLC needs to raise \$52,000 to complete the project, including the land purchase price, due diligence costs including survey and legal work, and funding for perpetual monitoring and stewardship. \$30,000 in funding for the purchase has already been committed from New Boston's conservation fund, and PLC is committing \$14,000 from the proceeds from our recent timber harvest at the Tuthill Preserve. We hope the final \$8,000 can be raised

through private donations. To make a tax-deductible donation to the project, please make your check payable to the Piscataquog Land Conservancy, and include "Houghton Project" in the memo line.

Contributions for land protection projects can be made securely online at [www.plcnh.org](http://www.plcnh.org).

# STEWARDSHIP UPDATES

## Volunteers Make 2018 a Stewardship Success

PLC once again completed on-the-ground monitoring of every one of our 108 conservation properties and easements last year. Annual property monitoring is a fundamental responsibility of all land trusts, and PLC couldn't do it without the support of an incredible group of volunteers. In 2018 seventy volunteer monitors collectively put in more than 450 hours walking and documenting our lands. These volunteers are the eyes and ears of PLC, and we are truly grateful for the time, effort and passion they put into watching over these special places. New volunteer land monitors are always welcome. If you love to spend time outside, and have an interest in being a part of our volunteer team, give us a call at 603-487-3331 or email [donna@plcnh.org](mailto:donna@plcnh.org).

## Planting the Proctor Preserve

On September 9th, 2018 a small group of volunteers gathered to plant native trees and shrubs at PLC's new Charles and Calvin Proctor Preserve in Lyndeborough. The focus of the plantings was a half-mile section of Cold Brook that flows through the preserve on its way to the South Branch Piscataquog River, and eventually the Merrimack. PLC had been approached earlier in the year the by Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC), who were looking for suitable places for riparian plantings that could improve water quality. The Proctor Preserve immediately came to mind. The plantings will help stabilize soil, increase wildlife food sources, and eventually restore shade and lower water temperatures in Cold Brook. We're hopeful that the few hours spend planting saplings will repay us with a healthy land and water ecosystem for many years to come!

## Wood, Water & Fish

In another upcoming project at the Proctor Preserve, PLC will be working this summer on a stream restoration project along Scataquog Brook. The project is being done in cooperation with NH Fish and Game Department, which previously provided a \$30,000 grant for the Proctor land purchase from the its Fisheries Habitat account. The stream restoration project will involve felling a small number of trees away from the stream, and then carefully and strategically placing them, either whole or cut into specific lengths, into the stream. This practice has been used for about twenty years in New Hampshire, first in the White Mountain National Forest. Downed wood in streams is natural (trees fall, including into streams) and provides essential functions such as retaining sediment and nutrients, creating habitat for aquatic insects and fish (and even wood turtles!) and forming the deep pools that are favored by brook trout. Intentionally placing wood into streams mimics and speeds up this natural process. Based on scientific studies in the eastern United States, we know that streams that flow through forests that have never been cut have a lot of wood in them. We will aim to get the stretch of Scataquog Brook flowing through the Proctor Preserve to about 75% of what would be naturally-occurring. If you'd like to volunteer to help with this summer's project, contact [john.magee@wildlife.nh.gov](mailto:john.magee@wildlife.nh.gov).



From top: Volunteer at Rose Mountain. Volunteers at Proctor Preserve. Photos by Jordan Bailey. Volunteers at Proctor Preserve. Photo by W. Cheely.



## Farewell Jordan!

In February PLC bid a very fond farewell to **Jordan Bailey**, who had held the position of Stewardship Coordinator since the fall of 2017. Jordan did a truly exceptional job, and will be missed by everyone who had the good fortune to work with her. Jordan departed PLC for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, where she is working with landowners to develop and implement conservation plans for forests and farms throughout Hillsborough and Merrimack Counties. We know she'll do an incredible job at NRCS, and will stay engaged with PLC as a volunteer. Good luck Jordan and don't be a stranger!

# PLC's 48th Annual Meeting Recap

About seventy PLC members gathered on Saturday, November 3, 2018 at the Community Church of New Boston for the Piscataquog Land Conservancy's 48th Annual Meeting.

After some socializing, PLC Board Chair Martha Sunderland called the meeting to order at 4:42 pm. Martha welcomed everyone to the meeting, and gave a brief overview of the work that the PLC had accomplished over the past year. She noted the growing impact and strength of our organization, and thanked the volunteers, committees, board and staff for making this progress possible.

## President's Report

PLC's President & Executive Director Chris Wells gave a presentation (available on the PLC website) that recapped the past year's achievements. Chris discussed the three land conservation projects completed during the 2018 fiscal year: the 112-acre Proctor Preserve in Lyndeborough, the 14-acre addition to our Nissitissit conservation easement in Brookline, and the 7.5-acre Brennan Confluence easement in Frankestown. Chris then gave highlights of the year's stewardship activities, including installing gates at the Rose Mountain Preserve, planting stream buffers on the Proctor Preserve (see story on page 5), and trail work and kiosks at our Black Brook Preserve and Tarr Wildlife Sanctuary. Chris also recapped the year's outreach and fundraising events, including a hugely successful Rose Mountain Rumble cycling event, the 10th annual Lobster by the River, and numerous free walks, XC ski outings, paddles and educational events throughout the year. Chris reviewed PLC's FY18 financial results, noting that PLC had once again completed the year with a balanced operating budget, and continued to grow its stewardship and legal defense funds.

## Business Meeting

The business portion of the meeting began at 5:20 pm. PLC Board Secretary Mike Boyko presented 2017's Annual Meeting minutes, which were unanimously approved by the membership. Board Treasurer Aaron Gill presented PLC's reviewed FY18 financial statements (also available on the PLC website), which after discussion were also approved unanimously. Martha Sunderland then introduced the Governance Committee's nominee for election to a

first term on the PLC Board of Trustees: Doug Powers of Lyndeborough. Doug first became involved with PLC as a co-founder of the Rose Mountain Rumble.

He has served on several non-profit boards including High Mowing School in Wilton, NH, where he also served as the school's Interim Executive Director (see PLC website for Doug's full bio). Doug was elected to the PLC board by a unanimous vote of the membership. The Governance Committee's proposed slate of officers for the next year was then presented: Jim Shirley, *Chair*; Aaron Gill, *Vice Chair*; Joshua Young, *Treasurer*; and Mike Boyko, *Secretary*. The slate was approved unanimously.

Martha also announced Paul Doscher was stepping down from the PLC Board after nine years of service, the maximum allowed under PLC's bylaws. She thanked Paul for his many years of dedicated volunteer service to the PLC and presented him with an appreciation gift card to his favorite fly fishing shop.

## Volunteer of the Year

Chris Wells introduced the 2018 Volunteer of the Year award by stating that usually PLC honors one individual who goes "above and beyond" volunteering for PLC. He explained that the 2018 award was being given to a group of volunteers: the

"Tarr Trail Guys" a small crew of local mountain bikers who have given hundreds of hours of their time and skills to create and maintain the trail system at the PLC's Florence M. Tarr Wildlife Sanctuary. Mike Larson of Goffstown accepted the award on the group's behalf. Continuing the break from tradition, Chris then presented PLC's first "non-human" Volunteer of the Year award to semi-retired draft horse Fannie Mae for her help us install gates at the Rose Mountain Preserve in Lyndeborough. Fannie Mae could not attend due to other commitments, so her owner Dan Buczala accepted the award on her behalf: a framed photo plus bags of apples and carrots.

The business meeting closed at 5:40 p.m. Everyone then enjoyed a delicious supper of homemade soups, chilis, and breads provided by PLC board members and staff. After dinner Paul Doscher gave a fascinating talk on the history of land conservation in the United States.



Volunteer of the Year, Fannie Mae, and Dan. Photograph by Jordan Bailey

# New Hampshire Charitable Foundation Makes Multi-Year Operating Grant to PLC

“...the review committee commented on how much PLC accomplishes with a modest staff size and many volunteers. Resources were tight this year since we were committing funds for a multi-year period, but the committee was pleased to recommend this grant support for PLC.”

In December PLC was awarded a three-year, \$30,000 operating grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (NHCF). Payable in three annual installments, the grant will help cover core expenses like staff salaries, office rent, utilities, insurance, etc. PLC had received operating support from NHCF in the past, but only on a single-year basis. In 2018 the Foundation’s Community Grants program announced a shift to multi-year operating grants, and PLC applied to the revamped program’s inaugural grant round. NHCF’s Grants and Initiatives Manager Gale Dean says “the review committee commented

on how much PLC accomplishes with a modest staff size and many volunteers. Resources were tight this year since we were committing funds for a multi-year period, but the committee was pleased to recommend this grant support for PLC.” We are deeply grateful to the NH Charitable Foundation for this vote of confidence in our work.

## Become a PLC Sustainer!

If you are a financial supporter of PLC, we hope you will consider becoming a sustaining member.

Being a “sustainer” means you spread your support out across the full year through automatic monthly contributions from your bank account or with your credit card. For you, being a sustaining member means that you can better budget your support of PLC, and not have to worry about whether you did or didn’t make that contribution you wanted to make. For PLC, it helps spread out our revenues to better match our monthly expenses.

Our growing list of sustaining members help keep PLC’s operations in trim through the year, so we can spend more time on achieving our land conservation mission, and less time on fundraising. Becoming a sustaining member is easy, you can set it up online at [www.plcnh.org](http://www.plcnh.org), or just give us a call at 487-3331. If you are concerned about being “locked in,” rest assured you can also change the amount of your monthly gift or cancel it at any time. Thank you!



Like most nonprofit organizations, PLC’s operating expenses tend to be pretty steady month to month, while contributions to our annual Conservation Fund are marked by big seasonal swings.

Photo by Joel Stave



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**Land Protection Specialist**  
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**Development Coordinator**  
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**Stewardship Coordinator**  
TBD

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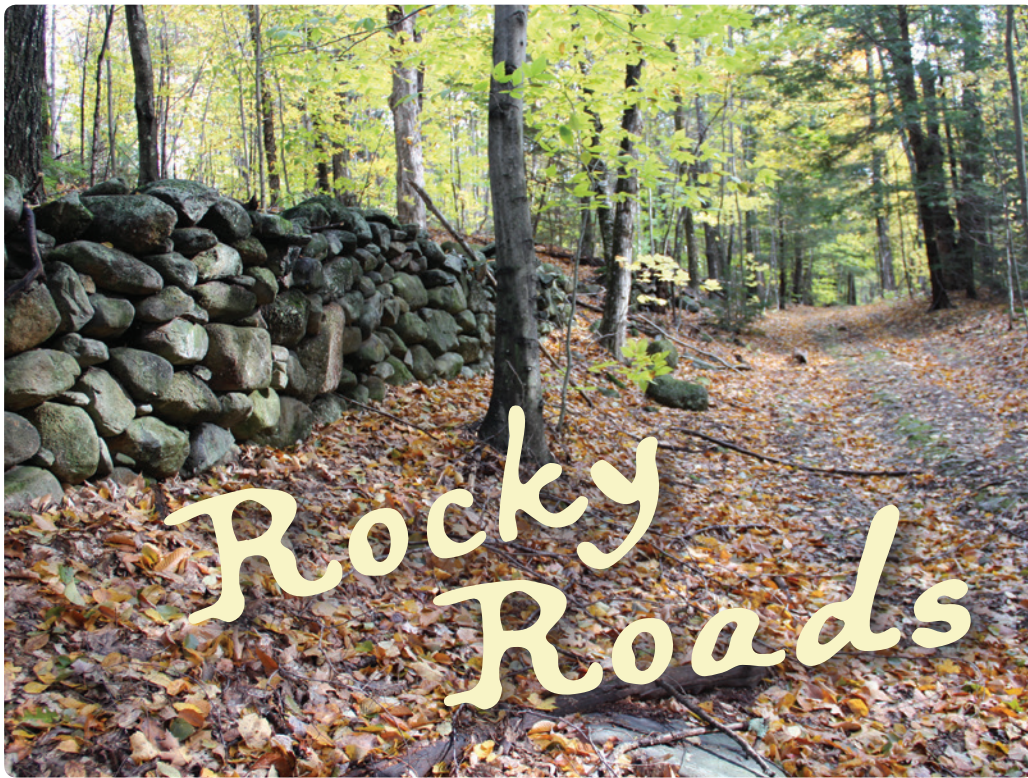
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Story and photos by Dave Butler.

French Road.

One of my favorite woods walks is the Chestnut Hill section of the Joe English Reservation in Amherst. A unique feature of the area are the piles of stones that are scattered randomly across the hillside. These piles are identical to the cairns one sees above tree line in the White Mountains. But where did these piles of



stones come from, and why are they in the middle of the forest? The answer is that the farmer who originally cleared and tilled the land chose to dispose of the glacial till by piling the stones into mounds. The farmer then plowed around the piles and planted his crops. A visitor viewing the cleared fields with the stone piles might have said “well, that’s one way to do it.”

*Stone wall scholar Robert Thorson...refers to stone walls as “linear landfills”.*

*He maintains that stone walls were merely a way to get glacial till out of the way.*

any visitor of the time would have concluded that this was another way to do it. A bonus walk along French Road is the “artisan” stone walls that line the road near where the French house once stood. Based on the time and precision involved, either Mr. French or a subsequent owner was affluent enough to hire a skilled wall builder. I’m

guessing Mr. French was the affluent one, based on the cellar hole.

Stone wall scholar Robert Thorson, author of the book *Stone by Stone*, refers to stone walls as “linear landfills”. He maintains that stone walls were merely a way to get glacial till out of the way. In other words, building walls was yet another — and ultimately the most common — way to do it in our corner of New England. When a field was cleared, the stones were moved to the edge of the field and piled into walls. A single stack wall, or even a double wall, covers less precious land than stones that are just dumped willy-nilly at the edge of the field. A variation on this theme was to move the stones to the edges of the property and build the walls there, establishing a clear property line. These walls are a boon to land surveyors to this day.

Thorson also questions the idea that the function of stone walls was to keep livestock in pastures (or other animals out of the farmer’s fields). There are many examples today of an abandoned stone wall with a sheep fence next to it, or an abandoned stone wall with a barbed wire fence running along it. If the stone wall was able to enclose the sheep or the cows, there would be no need for the additional fencing. If Thorson is right, then the thousands of miles of stone walls in New Hampshire really were just about getting rocks out of the way of the plow.

*Dave Butler of Bedford is a member of PLC’s Stewardship Committee, and a volunteer property monitor.*

Dave Butler will be co-leading a “stone wall” walk along French Road in Lyndeborough on April 20th. The walk is co-sponsored by PLC and the Harris Center for Conservation Education. Register at [www.plcnh.org](http://www.plcnh.org).



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## Upcoming Outings & Events

- Apr 20 / Old Roads & Stone Walls Walk, Lyndeborough
- May 19 / Wildflower Walk, Goffstown
- June 1 / Spring Birding Walk, Frankestown & Greenfield
- Jun 23 / Explore Hobart-Fessenden Woods, Brookline
- Aug 10 / Deering Lake Paddle, Deering
- Aug 24 / 5th Annual Rose Mountain Rumble, Lyndeborough
- Sep 2 / Lobster by the River, New Boston

For the latest on PLC outings, subscribe to our e-news. Just click the "join our mailing list" button at the bottom of our website: [www.plcnh.org](http://www.plcnh.org).

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## Help Protect Our Home

See cover story. Photo by Tom Jones.