With the days getting longer and the temperatures slightly warmer, March 1 was a perfect day to head outside and embrace the positive side of Maine winters – beautiful days with deep snow for playing in! Nearby 40 Maimers bundled up to enjoy the Three River’s property at Hobbs’ Farm in Acton, as part of the Great Maine Outdoor Weekend celebration (postponed from the originally scheduled event two weeks prior, due to severe weather). There was snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, wildlife tracking, and lots of chatter and hot-cider-sipping by the campfire. Amid laughter, teasing, and stepping around the wildly-playing dogs, the day was thoroughly enjoyed by the participants whose ages spanned 7 decades. If you missed it, don’t worry – the property is open to the public year round, so come check it out!

The 170-acre property was donated to Three Rivers by Christine Arnold in 2011. It is comprised of fields and forests, a Revolutionary War cemetery, and a picturesque pond; abutting the parcel is a large wetland complex of high conservation value, known as the South Acton Swamps. Nils and Patty Peterson lease the fields for haying, and are also working to combat the invasive species that conquered the fields in the years it was not managed. A sustainable forestry project is underway in part of the forest, courtesy of the students at the local MapleStone School.

In addition, the extensive woodland now houses a growing trail network, thanks to the hard work of board members, volunteers, and missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). LDS youth worked weekly through much of 2014 cutting and clearing the trails, which now wind on a 2-mile loop, including a wetland overlook and the “Ent Loop”, a meandering path through some massive pines that beg to be climbed, and call to mind the fantastic tree-like giants of Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings.

The five-year plan for this property includes more trails, an outhouse, and a picnic spot. Board member Larissa Crockett says that Hobbs’ Farm “represents the very best of what a land trust can accomplish - partnership with a local farmer, scenic views, historical monuments, and trails and open space to be enjoyed throughout the year by the community.” We are so happy to see the many ways this property is being utilized and enjoyed by the community, and we invite you to become a part of it... 677 Foxes Ridge Road in Acton, 0.4 miles northwest of County Road, open year round!

-Amy Ticomb
A property in Shapleigh the Land Trust recently protected with a conservation easement is the 125-acre Hutchins Forest. Pat and Bill Hutchins bought the parcel from Bert Stanley in the 50s. They wanted to live and raise their family in Shapleigh in part because Bill’s antecedents had been early Shapleigh homesteaders on the Hooper Road. That homestead passed out of the family a number of years before, and Bill did not think it had the quantity and quality of land he wanted, but Bert Stanley’s land did.

What attracted the Hutchins to this land was its suitability for forest management. The parcel’s soils are appropriate for growing harvestable timber, and the forest is readily accessible from town maintained roads.

At the outset, Bill began planting White Pine, Norway Spruce, and a variety of shrubs to attract wildlife. As Bill became familiar with the forest he found numerous hard maple trees and before long he began making and selling maple syrup.

Nevertheless, his principal goal was to manage the forest for profitable timber production without destroying wildlife habitat. To that end, the Hutchins had their woodlot Green Certified by the American Forest Foundation’s American Tree Farm System.

The parcel includes part of one large wetland in the Pump Box Brook watershed. The conservation easement, by limiting future fragmentation of the parcel, will help protect the brook’s water quality, the largest watershed feeding Mousam Lake.

The Land Trust is very grateful to Bill and Pat Hutchins and their family for ensuring that this parcel will continue to produce valuable timber, protect wildlife habitat, and conserve water quality. Theirs is a very generous and foresighted gift to our town.

-Madge Baker

Why should I become a member?

There are many reasons our members choose to support Three Rivers Land Trust. Some are interested in conserving land for environmental reasons—undeveloped land helps preserve our clean air and water. Some are concerned about wildlife habitat—they enjoy bird watching or want to know that our endangered species find a place to thrive. For some it’s about maintaining a way of life—hunting, fishing, forestry, farming, and the related pursuits of bee keeping, maple sugaring—all require that open spaces and farms continue to exist.

There is another reason, though, and it has to do with the Japanese concept of shinrin-yoku, or the Norwegian alternative of friluftsliv. These translate, respectively, to “forest-bathing” and “free air life”. What they mean is that the human spirit requires time in nature in order to recharge, to reduce stress, and to keep us from illness. This isn’t about extreme pursuits of extreme conditions; it’s simply about being outdoors, away from human activity, sharing time with nature, quietly alone, or with your family.

Apart from all the good reasons listed above to be a land trust member, this is the least specific, and probably most important, to my way of thinking. The land we own is always open to the public, and this ensures that all families in our community have access to forest bathing and free air life, whatever their circumstances. Everyone deserves a big backyard. So become a member for your own benefit, and become a member to benefit others in your community. Let’s make sure we all have a chance to enjoy the bounty nature can bring us, for generations to come.

-Ruth Guzman

The Hutchins Forest

Quiet Places Maps

Need a handy guide to local recreation and trails? You can purchase maps at our events and many local businesses, including:

- Acton Trading Post, Acton
- Apache Campground, Sanford
- Bike & Ski Generation, Sanford
- Boonies Inc, Shapleigh
- Gile’s Family Farm, Alfred
- Keepin’ It Local, Shapleigh
- Louis B. Goodall Memorial Library, Sanford
- One Earth, Shapleigh
- Parker Boathouse, Shapleigh
- Springvale Hardware Co., Inc., Springvale
- Springvale Library, Springvale
- Wilbur G. Shaw Hardware, Sanford

SET ASIDE SOME TIME TO APPLAUS

Three Rivers Land Trust

Would you be interested in serving as a board member or volunteering? Please get in touch!

The Hutchins Forest

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