



Conservation of Historic Hobbs Farm in Acton



Looking North across the Mire on the Arnold property.

On August 6th, six 3RLT board members, along with Wes Ham of the Acton Conservation Committee, met at Donald Morrill's house for our first site walk on the newly acquired Hobbs farm on Foxes Ridge Road in Acton.

The parcel consists of approximately 179 acres, including state-designated prime farm and forest soils and over 1200' of shore along a wetland of state significance. This area of the parcel has been of interest to the Trust because of the wetland's inclusion in the State's Beginning with Habitat project and its inherent need for protection with an adequate undisturbed buffer to conserve the area's value for waterfowl and other wildlife. The area serves as a wildlife corridor in a large unfragmented block called the "South Acton Swamps" on Maine

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife maps.

We walked the northwesterly boundary along a continuous stone wall on a slight downhill slope. After leaving the mown and fallow field area and entering the wood, we came upon a well maintained cemetery dating from the early 1800s. Wes Ham told us that there is good evidence of one Revolutionary War veteran's grave on site and claims made of another in the same area.

After some discussion about grave matters, we continued down slope, through thicker growth along the stone wall for almost a half mile from our starting point until we reached the open area of the wetland, known in Acton as "the Mire." From our vantage point, this open area seemed well in excess of 50 acres with lush grasses growing all along the perimeter of an area of open water

of more than 10 acres. We felt the "quaking" bog of peat beneath us as one or two of the group jumped and caused the ground to shiver like jello.

It felt good, despite the day's heat, to feel a bit of breeze crossing the open wetland, knowing others would be able to share the view due to our work on this project and the great generosity of the previous owner, Christine Arnold. We returned back uphill through the woods and walked over the fallow field, where Wes indicated there used to be a pump house by a good sized pond which provided drinking water for livestock and irrigation for crops. The pond is now surrounded by trees and brush, but seemed of ample size for its previous use. Wes had mentioned that he felt a kinship to the Hobbs Farm, having worked there as a boy.

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Conserving Forestland in York County

York County Working Forests Protection Project

Two recent studies, the Brookings Institute report “Charting Maine’s Future” and the USDA/USFS work “Private Forests, Public Benefits,” have focused attention on the development pressures on private forest holdings. The Forest Service study found that the Piscataqua-Salmon Falls watershed ranks third nationally in terms of the total acreage of private forest land projected to be more densely developed. This area is in excess of 345,000 acres and includes parts of Acton, Lebanon, and Sanford. With these issues and others in mind, 3RLT has begun a greater effort to conserve working forest lands in partnership with other regional groups. The process began with a discussion with the Francis Small Heritage Trust, in Newfield, and is showing promising signs.

The new effort is entitled the York County Working Forests Protection Project. It will be focused on 10 towns: Acton, Alfred, Cornish, Lebanon, Limerick, Limington, Newfield, Parsonsfield, Sanford, and Shapleigh, covering an area of 360 square miles.

There are three primary goals. The first is to conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple uses. This goal would be achieved by continuing efforts to establish conservation easements on working forest lands. Legal and financial information about conservation easements will be provided to family forest owners interested in maintaining and improving their forest land. The same assistance will be available for towns interested in enhancing their urban and community forest resources. Also, we will continue to support a stable Tree Growth Tax Law program for current use valuation of managed forest lands.

The second goal is to protect forests from harm. This involves not only encouraging wise land-use planning to reduce forest fragmentation,

but also assistance to towns and individuals to manage forests to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The protection and maintenance of water resources in the context of the working forest is also a part of this goal.

The third goal is to enhance the public benefits derived from trees and forests. This will be achieved primarily through an educational program in which the economic, recreational, and aesthetic values of the forest will be promoted to individuals and communities.

The Trust applied for two grants to support this project: one with the US Forest Service and the other, contingent upon receipt of the Forest Service grant, made to the Maine-based Sewall Foundation. These grants were gratefully approved and will enable the initial phase of the project, which is projected to take two years.

The York County Working Forest Protection Project involves the Maine Forest Service (Donald Mansius) as the project lead along with Marcel Polak (ME Assoc. of Conservation Commissions), Steve Walker (ME Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife - Beginning with Habitat), Joe Anderson (York County Soil and Water Conservation Dist.), Bill Hutchins and Fred Frodyma (Alfred and Shapleigh Conservation Commission(s)), Keith Fletcher (Maine Coast Heritage Trust), Everett Towle (forester and former director of Small Woodlot Owners Association of Maine), Jean Noon (Three Rivers Land Trust), Hilary Wallis (Francis Small Heritage Trust) and others.

With the word of the Forest Service lending support to our grant proposal, we are proceeding with a search for applicants for the position of a part-time contract consultant. Under the heading of Outreach to Landowners and Municipalities, the project manager will be responsible for:

- 1- Identifying private forestland owners in project areas.
- 2- Sharing information about the advantages of selling or donating conservation easements as a means of conserving forest lands.
- 3- Working with partners in the project to educate municipal officials regarding the importance of maintaining working forest lands and community forests.
- 4- Organizing workshops to assist individuals and towns in the use of Best Management Practices and Sustainable Forest practices.
- 5- Connecting interested landowners to available resources (legal, financial, wildlife, forestry).
- 6- Managing projects created through outreach.
- 7- Writing grants seeking funds to purchase easements when necessary.
- 8- Developing curriculum for a credit course for realtors on conservation options for forestland owners, including conservation easements.
- 9- Working with other project partners to achieve goals.

A second contract position will also be created. This consultant will work part time primarily on membership development for the Three Rivers Land Trust. This is critical as it will enable sustainable funding for the hiring of permanent staff to implement conservation projects in the long term.

We are hoping that you as a member and friend of Three Rivers will share in our enthusiasm for this new undertaking and help us to succeed as you generously have in the past. Let us know your thoughts by phone, mail, or e-mail, and how you might be willing to help. We thank you again for your support of the Trust’s work in your community.

Backyard Wonders

"... a ditch somewhere – or a creek, meadow, woodlot, or marsh...These are the places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of place gets under our skin.

...Everybody has a ditch, or ought to. For only the ditches and the fields, the woods, the ravines- can teach us to care enough for all the land."

Robert Michael Pyle

Where I grew up in the 1950s in suburban upstate New York, we lived across the street from a (very) small farm. In spite of living in a tree-lined neighborhood, in minutes I could cross the street, cut through the woods behind the farm, and walk on a trail passing a trickling waterfall and be on top of the hill above the neighborhood. In fact, my brother, my neighborhood friends, and I spent many hours after school, on weekends, and in the long hot days of summers lighting out for this territory. I wonder if the forts we built are still there; or if another boy, looking for something to do, has built his own fort there?

Daily discoveries of animal nests, insect cocoons, turtles laying eggs, tadpoles in vernal pools as well as the spy and hide and seek games we created made for an enchanting childhood. In the 1950s the electronic media (TV) had not yet taken hold of America. I had a small turquoise hand-held transistor radio – AM only. Our TV was a tiny black and white one. No cable, no cell phones, no video games or internet to distract us from the work at hand – getting lost and found in the natural wonders all around.

When I taught fourth grade a few years back, we took a hike up a trail off the Hebo/Hybo Road in Acton. Although it was about a two-mile hike roundtrip and within walking distance to most of their homes, only a few of our students had ever been to this lovely spot overlooking Loon Pond. Indeed, many said they had never been on such a "long" hike or spent an entire day in the woods.

Although some of the day was programmed for activities related to ecology, most of the day was devoted to following trails to vernal pools and hemlock groves; gnome hunts and building fairy homes. After taking this trip for five years it became clear that the most compelling and memorable activities were the unstructured explorations.

"Hey look, you can find salamanders under rotten logs!" and "See that snake lying on a rock in the sun? I bet she's warming up." These observations were empowering and the self-discovered knowledge more enduring. Many students remarked that they returned to this spot with their parents to see if their gnome homes were still there and to pick up litter left by others.

I heard of a college instructor at a prestigious New York City university who asked his freshmen environmental science students what ecosystem they were in at the moment. Serious answers included, "We're not in an ecosystem, we're in a building." And "New York is a city not an ecosystem."

It was remarkable to him that these "sophisticated" science students had become so disconnected from the place they inhabited, that they forgot we are all connected to an ecosystem as developed or damaged as it may be. New studies have found many children may have nature-deficit as well as attention deficit. But it's not their fault. Indeed it may be that getting children in the woods to observe and focus attention on the compelling world of nature may be a way to train better observation and reasoning skills.

Joseph Cornell, in his guide for parents, "Sharing the Joy of Nature," says that the first step in enabling children to feel connected to the earth is to awaken enthusiasm by playing games that capture their innate imagination. One game for 8-10 year olds is called "Bats and Moths" in which, after forming a circle, one child is blindfolded and given the job of bat. He circles the group (now spread out) and each time he calls out, "Bat," the moths have to say, "Moth!," he then tries to catch a

moth. If tagged, the moth has to sit as the "eaten prey" to simulate the predator/prey relationship. More structured investigation may follow later in the classroom/home on the ecology of bats and moths.

Here are Joseph Cornell's steps to Nature Awareness:

1. Awaken enthusiasm.
2. Focus attention.
3. Direct experience.
4. Share inspiration.

Some suggestions for getting our children out of the house and away from the electronic distractions that may overpower the beauty of a summer day in Maine:

- Play hide and seek with each person as an animal species.
- Play follow the leader with your family pet as the leader. Do what

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Walnut Hill News

It was gratifying to see the article in the June "Maine Townsman" featuring our acquisition of 88 acres in the state designated Alfred/Shapleigh Walnut Hill Focus Area. This parcel is ecologically important in that it is at the Southern end of the 6,000 acre unfragmented Fort Ridge/Walnut Hill area and contains a significant wetland. This, our first purchase, was a cooperative effort among the Three Rivers Land Trust, Shapleigh and Alfred Conservation Commissions, and the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. We were able to complete the purchase with sizable grants from the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program (administered by the Nature Conservancy) and from the Open Space Institute. We are currently working to inventory forest and small plant species, to accompany an existing Inland Fisheries and Wildlife study of the fauna in the development of a management plan for the parcel. Thank you for your continued interest and support for this project.

Organization Building

After reviewing an existing assessment of the organization and interviewing the Chair and another key representative, there was general agreement that 3RLT needs assistance in three areas: Fundraising, "marketing" (creating a greater awareness of the Trust within the community), and technical fee and easement acquisition skills. To grow, acquire members, and raise capital necessary for land projects, stewardship funds and more, 3RLT will need to develop and execute a fundraising plan with an all volunteer force. The Trust also needs to become better connected to the community to gain membership and support, and to ensure that its work is relevant to the surrounding communities' needs and desires. Finally, this all-volunteer trust needs to gain expertise in how to undertake complex negotiations with landowners and complete conservation projects.

Using the grant funds made available through the Ram Island Conservation Fund (administered by the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and originating from the Maine Community Foundation), 3RLT has selected the Rust Communications Group to assist us with our fundraising and marketing challenges. Libby Rust, the owner, has experience assisting non-profits all over the state. On this project she will be working with Elena Brandt, who has experience directly related to land trusts. We are all looking forward to seeing 3RLT progress with their assistance.

3RLT has also been working with Keith Fletcher, MCHT's Project Manager for the southern part of the state, to gain the skills necessary to complete conservation deals. Keith's time is being donated by MCHT as part of its effort to support its local land trust partners.

Thanks to Our Volunteers

Thank you to **Don Cameron** of the MNAP for coming down to help identify plants at Walnut Hill and to **Barbara and Charlie Grunden** of Falmouth for helping with the Walnut Hill flora and fauna inventory.

Thanks to **David Mann** and **Bill Hutchins** for their work in monitoring on the Boothby property.

Thanks to **Scott & Kelly Pelchat**, of Alfred, for help in monitoring the Shaker Woods easement, and to **Bruce Norton** for his continued help

mowing the field.

Thanks to **Amy Titcomb**, **Fred Greenhalgh**, **Bill Bullard**, and **Heidi Daly** for their help with the Alfred Festival Day booth.

Thanks to writer **Jeff Clark** of Bath and photographer **Jeff Poulan** for their article in the June "Maine Townsman" magazine which featured the Three Rivers collaboration with Alfred and Shapleigh on the Walnut Hill Project.

We Welcome our new members and thank them for their support:

Rev. John H. Cole

Steven J. Collins

Linda & Glenn Grigerek

Wesley Ham

Village Green, LLC

Walter E. & Mary L. Neuman

Joe Ricci

Springvale-Sanford Farmer's Markets

Open until Columbus Day
Wednesdays 1-5
outside Rite-Aid
in Springvale Center

Saturdays 8-12
in Gowen Park

Farmer List — Buy Local & Support Local Growers to keep farm lands viable!

Oakhill Alpaca Ranch

Shapleigh 793-3414

The Noon Family Sheep Farm

Springvale 324-3733

McDougal Orchards LLC

Springvale 324-5054

Wolf Pine Farm CSA

Alfred 324-2357

Berry Best Farm

Lebanon 457-1435

Applegate Deer Farm

Shapleigh 793-8677

Ridley's Farm Store

Shapleigh 636-1068

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Springvale 490-5543

Annette's Gardens, Perennials

Springvale 324-0331

Kelly Orchard Inc

Acton 636-1752

Notre Dame Institute

Alfred 324-6612

Shapleigh Knoll Farm

Shapleigh 247-6948

Shain's Farm Stand

Sanford 324-1567

Blueberry Hill Farm

Acton 457-1151

Sanford Farmers Market

Gowen Park
Saturday 8-12:00

Two Toad Farm

252-1103
www.twotoadfarm.com

The **Three Rivers Land Trust** was founded in 2000 and serves the towns of **ACTON, ALFRED, LEBANON, SANFORD / SPRINGVALE and SHAPLEIGH**. Covering an area of 215.4 square miles, or about 137,856 acres, this area is the last region of York County to establish an organization that is committed to providing assistance to citizens interested in preserving their property and holding and maintaining easements forever. Its Mission is *"To preserve and protect forever such valued natural resources as lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, agricultural lands, woodlands, historic sites, scenic places and wildlife habitat, in the inland municipalities of York County, Maine."* 3RLT has successfully completed 10 easements that protect over 1,575 acres. Currently there are several more easements in the works for at least 450 more acres. For more information visit the web site www.3rlt.org or call 324-3733.

Backyard Wonders (continued from pg3)

they do, within reason, of course.

- Create "sound maps" in the woods or fields. Everyone is silent for 5-10 mins. And on a 3x5 card maps all the sounds they hear. Best to do away from a noisy street. Compare and discuss, move to a new spot.
- Adopt a tree, plant, vernal (spring) pool, or habitat. Give your adoptee a name, make observations about its size, shape, color, smell and other features. Make a sketch or take a photograph. Return each month to check on the health of your new family member.
- Use the Three Rivers Land Trust's "Quiet Places" trail guide to take a long walk in the woods. Let your child use the map to lead the trip. If you hear "But where are we going?" you say, "You're in charge. Check out the map, I'll drive. What should

Hobbs (continued from pg1)

He was pleased to see a process had begun in order to conserve the agricultural value of the land. He said that in the early 1900's, the Hobbs Farm was thought to be the largest single agricultural operation in York County.

We owe thanks again to Christine Arnold, former owner of this parcel, for her donation of the title to 3RLT, with the understanding that a conservation easement would be drawn up to conserve all the values inherent in the piece.

We also wish to thank the Davis Conservation Fund, based in Falmouth, ME, and Piscataqua Regional Estuaries Partnership, based in Durham, NH, for their generous grants, which will enable us to cover initial expenses incurred in the project.

Soon, a subcommittee of the Trust with some interested community members will meet to start a discussion of how best to conserve this land within the fabric of the community.

we bring?"

- Find a spot in the forest that has lots of slash, moss, and rocks for building gnome homes or fairy houses: miniature or child-size. Build with them.
- In the car, on long drives play a species guessing game. Give clues to the animal or plant's characteristics. First one to guess the species wins.
- Play "Camera." Have your child use their hands to frame a small spot outside (thumbs touching, fingers forms the space). Count the organisms found in the frame, sketch or take an actual photo.

Many more can be found online or in one of Joseph Cornell's books.

Other readings:

Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble, The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places

Barry Lopez, Children in the Woods

Members and Friends Dinner Please Save the Date

Please come with family and friends to our Annual Membership Dinner on Friday, September 30 from 5:30 to 8:30 PM. The dinner will be held at the Springvale Baptist Church on Main Street.

We will be serving a home-cooked meal centered around roast turkey, baked beans, and macaroni and cheese. We'll start off with salads, add homemade breads, and finish up with apple pie and apple desserts with ice cream.

Outdoor writer Jeff Romano will showcase hikes from his latest book, *100 Classic Hikes in New England*. Come learn about the many hiking opportunities New England has to offer- from day hikes to backpacking trips- and tips for planning your hiking adventures.

Admission to the dinner and talk will be \$8.00 for members and \$10.00 for nonmembers. Children 10 years of age or younger are free. To support our work, we will be auctioning or raffling a few items.

To help us be prepared, please RSVP by September 26 to Madge Baker at bakwil@metrocast.net or Tess Burke at 324-9540. We hope you will join us in celebrating the work we all do together conserving the landscape of our community.

whose words I quote:

"The quickest door to open in the woods for a child is the one that leads to the smallest room, by knowing the name each thing is called. The door that leads to the cathedral is marked by a hesitancy to speak at all, rather to encourage by example a sharpness of the senses. If one speaks it should be only to say, as well as one can, how wonderfully all this fits together, to indicate what a long, fierce peace can derive from this knowledge."

Rick Kaye-Schiess

Membership Form

Membership Categories

Individual \$15
Family \$25
Supporting \$50
Business \$75
Other \$_____

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Please make checks payable to:

Three Rivers Land Trust

and mail them to:

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Join or Renew Today. We need your help. Thank you for your support.

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