Three Rivers Land Trust

Mission Statement:

Building stronger, healthier communities through the conservation of wild and working landscapes.

Vision Statement:

In 15 years towns will have implemented a broad conservation vision keeping farmland, working forest, and ecosystems intact, and increasing regional recreational opportunities, all while protecting large blocks of un-fragmented land for wildlife corridors, resilience, air quality, and carbon sequestration. 3RLT will be involved in school programs and other educational outreach opportunities. We will also be collaborating with many other groups, non-profits and municipal groups. There will be a system of interconnected trails across our service area, which people will know about and use frequently. The trust will also be involved in proactive management of our properties, and serve as a leader in best practices for farms, forests, water conservation, and renewable energy. There will be a stronger sense of community in our area, and an integrated food system that will help connect people with the land.

Intention:

This document is a statement of our commitment to this community, and our commitment to be transparent, welcoming, and inclusive. We hope that you, the reader, will learn from these pages and take action - by sharing it with our neighbors; by joining our efforts through membership, volunteering, or attending an event; or by considering conservation of your land.

We look forward to working with you!
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Three Rivers Land Trust History

Eighteen years ago, a small group of people in southwestern interior Maine realized and acted on the need for a land trust in the region. There had been two large and sad conversions of land into lots. One had been a large Dairy Farm and the other was a vast forest holding by a lumber company. Both properties were family owned and lost as the ownership changed with the generation. Both holdings had been assembled bit by bit through hard work of individuals.

At the time there was and still is a large land trust to the south, (Great Works Regional Land Trust) but they realized that they could not responsibly expand into the north and still maintain the quality of their services to their existing area's members. We invited them to our early meetings and they helped us a great deal as we wrote our by-laws.

Our name, Three Rivers Land Trust, was decided by our geography as we have head waters and watersheds that go to the sea along three rivers – the Salmon Falls, Little Ossipee, and Middle Branch Mousam Rivers. Our logo was decided by an art contest at the local Jr. High School. We were successful at securing startup funding and were able to create a series of maps of natural resources and features of the region with the help of Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. We held public hearings to determine focus areas for the trust to target for protection. We have been successful.

Acres covered in our service area: Lebanon: 35,872; Acton: 26,307; Shapleigh: 26,051; Alfred: 17,990; Sanford: 31,287 Total: 13 7,507 acres; 215.85 total square miles. Population in the 5 towns (2010) was almost 35,000. Because of our region's farming history, there are still fairly large tracts of land that are undeveloped. A land trust in this area of rapid growth and development pressure has significant opportunity to impact the recreational potential, wildlife habitat, water quality, farmland protection, open space, and the future rural character of the land. Our trust has successfully completed fourteen conservation easements protecting 2063 acres and the Trust also owns an additional 949 acres. The average growth in the towns participating in the trust has been well over 13% over the last two decades and as high as 22%.

At this time, this organization is entirely run by volunteers - the board of directors is the active force. The board is comprised of a volunteer lawyer, foresters, media people, land stewards, and retired business people. We meet once a month and as needed. Individuals from each town follow up with visits, phone calls, and information for regionally interested land- owners.

3RLT is an Accredited Land Trust by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Accreditation advances excellence among land trusts, and provides the public, landowners, and donors with the confidence that these important conserved lands will be protected forever. Voluntary accreditation provides independent verification that land trusts meet the high standards for land conservation, stewardship and nonprofit management in the nationally-recognized Land Trust Standards and Practices. Accredited land trusts now conserve almost 80% of all land under conservation easement or owned in fee by land trusts, ensuring the promise of perpetuity.
1.2 Document Overview

Contained in these pages is the Master Plan for Three Rivers Land Trust over the next three-year period. You will find information on 3RLT conservation priorities and focus areas, as well as the organization’s development plan. For the conservation to be successful, there must be an organization behind it to provide capacity and sustainability.

Land trusts that focus on strategic priorities and create conservation visions typically raise more funds and protect more land more efficiently than those who jump at any opportunity without an overarching plan. 3RLT has worked hard to identify the values they look for in conservation land.

3RLT Conservation Values:
- View preservation, open spaces
- Agricultural unique or prime soils
- Critical Watershed, or recharge area
- Wildlife resources, high-value habitat
- Endangered Species
- Sustainable Forestry
- Climate Resilience

3RLT also bring into consideration
- Community History
- Community access
- Local food production
- Size
- Proximity to other preserved lands
- Stewardship considerations.

This document identifies and prioritizes those places most important to the communities for multiple reasons. The plan has several intended uses:

- A guide for Three Rivers Land Trust to mobilize local resources and seek grants to make cherished places forever conserved;
- A resource for local planning boards as they review development projects and revise comprehensive plans; and
- A resource for community leaders as they pursue a path of sustainable development in the region.

The plan is made possible by a grant from Jesse B. Cox Foundation to Forest Works!, a regional conservation partnership. Staff time and logistical support have been provided by Forest Works! and Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative.
2.0 OUR REGION

2.1 A Density of Distinctive Places

Our vision is that Southwestern Maine will be a welcoming and enjoyable community for long-time residents, new-comers, and visitors alike. This vision will be achieved because essential landscapes will be conserved and forever made available for both ecological health and place-based economic development.

Southwestern Maine supports a wide variety of Maine landscapes within a compact area that is more easily accessible than the rest of the state. This poses special benefits and challenges to the region.

Southwestern Maine supports the state’s most commercially valuable timberland. The predominant Northern red oak and Eastern white pine forest type supports hundreds of loggers, truckers, foresters, and sawmill workers.

Southwestern Maine has a deep and rich agricultural history, remnants of which exist in stone walls, barns and grange halls. These orchards, fields and pastures are being revitalized by a new generation of community supported agriculture operations and niche-farmers.

Southwestern Maine is the state’s most biologically diverse region. It is home to creatures of the great north – such as bear, moose and loon – as well as migrant species of songbirds and butterflies. Also found here are rare critters, such as the Blanding’s turtle, New England cottontail and American woodcock.

Southwestern Maine is one of Maine’s most climate resilient landscapes. The tracts of unbroken woods, landform variety and diverse micro climates provide opportunity for native plants and animals to adjust home ranges and survive a changing climate.

Southwestern Maine is the state’s most accessible outdoor recreation region. It is a four-season outdoor recreation area with options for angling, hiking, birdwatching, hunting, paddling, cycling, skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling.

It’s all here in a compact region – timber, farmland, wildlife, climate resilience and outdoor recreation. Conservation of essential landscapes will ensure ecological health and place-based economic development go hand in hand.

The Three Rivers Strategic Conservation Plan is the guidebook for making this happen.

2.2 Threats and Opportunities

This region’s character is threatened by many trends.

- Forest fragmentation. Encroaching development and the division of land ownership into smaller parcels hurts both forest ecology and forest economics.
• Invasive species. The spread of invasive plants and insects chokes out native plants, brings new disease (e.g., tick-borne illnesses), and threatens to denude entire hillsides (e.g., hemlock wooly adelgid and emerald ash borer).
• Land values. The price of conservation land continues to escalate because of its desirability for new home construction.
• Transiency and digital age. Rootedness to place is in decline because of the transiency of modern life and the rise of on-line diversions.
• Extraction economies. Timber harvesting with no investment in the future of the forest continues to retard forest health and productivity.

But many opportunities favor this landscape as well.
• Adventure tourism. More travelers are seeking out authentic experiences close to nature and unique local events.
• Local food movement. A growing segment of food buyers are seeking a connection to the food they eat.
• The spread of high-speed internet. More jobs can be performed remotely by computer from wherever people want to live.
• Proximity to population. Southern Maine is within a few hours’ drive from all the major metropolitan areas of New England.

2.3 Demographics

Demographic data from the U.S. Census is provided in the following table for the 5-town region covered by Three Rivers Land Trust and for the State as a whole. These data were collected from the American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-year estimates (https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2016/). Overall, statistics show that the Three Rivers Land Trust region has a population with a higher degree of poverty and lower income than across the State as a whole.

**U.S. Census Data for the Three Rivers Land Trust Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Totals for 5-Town Region</th>
<th>State of Maine</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>35,277</td>
<td>1,329,923</td>
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<td>Median Age</td>
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<td>Median Household Income</td>
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<td>Unemployment Rate - 16 and Older</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
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<td>% Population Below Poverty Line</td>
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<td>11.1%</td>
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<td>% Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP</td>
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<td>16.3%</td>
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<td>Educational Attainment-Over 25 yo with less than HS Degree</td>
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<td>8.1%</td>
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<td>Educational Attainment-Over 25 yo with Bachelor's Degree or Higher</td>
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<td>% Minority</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<td>% Limited English Households</td>
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<td>% Owner-Occupied (vs. Rented) Households</td>
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<td>% Veterans (of population 18 and older)</td>
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<td>% Commuters with 30 Minute or Longer Commute</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Population (Non-Institutionalized) with Disability</td>
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<td>15.9%</td>
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</table>

Sources: U.S. Census, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-yr Estimates.

Our five-town region is located in York County which generally has a lower unemployment rate, a higher number of home sales, and a higher average home price than the rest of the state with the exception of Cumberland County (the Portland region). Also, home sales have increased in recent years.

Unemployment for York County as a whole was 2.9% in December 2018, which was lower than the state of Maine’s unemployment rate (3.4%) and the USA’s national rate (3.9 %) (Maine Department of Labor, [https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/laus.html](https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/laus.html), accessed January 31, 2019).

Also, for the last rolling quarter (September-November 2018), housing sales and the median sale price for single family homes were higher in York County than in all other Maine counties except Cumberland County, according to the Maine Association of Realtors (MAR) December 2018 housing report. (Note: the MAR only accounts for sales reported through the MLS.) York County accounted for nearly 18% of all single family home sales in the state for 2017. In that year, single family home sales in York County numbered 3,120, as compared to 1,934 a decade prior (2007), and the median price was $257,700, as compared to $239,900 in 2007 (MAR, [https://www.mainerealtors.com/image_upload/York17Data.pdf](https://www.mainerealtors.com/image_upload/York17Data.pdf)).

### 2.4 Natural and Cultural Resources

ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION ZONE: The Three Rivers Land Trust region overlaps the transition between the Appalachian Forest and the Northern Forest. Therefore, it supports a particularly large variety of habitat and species. Five of the state's 140 Focus Areas of Ecological Significance are found here.

ENDANGERED AND RARE SPECIES: Among the state endangered species found here are the black racer snake, Blanding’s turtle, New England cottontail and Edwards’ hairstreak butterfly. The globally rare ringed boghaunter dragonfly is also found here. In addition, dozens of rare species and exemplary natural communities have been documented. To underscore the connection to the North Maine Woods, the iconic species moose and loons are home here. Lastly, 230 bird species, or more than half of all native birds or those migrating birds through Maine, have been documented at the Sanford Lagoons, making it one of the state’s birding hotspots, according to York County Audubon. Five lakes supported populations of loons with 37 adults and three chicks counted in 2016 loon count, according to Maine Audubon.
UNBROKEN WOODS: Some of the larger tracts of unbroken forest include the 3,700-acre Massabesic Experimental Forest, the 3,900-acre Vernon Walker Wildlife Management Area, the 3,500-acre Waterboro-Shapleigh Barrens, and the 2,200 acre Goat Hill project. In spite of growing fragmentation, many tracts of woods remain in relatively large ownerships. The unbroken character of the woods has attracted attention from outside the region. The Maine Forest Legacy Committee and the Open Space Institute have prioritized the forest conservation in the region.

Present Landownership: While state and national conservation groups have a presence here, there is also a homegrown ethic of stewardship. In the larger region, some 975 landowners have enrolled 78,000 acres of woods, or nearly 24 percent of all woods, in the Tree Growth Tax Program, which allows the land to be taxed at a lower rate as long as the woods are commercially managed for sustainable forestry, according to the Maine Forest Service. In addition, dozens of landowners have registered their woodlots with the America Tree Farm system, making this one of the state’s highest concentrations of small woodlots under sustainable forest management.

OUTDOOR RECREATION: Residents and visitors take advantage of our dense and diverse special places. The region is laced with rivers, lakes and trail networks that support outdoor recreation year-round. There are five snowmobile clubs, four fish & game clubs, four public beaches or swimming holes, 4 boat launches developed by Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and four rivers with routes described in canoe guide books. There are 8 private campgrounds in the area.

- Walnut Grove, Alfred
- Apache Campground, Sanford
- Yellowstone Park Resort, Sanford
- Potters Place, Lebanon
- Lazy Frog Campground, Lebanon
- Flat Rock Campground, Lebanon
- Salmon Falls Campground, Lebanon
- Apple Valley Campground, Acton
3.0 Planning Process

In early 2015, the FW! Steering Committee decided to encourage and support both 3RLT and their neighboring land trust to the north, the Francis Small Heritage Trust (FSHT), to complete an updated conservation plan in order to keep FW! land protection priorities relevant. FW! received a grant from the Jesse B. Cox Foundation to pursue this goal. Each land trust conducted a comprehensive, community-based effort that concluded with revised priorities and focus areas. Additionally, the two land trusts have had the opportunity to learn about each other and continue to develop their relationship. Both land trusts began planning in the fall of 2015. After initially banding together to develop a conservation plan, in 2017 the two land trusts decided to produce separate plans.

Later in 2015, to begin the Conservation Planning process, a committee of 3RLT Board members formed to plan a community workshop meeting. This meeting was held on February 5, 2016. Participants turned out on a snowy evening and the conversation was engaging. Small break-out groups compiled lists of their concerns and priorities for the region. As the result of the new information, the Board has revised its mission statement and redrawn its focus areas.

2016 was also a year focused on Accreditation for 3RLT, so the Conservation Plan was largely put on hold while the organization gathered materials and submitted an application to the Land Trust Alliance. 3RLT received Accreditation in August of 2016, and resumed more focused planning efforts. The Accreditation process has helped inform the organization on goals and strategies to incorporate to their strategic plan as well, and in late 2017, the Board determined that it was time to renew the Strategic Plan. With an incomplete Conservation Plan and revisions being addressed in the Strategic Plan, 3RLT decided to combine the two processes.

In 2018, the Board of Directors held a half-day workshop to develop the goals and strategies presented in this document that will guide the organization in fulfilling its mission and achieving its vision. See Section 6.0 for the detailed goals and strategies along with assigned responsible parties and target dates.

This document is the result of a comprehensive effort to combine the organizational strategic plan with the strategic conservation plan – melding the priorities and the capacity together.
4.0 Geographic Focus Areas and Climate Change

3RLT identified focus areas at the very start of the organization in 2000. These geographic regions were identified by the board members and community members as places that were significant for ecological, agricultural and cultural reasons; and in some cases faced real threats from development and therefore were in need of conservation attention.

Over the years, the specific boundaries of these focus areas may have grown based on new information, or on actual conservation projects, but the focal points have remained the same.

3RLT does not work only in these areas as evidenced by a number of their conservation projects. But these areas are ones in which the land trust remains vigilant and proactive.

Additionally, Accredited Land Trusts, as 3RLT is, are required to have focus areas, because studies show that the mere existence of focus areas results in more productive and active conservation.
**4.1 Focus Area Name**: Walnut Hill Focus Area

**Location/Towns**: Alfred, Sanford, Shapleigh

**Approximate Size**: 2,260 with another 4,000 acres abutting of relatively unfragmented land

**Describe any conserved land contained in this focus area**: Walnut Hill I, Walnut Hill IV, Sousa and Sousa B Preserves. Williams Town Park

**Describe any imminent and specific threats**: fragmentation, including roads, accompanying housing developments

**Describe any known landowners in the focus area**: There are several relatively large landowners in the FA. The LT has been in contact with several of them who are resistant to placing any restrictions on the use of their property; we believe others may be more open to easement protections in the future.

**Describe 3RLT history working in this area**: Walnut Hill I, Walnut Hill IV, and the Sousa parcels were acquired with funding from the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program. The LT worked collaborated with Roger Williams until such time as he donated his 300-acre parcel to the Town of Shapleigh.

**Why does 3RLT want to conserve this area? As applicable, please describe**:  
**Natural and ecological significance**– IF & W has concluded this area is one of the more important for State Endangered Blanding’s turtle conservation. The State Endangered Northern black racer is a possible resident, and the habitat is right for the ebony boghunter dragonfly. Based on IF & W mapping and site visits, the following rare or imperiled natural communities are also found in the focus area: hemlock hardwood pocket swamp, and smooth winterberry. Several other rare plants are also found in the focus area, including Isotria. The wetlands include significant inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat. And the many significant vernal pools with extensive undeveloped surrounding upland support populations of a variety of amphibians.  
**Watershed** The FA is in the Mousam River watershed, an important waterway in York County providing water and recreation resources.  
**Farmland** There is minimal farmland in the FA.  
**Cultural significance** The Area is home to cellar holes and stone walls dating from the time when the area was cleared of trees and farmed in the 1800s  
**Forestland** Most of it is unfragmented and managed for timber resources and wildlife habitat.  
**Climate Resilience** The FA earns good grades due to the unbroken forest, the varied and hilly terrain, and extensive water resources in the form of streams, vernal pools, and wetlands.  
**Recreation** The FA is crisscrossed with trails – snowmobile trails border three 3RLT properties. An ATV trail follows the CMP powerline and Williams Park is served by extensive non-motorized trails.

**Any other reason this area is a priority for 3RLT?**
The area is suitable for non-motorized recreation. Hunting is the most popular one to date; but there are some woods roads available for hiking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, birdwatching, and, in winter months, snowmobiling. The LT intends to add more recreation trails in the next 3 – 5 years.
4.2 Focus Area Name: Massabesic Experimental Forest Connectivity

Location/Towns: Alfred and Sanford

Approximate Size: 5,900 acres

Describe any conserved land contained in this focus area: Massabesic Experimental Forest is owned by the US government and managed by the US Forest Service. The Ricker Field is now owned by Three Rivers Land Trust, and Three Rivers also holds an easement on Shaker Woods – a park owned by the Town of Alfred, with frontage on Estes Lake.

Describe any imminent and specific threats: Development in the areas surrounding the Forest.

Describe 3RLT history working in this area: Ricker Field, Shaker Woods

Why does 3RLT want to conserve this area? As applicable, please describe:
   Natural and ecological significance—flora and fauna, endangered species, statewide significance
   An Atlantic White Cedar Swamp, designated as a “Rare and Exemplary Natural Community” by the Maine Natural Areas Program, is found at Massabesic Experimental Forest. Several rare animal species have been recorded there, including the Endangered Hessel’s hairstreak butterfly (one of only four sites in the Maine where this butterfly has been identified), the Blanding’s turtle, and the spotted turtle. In addition, MDIF&W has identified a large candidate Deer Wintering Area in the Forest.

   Watershed
   The Littlefield River drains into Estes Lake and the Mousam River.

   Farmland
   Wolf Pine Farm is managed as a Community Supported Agriculture farm. Several other Mouse Lane residents have small farming operations as well.

   Cultural significance
   The Massabesic Forest has been public land and a favorite of hunters for several generations.

   Forestland
   The 3,700 acres at Massabesic Experimental Forest is one of the largest blocks of unbroken forest in the region.

   Climate Resilience
   Small, scattered acreages are considered above average in climate resiliency

   Recreation
   Estes Lake is popular for fishing and boating. The Town of Alfred maintains a small beach on the east shore of Shaker Pond. Littlefield River is popular for paddling. A network of tote roads, maintained footpaths, and unofficial deer paths make the Massabesic Experimental Forest a favorite of outdoor recreationalists in all seasons.

Any other reason this area is a priority for 3RLT?
The Massabesic Forest is an exceptionally large, unfragmented habitat, that is well used by plants and animals as well as outdoor recreationalists. The US Forest Service also conducts experiments in wildlife biology and sustainable forestry here.
4.3 Focus Area Name: Hanson-Deering Ridge

Location/Towns: Sanford and Shapleigh

Approximate Size: 1,500 acres

Describe any conserved land contained in this focus area:
McDougal Orchards, Noon Family Sheep Farm, Hall Environmental Reserve, Central Maine Power – Sanford Springvale Mousam Way Land Trust land, Blanchard, New England Wildflower Society

Describe any imminent and specific threats: Many landowners have taken a hard line against public access in response to trespass and property damage from rogue ATV use, although ATVers have recently formed a club. Development also Hanson Ridge has increased in recent years, and this is some of the last best farmland in Sanford

Describe 3RLT history working in this area: Both Three Rivers President Jean Noon and Vice President Carl Davis have strong ties to the area and strong relationships with many landowners. Three Rivers holds an easement on the Noon Family Farm

Why does 3RLT want to conserve this area? As applicable, please describe:
Natural and ecological significance—flora and fauna, endangered species, statewide significance. Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat, documented vernal pools south of Oak Street

Watershed Brooks drain into Little River, which flows into The Salmon Falls River, which forms the border of Maine and New Hampshire.

Farmland This area is valuable for soils, large areas of which are mapped as prime farmland and soils of state significance. The density of small farms (more than a dozen) in a contained area is unique in Maine. Several are in multi-generational family ownership. They grow commercial blueberries, raspberries, vegetables, mushrooms, hay and Christmas trees. Farmers also raise sheep and beef cattle. The farms annually host Springvale Farm Walk, a unique event in which hikers walk between farms on a four-mile trail.

Cultural significance The former Carpenter Dairy is now used as a commercial mushroom business.

Forestland Significant acreage is enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Program

Climate Resilience About a third of the acreage – on the north and west – is above average in its resiliency to climate change, according to modeling by the Nature Conservancy.

Recreation This region is laced with trails, including the multi-purpose Railbed Trail, which runs 5.5 miles through Springvale, the trail network at McDougal Orchards, networks maintained by Southern Maine Sno-goers, the ATV Club of Sanford Maine and many miles of unofficial but well-used mountain bike trails. Deering Pond is a popular spot for warm water angling.

Any other reason this area is a priority for 3RLT? Both Deering Ridge and Hanson Ridge are highly scenic with sweeping views
4.4 Focus Area Name: Acton Swamps and Hebo Hybo

Location/Towns: Lebanon and Acton

Approximate Size: 15.2 square miles

Conserved land within focus area: Hobbs Farm, Jonathan and Gina Gutman Farm, Jones Farm, Redwing Farm, Berry Best Farm, Gully Oven Natural Area, Salmon Falls Preserve, Acton Town Forest, future Lebanon Town Forest

Imminent and specific threats: Housing development, frequent use by ATVs along Hebo-Hybo Road which forms the west boundary of Lebanon town forest. Trash and potential erosion if unrestricted use continues. Sewell family trust dissolved in 2014, dividing up an unbroken block of 3,000+ acres.

3RLT history working in this area: Four of the properties listed above (Redwing Farm, Berry Best Farm, Gutman Farm, Jones Farm) have been conserved through conservation easements by Three Rivers; Three Rivers owns the Hobbs Farm and Salmon Falls Preserve

Conservation values:
- **Natural and ecological significance**—South Acton Swamps is a Maine Natural Areas Focus Area.
  - **Watershed** – The region drains into the Salmon Falls River. Lebanon town forest property includes acreage forming the headwater of Little River and includes Sacopee Pond whose outlet brook drains into Little River.
  - **Farmland** – Redwing Farm is farmed by Two Toad Farm, Jones Farm is farmed by Roger Ridley.
  - **Cultural significance** – Gully Oven was a natural amphitheater for concerts by 19th-century violin virtuoso Ole Bull (1810-1880)
  - **Forestland** – Sewell family land is 8,000-acre block divided in 2015
  - **Recreation** – Snowmobile, hiking trails run through Sewell property and Hebo Hybo
  - **Climate resilience** - The Focus Area overlaps with Southern New Hampshire Maine Forests region of Open Space Institute Climate Resiliency. The diverse plant species present are the best insurance in light of potential climatic change.

Recreation Hebo Hybo Road is actively used ATV and snowmobile trail.
4.5 **Focus Area Name**: Goat Hill to Shapleigh Pond

**Location/Towns**: Acton and Shapleigh

**Approximate Size**: 2,500 acres

**Describe any conserved land contained in this focus area**: 
Romac Orchard is under conservation easement. Hansen Pond is owned by Three Rivers

**Describe any imminent and specific threats**: Out-of-state interests are reportedly interested in acquiring rights to mine gravel on 800 acres of North Country Land property

**Describe 3RLT history working in this area**: Three Rivers has cultivated five landowners in the region since 2009 in a strategy to conserve 2,000 acres of contiguous forestland.

**Why does 3RLT want to conserve this area? As applicable, please describe**:

- **Natural and ecological significance**—flora and fauna, endangered species, statewide significance. Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat, documented vernal pools. Resource inventory conducted by Maine Natural Areas Program.
- **Watershed** The region forms the headwaters of three rivers: the Little Ossipee River, Salmon Falls River and Mousam River. Hansen Pond is rare in southern Maine in being free from any development on its shores.
- **Farmland** The former Romac Orchard has been revived as a commercial orchard by two families that split the acreage. One operates a pick your own orchard, the other a hard cider orchard.
- **Cultural significance** Goat Hill is a beloved spot now owned by the Town of Acton.
- **Forestland** Much of this area is covered by unbroken forest. Five contiguous landowners own some 2,000 acres. Significant acreage is enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Program.
- **Climate Resilience** About a third of the acreage – on the north and west – is above average in its resiliency to climate change, according to modeling by the Nature Conservancy.
- **Recreation** Mousam Valley Snowmobile Club maintains a trail network in the area. Hansen Pond and Shapleigh Pond are popular with anglers, trappers and paddlers. Square Pond, Wilson Lake and Great East Lake have significant residential development on their shores and active boating and fishing communities.
4.6 Climate Change - Threats and Opportunities

Climate change is likely to upend life as we know it in many unforeseen ways. So far, the changes have been relatively subtle in the Three Rivers region. Leaves bud out earlier. Growing seasons are longer. Winters are fluky. Perhaps most noticeable is encroachment of invasive plants and insects. Ticks – and tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease – are growing in prevalence. Hemlock Wooly Adelgid, which kills hemlock trees, and Emerald Ash Borer, which kills ash trees, have recently been documented in the region. The composition of the forest could change dramatically as ash and hemlock trees die off.

Climate change creates new challenges for land conservation organizations. 1) It heightens the priority of protecting unbroken forest, especially areas with known high densities and varieties of wildlife and with topographic variety. These forests – which cover extensive parts of the Three Rivers region – afford wildlife the greatest opportunities to adjust their ranges as the climate warms. On accompanying maps, areas that are “above average” in climate resiliency show up as dark green. 2) It increases stewardship responsibilities as land managers combat the encroachment of invasive plants and insects. 3) It may depress participation in outdoor events as residents grow more worried about contracting Lyme disease.

There is also opportunity in climate change. New revenue streams for forestland owners are possible as forests are increasingly valued for absorbing and sequestering atmospheric carbon. Currently, “carbon offset” payments, which entail expensive audits and transaction costs, are financially feasible only for forests of 2,000 acres or larger. These financial incentives may become attractive to smaller land owners over time. The growth of climate-friendly wood products – such as mass timber technology – may also improve the economics of growing wood commercially for the long term.
5.0 Maps

5.1 Climate Resiliency
This map shows the lands that modeling identifies as most resilient to a changing climate because of the opportunities afforded wildlife to adjust their home ranges. Lands with high resiliency tend to have the following characteristics: existing high density and variety of wildlife, unbroken forest (away from dangers of road traffic and development), topographic variety and microclimates (where wildlife can migrate higher to a cooler microclimate). This map shows that a majority of the service area of Three Rivers Land Trust is “above average” in climate resiliency (color-shaded light green) with pockets of land “far above average” in resiliency (color-shaded darker green). Source of data: The Nature Conservancy and Open Space Institute.

5.2 Farmland
This map shows lands most suitable for farming as well as individual commercial farms (as of 2017). Land identified as “prime farmland” (color-coded green) is the best for agriculture as determined by soil characteristics, slope, moisture, drainage quality, etc. Land identified as “soils of state importance” (color-coded yellow) are nearly as good as prime farmland and may produce comparable yields under the right management. Source: Natural Resource Conservation Service and field work by Three Rivers Land Trust.

5.3 Forest Resources
This map shows the forests that are most valuable for water quality protection, wildlife habitat, and timber production. “Undeveloped habitat block” (color-shaded olive) are lands generally supportive of wildlife because of the unbroken (or contiguous) character. “Unbroken, high value forestland” (color-shaded darker olive) is larger unbroken forest supportive of wildlife that need more room and prime timberland. “Wildlife corridors” are lands connecting most valuable forest that is supportive of wildlife travel corridors. “Beginning with Habitat Focus Areas” are areas with high densities and varieties of wildlife. Sources: Maine Forest Service, Maine Natural Areas program.

5.4 Recreation and Tourism
This map shows features of the natural and built landscape valuable for outdoor recreation, tourism and cultural heritage. Schools are included because of their value as community gathering points. The trails included are not distinguished by use and may be snowmobile trails, ATV trails, footpaths, rail trails. Source: fieldwork by Three Rivers Land Trust.

5.5 Water and Wetland Resources
This map shows the interconnected network of lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and aquifers in the region. Sources: National Wetlands inventory, US Fish and Wildlife and Maine Natural Areas Program.
6.0 Organizational Strategic Plan

Through the planning process (see Section 3.0), 3RLT has developed goals and strategies to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision. The details of those goals and strategies are presented in the following tables. These tables are broken out by the following *Strategic Priority Areas*:

1. Stewardship
2. Community Outreach
3. Protection with Acquisition/Fee
4. Protection with Easements
5. Membership
6. Organizational Capacity
**Strategic Priority Area:** Stewardship

**Strategy Statement:** To improve the quality of and capacity for stewardship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL: STEWARDSHIP</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Tracking Benchmarks</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Update monitoring practice/policy to ensure that Best Management Practices are followed; and to improve landowner knowledge of the restrictions.</td>
<td>Stewardship Cmt and Carl</td>
<td>1. Change in the policy 2. Integration into Steward training program</td>
<td>2018/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engage more people (members/volunteers) in monitoring with an intentional effort to train and engage</td>
<td>Stewardship Cmt and Carl /Outreach /Capacity</td>
<td>1. List of people that are interested 2. 50% of properties have a non-board member steward</td>
<td>2018/2019 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trails Prioritization</td>
<td>Carl (Lee)</td>
<td>1. Create Trails Prioritization list 2. Have a trails plan for all properties to build and maintain trails; include costs 3. Participate in regional trails planning 4. Hold two annual trail work days</td>
<td>2019 2020 Ongoing By 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Strategic Priority Area:** Community Outreach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL: COMMUNITY OUTREACH</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Tracking Benchmarks</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Maintain presence in all towns:** | One Board Member | 1. Complete full year of all events  
2. Each event is assigned to board member who takes the lead, in partnership with Ruth  
3. Annual assessment of Events Calendar  
4. More Board members attend 3RLT Events | 2018 – 2019 |
| • Acton Kite Day  
• Springvale Farm Breakfast  
• Shapleigh Outing  
• Alfred Annual Meeting at River House  
• Lebanon Summer Camp/Salmon Falls Preserve | Ruth | 1. Each board member submits a list of organizations from their town or that they have other connections with including contact information  
2. Continue encouraging 3RLT Board Members to attend town committee meetings to stay in touch with Towns | 2019 - Create list and begin to attend new events  
2020 – continue to attend new events  
2021 – new partnerships formed for new event or programs |
| **2. Create list of organizations in each town for outreach and partnership** | Ruth and Board Members | 1. Invite MW Board Members for a walk on a 3RLT property followed by a meal | Annually |
| **3. Have 2 joint Board Member events with Mousam Way** | Jess | 1. Develop town by town lists of members  
2. Determine who in each town will hold the house party  
3. Seek to complete 3 in the next 3 years | 2019  
2020  
2021 |
| **4. Consider holding town by town house parties** | Executive Committee | 1. Hold four annual school programs in one town  
2. Replicate program in second town  
3. Continue participate in Lebanon summer camp  
4. Partner with schools and other orgs on existing events | 2018-9 school year  
2020  
Ongoing  
2019 |
| **5. School programs** | Amy, Ruth, non-board volunteers | 1. Integrate cultural maps  
2. Develop historical narrative  
3. Develop Statement of Equity | 2019 - 2021 |
| **6. Incorporate a more complete history of the area that includes Wabanaki, agriculture, Underground Railroad, and more into 3RLT materials** | Amy/ Madge | | |
Strategy Statement: 3RLT is recognized as a leader of land conservation in our region.

Strategic Priority Area: Protection with Acquisition/Fee

Strategy Statement: To acquire and responsibly manage more high value conservation properties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL: ACQUISITION/FEE</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Tracking Benchmarks</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make a decision about Charles’ House</td>
<td>House Cmt</td>
<td>Plan to implement whatever the decision</td>
<td>Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conservation Plan</td>
<td>Madge, Martha</td>
<td>Finish plan</td>
<td>Early 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Finish:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Hansen Pond | Carl, Lee and Ruth as fundraiser | 1. Management Plan Approved  
2. Wetland Restoration completed  
3. Trail built | 2018  
2019  
2021 |
| • Gruber | Anna | 1. Sale of house  
2. Management Plan for forest | 2019  
2020 |
| • Goat Hill | Carl, Lee and Ruth as fundraiser | Universal Access Trail completed | 2019 |
| • Walnut Hill IV | Amy | Management Plan approved | 2018 |
| 4. Take on new properties as identified in Conservation Plan | Madge, Martha | At least 2 new projects identified in conservation plan are in process | By 2021 |
**Strategic Priority Area:** Protection with Easements

**Strategy Statement:** To acquire and responsibly manage more high value easement properties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL: PROTECTION WITH EASEMENTS</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Tracking Benchmarks</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hold one Board Meeting per year at a property</td>
<td>Executive Committee</td>
<td>Make it happen – first one in 2018 (Bozak) – success will be 4 events over the 4 years</td>
<td>2018 – 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Finish conservation criteria</td>
<td>Madge, Martha, Amy</td>
<td>More comprehensive and reflective of community engagement and climate change</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stay on course with current easement project: Wertheim (Easement, Baseline...)</td>
<td>Carl, Madge</td>
<td>Measureable progress and clear communication with board members as appropriate</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. GH2SP stay on course</td>
<td>Carl, Lee</td>
<td>Secure connector piece from Bob Libby to complete connection</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Establish map and database of large landowners and potential future conservation projects</td>
<td>Tom H, Carl, Madge, Jean</td>
<td>Create map Create database</td>
<td>2018 (done!) 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Strategic Priority Area:** Membership  
**Strategy Statement:** The reliable membership supports the vibrant programs and effective capacity.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
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<th>Tracking Benchmarks</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double current membership (~150 to 300)</td>
<td>All of Board and Ruth</td>
<td>Have 300 members</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Raise Funds to Finish Projects:  
  - Hansen Pond  
  - Goat Hill to Shapleigh Pond | All of Board and Ruth | Completed projects (see also “Acquisition/Fee” Goal #3) | 2021 |
| Better define what Membership includes; consider adding additional benefit(s). | Ruth (with Board involvement) | 1. Decisions made  
  2. Have membership description on website and mailer | 2018  
  2019 |
| Website revised to include more information and photos. | Ruth | 1. Complete property descriptions.  
  2. Incorporate new membership info.  
  3. Receive feedback and revise | 2018  
  2019  
  2019 |
| Target Lake Associations | Ruth (with Board involvement) | Attend all association meetings every two years. | Annual |
| Use Conservation Plan to market for memberships | Conservation Plan authors (see “Protection with Easements” Goal #2) and future grant writers | Have a completed plan that is available for grant proposals, in the office, & on website(?) | 2019 |
| Re-examine budget and fund designations; Increase operating budget, income, and revenues through diverse revenue streams to $60,000 | All - Staff | Full Board decision | 2020 |
| Improve production of grant proposals. | Staff | 1. Have created file with shared list of grants with deadlines.  
  2. Establish system for sharing and updating. | 2019 |
**Strategic Priority Area:** Organization Capacity

**Strategy Statement:** 3RLT has the capacity to efficiently and sustainably manage and grow all mission based activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
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<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Hire Executive Director                   | Full Board| 1. Research needs/hire consultant  
2. Conduct search and hiring                                                          | 2018      |
|                                           |           |                                                                                     | 2019      |
| Increase staff hours                      | Full Board| 1. Determine what kind of staff needed, funding need, etc.  
2. Prepare job description for next plan cycle                                          | 2021      |
| On-going training                         | Full Board| 1. Formalize method of sharing (e.g., a list on the website)  
2. Establish a goal for each Board member to attend annually  
3. Each Director meets goal                                                               | 2018      |
|                                           |           |                                                                                     | 2019      |
| Jargon Reduction                          | Amy       | Poll board for needs                                                                  | 2020      |
| More Work Parties                         | Full Board| 1. River House work  
2. Earth Day work day established                                                        | 2018      |
|                                           |           |                                                                                     | 2019      |
| Succession Planning                       | Full Board| 1. Define this term!  
2. Discuss officer terms                                                                 | 2019      |
|                                           |           |                                                                                     | 2019      |
| Re-visit All Strategic Goals Annually     | Full Board| Review this list and check-off items                                                   | 2018      |
|                                           |           |                                                                                     | 2019      |
|                                           |           |                                                                                     | 2020      |
|                                           |           |                                                                                     | 2021      |
| Track Volunteer Hours                     | Board and Staff| 1. Monthly totals of volunteer hours from each board meeting  
2. Create an annual volunteer award for most hours                                       | ongoing   |
Three Rivers Land Trust

Legend
- Beginning with Habitat Focus Areas
- Three Rivers Land Trust Area
- Undeveloped Habitat Block
- Unbroken, High Value Forest
- Conserved Land
- Focus Areas
- Wildlife Corridors

S. Bickford, WNERR Jan 2016
H:/Project/ForestWorks/2016Forest.mxd
All Boundaries Approximate

Miles
0 0.5 1 2 3 4