Even in this wild and worrisome springtime of 2020, Three Rivers Land Trust’s plans and projects are still moving along as we pursue our mission “to build stronger, healthier communities through the conservation of wild and working landscapes”. Our mission is even more relevant and important these days as we strive for strength, health, and a positive outlook. It is a good time to remember that there are still good things happening, causes worth supporting, and a wonderful world to explore and protect.

Let me tell you about some of the good things you can anticipate from Three Rivers this year. First, we are working hard to secure the final funding needed for the Goat Hill ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) trail. We still need your help to make this happen, but the wheels are in motion. You can check out more details about this project in the article ‘Climbing Toward Universal Access’ elsewhere in this issue.

A second major project is the wetland restoration and protection we will undertake this August at Hansen Pond Preserve. An important part of protecting the Little Ossipee River and Hansen Pond is repairing some of the damage left by logging roads, irresponsible ATV use, and over-eager recreation. We are working closely with ecologists and hydrologists to plan the removal of culverts, replacement of bridges, and restoration of native vegetation along the fragile wetlands surrounding Hansen Pond. Once complete, the water flowing to Hansen Pond will be even cleaner, and there will be more and better habitat for frogs, birds, and other wildlife.

At Hansen Pond this fall, we are planning to clear an area for parking, install signs, and open the trail to public use. Students from the MapleStone school in Acton have put in a lot of work on the property. From trail clearing to removing the decrepit A-frame from the shore of the pond, their help has been invaluable. If possible, we will count on their help again this fall to work on the planned boat rack and small canoe launch, which should be available in 2021. We also hope to hold a late-summer walk at the property - before the official opening! - so follow us on Facebook or join our email list so you don’t miss that invitation.

A new conservation project in Shapleigh will also get some attention this year: 78 acres of beautiful forestland and rich wetlands along Pump Box Brook. Our hope is for a short trail through the forest to be opened in 2021 – we will keep you posted! Last but not least, I want to mention something essential to the future of Three Rivers Land Trust. We need to increase our membership. This year we are asking our members to help us gain new members by asking a friend to join. Together, even with small contributions, we can share the work of protecting these essential landscapes, trails, and habitats, and have a greener future to look forward to!

-Cheri Brunault, Executive Director
Three Rivers aims to make 2020 the Goat Hill to Shapleigh Pond project! We are grateful to the landowners, donors to the land trust, and support of grantors, talent and the Town of Acton, Carl Siemon Family Charitable Foundation, and several grant programs have made every stage of this project a reality, from conservation of the land in 2016, through the construction of the initial trail in 2018, and now on to the final push for ADA compliance.

If you’re not familiar with Goat Hill, I encourage you to check out our website, where we have excellent drone footage of the summit and surrounding lakes! This final push for accessibility is being funded by your donations, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, and - we hope - several more grants. We at Three Rivers and the Town of Acton are grateful for every dollar of support received for this effort.

Here are the nuts and bolts of the project: In August, a professional trail contractor will start work. For everyone’s safety, the Goat Hill Trail will be closed during construction. The contractor will clear new paths wherever the existing trail can’t be made ADA compliant. The original path will remain, but we will make a longer, easier route around some of the steep sections. Level landings will be installed where needed to meet the standards. Once the route is cleared and compacted over the base layer of gravel, additional surface material (similar to stone-dust) will be brought in and compacted over the base layer of gravel, forming a smooth pathway for visitors in wheelchairs to access the picnic tables and shelter from the ADA route.

At the top of the hill, we intend to create a smooth pathway for visitors in wheelchairs to access the picnic tables and shelter from the view. We are fundraising now for accessible design and construction of the ADA route and to help cover the cost of the work at the top of the hill.

Once the major construction is done (we expect this by mid-September), the original trail will reopen, but we will likely spend a few weeks checking the ADA route to ensure it meets standards. If you or someone you know uses a mobility device (wheelchair, walker, etc.) and is willing to be one of our test-users, please let us know this summer – we would love to get to know a cadre of ADA-route users and hear their feedback about the finished trail!

Other elements needed to complete the project are signs at the trailhead and summit, and a kiosk at the parking area. Finally, an important part of finishing the ADA trail route will be getting the word out. Once it is done, we want to shout it from the (Goat Hill) hilltop, and make sure those looking for an amazing accessible experience know where to go! You can help us even now by telling your friends, family, and colleagues that we are SO close to our goal. Encourage them to join our mailing list or follow the Facebook page for updates, and ask if they can contribute a few dollars to the effort to complete the trail this year.

The closer we get to the total fundraising goal, the better this trail will be for all of our friends and loved ones who require an accessible route and want to see the top of Goat Hill for themselves!

- Cheri Brunault & Carl Davis, Board Member and Farmer at Twin Maples Farm in Acton

THANK YOU TO OUR NEWEST DONORS!
We appreciate our members, volunteers, sponsors, and grant funders! Thank you for helping us grow.

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"STEWARDSHIP" – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Hello Friends! My deepest wish is that by the time you read this, all will have miraculously returned to normal, but I realize this is unlikely. So, I hope this finds you happy, healthy, and in a safe place. I think many of us here in our five towns of Acton, Alfred, Lebanon, Sanford, Springvale, and Shapleigh, are especially appreciating our access to the outdoors right now. We are so lucky to have places to get away to; we recognize that calming nature can be, and its power to renew the spirit in difficult times.

Because of this, even though I know hardship will continue for many of us even after the shutdown ends, I am going to continue my efforts to get the land trust to a sustaining 300 members. You may find that you are not able to contribute at your usual level, and I understand if this is the case, but please know that a donation of any amount will help us. Independent of the dollar amount we raise, the number of members who support our work shows to public and private grantors that we are a nonprofit worth funding. Investing in the land trust is an act of hope for the future.

In our mission statement, we talk about preserving “working landscapes.” Farms are a big part of those working landscapes, and we recently convened a farmland committee to sharpen our “farm focus.” We currently hold conservation easements on several working farms, and I suspect there will be more to come in the future. Good soil - typically well-drained and flat - is good for growing crops ... and houses too! Three Rivers will continue with the important work of protecting farmland that could be threatened by development.

In our region, the supply of large unbroken tracts of prime farm soils (and smaller) produces amazing volumes of food for farmer’s markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and increasingly for wholesale markets. It’s an exciting time to be a small farmer!

So here at Three Rivers, we’re rolling up our sleeves and working to marry this moment to our mission. Our farmland committee has just started brainstorming how we can protect smaller farms and ensure our food future – so stay tuned for details, and we welcome any ideas you have.

- Tom Harms, Board Member
- "Farmer Tom"

And if you happen to be in a position to give a little bit more this year to help close the gap, we would be so grateful for the extra support right now. An additional gift to our annual giving campaign, or toward finishing the ADA compliant Goat Hill Trail, would go a long way and keep us on track for the end of the year. Thank you so much for your generous support – I am thankful to have such an amazing group of loyal members – and I hope to see you out on the trails soon, at a nice, safe distance of six feet. Be well!

- Ruth Gutman, Development Director

THE FUTURE OF FARMING

Looking for a Trail to Explore?

Browse trails on our website, or request a copy of our “Quiet Places” trail map!