



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The land trust's mission "To build stronger and healthier communities through the conservation of wild and working landscapes" has rolled around my mind more than ever before over the past year, resonating more deeply and in different ways. A year of being "remote" reminded me how much I need and value this amazing community, and how much I need outdoor spaces to process, to heal and to thrive.

that can take place in isolation any longer.

Something that keeps coming up for me is the danger and limitation of the "either/or" thinking I'm so used to doing. For years I have looked at each chunk of land with its parcel boundaries and asked, "Is this particular parcel protected or developed? Are we extracting a resource or leaving no trace? Is this acre for nature or for people?" In our world of working farms and forests, I'm learning that these dichotomies don't really work, as our interactions with nature nearly always leave a trace: A blueberry picked, a deer shot, a tree felled.

Along with Board Member Madge Baker, I've joined conservation leaders throughout the state in a year-long learning project to increase our understanding of our Wabanaki neighbors, and how they and their ancestors relate to the land in ways that don't always fit into our traditional conservation framework. In that culture, use of the land may involve sustenance, spiritual practice, and community-building all at once. Can we learn to emulate this fluid connection to land, striving to include all our neighbors in the process, and leaving things better than we found them, rather than untouched?

As we move forward into a new year, Three Rivers aims to work to strengthen our communities AND the future of land conservation. To that end, we've reached out to build new partnerships by listening to the voices of the youth leaders in our community, including our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) neighbors. We have joined MCAN (Maine Climate Action Now) as a coalition supporter – the first land trust to do so – and we are so excited to follow their lead in amplifying youth voices in supporting the critical work of pursuing climate justice.

I am so grateful to have you all in this wonderful community and appreciate your continued support. Change always presents a challenge, but I know together we can make our community stronger and healthier by building relationships with one another, and with our wild and working landscapes.

- Amy Titcomb



Three Rivers Land Trust
P.O. Box 295
Alfred, ME 04002

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HORIZONS



2021 Spring Newsletter

Building stronger, healthier communities through land conservation

Three Rivers Land Trust • P.O. Box 295 • Alfred, Maine 04002 • www.3rlt.org

TRAILS, TRAILS, TRAILS

Despite a challenging year, Three Rivers opened two new trails in 2020, and has plans to open more in 2021! If you haven't had the chance visit yet, look on our website under the "Lands & Trails" menu for more information about how to get to Hansen Pond Preserve in Acton and the Sousa Family Preserve Trail in Alfred.

At Hansen Pond Preserve, a 2.4-mile out-and-back trail takes you through a hemlock forest, along an elevated ridge, and down an old trail to the pond's scenic overlook. We couldn't have opened this trail without lots of help from volunteers. Maplestone School students helped cut the initial trail in 2019, and a cadre of volunteers assisted with the finishing touches in 2020. Many thanks to MapleStone students and their teacher Thomas Ledue; to Carl Davis and Keith Davis who built the new bridge; to the Mousam Valley Snowmobile Club who helped with signage, advice, and trail work; and finally to the volunteers who turned out to speed the completion of the trail: Gus Hedden, Madge Baker, Charles Crespi, Lee Burnett, and Doug Venell. Thanks also to Julie Venell for volunteering to monitor and steward the trail.

At Sousa Preserve in Alfred, we also relied on volunteer help. The hardworking MapleStone School students built a bridge in 2019 and then Three Rivers board



Carol Ward & Debra Chase volunteer at the Hansen Pond Preserve in Acton, April 2021
Photo Credit: Susi Alvino

members worked in small teams or solo through the early days of the pandemic to cut the trail and blaze it. This hilly 1.7-mile loop takes you through mixed forests rich with wildlife and carpeted with deep oak leaves.

Now that 2021 has arrived, we have big plans for more trail work.

At the Gruber Forest in Shapleigh, we plan to rehabilitate a trail network left by a former summer camp. Once work is complete, a small parking lot on Deering Ridge Road created by the land trust will allow access to the miles of delightful trails. Watch for a late summer or fall trail opening announcement!

The trail at Hobbs Farm in Acton is also due for some improvement. The existing rough trail loop will be re-routed from a new and more convenient parking location.

After trimming back the trails and adding new blazing, the refreshed trail at Hobbs Farm might become a new Acton favorite. Keep an eye out for announcements about volunteer opportunities there this spring and summer.

Then there is Pump Box Brook Preserve in Shapleigh – a 78-acre treasure conserved by Three Rivers in 2020. This sloping property helps protect the water quality of Pump Box Brook, which flows into to Mousam Lake. This year we will design a trail that respects the water resources of the property, and may ask for volunteer help in the late summer and fall. With a small parking area planned at the end of Knox Road, the Pump Box Brook Trail will be a great destination for a short, pleasant hike.

Three Rivers is excited to have so many trails to offer. We know that during the pandemic many people in our towns discovered or rediscovered a love for local trails, and found that spending time outdoors could be an antidote to stay-at-home woes. These trails and conserved lands are here because of the support of our members - we can't do this without you. Thank you for your support!

-Cheri Brunault and Carl Davis

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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GOAT HILL TRAIL FUNDRAISING SUCCESS!

We are pleased to announce that the fundraising goal for the Goat Hill Trail's ADA route has now been met! Thank you so much to all who have donated. From the original conservation of the land in 2017, through all the fundraising needed for the American with Disabilities Act-compliant trail, our community and members have generously supported the Goat Hill project and our commitment to enabling access for people of all abilities.



Work is planned to resume in June. Remaining improvements include a long switchback to create a gentler slope about mid-way along the trail, several

drainage improvements, creation of small resting areas, and the installation of signage. Work at the summit will continue over the summer to improve access to the five accessible picnic tables generously donated last year.

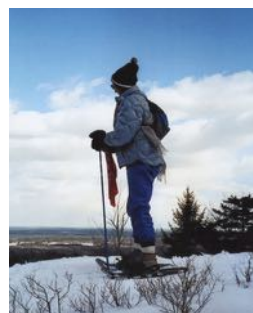
During the summer of 2021 we will work to finish modifications to the trail, allowing wheelchair users and other folks with mobility issues to make the trip to the summit with its unique and inspiring views. Further donations to the Goat Hill Trail at this point will go toward a maintenance and repair fund to keep the route accessible and in good shape.

Would you or someone you know who uses a wheelchair or other mobility device be interested in testing out the route once it is complete? We are interested in hearing feedback, so please reach out to us for an early invitation to visit the trail and for any questions about the trail's features.

-Carl Davis and Cheri Brunault

We lost two land trust members over the past year and both will be dearly missed.

Dora Spedding of Lebanon was a long time



Dora snowshoeing in 2004.

Photo Credit:
Kathleen Neuville

member, former board member, and founding member of the land trust. She was also a volunteer monitor of the Salmon Falls Reserve in Lebanon and a generous supporter of the Goat Hill Trail in Acton where she enjoyed family picnics and picking apples at Romac Orchard. Dora enjoyed all manner of outdoor recreation and was very fond of birds, gardening, and her beloved dogs. All of us at the land trust will miss Dora and her commitment to local outdoor and environmental organizations.

IN MEMORY...

Philip Yakubec of Long Island passed away



Philip & Elizabeth Yakubec (left) Kite Day 2019

early this year. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had been building a home in Shapleigh and were looking forward to finally living in Maine full time. Philip enjoyed fishing and hunting and collecting antique rifles and fishing rods. He also enjoyed kite flying, which is how he came to play a significant role in the land trust's annual kite flying event. Philip and Elizabeth volunteered time every year to help the land trust manage its large kite collection, and also purchased additional kites for us to lend and give away. To honor Philip's memory, his family asked that contributions be made to the land trust to support future kite flying events. We will be honored to fly a kite for Philip whenever we can.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Last year land trusts in Maine were offered the opportunity to take a year-long course, described appropriately as a learning journey, to gain knowledge and understanding of the Native people of Maine within the context of land and natural resource conservation. Among the many topics introduced in the first 6 months is tribal sovereignty.

In 1980 the Maine Indian Land Claim Settlement Act was passed by Congress and ratified by the tribes and the State of Maine. The Settlement Act was supposed to be a living, imperfect document to improve over time. The Maine Legislature has enacted no amendments for forty years. If we ask the Wabanaki (a confederacy of Maine indigenous tribes) what needs to be changed, we quickly learn there is a lack of trust on the part of some Maine leaders. For example, the Tribes want the sovereign right to regulate all natural resources on tribal lands; Maine leadership has not to date agreed. The Tribes want to be able to prosecute non-Natives for crimes committed on tribal lands instead of having to rely on

State prosecutors and police; under the 1980 Act they lack that authority.

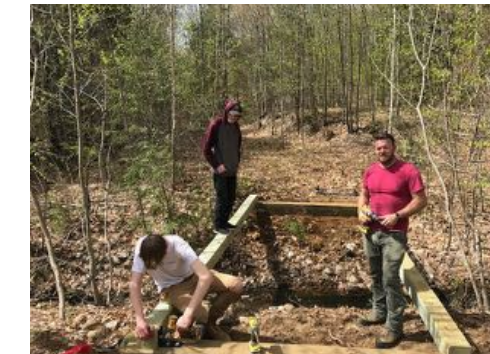
To achieve legal and equitable justice for Maine's tribes, the Wabanaki Alliance (made up of federally recognized Maine tribes) has drafted and introduced sovereignty legislation in this Legislative session. As participants in the learning journey, Three Rivers board members and staff may speak and write about why this legislation deserves serious attention within Maine's land conservation community. If you have questions, concerns or want more information, please contact us.

Other legislative initiatives relating to land conservation have been proposed to the Legislature; the most critical initiative is one to secure Legislative support for another Land for Maine's Future bond issue. It is too early in the session to provide the final bond amount; the best guess is the bill will seek approval of a \$30 million bond issue. The land trust board is likely to vote to support the bond issue as soon as the details are settled.

-Madge Baker

MADLESTONE SERVICE LEARNING ON THE SOUSA TRAIL

The MapleStone School in Acton provides education for middle and high school students who require specially designed instruction. Three Rivers is proud to partner with the school, and our properties have benefitted greatly from this mutually rewarding relationship.



MapleStone students Isaac and Aaron, and instructor Dave Bennett at the Sousa Preserve

For three years now, MapleStone students and staff have worked to develop trails for Three Rivers Land Trust under the guidance of the land trust's vice president, Carl Davis. During this time, MapleStones's "Outdoor Adventure Program" students took on the herculean task of cutting the brand-new Sousa Preserve Trail in Alfred. Over time, this land trust-owned property has become one of our favorite classrooms.

Building this trail has taken two full years. The access bridge, framed with 6"x 6" hemlock beams, was built by MapleStone instructor Dave Bennett and several MapleStone students to be strong enough to support a full-sized tractor. The vast majority of the cutting happened in winter to avoid tick season. Students learned how to dress for working in harsh conditions. The initial cut of the trail was rugged work. Nate Desautels, a MapleStone senior reflects: "Working on the trail kept me in shape. It was hard work, but it was fun." Accessing each end of the trail proved much easier than working in

its middle sections, as chainsaws and tools had to be carried over two miles during the course of a school day. The students had to work with and learn about multiple tree species, cutting no less than thirty sizable "widow-makers" (dangerous dead trees or limbs that hang suspended from other trees in the forest) and hundreds of smaller trees. The Outdoor Adventure crew became a skilled and efficient workforce.

The Sousa Trail area is rich with wildlife. On our first walk through the land with Carl and Board Member Amy Titcomb, we found the remnants of a hunter's deer kill. On a recent maintenance walk at the end of February, we saw at least ten different species tracks, including moose, deer, porcupine, fox, coyote, and more. Says Nate,

"I remember tracking the bobcat. You don't see bobcat tracks that often [where I live]; it's kind of unique." Certainly the Sousa Trail has many magical gifts to offer, and in the hope of capturing some of them, we will be working to install motion-activated cameras near the vernal pools and streams this spring. We are excited about the possibilities that await.

The old road that forms part of the trail has provided numerous learning opportunities as well. The rock walls and their overall organization tell many stories. Nate writes: "I really liked the history of the road on the Sousa Trail. I liked imagining the land with no or fewer trees [when it was farmland]." The Sousa Preserve is rich with history from an era gone by, including two cellar holes and an old dug well, now safely capped by MapleStone. "The old homestead cellar hole was pretty cool. I liked imagining what it looked like [back then]. It's crazy making foundations out of stone," writes Nate.

It has been very satisfying for all of us to be a part of the Sousa Preserve Trail project. We look forward to helping to steward the land and the trail with our students for years to come.

- Tom Ledue and Dave Bennett, MapleStone Instructors, and Nate Desautels, MapleStone Senior

THE FUTURE SANFORD COMMUNITY FOREST — A VISION OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES AND OUTDOOR RECREATION



The future Sanford Community Forest comprises 550 acres in western Sanford, with a trailhead on Oak Street (Route 11A). This undeveloped property is less than three miles from downtown Sanford, and connects to both the Rail Trail and to Mousam Way Land Trust's McKeon Reserve.

We started the public fundraising campaign for the Forest after securing over 80% of needed funds from grant programs and foundations, leaving about \$140,000 to raise in 2021. Thanks to generous donors we have already raised \$15,000, and we will continue to fundraise and seek further grants as the year progresses to ensure this property becomes a community resource for generations to come.

To make a donation to the Sanford Community Forest or to join us for a site



walk, please visit our website or give us a call. We look forward to sharing more with you about this exciting project in the months ahead.

It is rare to find a large parcel of undeveloped land this close to a thriving city where development is sure to continue. A large natural area within city limits will be important for our community's



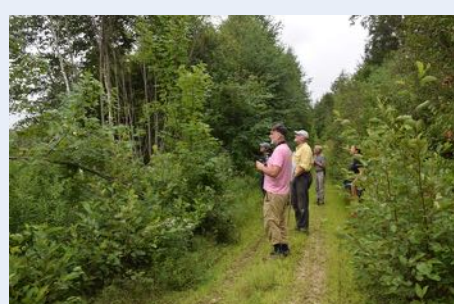
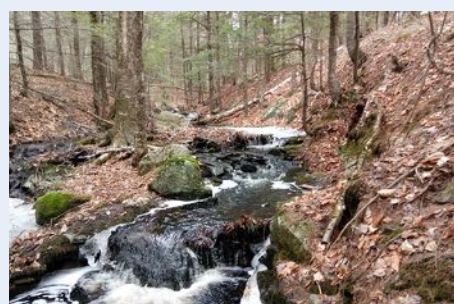
children and grandchildren.

The Sanford Community Forest could become a unique recreation area for the city and surrounding communities. The existing 3.6-mile woods-road trail would permit walking, biking, horseback riding, hunting, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling, with room for more trail development on the uplands of the east side.

The western side of the property is rich in wetlands, important for climate resilience and maintaining clean water in the Salmon Falls watershed. The east side is suitable for timber growth and could be managed for sustainable harvests and carbon-storage.

Educational opportunities abound, with extensive wetlands and forests ready to teach students about the connections between people, plants, and wildlife. Our vision for the property includes bus access and collaborations with local educators to encourage learning through hands-on experience.

Three Rivers is partnering with Mousam Way Land Trust and collaborating with other conservation organizations, local recreation groups, and the city of Sanford to gain community input and raise enthusiasm for this exciting project



Hello Friends,

First, a big thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership for 2021! I am so grateful each December and January to see the flood of donations that comes in; it's a sign that the land trust can expect to have another productive year. I also want to thank our members for their generosity last year – despite the pandemic we were able to continue our work without interruption and that was largely due to your commitment to our mission.

Increasing our membership remains a key goal for me. We are striving to reach a sustaining 300 annual members, and get a little closer each year. We rounded out last year with 232 members, and 2020 was an exceptionally difficult year. I know I say it a lot, but every membership donation counts. If you are not in a position to donate \$25/year (our basic suggested donation level), please know that your \$10 donation counts just as much to us. Even more importantly, it is significant to our grant funders. Membership shows community engagement, and that's a big part of what grantors are looking for when considering what organizations to support.

Second, I am so grateful to all of you who have made donations to the Sanford Community Forest project, and I'd like to offer a huge welcome to our new members who made their first gifts to this exciting project. About 75% of the \$15,000 we have raised so far comes from gifts of less than \$500; smaller gifts can and do make a difference!

In other news, I recently attended the Maine Environmental Education Association conference and learned about what other organizations, including many land trusts, are doing to promote, enhance, and provide environmental education to students and families all across the state, especially during this

MEMBERSHIP & FUNDRAISING UPDATE



time of Zoom and online events. Our members have told us that education should be an important part of our mission, and we agree.

During the conference I learned about the concept of Conservation 3.0 from an amazing presentation by The Ecology School at River Bend Farm in Saco.

Here's how Drew Dumsch, The Ecology School's president, describes the evolution of conservation:

- Conservation 1.0 was about "setting aside land, parks and preserves to provide a place for nature".
- Conservation 2.0 recognized that nature provides essential benefits to people through food, clean water, and related resources, and that investment in protecting nature supported human well-being;
- Conservation 3.0 is to "deliberately work with nature in order to maximize nature's ability to supply food, water, [and] energy, for all species of life".

Conservation 3.0 acknowledges the connection that exists between all living things, humans included, and the necessity that we play a positive part in the cycle. As Amy said in her President's Letter, land conservation is not something that can take place in isolation any longer. We must look at the land we are conserving, and all our actions, as a part of the much larger picture. For more on this subject of working and connecting with nature, we highly recommend one of our recent book club selections: *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

Thanks again for your support. I look forward to continuing our journey together, in what will hopefully be a much more connected, and far less isolated year, in so many ways. Be well!

-Ruth Gutman