

Winter 2002

The Watershed News

The Watershed News is a quarterly publication of the Green Mountain Conservation Group, a non-profit, 501(c) 3, charitable organization established in 1997 and dedicated to the preservation of the natural resources in the Ossipee Watershed. The towns of Effingham, Freedom, Madison, Ossipee, Sandwich and Tamworth make up the boundaries of the Ossipee Watershed Protection Project. This watershed includes one of the largest and deepest stratified drift aquifers in New Hampshire. It covers 47 square miles and receives drainage from a 330 square mile area. It is a critically important resource for existing and future community water supplies.

The GMCG's purpose is twofold:

1. To provide an organizational structure for a coalition of citizens and local officials interested in identifying sensitive areas within the Watershed in need of protection;
2. To offer public educational events about conservation issues and possible solutions regarding the preservation of this unique natural resource.

Through education and advocacy we strive to promote an awareness and appreciation of our natural resources and encourage a commitment to protect them.

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Executive Director, Blair Folts

2001: A message from the executive director

BY BLAIR FOLTS

2001 has been an exciting and challenging year for GMCG. We hired our first part time director and assistant, moved into a new office in Freedom Village, and completed two 2 year map projects— mapping aquifer recharge land and creating natural resource inventory maps for each town. We have also continued to be a voice for conservation in the Ossipee Watershed by continuing our programs of education, advocacy, research and land protection.

On the heels of September 11, we reeled with the nation confronted with feelings of disbelief, loss and grief. This sense of deep loss was further brought home to GMCG and to me personally by the sudden death of Charlie Watts in late September. Charlie had been a leading inspiration when GMCG formed. He had an expanding view of conservation and promoted openness to varying points of view when planning for natural resource conservation. The Ossipee Watershed has lost a great supporter of conservation. Charlie's voice will continue to guide GMCG in his simultaneously encouraging and challenging way as we move into the next phase of our development.

We gratefully thank all those who supported our work in 2001 especially you, our members! We also thank the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, Patagonia, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, NH Department of Environmental Services, New England Grassroots Environmental Fund, and several anonymous family foundations. We are also thankful for support received from other non-profit organizations across New England.

With your support, we look forward to continuing our conservation work in the Ossipee Watershed in 2002.

May the New Year be a peaceful one.

4th Annual Meeting will focus on watershed research

The fourth annual meeting of the Green Mountain Conservation Group will be Saturday, January 26, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Runnells Hall in Chocorua. The evening will commence with a brief business meeting and election of officers followed by a potluck supper.

The featured speaker at this year's celebration will be Dr. William McDowell, professor of Water Resource Management at the University of New Hampshire. McDowell's presentation, "Watershed Studies in New Hampshire and Around the World: Lessons Learned and New Opportunities," will focus on the basics of watershed science, classic work in New Hampshire (including Hubbard Brook), past work in the tropics, and ongoing work in New Hampshire (Lamprey River.)

GMCG staff and board members will present a synopsis of completed projects from this past year and will be on hand to discuss ideas and concerns members have regarding future projects. The recently completed Natural Resource Inventory maps of the six watershed towns will also be available, as will the final aquifer recharge map.

In 2002, GMCG will partner with the Chocorua Lake Association, Saco River Corridor Commission and NH Department of Environmental Services to design and establish a watershed-wide water quality monitoring program. Brianne Fowles, an AmeriCorp Volunteer, will give a brief slide presentation to introduce this project and invite members to volunteer.

"Green Mountain Conservation Group is very grateful to all those who helped make 2001 an important year for natural resource education and protection in the Ossipee Watershed," said Blair Folts, executive director. "Many area residents donated time, money, and expertise and advocated for the protection of natural resources in this region. Residents, friends and visitors are invited to attend the annual meeting to help celebrate the fourth year of conservation work in the Ossipee area."

The annual meeting is free and open to the public. The evening promises to be an exciting one full of good food and interesting discussion. Please bring a favorite dish. For more information call 539-1859 or 539-7095.

Special Places

Effingham Grange has a unique history

Editor's Note: *Special Places* is a regular feature of the Watershed News, highlighting an historical or cultural resource within the Ossipee Watershed. GMCG has endorsed the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, a public-private partnership committed to conservation of New Hampshire's natural, cultural and historical resources. For more information on LCHIP, call 230-9729.

BY BRIANNE FOWLES

There is an energy that flows within an old building. It takes years and years of people's lives passing through, changes or repairs being made, and even changing landscape to create this unique building energy. This energy is built up through the generations and creates a sense of connection to the past.

It is this connection that draws people today to preserve historic buildings. People realize the uniqueness of the energy and know that if it is destroyed, it will never again be replicated. As our population evolves we lose more and more of our history. We forget what it must have been like to live in the "old days." These buildings and even older generations provide windows for new generations to see into the past. However, a human spirit can only last so long, but the buildings can provide their stories for as long as they are preserved.

One such building is now referred to as the Effingham Grange at the corner of Town House Road and Route 153 in Center Effingham. The Grange has been standing for 185 years or more. Built in 1815, many faces have graced

the building. In its earliest years, it served as a general store owned by Mr. Drake. Not much success was had by the store and by 1836 the Carroll Literary Institute took over the building. At this time, the building had a bell tower with a bell. By the late 1800s, the tower and the bell were transferred to the nearby Center Effingham Church. Due to competition from a nearby school, the Carroll Literary Institute did not succeed for long. In March 1913, the Effingham Grange started to use the building for its meetings, and by June 1936, the Grange purchased the building. The Grange disbanded and in March 1994, the Grange turned the building over to the town of Effingham by a quick claim deed.

From 1913 to the time the Grange disbanded, the building was used for local card parties, other organizations' meetings, like the Effingham Women's Club, public meals, and church activities. The Grange and the Effingham church each made their buildings available to the other. If the Grange needed a larger space for one of its gatherings, the church was available.

Also, in the 1950s the Center Effingham Ladies Aid hosted craft and clothing sales. This idea continued on until the later years of the Grange. Second hand clothing sales were organized in the summer months.

Currently, the Effingham Preservation Society has voted to take over ownership of the building from the town. Doing so would require a town meeting vote. There is an alternative proposal to tear down the building since it is not used much. However, if the Preservation Society takes over responsibility for the building, the windows that this historic structure provides to the past will not be closed to future generations.

(Thanks to Arlene Gurtzen and Eric Potter of the Effingham Historical Society for sharing information on the history of the Effingham Grange building.)

Support Sought for Regional Forestry Cooperative

BY DICK FORTIN

Is the idea of forest landowners working cooperatively a new concept to the Mt. Washington Valley? Hardly! In 1940 the Carroll County Cooperative, Inc. was established by a collection of 30 woodland owners holding over 10,000 acres. Its first year of operation produced \$3,000 worth of birch bolts, a meager start but only the beginning. The second year of operation the demand for lumber had increased because of a changing world situation prompting the Cooperative to make a major leap, leasing the old Bowditch mill in Chocorua. The Cooperative operated for five years producing 5 million feet of timber but, most importantly, led the way in establishing the harvesting of timber as a crop on a selective cutting improvement basis and proved in dollars and cents that the value of resources can be increased while producing a reasonable revenue.

The Forestry Committee, a task force of the Mt. Washington Valley Economic Council, began meeting in 1999, sharing the same concerns the Carroll County woodland owners did in 1947. These concerns include the health and future of the local forest, as well as maintaining a viable forest industry, and recognizing the role and contribution of the working forest to the regional economy.

Support for the Forestry Committee's initiative has come from the National Community Forestry Center; a national organization encouraging community based endeavors promoting sustainable forestry. The efforts of the committee have focused on determining the feasibility of establishing a forestry cooperative, including public and private forest landowners practicing sustainable forestry. Issues being explored by the committee include adding value to a landowner's stumpage and developing a market for low-grade wood.

Can it be done? Nationally there are a number of success stories. In Wisconsin, the Sustainable Woods Cooperative, incorporated in 1998, includes 120 landowners and 25,000 acres, operates a sawmill and solar kiln and sells FSC certified hardwood lumber products to woodworkers across the United States. Vermont Family Forests, established in 1995, includes 30 landowners and 5,300 acres and supplies wood to Beeken / Parsons, a fine-furniture manufacturer in Shelburne, Vt. Both organizations focus on harvesting low-grade woods, building equity in residual stands and infrastructure, and performing

value-added manufacturing while maintaining high standards of practice and contributing to local and regional economies.

The Forestry Committee's effort is timely in light of the recent Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests' report, "New Hampshire's Vanishing Forests," indicating that New Hampshire loses 13,000 acres of forest each year to forest conversions. Keeping that in mind, the Forestry Committee has researched options and interviewed landowners to establish if an interest exists in a community-based approach to forestland ownership. Can a model be developed in the Mt. Washington Valley region that encourages long-term ownership and sustainable forestry, and adds value to the forest resources for the local landowner? The results of a well attended Forestry Forum held in November give every indication the idea has merit and that the committee should continue pursuing the community based project.

The committee has now moved into the next phase of developing a pilot harvesting and processing project that will be implemented in 2002. As one committee member put it, "It's time for the rubber to hit the road." If you are interested in learning more about the Forestry Committee initiative, or if you would like a summary of the landowner surveys or a summary of the Forestry Forum survey, contact Dick Fortin at 447-2391.

Dick Fortin of Eaton is a member of the Forestry Committee Task Force.

Watershed Birder

Winter Owls of the Watershed

BY SUSAN LEE

Owls are birds of prey, mostly nocturnal, with hooked bills, sharp talons and large fixed eyes and facial discs. Throughout their ranges they may be permanent residents, nomadic or they may migrate.

Some species of owls have individuals in all three categories. Of the 11 species of owls found in New Hampshire, five are year round residents which breed in the state. These include the Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned, Barred, Long-eared and the Northern Saw-whet. The Barred is the most common owl in New Hampshire and although a year round resident, may leave its home range when food is scarce. Some individuals will enter towns and villages, while others will perch quite conspicuously near bird feeders that attract mice and squirrels.

In late November and early December of 2001, there were numerous reports of Barred Owls being seen and a huge number of birds being injured or killed in collisions with highway vehicles. The most likely explanation for these events was that the owls were being forced out of the forests in search of food because the unusually dry fall had caused a decrease in their usual prey food. One of these owls perched for more than 45 minutes in a birch tree overlooking several feeders outside the Watershed Birders' dining room window in Madison.

Migratory, the Barn Owl and Short-eared Owl are present for part of the year. New Hampshire is on the northern edge of the Barn Owl's range and it is fairly rare here. More sensitive to cold than other owls, the Barn Owl leaves the cold and snow of New Hampshire from January until April. In the East, Short-eared Owls nest in the Arctic Tundra and winter throughout the coastal Atlantic states where they can hunt over coastal saltmarshes and estuaries. Short-eared Owls are regularly seen at Salisbury Beach State Park in winter.

Snowy, Boreal, Great Gray and Northern Hawk-Owl, the remaining four owls are the so-called "nomads;" wonderful northern birds which visit New Hampshire in winter to the delight of hardy Watershed

birders. The Snowy Owl is by far the most regular of these visitors. Called the “Ghost of the Tundra” or the “White Shadow,” the snowy is one of the most beautiful birds in the world and one of the hardiest. Fierce on its nesting territory, in winter the Snowy often sits for hours on fence posts, tufts of hay or sand dunes and is quite approachable by humans. Because snowy owl irruptions are unpredictable, there is no sure way to guarantee a sighting. However, Snowys are consistently reported from Hampton Beach and Salisbury Beach State Parks and one was seen over a several day period in Meredith in January 2001.

The Northern Hawk-Owl, named for its very long hawk-like tail, is diurnal and regularly hunts during the day. One of these nomads from the far north was an unexpected visitor to northern New Hampshire last winter and was seen by birders from throughout the US and several foreign countries. This particular owl frequented the fields around the airport in Whitefield, New Hampshire perching on tree tops, phone poles and on the airport flagpole.

For up to date information on when and where to find these marvelous winter visitors contact the New Hampshire Audubon Society Rare Bird Alert at 224-9900 or on the web at <http://www.nh.audubon.org/rarebird.htm>

Susan Lee is an avid birder and a longtime resident of the Ossipee Watershed. Share bird sightings or comments with her by e-mail at leegull@nh.adelphia.net

Conservation Conversations

***Editor's Note:** Conservation Conversations is intended to provide a forum for the Conservation Commissions in the six towns of the Ossipee Watershed to share news of their activities and an opportunity to find creative solutions regarding watershed issues. It is the goal of the Green Mountain Conservation Group to encourage the six towns to create a strong voice as a united watershed community.*

Think Locally; Act Watershed.

Freedom

The Freedom Conservation Commission has been attending the recent meetings of the Friends of Trout Pond. This informal group has formed to discuss ways to protect the 1900 acre tract of land known as the Trout Pond land on the Freedom, Madison border. Presenters have included Tom Howe from the Forest Society and Peter Benson from The Nature Conservancy. Though some of the land is damaged and has been badly used, it includes some important conservation land. It is the largest tract of undeveloped land in Freedom. It abuts other important conservation land in Freedom and Madison including the Pine Barren land. It provides important drinking water protection and aquifer recharge land. Trout Pond is an unusually high quality undeveloped pond. Committees have formed to work on ways to protect this land. The next meeting is scheduled for March 14 (see Calendar on page 7)

For more information contact Jennifer Molin at 539-4587.

Sandwich

This fall, the Conservation Commission monitored the town conservation easements through the use of aerial photography. The visibility was very good and the low sun angle created high contrast enhancing visibility for many properties. Of particular note was the high quality view of animal trails in the Red Hill Pond wetlands. We used an electronic camera this time which was a big benefit as the photos were labeled shortly after the flight. Since many of the photos look similar in the past it has occasionally been a challenge to coordinate field notes with the printed photos.

Madison

The commission has recommended to the planning board that a 75 foot setback from shoreline be adopted by the town at the town meeting in March. The planning board has voted to ask the selectmen to place such an ordinance on the town warrant. The commission also is dedicated to the idea of employing a professional to delineate the wetlands of the town. The banning of bear hunting with telemetry dogs on town properties will be presented to the voters at the March town meeting. The commission has voted to urge the Class VI Road Use Study Committee to ban ATVs on all Class VI roads in the town and reminded the study committee that deeds prohibit the use of such vehicles in the Goodwin Town Forest and the McNair easements.

Monitoring program seeks volunteers

In partnership with the Saco River Corridor Commission, the Green Mountain Conservation Group is establishing a water quality monitoring program for the six towns of the Ossipee Watershed, including Effingham, Freedom, Madison, Ossipee, Sandwich, and Tamworth. The Saco River Corridor Commission of Maine began the program's first season from July to October 2001. They tested for the following seven parameters: dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, turbidity, total Kjeldahl nitrogen, total phosphorus, and Escherichia coli. With the wrap up of their first, successful season, the SRCC will produce a report, that summarizes the reasons behind such a program, specific testing results, and the long term goals of the monitoring program.

Both agencies strongly feel that when dealing with natural ecosystems, political boundaries must be removed. Together, the RIVERS (Regional Interstate Volunteers for the Ecosystems and Rivers of Saco) will gather water quality data from the larger Saco watershed, which Ossipee is a part. With the help of volunteers, GMCG hopes to test one or two stream locations per town in the Ossipee watershed. These sites were selected with help from town officials and experts from UNH. The data gathered from the monitoring season (May to October 2002) will help to better understand the water quality characteristics in the Ossipee as well as the larger Saco Watershed. The data will be available to the public after the testing season is finished via internet and reports given to town officials.

To raise money for the water quality monitoring program, GMCG is hosting a raffle to offset the costs of the first year's efforts. This raffle is to help raise money to cover volunteer training, monitoring equipment and lab costs. Watch for our raffle purchasing form in our spring newsletter in the beginning of April. Our program will test for dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, turbidity, cations, anions, total phosphorus, total dissolved nitrogen, silica, ammonia and dissolved organic carbon. These parameters test for occurrences of different land uses in the watershed.

If you would like to volunteer for this program please call 539-1859.

Calendar

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26 *The Green Mountain Conservation Group* will hold its 4th Annual Meeting. A short business meeting will be followed by a potluck supper. The keynote address will be by Dr. William McDowell, professor of Water Resource Management at University of New Hampshire. Dr. McDowell will deliver a slide presentation "*Watershed Studies in New Hampshire and Around the World.*" **Runnells Hall, Chocorua, 6-9 p.m.**

THURSDAY, MARCH 7 *The Green Mountain Conservation Group* will host an evening forum, **Forest Economics and Forest Ecology**. Presenters will include Dave Publicover, senior staff scientist and forest ecologist from the Appalachian Mountain Club, Dan Stepanauskas, consulting forester, Peter Pohl, UNH Cooperative Extension Carroll county forester and Phil Auger, UNH Cooperative Extension forest educator. Presentations will be followed by a roundtable discussion of regional forestry issues and ways to further work together to promote sustainable forestry. **Runnells Hall, Chocorua, 7-9 p.m.**

THURSDAY, MARCH 14 *The Green Mountain Conservation Group* will facilitate a meeting with the Friends of Trout Pond. Invited speaker, Walter Graff, deputy director of the Appalachian Mountain Club will discuss ways that he worked with town officials in Randolph, and state and private organizations to protect 30,000 acres of paper company land that was for sale. Graff will describe how they formed a group, created a plan and were able to raise money to purchase this land. **Freedom Town Hall 7-9 p.m.**

For more information about activities, or volunteer opportunities, call GMCG at 539-1859 or 539-7095.

Landscape-scale conservation needed

BY A. DWIGHT BALDWIN, JR.

Data collected by various state agencies, including the New Hampshire Office of State Planning (OSP) and the Department of Transportation (DOT), indicate that east-central New Hampshire will experience rapid growth in the near future. What then is the evidence for these projections and what will be the implications of such growth if it occurs in an unplanned fashion?

First, traffic counts collected by the DOT on Route 16 in the West Ossipee to Conway stretch, indicate that traffic has doubled every 15 to 17 years since 1950. There is every reason to believe that this exponential growth curve will continue and may indeed steepen in the future. Average daily flow through this section of highway is now approximately 11,000 vehicles. OSP also has projected that growth in this area will be approximately 40% in the next 20 years. Clearly such projections are largely based on the realization that the natural beauty, peace and quiet of the area will draw increasing numbers of people to live and visit the area.

The recent charrette held at West Ossipee to investigate ways to make that area a major stopping place for visitors gives increased credence to the assumption that growth will happen, whether it is planned for or not. If the area is built out to look like New Jersey, much of the area's current appeal and ecology will be lost.

But there is, however, a limit to the number of people that can use and enjoy the natural resources of our landscape without causing environmental deterioration of those very things that have brought us to this place. Some call this upper limit a region's carrying capacity and, although at times this limit is difficult to determine precisely, it is still very real. It is often only recognized when it is exceeded and we see the negative effects of overuse. I believe that we have already reached this carrying capacity in our portion of the state at certain times of the year. Take for example the steady flotilla of kayaks, canoes and other watercraft that float down the Saco River on busy weekends in the vicinity of Fryeburg, Maine. The congestion, noise and trash left by these large number of people as well as erosion of the river banks themselves, has degraded the riverine environment and float trip experience for most. A similar story can be told for the use of the Pine River, which flows northward into Ossipee Lake. During busy weekends, people must wait long periods of time to put their boats into the water at a public boat ramp and the number of party pontoon boats anchored in certain places on the lake have become so numerous that water quality is jeopardized and the noise levels are so great that home owners along the shore are greatly affected.

Still a third example of a water body close to or at its carrying capacity is Chocorua Lake. This lake, with its view down its length to Mount Chocorua, is one of the most lovely and most often photographed scenic beauties in New Hampshire. Yet this treasure is threatened by traffic and overuse by visitors using Route 16. More than 20 years of water-quality monitoring show that the lake has become less clear most summers as algal growth has increased. Such growth is directly attributable to increased phosphorous concentrations brought into the lake by runoff from the highway, which in places is only 30 feet from the shore. In addition, visitors who stop at the lake to enjoy the view, swim, picnic, fish, etc. have caused erosion along the shore and severe compression of the soil at the base of magnificent red and white pines thus threatening the very trees which provide part of the scenic grandeur of the site. Ironically, these very people who stop because the site is so lovely, leave behind great volumes of trash of all description.

Many other current or potential problems of environmental deterioration in east-central New Hampshire directly attributable to overuse of the landscape could be cited. Pollution of the Ossipee stratified drift aquifer by uncontrolled development would be a disaster.

There is, therefore, a need for the initiation of a new ecological paradigm that has been called *landscape ecology* or *landscape-scale conservation*. We must begin a dialog with as many diverse and disparate groups as can be found to help define those natural resources that are now or will be threatened by the inevitable growth in their use. Perhaps other areas can be identified that are not threatened and which in fact can help absorb the increase demand. For areas that are recognized as threatened, plans must be formulated which will assure that their carrying capacity is not exceeded. Such planning will not be an easy task and will obviously have to be addressed in phases. I believe the first phase will be to convince citizens by whatever means is possible that there is indeed a problem. Any insights or ideas on how to begin this first step would be greatly appreciated. Please send any comments to the Green Mountain Conservation Group.