

Piscataquog News

THE PISCATAQUOG LAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

Highlights of PLC's 2011 Annual Meeting

PLC's 2011 annual meeting paid special tribute to the ongoing contributions of two people in particular. **Randy Parker** was designated Director Emeritus by Bob Todd, one of PLC's original Directors Emeriti. You can read more about Randy's long association with PLC (from Day One!) on page 3.

PLC volunteer **Will Townsend** of Weare, was this year's recipient of the President's Award for Volunteerism. For five years Will has worked five hours a week in the PLC office helping with a wide variety of projects. This year he focused on learning and entering data into two industry-standard computer programs: ArcView and Conservation Connections.

ArcView is a mapping program that allows us to input data about the parcels we protect. We can then layer on data from other sources, such as town tax maps and other conserved land, to make maps that identify our parcels, other conserved parcels, roads, waterways, contours, towns, aquifers, and other features. Will attended a course at UNH Cooperative Extension and has reached out to other industry professionals to become proficient in this program – work that has earned him the fond title of Masterful Map Man.

Will also implemented Conservation Connections, a database program that will help us manage our ever-increasing stewardship obligations. This data storage and retrieval program allows us to store details about each of our 90 parcels, such as size, date protected, deed information, and details about the conservation attributes we're protecting. We can also track infor-

mation about the original owner, subsequent owners, the currently assigned easement monitor, and so forth. Now that Will has the database set up, we need to compile detailed information to enter for each property. (Volunteers welcomed!) We are honored and grateful to be the beneficiaries of Will's time and efforts. Thank you, Will!

Attendees at the annual meeting also enjoyed a broad selection of tempting finger food and a fascinating presentation with live birds by **Nancy Cowan** from the New Hampshire School of Falconry in Deering, one of only a few places in the nation devoted to the ancient craft of hunting with a trained bird of prey.



Photos by Deb Ives, clockwise, from upper left: Nancy Cowan introduces James Baggs to a peregrine falcon. The falcon is wearing a leather hood, which keeps the bird calm when it is in a stressful environment.

Will Townsend accepts the President's Award for Volunteerism from Executive Director Paula Bellemore.

Carol Hess, PLC President, schmoozes with ardent PLC supporters Hollis and Joshua Young.



TO CONSERVE

the natural and scenic environment of the Piscataquog River Watershed communities:
 Deering ~ Dunbarton ~ Francestown ~ Goffstown ~ Greenfield ~ Henniker
 Lyndeborough ~ Manchester ~ Mont Vernon ~ New Boston ~ Weare

PLC



FROM MY CORNER

by Paula Bellemore
PLC Executive Director

Every October more than 1,000 land conservation professionals and volunteers gather at the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) Rally for a long weekend of training, education, and networking. As always, I returned from this year's rally invigorated and energized after spending time with this gathering of individuals who are all committed to a

common goal – to save the special places that provide a thriving habitat, clean water, clean air, and quality of life for us all. It is inspiring what land trusts are accomplishing every day, especially in these hard economic times.

Rally 2011 reminded me again of just how grateful I am that when the opportunity to do this work came up, I raised my hand. It's a difficult time for all nonprofits, but when times get tough... well, you know the rest. It's more critical than ever that each of us recommit to doing what we can to help PLC achieve its goals.

This year the annual PLC Board retreat focused on setting our strategic direction for the next few years. Our goals are high, our commitment strong, and we are confident that our family of supporters will, as always, raise their hands and step forward to help preserve the most important spaces and places in our watershed. I look forward to working with each of you to accomplish great things.

You should recently have received our Fall Conservation Fund appeal in your mailbox. Please take this opportunity to raise your hand, to recommit your support to the conservation goals you support, and to make a generous contribution. This work has never been as important as it is today. *Thank you!*

A Letter from the Future...

Imagine that centuries from now, you could go to your mailbox and find this letter addressed directly to you...Or perhaps this is a letter that you've sometimes wished you could send to your forbears.

Dear PLC Supporter,

Today I enjoyed walking the same forest footpaths that you walked 100, 200, 300 years ago.

The sweet song of the hermit thrush still rings through the woodland at dawn. Woodpeckers still telegraph their presence on an old hollow tree – the sentinel of the forest.

Mama black bear still introduces her new cubs to the same plants and insects, berries, and nuts they feasted on in your day. And other animals still maintain their place in Nature's grand scheme of things in this special part of New Hampshire.

Children still wonder at the miracle of new life teeming in vernal pools whose sacred spots have been preserved all these years.

Turtles still lay their eggs in the sandy banks of our rivers and wetlands.

Fish still hide in the quiet pools of rivers and swim in our lakes.

Your favorite wildflowers still grace the fields, meadows, woodlands and wetlands with their myriad colors and fruits of the season.

And today I am blessed to still find a precious, hushed refuge away from an increasingly busy world.

I humbly thank you – from the core of my being – for the foresightedness, will, and commitment you demonstrated time and again in so many ways to protect these special places for those of us who would follow in your footsteps. The magnitude and treasure of this timeless gift is immeasurable.

~ A thankful steward from a future generation

Gail & Randy Parker – A 50-Year Commitment to Conservation



Randy & Gail Parker (Courtesy photo)

by John McCausland

Randy Parker grew up hands-on – and feet-on! – the land and the water of rural New Hampshire. Living next to protected land in Claremont, he roamed the woods and fields – a quintessential country boy. At age 22, fresh out of Cornell with an engineering degree, he bought an abandoned grist mill on the river in New Boston, which he'd noticed one day when driving home from his job in Nashua. It was 1961, a couple of months before he married Gail, a New England girl of like Yankee mindset who shared his love of nature and old-fashioned, small town ways. A few years later, the young couple moved into the mill, borrowing \$1,500 to make the old building habitable. The Middle Branch of the Piscataquog ran right by their windows, even providing their drinking water (but not their sewer – they fixed that right away). They repaired the old wooden dam, creating a pond for fishing, swimming, and skating. New Boston was a quiet, almost forgotten village of only a thousand souls. The Parker children enjoyed the freedom of this setting just as Randy had in his childhood – hands-on and feet-on in nature.

In 1969 the bankrupt Boston & Maine Railroad announced it would sell its right-of-way along the Middle Branch between New Boston and Goffstown. Randy was now secretary of the first New Boston Conservation Commission, so he and the other commission members, John Conley, Carolyn Todd, Marjorie Colburn, and Ken Marvel, set about trying to acquire the land to protect it from development. For seven years Randy negotiated with the railroad trustees, eventually securing the valuable property. The group raised money a dollar at a time through spaghetti dinners and other local efforts – even selling spikes from the railroad! They set up a nonprofit organization to handle the purchase, and so was born the Piscataquog Watershed Association (now PLC).

In 1985 a job opportunity took the Parkers to Ohio, but when Randy retired in 1999, they returned to their beloved mill home and the PWA. Randy joined the Board and served when the then PWA began to open an office, add paid staff, and grow from an informal group of conservation-minded friends to a regional land trust. When his term ended, he was succeeded by Gail, who has served as Treasurer. Living just down the street from the PLC office, Randy and Gail have always been committed supporters and trusted advisors about potential easements or funding donors, or how to approach this person or that, or how to navigate town politics, and so forth. Randy carefully oversaw the PLC's growing investments, his conservative instincts navigating PLC through the market's ups and downs. The Parkers have been there too for the hands-on stuff, the spaghetti dinners, the walks in the woods.

With the Parkers celebrating 50 years of marriage this fall and Gail entering her final year on the board (due to PLC's term limits), their association with PLC enters a new phase. "Now don't write our obituary!" said Gail when we talked. And indeed, this is in no

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way the end of the Parkers' relationship with PLC. What are their hopes for the future? "That we not lose the personal, local touch as PLC becomes bigger," says Randy immediately. "One of our greatest pleasures is monitoring easements, getting out on the land," adds Gail. "You can't just have the government or some professionals in a distant organization do everything. The threats to the environment – climate change, habitat destruction, waste of resources – are very serious. But if these are just abstrac-

tions, if we don't address them hands-on at the local level, we're never going to make it." Hands-on. Feet-on. That's the Parkers and the PLC. Thank you, Randy and Gail! Here's to many more years of association in the future!

Give the Gift of Conservation

PLC gift memberships support both the environment and the local economy. PLC offers a ribbon-bound gift packet that includes a festive letter announcing your gift, two PLC window decals, and our three most recent newsletters. To order gift memberships, call us at 603-487-3331.

Hiking Opportunities on PLC's Conserved Properties

by Rebecca Wagner

Any time of year is a good time to get outdoors and commune with nature. In this region, we have many scenic places to hike, ski, or snowshoe, thanks to the generosity of the area's landowners and the work of town conservation commissions and organizations such as PLC. Not only do we protect natural beauty and environmental features, but we also preserve land for passive, nonmotorized recreation such as hiking, nature study, and wildlife observation.

Saving places that the public can explore and enjoy is a plus. While not a prerequisite, public access is often provided for when PLC conserves a property. Some conserved properties include trails while others allow more general access across the property.

However, not every conserved property allows for public access. Some lands are owned by PLC, while others are protected by a conservation easement. Easements protect the natural features of the land while leaving it in private ownership, and in most cases the owner (not PLC) determines whether or not to allow public access.



The best practice is to contact the landowner before visiting a property. If you see PLC signs on a property you'd like to explore, call PLC and we'll let you know if that land is open to the public. Or contact us for directions to protected properties that allow public access.

One of PLC's goals is to encourage people to get out and personally experience the unique beauty of these conserved lands. The public supports conservation in myriad ways, so public access is one way PLC seeks to thank the public for that support.

In Your Backyard: New Boston Martha's Brook Trail & Sam's Trail Loop

by Sarah Dixon

Some of PLC's prime easement properties have trails open to the public. In New Boston, check out the trails on the Brooks properties along Pine Road. Over the years the Brooks family has put more than 170 acres of land in New Boston under conservation easement. These conserved lands surround the home and studio of celebrated local artist, Jon Brooks. There are two well-marked trails on the property named for Jon's parents: the Martha's Brook Trail north of Pine Road and Sam's Trail beginning on the south side of Pine Road. Together these trails form an easy and pleasant 1.5-mile loop.

These relatively flat trails follow bright blue diamond blazes through the forest. The Martha's Brook Trail begins at a small parking area off Pine Road. (See directions at end.) The trail gently dips down into a small valley and parallels Martha's Brook, which it later crosses on a whimsical wooden bridge. Watch for some fun trail markers along the way. The sculptural wood elements and rock cairns are representative of the unique Brooks style.

The trail splits after the bridge. Take the right fork to proceed through the valley, passing a marshy area and eventually coming back to the road. Across the road, Sam's Trail begins by following an old stone wall and

opens up to a wonderful field view. Continuing along, Sam's Trail leads back to the brook, crossing Pine Road to a small waterfall, and soon leads back to where the trails merge, completing the loop. Take the right fork to end your hike back at the parking area.

In winter months, these trails provide the perfect opportunity for a snowshoe through the woods. The location is remote, peaceful, and quiet, but conveniently located right here in the watershed.

Remember to always be respectful of the privacy of local residents as well as flora and fauna. No hunting or motorized vehicles, please.



A whimsical bridge wiggles across Martha's Brook.
(Photo: Sarah Dixon)

Directions: Take Route 136 between New Boston and Frankestown to Thornton Road (opposite Todd's Corner). From Thornton, take the first right onto Pine Road. The small parking area is .4 miles down Pine Road on the right. The sign for the Martha's Brook Trail is set back a bit from the road.



Q Are people shampooing their hair in the river? Sometimes I see an accumulation of suds. Is that pollution?

car when it hasn't been too long since it was last waxed. Surface tension is one of the reasons oil and water don't mix. That's why we use surfactants such as soap and detergents to reduce the surface tension of water – so it washes away oil and grime.

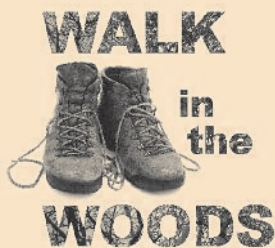
When air mixes with water and surfactants – such as when water tumbles over rocks – the combination tends to produce foam. Sometimes lines of foam will also form on lakes, in coves, and on shores as the result of wind or wave action.

While natural surfactants tend to biodegrade, synthetic surfactants that developed during the petrochemical boom after World War II were longer lasting, and for several decades foam on water bodies was associated with pollution from wastewater. Now that water pollution laws require household detergents to be biodegradable and the dumping of untreated wastewater is far less common, it's rare to see foam that's caused by water pollution, especially in headwater streams that don't have sewage discharges.

So the next time you see foam on a stream, notice its color and texture. Naturally-caused foam often starts off white and picks up color over time from particles in the water. It also tends to break apart easily. Foam caused by detergents often has a perfumey fragrance to it. And as for that head on your beer, its stability depends on the hydrophobicity of the polypeptides. But that's an article for another time...!

There are many places you might expect to find suds – from the washing machine to your beer glass – but not usually in a stream in the woods! But foam in streams is normal. It's usually caused by natural organic compounds from the decay of plant matter. When it rains, these compounds wash out of the soil and into streams and ponds. The chemicals that cause foam are called surfactants because they affect (act on) the surface tension of water. You could see anything from a swirl of foam on the surface to a large mass of foam collecting behind a rock or fallen log.

Surface tension results from the attraction between water molecules, and it's what enables insects such as water striders to walk on water. It's also what causes water to bead up on oily surfaces and on your



Join PLC for a Winter Walk in the Woods!

3rd Annual Moonlight Snowshoe
Saturday, January 7* – 7:00pm

Come along on a quiet snowshoe. We'll wander through a moonlit forest where the nighttime beauty and stillness will take your breath away.

**If it's super-cold we will reschedule to February 4.*

Winter Tracking
Sunday, February 19 – 1:00pm

Join knowledgeable PLC trackers as we explore the winter woods and learn how to spot and identify wildlife track, signs, and scat. Space is limited!

Watch our website and monthly E-news for details. If you don't get our E-news, but want updates, let us know!

THANK YOU to New Boston Dental Care, PLLC for sponsoring the 2011/2012 Walk in the Woods series! We love our Business Sponsors! To become one, contact Paula at 603-487-3331 or paula@plcnh.org.

Toast the Season with PLC!

PLC's 2nd Annual Open House
PLC Office, 5a Mill Street, New Boston
Wednesday, December 21 4pm – 7pm

Join PLC staff and Board members as we welcome winter with a glass of cheer! Light refreshments will be served.

Oops! Our Fall 2011 newsletter had two regrettable errors:

In the donor listing, the Sustainer category was inadvertently dropped during a format shuffle. Our late, but very heartfelt thanks go to:

Sustainers (\$10,000 and above)

Anonymous
Carol Hess & Jed Callen**

** *Charter members of Legacy Society*

In our list of thank you's to volunteers, we omitted two very important people who helped us with the back-breaking office furniture move in August. So a special thank you goes to **Gail and Randy Parker** for once again pitching in because they were "in the neighborhood"! (What neighbors to have!)

PISCATAQUOG LAND CONSERVANCY

Financial Report Summary

Despite nationwide economic difficulties, PLC ended fiscal year 2011 in a favorable financial position. Careful financial oversight and member contributions that stayed level with the previous year allowed PLC to meet its operating budget. Over the coming year the PLC Board will consider PLC's long term operating and endowment needs and establish goals to support our long term commitments. To request a complete copy of the financial report, contact the PLC office.

Statement of Financial Position as of 6/30/11

ASSETS

Checking /Cash	\$ 55,154
Investments	\$ 564,741
Accounts Receivable	\$ 122,194
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 917
Land and Furnishings (depreciated)	\$ 836,988

TOTAL ASSETS **\$ 1,579,994**

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities	\$ 95,755
Land	\$ 833,802
Project Funds	\$ 81,417
Stewardship Funds	\$ 262,791
Hughes Fund	\$ 169,711
Land Prot. Assist.Fund	\$ 18,684
French Endowment	\$ 10,963
Unrestricted Fund Balance	\$ 106,871

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY **\$ 1,579,994**

Tax Tip for a 2-Way Win!

Rather than making a cash donation to PLC, you can gift some or all of your IRA before 12/31/11 and avoid paying taxes on that amount. Call Paula at 603.487.3331 to learn more.

PLC Welcomes Two New Board Members!

Brenda Lind of New Boston has a 22-year history with land conservation. Most recently she worked with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, where she completed land conservation projects in the Merrimack River valley and south-western New Hampshire. She has consulted for other land trusts in New England as well as the national Land Trust Alliance, for which she authored several publications on land conservation planning and stewardship. Locally, she has worked to conserve many properties in the Piscataquog River watershed, and is a frequent visitor to PLC's many properties.



Brenda Lind
(Courtesy photo)

Mike Powell and his wife Deanna moved to the village of New Boston from Indiana in 1985, and now live adjacent to Dennison Pond, the Great Meadow, and the Saunder's Pasture conservation land. Over these 25+ years, Mike has developed a deep appreciation for the Piscataquog watershed and the many recreational opportunities it affords. An engineer by education, Mike focuses his professional career on leadership, project management, and strategy. He serves on the Board of Directors of the International Council of Systems Engineering - New England, as well as the Aerospace Industry Association - Engineering Management Committee.



Mike Powell
(Courtesy photo)



Piscataquog
Land Conservancy

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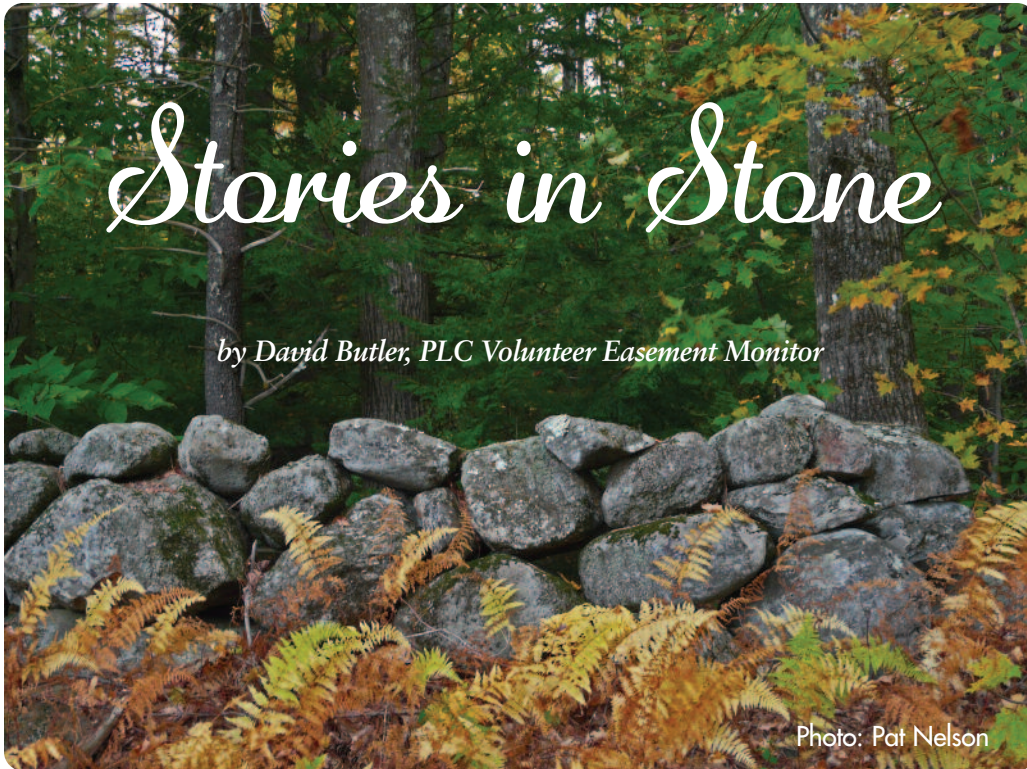
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Stories in Stone

by David Butler, PLC Volunteer Easement Monitor

Photo: Pat Nelson

As I tramp around PLC properties I am fascinated whenever I see a stone wall. Stone walls remind me that the land I'm walking on was once a working farm. I like to think about the farm and what crops and animals were raised there. Since I'm generally walking in a forest, it's impossible to see how the farm was laid out and how the stone walls fit into the workings of the farm.

When I do take time to do a detailed exploration of a property, I find complete chaos! There are stones laid out in random walls, stones in piles, and stones piled on top of boulders. There are single-width walls and double-width walls, as well as walls with large boulders and walls with stones that could have been lifted by a child. To top it all off, I often find a stone wall with a barbed wire fence or sheep fence running along it. Why would there be a wire fence running along a stone wall?

Tom Wessels' new book *Forest Forensics* helps make sense of the chaos. Wessels explains that farmers were simply trying to get the stones out of their fields. The farmers did not pre-plan the layout of stone walls because they did not initially know the stones were lurking beneath the surface. When a tract of land is covered with forest, the glacial till beneath the topsoil is kept in place by the vegetation. But when farmers cleared the land, the stones kept rising to the surface due to freezing and thawing action. So farmers were constantly setting the stones aside.

Wessels also explains that there were three kinds of agricultural use in our area: Pastures, hay fields, and crops. By analyzing the stones in a wall, one can determine which type of use occurred in the former adjacent field. For example, small fist-sized stones indicate that the land was tilled.

And why would a farmer install a wire fence along a stone wall? A particular tract of land may have had different uses at different times. For example, a farmer might have cleared a field in the 1700s and used it for raising crops. In the mid-1800s a farmer may have raised sheep on the same land. And in the 1900s this land might have been used for a dairy farm, hence the barbed wire fence.

NH Dragonfly Survey Update

The NH Dragonfly Survey began in 2007 as a partnership of NH Audubon, NH Fish & Game, and UNH Cooperative Extension. The goal was to gain a better understanding of the distribution of dragonfly species of conservation concern in the state.

For the last five years, volunteers around the state of NH, including several from PLC, participated in the survey. Volunteers logged nearly 18,000 records and found about 180 different species of dragonflies, including four species that were discovered for the first time in the state. The most comprehensive database of the life of any New Hampshire insect was created in the process, and in the long term, this information will inform conservation planning. For example, a common species could become threatened if that species' specific habitat is affected by development.

Pam Hunt of NH Audubon is compiling the survey results and preparing a report that will summarize the distribution and status of all the species known to occur in the state. By the time the final report is complete in the spring, Hunt said the hope is to have a fuller picture and understanding of dragonfly habitat.

You can learn more about the project and read the survey's quarterly newsletters online:

www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/Nongame/dragonflies.html



Address Service Requested

Upcoming Events

Open House – December 21 – 4:00-7:00 pm
Toast the Season with PLC!

Saturday, January 7 – 7:00pm
Moonlight Snowshoe

Sunday, February 19 – 1:00pm
Winter Tracking

Details inside.

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October's Trick & November's Treat

After Father Winter played a mean trick on us in late October, Mother Earth (aka Lisa Ferro) doled out treats to visiting goblins a week later. Luckily no one gobbled up this donut worn by Claire Ives, daughter of Deb Ives, PLC's Stewardship Coordinator.



Photo: Deb Ives

Pssst... Don't let PLC turn into a pumpkin!

Please respond to our Fall Conservation Fund appeal that recently arrived in your mailbox.