

The mission of the Somerset Woods Trustees is to protect lands in Somerset County that have significant natural or cultural resources and manage them in a sustainable way for public benefit.

SOMERSET WOODS NEWS

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For more information:

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## TRUSTEES:

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**Clinton B. Townsend Esq.**

## A WALK IN THE WOODS

Here we are in a new year and I am excited about the direction of Somerset Woods Trustees. We accomplished much last year and have a lot to do in 2015.

We completed a conservation easement on the Townsend Farm in Canaan, generously donated by Bill and Louise Townsend. Maine Farmland Trust is a secondary holder of the CE and was instrumental in helping us close the easement. We are still working with MFT on an easement on the Weston Farm in Madison that will protect 328 acres and 11,000 feet of river frontage.

We saw three board members resign this past year, Jeff McCabe, Marie Lougee and Skip Gates. All have been valued Trustees and will be missed. We have been fortunate to add three capable and avid conservationists to the board, Warren Shay, Joe Dembeck and Chris Young. Warren is a well-known attorney in Somerset County and is an original board member of Lake George Regional Park. Joe is an environmental consultant and biologist who lives in Canaan. Chris is a retired SAD 54 teacher and lives in Caratunk giving us another upriver presence. We currently have one board opening and would love to hear from any of you if you have an interest or know someone that may.

We are extremely happy and fortunate to have our first Executive Director. Nina Pleasants joined us in May and has been energetic and diligent in her duties. She is a retired theater professor from Boston University and now lives with her husband Michael in the metropolis of Norridgewock. She has raised some critical funds for our Coburn Woods Trails project that we hope will see considerable progress this year and has been working with Sebasticook Regional Land Trust in an effort to become more proactive in the Great Moose Lake area. Nina is also working with our Events Committee to develop some public programs for 2015.

We continue to grow and protect more of our beautiful county. It is a rewarding organization to be part of. If you have any questions, concerns or interests that SWT may be able to help with, please drop us a note or email.

*Jack Gibson, President*

SWT has volunteered its time and talents to preserve natural habitats (earth, water, trees, even air) for the benefit of humans and creatures and the enjoyment of past, present and future generations. Its members strive to be good stewards of nature's pristine beauty and environmental balance. Its collaborators, donators, and supporters enjoy knowing they have a large part in the successful results.

## COBURN WOODS UPDATE

In order to improve public access to Coburn Woods, SWT has decided to construct a 10-car gravel parking lot at the Russell Road entrance to the trail system. In 2014 the Town of Skowhegan replaced the damaged culvert at the site. With that improvement, we can now build a driveway that will enter the woods to the parking area providing natural coverage from the road. The Plum Creek Foundation has donated \$1500 for construction costs and LLBean Land Trust Grant (through Maine Coast Heritage Trust) has donated \$3660 towards implementation of the plan. Some of these funds will be allocated for improving access from the Coburn Ave. entrance.

Last summer our intern, Jeremy Demers, procured a \$1000 grant from Walmart for improving signage in the Coburn Woods. He also developed a map of existing and future trail links which can help people orient themselves in the woods until the signage is in place.

Meanwhile, we have a lot news from the other end of Coburn Woods – Taylor Field. Joe Dembeck, with a group of volunteers, has begun the pruning of the old heritage apple orchard. John Bunker identified many different apple trees including Wolf River, Wealthy, Dutchess, Snow, and Macintosh in early September but the best time to prune is now. The removal of buckthorn, bittersweet and other invasive species is no small undertaking.

In Spring, the Maine Grain Alliance plans to cultivate 2 acres of Taylor Field to grow heritage wheat for seed development and to use the lot as a demonstration site for the Kneading Conference and other events.

*Roger Poulin*

## FUNDING NEEDS.....

Somerset Woods Trustees is a 501(c)(3) organization and any donations are therefore tax deductible to the extent provided by law. Funding is needed for Coburn Woods parking and trails projects, for continued operation of Kennebec Banks, the rest area formerly run by the Maine Department of Transportation, and for support of SWT operations and activities. We are also set up through Pay Pal to receive donations at our web site:

<http://www.somersetwoodstrustees.org/please-consider-donation-somerset-woods-trustees>

or any contributions may be mailed to Somerset Woods Trustees, PO Box 833, Skowhegan, ME 04976.



*Coburn Woods*

*By Hannele Lahti*

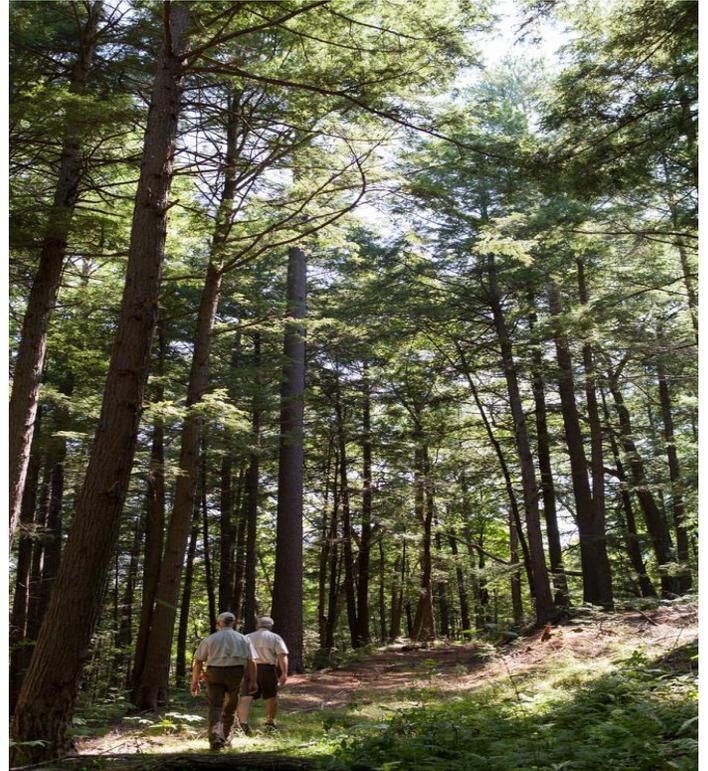
SWT Newsletter is now available by email! To save trees and counter the rising postal rates, we are pleased to offer the SWT Newsletter to you electronically. If you wish to receive editions via regular mail, please Nina Pleasants at (207)660-1066 and she can print up a copy for you.

## TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS Joe Dembeck & Chris Young

Joe Dembeck grew up in Sparrowbush, New York along the Delaware River. He graduated from the State University of New York College at Geneseo, NY with a B.S. in Biology in 1994 and in 1996 received his M.S. in Water Resources Management from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, NY. He has worked on fisheries and water resource issues throughout the Northeast for 20 years as an environmental consultant and biologist with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. He currently works as an independent consultant focusing on fishery and aquatic resource management interests. Joe serves on the Town of Skowhegan's Conservation Commission. Joe and his partner, Natalie Jones, live in Skowhegan. He enjoys canoeing, fishing, hunting, snowshoeing, and working in his woodlot.

Chris Young graduated from SAHS in 1971 and University of Maine at Orono in 1975. He taught Social Studies at the Pittsfield Junior High School until 1980, then high school social studies at SAHS until 1997. He operated a campground at Pleasant Pond in Caratunk from 1978-2006 and served as a town official in Caratunk from 1985-2007. Currently, Chris works as a building contractor and camp caretaker. He is married, has two grown children and in his free time enjoys skiing and playing the fiddle.

We welcome them both!



## Upcoming Events

February 14<sup>th</sup> at 10 am – Joe Dembeck will be celebrating Maine Great Outdoors Day by leading a 1 mile snowshoeing walk on Philbrick Trails in Skowhegan. Meet at the parking lot at the end of Joyce Street. The trails are of moderate difficulty. Beginning snowshoers can walk on the River Walk with Nina Pleasants and if you want to try snowshoeing, Main Street Skowhegan office (above the Bankery) has pairs of snowshoes available to borrow for free. The office is open 9-5 Mon-Fri.

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, there will be another SWT snowshoeing opportunity at Lake George on the Skowhegan side as a part of Winter Fun at Lake George. It will be a free event for family fun including hot dogs and other refreshments and sponsored by Conservation Commission. Check our website for more information about events [www.somersetwoodstrustees.org](http://www.somersetwoodstrustees.org).



*Above: Eaton Ridge  
Below: Kennebec Banks  
By Hannele Lahti©*

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## Winter Wonderland

Don't think that Somerset Woods Trustees hibernates in the winter. This is the time of year that you may run into some of the directors in the woods, cross country skiing or snowshoeing. The trails (often old woods roads or skidder trails) are open for use and easier to negotiate without leaves and low story growth. Go to our website at [www.somersetwoodstrustees.org](http://www.somersetwoodstrustees.org) to view our property locations. Pretty winter trails are available at most of them.

Our president, Jack Gibson and his wife, choose the Coburn woods for cross country skiing. For the most part the paths are wide enough to be side-by-side and, with one exception, the inclines are gradual to medium difficulty.

One of our volunteers, Patty Van Horne prefers the trails that back up on her property, the Philbrick Trails. They are a little narrower and have some steep inclines but you are rewarded with beautiful views of the Kennebec River.

On my showshoes, I prefer the easier routes like the River Walk and the Kennebec River/ Eaton Ridge Trail. The trails are relatively flat, wide and short. I am always looking for a partner to snowshoe with so give me a call.

Remember to go into the winter woods prepared, preferably not alone, bring your cell phone in case of emergency and take pictures. Tell us your stories and send us your photos. If you see any garbage or destruction, please remove it or report to us and we will get it removed. Let me know if I have permission to share your stories and photos on our facebook page.

*Nina Pleasants*  
Part-time Executive Director of Somerset Woods Trustees  
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