



The Newsletter of the Frankestown Land Trust, Inc.

Fall 2024

Conserving Community

SOME OF THE most overlooked benefits of land conservation are the ways in which the efforts to protect special places—and the protected spaces themselves—bring people together to create a sense of community and belonging.

We often think about preserving wildlife habitat for flora and fauna. But we, too, are a part of nature and are affected by the quality of our environment. A growing body of research shows that time spent outdoors interacting with the natural environment is vital to human health and development. Don't we all feel better when our views are not as cluttered as our brains? Conserved lands provide opportunities for socialization as well as solitary recreation—ways to enjoy fresh air, exercise, hunting, fishing, bird watching, and other activities together. They preserve the ecosystems required for the next generation to learn valuable skills and to continue outdoor traditions. They provide resources for jobs that contribute to the local economy and career opportunities for young people, from research, to restoration, to environmental justice.

Frankestown has worked to capture the connection between conservation and community in the Land Use Chapter of the town's Master Plan.

“Although Frankestown’s natural systems and habitats are highly valued by the community, the specific benefits of these resources are complex and difficult to describe and quantify.”

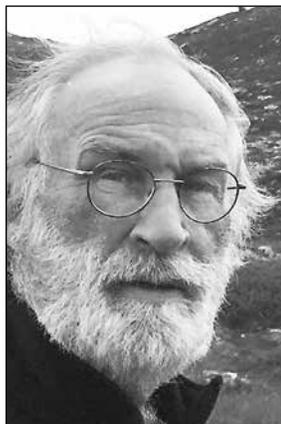
“Ecosystems function on many different levels to serve our everyday lives: providing food, raw materials, water, medicines; regulating our air, water quality, climate, and floodwaters; enhancing our cultural identities, recreational activities and sense of place; supporting the underlying functions that make our very existence possible, such as photosynthesis, creation of soils, and the water cycle. Frankestown’s natural systems are rich and complex, ranging from mountain environments to riparian and wetland ecosystems. As part of sustainable land use planning that ensures a high quality of life for our citizens, it is critical to understand our natural systems and provide for the conservation and protection of these resources.”

The public health benefits of land conservation include protecting air and water quality, as well as scenic views.

Conserving Community
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A Letter from the Chair



Fall 2024

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Francestown Land Trust,

Since Christmas of 2023 my family and I have been observing a pair of bald eagles on part of our property that is protected by a conservation easement. We first noticed the nest on Christmas Day, and from that moment on became totally obsessed with learning everything we could about bald eagles—their diet, hunting,

mating, nesting, hatching, rearing, fledging, and migration. After countless hours observing the nest and the adult pair's activities, we noticed that they were no longer leaving the nest unattended for more than a few minutes and surmised that at least one egg must be being incubated. When we saw the adults change their positions in the nest, we concluded that an eaglet had hatched. When, finally, we saw the eaglet in early May, we were gob-smacked by its size and nicknamed it "Baby Huey."

We watched Huey grow and develop new behaviors. Fortunately, when a freak windstorm blew the nest out of the tree in late June, the eaglet was old enough to perch on the branch where the nest had been. Huey soon became a loud teenager, constantly begging for food until the adults employed some "tough love" to encourage the noisy eaglet to find its own, while they kept watch from a close-by perch.

Much of our observing occurred while boating or swimming and included engaging with others out on the lake who were curious about the eagles. Celebrating "our" eagles seemed to bring the lake community together in a new way.

And then... they were gone. Huey had fully fledged and headed off to start a new life and the eagle parents flew off for what



we hoped was a well-deserved vacation. We speculated about if and when they would return, if they would choose the same very exposed tree (Audubon says "very likely"), and, if so, would they hatch more than one egg this time?

Of course, the eagle family did not exist in isolation. We saw a few lucky airborne bass escape back into the lake on the way to the nest. The merganser family may have lost a few members. The loons were probably on edge. In other wildlife news, a fawn fell victim to a bear, a pack of coyotes made their rounds, and the usual contingent of skunks and raccoons made nocturnal visits.

The point I'm trying hard to get to here is that, under the conservation easement, many species, including our eagle family and fellow humans, seem to have found life more hospitable.

The land no longer has buildings or a septic system on it. No fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides are applied to maintain lawns or gardens, protecting the lake's water. And, although the property was originally protected in hopes that loons might return to nesting there (they haven't), the community that formed around seeing eagles up close and personal has expanded to share all kinds of observations.

In this newsletter, we look at some of the ways conserved land helps create and perpetuate human community, in addition to preserving local flora and fauna.

The FLT itself is part of a greater community that works to identify and protect forests, wetlands, and agricultural land. Founded in 1986, our all-volunteer organization now stewards more than 3,000 acres in Francestown and surrounding towns through conservation easements and fee-ownership. Many of our holdings have well-marked trails and maps are available on our website. We encourage you to get out and enjoy these special places.

We also invite you to join our community of volunteers. Our work plan includes invasive plant removal, habitat improvement, trail work, and annual monitoring visits to our holdings. If you're interested, please reach out to us at: info@francestownlandtrust.org

Larry Ames, Chair
Francestown Land Trust

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Join our email list to learn about our upcoming events. Contact us at info@fracestownlandtrust.org to be added to this list.

Investing in Community Resilience

OUR PROTECTED TOWN forests and conserved land provide a long list of community benefits to those of us who live here today. They also provide a strong connection to our past and to our future.

Throughout the forests are reminders of New Hampshire's history and economic past. Cellar holes and stone walls remind us of the early settlers who built our communities. Their abandonment stands as a monument to the fragility of economic cycles and the importance of investing in community resilience.

Land Trusts, in partnership with their communities, protect open space and promote sustainability to help make communities more resilient into the future. One of the best definitions of sustainability may be to "not sacrifice the future for the benefit of the present." Sustainability needs stewardship, but resilience needs forward-looking investments.

Fracestown has a deep history of investing in resilience. Broadly speaking, K-12 education, clean water, and public safety are all great examples of essential public investments that enjoy broad community support because they drive economic impact and improved quality of life over generations. They are examples of forward-looking investments, which are the foundations of resilience. Bigger towns and cities often build on these foundations with anchor institutions, such as universities, arts, and culture.

In Fracestown one of our anchor institutions is our tremendous resource of public and protected forests, waterways, trail networks, and outdoor recreation. It may seem less economically tangible than a large university, but even the biggest cities value the economic impact of green space. The New

York City Parks Department estimates that trees provide \$5.60 in benefits for every \$1 dollar spent on tree planting and care. There are longer term macro-economic implications, as well. Protecting habitats and biodiversity can protect against costly flooding, climate change, crop pollination failure, and other risks.

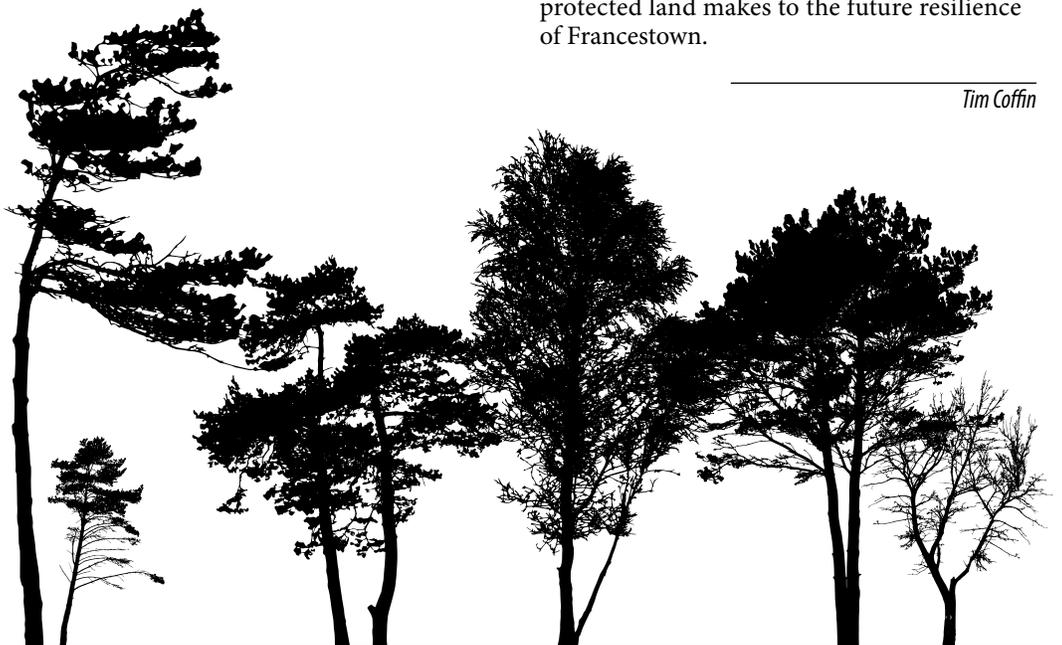
Of course, running cities and towns is expensive and capital-intensive. The decision to build and finance a new school, for instance, will impact a town's budget for an entire generation. Where then, to place open space and protected habitats on the scale of essential long-term community investments?

Weighing that question, years ago Fracestown established by town vote, six town forests totaling nearly 1,500 acres, open to the public for recreational uses, including hunting and fishing. These areas have proved an important foundation for Fracestown's economy, delighting residents, attracting visitors, and sustaining vital resources.

Additionally, the FLT, with widespread town support, protects public properties totaling 1,259 acres, including the *Rand Brook Forest* and *Schott Brennan Falls Reserve*. All land owned by FLT is open for public use. The FLT also holds conservation easements on 35 privately-owned properties, helping to protect an additional 1,812 acres. Including one Executory Interest, FLT helps to protect a total area of 3,096 acres.

Both the Fracestown Conservation Commission and the Land Trust reflect our town's enduring commitment to a sustainable and resilient community. Today, we can all enjoy the quality of life benefits of our open and protected forests, but we should not lose sight of the longer-term contribution protected land makes to the future resilience of Fracestown.

Tim Coffin



Announcing the Robin Haubrich Volunteer Award

A HIGHLIGHT OF the FLT Annual Business Meeting on June 13, 2024 was the presentation of the *Robin Haubrich Volunteer Award*... to Robin Haubrich! The award was created in celebration and recognition of Robin's many years of dedicated, behind-the-scenes volunteer work.



A talented designer and project manager, Robin long drove the effort to create, publish, and mail our semi-annual FLT Newsletter. She designed flyers and posters for the FLT Annual Meeting and the *Joan Hanchett Nature Series* (JHNS) and she has been the long-time caretaker of the FLT website.

Robin has also logged countless hours out on the trails making FLT properties navigable and pleasant for hikers and walkers. It is fitting indeed to honor Robin with our first formally recognized FLT volunteer award; a watercolor of "Monadnock from Crotched" painted and gifted by artist Betsy Hardwick. The *Robin Haubrich Volunteer Award* will be our way to recognize other outstanding volunteers in the future. Thank you, Robin!

Conserving Community *Continued from page 1*

Agricultural easements help ensure food security by protecting open space and soils. These easements can help to keep large family farms intact and resist economic pressures to develop the land. In addition to building self-sufficiency and resiliency, locally produced food creates commerce and community via farm stands and farmers' markets, while saving energy used in food transport. Agri-tourism is another important element in the local economy, attracting visitors with pick-your-own orchards, wineries, corn mazes, maple syrup sugaring, and other seasonal events. Protecting land not actively used for agriculture can also contribute by supporting pollinator habitat and other ecosystems that benefit agriculture.

Land conservation also benefits communities by reducing taxpayer infrastructure costs. Protected land doesn't require road access, utilities, or maintenance. By protecting water quality, it reduces the need for expensive treatment of public water systems. With the increased frequency of heavy rain events, undeveloped land absorbs rainfall, which helps reduce damage from flooding and controls run-off, which, with warming water temperatures, can lead to unhealthy and sometimes dangerous algae and bacterial blooms that affect fisheries, wildlife, and human health.

By helping to preserve biodiversity, protected parcels provide an important buffer for ecosystems in a changing climate. It can even be argued that protecting land and soil helps mitigate climate change.

Finally, working together to protect land and ecosystems creates common purpose. From individual landowners working with their neighbors to piece together smaller parcels to create a wildlife corridor; to working with town government and regional conservation partners; to applying for state and federal grants; to groups gathering for recreation, education, or wildlife viewing—when we work together toward a goal, our differences matter less.

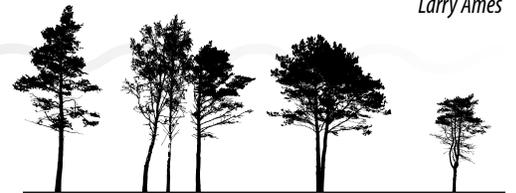
We recognize that the specific benefits of protecting natural systems and habitats are complex and difficult to describe and quantify. Some benefits, such as statewide tourism revenues or saving the cost of building roads and treating water, are more easily quantified than the feeling you get watching otters at play or enjoying the sunset at High Five, which does not mean that that they are any more or less important for our quality of life.

Larry Ames

NH Audubon Recognizes FLT Vice-Chair Betsy Hardwick

NH AUDUBON HAS presented its *Tudor Richards Award* to Betsy Hardwick of Franconstown for "working tirelessly and effectively for conservation in the Granite State." Betsy was recognized for championing the natural environment in New Hampshire through both conservation and environmental education.

Betsy has chaired the Franconstown Conservation Commission (FCC) for 25



years and is vice-chair of the FLT. Among her notable accomplishments are the passage of a \$1 million town conservation bond and driving the "2010 by 2010" campaign that resulted in conservation of 25% of the land in Franconstown. She has also served on the New Hampshire Coverts Advisory Board and presented at the NH Association of Conservation Commissions' annual training.

FLT Hosts Donor Appreciation Luncheon

ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22TH, the FLT hosted its second donor appreciation luncheon to thank members, outline conservation plans, and preview upcoming projects. The FLT depends on the generous support of donors to do its work. Member donations fund the operations that protect the valuable conservation, recreational, and agricultural lands and enable new projects. A map showing conserved parcels (by the FLT and others) provided a graphic representation of work to date and areas of specific interest. Chair Larry Ames introduced the FLT Board of Directors and several reported on this year's activities.

Board member Marsha Dixon, who graciously hosted the luncheon amid her beautiful gardens, spoke about the positive response to the *Green Corridor Project* fund raiser. As head of the fund raising effort, she reported donations of \$40,400 to date toward the goal of the \$45,000 needed to fund the necessary survey, closing, and stewardship costs and to close the remaining small gap in the purchase price of a "keystone" property vital to completing a "green corridor" connecting conserved land from *Shattuck Pond* to the *Crotched Mountain Town Forest*.



Marsha introduced Jim and Cindy St. Jean, owners of the parcel of land. The two are avid mountain bikers and Jim explained that they began piecing together an extensive recreational biking trail network in 2019. Having purchased 33 acres of land on the west side of Route 47 and giving the conservation easement to the FLT, they next purchased an additional parcel of land on the east side of Route 47 and turned to the FLT to put it under conservation easement as well. Coupled with trails on the adjacent *Fisher Hill Town Forest*

and FLT's *Fisher Hill Road Forest*, these properties provide a robust trail network, now called the *Turnpike Trails*, all available for public use. Cindy talked about her rewarding experiences learning about the history of the area and capturing a photo during her first moose sighting. Granted, it was a "behind shot," but the moose was walking right down the middle of the trail!

Greg Neilley, Treasurer, noted that the conservation grant landscape has changed and that, going forward, it was unlikely that as many projects could be completed entirely with grant funding. Thankfully, the fabulous donor response to the *Green Corridor* campaign gives the FLT confidence that, with the backing of its incredibly supportive members, it can continue to protect important open spaces in the area.

FLT Hosts Donor Appreciation Luncheon Continued on page 7

Annual FLT Meeting Focuses on Climate

FIFTY MEMBERS ATTENDED the Annual Franconstown Land Trust Meeting on Thursday June 13, 2024. The meeting began with a social reception, followed by a brief business meeting, and speaker presentation.

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Rick Van de Poll, principal of Ecosystem Management Consultants (EMC) of Sandwich, New Hampshire, delivered an animated, slide-illustrated talk on "The Effects of Climate Change on Local Wildlife."



Rick was quick to establish that "Climate change shall affect virtually all of us, every species, every habitat, and every ecosystem, regardless of whether or not we are aware of or recognize the symptoms, and that the pace of global warming has and will outstrip the speed at which any of our keystone species can adapt through normal evolutionary means."

He talked about the direct effects that climate change has on plants and wildlife, noting which species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrate will be "gainers" and which will be "losers," as they deal with warmer, wetter winters, shifts in insect population abundance, seasonal droughts, and stronger windstorm events.

After a Q&A with Rick, members continued to socialize, making it a great evening for all.

Exploring our Trails – a success!

ONCE A MONTH, representatives from the FLT and Francestown Conservation Commission (FCC) share the fun of leading hikes on some of the great forest trails right here in Francestown. We choose a different forest, under the protection of either FLT or the FCC, and invite the public to join us in enjoying the trails on a hike-worthy day.

It's been a wonderful way to introduce trails to new hikers and to offer seasoned hikers the opportunity to join a group and learn something new about the forest. Ads promoting the hikes are placed in *The Francestown News* each month, flyers are posted at the Francestown George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library, in the kiosk outside the library, and in the Town Office.

The *Exploring our Trails* series began in June with a hike led by George Sanderson on his amazing property, with eskers, erratics, and beaver ponds. Subsequent hikes were led through



the *Shattuck Pond Town Forest*, the *NH Turnpike Trails* (focus of the *Green Corridor Bike Trails Fundraiser*), the *Crotched Mountain Town Forest*, and most recently, the *Rand Brook Forest* and *Driscoll Hill Town Forest*.

For information on our next hike, planned for mid-November, go to the francestownlandtrust.org website.

Special Places Matter

EVERY MONTH, the FLT and Francestown Conservation Commission (FCC) co-author a monthly ad in *The Francestown News* under the heading *Special Places Matter* that describes FLT- and/or FCC-protected habitats that are critical for wildlife and water quality.

The series is a continuation of last year's series: *Celebrating Special Places*, which highlighted protected forests in Francestown.

Below is a recent *Special Places Matter* piece on Headwater Streams. To learn about other previously published Special Places, go to the francestownlandtrust.org website.

Why Special Places Matter

Headwater Streams



Photo by Barry Wicklow.

Francestown Conservation Commission
www.francestownnh.org/conservation-commission


Francestown Land Trust
www.francestownlandtrust.org

Did you know that headwater streams are critical to the health of the entire river network? These typically unnamed streams provide cold high-quality water to the river system; they regulate the downstream flow of nutrients, the transport of sediment, and distribution of organic matter. They also hold back flood waters, remove pollutants, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

Headwaters are the smallest in the hierarchy stream network of a watershed; they have low water volumes and are extremely sensitive to disturbance. Development, impervious surfaces, runoff, pollution, loss of tree buffer and loss of connectivity endanger our headwater streams and as a result, jeopardize larger streams and rivers.

Twenty years ago, the FLT Headwaters Project began a multi-year effort to protect headwater streams along Rand Brook and the South Branch of the Piscataquog River in Francestown. Since 2004, efforts by the Francestown Land Trust and the Francestown Conservation Commission have also focused on protecting headwaters of Brennan, Collins, Whiting, School House, Pettee and Avery Brooks.

Headwaters are the stream network's strongest defense against climate change. When you think about the source of clean water for people and wildlife, now and for future generations, remember the natural benefits of our headwater streams.

Hannah Proctor, on behalf of the FLT Outreach Committee, described new programs introduced this year, many in collaboration with the Francestown Conservation Commission, the George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library, and *The Francestown News*. These programs include: the *Exploring our Trails* monthly hikes on trails in town; the *Special Places Matter* ads in *The Francestown News*; and a new look for the FLT website. She spoke about volunteering and the presentation of the first *Robin Haubrich Volunteer Award* to Robin Haubrich at the 2024 FLT Annual Meeting in June.

Ben Haubrich, Land Manager, congratulated Betsy Hardwick, Vice Chair of the FLT, on receiving the *Tudor Richards Award* from NH Audubon for her many years of effective conservation work in New Hampshire. Ben noted that Betsy has been a key leader in Francestown for many years, showing unwavering support of land conservation and forestry. If you asked Betsy, she would say that she gets the greatest enjoyment when leading hikes for the younger school kids, where she gets to pass

along her love of nature.

Members shared their concerns, future project ideas, and suggestions for additional public outreach activities with directors while enjoying delicious food. Attendees also participated in a drawing for door prizes, which



included FLT swag, FLT maple syrup, a full bag of garden bounty, and several hand-crafted wood items donated by Jeff Tarr.

The sun came out, the rain stayed away, and all enjoyed taking an afternoon to chat with others from our local conservation-minded community.



HAVE YOU SEEN?

Have You Visited Our Website Recently?

We've changed our look... Added more news-worthy coverage and more photos... If you haven't visited francestownlandtrust.org recently, take a look!

We've been busy this year "reaching out" to new and old members, the community, and other groups in town. As part of this effort, our new website highlights *Recent Events* and *News and Programs*—so it's easy to see reviews and photos of past events and find out about future programs.

Do you want to learn more about our current **Green Corridor of Trails Fund Raiser** – it's there!

Or perhaps you're interested in...

- Learning about upcoming **Exploring our Trails** hikes and seeing photos of past hikes
- Reading the **Special Places Matter** ads featured in *The Francestown News*
- Seeing coverage and photos from talks at this year's **Joan Hanchett Nature Series**
- Perusing any of our **Newsletters**, past or present

It's all there and easy to find.

If you have any requests, comments, or questions about the website, we'd love to hear from you!

francestownlandtrust.org





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UPCOMING EVENT



Joan Hanchett Nature Series *presents*

Brilliant Beaver

When: Friday November 15, 6:30pm

Where: Francestown Town Hall

Presenter: Willa Coroka

DID YOU KNOW that the American Beaver can max out at 100 pounds?!

Come join us while we learn about this fascinating mammal with a large reputation. Referred to as pests by some, and as keystone species by others, this is your chance to learn all about North America's largest rodent. You'll hear about all things beaver—from facts and stats, to fables and unrivaled engineering abilities, to perfume, pelts, and everything in between. The interactive program will wrap up with an activity suitable for kids and adults alike.

Willa Coroka graduated with her MS in Environmental Studies after several years of seasonal jobs that took her from the coast of Chile to the mountains of Andalusia and myriad locations in between. Her deep commitment for preserving wild spaces and knack for evoking excitement in people's



perception of the natural world led her to create *The Magpie's Apprentice*, a learning platform offering eco-centered lectures, presentations, and workshops.

The *Joan Hanchett Nature Series* is a free program for adults and children of all ages. It is sponsored by Francestown Land Trust, George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library, *The Francestown News*, and the Francestown Conservation Commission.