

Watershed News

THE PISCATAQUOG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



by Caroline Robinson



Winslow and Sophie in
Francetown, circa 1992

When I was first getting to know my husband, Buck, he would take me to a romantic cabin on Scobie Pond. It was very rustic, with no running water and two stoves for heat. Leaving Cambridge and going to Scobie became such a wonderful respite for us that, when we got married in 1981, we looked for land in the area.

We were lucky to find a river property close to the center of Francetown; it was secluded, wooded, and wild. The year our first child was born, we installed a small shed with a tiny woodstove, and spent weekends exploring the woods and river. Three years later, when we had a second child, we built a family-sized cabin.

If we had known then that we would wind up farming on the NH seacoast, we never would have bought wooded acreage, let alone built a cabin in Francetown. But in 1991 we made the decision to move our family to the land in Stratham where I had grown up and to open a large, organic berry farm. Now how would we ever get to Francetown? Should we sell the cabin?

We couldn't. We loved it too much. The cabin became a source of secluded family delight. It offered a perfect laboratory for us all to discover forest, pond, and river wildlife. Salamanders, beaver, otter, trout, blue heron, ducks, turtles, bear, deer, mice, and a host of songbirds and insects made every visit exciting. For two years, we tried keeping bees in the field, but each time, a bear demolished the hives and left us humbled.

The cabin was also an experiment in alternative energy, with photovoltaic panels, solar hot water, a wood-burning boiler, a woodstove, a propane fridge, and cooking stove. While we were gone, the batteries would charge, and when we came for a weekend, we would use the stored electricity and hot water. In winter, we ran a generator to boost the batteries. Not being connected to the grid was a source of pride, and conservation of energy was a house rule.

As three small abutting properties became available, we added them to the original purchase, hoping to further protect the river. In spring floods, the river rounds two sharp corners, shooting a powerful stream of water up onto the shore and carrying away brush, fern, and gravel. It is a beautiful, powerful sight, and offers a glance back in history to a time when there was a water mill just upstream of us on Potash Road.

We often talked about putting our land into easement, and did so with the farm in 1998. That same year my husband was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, so the Francetown easement got put on hold. When he died in 2003, I vowed to finish realizing our dream of permanently protecting the land we had bought together.

My children are now 18 and 21, and both are studying for environmental careers. Knowing that the property is protected forever, we are all grateful to the PWA – in perpetuity!

Caroline Robinson, a longtime PWA member, owns and farms Berry Hill Farm in Stratham, NH, where she is active on the town's Open Space Committee and works with landowners to protect their land.



TO CONSERVE

the natural and scenic environment of the Piscataquog River Watershed communities:
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

by Margaret Watkins

I was surprised and thrilled when long-time PWA member Randy Parker alerted me to an article about conservation easements in the latest AARP magazine. Easements, I thought, are going mainstream!

The article points out that more than 30% of all forestland – “a staggering 186 million acres” – in the United States is privately owned by individuals 55 years old and older. “Though the fear of paving paradise is nothing new,” reads the article, “experts are only beginning to understand how the shift will affect everyone, not just rural landowners.” Water quality, water supply, soils for growing food and fiber, recreational amenities, scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, and flood storage [thank you, spring weather, for the reminder!] are among the direct, irreplaceable benefits that undeveloped land provides people. The land PWA and other conservation entities protect helps maintain these fundamental natural-world services to human society.

But there's another, equally compelling side to the equation between man and nature that lies at the heart of our land protection work. Caroline Robinson speaks to it in her article on page 1 about her land on the South Branch in Franconia. Caroline's story focuses on how her family's lives and learnings are inextricably linked to their Franconia property. Other landowners who have conserved their land have different stories with similar, value-laden connections to the land and its wildlife.

Our lives play out in a context of place that is intensely personal and intensely important.

In conserving their land, landowners have a unique opportunity to create something enduring from their love of the land and the memories it holds for them. When you think about it, there aren't many things in life over which we have such control far into the future. Your vital support of the PWA helps sustain our work with landowners who want to conserve their land, and ensures that the myriad gifts of protected land that we all enjoy will endure forever.

Russells Honored with Award

Gordon and Barbara Russell were honored recently with a 2007 Make-A-Difference Donor Award from CONFR (Continuing Education in Fundraising), a statewide organization that provides networking and professional development opportunities for nonprofit fundraisers. This prestigious annual award recognizes donors who have made significant and lasting contributions to nonprofit organizations in New Hampshire.

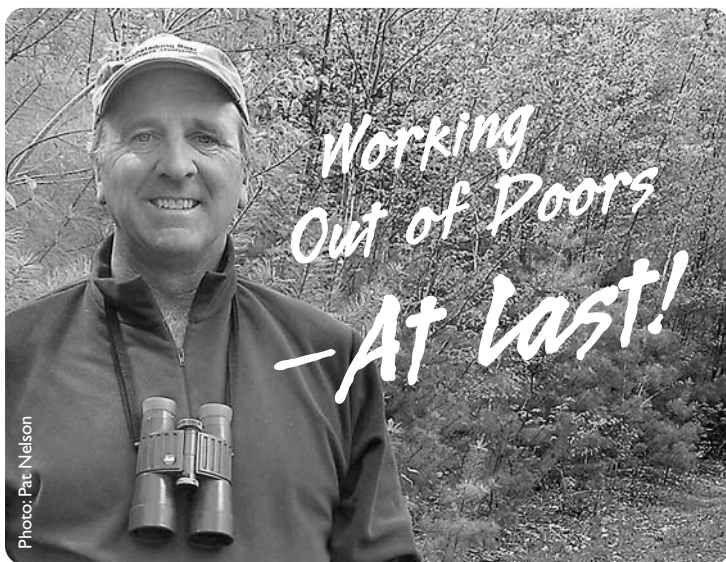
The Russells were nominated by PWA and Benthien Associates. In the nomination, Paula Bellemore, PWA's Director of Operations, wrote “With energy, passion, and commitment to land conservation, Gordon and Barbara have made a lasting impact on the 220-square mile Piscataquog watershed and its people. Gordon was a founding member of the Piscataquog Watershed Association (PWA) in 1970 and served as its President from 1989 to 1999. Through their personal efforts and through the establishment of the Russell Piscataquog River Watershed Foundation, the Russells have greatly accelerated the pace of land conservation in the watershed. They were instrumental in creating Headwaters Project-I, the first landscape



Gordon & Barbara Russell (Photo: Barbara Thomson)

level conservation initiative in the area, conserving 1,000 high-priority acres.”

Gordon's energy is boundless, his commitment unwavering. But while Gordon might be the better known of the pair, he would be quick to note that without Barbara, he could never accomplish all that he does – they are in every way a team. The watershed is a different, better place as a result of their years of dedicated service to inspiring nature appreciation and land conservation. Congratulations, Gordon and Barbara!



by Paul Susca

If you encounter Ben Haubrich off the beaten path in the watershed, he might be scouting a new trail. After 32 years as a park manager, Ben is just the guy to figure out where to put a trail on a newly protected PWA parcel. He has scouted trails on the Bicknell and Rand Brook properties in Franconstown, the Colburn Meadow property in New Boston, and the Burke property in Deering.

Ben finds himself as busy in early “retirement” as he was when managing the Monadnock State Park or supervising 21 state parks in western NH or administering the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the NH Division of Parks and Recreation. Ironically, his career with Parks involved more time working indoors than he ever expected. Even now, when he isn’t locating property boundaries (either in the field or in the Registry of Deeds) or scouting trails, Ben is writing baseline documentation reports for new PWA lands, or helping out on similar projects for the Franconstown Land Trust or the Harris Center, both of which he serves as a board

member. “Obviously,” he says, “I have a passion for protecting land and I believe in what PWA and these other organizations are doing. And being involved with all of them helps us share ideas.”

Ben became involved with the PWA in 2003 after his job with the state intersected with then PWA President Margaret Watkins’ job with the National Park Service. He joined Margaret’s Keeping Track team – walking a transect in Dunbarton four times a year. Keeping Track is not just a great way to enjoy the woods, he says, but it helps support PWA’s land conservation mission. “You show a landowner the data on all of the species on their property or a neighboring property,” he says, “and they really get interested in protecting the property.” He soon started monitoring conservation easements, preparing easement baseline documentation, and scouting new trails – to add to an ever expanding list of volunteer activities.

Being “retired” for the time being finally gives Ben a chance to get outdoors! When he can tear himself away from his volunteer activities, Ben heads for the woods or the water. One of his favorite activities is “brook whacking,” as he calls it – bushwhacking to follow a brook – just to see what is there. One of his favorite paddling spots is Lake Horace Marsh* at the inlet of Lake Horace in Weare. “You have to portage over a few beaver dams,” he says of the marsh, “but you find yourself canoeing through a hardwood forest!” Ben and his wife, Robin, live on a gravel road near Scobie Pond in Franconstown, where they can enjoy a pleasant walk at any time of the day or night.

Paul Susca, a former PWA Board member, and his wife, Peg Lopata, are longtime PWA members who live with their two children in Franconstown.

*** Editor’s note:** PWA is working with the NH Department of Environmental Services, the Weare Conservation Commission, NH Fish & Game Department, and the Russell Foundation to minimize the damaging impacts of dam management on the marsh at Lake Horace.



Keeping Track is About More than Animals

Data gathered by PWA’s Keeping Track teams over the last 10 years has provided a wealth of information that has helped inspire landowners to protect their properties in perpetuity and has factored importantly in proposals for funding to acquire land and easements. **This summer’s transects are all new. Come join us for an opportunity to discover the special features of each.** Novices are *always* welcome.

Saturday, July 7 ~ Wilson Hill, New Boston
Call Ken at 487-5114

Sunday, July 8 ~ Franconstown/New Boston
Call Margaret at 774-7120

Sunday, July 15 ~ Bullard Hill, Franconstown
Call Gordon at 487-2994

Dates are subject to change. Call leaders to confirm.

got miles?

If you’ve got airline miles to spare, we need a roundtrip and a one-way ticket to Denver for the Land Trust Rally in October.

All gifts are tax-deductible.

Weare Students Release Salmon Fry

by Clint Davis

Last October, a fifth grade class at the Weare Middle School began a project that culminated in the release of more than 100 salmon fry into the South Branch of the Piscataquog River on May 7. This program, funded and supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the New England Salmon Association, promotes a greater understanding of our waters through a hands-on, engaging format. The Adopt-a-Salmon program gives students the chance to raise Atlantic salmon from eggs into small fry that they release into the wild – while hopefully retaining a sense of stewardship for the river into which they have just entrusted their surrogate “family.”

After months of care and hopeful waiting, the day came for the kids to free their small fish back into natural waters. Amid a frenzy of youngsters, Jerry King, a PWA volunteer, handed out the small salmon to the students, who then transferred them to the river. With farewells and shouts of encouragement – and perhaps a few tears – the students watched as their tiny fish swam off into the stream and out of sight.

Clint Davis of New Boston is a senior at the Derryfield School whose senior project with PWA focuses on water quality monitoring and fish.



Students release salmon fry from cups into the river. (Photo: Jerry King)

PWA thanks the following members for their support!

Welcome to Our New Members! (as of May 1st)

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Marilyn & Dan Nolan
Thaddeus & Laura Pasternack*
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Martha Cruciani, Warwick, RI

Member Renewals (as of May 1st)

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Susan & Bill Tucker

THANKS ALSO TO...

Pat Nelson & the Mahoney-Wynn family for their gifts of inkjet cartridges.

David Neiman for his ongoing technological advice and assistance.

Danna Holden for her help painting, cleaning, and organizing the office.

Mary Pendlebury for helping us with mailings.

John Walker for his financial advice and guidance.

Will Townsend for helping in ways too numerous to list.

Help protect the places you cherish. Renew or make a gift at www.pwa-nh.org.

New PWA T-Shirts are Here!

T-shirts are 100% cotton, with the new PWA logo on the front and letters to rival the FBI on the back. \$15 each. Stop by the office or order by mail. Colors and shirt chest measurements are:

Womens: White or Sand, sizes M(40) & L(44)

Mens: Light grey or Natural, sizes M(39), L(41), XL(48)



PWA volunteer Jamie Bodwell & Mary Ellen Kane model the new T-shirts. (Photo: Margaret Watkins)



Summer Outings

Saturday, June 23, 9:30am - 2pm

Hike up Rose Mountain Bring a lunch! Hike an old logging road to a stunning summit. Some steep spots. Meet at the trailhead on Russell Station Road near the Francestown/Greenfield line. Watch for signs.

Saturday, July 14

Kayaking the Watershed - Leaders' Choice Experienced trip leaders Rosemary Conroy and Ben Haubrich will lead able kayakers on a mostly flatwater trip. Details to follow, based on water conditions. Pre-register by July 5. Note: PFDs required; all boaters must be able to portage independently.

For directions or to register, visit www.pwa-nh.org, call 487-3331, or email us at pwa@pwa-nh.org.

A How-To Guide:

Eliminating Invasives from Your Property

by Lyn Lombard

By now, we hope you have learned to recognize the alien invasive plant species that threaten our native plants and the wildlife that depend on them.* But when and how can you control their spread? **Before the plant sets seed is usually the best time to attempt any control measure.** Now, let's look at how:

Mechanical Means: Many soft-tissue plants can be removed by using tools such as a pitchfork or shovel. *Purple loosestrife* and seedlings can be removed in this way, but it is important to get all root matter. *Garlic mustard* and *black swallowwort* need only to be pulled.

PWA now has a Weed Wrench™ to loan to members. This tool will remove a plant whose main stem or trunk is up to 2½ inches in diameter. Position the trunk in the vice-type grip, step on the footpad, and draw back on the handle. Work around the plant – and out it comes! This tool is great for removing small *Norway maple*, *autumn olive*, *buckthorn*, *burning bush*, *honeysuckle*, and *bittersweet*.

Limited Chemicals: If the trunk of the plant is larger than 2½ inches, cutting it down and immediately painting an herbicide on the cut might be effective. The roots of these persistent plants often continue to grow, so keep a watchful eye for little seedlings and pull or dig them out.

Suffocation: If the location permits, suffocating small seedlings and herbaceous plants with two or three layers of plastic held down at the corners works well. If the invasive

is interspersed with your favorite plants, dig them out and move them to a pot or another bed until you've controlled the invasive. This works with *loosestrife*, *garlic mustard*, and small seedlings of any plant.

Repeated Cutting: Often, the best you can do to control *Japanese knotweed* and *common reed* is to repeatedly cut the plants. Repeatedly means five or six times a season. Many plants reproduce by both roots and seeds, so they must be constantly cut during a growing season.

Assuming you have cut down your woody plants **before** seed production, place branches and trunks in a burn pile and burn when your town permits. For plants such as *loosestrife*, *garlic mustard* and *swallowwort* that reproduce by seeds, pieces of stem and roots, it is best to bag it tightly and take it to a landfill. *Common reed* and *knotweed* can be piled on plastic, covered tightly with plastic and left to bake in the sun.

For more extensive information on getting rid of your invasive plants or to reserve the use of PWA's Weed Wrench™, call Hannah Proctor at 547-2816 or Lyn Lombard at 487-5114.

**A pocket guide to 14 common invasives is available from PWA and is also posted on the PWA website at www.pwa-nh.org.*

CORRECTION: The March/April Invasives article should have stated that *Berberis koreana* and *Berberis canadensis* are safe to buy. It is only Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) that is now banned. We regret any confusion caused by this error.



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UPCOMING "WALK IN THE WOODS!" OUTINGS

Saturday, June 23 – Hike up Rose Mountain

Saturday, July 14 -- Paddling in the Watershed

See page 5 for details.

May / June 2007 Volume 19, No.3

Watershed News

THE PISCATAQUOG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE

Riverfront Protected in Franconstown	Page 1
People & Land: It's Personal	Page 2
Russells Honored with Award	Page 2
Volunteer Profile: Ben Haubrich	Page 3
Keeping Track Summer Schedule	Page 3
Students Raise & Release Salmon Fry	Page 4
Eliminating Invasive Plants	Page 5
New PWA T-Shirts are Here!	Page 5
Summer Outings	Page 5

LYNDEBOROUGH: SENTER'S FALLS PWA's Rice Natural Area

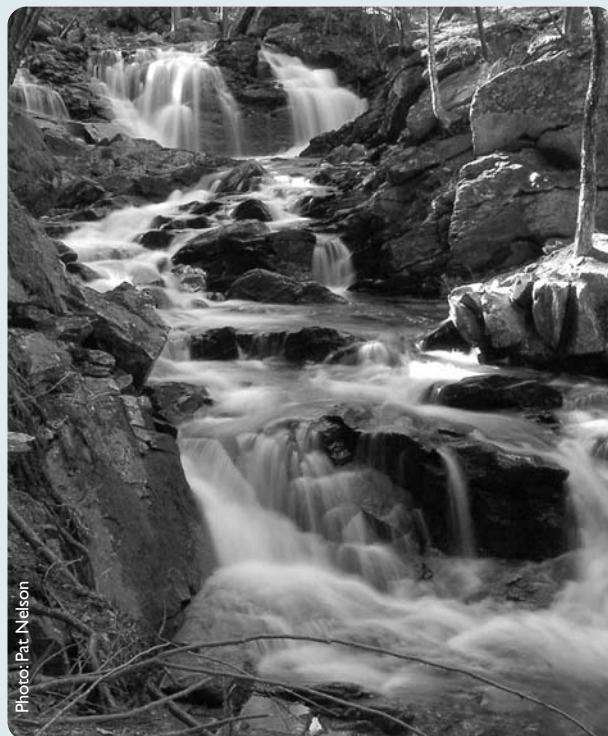


Photo: Pat Nelson

On May 5, about 35 people enjoyed a hike led by Gordon Russell along the Two Brooks Trail that he created to showcase a glacial drumlin and the rocky gorge that hosts Senter's Falls on Cold Brook.