



Chocorua Lake Conservancy

Fall/Winter 2016

Conserving the Basin since 1968



Labor Day 2016 Parade of Lights on Lake Chocorua; see story on page 7. Photo by Betsy Whitman Memishian

A Summer of Stewardship

Stewardship Director Lynne Flaccus reflects on her first summer season with the Conservancy.

Watching the colors migrate up the slopes of Mt. Chocorua and reflected in the waters of the lake, it's hard to believe the summer went by as quickly as it did. It didn't seem that long ago that volunteers gathered to clear trails in the area and the lady slippers around the lake were in bloom!

I've had a busy summer visiting with landowners, walking properties, organizing files and preparing stewardship reports for fee and covenanted properties. Without going into the dull logistics of the work, I thought I would share with you some of my impressions from summer stewardship.

By far, the most enjoyable time has been spent visiting with landowners and learning about the connections people have with their land. Whether a property has been in the family for generations, or only recently acquired, I have been impressed by the passion and love for the lands around Chocorua held by so many of you. This passion is woven into the long history of the Basin and has come through in so many wonderful stories that have been shared; family or friend connections, hidden trails and "swamps", the family names for unusual rocks, trees, or ponds, wildlife encounters, past tennis tournaments and adventures on the Lake or on the trails of the mountains.

I've learned about the long history of landowners and dedicated volunteers who have worked hard to

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FAQs: Land Trusts 101

Since joining the CLC in May, Stewardship Director Lynne Flaccus has spent the summer and fall getting to know many in the Chocorua/Tamworth community and familiarizing herself with the CLC lands and the covenants and easements that the organization holds.

The CLC made a deliberate decision to hire a Stewardship Director (as opposed to an Executive Director) for its first full time employee because land stewardship is the primary function of a land trust, and because an experienced staffer brings thoroughness, professionalism and efficiency to this important task.

At the CLC Annual Meeting in August, Vice President Peg Wheeler presented “Land Trusts 101,” an overview of the responsibilities of a Land Trust in the 21st century. These Frequently Asked Questions are drawn from that presentation.

Recently, CLC has been referring to itself as a “Land Trust.” What is a Land Trust?

A land trust is a nonprofit organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by undertaking or assisting in land or conservation easement acquisitions, or by its stewardship of such land or easements.

By effectively saving land, land trusts enhance the economic, environmental and social values of their communities. They provide clean water, fresh air, safe food, places for recreation and a connection to the land that sustains us all.

Source: 2010 National Land Trust Census Report-Land Trust Alliance

What role do state and local land trusts play in land conservation?

The federal and state governments have preserved, protected and managed significant portions of our special natural landscapes through national and state parks, national monuments, national and state forests and the like. However, many other smaller parcels of land are protected in some manner through non-governmental means including through numerous large and small land trusts across the country.

Since records were first compiled in 1985, the acreage protected by land trusts has increased from about 2 million acres to nearly 18 million acres by 2010. In the northeast, over 5 million acres have been conserved by land trusts. In New Hampshire alone, nearly 350,00 acres have been preserved by land trusts.

What do land trusts do?

The primary focus of many land trusts, particularly those that are “young,” is to acquire property or easements in order to protect the natural characteristics of their focus area. Some land trusts may be focused on a protecting a particular watershed or viewshed while others may focus on preserving particular types of property (e.g. working farms or forests). This protection is accomplished through land acquisition or through the acquisition of conservation easements. Once a parcel is acquired or an easement is obtained, the land trust has a continuing duty to ensure that the property maintains its character.

How common are land trusts? How many are there in New Hampshire?

In 2010 (the date of the Land Trust Alliance’s most recent census), there were 34 different land trusts in New Hampshire, at least a third of which were all volunteer organizations.

Were the CLCF and CLA Land Trusts?

The CLCF (Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation) and the CLA (the Chocorua Lake Association), the predecessor organizations to the CLC, were founded at the same time, in 1968, with different, but intersecting goals. The CLCF was a legal trust that held title to individual parcels of land and, through agreements with property owners, committed to overseeing the covenants and easements in the Basin to ensure the conservation of the protected properties into the future. The CLA, on the other hand, was a membership organization that functioned more as a landowners “association.” The CLC is the successor organization to both organizations and has accepted continuing responsibility to protect these lands in perpetuity.

What exactly is “land stewardship?”

Broadly speaking, land stewardship is the process by which a land trust satisfies the legal and ethical obligations created when the trust acquired the property or accepted an easement or a covenant. When a land trust accepts a conservation covenant or easement, it accepts a perpetual, legal responsibility to protect the conservation values described in that covenant or easement, to visit the protected property on a regular basis, and to uphold the terms of the covenant or easement. This process is “stewardship”

Sound stewardship that promotes and ensures the protected values of the land is achieved through the establishment of “baseline” documentation of property conditions; on-going, regular communication with owners of protected land; ensuring continued implementation of the terms of the easement or covenant when a property changes hands by engagement with the new owners; investigating all apparent violations of the covenant or easement terms; and addressing any departure from the conservation terms to ensure those original terms continue to be honored.

I hear the terms “easement” and “covenant” being used, seemingly interchangeably. What are they and how are they different?

Covenants, broadly defined, are legal agreements where two or more parties agree to take or refrain from taking, particular actions. When applied to properties, a covenant outlines what a property owner agrees to do or not do with their property. A conservation easement is an agreement between an individual owner and a land trust (or a government entity) whereby the landowner agrees to refrain from certain activities in relation to the property in order to achieve certain conservation purposes. Covenants, as originally established in the Chocorua Basin, were employed because the concepts of “land trust” and “conservation easement” had yet to be established in 1968, when the CLCF was founded and the land in the Basin was first formally and legally protected.

Covenanted protection of the entire Basin creates not only a commitment between each landowner and the CLC, but also a mutual agreement among owners of covenanted land to uphold the terms of the covenants for the benefit of all. CLCF (predecessor of CLC) is an owner of land subject to the early covenants and is also a participant in the agreement among landowners.

How much land is the CLC presently responsible for protecting?

The CLC is responsible for 3,801 acres across 142 individual parcels. 931 acres are owned and/or managed by the CLC across 20 distinct properties. 2,870 acres are protected by conservation covenants and easements held by the CLC on 122 properties.

In addition, the CLC maintains public access to the lake through the Grove, the Island and the Beach. Through its seasonal patrol, annual site maintenance and regular upkeep, the CLC provides access to thousands of people every year to stop to swim, paddle, picnic, paint, photograph or otherwise enjoy the natural landscape of the Basin.

Wildlife Notes

2016 was the summer of the snapper, as a sometimes elusive resident of Lake Chocorua came out of hiding to explore the shore and make some dockside visits. Reference to “the” snapping turtle has been the tradition for many years, but the number of sightings this summer may have put that to rest. No interactions have resulted in bites, and the presence of this predator, who is believed to have coexisted with dinosaurs, hasn’t scared the loons away.

Photo by Alex Moot.



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Wildlife Notes

Can you identify these wooly beasts? On the left, a colony of aphids attach themselves to an alder tree, their sticky white hairs acting as a deterrent to predators. On the right, a toothy fungus encouraged by wetter weather grows in the cleft of bark. Lynne Flaccus posted these to the CLC Facebook page; see the cover story for more hidden treasures spotted on her explorations in the Chocorua Lake basin.

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Summer Stewardship, continued

to protect the water quality of the lake and its tributaries as well as the uplands in the Basin. I've been struck by the foresight of CLCF and CLA founders, who have been diligent in their efforts to make protection of the area a community effort. The legacy of the organization is imprinted in the preserves and trails that have been established, and the properties that are open to the public. I'm grateful that so many worked tirelessly to set aside, and now maintain, The Grove and The Island with public beaches so others can continue to enjoy the waters of the lake and the spectacular views.

In addition to family stories I've heard, I've had the opportunity to learn the stories the land shares as well. Old stone walls and foundations telling of past agricultural use, dug wells and rock piles, wood survey posts still standing from 1952, abandoned roads, and signs of wildlife on the land. I have been lucky to have many of you join me on boundary walks, sharing your love of the land, asking natural history questions and sharing your own knowledge along the way. I am grateful for those opportunities to walk and learn about the land. For those who weren't able to walk, I benefited from your memory and tips on where to find granite monuments and old paths. I managed not to get lost this summer, though at times I will admit some confusion!

One landowner asked me to let them know if I found hidden treasures. I stumbled across hidden streams of cold water, vernal pools, milk snakes, toads, hermit thrushes, cranberries, blooming pitcher plants and lady slippers, rattlesnake plantain, and even found oven bird nests. Perhaps no gold, but hidden treasures on the landscape nonetheless!

As I mentioned at the Annual Meeting, stewardship of the many covenanted properties is a partnership between CLC and landowners. Thank you for your cooperation in helping to protect the Chocorua Lake watershed, including the uplands that help to maintain water quality in the lake.

For those who I have not met, or had the opportunity to visit on your property, I look forward to your stories and conversations into the fall and winter!

President's Letter

Dear Members,

It has been two years since the Chocorua Lake Conservancy was formed in August 2014 via the merger of the Chocorua Lake Association and Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation. In these two years, the CLC has made tremendous progress in many fronts.

Most importantly, the CLC raised sufficient grant funding during 2015 to hire Lynne Flaccus as Stewardship Director in May 2016. The continued protection of the Chocorua Lake Basin depends on the partnership between the CLC and landowners who have conservation covenants and easements protecting their properties.

Our New Stewardship Director

Since starting her job, Lynne has been meeting with landowners and visiting protected properties. During these meetings, Lynne learns about the properties from the landowner and gathers information for a report that describes current conditions on the property. Each of Lynne's field visits takes time, depending on property size, clarity of boundaries, length of conversation, and stories over a cup of coffee. As of October 15th, Lynne had visited with over 40 landowners and is looking forward to future walks and conversations through the winter and spring.

Following each visit, Lynne prepares a Current Conditions Report for landowner review and sign off. A copy of the document then goes to the landowner and becomes a baseline of information as we work together to uphold the covenant or easement placed on the property. Lynne reports that the meetings and walks have provided her with opportunities to learn about the many personal connections landowners have to the area, and she has thoroughly enjoyed the walks with those who have been able to join her.

Caring for Our Public Lands

Lynne has also been working with volunteers of Land Management Committee in the stewardship of the CLC-owned properties that are open to the public. CLC was recently granted funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to implement a number of projects, including placement of nest boxes, control of erosion and invasive species, improvement of brook trout habitat, and shrub plantings important for wildlife. We are excited about this opportunity to care for our public lands and involve the community in these efforts.

Public Access

The CLC is dedicated to continuing to protect the quality of life in the Chocorua Lake Basin for local residents and visitors. An important (but often overlooked) part of the CLC's mission is to provide public access to Chocorua Lake and trails on surrounding conservation land for both local residents and visitors. The CLC currently owns or maintains over 5,800 feet of publicly accessible shoreline on Chocorua Lake and the Little Lake for visitors. Thanks to the CLC's efforts, almost 40% of the total Chocorua Lake shoreline is accessible for use by visitors, more than any other lake in New Hampshire (not including lakes with state parks). Troy Emerson has continued his excellent work as our Lake Patrol Officer, visiting each of our two main public access areas on Chocorua Lake twice a day to make sure they are free from trash from Memorial Day to Columbus Day.

Protecting the Future

We remain excited about the recently signed option agreement with the Bowditch family to forever protect the iconic Basin View Lot from development. Over the past few months, board members and other volunteers have been meeting with loyal and generous past donors to gain their support for this important project and an accompanying Stewardship Fund. We hope to have sufficient funds to close on this project by next June 2017.

Growth and Challenges

From a financial perspective, the CLC has more than doubled its membership and donor base over the past two years to more than 300 households in 2015. Over the same timeframe, the CLC has more than quadrupled the number of local member households from Chocorua and nearby towns to 75 households. This local support was visible over Labor Day weekend when over 130 members and family members attended the CLC's inaugural "members porch party".

Despite our accomplishments, the CLC has many challenges ahead. The CLC still does not have sufficient operating funds to rent office space for Lynne Flaccus for her work. Lynne continues to work out of the basement of the Watkins house (thanks John and Mary!!).

The CLC continues to rely too heavily upon the generous (but not sustainable) time commitment of a handful of local and not-so-local board members and committee members to complete much of its work. We are looking forward to creating ways for more local volunteers to become involved in stewardship of our CLC-owned and managed lands, bringing creative ideas to committees, and joining our Board. We are a "small but mighty" organization, and need more volunteers to help us with the work.

And, as usual, the CLC will need the generous support of our members and donors to our year-end appeal to cover our 2016 expenses. I hope you will consider as generous a year-end gift as you are able.

Regards,

Alex Moot

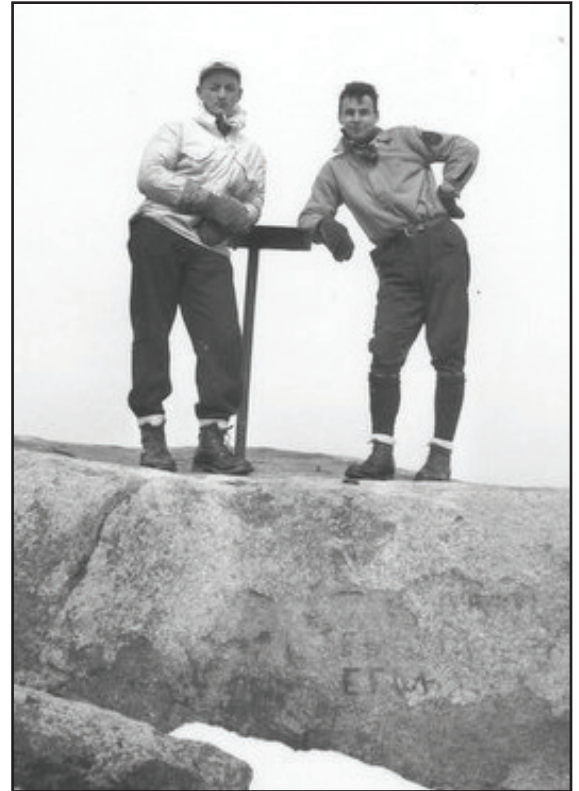
Board President (2016-17)

Fire History of Mount Chocorua*

Historians believe that the peak of Mount Chocorua first burned “in about 1815” in a fire that extended from the south flank of the mountain to the summit and burned over 3,000 acres. The date of approximately 1815-1820 coincides with the famous Gale of 1815 which flattened a lot of the forest in Northern New England.

“The complete loss of forest and soil...may have resulted from a sequence of catastrophic events: the 1815 hurricane downed timber that dried and [then] burned in 1820....Trees downed by this 1815 hurricane may have fueled subsequent fires started by lightning or nearby farmers.”

On August 28, 1882, residents of Albany, Tamworth, and other towns watched Mt. Chocorua turn into a “towering inferno” as fire, started by a careless traveler, raced to the top of the mountain. In 1903, another fire burned about 1,800 acres. In June 1915, a fire broke out between Mount Pausus and Mount Chocorua on land heavily logged in previous years. The map for this tract suggests the fire covered 1,422 acres, although the fire was likely larger by up to 50 percent. An anecdotal account reported that the 1915 fire reached north of the area mapped to Champney Falls.



In 1902, the New Hampshire Forestry Commission noted:

“The absolute nudity of the summit of Mount Chocorua...is a striking instance of what a succession of forest fires will accomplish. That bald, naked, glistening, and serrated cone so absolutely distinguishable among all New Hampshire summits is much below the normal timber level in its altitude, and yet the growth with which it was once covered has been entirely removed by the flames, and the soil upon which it stood has also gone, leaving to nature the slow work of again creating the conditions for forest growth.”

Logging sharply increased between 1885 and 1925 creating, directly or indirectly, an era of forest fires in the White Mountains where logging railroads with wood-burning locomotives sparked flammable material and lightning ignited logging slash. So many fires, especially in the 1900's, spurred regulation to establish the White Mountains as a public park and were very important in forming the national forest system.

The last major fire in the White Mountains occurred in July, 1923, on Flat Mountain in the Sandwich Range Wilderness along a logging railroad and burned uncontrolled for four days. In response, Ingersoll Bowditch founded the Chocorua Fire Patrol, overseen by residents and privately funded, to guard against fires inadvertently, now illegally, started by picnickers on the shores of Chocorua Lake. Since 1968 the CLA, now the CLC, has assumed responsibility for that patrol.



In 1927, Charles Howard Walker, a noted local architect, built a stone fire tower on the Middle Sister Peak. The 10-foot high stone structure replaced the fire stand on the summit of Mount Chocorua and remained in service until 1948. The stone foundation is still visible today.

* Material for this article is from Christine L. Goodale, “Fire in the White Mountains,” *Appalachia*, December 2003.

A Luminescent Reminiscence

The annual Parade of Lights on Chocorua Lake is a Labor Day weekend tradition that began in the 1960s, initiated by Sam'l Newsom and friends and inspired by an element of some Japanese festival celebrations. Sam's son Sam Newsom shares his recollection of this tradition that brightens the end of the summer season on the lake.

The parade of lights was always the perfect way to close every wonderful summer in Chocorua.

I got involved in the tradition around the late sixties or early seventies (I am guessing a little on these dates) with both my parents as well as the Wellinghursts, Wayletts and Moots from the little lake side. The first few years my father, Sam'l, built our lights using a cage of chicken wire with wax paper wrapped around it and a candle stuck on a nail in the center. We placed these lights on the various seats of both the canoe and the row boat.


As all boys can attest, a few candles are fine, but a lot of candle power is much better. So as the years progressed the fire power increased and luckily gallon milk jugs came into use and were easy to find.

We progressed from a few on the boat to a lot on the boat as well as a long board that we towed behind with many more milk jugs nailed on to it. The milk jugs were key as they did not take on water as the old chicken wire lanterns had. As the years went by and our canoe aged we had to save one milk jug for bailing. Later on some ingenious souls outfitted their boats with electric Christmas lights strung up on tall poles.

The Parade was preceded by a pot luck dinner and plenty of libations in the Grove, often calling for long johns to be worn. There was always singing and I especially remember the deep melodic voice of Dick Gill flowing across the lake followed by the voices of the rest of the picnickers. As the sun set the boats would take to the water and my mother, Sylvia, amongst others, would mimic the cry of the loons. The water was calm and there was a peace that settled over the place as the lights and stars came out and the lake grew calm.

As the tradition grew so did the flotilla. It seemed that most of the houses around the lake participated one time or another, in addition to boats brought in just for this event. Many times we would paddle past the first point with almost a continuous line of boats and candles from there back to the beach. The traffic on Rt 16 would slow down to watch the lights reflecting in the water and to listen to the voices coming from the Grove. It was a magical night. During one Parade the Northern Lights put on a spectacular show trying to out do the parade, but instead it just solidified our reason why Chocorua has, and will always will have, a special place in our hearts.






The Chocorua Lake Conservancy is a non-profit land conservation organization dedicated to the protection of the scenic and natural resources of the Chocorua Lake Basin and surrounding area for the benefit of all present and future visitors.

Find us online at:

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The Chocorua Lake Conservancy publishes and distributes an educational newsletter twice a year, in the Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter.
 Current and past issues are posted online at:

➤ chocorualakeconservancy.org/news/newsletter/

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