

Protecting natural resources in the Ossipee Watershed since 1997



The Ossipee Watershed's snow covered lakes & ponds as seen from atop Mt. Chocoura in February, 2020. Photo: Moselle Spiller

2019 Report to the Membership

BY MATT HOWE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Yes, 2019 was a year of transition and challenges for GMCG. Changing leadership after more than two decades is no small endeavor. Anyone who has ever been a part of an organization, be it a nonprofit, business, government or school, knows this. It's never easy. If it was easy then you didn't do it right.

Yet amidst the challenges of change and the never-ending financial pressures of sustaining a nonprofit, 2019 was also a year of continuity and progress. As you will read in these pages the GMCG staff and AmeriCorps members were on it! Monitoring our waters, educating our youth, informing the public, defending the aquifer, conserving our land. The depth and breadth of GMCG programs is spelled out here and we have you to thank for making it all possible. *Continued on page 2*

We dedicate our 2019 Annual Report to GMCG Founding Executive Director Blair Folts who concluded 22 years of leadership in December 2019. On behalf of the land, the water, the wildlife and the people of the Ossipee watershed, we give thanks.



*Visionary
Educator
Advocate
Conservationist
Artist*

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts." - Rachel Carson

Report to the Membership, cont.

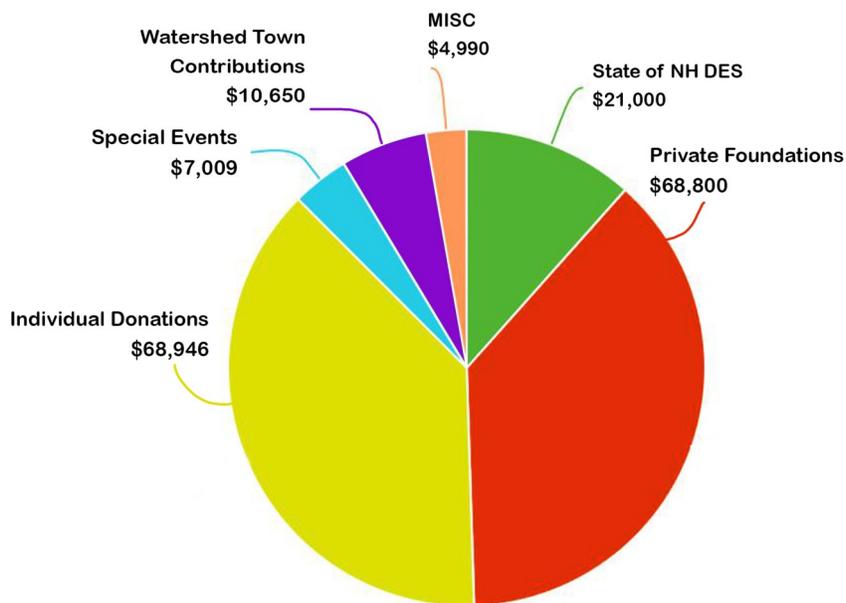
As these illustrations of 2019 financial activity convey, expenses exceeded revenues. Fortunately we had a rainy day fund to stay the course during our transition, but it's important to share the story that we didn't achieve all of our 2019 revenue goals and in 2020 there is work to do to maintain our core programs and restore organizational reserves. As you know, foundation grants have been an important part of GMCG's budget over the years. A reduction in grant funds can have a significant impact, and that is what we experienced last year.

Now to the good news! In January, a private family foundation, in a gesture designed to spark new levels of giving and attract new donors, announced the 2020 Watershed Challenge Grant. The challenge to the GMCG community is to raise \$45,000 in donations by August 31. If we meet that goal the foundation will match the \$45,000, generating \$90,000 overall to sustain our 2020 programs. Since the Board accepted this challenge on January 13th, we have received 76 gifts and pledges amounting to \$16,200 or 35% of the goal! Despite being well on the way, we will need all of you to guarantee our success. We ask you to keep this matching opportunity in mind as you consider your 2020 support – whatever you give will “double your conservation!”

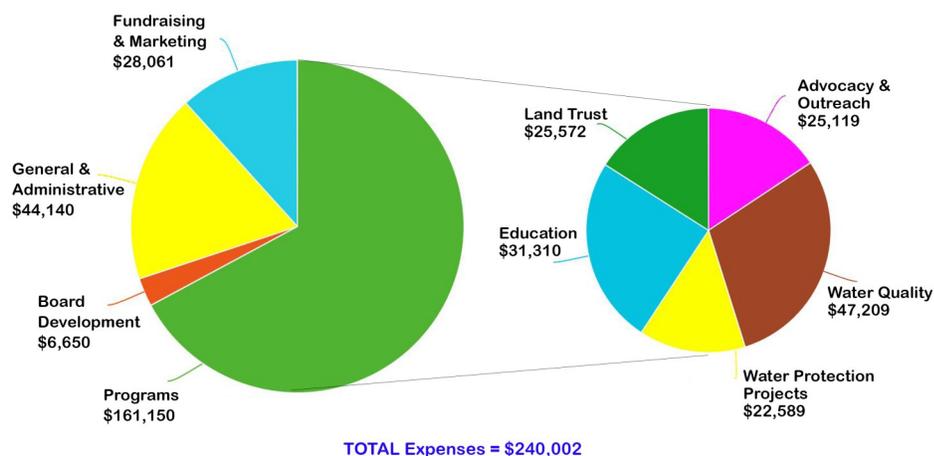
In addition to its leadership of the transition and executive search process the GMCG Board also updated our strategic plan in 2019, underscoring the organization's primary goal as follows:

GMCG 2019 Revenues

\$181,395



GMCG 2019 Expenditures



“GMCG is a leader in ensuring that the quality of the waters and other shared natural resources of the Ossipee Watershed are protected and sustained for current and future generations to enjoy.”

That sure sounds good to me. My role is to support our professional staff in every way possible as they implement the plans and programs that have been carefully designed to achieve that goal. Equally important is to work in close partnership with the Board of Directors to facilitate their work as they lead GMCG into its third decade and chart a course toward long-term prosperity. Every step of the way I will look forward to hearing from you about the issues that concern you most and how GMCG can continue to improve and enrich our service to the watershed and to our community.

Green Mountain Conservation Group

The Watershed News is a quarterly publication of the Green Mountain Conservation Group, a non-profit, 501(c)(3) charitable organization established in 1997 and dedicated to the preservation of the natural resources in the Ossipee Watershed. The towns of Eaton, Effingham, Freedom, Madison, Ossipee, Sandwich and Tamworth make up the boundaries of the Ossipee Watershed. This Watershed includes one of the largest and deepest stratified drift aquifers in New Hampshire. GMCG also partners across the Maine border into Parsonsfield and beyond. Water does not have any political boundaries.

Through research, education, advocacy and land conservation we strive to promote an awareness and appreciation of our watershed's natural resources and encourage a commitment to protect them.

Board of Directors

Larry Wogman, Chairman
Kit Morgan, Vice Chairman
Rich Fahy, Treasurer
Aysia Morency, Secretary

Town Representatives

Eaton, open
Effingham, open
Freedom, Alice Custard
Madison, Noreen Downs

Ossipee, open
Sandwich, Mark Longley
Tamworth, Karen Vitek
Maine, Peter Zack

Staff

Matt Howe, Executive Director
Tara Schroeder, Education Coordinator
Moselle Spiller, Outreach Coordinator
Jill Emerson, Water Quality Coordinator

AmeriCorps Members

Sarah Goldsmith, Water Quality Assistant
Ellie Stoermer, Education & Outreach Assistant

Earth Day Turns 50 - Join the Celebration!

On April 22, 2020 Earth Day will turn 50! We think that's something to celebrate, and we are inviting local businesses and organizations to join us in honoring half a decade of environmental progress in the Ossipee Watershed and around the world. Please visit www.gmcg.org and click on the Earth Day banner at the top of the home page to learn how you can support our celebration and broadcast information about the ways your company or organization is working to promote sustainability through earth-friendly practices. Thank you!



PLEASE! Renew your membership today! Every drop counts! Thank you!

(Please make checks payable to Green Mountain Conservation Group Box 95, Effingham, NH 03882)

You may also donate online at www.gmcg.org/we-need-your-help/

Vernal Pool __\$25 Stream __\$50 River __\$75 Pond __\$100 Bay __\$250 Lake __\$500 Aquifer __\$1000

Other _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Are you interested in being a GMCG Volunteer? YES

GMCG is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization funded by grants, memberships, and donations.



Research

Goal: "To gather data and scientific information in order to provide Ossipee Watershed stakeholders with information to make appropriate natural resources decisions based on sound science."



Volunteers (L-R) Kit Morgan, Tim Otterbach, Hillary Johnson, Carol and Brian Taylor, Victoria Green, Linda Habif, and Lucas Kirsch out collecting data in the Ossipee Watershed in 2019. Photo credits: Jill Emerson

BY JILL EMERSON, WATER QUALITY COORDINATOR

Spring is one of my favorite times of year. The weather warms up, the snow is disappearing (yay!), the days get longer, and everything comes out of hibernation. With the change of the season, you can almost feel a renewed sense of purpose in the air, and life gets busy fast.

It's also a busy time of year here at GMCG for research. We launch two of our bigger data collection programs: our tributary monitoring program (RIVERS) and the Volunteer Lake Assessment Program (VLAP) on the Lake Ossipee system.

The RIVERS program—a joint citizen science program run in partnership with our downstream friends the Saco River Corridor Commission—just finished its 17th monitoring year. The 2019 season was one of the highest volunteer turnouts the program has experienced—not a trivial feat for a program approaching the age of a legal adult. Volunteers of the GMCG portion of the RIVERS program collected some pretty impressive numbers the past year:

- Over \$13,500 of in kind donations
- 270 hours of data collection

- Around 2000 data points recorded
- 141 liters of water collected
- 28 locations sampled biweekly
- 6 months of monitoring

This year our Quality Assessment Project Plan (QAPP) for the program has been revised and is currently under EPA review, so we are looking forward to relaunching our 18th season with some minor changes that will streamline the efficiency of the testing protocol for our volunteers.

Each town we collect data in was also given a report on the health of the water the volunteers test, and these can be found on our website (or from your local conservation commission). The biggest threat to our water health currently is road salting. This is not an issue isolated solely to the Ossipee Watershed, but of national concern.

Meanwhile, the VLAP program volunteers sampled the Lake Ossipee system monthly from May through August, submitting the samples to NHDES for processing. A report on the health of the system should be available shortly for review and can

be found on the NHDES website. We had 4 new volunteers to the program this year, and volunteers spent over 25 hours collecting data on the lakes. We also traveled to various locations in the watershed to observe and record cyanobacteria blooms, collecting samples for in house identification.

Many of these programs are only functional because of the dedication of our volunteers. I would personally like to thank all of those who have supported GMCG's past and current research programs, and I look forward to developing and launching new programs like a microplastics survey coming this summer.

Happy Science-ing!

In 2019 GMCG partnered with Smith College's Department of Geosciences for a third groundwater study to test over 90 wells in the Ossipee Watershed. These studies were conducted to establish baseline water quality data for the watershed. Well water samples were analyzed for 23 parameters, include all major cations, anions and silica, together with a suite of trace metals and stable isotopes.

Education

Goal: "To provide the public and individual stakeholders with educational opportunities about the natural resources of the Ossipee Watershed, including their value and sensitivity, through workshops, educational programs, scientific data and research."

BY TARA SCHROEDER, EDUCATION COORDINATOR

2019 was a jam-packed year for GMCG's educational programs at the new Blue Heron House at the Patricia & Charles H. Watts II Conservation Center and throughout the watershed. GMCG staff and volunteers worked with 11 different schools across the Saco River Watershed, bringing water literacy programs such as the Volunteer Biological Assessment Program (VBAP), Groundwater Education Through Water Evaluation and Testing (GET WET!), Less Plastic Initiative, and Trout in the Classroom (TIC) to students in 4th through 8th grade. A total of 719 students participated in GMCG's watershed education programs in 2019!



Board member and Maine Rep. Peter Zack assists students at GET WET!

GMCG staff engaged even more youth and adults through public programs throughout the year, with a total of 31 public programs, with 24 of those programs happening at the newly finished Blue Heron House. Programs included: vernal pool explorations; Earth Day and volunteer appreciation celebrations;



Kennett High School Watershed Ambassador Sierra Abrams assists a youngster viewing specimens from the vernal pool at Nature Story and Discovery Time.

birding for Project FeederWatch; holiday felting and crafting; and programs on raptors, pollinators, animal tracking, forestry, septic system and dirt road maintenance, cyanobacteria, plastic, macroinvertebrates and drinking water protection. Many more trainings and meetings happened at the center over the course of the first year in our new home.

In 2019, GMCG also launched new educational programs to expand outreach to children in the watershed who are not part of our regular water literacy programs in local schools: preschoolers and high school students. The Less Plastic Initiative had GMCG staff visiting Kennett High School and

Kingswood Regional High School, and brought Sacopee Middle School students to Blue Heron House for field trips. Students learned about



A student in Less Plastic Day views microplastic particles in store bought bottled water.



Youngsters learn about bee conservation from Education Committee volunteer Robin Waters and Sierra Abrams.

the global and local impacts of plastics, created bioplastic as an alternative to plastic, and investigated microplastics in lake water samples and single use plastic bottles.

The new Nature Story and Discovery Time summer series engaged preschoolers and their caregivers in place-based learning with free, weekly programs on topics like macroinvertebrates, vernal pools, bees, plastic and trees. Children enjoyed stories, puppet shows, outdoor exploration and activities at the new center led by GMCG staff and volunteers. The Watershed Ambassador Program was also launched this past year, adding a local high school student to assist with teaching younger students water literacy and nature programs.

GMCG hosted the first ever Summer Environmental Film Series this past year, opening Blue Heron House to the public each Tuesday evening in July for a series of films chosen to introduce watershed residents to a variety of topics meant to inspire environmental stewardship and action. Through these films we got a closer look at the challenges facing coral reefs and pollinators, learned of the research and impact of great conservationists like Dr. Jane Goodall and Dr. Ben Kilham for chimpanzees and panda bears, and



2019 AmeriCorps member and Education Assistant Haley Parent collects specimens along with young participants in a Vernal Pool Discovery program at the GMCG vernal pool.



Students release live trout they raised from eggs in the classroom, as part of the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program.

took a thrilling adventure up El Capitan with “Free Solo”. Locals with first-hand experience in underwater photography and reef conservation, climbing in extreme places like Mount Everest as well as personal ties to Jane Goodall and Louis Leakey shared their stories to introduce the films. Thank you to all of the wonderful GMCG

supporters, friends and volunteers who help to make these programs possible! Stay tuned for the summer 2020 film lineup!

Interested in sponsoring, volunteering for, or scheduling a GMCG program with your organization, homeschool or local library?

Contact Tara at education@gmcg.org

Advocacy

Goal: "To present objective information with the belief that informed citizens will make good judgments about our unique watershed resources."

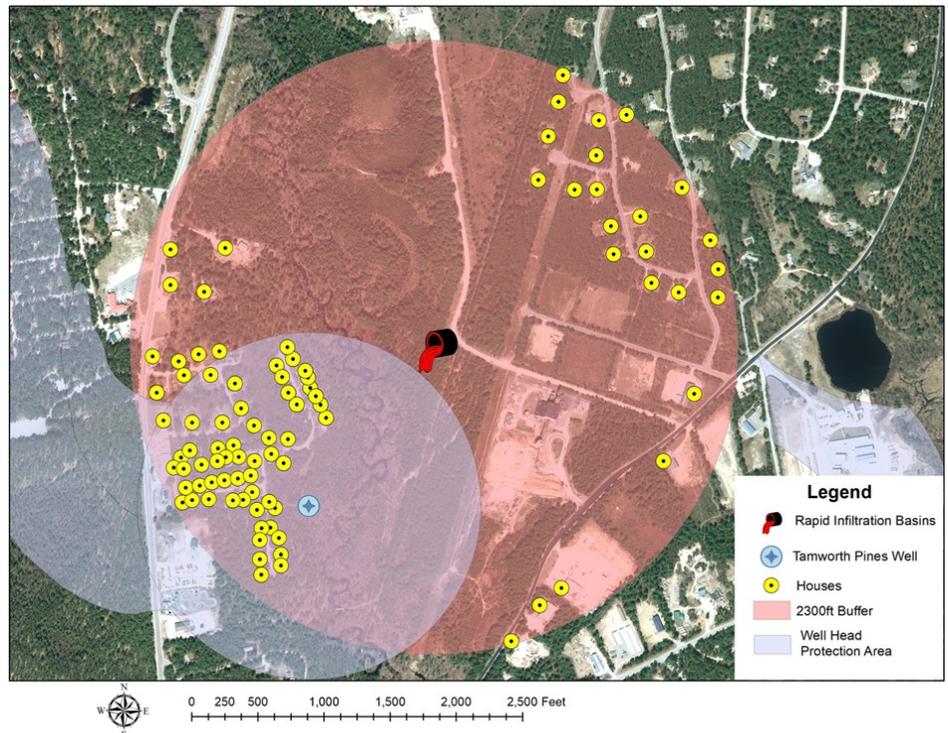
BY TARA SCHROEDER
& MOSELLE SPILLER

In 2019, GMCG hosted seven Ossipee Aquifer Advisory Committee (OAAC) meetings at Blue Heron House, chaired by GMCG Education Coordinator Tara Schroeder. The OAAC's mission is to raise public awareness and assist communities with regional aquifer protection. The objectives of the OAAC are:

- 1) To work in an advisory capacity with local municipalities, agencies, boards, and commissions within our watershed;
- 2) To educate the public and to assist in awareness about the Ossipee Aquifer; and
- 3) To review, gather data and communicate any potential impact on Ossipee aquifer from development.

Work of the OAAC in 2019 included: hosting a community PFAs workshop with NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and Toxics Action Center representatives; conducting the third groundwater study with partner Smith College; leading two GET WET! groundwater education programs for the public in Freedom and Conway; and advocacy work around Pinetree Power's groundwater discharge to the Ossipee Aquifer.

Through the dedication and hard



In 2019, the Ossipee Aquifer Advisory Committee worked to prevent discharge of wastewater to the Ossipee Aquifer that could have impacted more than 100 private wells and local businesses (yellow dots).

work of staff and volunteers, drinking water protection efforts of the OAAC will continue to expand across the watershed in 2020, with more public outreach and education efforts in watershed towns.

GMCG's Less Plastic Initiative ramped up to lay the groundwork for future lake water and sediment testing for microplastics. Future efforts will expand the Less Plastic Initiative work in schools by creating more hands-on, science-based activities around microplastic monitoring.

GMCG continued to advocate for Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect shared water resources through the reduction of pollutant loads and storm water run-off using structural

designs such as rain gardens, vegetated buffers, drainage ditches, swales, retention walls, and basins. BMPs also include proper septic system maintenance. GMCG is now in Phase III of their Watershed Management with design and implementation of BMPs on Ossipee Lake. Funding for this project is provided in part by a Watershed Assistance Grant from the NH DES with Clean Water Act Section 319 funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



In August of 2019, volunteers built a rain garden designed to capture and infiltrate storm water on Ossipee Lake.

Land Trust

Goal: "To support natural resource protection through land and conservation easement acquisition and other appropriate methods when it promotes the protection of water resources, agriculture, forestry and wildlife habitat."

BY MATT HOWE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We extend our gratitude to Allen and Joanne Brooks of Jackson for granting a conservation easement to GMCG on 65 acres in Freedom. Allen and Joanne collaborated with Blair Folts on the project, whose extensive research and planning to facilitate the gift represents yet another of her lasting contributions to land protection in the Ossipee Watershed.

The Brooks Easement is home to a blue heron rookery and an abundance of other bird life as well as bear, moose, beaver, and deer. The tract features scenic frontage along Route 153; healthy older growth upland forest (predominately white pine with hemlock, beech and oak); wetlands; and the headwaters of Square Brook, which flows into Ossipee Lake and is one of GMCG's tributary water quality monitoring sites.

The defining feature of the property is its "Sacred Tree," pictured here receiving a hug from Allen while Blair enjoys the late Fall sunlight. Many years ago when teaching French to Peace Corps volunteers in the West African nation of Dahomey



Allen Brooks and Blair Folts with the "Sacred Tree" on the day of the baseline assessment walk of the property in November of 2019.

(now Benin), Allen learned the tradition of the sacred tree. When his Dahomean friends heard he was returning to the New Hampshire woods to build a home, they gave him two bottles of African beer with these instructions: find a large old tree near where you intend to build, then sprinkle the beer on the ground around the tree. This tree shall then always protect you and bring you good luck. Allen reports that he has had good luck, and now, forever recorded in the easement are the location of the sacred tree with instructions to never cut it down! With the completion of this project, GMCG now holds thirteen conservation easements protecting 2,197 acres in the watershed, in addition to our five fee-ownership properties totaling 304 acres.

Also in 2019 we proudly opened the public trail in the GMCG Natural Area and unveiled a new kiosk marking the trail head. The October 29th ribbon cutting ceremony concluded several years of study and mapping the 41 acre preserve donated to GMCG in 1999 following a community-wide effort to prevent the development of a waste transfer station on the site. During the summer of 2019 Moselle Spiller led AmeriCorps members Haley Parent and Victoria Green in clearing and marking the trail. Volunteers Brian Taylor, Kit Morgan and Rich Fahy were vital to helping complete the kiosk, entry way steps, and foot bridge which were engineered and constructed by Tim Otterbach. Moselle Spiller designed the graphics on the kiosk display. This spring or summer be sure to drop by for a peaceful 30-minute excursion through this diverse habitat. The GMCG Natural Area entrance is located on Green Mountain Road just 0.1 miles South of the Route 25 intersection. Look for the wooden steps directly off the East side road shoulder.



Staff, board members, and volunteers gather round the newly unveiled kiosk at the ribbon cutting.

Notes from Downstream

"Borders? I've never seen one, but I hear they exist in some people's minds." Thor Hererdhal

BY DALYN HOUSER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SRCC

The Saco River Corridor Commission was extremely successful in 2019 in its mission to protect the unique and exceptional natural resources of the Saco River Corridor from incompatible development that may lead to diminished water quality. The Commission worked for over 4 years to create a new digital mapping system that is now available for use, at no cost, on the SRCC website. This process entailed workshops held with community leaders from the twenty Corridor towns who assisted the SRCC in transferring content from the original maps created in the 1970's to the new digital mapping system. The new digital maps include the SRCC jurisdictional boundaries (500 feet from the Saco, Ossipee and Little Ossipee Rivers and 1,000 feet from the rivers in areas of the 100-year floodplain). The maps also include tax map parcels and FEMA floodplain overlays from the State of Maine GIS department and are a valuable tool for communities in the consideration of land-use and development.

Last year the Commission completed important regulatory



The Ossipee River flows past GMCG's Effingham shoreline on its way into Maine.

work in the continued protection of the Saco River Corridor and its precious natural resources. Rulemaking changes to some of the Commission's performance standards were written and passed, after public hearing, based on feedback from Corridor communities and changes to state standards in the Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act. The Commission worked on these rulemaking changes for over six months to ensure that the changes made would not negatively impact water quality or weaken the current regulatory protections in place. The Commission also completed an educational program with students of the SOLE class at the Sacopee Valley Middle School where

students worked to collect water quality data with field equipment and provided a presentation and report on their findings to members of our community. The Commission is extremely grateful for all those in our community who work to protect our natural resources and would like to thank you all for your continued support. As always, feel free to contact our office if you have questions about any of the work that we do.



AmeriCorps: Getting Things Done in the Ossipee Watershed



2019-2020 LRCC AmeriCorps members Ellie Stoermer (L) and Sarah Goldsmith (R) set up bird feeders for the Blue Heron Bird Club / photo credit: Jill Emerson

BY ELLIE STOERMER, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH ASSISTANT
AND SARAH GOLDSMITH, WATER QUALITY RESOURCES ASSISTANT

GMCG is proud to be hosting AmeriCorps members from the Lakes Region Conservation Corps for the second year in a row. Our current members, Ellie Stoermer from Seattle, WA and Sarah Goldsmith from Grantham, NH have been keeping busy with:

- Hosting the second season of the Blue Heron Bird Club, a winter citizen-science program that is part of Cornell's Project FeederWatch.
- Expanding the trail network at the Blue Heron House. The new trail will be behind the Huntress House and pass through a butterfly garden before entering the woods.
- Sarah presented posters on the trends in water quality over the history of the RIVERS program at conferences in NH and ME.

Our 2018-2019 AmeriCorps members Victoria Green and Haley Parent accomplished many large scale projects during their time serving in the Ossipee Watershed, including:

- A kiosk to inform visitors on the organization's

mission, trail locations, and notable wildlife that may be observed on the premise

- The implementation of a new trail system at our Natural Area, off of Green Mountain Road in Effingham
- Creation of new educational and research opportunities including Nature Discovery and Story Time, a program geared towards our youngest visitors and Project FeederWatch, a citizen science bird watching program done in conjunction with Cornell.

Victoria and Haley spent collectively over 3,400 hours serving, bringing research and educational opportunities to the communities of the Ossipee Watershed. We would like to thank them for choosing us as a host site and wish them nothing but success in all of their future endeavors! While they may have left the Ossipee Watershed for new passions elsewhere, they will always be part of GMCG's Team Green!

Save the Date! 2020 Spring Calendar

All events take place at 236 Huntress Bridge Road, Effingham, NH unless otherwise noted.
For info call (603) 539-1859 or email info@gmcg.org.

Tuesdays & Wednesdays March 17-18, March 31, April 1 from 9 to 10 a.m.: Blue Heron Bird Club

Join us as we participate in the citizen science birding initiative from Cornell Lab of Ornithology-Project FeederWatch. GMCG will provide hot coffee as we observe and record the winter birds at our newly installed bird feeders. No birding experience necessary.

Wednesday, March 25 from 5 to 6 p.m.: Education Committee Meeting Blue Heron House

New members welcome! The Committee helps to guide GMCG's educational programs and meets quarterly throughout the year. Help plan fun and informative programs for 2020 and discuss new program and project ideas. Please RSVP to Tara at: education@gmcg.org if you would like to be a part of this exciting work!

Wednesday April 8 from 6 to 7 p.m.: RIVERS information session

Curious to learn all about our flagship citizen science program? What to know how to be involved? Come to our informational session where prospective volunteers can hear about what the program is, what the benefits are, and what it takes to be a RIVERS volunteer. Light refreshments offered.

Friday April 10 at 6:30 p.m.: Black Bear Happenings in NH

Join us as a NH Fish & Game Steward shares information about black bears in the State of NH. Learn about their history, their habitat needs, and ways to avoid potentially costly conflicts. Sponsored by The Effingham Conservation Commission and co-sponsored by UNHCE/Taking Action for Wild Life; Effingham Public Library; Green Mountain Conservation Group; and the Effingham Historical Society.
This free public event takes place at the Effingham Public Library at 30 Townhouse Rd.

Tuesday April 21 and Saturday April 25 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.: RIVERS training session

Learn the protocol all RIVERS 2020 volunteers will follow in their data collection, and get some hands on experience with the equipment before the program starts. Mandatory for new recruits; returning volunteers are strongly encouraged to come and brush up on their monitoring skills. Refreshments offered; training will be part indoor, part outdoor, so please dress appropriately and come prepared with rain boots!

Wednesday April 22 from 12 to 3 p.m.: Earth Day Open House Celebration

GMCG invites the public to celebrate the 50th year of Earth Day at Blue Heron House with service projects, activities, food and fun for the whole family. Help with the spring clean up at the center, including roadside cleanup, trail clearing, raking, chair painting, and more. Activities include creating upcycled t-shirt bags, watercolor bookmarks, upcycled "stained glass" candle holders in addition to a vernal pool exploration, water lab discoveries and a scavenger hunt. Healthy snacks will also be provided. All ages welcome. Free and open to the public, with donations appreciated (and matched by a generous family foundation!)

Friday, May 15: Vernal Pool Exploration at Blue Heron House 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Children and families are invited to explore GMCG's three-year old pool for evidence of amphibians, fairy shrimp, and other macroinvertebrates that are typically found in such habitats. Get ready for getting your hands wet and your eyes amazed! Rain or shine!

Monday June 8 at 1 p.m.: BMP Field Trip to Chocorua Lake

Best Management Practices (BMPS) are structural designs and that control storm water runoff contributing excess nutrients and non-point source pollution to our lakes. GMCG is partnering with Chocorua Lake Conservancy for a fieldtrip to see BMPs currently in use at Chocorua Lake that have improved water quality. Participants will learn what they can do as homeowners, members of lake associations, and local municipalities to mitigate storm water runoff and protect water quality in their communities. The meeting place will be at "The Island" which is where the kiosk and parking is for public access.



THE WATERSHED NEWS

A Quarterly Publication for the Ossipee Watershed

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This spring GMCG is teaming up with **GotSneakers**, an innovative social enterprise that came up with a cool idea to keep used sneakers out of landfills and turn them into income for nonprofits. Got sneakers in the closet gathering dust? Visit gmcg.org/gotsneakers to find the drop-off location near you and learn how you can help us collect shoes from your friends, classmates and co-workers.



SAVE THE DATE! April 22, 2020 Earth Day turns 50!

Open House Celebration at the Blue Heron House 12 to 3 p.m.

