

Protecting natural resources in the Ossipee Watershed since 1997



Two state grants will expand the GMCG Natural Area in Effingham

A grant of \$47,250 from the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and \$29,650 from the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund (DWGTF) will fund the acquisition of the 34-acre Thurston parcel

Thanks to grant awards from LCHIP and the DWGTF, along with generous support and cooperation from the estate of Richard Thurston, GMCG is pleased to announce the acquisition of the 34-acre Thurston property on Route 25. The parcel abuts the existing 41-acre GMCG Natural Area and is adjacent to the 2,336-acre High Watch Preserve owned by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

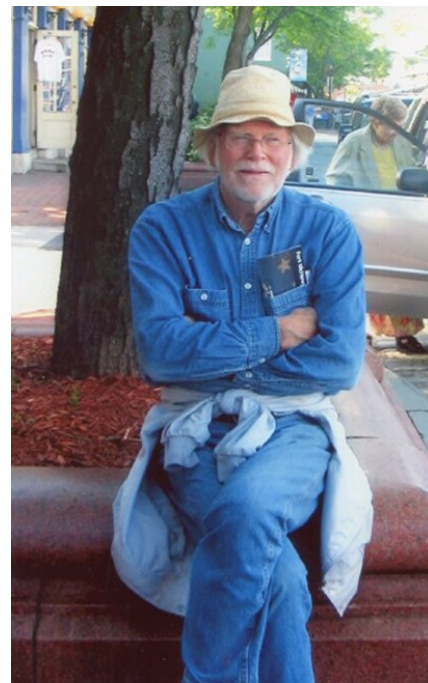
“This land is a significant wildlife corridor and link to other conservation lands on the northern slope of Green Mountain,” noted GMCG Executive Director Matt Howe. “We extend our gratitude to all parties involved for making this project possible.”

The expansion of the GMCG Natural Area to a 75-acre preserve enables GMCG to extend its interpretive nature trail and improve daytime public access to upland portions of the property. The tract is forested with 14 acres of pine, 10 acres of hardwood and includes 9 acres of wetland bisected by Hodgedon Brook which flows into the Ossipee River. The land features abundant wildlife (including a healthy population of native brook trout in

Hodgedon Brook) and, like the abutting GMCG Natural Area, is rated as one of the state’s “highest ranked wildlife habitat.”



GMCG Executive Director Matt Howe accepted the LCHIP grant award at a State House ceremony on December 11, 2023. Left to right, Governor Chris Sununu, Matt Howe, LCHIP Executive Director Paula Bellemore, and LCHIP Board Chair Ben Wilcox. Photo by Joe Klementovich.



December 11th was a good day for Effingham! Joining Matt Howe at the State House ceremony were Chuck Fuller, lead project sponsor, and Karen Payne, president of the Effingham Preservation Society, who were on hand to receive a \$172,000 grant award to the Town of Effingham to help with continued rehabilitation of the Effingham Library and the Old Town Hall. Also in attendance but not pictured were Town Selectman and Project Treasurer Leo Racine and Effingham Library Trustee Steve Regal. Work will involve restoring the six-story bell tower, double doors, and upper story windows, along with insulating the ceiling and updating wiring. The project is the next chapter of a multi-year effort to rehabilitate the Italianate structure built in 1858 as the New England Masonic Charitable Institute, the only known boarding school sponsored by Freemasons. After the school closed, the first floor served as the Town Hall for over a century before the Town converted it to the Effingham Public Library, now referred to as a “community center with books.”

GMCG and the Town of Effingham were among 25 recipients of 2023 LCHIP funding chosen from a total of 48 applicants. For a complete list and project descriptions of 2023 LCHIP grantees visit www.lchip.org.

Prior to Richard Thurston's death in April 2021 at age 101, he made it known to both his family and GMCG's founding director that he wanted this parcel (held by the Thurston family for generations) to become GMCG conservation land. We wish to extend special thanks to Richard's daughter, Carol Zachor of Wolfeboro. As executor of Richard's estate, Carol generously (and patiently!) followed through with Richard's request by arranging a bargain sale and giving GMCG over two years to secure this funding.

Green Mountain Conservation Group

The Watershed News is a quarterly publication of Green Mountain Conservation Group, a nonprofit, 501 (c)(3) charitable organization established in 1997. The mission of GMCG is to protect the lakes, rivers and groundwater of the greater Ossipee Watershed, its aquifer, land, and associated natural resources to ensure prosperous communities and a healthy ecosystem for all.

The towns of Eaton, Effingham, Freedom, Madison, Ossipee, Sandwich, and Tamworth comprise the Ossipee Watershed. This watershed includes one of the largest and deepest stratified drift aquifers in New Hampshire. GMCG also serves the towns of Maine's Sacopee Valley.

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GMCG in action



Tom at the Berlin Fish Hatchery scoops, rinses and weighs the Eastern Brook Trout eggs for the schools participating in the Trout in the Classroom program including: Sandwich Central School, Pine Tree Elementary School, Northeast Woodland Charter School and Freedom Elementary School. Each school received around 500 eggs this year to raise in the classroom and later release in the spring to a local river or stream that they studied. Thanks to the Alfred Quimby Fund and The Kendal C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation for supporting this program!



Freedom Elementary School fourth graders are excited to receive their Eastern Brook Trout eggs in early January 2024.



GMCG Education Committee members partnered with local librarians to help them expand their collections of children's books with environmental themes through the new Sponsor-a-Book program. Together they have compiled a growing list of exemplary children's books that reflect GMCG's mission of protecting and conserving the natural resources of the Ossipee Watershed with a special emphasis on water.



Land Trust Committee Chair Dana Simpson and GMCG Outreach Coordinator Moselle Spiller conduct conservation easement monitoring at a property in Freedom last September.



AmeriCorps members Grace Piselli and Hali Bedenharn were out in January collecting water quality data with our RIVERS tributary monitoring program.

Forest management operation planned for High Watch Preserve this winter

by Tara Schroeder
GMCG Education Coordinator

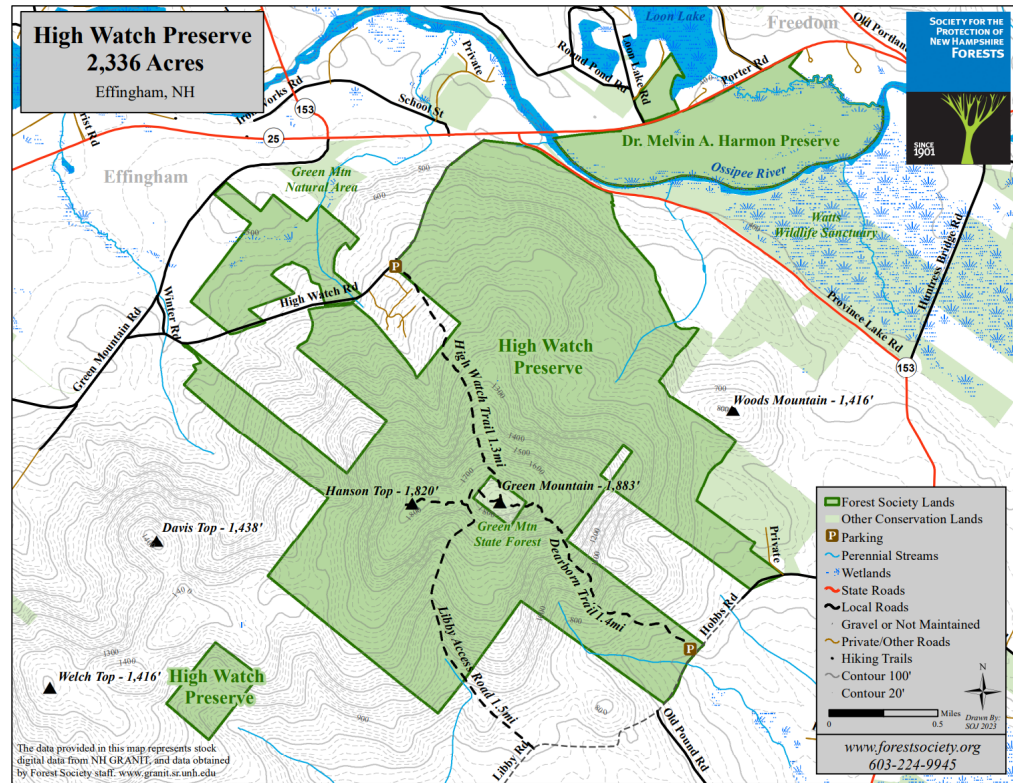
Steven Junkin, field forester for the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests Society, recently shared that the Society plans to conduct a forest management operation this winter on its High Watch Preserve, a 2,336-acre reserve it owns on Green Mountain that surrounds the Green Mountain State Forest.

Located in Effingham and Freedom, the property features hiking trails to the summit of Green Mountain, including the popular High Watch Trail, the Libby Road Trail and Dearborn Trail. The High Watch Preserve was the Society's 100th acquisition to its collection of permanently conserved forest reservations statewide. The majority of the High Watch Reservation was donated in 2000 by Charles and Patricia Watts former owners of the High Watch Rehabilitation Hospital.⁽¹⁾

As for the forest management operation slated for this winter, Junkin stated: "We have hired Tim Nolin a licensed consulting forester out of Ossipee to oversee the ground work.



The Emerald Ash Borer is an invasive insect that attacks ash trees and was first found in New Hampshire in 2013. It is "extremely destructive" and can kill ash trees within 3-5 years of infestation.
Source: <https://extension.unh.edu/blog/2019/08/emerald-ash-borer-eab-update>



The High Watch Preserve is a 2,336-acre reserve owned by the Society on Green Mountain. Source: https://forestsociety.org/sites/default/files/HighWatch_WebMap.pdf

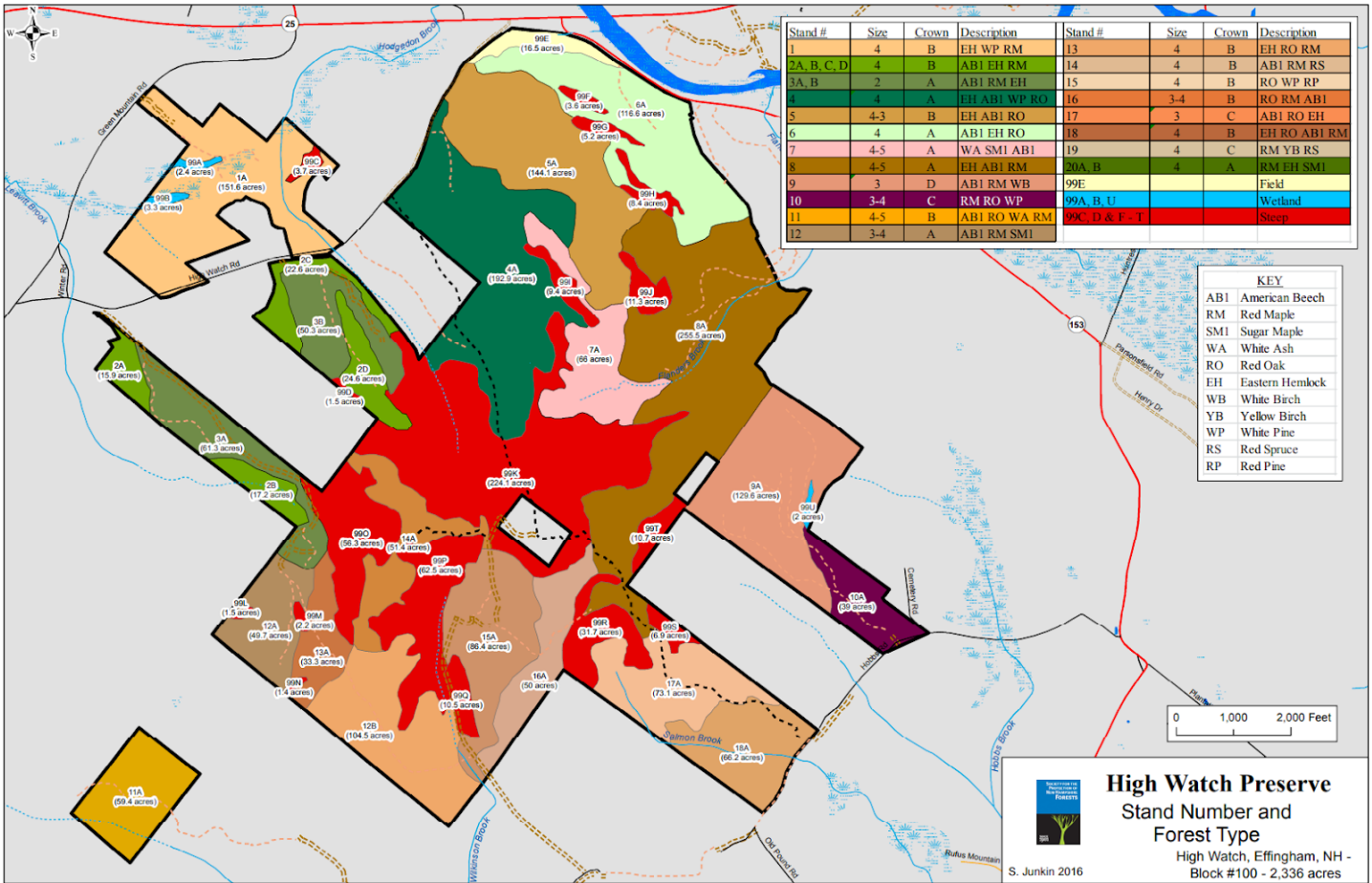
The impetus for this project is the newly identified emerald ash borer infestation in Stand 7 (see stand map, next page). This is a lovely northern hardwood stand with ash, sugar maple, beech and yellow birch growing there. The ash in the stand will soon die from this insect. Harvesting these trees now will ensure we will not lose financial value from these trees. The closed canopy condition of this stand prevents desirable tree regeneration from occurring. By opening up the canopy through timber harvesting, trees such as yellow birch, white birch and white ash will ideally regenerate in the new openings."

Stands 7 and 8 are the areas where the cuts will be concentrated, likely starting mid-January of 2024, said Junkin. "Young pole timber yellow birch and sugar maple will be retained and released as a part of this project. These trees will thrive in the additional sunlight and other resources that will be provided. The fall of 2022 was a good year

for ash seed production. We are hopeful these seeds will still be viable and will spring forth following this work. Forest managers are hopeful that ash will remain on the landscape so long as there are enough young ash to survive the main wave of emerald ash borer as they are less susceptible to the bug when young. Biocontrol insects will also have more time to build up numbers. Last year we assisted the state of New Hampshire with insecticide treatments of a select number of ash trees in Stand 7. These will be future seed and progeny (genetic) sources of ash."

Junkin shared more details about where access roads would be for the operation and impacts to viewsheds. "The access will be through a right-of-way we have over a private parcel along [Route] 153. This is the same access we used when doing tornado salvage work in 2008 and 2009. The viewsheds to be impacted will be locations like Loon Lake and the village of Porter, Maine," he said.

Continued on page 5...



A map of the High Watch Preserve indicating different stands of tree species. Stands 7 and 8 where forestry operations will be carried out this winter are indicated in pink and dark brown. Source: Steven Junkin, Forester for the Forest Society.

“There will be some large openings as a result of our regenerative treatment so these sections will visually look different to the onlooker. Though the impact visually will not be as drastic as the



Viewshed north from Green Mountain Fire Tower, taken July 2019. Source: Matt Howe, GMCG

clear cuts done back in 2019, given our current plan is to leave some residual stems in the openings. There are no trails in this part of the property so recreational uses will be unaffected.”

Junkin also elaborated on other goals for the property: “Other ideas that spring to mind are the concerns we have with dense concentrations of beech trees, which is very common on High Watch. Beech trees...are on the hit list of a very destructive nematode otherwise called beech leaf disease. If we can spur regeneration of non-beech species the forest will better respond and react when this pest potentially eliminates this tree species in a very short period of time.”

For more information, contact Steven Junkin at 603-224-9945 x310 or sjunkin@forestsociety.org.



Beech leaves showing evidence of beech leaf disease, a concern for the High Watch Preserve. Source: Nicole Keleher, MA DCR

¹⁰Anderson, D. (2015, August 16). Society hopes to expand High Watch Forest Reservation. NH Union Leader: Forests. https://www.unionleader.com/nh/outdoors/forests/forest-society-hopes-to-expand-high-watch-forest-reservation/article_bdc84f92-839f-5817-8758-405994108d5d.html

Through VBAP children discover the captivating world of macroinvertebrates

by **Tara Schroeder**
GMCG Education Coordinator

More than 40 members of the Greater Ossipee Watershed community came to hear students from Sandwich Central School and Effingham Elementary School present what they learned through the annual Volunteer Biological Assessment Program (VBAP) Community Presentation. This year was the 18th year of assessments with the Sandwich School being the first to participate when GMCG launched the program in 2006 with the help of New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). The program has since been taken over by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG).

Students showcased their learnings through watershed model demonstrations, recitation of poetry about macroinvertebrates and the creation of videos and displays. Other schools that participated in the program this year were: Kenneth A. Brett School; Ossipee Central School; Madison Elementary School and Pine Tree Elementary School. Collectively, these schools studied the water quality of the Bearcamp River and Swift River in Tamworth, the Lovell River in Ossipee, the Swift River in Conway, and the Cold River in Sandwich. This year the NHFG's Watershed Education Specialist Kayla Croteau was in attendance and shared the following message: "It is inspiring to see how far this program can reach and how impactful it can be on students, their families, and the environment as a whole. The way GMCG has brought VBAP and other watershed education topics to the community schools is exactly what we want to see being done around the state with this programming. It is learning, stewardship, and engagement in action."

Community members at the event were able to view microplastics samples that the students collected

this fall from local rivers, check out macroinvertebrate specimens, learn about drinking water testing opportunities and enjoy some cider and doughnuts. Students shared water quality assessment results for the river and stream sites they studied. Overall, half of the sites had a biotic score of "Good" and half had a biotic score of "Excellent," which is based on the macroinvertebrates they collected during sampling. Students also tested their sites for pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature and turbidity. Results showed that the rivers and streams were mostly conducive to supporting aquatic life, with a few sites exhibiting lower pH and dissolved oxygen levels this year. Students found microplastics in samples from all six sites that were tested. For more details about the program and results, visit <https://gmcg.org/education-2/whats-happening/>.

VBAP is a fun, hands-on way to expose students to environmental science and encourage stewardship of water resources. Thousands of students from the greater Saco River Watershed have participated in the program since 2006. For some students, the program has shaped their future field of study and career. Effingham Elementary teacher Sarah Olkkola shared, "My son did the VBAP program in fifth grade at OCS (Ossipee Central School) and is now in his first year at UNH studying wildlife and conservation biology. I know that his macro study was part of his inspiration!"

Thank you to the Sandwich Central School for hosting the program this year, and to all of the teachers, parents, caregivers, chaperones, staff and AmeriCorps members who helped with the program. Thank you, as well, to the foundations that supported the program, including: The Alfred Quimby Fund, The Tamworth

Foundation, and The Kendal C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation.



Some of Mrs. MD's students from Sandwich Central School prepare for their presentation at the event, showcasing the VBAP T-shirts they helped to design.



Students created interactive watershed models to demonstrate how different types of pollutants can travel to surface waters like rivers, streams, lakes and ponds.



More than 40 members of the public attended this year's VBAP Community Presentation in Sandwich.

by Tara Schroeder
GMCG Education Coordinator

GMCG's Salt Responsibly initiative is in its second year of raising awareness about the ways we can reduce the use of salt while keeping roads, driveways, parking lots and sidewalks safe. Public service announcements on the radio and social media messaging direct the public to www.saltresponsibly.com to learn about the harm caused by winter salt applications and offer guidance to reduce the amount of salt that is contaminating New Hampshire's waterways and water supplies.

For a number of years GMCG has collaborated with the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Technology Transfer Center to promote and deliver NHDES's highly regarded Green SnowPro certification program. This program is the first in the nation to train and certify commercial and municipal salt applicators on the latest methods and technologies to safely reduce the use of salt, while offering limited liability protection from damage arising from snow and ice. Now the program is tailoring trainings for municipalities in addition to private contractors. GMCG recently reached out to Aubrey Voelker, salt reduction program coordinator for NHDES, to learn more about the new program and what is happening with the salt issue across the state.

GMCG: *How many water bodies are impaired for chloride or sodium in New Hampshire at this time?*

Aubrey: In 2008, New Hampshire listed 19 chloride-impaired water bodies on the 303(d) list under the Clean Water Act. That number has increased to more than 60 in 2022.

GMCG: *Are there any examples you can share where an impaired waterbody has been delisted?*

Aubrey: Recently NHDES awarded a



Watershed Assistance Grant to the Merrimack Village District to develop a sodium chloride-based watershed plan. This will be the first watershed plan specifically focused on chlorides in the state. You can read the press release to learn more here: <https://www.des.nh.gov/news-and-media/nhdes-awards-watershed-assistance-grant-sodium-chloride-based-watershed-restoration>

GMCG: *What is NHDES's main message to towns, residents, businesses, and watershed organizations like ours regarding salt?*

Aubrey: Dramatic and rising concentrations of chloride from salt applications have been identified in New Hampshire waters due to the application of de-icing chemicals. At this time, the only way to prevent chloride from reaching surface waters and groundwater is to reduce the amount applied to our roadways, parking lots and sidewalks without compromising safety.

The primary goal is to prevent the over application of winter salt and other de-icing materials while still maintaining a high level of safety. There are many ways to achieve salt reduction and certain strategies and practices work best for different circumstances. Education and outreach on how salt works is necessary as well as a need for a shift in expected level of service.

GMCG: *Can you describe the new Municipal Green SnowPro program?*

Aubrey: The Municipal Green SnowPro program administrative rules are currently in the approval process, and we hope to have the program finalized and open for applications for the 2024/2025 winter season. Partnering with municipalities in the Green SnowPro program strives to meet various goals based on the level of certification achieved.

There will be three levels of certification: Standard, Advanced and Expert. Standard certification focuses on salt accounting, material storage, and training. Advanced and Expert certifications include the requirements of Standard certification while also requiring the implementation of additional salt reduction best management practices (BMPs).

GMCG: *When is the next Green SnowPro training?*

Aubrey: An approved Green SnowPro Initial Course can also be completed at anytime online through the Smart About Salt Council and register for here: <https://smartaboutsalt.com/>

GMCG: *How can better tracking of salt/sand use and costs by towns be beneficial?*

Aubrey: Detailed recordkeeping of de-icing and anti-icing materials helps towns not only know when and where materials have been applied but allow for improved planning strategies. Knowing exactly how much material is being applied aids in budgeting for materials in the future as well as knowing exactly when, where, and how much material is being applied and if there are options for salt reduction in certain areas.

Good recordkeeping can also aid in making decisions about where reduction may be needed as well as the making decisions about adding salt reduction best management

practices (BMPs) such as brine. While BMPs such as utilizing brine may have upfront equipment costs, significant savings in materials can be achieved that negate these costs. Knowing exactly the amount and costs of materials already being used helps with these decisions and calculating potential costs savings.

GMCG: *To your knowledge, are most towns' costs for salt and the amount of salt used each year rising?*

Aubrey: Like most materials, there does appear to be an increase in the costs of salt that all sectors are facing. It is difficult to determine if salt use is rising or not. The BMPs utilized for snow and ice management are determined by the current weather conditions and includes countless variables such as current and future precipitation, current and future temperatures, time of day, expected level of service, etc. As New England winters continue to shift, there will be a shift in BMPs and how much material is needed to maintain safety.

GMCG: *In the Ossipee Watershed, Sandwich has a "minimum salt policy". Are there any others in the state to your knowledge and should other towns be looking at this option and under what circumstances? [Sandwich uses an estimated 30 yards a year of salt to mix with sand so it doesn't freeze due to moisture, and state maintained roads are salted consistent with all state roads.]*

Aubrey: I do not know if there are other towns that are completely salt-free. There are towns that have established low-salt roads/zones. There are many things for a town to consider when designation low-salt or salt-free areas such as volume of traffic, affected stakeholders, community support, etc.

GMCG: *How can a town work with the state to create reduced salt or salt-free zones near sensitive areas, like wellhead protection areas,*

surface waters, or wetlands?

Aubrey: To designate reduced salt or salt-free zones on state-maintained roads, a town would need to reach out to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to start that discussion. There are also multiple stakeholders that usually need to be involved in the process for designating any areas for reduced salt including town administrators, the fire department, the school board – if on a school bus route – and the community members traveling those roads.

GMCG: *What is NHDES recommending as road salt alternatives at this time? Does NHDOT use brine or other alternatives on any state roads?*

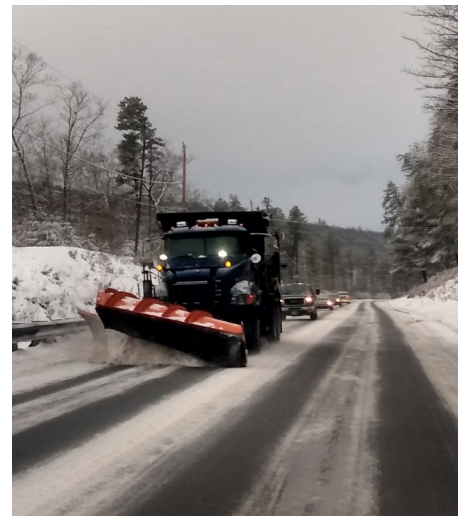
Aubrey: NHDES recommends using the proper amount of material for the present weather conditions. The best material or practice is determined by current weather conditions, expected level of service, and even type of roadway/parking lot/sidewalk being maintained.

"The primary goal is to prevent the over-application of winter salt and other de-icing materials while still maintaining a high level of safety."

There is no "one-size-fits-all" material or BMP due to the countless variables that need to be considered. NHDOT does utilize brine in certain regions of the state if current and predicted future weather conditions allow for it.

To learn more about water quality data including chloride levels in GMCG's 15-year Water Quality Report and the interactive salt trends map for the Ossipee Watershed, visit: <https://www.gmcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/15yr-WQ-Report-Final-Draft.pdf> and <https://saltresponsibly.com/interactive-map/>.

For more information about NHDES's road salt reduction efforts and the Green SnowPro Certification program, visit: <https://www.des.nh.gov/land/roads/road-salt-reduction>.



A NHDOT plow truck on Route 25 in Effingham last winter.



Winter road salt dispersed at a boat launch on the Ossipee River in Effingham last winter.

The critical role of wildlife corridors in NH's changing landscape

by Tara Schroeder
GMCG Education Coordinator

On December 13, 2023, GMCG hosted an online workshop about wildlife corridors featuring University of New Hampshire (UNH) Cooperative Extension Wildlife Conservation State Specialist Haley Androozzi and Chocorua Lake Conservancy (CLC) Stewardship Director Debra Marnich. The two presenters shared a wealth of information and resources with an audience of approximately 30 participants about the importance of wildlife corridors and how people can take action in their communities to protect these vital passageways for wildlife.

New Hampshire is home to an incredible diversity of wildlife species with approximately 500 species of birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles and about 11,000 known species of insects. Wildlife needs habitat to move in order to find food, water, and shelter, and to reproduce and migrate between seasonal habitats. A wildlife corridor joins two or more areas of habitat to allow for the movement of wildlife from one area to another. Wildlife corridors can include wooded areas, riparian areas, waterways, airways, or even a hedgerow, depending on the type of wildlife. They can be as small as a brook and surrounding wetlands (e.g. for salamanders, fish) or span an entire continent (e.g. for monarchs and hummingbirds). Wildlife corridors also allow for an exchange of individuals between populations, preventing inbreeding and reduced genetic diversity that can occur with isolated populations.

Over the past 150 years, NH's landscape has drastically changed for wildlife due to an increase in the number of roads, houses, and other permanent developments being built, resulting in a direct loss of wildlife and wildlife habitat. Vehicle collisions are the leading cause of observable wildlife mortality in the



A bobcat and her kitten traveling along a river corridor. Photo by Debra Marnich.

state and across the country.

The impacts of development to some species has been greater than others. Those most impacted include slow-moving species like reptiles and amphibians; species that depend on high adult survivorship like turtles; species that are long-range dispersers and cover long distances like bobcat which can range up to 20 miles; and species that already have limited populations to begin with, like the timber rattlesnake where there is just one known population in the state.

The Blanding's turtle, American marten and spotted salamanders are some examples of the many NH species that require corridors and are more at risk when development encroaches on their habitat. Blanding's turtles are considered state-endangered and use a diversity of wetland, aquatic and upland habitats and travel one mile or more between habitats, especially during breeding season when females are searching for ideal nesting areas. They inevitably encounter a lot of hazards along in their travels. With a reproductive age of 14-20 years and then only laying a few eggs per year, adult deaths can have a big impact on populations.

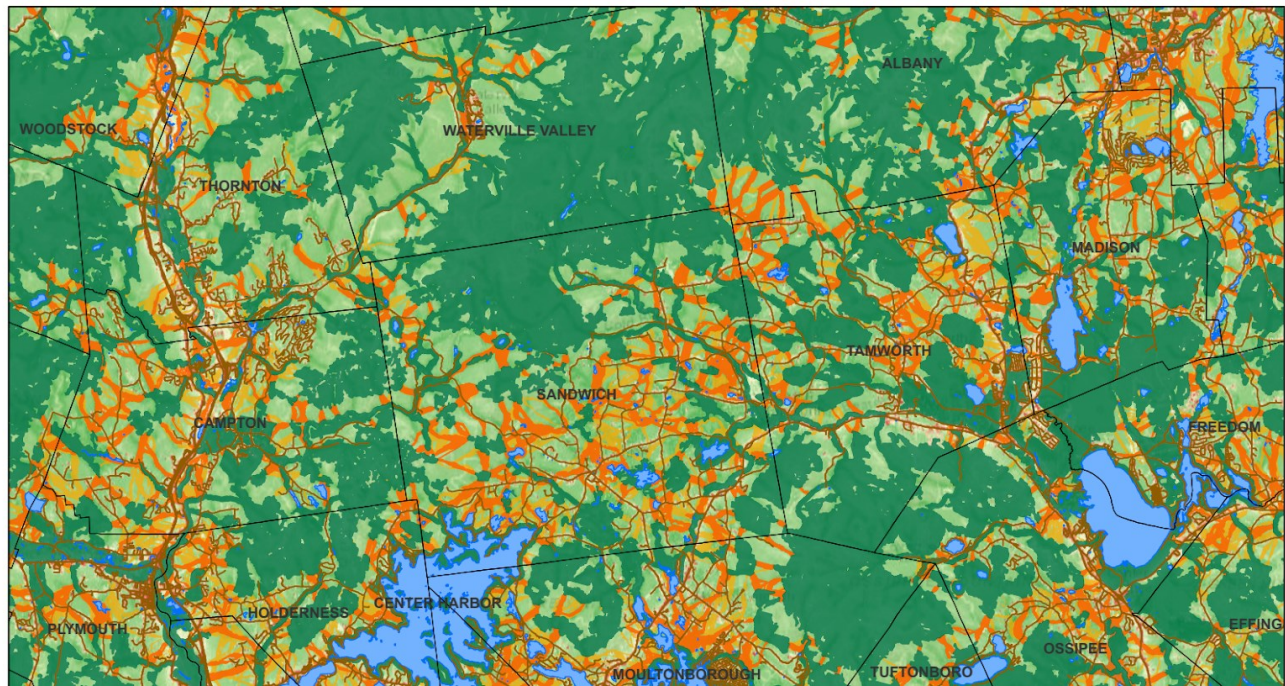
The American marten is considered a species of greatest conservation need, relying heavily on wildlife corridors in the northern part of the state where they use

high elevation spruce-fir forests above 2,700 feet and require large blocks of forested land to travel long distances. The marten's preference for mixed softwood stands and old-growth forests and long-range travel necessitate a niche habitat that is at risk both from human encroachment and climate change.

While spotted salamanders are relatively common throughout the state, they tend to suffer high mortality on roads during their annual spring migration events, also known as "Big Nights." These salamanders spend the majority of their time underground in forested uplands before making their way on warm, rainy spring nights to vernal pools where they breed and lay their eggs. The Salamander Crossing Brigade program began in 2007 by the Harris Center in Keene, NH to train citizen scientists to collect data about migrating amphibians and safely usher the animals across roads during Big Nights. Their work has led to data-driven decisions at the local level where roads in Keene are closed during certain nights of the year to allow for safe migration at important crossings. (See the calendar page for information on the next online training.)

There are many other actions that can be taken by landowners and communities to conserve, manage and restore wildlife corridors. As with Keene, towns can begin to identify large habitat areas and corridors in their community. Inventories and assessment tools are available, such as the wildlife sightings website managed by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG) where anyone can report wildlife sightings and observations. NHFG also created a map of wildlife corridors a few years ago, showing important prioritized habitat blocks as identified through its NH Wildlife Action Plan with potential wildlife corridors connecting those blocks.

NH Wildlife Corridors Map



The NH Wildlife Corridors map, developed by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, is a useful tool to help identify these important areas on the landscape. The core wildlife habitat blocks are areas over 50 acres in size that are a priority in the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan. <https://nh-wildlife-corridors-nhgranithub.hub.arcgis.com/> (Map created by Tara Schroeder)

(See the map above as an example of how to create a community map with local data.)

Information about wildlife corridors can also be used at the local level to inform land use decisions, for example, by incorporating wildlife corridor information into a town's Natural Resource Inventory, Master Plan, and conservation plans. There are many examples of regional modeling efforts to identify critical connectors between significant conservation lands being conducted by organizations like The Nature Conservancy, Upper Valley Land Trust and NH Audubon.

Other initiatives involve the management and restoration of wildlife corridors for specific species such as the New England cottontail rabbit and Eastern Brook trout, the use of seasonal signs at important crossings, and the modernization of culverts to improve wildlife crossings. In fact, CLC has been actively working on protecting riparian corridors and will be restoring 1,000 feet of the

eastern shoreline of Lake Chocorua in 2024. GMCG also recently completed the assessment of more than 400 stream crossings in the Ossipee Watershed from 2020-2022 and has been working alongside Saco Headwaters Alliance, North Country Council and NHHG to share the results with towns to facilitate upgrading crossings that are vulnerable to floods and scored poorly for aquatic organism passage.

The most powerful tool we have to protect wildlife corridors is through land protection. CLC has successfully protected 3,000 acres of land in the Chocorua Lake Basin through conservation easements and covenants, and GMCG has conserved over 2,000 acres of land in the Ossipee Watershed through conservation easements or fee ownership. Debra Marnich reminds us that private landowners own about 75% of the forests in the state, or 4.9 million of 6 million acres of land, so

collectively, private landowners can have a very large impact on protecting wildlife corridors. She reminds us, "No matter how much land you own, whether it's one acre, 500, 50, or anything in between, even on a very, very small scale, you can make a difference." And, when communities protect wildlife habitat, they also help to ensure clean water, clean air, healthy soils, and more, she said.

For more information on upcoming workshops and trainings, or to request copies of the new brochure focusing on the actions you can take for wildlife in New Hampshire, visit: www.takingactionforwildlife.org, a partnership among UNH Cooperative Extension, the NHHG and the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions.

GMCG Welcomes New AmeriCorps Members



Hali Bedenharn, AmeriCorps Member Education & Outreach Assistant

Hey everyone! My name is Hali Bedenharn and I grew up exploring creeks, trails, and nature centers in and around my hometown of Oneonta, New York. I have earned a B.S. in Environmental Sustainability and Geography and have always had an interest in conservation work. Most recently I was a naturalist for the Sawtooth Interpretive and Historical Association (SIHA), an environmental education nonprofit in the mountains of Idaho. Working with SIHA has fueled my love for outdoor education and instilled how important nonprofits are for environmental conservation efforts. In my spare time you can find me outdoors; hiking, learning about local flora and fauna, or birdwatching. I am thrilled to explore New Hampshire and continue working with the public as Team Green's Education and Outreach Assistant this year!



Grace Piselli, AmeriCorps Member Water Quality Resources Assistant

Hello, I'm Grace, a young ecologist who has lived and worked in New England my whole life! With a B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Northeastern University, I have a passion for understanding the complex relationships within environments. I have a keen interest in aquatic ecosystems, and how people think about them. I've worked in multiple aquariums as both an educator and aquarist, as well as within the National Park Service through AmeriCorps. These professional experiences have only cemented my path as an ecologist. Originally from Milford, Connecticut, I love to explore the outdoors through tide pooling and international travel. I also enjoy baking for friends and family.

You can be a RIVERS volunteer!

The 2024 Regional Interstate Volunteers for the Ecosystems and Rivers of Saco (RIVERS) season begins on April 29th! We are looking for new and returning volunteers to attend a training session before the new season starts. There are two offered sessions, though volunteers only need to attend one. Training dates are Tuesday, April 23rd and Saturday, April 27th, 10am-12pm. Volunteers are asked to dress for the outdoors and bring their intrepid spirits. Have questions? Contact Jill at water@gmcg.org.



Conservation conversations

Editor's Note: *Conservation Conversations is intended to provide a forum for the seven towns of the Ossipee Watershed to share news of their conservation and planning activities and an opportunity to find creative solutions to challenges.*

Effingham Conservation Commission:

The Effingham Conservation Commission (ECC) will be gearing up for the regularly scheduled events of spring and summer: the Earth Day poster contest at the Effingham Elementary School, the April roadside cleanup event, a summer presentation with a date to be determined, and the usual maintenance tasks at the Larry Leavitt Preserve and the Pine River Cherubini Preserve (PRCP). The ECC also continues to seek a trail builder to complete the trail system in the PRCP.

Tamworth Conservation Commission:

Recently the Tamworth Conservation Commission (TCC) worked with landowners to place a conservation easement on 68 acres of wooded land. The parcel has frontages on the Bearcamp and Swift Rivers as well as Mill Brook. This woodlot has numerous wetland areas and provides excellent habitat for wildlife. The TCC is currently working with landowners who are interested in donating conservation easements on two additional parcels.

The TCC has been lending assistance to a Tamworth Community Nurse Association project to have a handicapped accessible trail built just off Scott Road in Tamworth. This project would also include the enlargement of the current parking area serving the Hammond Trail on Mt. Chocorua. Preliminary plans for both the trail and parking area have been received; the next step will be fundraising.

New mission statement approved; new highway signs coming soon!

by **Matt Howe**
GMCG Executive Director

As part of its 2023 strategic planning process, the GMCG Board of Directors adopted a fresh new mission statement to underscore the organization's focus on surface and groundwater protection as the core purpose for all of its research, education, advocacy and land conservation efforts. The new statement also aims to reinforce the linkages between environmental quality and economic sustainability and human health and welfare. It reads:

Green Mountain Conservation Group protects the lakes, rivers and groundwater of the greater Ossipee Watershed, its aquifer, land, and associated natural resources to ensure prosperous communities and a healthy ecosystem for all.

And keep a look out later this year for the first of several signs we intend to place on the major roadways entering the Ossipee Watershed from the north, south, east and west. Depending on where they are located, the signs will say either "Entering the Ossipee Watershed" or "You are in the Ossipee Watershed." You have surely seen similar signs in other parts of New Hampshire, New England and the U.S. We believe it is time to have them here, too, as a constant reminder to all that this is a special place deserving of everyone's care and vigilance. If you or a business you know have property on Route 16 or Route 25 or other well-traveled routes such as 153 or 113 where you think one of these signs would be appropriate, please contact us!



"Entering the Ossipee Watershed" sign design created by GMCG Outreach Coordinator Moselle Spiller.

Success!

GMCG concludes \$250K campaign for land conservation, capital improvements and organizational development

In November 2021, the GMCG Board launched a three-year campaign to raise \$250,000 to advance the organization in several ways. The Board's goals were to:

- Sustain our signature programs
- Invest more in our staff
- Finance essential improvements to the Blue Heron House and Huntress House
- Sharpen our messaging and heighten awareness and understanding of GMCG throughout the watershed
- Increase our efforts to place more land in conservation

Thanks to dozens of generous donors across the watershed, the Royal Little Family Foundation, and two land conservation grants from the State of New Hampshire (see front page article) we have exceeded our goal and concluded the campaign.

Our accomplishments include:

94 acres of land conserved

Campaign funds enabled us to add 44 acres to the 102-acre Philips Brook Wetland preserve in Effingham and Ossipee; 34 acres to the 41-acre GMCG Natural Area on

Route 25 in Effingham; and ensure the completion of the 20-acre Blankenstein donation on Davis Pond in Madison.

Expansion of the GMCG Water Research Center

The basement of the Blue Heron House now includes a water research lab with new equipment and sufficient space for our growing team of AmeriCorps members as they support our widening research into microplastics; E. coli; and environmental DNA. Several other improvements to the Blue Heron House (including a beautiful new entryway) and the Huntress House were made possible by the campaign.

Improved staff compensation, technology infrastructure, and marketing campaigns

We have been able to make steady improvements in staff compensation, health benefits and retirement contributions. We also were able to build a new website and launch two major public relations initiatives: "Salt Responsibly" and "One Aquifer. Let's Protect It".

To all of you who joined in this campaign with your generous gifts and multi-year pledges, thank you!

- Matt Howe and the Development Committee

Your support makes all the difference!

*Please make checks payable to Green Mountain Conservation Group
PO Box 95, Effingham, NH 03882*

You may also donate online at www.gmcg.org/donate

My/our gift of \$ _____ is enclosed.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

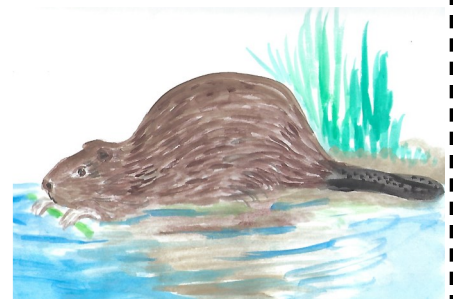
PHONE _____ **EMAIL** _____



GMCG is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

GMCG's Federal Tax Identification Number is:
02-0498020

Thank you!



GMCG's 6th Annual Polar Plunge and World Water Day is set for Friday, March 22

In honor of World Water Day, GMCG plans to host our 6th Annual Polar Plunge for Healthy Water on Friday, March 22. In addition to the group plunge in the Ossipee River at noon, the GMCG headquarters will be open to the public for a World Water Day Open House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. GMCG staff and AmeriCorps members will be on hand to give tours of the Blue Heron House and answer questions about GMCG programs and volunteer opportunities. Light refreshments will be served. At noon, everyone is invited to gather outside on the bank of the Ossipee River to cheer on the brave polar plungers!

To register as a plunger, sponsor a plunger, or simply give to support this cause please visit www.gmcg.org/polarplunge

**GREEN MOUNTAIN
CONSERVATION GROUP**

6th Annual
POLAR PLUNGE
Take the plunge for healthy water!

Friday
March 22, 2024
12pm

Jump in the Ossipee River
along with GMCG staff and
friends to support water
protection programs.

Register to participate or
donate to support
the polar plunge at
www.gmcg.org

Meet at
236 Huntress Bridge Road
Effingham, NH 03882

Save the date! 2024 winter calendar

Please register in advance for these programs at www.gmcg.org. There are no registration fees, but your donations help us sustain these programs. For all outdoors events, please dress appropriately for cold weather and with proper winter footwear. This year we are excited to offer a limited number of snowshoes for children and adults to rent for \$5/pair. All the programs listed will take place at GMCG's Blue Heron House in Effingham located at 236 Huntress Bridge Road, except for the Mary's Mountain adventure in Freedom, and the salamander event on Zoom.

Wednesdays, in February & March from 10 to 11 a.m. Winter Nature Story & Discovery Time Winter Wanders

Whose tracks are those in the snow? What visited Blue Heron House last night? Join GMCG each Wednesday as we explore the woods, fields, river and vernal pool habitats to learn about animal signs and how animals and people adapt to survive through the winter. We will examine prints, track patterns, and other animal signs to become winter detectives. Each session will include a nature themed story, songs, crafts, games, and outdoor exploration around the day's theme. Program dates are: 2/7, 2/14, 2/21, 2/28, 3/6, 3/13, 3/20, & 3/27, weather dependent.

Wednesday, February 14 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Keeping a Nature Journal/Field Sketching in Winter

Want a different way to experience the natural world? Sketching something actually helps you see it through a different lens. Join Environmental Educator Barbara Bald as we explore ways to set up a Nature Journal and learn new ways to do easy sketches of what you are seeing. No drawing experience is necessary. Materials needed: A sketch pad or journal, drawing pencil (4B if you have one), eraser, colored pencils (if you have them), gel pen. If none of these are available, not to worry. Just bring a regular pencil. You can always craft a homemade journal. Just in case, we will have some extra homemade journals, too.

Wednesday, February 28 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Outdoor Animal Tracking Program

Family-friendly and open to all ages, folks will be led on a short outdoor walk along GMCG's Blue Heron Trail at GMCG's conservation center, the Blue Heron House, located at 236 Huntress Bridge Road in Effingham. Animal tracker Barbara Bald will spend some time observing casts of tracks, pelts, skulls and more before heading out into the forest to explore. Participants will learn how to identify native animal and bird tracks in the snow.

Friday, March 8 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Mary's Mountain Snowshoe

Enjoy a moderate, 1.5 mile round trip winter snowshoe trek up Mary's Mountain for beautiful views from open ledges of Green Mountain, Ossipee Lake and Danforth Bay. Mary's Mountain is a 944-foot peak located in the 2,661-acre Freedom Town Forest. Meet just below the kiosk/trailhead off of Ossipee Lake Road in Freedom, located on Shawtown Road past the Danforth Bay Camping Resort.

Thursday, March 14 from 7-8:30 p.m. Salamander Crossing Brigade Volunteer Training on Zoom

Every year, the Harris Center trains community scientists to serve on Salamander Crossing Brigades at amphibian road crossings throughout the Monadnock Region. These heroic volunteers move migrating amphibians across roads by hand during one or more "Big Nights" each spring, keeping count as they go. Attend this fun, information-packed volunteer training to join their ranks. For more information and to register, visit www.harriscenter.org or contact Brett Amy Thelen at thelen@harriscenter.org. Stay tuned for a Crossing Brigade in the Ossipee Watershed this year organized by GMCG and the Chocorua Lake Conservancy!

Friday, April 12 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Invasive Plants & Pests Workshop

Join UNH Cooperative Extension Forestry Specialist Wendy Scribner to learn about the invasive plants and pests that threaten New Hampshire's towns and forests. These damaging insects and diseases as well as non-native plants can spread quickly and put forests and the natural environment at risk. Wendy will share information about non-native upland invasive plants and pests and how to identify, report and manage them. State regulations and initiatives as well as management techniques, planning resources and available tools will also be covered. This workshop is designed for private landowners, land trust staff, foresters, natural resource professionals, municipal staff and community members who are interested in natural resource protection and stewardship.



PO Box 95
236 Huntress Bridge Road
Effingham, NH 03882
(603) 539-1859
www.gmcg.org

THE WATERSHED NEWS

A Quarterly Publication for the Ossipee Watershed

Save the date!

**GMCG 6th Annual Polar Plunge
for Healthy Water**

Friday, March 22

GMCG World Water Day Open House
from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

and
group plunge in the Ossipee River at noon



In This Issue:

- GMCG awarded two state grants to expand GMCG Natural Area in Effingham
- Forest management operation planned for High Watch Preserve this winter
- GMCG celebrates 18 years of VBAP with local schools at community presentation in Sandwich
- NHDES launches new Municipal Green SnowPro program to reduce impacts of salt
- The critical role of wildlife corridors in NH's changing landscape
- Meet the new AmeriCorps members
- and more!

Contributors:

Matt Howe, Tara Schroeder, Hali Bedenharn, Grace Piselli, Nancy Walser, Moselle Spiller. Cartoon by Tim White.