



Early spring thaw in the headwaters of the Saco River near Hart's Location. This familiar scene occurs across the Ossipee Watershed, as winter melts to spring and vast amounts of runoff carry road salt and other pollutants downstream.

The Big Melt

**by Nancy Ritger
GMCG Executive Director**

Spring has arrived: days are longer temperatures are rising, and the snowbanks from a long winter are finally disappearing. All that melting snow feeds swollen streams and rushing rivers across our watershed. While many of us welcome the change of seasons, the “big melt” also carries a hidden menace - road salt.

Throughout the winter, salt is spread across roads and parking lots to make travel safer. But when the snow melts, that salt doesn't simply disappear. During spring snowmelt and rain, salt-laden water seeps into the ground and enters groundwater reservoirs.

In the summer months groundwater feeds streams, lakes, and ponds, especially in times of draught. This means chloride from winter road salt can be slowly released into rivers and lakes long after the snow and ice are gone. Over time, chloride can build up in freshwater systems, harming aquatic plants and wildlife and altering water chemistry.

Two bills recently considered in the New Hampshire House aimed to reduce road salt contamination but

ultimately failed to pass. HB1607 would have required proper storage of bulk road salt to prevent it from leaching into groundwater or running off into lakes. HB1810 proposed creating a road salt mitigation fund supported by a \$4 per-ton fee on out-of-state suppliers. The fund could have generated about \$1.6 million annually to help municipalities purchase equipment and adopt technologies that allow for more efficient salt use.

Representative Rosemarie Rung (D - Hillsboro12) the bills' sponsor, called the defeat short-sighted, noting that removing salt from drinking water is extremely costly and that rising salt levels can disrupt aquatic ecosystems.

Locally, Ossipee, Freedom, and Effingham already have proper salt storage facilities, so HB1607 would not have changed current practices. However, the proposed mitigation fund could have helped communities invest in new technologies to reduce the amount of salt applied to roads.

While these measures did not pass, awareness of road salt's long-term impacts are growing. The big melt may signal the arrival of spring, but it also reminds us how closely our winter choices are connected to the health of our waters.

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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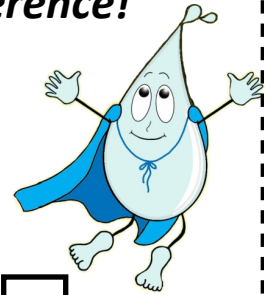
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GMCG remembers dedicated conservationist Ron Adams

Ronald N. Adams, 79, of Ossipee, NH, passed away peacefully on January 9, 2026, at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital in Dover, surrounded by his loving family. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, he was the son of the late Dr. Ronald W. and Dorothy (England) Adams.

He spent his high school years at Hebron Academy in Hebron, Maine and then went on to receive an AB degree from Colgate University and a Master's Degree in Teaching from Wesleyan (CT) University.

Ron began his teaching career at Greenwich (CT) High School, where he met a colleague who became his wife. Soon after, he and Karen chose to pursue their dream of living in the country and relocated to Ossipee, New Hampshire, where Ron had the opportunity to apply his carpentry skills for the next 52 years to a very needy old farmhouse, along with clearing the overgrown fields around it mostly by hand.

He took a job teaching and coaching soccer at the Alton Central School until an opening came up closer to home at Kingswood Regional High School in Wolfeboro, NH, where he taught social studies for 24 years and served as department chairman. He was very involved with the Close Up Program at Kingswood, traveling with students to Washington, DC, where they experienced the legislative process firsthand. For his leadership with that program, he was recognized by the national staff in Washington, DC as "an inspired and dedicated educator who has helped create a new citizenship education legacy in New Hampshire." He was also actively involved throughout his teaching career with the New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies, holding several leadership positions over the years, including president. He assumed responsibility for organizing and running the Council's annual statewide conference for many years and served on the House of Delegates at the annual national conferences.

During his time at Kingswood, Ron was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach overseas in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia for two years from 1991 to 1993. It was a very interesting time for Ron and his family to live there as the country transitioned from communism to capitalism and split into the two countries of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. During that time, in addition to teaching at a Slovak high school, Ron founded the Bratislava American International School, where he served as both the director and a teacher.

He and his family had opportunities to travel extensively in Eastern and Western Europe and came home with many treasured memories and lasting friendships. Following his classroom career, Ron worked for several years as a social studies Curriculum and Assessment Specialist at Measured Progress, a test development company in Dover, NH.

Ron was an active member of the conservation community, stewarding land in the Ossipee Watershed, including Dan Hole Pond. He served eight years with the Ossipee Conservation Commission. He served as a member of the Dan Hole Watershed Trust where he was responsible for securing grant funding to solidify protections for ecologically sensitive areas. He served on GMCG's Board and Land Committee since 2024. In that short time Ron led the charge for GMCG to move two important land conservation projects from concept to reality. At the GMCG Annual Watershed Celebration in 2025, Ron received GMCG's distinguished High Watch Community Award for exemplary volunteer service.



In retirement, Ron and his wife continued to enjoy traveling throughout the United States, highlighted by visits to many of the national parks. Ron loved the outdoors and was a champion of conservation. He took immense joy in caring for his 18 acres of land, planting vegetable and flower gardens, and enjoying the natural world with his family through activities such as hiking, camping, canoeing, and skiing. He served for several years on the Ossipee Conservation Commission and was instrumental in the creation of the Scenic View on Route 16. He was also actively involved with the Dan Hole Pond Watershed Trust prior to its closure and then became an active member of the Green Mountain Conservation Group, which in 2025 awarded him their highest honor, the High Watch Award, for exemplary volunteer service.

He was a devoted member of the Second Congregational Church in Ossipee for over 40 years, where he served in a variety of roles including treasurer, lector, and more. Ron is survived by his wife, Karen (Karl) Adams; his daughter, Elizabeth Adams of Ossipee, New Hampshire; his son, Christopher Adams and wife, Michelle, of Latham, New York; and his cherished grandchildren, Reid Adams and Whitney Adams. He is also survived by his sister, Dyanne Edds, of St. Petersburg, Florida; two nephews, Teall Edds and Aaron Edds; and several great-nieces and nephews.

Ron devoted his life to education, service, and conservation, leaving a lasting impact on countless students and his community. He was always generous with his time and talents, rarely saying no to a request for help, however big or small – whether it be chairing the reaccreditation process at the high school or washing dishes at a church supper.

A celebration of his life will be held at a future date. If you wish, please consider a donation in Ron's memory to Green Mountain Conservation Group, PO Box 95, Effingham, NH 03882 or to a charity of your choice.

by Jill Emerson
GMCG Staff Scientist

“Science without documentation is just farting around” – PG version of a popular laboratory saying.

In science, there is a sacred and slightly ruthless rule: if you didn't write it down, it didn't happen. You could have discovered a new species, solved climate change, or brewed the perfect cup of coffee—but if it's not in a permanently bound notebook, properly dated, initialed, and legible, it might as well have occurred in a dream. Science has no patience for results written down on a series of random Post-It notes (a pet peeve of mine), poorly labeled samples (usually a cryptic combination of letters and numbers), or people saying “I definitely remember” (you definitely don't). It wants timestamps, units, methods, and preferably handwriting that doesn't look like it was produced during an earthquake. Documentation is what transforms “we think this is what happened” into “here is exactly what happened, how it happened, and here's the evidence.” Without documentation, you're not doing science—you're just playing with lab equipment.

Our citizen science tributary monitoring program, RIVERS, has a lot of documentation to it – probably more than people think. One of our most important documents is one that many people will never see, and, coming in at a whopping 150+ pages, one most will never read. This document is called a Quality Assurance Project Plan, or “QAPP”. For those wondering how to pronounce that, imagine a duck with a cold (“Kwap”).

At its core, a QAPP lays out exactly what you're doing, why you're doing it, and—most importantly—how you're going to make sure the data you collect is solid, defensible, and not just the result of someone eyeballing a sample and saying, “Eh, looks fine.” It covers who is responsible for each

step, what equipment will be used, how that equipment is calibrated, how samples are labeled, how they're transported, how they're analyzed, what happens if something spills, breaks, freezes, overheats, or otherwise misbehaves, and how you'll document all of it. If there is a possible way for things to go sideways, the QAPP tries to anticipate it before it happens.

Importantly, a QAPP isn't about mistrust—it's about consistency. Our RIVERS program uses many volunteers, is co-run by two organizations, and utilizes multiple staff members and labs in order to measure water quality in the Saco River watershed. Thus, the QAPP ensures everyone is collecting and handling data the same way, from the beginning when a volunteer steps into the river to the end where the data are reported. That way, when results come in, you can compare apples to apples confidently instead of apples to something that may or may not have been sitting in a cooler for six extra hours.

A QAPP is what allows your data to walk into a meeting with scientists, funders, or regulators and say, “Yes, I am accurate, traceable, and reproducible,” and it does need to be reviewed to make sure the protocols and methods cited are at the highest scientific standard. This review is typically conducted every five years to ensure the program remains aligned with current best practices. By revisiting protocols on a regular schedule, new and improved sampling methodologies can be incorporated as they emerge, keeping monitoring efforts consistent with evolving scientific standards. The reviewers for our QAPP are NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), ME Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP), the University



A volunteer obtains river information after being trained on scientific data collection protocols outlined in the QAPP.

of NH, and the EPA. As one can imagine, having so many players and specialists reviewing niche scientific protocols can get a little hairy. Trying to juggle a plethora of opinions, regardless of the subject, in an attempt to keep many stakeholders happy can be a Sisyphean task.

QAPPs are not flashy. They are not glamorous. You wouldn't frame one and put it on your wall. To be honest, QAPPs are annoying, pedantic, and kind of a pain in the butt. But they can be the quiet hero behind credible science—the reason your project doesn't rely on crossed fingers and good intentions, but on documented, repeatable, high-quality methods. Right now our RIVERS program is undergoing a QAPP review – because while we strive to make science accessible to all, we also want that science to be of the highest caliber.

Where are they now?

Former GMCG staff members, interns and AmeriCorps members share updates about their careers, adventures, and life post-GMCG.

Grace Piselli, Water Quality Resources Assistant AmeriCorps Member at GMCG 2024

“Last summer I pursued a summer internship with the Smithsonian Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute's Great Plains program. I lived in rural northeastern Montana assisting on graduate research exploring Great Plains ecology—everything from pesticide impacts to bison wallowing, and the effects of plague treatment on prairie dogs! I even started an independent project vacuuming bugs from prairie dog burrows to see what lives down there—hopefully one day I can publish that data.

Right after Montana, I landed my DREAM job as Associate Project Manager of Conservation at The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk. I've been here about six months and love it! Our mid-size team runs a wide range of coastal conservation research, from privately funded horseshoe crab surveys to grant-backed marine debris removal. Much of our work is in salt marshes, testing restoration strategies, measuring elevation gain versus sea level rise, and simulating climate effects on marsh plants.

I was just assigned my first project to lead: partnering with a local oyster company to launch a small-scale reef restoration off Norwalk, CT. We'll manage the reef using aquaculture techniques, track effects on shoreline erosion, water quality, and plant growth, and involve a local high school in fieldwork. I'm thrilled to be collecting water quality data again—this time with a YSI!

Overall, I'm doing well back in Connecticut and excited to continue growing professionally and personally. GMCG was transformative for me as a scientist, and I wouldn't be where I am today without it. I miss you all and the community members too!”



Photo: Grace Piselli (right) in the field as Associate Project Manager of Conservation at The Maritime Aquarium, Norwalk, CT.

Ellie Hatt, Conservation Assistant AmeriCorps Member at GMCG 2024

“After my half-term AmeriCorps service at GMCG, I joined Maine DEP's Watershed Management Unit in Portland. Thanks to Maine Conservation Corps/Volunteer Maine, we stayed afloat during uncertain AmeriCorps funding in April 2025. At DEP, I worked with lake associations on six watershed surveys, identifying erosion points and recommending fixes. I also drafted a Watershed Report and Protection Plan for one lake to guide the next decade of conservation and assisted in diverse fieldwork across WMU units, including Marine, SWAT, and Biomonitoring.

In December 2025, a week after finishing my term, I began full-time as Land Use Coordinator with the 30 Mile River Watershed Association in Mount Vernon. I manage projects focused on erosion prevention, including watershed surveys, protection plans, technical assistance, and overseeing Section 319 Clean Water Act grants.

Outside work, I still find time for ultimate frisbee, hiking, crafting, contra dancing, kayaking, and more. My GMCG experience was pivotal in shaping my passion for lake conservation—the skills and connections I gained in just five and a half months were invaluable.”



Photo: Ellie Hatt pursued conservation work with Maine DEP, Maine Conservation Corps, and 30 Mile River Watershed Association after her GMCG AmeriCorps service.

Josey Curley, Conservation Assistant AmeriCorps Member at GMCG 2024

“Life has been exciting recently; my boyfriend Will and I found a dog on the road back in May while we were traveling in CA- so we took Layla in! And then we moved out to Colorado a few months ago! It's been very rewarding and so cool to experience living outside of New England (though of course there's no place like home).

I'm currently a nanny for a family on Will's hockey team, along with a few side gigs mixed in! I love taking care of the kids and enjoying the freedom of this chapter of life.

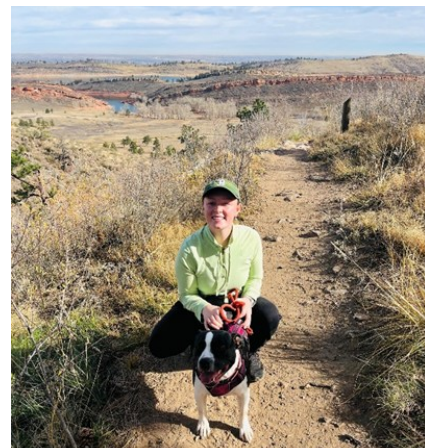


Photo: Josey Curley with her rescue dog Layla, formerly a Conservation Assistant AmeriCorps member.

GMCG partners with MDI Biological Laboratory, Dartmouth College and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to offer toxic metals testing and drinking water safety education in local schools

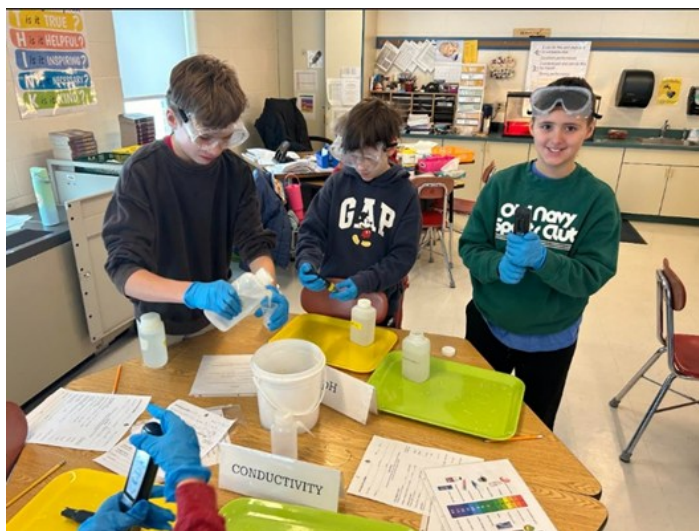
by Tara Schroeder
GMCG Education Coordinator

This winter, GMCG added toxic metals education and testing to its drinking water program, GET WET! (Groundwater Education Through Water Evaluation and Testing), in area schools. GMCG has led the citizen science GET WET! program in local schools and libraries since 2009. The addition of toxic metals testing is made possible through the Science Education Partnership Award project, “All About Arsenic+: Communicating Data.” The collaborative public health initiative was launched in 2015 by researchers at Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory and Dartmouth College’s Toxic Metals Superfund Research Program and is funded through the National Institute of Nursing Research and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. Since 2019, the project has engaged 41 schools and 5,200 students, connecting 45 teachers with 22 scientist partners.

The project engages teachers and students across Maine and New Hampshire in collecting drinking water samples from both public systems and private wells, with a focus on toxic metals including arsenic, uranium, manganese and lead. Nearly half of households in Maine and New Hampshire rely on private wells, which are not regulated, leaving it up to homeowners to test their water regularly. Because of the region’s unique geology, wells can contain naturally occurring toxic metals that may pose health risks ranging from impacts on infant and childhood development to increased risk of heart and lung disease and certain cancers.

“It is so important for households on private wells to test their water regularly,” said Amy Hudnor, Private Well Coordinator for the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and GMCG’s scientist partner for the project. “NHDES is excited to be involved in this partnership in which private well testing is brought into the classroom, empowering youth to learn about common contaminants such as arsenic and lead while testing their own well water and sharing that information with their families and communities.”

In 2025, GMCG Education Coordinator Tara Schroeder brought the program to local communities after training with Dr. Jane Disney and her team at Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory and forming a partnership with Hudnor. The three-year project will engage hundreds of students and their families in drinking water

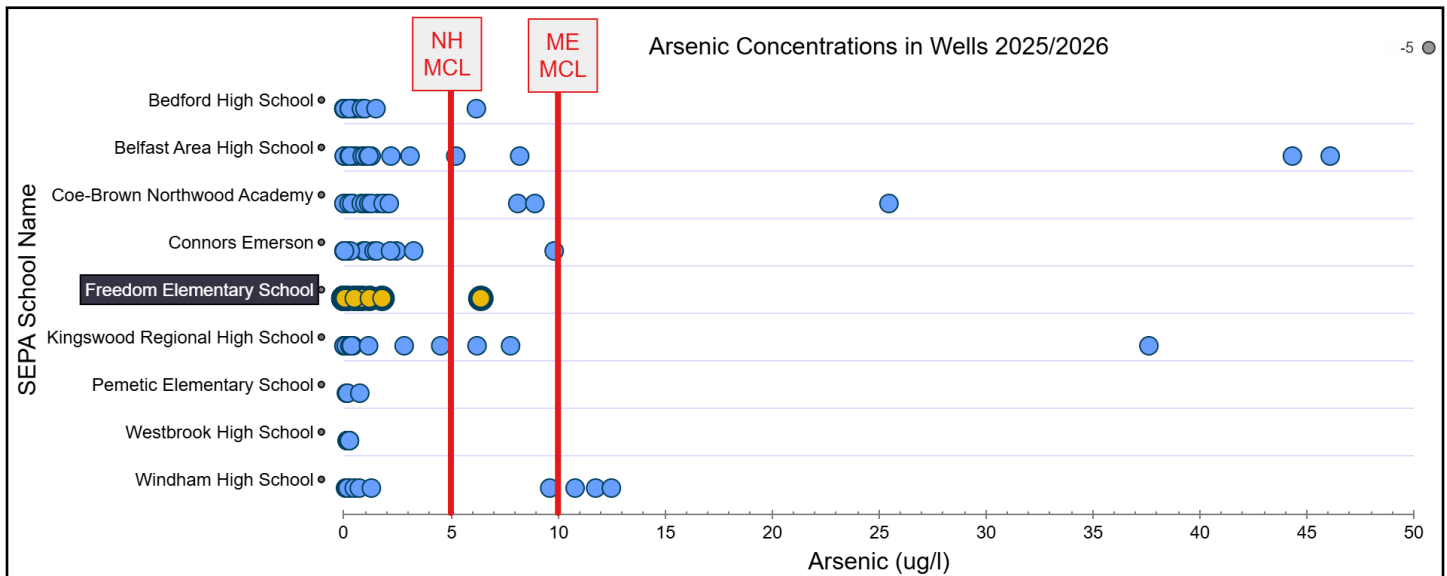


Students from Freedom Elementary School test their well water in class and through Dartmouth College’s lab for 30 parameters—including toxic metals like arsenic, uranium, and lead—as part of GMCG’s GET WET! program and the All About Arsenic project. Each winter, GMCG trains teachers and volunteers (like Anne Packard, pictured above) to participate.

education while providing valuable information about the safety of their well water through GMCG’s GET WET! program.

“We know there is potential for elevated levels of some toxic metals in our region based on past groundwater studies and state testing data,” Schroeder said. “Testing can also be costly for families. Through this program, we can provide important information while helping families better understand and ensure the safety of their drinking water.”

For more information about the All About Arsenic+ project, visit www.allaboutarsenic.org. Learn more about this project and GMCG’s GET WET! program at www.gmcg.org.



Graph: Arsenic concentrations in drinking water samples from schools in New Hampshire and Maine (2025–2026), including Freedom Elementary School. Each blue dot represents an individual measurement (µg/L). Students participating in the All About Arsenic Project have used their data to advocate for stronger Maine standards and for \$400,000 in one-time grants to help homeowners and landlords with contaminated private wells.

Support Safe Drinking Water in Our Communities

by Tara Schroeder
GMCG Education Coordinator

Would you like to make a difference in your community and help support drinking water safety and education?

GMCG is helping students understand drinking water—where it comes from, why it’s important to test for contaminants, and how to protect it for future generations. Through our GET WET! (Groundwater Education Through Water Evaluation and Testing) program and the All About Arsenic project, students participate in hands-on science by testing their drinking water in the classroom. These activities are guided by trained staff, AmeriCorps members, and community volunteers, and are affiliated with the University of Maine, Dartmouth College, and Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory.

Students can test their drinking water at home for 30 different parameters, including potentially toxic heavy metals such as lead, arsenic, and uranium. The data collected through the program contributes to an important long-term record of groundwater health in our region, helping communities better understand and respond to changes in local water quality.

We are seeking sponsors to help underwrite the costs of this educational program including water testing and to provide ZeroWater pitchers for households whose test

results show elevated levels of contaminants.

Your sponsorship can make a meaningful difference for a family in need by providing a ZeroWater pitcher, which can remove contaminants such as lead, arsenic, uranium, and other heavy metals, helping ensure safer drinking water at home.

Contact Nancy Ritger at director@gmcg.org for more information on how to sponsor this program.



Photo: A ZeroWater Pitcher uses a multi-stage filtration system to reduce contaminants such as lead, arsenic and uranium in household drinking water. The pitchers will be provided to families in need whose water tests show elevated levels of heavy metals.

Winter salt, whimsical salamanders, and warm spring: *Reflections on our shared environment*

by Rose Harnett, AmeriCorps Member Education & Outreach Assistant

What do salamanders and salt have in common? They both start with “Sal.” Now, I don’t know who Sal is, but when I find him I am going to ask about the deal with all this salt. We use salt to melt ice on driveways, roads, and walkways, but salt does not disappear after the winter.

Salt sticks around. Up to one and a half football fields away from the road, salt has been found contaminating salamander dwellings, known as vernal pools. Salamanders and other amphibians love these seasonal wetlands: they migrate to vernal pools on rainy nights in early spring for habitat and courtship, and to lay eggs. Vulnerable to changes in their pool, shell-less salamander eggs may not hatch if salt is present. If they do hatch, there is a high chance their spines will be deformed.

Salamanders are always sensitive to their environment, even after they hatch, because they breathe by absorbing oxygen through their skin and mouth. When in contact with pollutants, salamanders become sick and may not survive. Excess salt affects all the creatures and plants in the vernal pools, by increasing competition for food and making survival harder. But we can help! By salting responsibly, we can limit our effects on salamander friends.



Your advocacy can help amphibians thrive

One simple way to protect amphibians is by encouraging your local municipality or highway department to apply less salt near wetlands and sensitive aquatic habitats. Using brine—a liquid salt alternative—can also reduce the amount of solid salt that ends up in vernal pools. Roads near salamander habitats can be treated more carefully, especially during early spring when breeding and egg-laying are happening. Even small changes, like adjusting timing and amounts, can make a big difference. Attend town meetings, send a note, or share information about salt impacts—

Photo (L): This unassuming roadside scene is actually a riparian habitat that feeds into our local watershed. Winter road salt can easily run off into these small waterways, raising chloride levels and harming aquatic life.

Spring Nesting: GMCG Offers Hand-Built Bird Boxes for Local Songbirds

As spring approaches, songbirds will soon be looking for safe places to build nests and raise their chicks. You can help by providing a cozy home in your yard. Hand-built nesting boxes are now available at the GMCG’s Blue Heron House, offering a secure space for local birds to nest and thrive.

These boxes are carefully crafted by GMCG board member Dana Sipson of Ossipee, who generously donated his time to support the organization. Each box is designed to protect birds from predators and the elements, giving them the best chance to raise healthy chicks this season. By placing a nesting box in your yard, you can support the local bird population and enjoy watching these feathered visitors up close.

Nesting boxes are available for a suggested donation of \$25 each. GMCG is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., but please call ahead to make sure staff are not out in the field before stopping by.

Supporting this effort helps provide vital habitat for songbirds while giving you the opportunity to connect with nature right in your own backyard.

Stop by soon and give local birds a safe place to call home and support GMCG with your birdhouse donation!



Photo: A birdhouse built by GMCG board member Dana Simpson, providing a safe nesting spot along the Blue Heron Trail.

Meet GMCG's new 2026 season AmeriCorps Members

Rose Hartnett, AmeriCorps Member Education & Outreach Assistant

"Born and raised on Long Island, New York, I grew up catching frogs in my backyard and eating any plants my grandpa deemed edible. By middle school, I was completely enamored with trees and the conservation status of the American buffalo. Passionate about land preservation and caring for wildlife, I went on to study Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Wildlife Conservation at the University of Connecticut.

At UConn, I worked for the forestry department clearing trails, logging, and doing sawmill work. I also assisted graduate students in Integrated Pest Management labs, detecting potato leafhoppers on crops and pollinators along highways. After graduating in 2024, I moved home and taught marine biology on the North Shore as a summer camp counselor and on the South Shore for New York State Parks as an environmental educator.

After a year, I took a part-time position closer to home at the Queens County Farm, where I taught about sustainable agricultural practices and livestock. I befriended alpacas, harvested squash, and led educational programs. With more time to travel, I visited family in New Hampshire and immediately fell in love with the peace the lakes and trees brought me. I applied for jobs while lying on my aunt's dock and was grateful for the opportunity to serve at GMCG.

Since moving to Effingham to serve at GMCG, I've taught the GET WET! program in schools, helped make sure our watershed felt the love on Valentine's Day, explored beautiful trails, and assisted with water quality research. I'm looking forward to seeing what each season brings!"



Photo: Rose and Cass test water on Ossipee Lake's out flow this winter. GMCG is proud to be partnering with the Lakes Region Conservation Corps as an AmeriCorps host site, currently hosting two full term members. AmeriCorps is a voluntary civil society program supported by the U.S. federal government, engaging adults in public service work with a goal of "helping others and meeting critical needs in the community."

Cassidy Gersten, AmeriCorps Member Water Quality Resources Assistant

"Raised in a military family, I lived in many different places growing up, my favorite being an Air Force base along the mouth of the James River. I spent much of my time outside observing the water, catching crabs, and watching the jellyfish bloom. After two years, my family moved to the Virginia suburbs outside of Washington, D.C., where I spent my time missing the river that once graced my backyard.

I attended William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, just a short drive from another river I came to explore: the York. As a sophomore and former pre-medicine student determined to spend the summer away from home, I applied to a lab that promised time on the water. I soon found myself working on seagrass research at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, assisting graduate students, participating in fieldwork, and conducting my own

research. For two and a half years, I lived and breathed marine biology. By graduation, I was burnt out.

Three months after graduating, I moved to Madrid, Spain, to teach English. Outside of work, I prepared my honors thesis research for publication, took Spanish classes, and traveled—finding favorite cities along coasts and rivers. Still, I found myself yearning to be back in the field. After moving back to the United States, I began searching for jobs in new places I wanted to explore. A posting for an AmeriCorps service year as a Water Quality Resources Assistant caught my eye, and the rest is history—a history that includes my first one-and-a-half-foot snowstorm, water quality sampling in a single layer because it was a "warm" 35 degrees, and many more adventures to come during my time with GMCG!"

Winter salt awareness week brings attention to salt pollution and practical solutions

by Moselle Spiller
GMCG Outreach Coordinator

Winter Salt Awareness Week 2026, held January 26–30, drew national attention to the growing problem of salt pollution and highlighted strategies for reducing its impact on freshwater resources. The week was a collaborative effort among governmental and nonprofit organizations across the United States.

In New Hampshire, GMCG partnered with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to engage road agents, public works departments, municipal officials, contractors, businesses and residents in conversations about responsible winter maintenance practices.

GMCG kicked off the week early on January 26, 2026 with a road salt reduction roundtable discussion and public webinar that attracted more than 500 participants nationwide. The event focused on education and awareness around reducing road salt use to protect watersheds and the environment.

“A big thank you to the Green Mountain Conservation Group for hosting a Road Salt Reduction Round Table discussion during last week’s Winter Salt Awareness Week,” said Scott Kinmond, technical specialist and instructor with the University of New Hampshire Technology Transfer Center (T2). “This week focuses on education and awareness nationwide on the use of road salt and efforts to help reduce it for the good of our watersheds and environment.”

Kinmond said the UNH Technology Transfer Center works with NHDES to train New Hampshire municipalities and private contractors in salt reduction techniques, including salt spreader calibration and the use of liquid anti-icing. These practices can reduce salt application by 30 to 70 percent. Contractors can also receive



A large chunk of road salt found after winter maintenance highlights how oversalting can occur in a concentrated location when salt is not properly dispersed.

training through the NHDES Green SnowPro certification program.

Speakers during the week also highlighted the environmental impacts of salt pollution, particularly on amphibians and freshwater ecosystems.

“Frogs possess highly permeable skin, making them exceptionally vulnerable to environmental salt concentrations,” said Nancy Ritger, Executive Director of GMCG. “Salt exposure disrupts electrolyte balance, damages skin and impairs vital organ function, often resulting in death. Road salt runoff contaminates habitats and contributes to amphibian population declines.”

Each winter, an estimated 20–30 million tons of road salt are applied nationwide. In New Hampshire alone, approximately 400,000 tons are used annually. Once applied, salt enters soils, lakes, streams and drinking water supplies.

Salt pollution affects aquatic ecosystems, drinking water quality and infrastructure. The estimated cost of vehicle corrosion, road and bridge

maintenance, tree damage and infrastructure deterioration is about \$3,140 per ton of salt — totaling more than \$60 billion nationwide each year.

Throughout the week, daily livestreamed webinars featured researchers, municipal staff and industry professionals discussing water quality research, impacts to fish and wildlife, and successful strategies for reducing salt use.

“Thank you to everyone who participated in Winter Salt Awareness Week by attending livestreamed webinars, sharing information in their communities and joining the Road Salt Round Table discussion,” said Aubrey Voelker, coordinator of the Salt Reduction Program and Green SnowPro with the NHDES Watershed Assistance Section. “One of the biggest hurdles to reducing winter salt use is increasing public awareness about the costly impacts salt has on our environment and infrastructure.”

GMCG also promoted its ongoing Salt Responsibly campaign, launched in January 2022, which provides education and guidance for residents, municipalities and contractors on reducing salt use while maintaining winter safety.

More information about GMCG’s winter salt awareness efforts is available at saltresponsibly.com



Save the date! GMCG 2026 spring calendar of events

March through May, Big Night & Salamander Crossing Brigades: Do you live near wetlands, or a river, stream, lake or pond? These areas are alive with amphibian activity in early spring. Green Mountain Conservation Group, Chocorua Lake Conservancy, and Tin Mountain Conservation Center are encouraging area residents to contribute to citizen science by identifying amphibian migration hot spots in the Saco Watershed and monitoring the amphibian road crossings near your home. Big Night, the first warm, rainy night (or nights) of spring, when amphibians migrate from their winter homes to spring breeding grounds, is weather-dependent and could happen any time March through May. **Chocorua Lake Conservancy and GMCG will be hosting another salamander brigade this year in Tamworth. Stay tuned for registration details.** To learn more, attend a training session and submit your data for anywhere in the Saco Watershed at www.gmcg.org. Contact education@gmcg.org.

Saturday, April 4 from 12 p.m. — GMCG 8th Annual Polar Plunge for Healthy Water: Join GMCG for our Annual Polar Plunge into the Ossipee River — a bold, refreshing tradition to celebrate and protect the watershed that sustains our communities. Every splash supports GMCG's work safeguarding the Ossipee Watershed and protecting our region's sole-source aquifer. Donations help fund water quality monitoring, education programs, watershed science and conservation action throughout the year. At 1 p.m. the Polar Plunge gets underway, along with refreshments, on site wood fired sauna, and prizes. The minimum participation donation for individual plungers is \$10. Not plunging? You can still support the cause by donating, sponsoring a plunger, or cheering on participants! To register to plunge, donate, or sponsor the event, visit www.gmcg.org/polarplunge by Friday, April 3.

Saturday, April 25 and Tuesday, April 28 from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. — RIVERS Volunteer Training Sessions: At the Blue Heron House, RIVERS volunteers will learn and refresh their water quality skills, practice using monitoring equipment, and meet other volunteers. In order to provide the highest quality data, we strongly encourage all volunteers to attend one session. Sessions will be outside so please dress for the weather. For more information email Jill Emerson at water@gmcg.org.

Friday, May 15 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. *Water Always Wins: Thriving in an Age of Drought and Deluge* by Erica Gies Book Discussion & River Walk: Join Ossipee Public Library and Green Mountain Conservation Group at GMCG's Blue Heron House for a discussion of the award-winning book *Water Always Wins: Thriving in an Age of Drought and Deluge* by Erica Gies, followed by a guided nature walk. Winner of the Rachel Carson Award for Excellence in Environmental Journalism, *Water Always Wins* takes us on a journey across the globe, highlighting sustainable practices of living with water from the past and present that can inform our future. Following the discussion, we will embark on a guided walk along the Ossipee River where participants can journal, reflect, and share their thoughts with others. Copies of the book are available at the Ossipee Public Library and other local libraries. Please register at www.gmcg.org.

Friday, May 22 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. iNaturalist Training Workshop: Learn how to use iNaturalist to document local biodiversity and contribute to citizen science. This workshop will cover how to record observations, get identification help, explore data, join projects, and take effective photos using the iNaturalist app (available for iPhone, iPad, and Android). iNaturalist is a widely used online platform for sharing biodiversity information and supporting scientific research. Participants will learn how to apply it to projects such as BioBlitzes, natural resource inventories, school ecology studies, and initiatives like the NH Butterfly Monitoring Network. Presented by Haley Androzzio of UNH Cooperative Extension and hosted by Green Mountain Conservation Group, Chocorua Lake Conservancy, Appalachian Mountain Club, the Tamworth Conservation Commission, and Cook Memorial Library. Event location is the Cook Memorial Library in Tamworth and is open to the public. Stick around afterward for a showing of the Pollinators & Plants crankie at 5 p.m.

June 22 - 28, 2026 Pollinator Week Bioblitz: Pollinator Week is an annual celebration of pollinator health that was initiated and is managed by Pollinator Partnership. It is a time to raise awareness for pollinators and spread the word about what we can do to protect them. This year, GMCG will host a bioblitz in the Ossipee Watershed and beyond with the Appalachian Mountain Club. Anyone can join the Pollinator Week Bioblitz on iNaturalist and be a part of this community science project to help collect data on the distribution of pollinators and the plants they depend upon. Participation in the project entails taking pictures of pollinators and plants and uploading them to iNaturalist to be included in the Pollinator Interactions on Plants (PIP) of the NE US project. Observations are submitted through the iNaturalist app any day during Pollinator Week from June 22-28, 2026. Your efforts can contribute to our understanding of pollinator populations and help inform conservation efforts locally and globally. Visit www.inaturalist.org to join the project or learn more at www.gmcg.org.



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THE WATERSHED NEWS

A Quarterly Publication for the Ossipee Watershed

Save the date!

**2026 Annual
Watershed
Celebration**
Tuesday, July 28th
at The Preserve at
Chocorua

**Thank you
Polar Plunge
Business Sponsors!**



From hot saunas to icy plunges, White Mountain Sauna Haus of North Conway celebrates the healing power of water and proudly sponsors GMCG's Polar Plunge providing an on-site wood fired sauna for plungers to enjoy at the event!



Saturday April 4

Join us at the Blue Heron House for our annual plunge into the Ossipee River — a bold & refreshing tradition to celebrate & protect the waters that sustain our communities.

Every splash supports Green Mountain Conservation Group's work safeguarding the Ossipee Watershed & protecting our region's sole-source aquifer. Your participation helps fund water quality monitoring, education programs, watershed science, & conservation action throughout the year.

Noon: Coffee, Cocoa, Lunch & Desserts

1:00: the Polar Plunge Gets Underway

Prizes for the top three plungers & teams who raise the most funds!

Minimum participation donation for individual plungers: \$10

Register by Friday April 3rd



Blue Heron House
236 Huntress Bridge Road
Effingham, NH 03882
603.539.1859
info@gmcg.org
gmcg.org/polarplunge/