

Protecting natural resource sin the Ossipee Watershed since 1997



Sandwich Elementary School Students identify and sort macroinvertebrates for the VBAP program at Cold Brook this September.

From students tostewards: 21years of watershed education

Each fall, students across the watershed conduct participatory science to learn about the health of our waterways through the Volunteer Biological Assessment Program (VBAP). Since 2006, schools have worked with GMCG to assess local rivers and streams, conduct water testing and sample for macroinvertebrates, investigate land uses that affect water quality, and more recently, sample for microplastics. Through the program, they gain a sense of place, participate in gathering real-world science that is used to track the health of our waterways, and understand why clean water is important as well as their role in protecting it for the future.

This year, more than 240 students from kindergarteners through sixth graders are participating in the program, in addition to many teachers, chaperones and volunteers who help with the field day programs when students are out on the rivers.

Schools that are involved in 2026 include: Effingham Elementary School; Freedom Elementary School; KA Brett School in Tamworth; Ossipee Central School; Pine Tree Primary School in Conway; and Sandwich Central School. Tara Schroeder, GMCG's Education Coordinator, started this program with NH Department of Environmental Services and now runs the program in collaboration with NH Department of Fish & Game who help provide training for teachers, volunteers, staff and AmeriCorps members and receive GMCG's annual reports. "It's certainly my favorite program that we do with students for many reasons. Watching them get excited about science, exploring the river and learning new things, and getting inspired to be good stewards is just awesome. Even the parents and teachers are learning new things and really get into it, like helping the students find and sort the macroinvertebrates they caught. One student exclaimed how she couldn't believe she missed the program last year to go to Disney, she was having so much fun!"

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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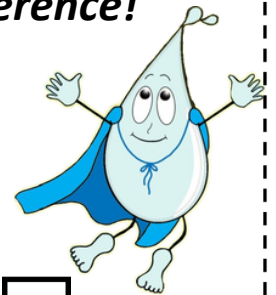


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Turning knowledge into action

by **Nancy Ritger**
Executive Director

I am often asked what Green Mountain Conservation Group does in the Ossipee Watershed. The answer tends to be long winded because we are busy! For more than 20 years, Green Mountain Conservation Group (GMCG) has helped communities throughout the Ossipee Watershed understand and protect their most important natural resource: clean water.

GMCG brings science directly into the community through hands-on education, citizen science, volunteer training, public programs, water quality monitoring and accessible water quality information. Each year, GMCG reaches approximately 800 students through 60+ school programs in New Hampshire and offers 30–40 programs for community members, including teacher and volunteer trainings. Participants don't just learn about water—they get outside, test streams, sample lakes, explore groundwater, collect data, and discover how everyday choices can affect the watershed.

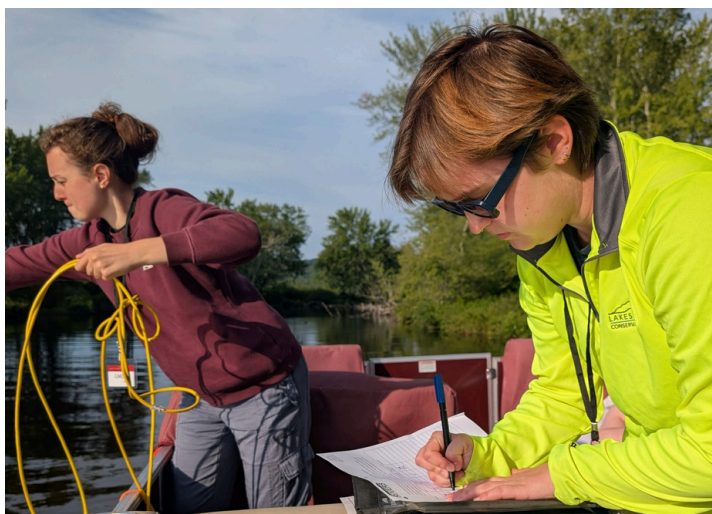
Since 2001, GMCG has built a 20+ year record of water-quality data, monitoring 29 rivers and streams biweekly from May through October and 10 sites year-round. These data help identify trends and emerging concerns and are shared with towns and state agencies. Annual community water-quality reports are shared with the 7 watershed towns. The 20 year report will be available at the beginning of 2027.

GMCG also provides practical resources for homeowners and communities. Through online programs and day long events, community members learn about local pollinators, landscaping for lakes, and ways to prevent stormwater erosion. Programs offer access to private-well testing and groundwater sampling to provide data that contributes to analysis of arsenic and uranium in local water sources.

And the learning doesn't stop with data. Through programs like Salt Responsibly, GMCG helps communities turn knowledge into action—reducing unnecessary road salt, protecting groundwater, and keeping pollutants out of our lakes and streams. New eDNA testing capabilities add another powerful tool, helping detect invasive species and species of concern early, when there is still time to respond.

The results reach beyond education. GMCG has helped five watershed communities strengthen groundwater protection and currently protects more than 2,500 acres of watershed land.

Every student who tests a stream, every volunteer who monitors a site, every homeowner who tests a well, and every community member who takes steps to reduce stormwater erosion adds to a larger effort.



GMCG AmeriCorps member Cassidy Gersten and summer intern Anna Bentley collect water quality data and samples for the Volunteer Lake Assessment Program (VLAP), helping monitor the health of the Ossipee Lake system.



GMCG's educational sign, designed by Outreach Coordinator Moselle Spiller, was reinstalled this spring at the Pine River Boat Launch kiosk in Ossipee. It promotes responsible recreation and stewardship of the Ossipee Lake Natural Area's rare plants and sensitive habitats.



GMCG Staff Scientist Jill Emerson leads the annual RIVERS water quality monitoring volunteer training day at the Blue Heron House this spring.

GMCG in action



Above: Pine Tree Primary School kindergarteners attempt to evade “fisherman” GMCG volunteer Tim Walsh in the trout obstacle course and release the trout they raised at school with AmeriCorps member Cass on their field trip to the Swift River. (Photos by Rachel Sharples)



Above: Volunteer Tim Walsh leads a bee house building workshop at GMCG this summer during Pollinator Week. AmeriCorps members Cass and Rose display the new bee house they made for GMCG’s pollinator garden. (Photos by Tara Schroeder)



Above: Volunteers Victor and Karen Vitek and interns Sophia Payne and Ele Kupetz help with STEAM programs like “Exploding Science” and “Pond Ecology” for Madison Recreation Department and Camp Calumet this summer. (Photos by Tara Schroeder)

GMCG in action



Above: Fourth graders from Northeast Woodland Chartered Public School sample the Saco River for microplastics with Education Coordinator Tara Schroeder and Staff Scientist Jill Emerson. (Photos by Tara Schroeder and Rose Harnett)



Above: AmeriCorps member Rose leads a program with Wendy Scribner, Carroll County Extension Forester from UNH Cooperative Extension about pollinator habitat and monitoring at GMCG's pollinator garden (left). Rose shares a story about bees and plants the pollinator and veggie garden with children at Children Unlimited, Inc. in Conway. (Photos by Tara Schroeder)

Cultivating a sense of wonder in the next generation of watershed stewards

by Tara Schroeder
Education Coordinator

"I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil." Rachel L. Carson, *The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children*

I love my job – to me, it is meaningful work, I am learning new things all the time, and I get to work with kids and families and some of the most passionate and giving members of our watershed community. Most of all, I love seeing that spark of inspiration, that "sense of wonder" as Rachel Carson so aptly describes in her book of the same title, in children and adults when they discover something new in nature, solve a problem, conduct an experiment successfully or are inspired to take action to protect the environment.

Over the course of the year there are many such moments when teaching participatory science programs for schools, summer camps, children's centers, libraries and at our conservation center. For example, when a child discovers a new macroinvertebrate that they didn't know existed in a river like the hellgrammite or "toe-biter", see their first hummingbird moth in the pollinator garden, or spy a teeny, tiny monarch caterpillar on a milkweed plant, so small it was hidden under the flowers. Or, when they make elephant toothpaste, explode a pop rocket, build a boat, test their drinking water using chemistry sets and get real results, create an upcycled and reusable plastic bag, or write a letter to fix their school's water quality. It certainly is remarkable to witness these moments when the excitement and learning is palpable, and to see the ripple effects these moments have within the watershed community. Many years later, some students who participated in GMCG's programs have shared that they were inspired to become a town official or pursue environmental science in college as a result of their experiences.

The volunteers, teachers, teachers' aids, school administrators, parents, grandparents, chaperones, librarians, members of the public and even the bus drivers all make these programs possible, and are ally privy to the fun and memorable experiences of learning about our surroundings through hands-on STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art Math) programs and participatory science programs.

Whether sampling a river for microplastics and looking at them under a microscope, building a bee house to take home, counting amphibians on a Big Night, or raising trout in the classroom, these experiences help build connections to the natural world in our communities, and we hope, a sense of stewardship to protect what we understand, know and feel. Thank you to our community partners, volunteers, staff, AmeriCorps members, and interns for making these programs possible every year!



Left: Arthur DeZenzo looks for pollinators with his grandpa in GMCG's pollinator garden.



Right: Madison Recreation Department campers find a tiny monarch caterpillar hidden amongst the milkweed flowers during one of their STEAM programs this summer.



Above: Students at Northeast Woodland Chartered Public School discover microplastics in their samples from the Saco River under the microscope.

GMCG's watershed education programs are made possible with support from Alfred Quimby Fund, the Kendal C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation, The Tamworth Foundation, GMCG watershed towns and donor support. Thank you for your support!

Protecting the forests that protect our water

by Nancy Ritger
Executive Director

When we think about the White Mountain National Forest, we often think about mountains, forests, wildlife, and recreation. But these forests also perform another essential job: **they help protect our water.**

Rain and snowmelt flowing through forested headwaters recharge groundwater, feed streams and rivers, stabilize soils, and help filter water before it reaches downstream communities.

This connection is especially important in the Ossipee region, home to New Hampshire's largest stratified-drift aquifer. This vital drinking-water resource is highly productive—but its sandy and gravelly deposits also make it vulnerable to contamination from activities at the land surface.

What happens upstream can affect our water downstream.

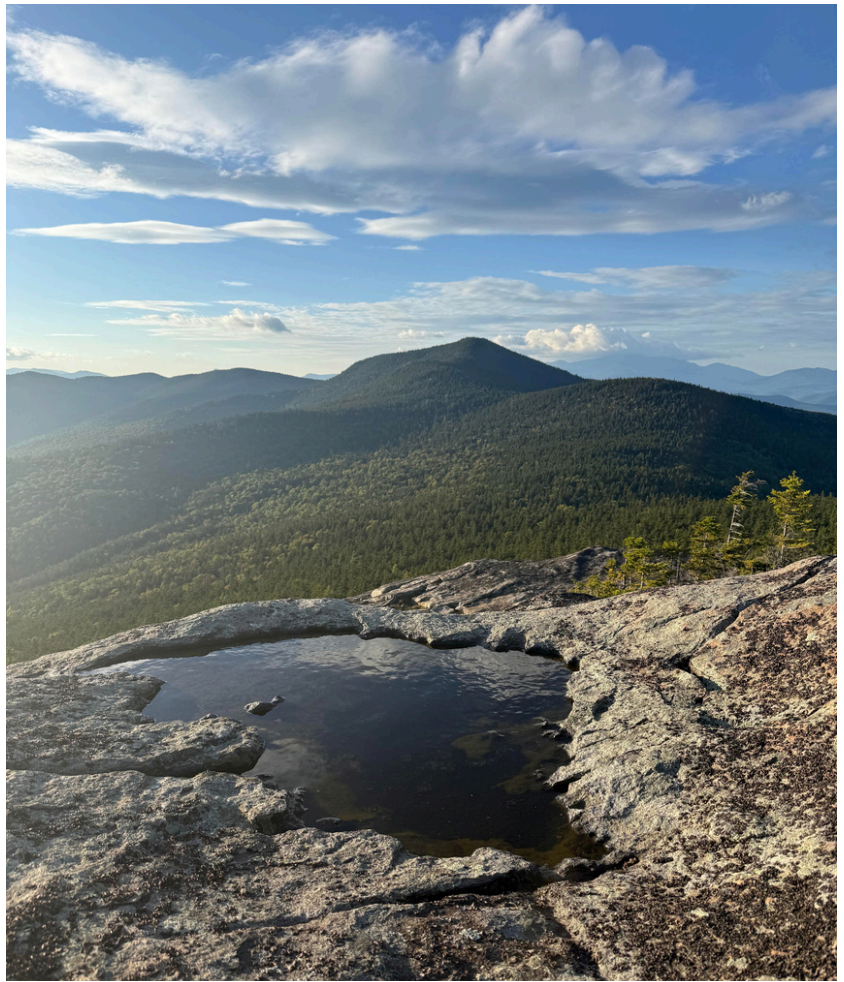
That is why Green Mountain Conservation Group is urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Forest Service to maintain strong protections for roadless areas in the White Mountain National Forest.

Road construction can disturb soils, alter natural drainage, increase erosion, and carry sediment and pollutants into streams and groundwater. By keeping forests intact, we preserve natural systems that absorb rainfall, slow runoff, reduce erosion, and help communities prepare for both intense storms and drought.

Protecting roadless areas is about more than protecting remote forests. It is about protecting the natural infrastructure that protects our drinking water.

Water does not stop at the boundary of the White Mountain National Forest. It flows downstream into our aquifers, rivers, communities, and ecosystems.

Healthy forests protect healthy watersheds—and healthy watersheds protect our water.



Top: A fresh rain puddle on Middle Moat Mountain, along the ridge between South and North Moat, with a view north west into the White Mountains. August 2026. Bottom: The Ossipee River flows downstream toward Maine, carrying water from the White Mountains through Ossipee Lake and onward to the Saco River. October 1, 2026. Photos by Moselle Spiller.

Ossipee Watershed residents get LakeSmart to help prevent cyanobacteria blooms

by Tara Schroeder
Education Coordinator

At GMCG we always say “water knows no boundaries” because the water quality of our lakes, ponds, rivers and streams is determined by what flows into it from the surrounding landscape or watershed. Water does not obey town or state lines as it flows from the headwaters in the mountains to our lakes and ponds. As our watersheds become more developed and the frequency and intensity of storm events continue to increase due to climate change, water is picking up more nutrients and contaminants across the landscape, and they are finding their way into our surface waters. According to NH LAKES, polluted runoff causes over 90% of the water quality problems in New Hampshire’s lakes and rivers.

For the past twenty years GMCG has been addressing stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution through education and best management practices (BMPs) projects on lakes such as Berry Bay, Ossipee Lake, Broad Bay, Leavitt Bay, Province Lake and Danforth Ponds. On August 5, GMCG hosted Kat Kelleher, Conservation Program Coordinator for NH LAKES, who shared techniques and tips for making properties lake-friendly to protect water quality. “I am so excited that in the LakeSmart Program we get to share with homeowners tailored recommendations to stop run-off and protect the waterbodies we love”, said Kelleher. They are worried about cyanobacteria and the future of our state’s waterbodies. “It’s exciting to share with homeowners solutions and options they did not know were available to make their homes work for their lives and the lake!”

Kelleher’s presentation focused on the need for prevention with BMPs to cool, slow and capture water in the soil and keep nutrients and other pollutants from entering waterbodies. Some of her tips included: leaving native vegetation, woody plants and trees for shade and infiltration (a fully grown tree can take upwards of 30-40 gallons of water per day!); maintaining vegetative buffers especially in the protected shoreland, naturalizing lawns or mowing less, and keeping pine needles and leaves as



Infiltration steps on a waterbody in the Ossipee Watershed that were put in as part of the LakeSmart program to reduce stormwater runoff and erosion of the shoreline. (Photo courtesy Kat Kelleher, NH LAKES).

nature’s mulch; infiltrating water with vegetation, dry creek beds, stone or rain gardens, infiltration steps, pathways, walkways and trenches; and diverting water with rain barrels, waterbars, rubber razors, fire hose diverters and other techniques.

“Small changes have large impacts,” she exclaimed. And, don’t forget to maintain your septic system, pick up after your pets and avoiding fertilizers and other pollutants like salt which can also be toxic to aquatic organisms and harmful to humans. Property owners should also be aware of the Shoreland Protection Act and its restrictions on the use of fertilizers along the shoreline. No fertilizer, except limestone, may be used within 25 feet of the reference line (shoreline). Beyond that distance, NHDES recommends either avoiding fertilizer or using fertilizer without phosphorus and not to exceed label application rates.*

There are a number of helpful resources available for property owners, landscapers, businesses, lake association and other community members. The LakeSmart program is one that is taking off in the Ossipee Watershed with ambassadors from the Ossipee Lake System and Silver Lake, as well as other waterbodies. In this free, voluntary, and nonregulatory program of NH LAKES, a qualified professional will come out to your property and talk through ways you could better protect lake health with the decisions you make on your property. Homeowners whose actions protect lake health are recognized with a LakeSmart award.

To date, participation in the program includes: Ossipee Lake with 24 properties, Silver Lake in Madison with 31 properties, and Big Pea Porridge Pond in Madison with 12 properties. Kelleher shared that NH LAKES has also had 10 tours on Conway Lake, 1 on Bearcamp Pond in Tamworth and 6 on Duncan Lake in Ossipee, but that these waterbodies do not have a LakeSmart Community (or ambassadors) at this time. Visit nhlakes.org/lakesmart for more information and their Resource Library for actions homeowners can take.

A summer among pollinators protecting our watershed

by Rose Harnett
AmeriCorps Member
Education and Outreach Assistant

Pollinators are essential to the watershed. Beetles, bees, bats, butterflies, flies, wasps, moths, mosquitoes and reptiles can all serve as pollinators. As they travel from flower to flower looking for food, pollen collects on their usually hairy bodies and is carried to other plants. Between 75% and 95% of flowering plants need help with pollination. Without pollinators, these plants would not be able to produce food, fruit and seeds or reproduce. Pollinators help our native plants grow and thrive.

Pollinators depend on native plants for habitat, which provide food, nesting and overwintering for them. In addition to providing wildlife habitat, native plants also absorb water, filter pollutants and stabilize soil to prevent erosion. They act as a barrier, slowing water and sediment before they enter lakes, rivers and streams. When we improve and create habitat for pollinators by planting native plants, we protect water quality and the health of the watershed.

Last year, GMCG began a three-year project to establish a 6,650-square-foot pollinator field. With the first stage completed, we can now see the wildflowers planted last year growing and blooming. This summer, I monitored our new pollinator field and GMCG's pollinator garden with the help of Sophia Payne, one of GMCG's summer interns, and citizen science volunteers. Since many pollinator populations are declining, monitoring is important for understanding native pollinators and any changes to their populations over time. Our goal this summer was to understand the diversity of pollinators visiting our habitats and which plants they preferred.

We created pollinator monitoring data sheets and iNaturalist to collect and upload our data and identify pollinators. You can participate in our pollinator monitoring citizen science project, too. Pollinator monitoring kits are available at GMCG, or you can download and use the iNaturalist app from anywhere at any time. On iNaturalist, you can join the Pollinator Interactions on Plants (PIP) of the Northeast U.S. project and upload pictures of the pollinators you observe.

Overall, we observed more than 400 pollinators, including hummingbird moths, two-spotted bumblebees, bicolored sweat bees, swamp milkweed leaf beetles, great black digger wasps and many flies. With more than 40 plant options, the most frequently visited plants were mountain mint in the pollinator garden, cornflower in the pollinator field and butterfly weed in both areas. Each plant had its own distinct characteristics, including different colors, shapes and bloom times. A variety of flowers is important for ensuring that every pollinator finds the specific nutrients it needs.



A leaf cutter bee on tufted vetch in the pollinator garden, with pollen attached to its body.



A hummingbird moth looking through bee balm for nectar in the pollinator garden. In the background, there is mountain mint and our bee houses, now filled with dead plant shoots for overwintering.

With the second stage of the pollinator field expansion planned for this fall, I am curious to see whether there will be new plant favorites and more pollinator visits next year. Through monitoring, you can see how pollinator trends change over time and how well your conservation efforts are working.

Want to help expand our pollinator field and learn how to make your property more supportive of native pollinators? Join GMCG and pollinator experts Wendy Scribner, Natural Resources Field Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension, and Debra Marnich, Stewardship Director of the Chocorua Lake Conservancy, on Thursday, Oct. 22, for "Creating Habitat for Native Pollinators" from 10 a.m. to noon, followed by a Pollinator Habitat Improvement Project volunteer workday from noon to 2 p.m. at Green Mountain Conservation Group's Blue Heron House, located at 236 Huntress Bridge Road in Effingham. Please register at gmcg.org. Free, donations welcome!

Ossipee Watershed residents step up for salamanders

by Tara Schroeder
GMCG Education Coordinator

“Big Nights” happen in early spring, when thousands of frogs, toads, and salamanders cross roads from upland, forested areas to wetlands where they breed. During salamander brigades, volunteers help amphibians cross roads safely while collecting data on species diversity and abundance. This information helps identify important habitat and migration “hot spots” across the landscape.

GMCG and Chocorua Lake Conservancy have hosted salamander brigades in Tamworth for the past two years. We have also collaborated with Tin Mountain Conservation Center and The Harris Center for Conservation Education to launch this participatory science program in our part of the state, recruit volunteers, and raise awareness about the importance of amphibian migrations and habitat conservation. The Harris Center has been leading salamander brigades for 20 years, and in 2026 reached the milestone of helping more than 100,000 amphibians cross roads safely.

Meanwhile, plans are underway for New Hampshire’s first amphibian tunnels at a crossing on Jordan Road in Keene. The site was chosen because of the presence of Jefferson complex salamanders, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), as well as the many years of community science data collected there. NH Fish and Game, the City of Keene, and the Harris Center are partnering on the project, which is supported by grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s America’s Ecosystem Restoration Initiative.

Science Director Brett Amy Thelen shared: “The Harris Center’s Crossing Brigade program has played an integral role in several on-the-ground amphibian conservation measures in Keene, including the protection of amphibian habitat adjacent to one of our busiest crossing sites, the implementation of New Hampshire’s first Big Night road closures, and — now — the Granite State’s very first amphibian tunnels. Our volunteers not only provided data to inform these conservation efforts (for instance, documenting the presence of an at-risk species at one crossing site, and of a high volume of amphibians at another), but also demonstrated that there was strong community support for these kinds of wildlife conservation initiatives. Both were essential to the success of these projects.”

Sandwich Takes the Lead

Here in the Ossipee Watershed the Sandwich Conservation Commission (SCC) began organizing its own salamander brigades and using iNaturalist to document amphibians and crossing sites that can be shared with the public.



Volunteer Lucas Kirsch helps a spotted salamander across the road. (Photo by Tara Schroeder)

“We are assembling salamander brigades each spring to collect data, observe trends, and document important wildlife areas in town going forward, and help amphibians cross paved roads,” says Nancy Walser, chair of the Sandwich Conservation Commission.

The SCC launched its brigades in 2025 as a pilot program. Four commissioners started small, getting a feel for what was involved while scouting for active crossing sites. In February, wetland scientist and commissioner Dr. Rick Van de Poll gave a “science talk” on vernal pools that drew 40 people. Van de Poll was part of the early monitoring efforts in the 1990s, when he conducted the Robin Hood Park Natural Resource Inventory for the City of Keene.

“I documented Jefferson’s salamander, which was/is a SGCN. We noted many getting killed on Jordan Road, so started to help them get across on rainy nights.” Since then, Van de Poll has surveyed dozens of sites, including 34 sites monitored regularly in Sandwich since 2004. “I’d have to tally how many critters I’ve helped across, but it is certainly in the hundreds.”

Ossipee Watershed residents step up for salamanders *continued...*

“Van de Poll sees the brigades as an effective way to connect conservation work with the broader community. “We’ve gotten the police aware of ‘Big Nights,’ as well as a number of townsfolk, many of whom have come out to volunteer their time. It’s a great project for the conservation commission as it is very visible, has a positive effect on local amphibian populations, and is consistent with our mission as a municipal organization.”

Following Van de Poll’s talk, the SCC started a text chain to alert people when weather conditions looked right for a migration. Fourteen volunteers came out on the first night. The commission also posted information about amphibian migrations on the town’s listserv and asked residents to avoid driving on the first rainy nights when temperatures were above 50 degrees.

“Afterwards, I got A LOT of questions about the brigades—what we saw, etc. There has been high interest even among people who didn’t take part in the nighttime counts,” says Nancy.

Raising Awareness and Protecting Habitat

The brigades are about more than helping individual amphibians cross the road. For the SCC, they are also a way to raise awareness about biodiversity, habitat loss, and the importance of protecting places such as vernal pools.

“Our goals are to raise awareness about the importance of amphibians to biodiversity, how some are endangered due to habitat loss, pollutants and climate change. We also want to raise awareness about the special places in our town that they depend on such as vernal pools. The development pressure in Sandwich means that we need to raise awareness about protecting important natural resources; thoughtful land use, in other words,” says Walser.

The commission has also incorporated these conservation priorities into the town’s broader planning efforts. “We have also participated in the updating of the Sandwich master plan’s Natural Resources chapter this year. A survey of about 700 residents was conducted for the master plan, and ‘protecting natural resources’ was cited by respondents as the top challenge for the town’s future. So we’ve spent some time thinking about goals and initiatives to do that; protecting vernal pools is one of those,” said Walser.

The brigades have also produced some exciting discoveries. Walser notes that volunteers were particularly excited to document a leopard frog in Sandwich, one of three frog species identified as being of greatest conservation need in New Hampshire.

Getting Started

For conservation commissions interested in starting their own salamander brigades, Walser points to the wealth of resources available through the Harris Center.



Sandwich Conservation Commission members and community volunteers help with salamander brigades this spring. (Photo courtesy Nancy Walser)



Spotted salamanders can live up to 30 years and spend most of their lives underground. Each one has its own unique spot pattern, like human fingerprints. (Photo Eden Beauchesne)

"The resources on the Harris Center website are amazing. We asked all volunteers to take the online training, and we used their data collection sheet out in the field to count the numbers of amphibians that we found. We also use the iNaturalist app to do identifications and document the different species found with photos."

One of the commission's members created an iNaturalist project page for the 2026 season. Walser compiled the written field reports into a narrative describing what volunteers found and plans to share it on the Conservation Commission webpage.

"We'll post it on our Conservation Commission webpage and advertise that because so many people asked about what we found. We are also sending the data to GMCG to track what is found in the region."

Van de Poll agrees that collaboration and local knowledge are key to making these efforts successful. "There are now lots of good example towns to seek advice from, as well as the Harris Center that really put crossing guard efforts on the map. It really helps to have someone or several people who have been informally keeping track of good crossing areas to advise the volunteers who wish to go out. It is also helpful to have an organization like GMCG who is willing to tally regional results, as this amps up the effectiveness of the effort."

A Growing Regional Effort

This year, salamander brigades in Sandwich, Tamworth, Bartlett, and Conway brought together 46 volunteers who helped 389 amphibians cross roads safely to their breeding grounds.

To learn more about salamander brigade programs, visit harriscenter.org. To find out how you can help with a local brigade, contact education@gmcg.org.

There are other ways to help, too: stay off the roads during critical spring migration nights, contribute to participatory science, and share amphibian observations through platforms such as iNaturalist or the Reptile and Amphibian Reporting Program (RAARP), coordinated by the NH Fish and Game Department.

For conservation commissions considering starting their own brigades, Nancy offers several pieces of advice:

- **Start small.** Begin without volunteers so that you understand what is involved before taking on a larger effort.
- **Ask residents to stay off the roads on Big Nights.** Let people know that avoiding driving during these critical migration events is one of the most important ways they can help.
- **Communicate with your police chief** in advance. Our police chief received several calls about slow-moving cars and people walking along roads with headlamps. Once they were told about the brigades, everyone was supportive.

- **Share your findings.** Write up what you discover so people in town can learn about the results and stay engaged with the project.

Organizations such as GMCG, Chocorua Lake Conservancy, and Tin Mountain Conservation Center can help support these efforts, too. Van de Poll believes that coordinating efforts across communities can help build local involvement.

"Coordinating efforts across each of their member towns can help stimulate more and more local involvement. Continuing to offer training workshops, helping aggregate count data, and posting results in several media outlets will all help get the word out and hopefully reduce traffic flow during critical times of year."

For Van de Poll, one of the most exciting examples of what can grow from years of community science and local involvement is the Jordan Road project in Keene.

"Perhaps the most exciting is watching the development of the Jordan Road, Keene story over the years to the point where we are actually getting the very first amphibian underpass in the state built at this site!"

It will be interesting to see the impacts of the underpass in Keene on amphibians in the coming years, and hopefully it is the first of many efforts to ensure safe passage for amphibians across the region.



GMCG and CLC volunteers are ready for the 2026 salamander brigade following an educational program in Tamworth. (Photo courtesy of Sue Kelly)

Save the date! GMCG 2026 summer and fall calendar of events

GMCG Online Auction: This November local businesses across the watershed are coming together to show their support for our watershed protection work! GMCG's 2026 Online Silent Auction for Water Protection will go live on our website on Friday, November 6 at 5pm and will close on Sunday, November 15 at 9pm. Auction items will be a diverse offering from holiday gifts, to adventure experiences in nature. Proceeds raised will support GMCG's year-round research, education, advocacy, and land conservation to protect the Ossipee Aquifer and all the natural resources in the Ossipee Watershed! Please contact to outreach@gmcg.org donate an item, gift certificate, service, or experience!

Thursday, October 22: Creating Habitat for Native Pollinators from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. followed by Pollinator Habitat Improvement Project Volunteer Work Day from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Learn how you can make your property more appealing and beneficial to native pollinators like bees, flies, beetles, hummingbirds and moths. Pollinators are vital to our food system, and with research showing significant declines in native species, we can all help native pollinators by considering their habitat needs as we landscape our properties.

Even small areas can provide important food sources and nesting sites for pollinators like native bees, butterflies, moths and other insects, as well as birds. Experts Wendy Scribner, Natural Resources Field Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension and Debra Marnich, Stewardship Director of Chocorua Lake Conservancy, will explore the importance of native pollinators, share first-hand research experience and examples of how to create habitat for native pollinators. Participants will be able to see an example of a pollinator garden, bee hotel and pollinator field. Following the program, participants are welcome to volunteer to assist with the Pollinator Habitat Improvement Project at GMCG. Last summer GMCG began the three-year project to create a pollinator field to enhance wildlife habitat for pollinators. This 6,650 ft² area will be temporarily covered with cardboard in three stages to prepare the planting area and kill the existing plants.

At the fall volunteer workday, we will rake out the dead plant materials and seed a wildflower meadow with a diverse mix of plants that will bloom throughout the season. The program and work day will take place at Green Mountain Conservation Group's Blue Heron House, located at 236 Huntress Bridge Road in Effingham. Please register at www.gmcg.org, as space is limited. Donations graciously accepted.

TBA in January: Private Well Workshop with NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) at the KA Brett School in Tamworth. A free informational drinking water workshop and water testing opportunity for private well users. If your drinking water comes from a private well, it is important for the health of you and your family that you test your water regularly.

New Hampshire well water can contain naturally occurring elements in soil and rock, such as arsenic and radon, and contaminants such as PFAS can find their way into water from human activities. You cannot taste, smell or see these substances, but over time they can increase the chances of health issues. Amy Hudnor from NH DES will review the most common well water contaminants and their potential health effects.

The good news is that any water contaminant found can be removed, so Amy will fully review water treatment and well maintenance strategies if contaminants are found. Stay tuned for program details and registration, coming in October!

Wednesday, January 13: School Drinking Water Programs Information Session from 6:00-7:00 p.m. on Zoom. GMCG's Education Coordinator Tara Schroeder will share about the Groundwater Education through Well Water Evaluation and Testing (GET WET!) and All About Arsenic+ drinking water programs in local schools. This information session is for teachers, volunteers and anyone from the public interested in learning more about the programs. GMCG has been bringing GET WET! to local schools since 2009. The program is based out of the University of Maine and is designed to engage local students and the community in learning about and protecting drinking water. The mission of GET WET! is to bring collaborative environmental research into the community through the classroom in order to understand local environmental changes and promote public health through safe drinking water. Students collect water from their home following sampling protocols and test for seven different parameters in the classroom, including chloride, nitrate, pH, hardness, iron, conductivity and microplastics. In addition, participants can learn about the All About Arsenic+ program in which GMCG partners with NH Department of Environmental Services, Dartmouth College and MDI Biological Lab to include additional free testing of heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and uranium as part of the school programs. Please register in advance for this program at gmcg.org.

January 25-29: Winter Salt Awareness Week 2027, free & online. GMCG is a proud partner in this collaboration of governmental and nonprofit organizations across the U.S. and Canada with a goal to raise awareness of the ways winter road salt damages infrastructure and threatens the health of lakes, streams, and drinking water - and to promote salt reduction solutions. GMCG is working with WI Salt Wise NH Department of Environmental Services (NH DES) to promote the week with flyers, PSAs, and educational social media posts for the general public about salt reduction and chlorides. Road agents and crews, private contractors, town officials, conservation commissioners, lake associations and residents, and members of the public can learn about the problem with salt, solutions that work, and best practices to keep our fresh water fresh. To register for the free, online webinars, visit: <https://wintersaltweek.org/>.

Thursday, January 21 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. GET WET! Training. GMCG will host the annual Groundwater Education through Well Water Evaluation and Testing (GET WET!) training session for volunteers at the GMCG Conservation Center Blue Heron House located at 236 Huntress Bridge Rd, Effingham, NH. GET WET! is based out of the University of Maine and is designed to engage local students and the community in learning about and protecting drinking water. The mission of GET WET! is to bring collaborative environmental research into the community through the classroom in order to understand local environmental changes and promote public health through safe drinking water. Participants will learn how they can volunteer to help bring this important drinking water protection program to local schools and public libraries. Participants can bring in a sample of their home well water and test it for six parameters, including: chloride, conductivity, hardness, nitrates/nitrites, pH, and iron. To register, visit www.gmcg.org



The banner features a scenic background of a river flowing through a forest with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, red, and yellow. In the upper left, a large orange gift box with a red bow is surrounded by smaller red gift boxes and scattered orange leaves. The text is arranged as follows:

- Top left: *Support conservation while discovering unique gifts, memorable experiences, and local treasures!*
- Top center: **GREEN MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION GROUP** logo, which includes a stylized green mountain range above the text.
- Top right: www.gmcg.org
- Center: **FRIDAY, NOV. 6, 5:00PM TO SUNDAY, NOV. 15, 2026, 9:00PM**
- Bottom center: *Fall 2026 Online Auction for Watershed Protection* in a large, stylized orange font.