



SELTeverlasting

NEWS FOR OWNERS OF LAND PROTECTED BY A CONSERVATION EASEMENT

In my nearly two decades of working in forestry and land conservation, one of the things I have enjoyed most has been getting to know different landscapes across the country. I am fortunate that my time spent in the field has mostly taken me off the beaten path whether to look for a corner pin, get lost in a corn field, follow a boundary line through a brushy wetland or just venture off over a forested hill to a part of a property I haven't seen before. Like others in the natural resources field, these explorations have given me a deeper understanding and appreciation of the land including changes that come along with the seasons and how the landscape tells us a lot about the land's history. With spring upon us and the warmer weather on the way, I hope you are able to do your own off the beaten path exploration to discover more of your own land's story. Whether you have lived there your entire life, or are a new owner of your conservation land, there is always something more waiting to be discovered!

Best wishes,

Deborah Goard
Easement Stewardship Director

Springtime in the Forest: A Primer on Vernal Pools and their Stewardship

by Andrew Moe, Former SELT Seasonal Conservation Easement Steward

A "Vernal Pool," You Say?

Vernal pools are seasonal wetlands that provide essential habitat for wildlife, serving as the primary breeding ground for several species of amphibians and invertebrates, and important foraging habitat for many reptiles, mammals and birds. They can be found in a number of locations, including fields, marshes, ditches, river floodplains and gravel pits, but in New Hampshire are most commonly found in isolated depressions within forests.



Spotted salamander egg masses can be found in vernal pools in the spring. The spotted and other salamanders in NH are dependent on vernal pools for reproduction.

PHOTO CREDIT: MARK WEST

One of the main reasons vernal pools succeed as breeding habitat is they are typically isolated from other waterbodies and are dry during long periods during the year. Consequently, they are characteristically free of fish—a significant predator of amphibian eggs and amphibian and invertebrate larvae. In addition to the absence of a viable fish population, vernal pools are typically characterized by the

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presence of certain species. In New Hampshire, primary indicator species include: marbled salamander, spotted salamander, blue-spotted salamander, Jefferson salamander, wood frog and fairy shrimp. Additionally, a number of other crustaceans, mollusks and insects are considered secondary indicator species. Before heading into the field, a great way to prepare for vernal pool identification is by spending some time familiarizing yourself with the species that inhabit vernal pools including their appearance at different life stages (e.g., egg, larval & adult).

Locating Vernal Pools on Your Land

The best time of year to search for vernal pools on your land is during spring (March through May) once the snow has melted and the ground has begun to thaw. Because springtime amphibian movement is strongly correlated with weather conditions, it is important to keep an eye on the forecast during this time—prolonged air temperatures above 40°F and warm rains will trigger arousal from hibernation. Salamanders are the first amphibian migrants to vernal pools, and when conditions are right, a mass migration may ensue, resulting in what is known as a “Big Night.” On these nights, many salamanders on the move are vulnerable as they travel across roads to reach vernal pools. As a result, a number of Granite-Staters have joined “Salamander Crossing Brigades”—volunteers that serve at known amphibian road crossings to safely assist animals across roads.

When heading out to the woods, dress accordingly with rubber boots or waders and don’t forget to use your ears! Listening for chorusing wood frogs in early-spring can be a great way to lead you in the direction of a potential

vernal pool (tip: Google “wood frog chorus”—a YouTube video is the first result and provides both the sound of wood frogs calling and a good depiction of a forested vernal pool). The visual cue of standing water is certainly an important one in locating vernal pools, but in order to confirm that a potential vernal pool is actively in use, you will need to closely inspect the pool looking for indicator species. Adult amphibians usually do not linger in the pools for very long after breeding, so be prepared to look for eggs, larvae and juveniles as well. Fairy shrimp are small crustaceans (0.5–1.0 in. in length) and tend to blend in, especially in pools with a leaf litter substrate, so be patient and still in your observations. Finally, always be mindful that, while some temporary disturbance is inevitable, strive for minimal disruption of the pool and minimize handling of animals.

I Think I Found a Vernal Pool, Now What?

From a stewardship perspective, there are a number of best practices to consider when managing land where vernal pools are present. The following is a summary of management guidelines provided by UNH Cooperative Extension in the vernal pool section of their “Habitats of New Hampshire” series (available online at www.extension.unh.edu/Vernal-Pools):

- When conducting any work near vernal pools, follow Best Management practices and operate equipment only when soils are frozen (winter) or very dry (summer) to avoid creating ruts and skid roads that collect or change the flow of water. These disturbances can influence the timing of wet/dry periods in a vernal pool, altering the species that can breed there.

The “Big Six”: N.H. Vernal Pool Primary Indicator Species

Species	NH Conservation Status	Brief description
Fairy Shrimp	Not Threatened or Endangered	Omnivorous, free-swimming filter feeders. They appear transparent and swim with their legs up. Generally brown, orange or red in color.
Wood Frog	Not Threatened or Endangered	Light tan to dark brown in color. Noticeable dark “mask” that extends behind the eye. Their call sound resembles a quacking duck.
Spotted Salamander	Not Threatened or Endangered	Black or gray with yellow spots and up to 8 inches in length (the largest of the mole salamanders in N.H.).
Blue-spotted Salamander	N.H. Special Concern	Dark blue to blue-gray in color with distinctive bluish spots. Found primarily in the southeastern part of the state. Hybridizes with Jefferson salamander.
Jefferson Salamander	N.H. Special Concern	Dark brown or gray-brown in color with white or pale blue flecks. Confirmed only in Keene-Winchester area but hybrids with Blue-spotted salamander more widespread.
Marbled Salamander	N.H. Endangered	Dark-bodied with silver or white crossbands along the back. Restricted to southern N.H. and currently documented in Hinsdale, Brookline, Hollis and Milford.

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- Avoid clearcuts in or around vernal pools. Removing the shade of the tree canopy can heat up the air, soil and water in the pool, change the period of time that water remains in the pool, and influence which species can survive there.
- When planning new roads or improvements that bisect known amphibian and reptile migration corridors, consider incorporating tunnel crossings under roads with accompanying drift fencing to minimize road crossing deaths among these animals during migration.
- Consult a licensed New Hampshire forester before conducting a timber harvest on your property. Understand and follow all laws pertaining to tree harvesting near wetlands and waterbodies. Many vernal pools qualify as wetlands by New Hampshire state regulations.



Vernal pools, such as this one, are typically isolated from other waterbodies and are dry during long periods during the year.

PHOTO CREDIT: MARK WEST

For More Information and Resources:

A great first step in learning more about vernal pools and their stewardship is by attending a vernal pool site walk with someone knowledgeable on the subject.

For those interested in obtaining assistance with wildlife habitat management specific to your own land, be it vernal pool-related or otherwise, contact Matt Tarr, the Wildlife Program Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension at (603) 862-3594 or mtarr@unh.edu. For more information regarding vernal pools and specific management strategies, there are a number of great resources available online from the following

groups: UNH Cooperative Extension, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Nongame Program, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. For more on Salamander Crossing Brigade trainings and other citizen science volunteer opportunities, check out the Harris Center for Conservation Education (online at www.harriscenter.org).

CONNECT WITH US!

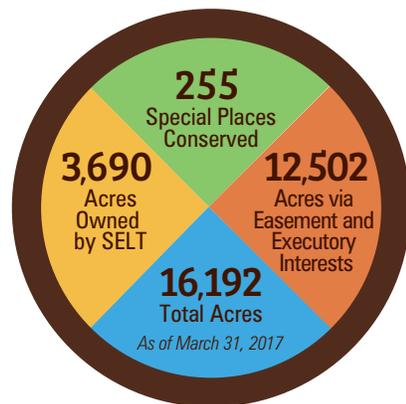
- Sign up for our **free monthly e-news** on our website or by emailing info@seltnh.org
- Stop by our office at 6 Center Street, Exeter, NH, and say hi!



Find SELT on Facebook to stay in touch with us daily!

www.seltnh.org

Land Conservation by the numbers



Thanks for doing your part to assure these lands are permanently protected!

Notes from the Field

By John Richards in memory of Tom Brouillette

On May 16, 2016, I joined crew chief Chuck Adams of Ambit Engineering in surveying the roughly 1,115-acre Kennard Hill property in northwest Epping and southern Nottingham. The property, a key part of the Pawtuckaway-to-Great Bay greenway, has miles of class VI roads and trails. Stonewalls crisscross the acreage, allowing the mind to wander back to when agriculture was a driving force in the local economy. Kennard Hill has fields, extensive wetlands, gurgling brooks, damp hollows and towering trees. The rural nature of this area has also been drawing the interest of developers. South of Kennard Hill is the large and growing Prescott Orchid development. To the east, Echo Farm and the adjacent Brewett property have been purchased by developers and the heavy equipment has been brought in. New Hampshire has had the fastest growing population in New England for more than twenty years and the Seacoast is ground zero for much of that growth. Vestiges of our rural past are disappearing at an alarming rate, making land conservation ever more important.

We began our survey at the Kennard family graveyard off French Road. Long ago, beavers dammed nearby streams, cutting the road in half and creating an impassable wetland. Just under the water's surface are two parallel stonewalls marking the sides of this ancient byway. If your eyes are sharp enough, you can see the road emerge from the pond on the opposite side. The graveyard is a bit tumbled down. Entropy has scattered some of the stones from the walls and the wrought-iron fences are missing some sections. Here, among the crude field stones marking the earliest graves, is a monument attesting to the hardships of our New England ancestors. Of the seven



The cemetery, stone walls, beaver pond and woods roads all tell their own story about the natural and human history of the land. PHOTO CREDITS: STAFF

children of David and Emily Kennard, only one would live until middle age. Four of the children died before their first birthday and two sons died fighting for the Union during our Civil War.

A large survey offers a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the property and yourself. Surveyors experience the insect cycle as acutely as the weather. As we ran our traverses, the black flies became increasingly aggressive. Within a week, mosquitos became the dominant pest. Work continues through heat and cold. Ticks and biting insects are just another inconvenience to overcome. As Chuck said during a cold, drenching rain,

“We choose to do this.” There aren’t many opportunities to work on such a large parcel and I savored time spent following walls and looking for clues left by earlier surveyors. Surveying is like treasure hunting. Weeks might be spent researching old deeds to create a map. Then it’s into the woods in search of blazed trees, stone piles, bits of barbed wire and other signs marking the boundary.

Chuck and I spent months at Kennard Hill following miles of property lines, some of which were laid out during the colonial era. The ruggedness of the terrain a reminder of this region’s glacial history. There are rock ledges scraped clean by ice and elements. Giant boulders, uprooted by the ebb and flow of huge ice sheets, still bear the grooves of their long-ago journey. And then there’s the human history. A few cellar holes dot the property. Wall-lined roads interlace the forest. Mostly, however, it’s the network of stonewalls that mesmerized me. What



was it like to fell a virgin forest, wrench the stumps from the ground and gather the stones for the walls? How many thousands of hours went into creating a field that was suitable for agriculture? Now, for the most part, these walls fence in nothing more than trees. Instead, they act as silent monuments to the industriousness and fortitude of the Kennard’s and the Harvey’s and the other families that came early to New Hampshire. And now, thanks to the generosity of the donors, the vision of the Southeast Land Trust and the willingness of the Harvey family, this land will remain undeveloped and open to the public forever.

John Richards works on a survey crew and was a childhood friend of Tom Brouillette. Tom, a good friend of SELT’s and a surveyor for many of our landowners, passed away unexpectedly in November of 2015.

Update on Lands Conserved in 2016

In 2016 SELT closed on 14 conservation easements. These properties are in Auburn, Derry, Durham, East Kingston, Epping, Kensington, Lee, Nottingham and Rochester. Here are a few:



Above: Located off Ten Rod Road in Rochester, the 181-acre former Laverdiere Farm has been conserved in partnership with NRCS and the City of Rochester as part of SELT's efforts to continue to protect important agricultural lands. Matt and Gretchen Scruton, who bought the land a few years ago, have breathed new life into the land and operate Ten Rod Farm. PHOTO CREDIT: STAFF

Below: Historically part of the 200-acre Thompson Dairy Farm, the Town of Durham acquired the approximately 53-acre Thompson tract and placed it under a conservation easement with SELT in March. A mix of forest and old field, this land will help protect the water quality for the Durham-UNH water system as well as provide area residents a place to get outside and enjoy the view. PHOTO CREDIT: STAFF



Above: A mix of forest and agricultural land, this 64-acre property in Auburn also includes over two acres of a beaver pond. This land will now remain forever undeveloped for its current and future owners to continue to manage the forest and agricultural land. PHOTO CREDIT: STAFF

Below: The conservation easement on the 28-acre Monahan Farm in East Kingston was finalized in December. This family-run farm offers a variety of fruits and vegetables sold at their farm stand, including some pick-your-own. PHOTO CREDIT: STAFF



Upcoming Events

For more event details and a complete calendar, please visit www.seltnh.org or www.facebook.com/SELTNH/events. Please pre-register for field trips and presentations by clicking the registration link found within the event listings on our website or Facebook page. Suggested donation is \$5 per person/\$10 per family.



Celebrate National Trails Day with SELT!

Saturday, June 3rd · 9–10:30am

Join us for one of three group hikes:

- Musquash Conservation Area, Londonderry
- Tucker & French Family Forest, Kingston
- Barr Property on Isinglass River, Barrington Trail

Visit www.seltnh.org for more details and to sign up.



HIKE IT. SAVE IT.

Birding at the Piscassic Greenway

Saturday May 13th · 6–10am · Newfields

Join Roger Stephenson and Patience Chamberlin for SELT's annual spring birding trip. We'll meet promptly at 6am at the Piscassic Greenway trail kiosk on Bald Hill Road in Newfields. Geared for the beginner and challenging for the intermediate as well, we'll explore six different bird habitats – be sure to bring binoculars, water, snacks, and dress for the weather.

Registration is limited to 20 spots. Please register by noon on Friday, May 12th.

Grand Opening of the Mast Road Natural Area trail network

Saturday May 20th · 9–11am · Epping

Celebrate the new trail guide and kiosk at our 530-acre Mast Road Natural Area. Explore nearly three miles of scenic trails and learn about the interesting cultural and agricultural history of this unique property! Ribbon cutting at 9am, followed by a guided walk with Land Manager, Phil Auger.

Please register by noon on Friday, May 19th.

The Amazing Moose

Wednesday May 31st · 6–7pm · Alnoba in Kensington

Kristine Rines, a NH native, is an internationally recognized moose biologist. A leader in innovative moose management, she is a recipient of the National Wildlife Federation's Women in Conservation Award. She has been with the New Hampshire Fish & Game department for 34 years, 32 of those years as their Moose project leader. This presentation will explore the New Hampshire moose, including life cycle, history in the state, current condition, recent management, and research results.

Please register by noon on Tuesday, May 30th.

Annual Conservation Celebration

Wednesday June 14th · 6–8:30pm · Alnoba in Kensington

This annual event celebrates the many acres of farms and forests, wetlands and habitat conserved in the prior year. We also outline our plans for the future, and recognize landowners and communities with whom we have partnered. This year we'll gather at beautiful Alnoba in Kensington.

Check our website soon for more details and to register.



Alnoba in Kensington, NH.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALNOBA

Check our website, www.seltnh.org, for up to date information about current events and new workshops.

Thinking of
SELLING YOUR PROPERTY?

More and more conserved land is selling – meaning there is a whole new generation of landowners who need to understand what a conservation easement is and what its privileges and responsibilities are.

SELT can help make your sale smoother by working with your realtor to properly inform buyers about your conservation easement. Once you've decided to sell and have selected a realtor, please have him or her call us. We will provide an electronic packet of information to incorporate in your disclosures and can answer questions from buyers.

Once you've scheduled a closing, please remember to give us the required notification of transfer of title in accordance with the terms of the easement.

**Questions, Comments,
Concerns?**

To contact the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, please call **603.778.6088** or email **info@seltnh.org**.

PO Box 675, Exeter, NH 03833

Website: **www.seltnh.org**

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SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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*Formed through the merger of Strafford Rivers Conservancy
and Southeast Land Trust of NH*

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