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Above: The first success of the fledgling land trusts in southeastern New Hampshire was the Franklin tract, conserved by the Strafford Rivers Conservancy in December 1989. It is now known as the Franklin-McElheny Preserve in Dover and Rollinsford.

CREDIT: JERRY MONKMAN/  
ECOPHOTOGRAPHY LLC

## From “kitchen table” to the “go to” organization, SELT’s roots—and future—are community-driven and place-based.

**T**he origin stories of SELT’s parent organizations, the Rockingham Land Trust, Strafford Rivers Conservancy, and Seacoast Land Trust, have one thing in common: people motivated by the loss of their community’s open space.

A typed, 1979 invitation to learn more about a “conservation trust” described a problem that could be torn from today’s headlines: “Rockingham is New Hampshire’s fastest growing county; intense development pressures are converting land uses and haphazardly fragmenting land areas. Private initiatives are desperately needed to augment public open space protection efforts.”

Joanna Pellerin, an early Board member and President of the Rockingham Land Trust (RLT), recalls traveling to learn about the novel idea of a land trust, motivated by the area’s rapid development. Meeting notices from the 1980s echo that sentiment: “Our concerns continue about the steady loss of open land in the Seacoast Area,” wrote RLT President Bob Bates. “The quality of life in our towns in the future will be directly affected by the quality of our open space. Once gone, it will never come back.”

During those earliest years, RLT, led by Exeter’s Jack Heath, facilitated the work of others. For instance, they supported the Allen Street Neighborhood Coalition’s efforts to conserve tidal land along the Squamscott River. RLT also helped establish the Exeter River Watershed Association (now Exeter River Local Advisory Committee), reflecting the organization’s growing focus on water. In 1989, conservation began in earnest, perhaps as a result of necessity, for it was in this year that Bob and Gail Bates donated RLT’s first easement.

And that same year another group of interested citizens came together, organized a new trust, and accepted their first easement. “That first easement, donated by Walter Franklin, was a big one,” explained Kevin McEaney of Dover, who served on the Strafford Rivers Conservancy’s (SRC) board for more than 23 years. “It kickstarted us, gave us credibility to approach other landowners.” Walter eventually donated the land to SRC as well, creating what is now known as the Franklin-McElheny Preserve in Rollinsford and Dover.

Steve Dibble still remembers when founder Ashton Hallett invited him to the first meeting of SRC. “Ash began it all, joined by Robin Aikman, and others,” explained Dibble, who *continued on page 4*



# A Life Well Lived, An Enduring Legacy

**W**e're saddened to share that Isobel Parke, a conservation leader and friend of SELT, recently passed away at the age of 93. Isobel was a committed conservationist – personally and professionally. She worked closely with SELT to permanently conserve her 160 acres of land in West Epping. Most recently she partnered with SELT to acquire an adjoining 58 acres and conserve it as well. And no doubt, her own actions helped make the case for conserving the adjoining Harveys' Kennard Hill Forest (some 1,100 acres) and land along the Pawtuckaway River (now totaling more than 600 acres)!

Isobel's legacy will live on through the many organizations she supported through her will, including SELT. A unique arrangement will result in Isobel donating her beloved Tributary Farm and Stevens Farm to SELT, along with a generous contribution to support our perpetual stewardship responsibilities. Isobel referred to this as a 'dowry', reflecting that indeed, SELT was being wedded to her land.

In 2007, Isobel explained her decision to include SELT in her estate plans. "You can't save the whole world but you can do something for your own community," she observed. "I believe that being local means that the Board and members of the Land Trust have greater investments as stewards of the land and more immediate contact with the local communities in discussing how its use can enrich the neighborhood."

Beyond her neighborhood, Isobel had a lasting impact on New Hampshire. A public relations expert by training, Isobel used her professional skills to advocate for the environment. In 1968, she helped pass the NH constitutional amendment that enabled current use taxation on open land, and she served on the Statewide Program of Action to Conserve the Environment (SPACE). Locally, she served on the Lamprey River Watershed Association and UNH Cooperative Extension Rockingham County Advisory Council.

Perhaps you know Isobel because you were lucky enough to visit her at home and see her amazing flower gardens, walk in her sustainably managed woodlands, pick fresh blueberries from her more than 600 bushes, or attend her annual blueberry pancake breakfast for the Rockingham County Woodlot Owners Association (and occasionally auctioned at SELT's Fall Foliage Fundraiser). With her gift to SELT, we look forward to sharing her woods with you.

Isobel was gracious, conscientious, thoughtful, and forward looking, thinking beyond herself. We will miss her.



Pictured above: Isobel Parke.  
PHOTO CREDIT: PAULA SINGER



## Be a Steward for the Lands You Love—Forever

Everyone needs a will, no matter how long we hope to live. A will brings peace of mind, cares for your loved ones, makes your wishes known, and can create a legacy for family, friends, and the world.

That's why SELT is partnering with FreeWill: to offer our supporters free, online tools to help take care of your loved ones and steward the lands you love, forever.

FreeWill is perfect for those with simple estates. Intuitive online tools will help you write your will **for free and in under 25 minutes!** More complex needs? Use it as a starting point and finish up with a lawyer.

The service is free, whether or not you choose to create a legacy with SELT. You can get started for free at [FreeWill.com/SELT](https://FreeWill.com/SELT).

**Learn more about creating a legacy with SELT.**

Go to [seltnh.org/donate/planned-giving/bequests/](https://seltnh.org/donate/planned-giving/bequests/) or contact Beverly Shadley, Deputy Director, at [bshadley@seltnh.org](mailto:bshadley@seltnh.org) or 603-658-9752.

**FREEWILL** 



# Local Farms Find New Homes and Security

What's the top challenge facing young farmers? According to a 2017 report from the National Young Farmers Coalition, it is access to affordable land. Here on the Seacoast, farmland is often sold at a premium far out of reach for most farmers looking to secure affordable land. As a result, young farmers rely on leased land to grow their crops and raise livestock. Lease arrangements often lack long-term security and rarely allow them to live alongside their farm operation. Recognizing these challenges, SELT is working with two local farms to permanently conserve farmland and help provide the security of farm ownership.



Winter at Meadow's Mirth Farm in Brentwood.

PHOTO: JOSH JENNINGS

In February, the community of Brentwood gained a new farm on South Road. Meadow's Mirth, a well-known staple at farmer's markets and dinner tables across the Seacoast, purchased the 35-acre property previously owned by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Leasing land for more than a decade, Meadow's Mirth owner Josh Jennings was ready to find a "forever home" for his farm, a place where his careful stewardship of the land and soils could build a more predictable harvest over time.

Josh says it best, "Farming on leased land always requires a careful calculation between long-term investments, lease contingencies, and landowner attitudes. There is a tremendous peace that comes from having a secure place to farm. Farmers need farms!"

**"Owning the land allows me to focus on the thing I do best—growing!"**

*Josh Jennings, Meadow's Mirth Farm*

Wasting no time, Josh is already out there working hard to get the property ready for the 2020 growing season. Meanwhile, SELT is partnering with Brentwood's Conservation Commission to permanently conserve the farm – keeping it open for agriculture, forestry, and wildlife habitat for future generations. The Town of Brentwood will decide whether to support this project at their Town Meeting in March, but SELT hopes to secure the lion's share of funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Truly a communal effort, this project is proof that our work – together as

a whole – is greater than the sum of our parts.

Further north in Farmington, a 135-acre farm on Meetinghouse Hill Road is also busy again with activity. Previously a dairy farm that was lovingly operated by the Carlsen family, this scenic property is now under the care of Jimi Tutor & Kristen Klenow, owners of Clyde Farm.

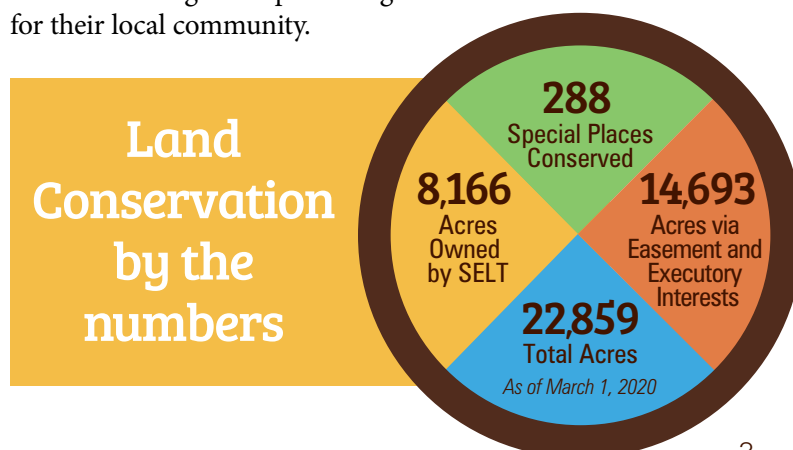
Jimi and Kristen are now entering their fifth growing season on the Seacoast after previous careers in the vineyard and vegetable scene of Sonoma County, California. After several years of leasing land, first at New Roots Farm in Newmarket, then Stout Oak Farm in Brentwood, Jimi and Kristen formed Clyde Farm in 2018 to market their wide array of certified organic vegetables, flowers, chickens, eggs, turkey, and lamb. By the end of the 2019 growing season, despite a loyal customer base and growing sales, the couple's search for affordable farmland had come up empty, making investments in future growth untenable.



Kristen Klenow building a new structure at Clyde Farm in Farmington.

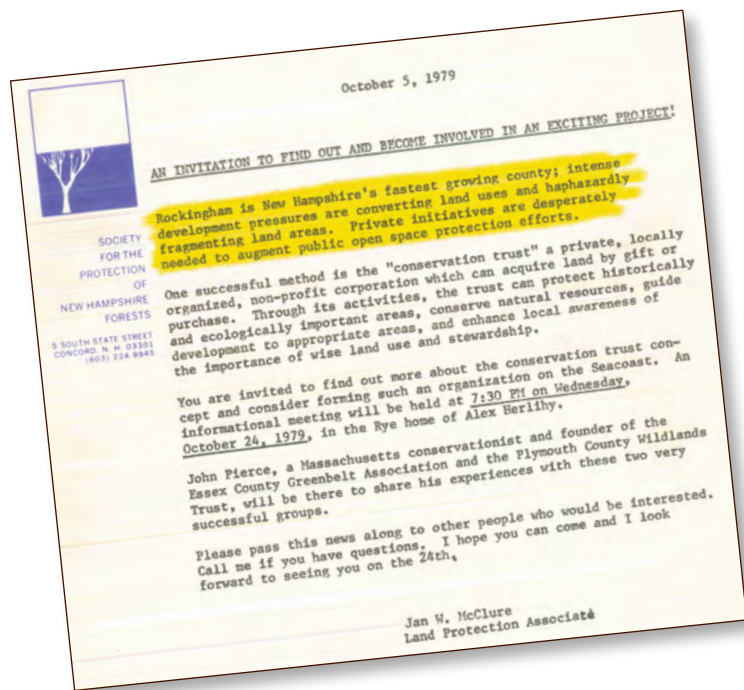
PHOTO CREDIT: JIMI TUTOR

Seeing a potential match, SELT introduced Jimi and Kristen to the Carlsen family, knowing that a successful conservation effort may also allow Clyde Farm to secure their dream of ownership. With the support of the William H. Donner Foundation, SELT has now committed to purchasing a conservation easement by the end of 2020. In parallel, Clyde Farm signed a lease with the Carlsen family that also gives them a right to purchase the property once SELT's easement is in place. Together, all three parties can realize the common goal of a permanently conserved and more affordable farm property that will once again be producing food and economic benefits for their local community.



continuously served as the first, and only, Secretary of SRC, retiring at the merger in 2014. “There was such a need for conservation with all the development that was pushing into the area and Ash was the driving force.”

Geography matters in conservation, and with the formation of RLT and SRC, much of what we call southeastern New Hampshire now had active land trusts. SRC – almost named Seven Rivers Conservancy – always valued rivers and water quality. Newspaper articles announcing the formation stated it planned “to fill the gap between Great Bay and the Lakes region by linking the resource protection efforts in both areas.” And RLT had a long link to the Exeter River and its communities. However, there was one significant watershed area that did not – the coastal communities bordering the Atlantic.



In Portsmouth, on the banks of the Piscataqua River, a third land trust was born. Robin Najar, a founder of the Seacoast Land Trust (SLT) and current SELT Board member, explained that a proposed condominium project on Belle Isle

(aka Lady Isle) sparked her and others to organize and oppose its development. While they ultimately prevailed in court, for Najar a larger question was raised: why are there no land trusts covering this area, one rich with water resources and facing tremendous pressure?

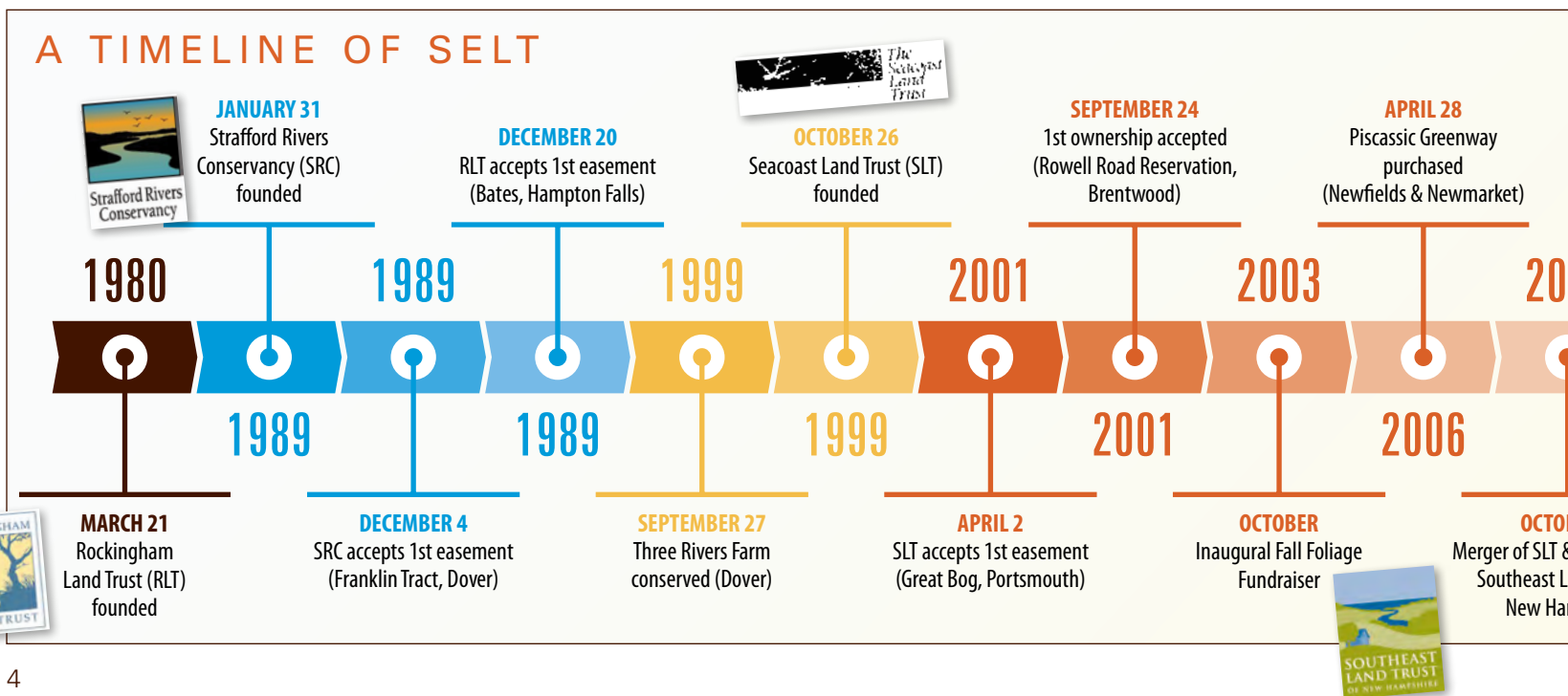
Danna Truslow of Rye remembers that the founders reached out to RLT for help in 1999. The response was inauspicious; without staff or resources, RLT declined. “So the founding board members decided to give it a try,” Truslow added simply. Truslow joined the Board of SLT in 2000 and became its second Executive Director, serving from 2000 to 2005.

“What really propelled us forward was when the Forest Society offered to do some geographic information system (GIS) mapping to prioritize lands,” recalled Truslow. “First, we did Berry’s Brook and Sagamore Creek watersheds in Rye and Portsmouth, and after positive responses from the Conservation Commissions, we worked with Greenland and then our remaining communities.” These priority areas ring true today – consistently identified by regional conservation plans, guiding the way for SELT. And not coincidentally, the priorities followed watersheds, echoing the realization of both the SRC and RLT.

It would take until 2014 to integrate these three disparate efforts, see the true value of thinking in terms of a watershed, and unify the organizations to serve 99% of New Hampshire’s coastal watershed.

The hiring – and departure of – staff was transformative for each organization. Truslow’s hiring foreshadowed similar decisions by both RLT and the SRC. Pellerin, then the President of RLT explained, “I’d met Brian Hart through our collaborative work for the Moose Plate Program. He asked if RLT was looking for an Executive Director, which we were not at the time. With my encouragement, he wrote up a plan, pitched it to the Board, and was hired in 2002.” More than seventeen years later, Hart remains, SELT’s staff numbers 12, augmented by seasonal help and a cadre of regular volunteers.

And when Truslow left SLT in 2005 to pursue a master’s degree, it opened the door for successful merger discussions with RLT and the formation of the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire. The new organization would serve all of







Anna Boudreau and Kevin McEaney.  
COURTESY PHOTO



Bob and Gail Bates getting award from Joanna (left) at 2003 annual meeting.  
COURTESY PHOTO



The SLT Board and staff meet for last time in September 2006, prior to the merger with RLT. L to R: David Kirkpatrick, Dennis Dillon, Danna Truslow, Bob Eaton, Robin Najjar, Terry Coyle, Etoile Holzaepfel, Kristen Grubbs, Chad Vanderbeck, and Dick Adams. COURTESY PHOTO

Rockingham County, Durham, and Lee. As Truslow was leaving SLT, Anna Boudreau was hired as SRC's first Executive Director. Her departure in late 2013 after 9 years of service opened the door for the merger of SRC and the Southeast Land Trust, consummated in late 2014. The new organization was rebranded as SELT and covered all of Strafford and Rockingham Counties, plus Wakefield and Brookfield in Carroll County – in total 99% of New Hampshire's coastal watershed.

McEaney is proud of SRC's years of volunteer-driven work, but remains a huge proponent of the merger: "The merger was a big boost for both organizations because it expanded the catchment areas, especially in outlying rural areas that have more land and will be under severe development pressure. SELT is on the right course, and continuing that course is the right way."

In reflecting on what SELT has become, Truslow remains pleased. "I'm just so impressed at what the organization has been able to achieve," she said. And the future? For Truslow, the answer lies in restoring the natural systems affected by development, climate change, and fragmentation. "I've always been a huge proponent of restoration. At some point in the future, we will have done as much conservation as we can, then resource restoration and management will be critical." Pellerin is less specific, but optimistic, exclaiming, "SELT is wonderful in all it dares to do!"

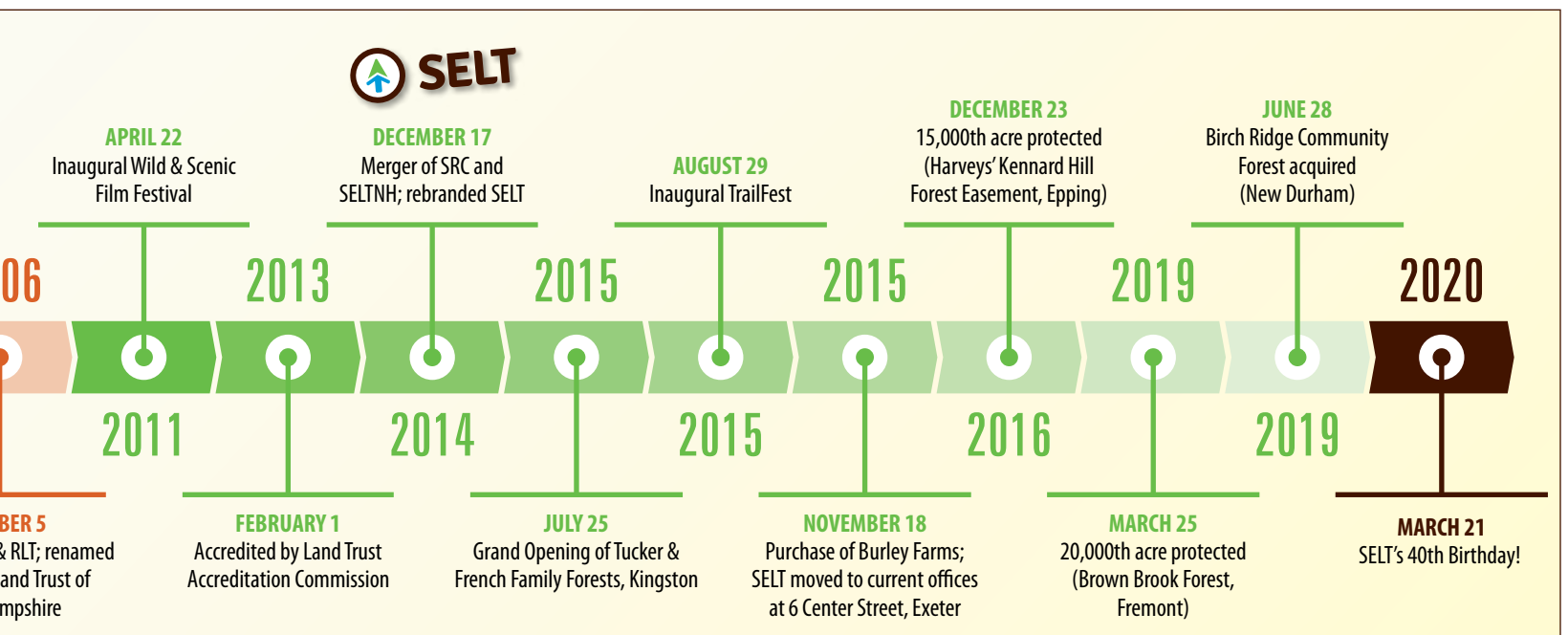
Najar paused as she considered the future SELT in 10, 20, or more years. "I hope," she began, "there is more land protected, the greenways connected, the puzzle coming together." Beyond

that, she expects, "SELT will become the premier environmental organization in the southern part of New Hampshire. The Center for People and Nature, the stewardship programs, volunteer work, and early educational programming – it's all setting SELT up for that future."

Thanks to our supporters, that future is bright. As 2020 marks SELT's 40th anniversary, we continue to move forward with the Center at Burley Farms in Epping; in January SELT secured formal approval from the Epping Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment for our site plan and use of the farm. Our updated strategic plan will guide our continued conservation work, clarify our role in engagement and education of youth, family, and community, develop our stewardship and land management priorities, and explore how we can best tackle the challenges of affordable, accessible farmland. We look forward to sharing our vision for the future.

### Share Your Story

We know the history of SELT and its predecessors is rich with stories and the contributions of many people, whose efforts culminated in what SELT has achieved in its first 40 years. Their contributions cannot be reflected fully in this brief article. Please add to the story – by sharing photos and your memories on our Facebook page or by emailing them to [info@seltnh.org](mailto:info@seltnh.org). We'd love to hear from you!





# Creating a Resilient Forest

The Franklin-McElheny Preserve is nestled between a quiet neighborhood and the Salmon Falls River in Rollinsford. And here, a pernicious invasion of the hemlock woolly adelgid is slowly killing the hemlocks in the forest, setting in motion inevitable changes.

SELT's initial proposed response was the extensive removal of the hemlock forest and creation of young forest thickets. This beloved forest, revered for its hemlock canopy and network of trails, would be changed substantially. When we first outlined our intended approach in early 2018, there was considerable community concern expressed about the scale and scope of change. Through two public meetings, more than 100 residents asked questions and shared concerns. "The depth of appreciation expressed for this land was reassuring," explains Debbie Goard, Stewardship Director, "but it was clear that we would have to consider alternatives to our initial approach."

in an advanced stage of decline. Their removal will allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor and encourage regeneration of seedlings. As Goard explains, "Our hope is that a diversity of tree and shrub species will regenerate, creating a more diverse forest that will benefit a variety of wildlife species and be more resilient to potential future attacks from invasive insects and diseases."

Licensed forester Charlie Moreno will oversee the harvest, which begins with marking specific trees for removal. The timing of the harvest will depend on the weather. Often, logging occurs when the ground is still frozen to reduce damage from heavy equipment. However, with this fickle winter weather, the ground may soon thaw and the work may have to wait until after mud season. As many hemlocks are in an advanced stage of decline, it is a priority to remove them before they die and become hazardous to cut.

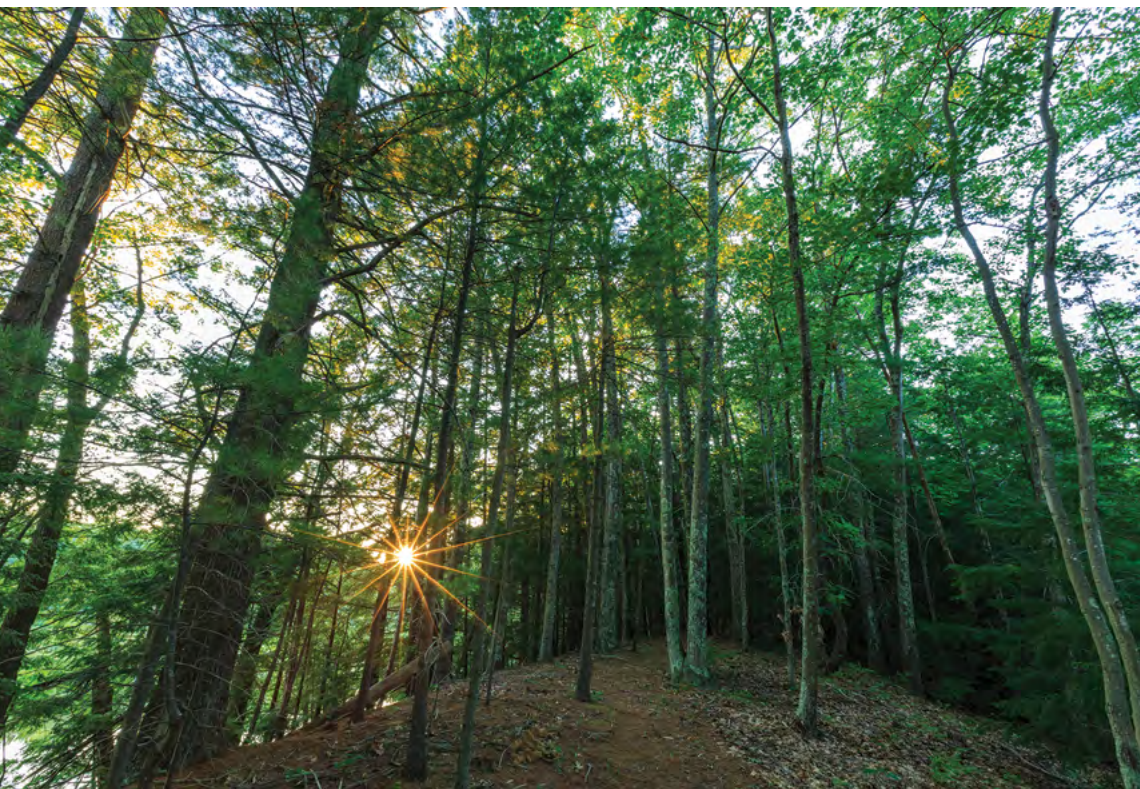
The second phase is expected to take place within the next three to 10 years. Local volunteers will take periodic photographs at designated locations to document the continued effects of the hemlock woolly adelgid, the health of the remaining hemlocks, and the forest's response to the harvest. The information derived from this citizen science project will help SELT understand which species and how many grow as a result of increased sunlight hitting the forest floor. And, perhaps as important, it will continue to engage the community in understanding and responding to the changing forest.

To reduce the risk posed by diseased or dead trees falling on or near trails and visitors, SELT will continue to remove dead or dying hemlocks along or near the Preserve's trails. The timing, scope, and nature of the second phase will be determined by the information gathered from the continued observation of the forest including the

rate of decline of the remaining hemlocks and the response of seedling regeneration.

While change at the Franklin-McElheny Preserve is inevitable, this new approach engages the community in considering and responding to those changes. And in doing so, it is SELT's hope that this will sustain and deepen the community's love of and care for this special place.

Never been there? The Franklin-McElheny Preserve is open to the public and features a kiosk with a trail map. SELT's trails can be accessed via a footpath from River Road. Parking is available along the cul-de-sac; however, please do not block the road, driveways or park on the lawns. Keep in mind that the Preserve may be closed during the logging operation to remove the affected trees. Learn more and get directions at [seltnh.org/franklin-mcelheny](http://seltnh.org/franklin-mcelheny).



Franklin-McElheny Preserve

PHOTO CREDIT: JERRY MONKMAN/ECOPHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

To move forward, SELT established the Franklin-McElheny Working Group to consider all the options from "do nothing" to "remove it all." Four Rollinsford community members Nancy Carmer, Jonathan Ordway, Lucy Putnam, and Nancy Ueda served on the Working Group, along with Kyle Lombard, Forest Health Program Coordinator for the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Land, SELT's Stewardship Director Deborah Goard, and Deputy Director Beverly Shadley.

After over seven months of meetings, discussions and insight from natural resource professionals, the Working Group recommended a two-phase course of action. The first phase, slated for 2020, will remove the most damaged hemlock stands, such as those on the eastern edge of the Preserve near the river and along adjacent trails. The goal is to remove hazard trees along the trails and those in other areas of the forest that are





## Welcome to the Team

**W**e are excited to announce Amanda Hollenbeck will join SELT as our Easement Stewardship Manager beginning in mid-March! “This expanded position plays a critical role in helping monitor and enforce our conservation easements,” explains Debbie Goard, Stewardship Director. Amanda will also manage the Seasonal Stewards and support our volunteer program. She arrives at SELT after two years with the State’s Conservation Land Stewardship Program where she enjoyed visiting special places throughout the Granite State (including SELT’s Stonehouse Forest). Prior to that she worked as a Cartographer with the NH Department of Safety where she worked to update information across the state for NH’s 911 service. Amanda’s enthusiasm, organizational skills, can-do attitude, and love of the outdoors make her a great fit. If you are in the area, stop by and welcome Amanda!

### Board Members

- Samuel Reid** President, Dover
- Ann Welsh** Vice President, Durham
- Rob Wofchuck** Treasurer, Brentwood
- Joan Pratt** Secretary, Exeter
- Terry Coyle** Portsmouth
- Bill Campbell** Exeter
- Thomas Chamberlin** New Castle
- Dan Clapp** Madbury
- Bruce Goodwin** Kingston
- Pam Hall** Portsmouth
- Scott Marion** Rye
- Linda McGivern** Rollinsford
- Brent Merriam** Epping
- Robin Najjar** Portsmouth
- Laurie Smith** Dover
- VJ Strehl** New Castle
- Dan Wyand** Portsmouth

### Staff

- Zoe Aldag** Outreach & Volunteer Manager
- Allison Bolia** Development Specialist
- Shaun Dillon** Conservation Coordinator
- Deborah Goard** Stewardship Director
- Brian Hart** Executive Director
- Amanda Hollenbeck** Easement Stewardship Manager
- Duane Hyde** Land Conservation Director
- Jeremy Lougee** Conservation Project Manager
- Kylee Noga** Executive & Operations Assistant
- Parker Schuerman** Land Manager
- Bev Shadley** Deputy Director

### Questions, Comments, Concerns?

To contact SELT, please call **603-778-6088** or email [info@seltnh.org](mailto:info@seltnh.org).

6 Center St., PO Box 675, Exeter, NH 03833  
Website: [seltnh.org](http://seltnh.org)

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A BENEFIT FOR THE SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



Artwork by Obi Kaufmann

## Friday, April 17

7-10pm · The Music Hall · Portsmouth

Tickets \$20 · Purchase tickets in advance to this sell-out event! Tickets available at the SELT office or The Music Hall box office.

### A Mark of Distinction

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## 40 and Forward: Celebrating SELT's 40th Birthday!

see page 1

## Local Farms Find New Homes and Security

see page 3










## Creating a Resilient Forest

see page 6

# Get Outside

**Come get outside with us! Check out the events below and sign up at [seltnh.org/events-page](http://seltnh.org/events-page).**

Suggested donation is \$5/person or \$10/family. Please register early; our events fill quickly. Registration closes at Noon the day before the event.

EVENT	LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION		
Float + Glide + Spin		Explore seeds and dispersal with former science teacher, Laura Barone. Design, build and test a seed of your own! Ages 7–10 (and their caregiver).	Burley Farms, Epping	4/4/2020	9–11 AM
Wild & Scenic Film Festival 		Short, beautiful films to ignite your spirit and inspire you. Purchase tickets at <a href="http://TheMusicHall.org">TheMusicHall.org</a> . \$20 general admission.	The Music Hall, Portsmouth	4/17/2020	7–10 PM
Walk + Track with a Naturalist		Discover patterns and behaviors within our landscapes to unlock the mysteries of nature. Ages 10+. (Next up: 5/30)	Stonehouse Forest, Barrington	4/24/2020	4–6 PM
Birding at Burley		The early bird gets the worm. Head outside with other SELTie birders to see what's around this migration season.	Burley Farms, Epping	5/8/2020	6:30–8:30 AM
Hike it Baby & SELT – Birds & Flowers		Look for flowers and listen for birds with other young explorers. Ages 0–5 (and their caregiver).	Charles Rand Memorial Forest, North Hampton	5/12/2020	10:15 AM–Noon
Conservation Celebration		Save the date for SELT's 40th birthday celebration!	Burley Farms, Epping	6/13/2020	

 EASY  MODERATE  DIFFICULT  TICKET REQUIRED

Generous support from the Center for Assessment makes these field trips possible. Learn more about our Get Outside sponsor at [nciaa.org](http://nciaa.org).