



# Western Foothills Land Trust

Fall 2023 Newsletter



## Changing of the Guard: New Leadership for the Trust

Despite some mid-afternoon rain and thunder, WFLT's Annual Gathering, celebrating 36 years of land conservation, was a splendid late summer gathering at Camp Wigwam on Bear Pond in Waterford. Attendees played along the waterfront during the late afternoon and then enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and libations on the lodge porch overlooking Bear Pond. Dinner brought a bit of nostalgia for all, with classic camp lasagna and salad. The evening showstopper was the blue supermoon rising over Bear Pond.

While the setting and the meal were memorable, the heart of the evening was honoring Lee Dassler as she transitioned from Executive Director to Development Director, passing the leadership torch to Kacy Bailey as the new Executive.

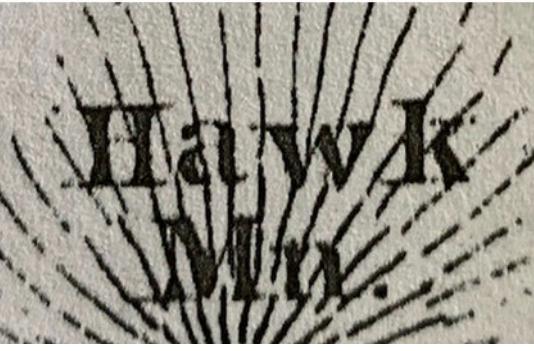
Lee has played an instrumental role in the growth and success of WFLT during her tenure as Executive Director. Her unwavering

passion for land conservation, strategic vision, and tireless efforts have helped WFLT conserve thousands of acres of critical land in the region and develop nearly 35 miles of recreational trails. Under Lee's leadership, WFLT has achieved numerous milestones, notably the recently completed, decade-long project to connect Roberts Farm Preserve to the Trust's new Farm-to-Town Trailhead in downtown Norway. Her dedication has been instrumental in advancing the organization's mission to protect and preserve the natural heritage of our region for generations to come.

Kacy, who served as the Deputy Director for WFLT since May 2022, brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to conservation to this role. With a background in outdoor recreation and real estate law and a personal affinity for the area, Kacy is well-prepared and eager to continue WFLT's important work. Lee will continue to serve WFLT as Development Director, where she will helm the fundraising efforts for many exciting projects.



Annual meeting guests enjoy family style dinner at Camp Wigwam. Photo: Lee Dassler



Bob Spenser leads a history walk of the City Brook Trail prior to the Annual Meeting. Photo: Lee Dassler



## JOE ZILINSKY: Departing Treasurer & Vice President



Joe Zelinsky, past-Treasurer and past-Vice President, recently retired from our board. During his time with us, several remarkable qualities became apparent:

- An unerring integrity.
- A willingness to undertake what needed to be done.
- An ability to grow and adapt as conditions demanded.
- A lack of modesty in defense of the Trust.
- An ability to see and appreciate others' points of view.
- The skill of compromise without surrendering principles.

These were the qualities through which Joe expressed his love of the Trust and its mission.

And there were two more:

- A love of draft horses.
- And a practice of yin yoga.

For us, these well may be qualities difficult to replicate. And for that, we thank you for your service and dedication, Joe.

By Bob Van Nest



Conner grew up in Waterford, Maine and graduated from OHCHS. He obtained a bachelors degree in Small Business

Management from SNHU, and has a diverse combination of professional experiences that illuminate his adventurous approach to life. He brings a blend of expertise ranging from youth recreation and leadership, to sales, to EMS, and trail work. Conner and his wife enjoy alpine skiing, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, camping, swimming and more! "I am passionate about conserving natural and historically significant areas for their recreational and environmental benefits!"

## Welcome New Board Member: CONNER TREMBLAY

## WFLT Board and Staff

### Staff

#### Executive Director

Kacy Bailey - [kacy@wfltmaine.org](mailto:kacy@wfltmaine.org)

#### Development Director

Lee Dassler - [lee@wfltmaine.org](mailto:lee@wfltmaine.org)

#### Outreach Director

Kelli Shedd - [kelli@wfltmaine.org](mailto:kelli@wfltmaine.org)

#### Stewardship Director

Alyssa Andrews - [lands@wfltmaine.org](mailto:lands@wfltmaine.org)

#### Land Associate

Heather Rorer - [heather@wfltmaine.org](mailto:heather@wfltmaine.org)

### Board

#### President

Carl Costanzi

Mikko Liimatta

Beth Calhoun

Roger Green

Nathaniel Liu

Richard Sousa

Sienna Tinsley

Conner Tremblay

Robert Van Nest

## Thank you Sara King!



WFLT expresses its thanks to Sara King for her contributions to the Trust as a member of our board of directors. Sara joined the board in 2021 and served on the programs committee, sharing her experience as an outdoor educator and fellow community program resource through her work with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension 4H programs in Oxford county. Thank you, Sara!

### KACY BAILEY



Kacy Bailey, Executive Director  
Photo: Andy Gagne

Joining the WFLT staff as Deputy Director in May 2022, Kacy moved into the role of Executive Director in September. Kacy brings an enthusiasm for the nuts and bolts of operations of the Trust – from documenting and formalizing long-standing policies and practices, to increasing the sophistication of our accounting and financial controls, to employing new technology to streamline operations. She is honored to take on the Executive role and excited to move our pipeline of acquisition projects forward while deepening WFLT's commitment to stewarding our properties.

### JOSH BERRY: WFLT'S 2023 Summer Intern in His Own Words

Hello, I'm Joshua Berry, a recent graduate from the University of Maine, where I majored in wildlife ecology with a concentration in wildlife management. In the summer of 2022, I had the opportunity to volunteer and help clean up Sheep Island. It was a great experience, leading to my learning about and applying for the Richard G. Rockefeller Internship this past summer, where I worked with Western Foothills Land Trust as a stewardship intern.

Over the summer, I worked on multiple projects, my most significant project being boundary line monitoring on all of Western Foothills' fee-owned properties. This project helped me better understand how a land trust maintains its properties.

During the internship, I also worked on a two-day boardwalk repair project, which allowed me to improve my carpentry skills and provide enhanced access for locals who love walking the Witt's End trail. In addition, I was involved in planning a large pollinator garden that is being planted at Shepard's Farm Preserve this November.

The most significant event I worked on was the Norway Triathlon. This incredible annual event taught me about the fundraising side of land trusts and how vital community support is for them to succeed. The triathlon brings people together to work on something bigger than themselves, and that's one of the best things about working for a land trust.

Ultimately, it was a blast helping out at WFLT because I learned so much about the various areas of land trust operations and the great people who run them.

### LEE DASSLER



Lee Dassler, Development Director  
Photo: Andy Gagne

In early September, after years of dedicated service and steadfast commitment to the organization, Lee Dassler has moved into the role of Development Director where she will helm the fundraising efforts for many exciting projects. One such project, near and dear to Lee, is the Roberts Farm Campus project which will create an educational center to benefit MSAD 17 students and the local community.



Josh Berry at Shepard's Farm Preserve's future pollinator garden.



## Twin Bridges Preserve Expands by 721-acres

Western Foothills Land Trust is working to reunite fragmented parcels and natural habitats for the benefit of wildlife, water quality, and public access. Edwards Mills is adjacent to 100 acres (3 parcels) recently protected in Norway and Otisfield as well as the 252-acre Twin Bridges Preserve that WFLT has managed since 2015.



Sarah Kearsley casts into the Crooked River at Twin Bridges Preserve.  
Photo: Andy Gagne.

On October 11th, Twin Bridges Preserve was enlarged by 721-acres after WFLT acquired an adjacent forest tract known as Edwards Mills. The large tract includes access from State Route 117 and land on both sides of the Crooked River in Norway, Otisfield, and Harrison. In addition to shoreline and stream protection, the land features 275-acres of deer wintering area, 84-acres of wetlands, and at least one potentially significant vernal pool.

The Edwards Mills property is part of a 15,000-acre assemblage of former Chadbourne Tree Farm properties acquired in 2020 by The Conservation Fund in a partnership with Malone Family Land Preservation Foundation known as White Pine Forest, LLC. The expanded Twin Bridges Preserve will protect over 1,000 contiguous acres of forestland, 4.5 miles of Crooked River shoreline, and over 2 miles of stream habitat on the Crooked River. Permanent protection of this land will preserve its ecological functions and scenic features, and provide future opportunities for public access and recreation.

The Conservation Fund made possible the purchase of Edwards Mills through its Working Forest Fund program, which brings

financing and expertise to pre-acquire large working forests to buy time while permanent conservation solutions and funding are created.

Funding for the \$1 million purchase from White Pine Forest, LLC came from The Conservation Fund in partnership with the Stifler Family Foundation and an anonymous foundation, Land for Maine's Future, Portland Water District, an anonymous donor, the Open Space Institute, Woodard & Curran Foundation (through the Sebago Clean Waters Water Fund), Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, and OnX.

Support from the Open Space Institute comes through the Open Space Institute's Appalachian Landscapes Protection Fund, which supports the protection of climate-resilient lands for wildlife and communities. The Fund is made possible thanks to major support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and additional funding from Lyndhurst, Riverview, Tucker Foundations, and Jack McKee.

The Trust intends to rename the entire 1,000-acre landscape as Twin Bridges Preserve and is planning to establish non-motorized recreational trails, a parking area, and a trailhead with kiosk over the next year. The trails will accommodate hiking, snowshoeing, backcountry touring, fly fishing, and nature observations. A section of the ITS 89 snowmobile trail runs through the tract: the Trust looks forward to working with the local clubs to continue that use.



Lee Dassler (L) removes the "end of land trust" sign at the former edge of the Trust's property in Otisfield. Photo: Andy Gagne.

*To learn more about the Chadbourne Tree Farm properties and the collaborative effort to protect 15,000 acres, visit:  
[www.wfltmaine.org/chadbournetreefarms](http://www.wfltmaine.org/chadbournetreefarms)*

## Coaches Loop: Honoring Christopher Easton



Coach Christopher Easton at the surprise unveiling of Coaches Loop.  
Photo by: CL SK via Facebook.

Last spring, after four decades of coaching, the Oxford Hills Nordic ski teams' coach, Christopher Easton, announced his retirement. Fifty ski team alums and grateful parents from eight states and three countries responded by organizing a surprise thank you at the Roberts Farm warming hut this past July. Coach Easton was delighted to tears to hear generations of skiers, many with families of their own, recalling his athleticism, humor, and balanced approach to competitive athletics. In his honor, the group raised \$4,000 in seed money for "Coach's Loop," a two-kilometer solar LED illuminated loop at Roberts Farm.

"Coach's Loop" will provide the ski teams, our after-school ski program, and working adult skiers additional hours of safe ski time during the season. The LED units we have tested use occupancy sensors that will turn on as a skier approaches the unit and turn off after they have skied by.

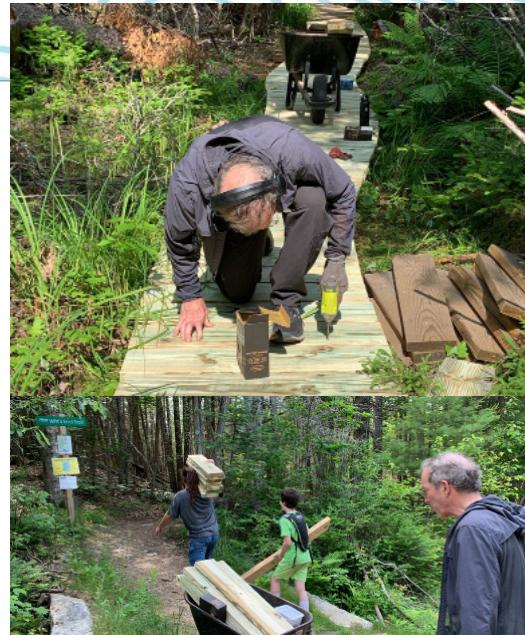
*The Trust is still fundraising for Coach's Loop and welcomes donations and volunteers willing to help install the system.*

Contact Lee@wfltmaine.org.

## Catalyst Grant Awarded

A partnership of five western Maine conservation and recreation non-profits, including WFLT, has been awarded \$1,000,000 from the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) via the 2023 Catalyst Program. Over the three-year implementation of this grant, Oxford County communities from Denmark to Rumford, Bethel to Buckfield, will see improved access, amenities, and opportunities for trail-based recreation at 15 trail systems. WFLT's planned improvements include resurfacing trails, improving trailhead parking areas, and establishing miles of new mountain bike trails. This award is excellent news for the partners and the communities of western Maine, especially given the increased use of trails since the pandemic and increased damage to trails and trail access due to recent storm severity and frequency.

The unique team of Oxford County groups includes lead applicant Inland Woods + Trails, Greater Lovell Land Trust, Loon Echo Land Trust, Mahoosuc Land Trust, and Western Foothills Land Trust. These organizations share a strong history of collaboration on conservation and recreation projects and enjoy working together to benefit their communities and those who visit western Maine.



Volunteer John Snell repairs a boardwalk on the Witt's End Trail in Norway. Photo: Lee Dassler

Join us on Friday, November 24th for our Pollinator Garden Seeding Session at Shepard's Farm Preserve in Norway! Volunteers will meet at the preserve at 10:00 AM. Wear sturdy boots, gloves, and bring water. FMI and to RSVP, email info@wfltmaine.org. Shepard's Farm Preserve is located at 121 Crockett Ridge Road, Norway, ME 04268.

# PROGRAMS & VOLUNTEERS



## Pollinator Garden Planting

Thanks to a three-year grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Trust has started to restore pollinator habitat and remove invasive plant species at Shepard's Farm Preserve.

The proposed pollinator habitat will be established and restored over three years, approximately one-quarter acre each year, using non-chemical methods to kill the existing vegetation and replanting with native plant species. Non-chemical (mechanical) methods will treat invasive species. Our desired outcome is an increase in habitat to support the growth of monarchs and other native pollinators.

Our MCHT summer intern, Josh Berry, and Master Gardener volunteer, Karen Bennett, kicked off the project by spreading and weighting recycled large cardboard sheets, foraged from area stores, across a low-mowed quarter acre to kill existing weeds. The project will be replicated in 2024 and 2025 across the adjacent quarter acre plots. The pollinator-species seed mix, which by-design needs to be spread after a hard frost, was designed by our USFW partner Hannah Mullally and was provided by Ernst Seeds.

For several years, Gary Mitchell has volunteered his invasive removal skills to the Trust. With support from this grant, we can finally compensate him for his work combating the Preserve's explosive autumn olive outbreak.



Future site of Shepard's Farm Preserve's pollinator garden. Photo: Lee Dassler

## 2023 Norway Triathlon

In a miraculous break between rain storms, the 2023 Norway Triathlon went off without a hitch on Saturday, July 8, at Pennesseewassee Park in Norway. This year marked the event's 16th year boasting 93 individual and team athletes from nine states. The Norway Tri is the largest annual fundraiser for Western Foothills Land Trust which has organized and promoted the triathlon since its inception in 2008.

Finishing in first place for the individual men's class: Kyle Anderson of Cambridge, MA, with a time of 1:16:05. Hannah Bewsey of Topsham, ME, took first place in the individual women's category with a time of 1:19:39. Five teams competed with The "A Team" taking first place male team with a time of 1:30:00. "Paddle, Pedal and Pound" finished first for a female team in 1:56:53; Team "ASKME" won the coed team category with a time of 1:25:00.

Thank you to our 2023 sponsors and a round of applause to all of the volunteers, town, and emergency personnel required to safely host this annual event.

Save the date for the 2024 Norway Triathlon: 7/13/24. Registration will open January 1, 2024.



Photos this page: Abby Bennett



## Maine Beer Company



### In Memory of Marcia Benson and Ethel Bean Turner

The Trust has lost two friends and easement donors recently: Marcia Benson of Saugus Massachusetts and Ethel Bean Turner of Otisfield. In 2011, Ethel donated a conservation easement protecting 56 acres of woodlands and 1,914 feet of shoreline on Thompson Lake known as Long Point. The wooded promontory is home to an eagle's nest and an archeological site. Ethel was a dedicated business owner, active community member, founder of The Otisfield Historical Society, and a dedicated gardener.

Raised in West Paris, Marcia Benson grew up with pets and horses, a passion that stayed with her until her passing this fall. Marcia worked in medical records and volunteered rescuing and fostering dogs and cats. The Maurice G. Benson Easement protects a 189 acre of working forestland adjacent to the Agnes Gray School. Consistent with her devotion to animal welfare, hunting is prohibited on the parcel.



Marcia Benson



Ethel Bean Turner



### Make a Year End Gift Today

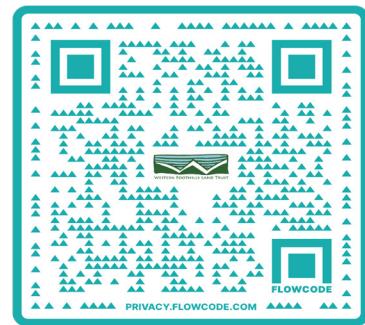
Join us in preserving the beauty of Western Foothills. Your support fuels conservation efforts, protecting vital habitats and ensuring access to nature for generations. Donate today to the Western Foothills Land Trust's Year End Giving Campaign and be a guardian of our region's natural legacy. Together, let's make a lasting impact!

#### Make Your Year-End Gift Count!

If you are over age 70½, you may give a gift from your IRA as a tax-free distribution to a qualified charity. Please consult your financial advisor for more information.

Please make checks out to:  
Western Foothills Land Trust  
PO Box 107, Norway, ME 04268

Support Local Conservation



Donate Today

### Bequests

Create your impact.  
Plan today.  
Give tomorrow.

### Create Your Legacy Today

Including Western Foothills Land Trust in your will is a meaningful and impactful way to leave a lasting legacy that benefits both the environment and your local community. By doing so, you ensure the preservation and protection of critical natural landscapes, wildlife habitats, and recreational opportunities for future generations. Your bequest supports the ongoing efforts to conserve and steward these precious lands, promoting sustainable land use and outdoor experiences. By including Western Foothills Land Trust in your will, you contribute to the long-term well-being of the environment and help create a sustainable legacy for your community to enjoy and cherish for years to come. Contact Lee Dassler at [Lee@wfltmaine.org](mailto:Lee@wfltmaine.org) to discuss the variety of ways you can shape your bequest. For any legal questions, please consult your financial advisor.

Bequests are an excellent way to support Western Foothills Land Trust's mission and to ensure your lasting legacy. If you would like to or have already included WFLT in your estate planning, contact Lee Dassler at [Lee@wfltmaine.org](mailto:Lee@wfltmaine.org)



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THANK YOU TO OUR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS, VOLUNTEERS, AND COMMUNITY FOR  
SUPPORTING WESTERN FOOTHILLS LAND TRUST'S PROGRAMS AND EVENTS.