

Caring for Land Forever: A Spotlight on Stewardship

Land protection projects can be like weddings - big, important (and often expensive!) events that take commitment and careful planning. Whether land is quietly donated or the community rallies and chips in to save a place we all love, when land is permanently protected, it is an accomplishment worth celebrating.

But what happens after the fundraising goals are met, the papers are signed, and the easement or deed is recorded? In many ways, our conservation work has just begun as landowners and the Stowe Land Trust become jointly responsible for caring for, or stewarding, the land in perpetuity. Like the marriage after the wedding, stewardship work is ongoing, not always easy or straightforward, but often deeply rewarding.

SLT's Stewards at Work

Who are the stewards of SLT's 3,500 acres of protected land? They are those who own the land, SLT staff and volunteers, and the greater Stowe community. Together, we work to ensure that protected land is cared for and that, when possible, we leave it better than we found it for those who will come after us.

"being a good steward is appreciating the land for its natural intent"

Landowners

SLT owns and manages five of our 30 protected properties. In all other cases, the land is owned by others, either privately or publicly. For many of these individuals, families, businesses, and government entities permanently protecting their land in the first place is a significant act of caring for it over the long term. They also build and maintain trails, monitor and improve habitat for wildlife, plant trees to restore floodplain forests, and/or earn their living through farming or other rural enterprises. Their interests and opportunities are varied, but many share both a love of the land and a sense of responsibility to use it wisely. As landowner Ron Stancliff says, "being a good steward is appreciating the land for its natural intent: to provide benefit to the owner without shortcoming other creatures that share it."

Volunteers

Each year, over 20 volunteer land stewards help SLT ensure that protected properties are cared for according to the terms of the conservation easements. These important volunteers conduct monitoring visits to properties at least once a year to document current conditions and any potential problems. They are also liaisons between SLT, landowners and the public, acting as ambassadors in the community for both the land and SLT.

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Which land stewardship project or activity on your property are you most proud of?



Working with the American Chestnut Foundation to reestablish the chestnut by planting young trees on my properties.

Ron Stancliff, Stancliff Property and Joe's Pond
Photo credit: HuntingPA.com



Restoring the historic Adams Farm barn on my property with the help of my neighbors and community.

Heather Hale,
Bryant Property



Continuing to farm my land.

Paul Percy, Bouchard Farm,
Landmark Meadow, Stowe
Meadow Club Lot

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Stowe Land Trust is dedicated to the conservation of scenic, recreational, and productive farm and forest lands for the benefit of the greater Stowe community.

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STOWE LAND TRUST

Letter from the Executive Director

October 31, 2014



Dear Friends,

As I sit down to write to you today, I am grateful to stop and take a moment to reflect on the past year with Stowe Land Trust. Though I am still fresh in my role, I have had the benefit of nearly a year of experience—getting to know the organization, the community, and the supporters. It's a sweet spot to be in—I have settled into my role, but am energized and excited about many new possibilities and ideas for future projects. SLT and the Stowe community continue to be wonderful to work with.

Stowe Land Trust experienced significant transition in 2014. Today we have an entirely new staff as well as a few new board members and officers. Board chair Alan Thorndike stepped down after two years at the helm. On behalf of the entire organization, I'd like to thank and commend Alan

for his excellent work as chair and his guidance through this period of transition.

We have made good use of the transition opportunity, and have completed a myriad of essential and foundational projects that set us up for big things in 2015. A few notable projects include finishing a multi-year renovation project at the Mill Trail cabin and opening the cabin for use by our Summer Naturalist program. The Summer Naturalist Program expanded by leaps and bounds in 2014, and we hope to build this program even more next season.

Kristen Sharpless, SLT's Conservation Program Manager, worked with the Board of Directors to complete management plans for all 5 properties owned by Stowe Land Trust—this process has been a wonderful exercise in “structured dreaming”. We love some of the big ideas put forth in the plans—including the possibility of revitalizing the maple sugar operation at the Kirchner Woods property. We are looking for concrete ways to better engage with the community, and want our properties to become shining examples of the best ways to practice stewardship. I hope you enjoy Kristen's article on stewardship included in this newsletter.

Meanwhile, we are continuing to work on updating our strategic conservation plan—the plan that guides us in our conservation efforts in Stowe. This plan will bring a sharper focus to our land protection work—as we have protected more than 3,500 priority acres of land today, this sharp focus is essential in guiding future work.

All this is to say that I believe Stowe Land Trust has come through this transition stronger than ever, and I look forward to a great year in 2015.

Keep in touch,

Caitrin Maloney
Executive Director

Spotlight on Stewardship - continued

“What better way for us to help than to do what we like to do every day: get out and explore.”

For many, they volunteer because they love Stowe’s beauty and character and want to be a meaningful part of SLT’s conservation efforts. Volunteer land steward for Cady Hill Forest, Lucy Nerseian, says, “It took so much effort on the part of so many organiza-

tions and individuals to protect the land that it feels like I’m an extension of their hard work and that it’s my duty to make sure it stays as ‘perfect’ as it is right now.” As volunteer land stewards Arnie and Ronna Ziegel point out, the work is also fun. “What better way for us to help than to do what we like to do every day: get out and explore.”

SLT Staff

SLT Conservation Program Manager, Kristen Sharpless, runs SLT’s Stewardship Program. From coordinating volunteers to communicating with landowners to managing SLT’s five fee-owned properties, her work is never done and always varied. Here’s what a work day focused on stewardship can look like:

8am - Respond to a landowner request for SLT approval of a new forest management plan for a protected property.

9am - Coordinate volunteers helping to replace a bridge at Wiessner Woods.

1pm - Complete annual monitoring visit with a landowner and volunteer land steward. Discuss plans for a barn expansion and remind landowner of the need to obtain written approval from the land trust prior to starting construction.

3pm - Respond to a report of motorized vehicle use and overnight camping on a conserved property where prohibited.

4pm - File paperwork and correspondence to ensure good record keeping; respond to phone calls and emails.

Staying Stewardship Strong

As the number of SLT-conserved properties grows, so does our stewardship responsibility; we have more land to care for, more easements to monitor, and more landowners with whom to coordinate. Our stewardship work is also becoming increasingly complex. A changing climate, new technologies and science, and shifts in our land-based economies and culture can make wise land use a moving target - even with the permanent terms of a conservation easement to help guide decisions. In addition, as time passes and protected land passes from one owner to the next, property values rise, and neighboring parcels are developed, the risk for easement violations and other problems on protected lands increase.

A strong stewardship program is the most effective tool for ensuring that the future of SLT’s protected lands stays bright. The relatively low-cost maintenance of regular monitoring and communication helps to prevent stewardship problems from escalating into emergency situations where difficult and expensive remedies are the only option.

What will keep SLT’s stewardship program strong into the future? Certainly the dedication of landowners, volunteers and the SLT board and staff, but also the commitment of the Stowe community. When we all chip in to take care of the places we have saved, the promise to do so forever becomes a reality.

What about being a volunteer Land Steward is most rewarding?



The feeling of ownership and personal identification with the land I monitor.

Bill Anderson,
Maple Run – Chase property steward



Helping to maintain a positive relationship between SLT and the property owner by connecting periodically with the landowners.

Charlie Berry, Grandview Farm steward.
Photo credit: John Sharpless



Seeing the growth in the number of people who visit the property. It’s become a “must do” for all those who visit Stowe. It’s also a challenge to protect the land from being “loved to death”.

Greg Speer, Bingham Falls steward

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 The Bistro at Ten Acres Lodge
 The Body Lounge
 The Matterhorn

The Phoenix Table & Bar
 The Swimming Hole
 Topnotch Resort & Spa
 Trapp Family Lodge
 Trattoria La Festa
 Umiak Outdoor Outfitters
 Well Heeled
 Wendy's Closet
 Yankee Home Solutions

Program Partners

Blessed Sacrament Bible Camp
 Laraway School
 State of Vermont
 Stowe Conservation Commission
 Stowe Mountain Bike Club
 Stowe Nordic Outing Club
 Topnotch Resort & Spa
 Town of Stowe
 Trapp Family Lodge

UVM Rubenstein School
 Vermont Housing and
 Conservation Board
 Waterbury Conservation
 Commission
 Mud City Adventures
 River of Life
 Stowe Bible Camp
 Stowe Dept of Parks &
 Recreation Summer Camp
 Stowe Elementary School
 National Life Group

This list includes all donations made between November 1, 2013-September 30, 2014. If we have missed or incorrectly listed your name please let us know!

Second Summer Naturalist Season a Hit



Family Fun: Looking for insects at the Mill Trail.

Stowe Land Trust's Summer Naturalist Program provides learning opportunities – especially for children - that inspire local citizens to engage with their natural world and foster a love and appreciation for the land. This summer, SLT's Naturalist, Krista Battles, engaged over 700 children, parents, and teachers in guided walks, educational programs, and volunteer projects at the Mill Trail and other SLT properties. A big thanks to Krista and to everyone who participated. See you again next summer!



Stowe Elementary School 4th graders visit the cabin as part of learning about Stowe history.

“Fun & Friends” Winter/Spring 2015 Outings

These events are free and open to the public! Please bring your own equipment for all outdoor outings. For more information or directions to any of these outings, check the News and Events page at www.stowelandtrust.org, or feel free to call 802.253.7221 or email info@stowelandtrust.org.



Mill Trail Cabin Snowshoe

Saturday, Dec. 27th
10am-12pm

Mill Trail is an enchanting place no matter the season but the sparkling winter snow and babbling Notch Brook make this a great winter hike. Join SLT on a snowshoe

passing Helen Day and Doc Lichtenhaeler’s Cabin and several historic cellar holes. Please park in the pull off on Notchbrook Road and be sure to bring your own equipment.



Full Moon Snowshoe

Thursday, March 5th
6pm-8pm.

Snowshoe through the famous Smugglers’ Notch, a narrow pass through the mountains lined with 1,000-ft cliffs. The moon will illuminate the snow while you trek through Vermont’s Park of the

Year. Please meet at the newly restored Barnes Camp and be sure to bring your own equipment.



Wiessner Woods Family Snowshoe

Saturday, Jan. 17th,
10am-12pm

Join Stowe Land Trust for a snowshoe tour of Wiessner Woods. Follow the Catamount

Trail as it meanders through the Hemlock forest passing by the Gnome Home on the way to the Halvorsen’s sugar house. Please meet in the Wiessner Woods parking area and be sure to bring your own equipment.



Skyline Hike

Saturday, May 16th
9am-12pm

Join SLT as we hike along one of Vermont’s most scenic ridges. The trail will lead us through mossy forest floors and rocky outcrops. We will meet at the Pinnacle Meadows parking area. Please bring plenty of water and a snack.



Backcountry Ski in Ranch Valley (intermediate-advanced)

Saturday, Feb 21st
9am-1pm

The first downhill ski trails in Stowe were cut in Ranch Valley in the

1930’s. While the focus of downhill skiing has moved up Route 108, the Ranch Valley still offers great turns. Join SLT and friends on a backcountry tour of the area. This outing is for experienced skiers and riders. Please meet at the beginning of Ranch Brook Road and be sure to bring your own equipment.



Kirchner Woods Bird Walk

Saturday, May 16th
8am-11am.

May is a great time of year for bird watching as many species are migrating back to their northern

breeding grounds. Join us on a bird walk through Kirchner Woods. Please meet at the Kirchner Woods parking lot on Taber Hill road and bring your own binoculars.

Naturalist guided walk for the whole family with Krista Battles on Saturdays, March 17th, April 11th and May 9th at the Mill Trail. Visit the website for more information: www.stowelandtrust.org



Mill Trail Cabin Selfie Photo Contest – Enter to Win!

Want an excuse to get out and explore this season? Here’s one: send us a photo of you and your loved ones at the Mill Trail Cabin and be entered to win a limited-edition Stowe Land Trust hat. Entries can be submitted by posting photos to our Facebook page or by emailing them to us at info@stowelandtrust.org. Be sure to include what you like the best about the Mill Trail in 20 words or less. One entry per family please. The deadline for entries is December 31, 2014.



New Directors Elected

Three new board members were elected by Stowe Land Trust's (SLT) membership at the 27th Annual Meeting celebration held on Sunday, September 7th. Clifford Borden, Sam Gaines and Walt Looney will join twenty existing board members responsible for governing the community conservation organization.



Clifford Borden

Clifford has been enjoying all that Stowe has to offer since first coming here to ski in the 1980s. He is Portfolio Manager and Director of Borden Wealth Management at ScotiaMcLeod in Montreal. A longtime public servant, Clifford has been a town councilor in Hampstead, co-chaired two

Israel Cancer Research Fund events which raised over 1.3 million dollars and has chaired the Combined Jewish Appeal (CJA) professional division for two years, raising funds for the Montreal Jewish Community. Clifford has been a member of SLT since becoming a homeowner here in 1997 and firmly believes SLT is the vital contributor responsible for maintaining all the wonderful natural areas and recreational opportunities in Stowe. When the snow has melted you can find him on his mountain bike or running on the area's extensive trail network.



Sam Gaines

Sam is the Vice President and Director of Development at Spruce Peak Realty, the real estate subsidiary of Stowe Mountain Resort. Sam manages all aspects of real estate design, planning, permitting, construction, and sales and marketing with respect to Spruce Peak at Stowe—a planned

community that includes a 300-room 4-star condominium hotel, 38

mountain cabins, 20 home sites, a Bob Cupp-designed golf course, a 423-seat Performing Arts Center, a Private Residence Club, a spa, and various ski and summer recreation improvements. Sam holds a BA in Public Policy Analysis from Pomona College in Claremont, California and a MA in Real Estate Finance from the New York University Schack Institute of Real Estate. Sam lives in Stowe with his wife Molly and son Theodore. Sam is a passionate skier, runner, hiker, and tennis player.



Walt Looney

Walt and his family have been seasonal visitors to Stowe for more than 30 years. After he retired from his law firm in 2010, he and his wife, Diane, bought a farm on Shaw Hill in the Moscow section of Stowe. Walt's now-grown sons learned to ski at Spruce Peak, and with the debut of his

three-year old grandson on the Magic Carpet last winter, the next generation has been introduced to the treasures of Stowe. Walt was a partner for 32 years with the New York law firm of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, where he managed their Hong Kong and London offices, among other roles. He has long been interested in conservation, has been involved with a variety of conservation organizations, and serves as a director of Sheriff's Meadow Foundation, a Massachusetts land trust. He enjoys cross country and downhill skiing, snowshoeing, cycling, birding and hiking the local trails. Walt is also a director of the New York-based classical music organization, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. He is a graduate of Boston College, University of Virginia and Harvard Law School, and is currently general counsel of a London-based asset management firm.

A Fond Farewell and a Warm Welcome

After seven years of dedicated service, it is with great sadness that we bid Erin Bruhns farewell as she starts her new life in Vancouver, BC. Taking her place on our team is Metzi Anderson, who is our new Operations Manager. Erin, we thank you for all you have done for us over the years, and we wish you well in all your future endeavors!



Erin Bruhns



Metzi Anderson



Renew your membership today! Your donations help conserve our local lands and the way of life we all value. Your contributions make our success possible.

Thank you from all of us at the Stowe Land Trust!

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