



# Currents

Conserving land for people, wildlife, clean water, and the future

## Stewardship: An Ongoing Commitment to Land and People

In the past two years, RRCT has improved easement monitoring, drafted baseline documents and established better landowner contact. Now we're turning to the over 200 acres that we manage. While land trust stewardship involves management by definition, boots-on-the-ground work can become quite the can of worms.

To help frame this issue, let's first own up to our role as ecosystem engineers. We have changed natural communities, the temperature of air and water and even the way sediments move across a landscape. RRCT lands have already been altered, then, and the management responsibilities we shoulder hinge upon decisions made decades ago. Two management situations forced – or at least encouraged – our

hand this spring and summer, and required very different tools.

The Chandler Brook Preserve, owned by the Town of North Yarmouth and protected by RRCT easement, features soils as productive as they are erosive. Years of mowing near a steep bank along the brook resulted in a recent slope failure. Restoration help came from Wal-Mart, which produced both native trees and volunteers to plant them along the eroding bank. As far as management goes, this is as straightforward as it gets.

Invasive bittersweet on the Littlejohn Island Preserve required a more aggressive approach. After weighing alternatives, RRCT razed all but canopy trees in severely invaded areas, and will likely turn to limited herbicide use to keep regeneration at bay. The logging that opened this land up to intense bittersweet colonization 15 years ago now requires us to clear soil-stabilizing vegetation and burn fossil fuels in the interest of protecting threats to the ecological integrity of this preserve. It isn't pretty, but we think it's our duty.

This stewardship is a work in progress, and one that we refine and define constantly.

And, whether we wield chainsaws or binoculars, merely being on the land makes us all stewards. As we

continue to open our properties to the public, please bear this in mind, and tread lightly. We promise to do the same.



Wal-Mart employees planted nearly 500 trees on the Chandler Brook Preserve this May  
Photo by Amanda Devine



Stewardship looms large – and motorized – at the Littlejohn Island Preserve  
Photo by Louisa Moore

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## Letter from the President

Thanks for your help! I don't mean that lightly. This past summer, we had more help at RRCT than ever before and it made a huge difference on our preserves and in our office. Royal River Conservation Trust is fortunate — we have a full-time director and a part-time stewardship director, but some days it seems it takes the work of five people just to keep the doors open.

Volunteers contribute to RRCT in many ways: clearing trails, stuffing envelopes, planting trees, monitoring easements, working in the office or photographing preserves. An abutter for one of our preserves hosted a reception to introduce us to the neighborhood and the people who walk there. A local farm recruited volunteers to staff last fall's Harvest Dinner.

Volunteer opportunities come in all shapes and sizes. Over 60 Wal-



Mart employees planted trees on the Chandler Brook Preserve this spring. On a colorful autumn day, a local pilot and a stay-at-home dad with a penchant for photography flew over Pisgah Hill and our preserves to provide aerial views. Half a dozen high school students cleared trails and hacked away at invasive species at the Packard Farm and Littlejohn Island preserves this summer.

I learn something from each volunteer. I stuffed envelopes with a retired

doctor who came in to help us with a membership mailing. We caught up on neighbors and debated the best internet providers, cell phone plans and recipes. I planted trees with a high school student and learned how to wrench those pervasive honeysuckle roots right out of the ground. I got a visual geology and history lesson from a Pisgah Hill volunteer as we hiked up the ridge. His arms waved wildly as he described pegmatite intrusions in granite.

I believe our volunteers learn something each time they work with us as well. We love your help and your conversation. So come join us — it's a chance to connect with your community and move our programs forward. And Amanda always brings homemade cookies!

— Gro Flatebo, President RRCT

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*Executive Director*

Amanda Devine

*Stewardship Director*

## Tom Armstrong Retires from RRCT Board

Tom Armstrong recently resigned from RRCT's board of trustees after 6 years, 2 of which he served as president. It is with great reluctance that we see him go. Tom can often be found (if you're fast enough) biking, kayaking or enjoying trails on foot or on skis. He has had adventures around the globe. A consummate outdoorsman, he has a great appreciation for the Royal River and land conservation.

During Tom's tenure and under his leadership, RRCT enjoyed growth through a variety of projects including the addition of easements on the Spear Farm Preserve in Yarmouth and the Shaker Farm project at Sabbathday Lake. Tom was behind successful efforts to create the Fels-Groves and Littlejohn Island preserves in Yarmouth. Both are wonderful examples of beautiful places in our own backyard that will now be available to future generations.

Tom's energy, enthusiasm and his years of management experience at L.L. Bean made

him a great member and leader of the board. While we will miss his presence at our meetings, we will continue to rely on him as an adviser on future projects and as an active member of RRCT. Meanwhile, Tom continues to be a leader in land conservation in Maine as a member of the boards of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Davis Family Trust. We thank him for countless hours of work and for his commitment to preserving special places in Maine.



No longer beholden to RRCT Board meetings, Tom Armstrong enjoys his newfound free time.

# Combining Heart and Mind for Land Conservation

At the root of our efforts here at RRCT is a landowner's willingness to work with us to protect their land. Discussing the future of what is often a families' largest asset is my favorite part of the job. Often this personal conversation comes only after much soul-searching and family discussion.

Most landowners I work with have a deep love of their land. Some families depend on selling their property to pay for college or retirement; others want to leave a natural legacy. RRCT is sensitive to the motivations and challenges facing landowners as they make decisions about their land.

RRCT offers landowners an alternative to the open market. Sometimes this

means protecting a portion of a parcel while leaving some land to children and grandchildren. With guidance, land conservation can sometimes provide a landowner with tax benefits.

Conservation doesn't just happen. It often starts with a landowner's wish keep land "as is" evolving into a discussion of practical considerations. In more cases than not, we find a solution that serves the heart, provides a public benefit and maintains a healthy estate.

If you or someone you know would like an initial discussion with us, please contact Henry Nichols at 847-9399 or [hnichols@rrct.org](mailto:hnichols@rrct.org).



## We Need You!

Last spring, we gathered a handful of the most creative people we know to help us come up with an idea for an annual signature event that would raise RRCT's profile and generate income. Our guests produced some wacky ideas that ranged from a road kill cook-off to a betting pool guessing the exact time

that a piano would fall through the ice on Sabbathday Lake.

In the end, we all centered on an event that starts with an activity suitable for both families and serious outdoors people, such as a run-bike-paddle or a bird census from remote corners of the watershed, and culminates in

a celebration of local food. Outdoor fun and good food: what could be better?

*We need your help* in planning and execution. If you would like to help RRCT break ground on our signature event, please write or call Henry at [hnichols@rrct.org](mailto:hnichols@rrct.org) or 847-9399.



Stewardship bloopers: To no lasting damage, the truck delivering 500 trees to the Chandler Brook Preserve last May became stuck in the mud. Karl Hawkes, former property owner and current neighbor, came to the rescue (with a little help from his tractor).

## Wish List

Sometimes our supporters have items they no longer find useful, but that we may need. Here are a few possibilities:

- Projection screen
- Folding chairs
- Functional laptop computer
- Kneeling type office chair
- Flat screen computer monitor
- Legal size filing cabinet

If you'd like to donate any of these items, call or e-mail RRCT.

## Pisgah Hill Update

RRCT continues to work with the Pisgah Hill Campaign Committee, a group of local conservationists, to conserve 200-plus acres of wildlife habitat on and around New Gloucester's second highest point. RRCT has agreements with several of the project landowners and continues discussions with others to secure these important acquisitions. When complete, the Pisgah Hill Conservation Area will be open for public enjoyment and protected for wildlife.

Bolstered by a grant from the Land for Maine's Future program, the Pisgah Hill Campaign Committee and RRCT

are making connections with people and community groups in New Gloucester and preparing requests to several charitable foundations as we raise funds to realize this outstanding community opportunity.

This past summer and fall, we have led walks up Pisgah Hill so that people can see firsthand this beautiful part of our watershed. If you would like more information or to see Pisgah Hill for yourself, please contact Henry Nichols at 847-9399 or [hnichols@rrct.org](mailto:hnichols@rrct.org) so that we may arrange landowner permission for a visit.



## Sabbathday to the Sea

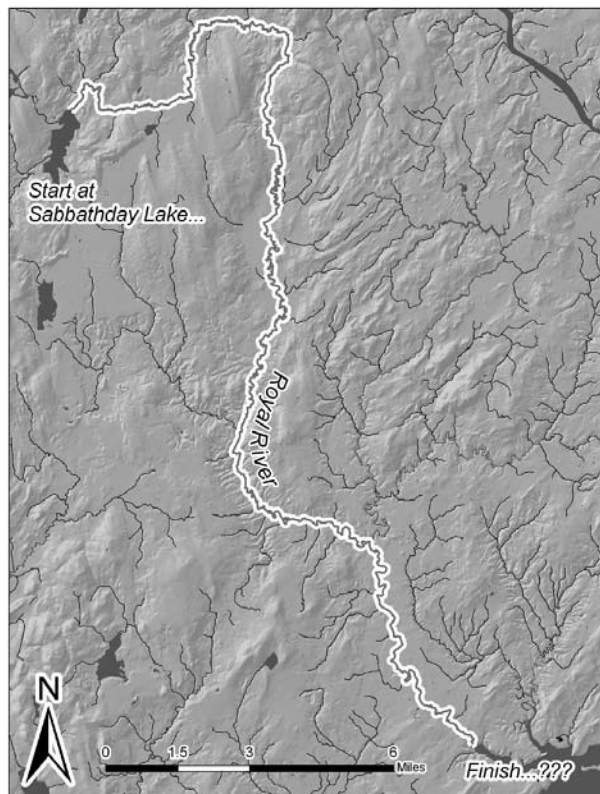
How would you like to be a part of a local expedition aimed at following the entire course of the Royal River, from its birth at the headwaters of Sabbathday Lake to the sea? Be prepared for some short portaging, flat-water, quick water, and Class II whitewater. Depending on the water level, we may have to get out and drag our boats along the Royal as it leaves the north end of Sabbathday Lake.

We plan to leave Saturday, April 24, 2010 at 7 a.m. from the south end of Sabbathday Lake and the parking lot of the Grange. We'll paddle down the lake to the outlet, and then proceed over the Outlet Road and on to the Royal River. We will then paddle north through Upper Gloucester, cross over into Androscoggin County and Auburn, around Peacock Hill, and then on to the Intervale area of New Gloucester. Depending on conditions and energy level, we'll call it a day somewhere in New Gloucester, perhaps pulling out at Route 231 (Intervale Road). The next day, we'll continue the trip, paddling past Pineland Farms and through Gray and North Yarmouth, ending in Yarmouth just shy of the Atlantic Ocean.

While this is an ambitious trip, spring flow should lighten the load. Special treats will await hardy travelers at each conservation easement RRCT holds along the river. Suitable craft for this adventure include canoes or kayaks light enough to drag or portage. This will be a good chance to experience our watershed firsthand, and hopefully before it awakens to

the annual emergence of black flies and mosquitoes! In case of flooding or poor weather, the rain date will be May 1, 2010.

In addition to a canoe or kayak, participants should bring food, water and a lifejacket and wear warm non-cotton clothing. Should you be unable to paddle, there may well be some space to sit in a canoe — leave the paddling to others! Please email us at [info@rrct.org](mailto:info@rrct.org) if you'd like to be reminded about it again in the spring. Forty-four miles of fun and adventure: what else are you going to do this mud season?



Over its forty-four mile run from the source to the sea, the Royal River takes twists and turns through New Gloucester, Gray, Auburn, North Yarmouth and Yarmouth.

## Down On The Farm

Old Crow Farm in Durham represents a new direction for RRCT — an effort to re-establish a working farm adjacent to the Royal River watershed. Steve Sinisi has worked with RRCT, the state Department of Agriculture and the Land for Maine's Future program to purchase land where he'll raise cattle and hogs. A RRCT conservation easement on the land allows these uses, as well as the construction of a home and farm buildings for Sinisi and his family.

"We want to re-establish what used to be a working farm into one again," Sinisi says. "Our long-range goal is to have a little store so we can sell retail as well as wholesale."



Old Crow Farm represents a departure for RRCT, which until now has concentrated on more traditional conservation easements. "We wanted to protect farmland in the vicinity of a tributary to the Royal River," said Linzee Weld, who spearheaded the project for RRCT. The property was once a major dairy farm in the town, she added, and the former owner helped Sinisi through a below-market "bargain sale." One benefit of the project is the possibility of connecting the farm via a hiking trail to other preserved land in the area, Weld said.

Sinisi has already raised and sold ten hogs, including 400 pounds of pork he sold to last summer's Common

Ground Fair. Shares in the six steers still on the farm are still available; Sinisi plans to sell beef in 100- to 125-pound lots at \$5.35 per pound. All animals are free range and raised using organic practices. (For information about purchasing beef, call Sinisi at 837-8625.) Land involved in the Old Crow Farm project totals 70.1 acres, including the five-acre homestead area.



Steve Sinisi carries the farming torch at Old Crow Farm (formerly the Davis Farm)

## Generous Support from Organizations

Each year Royal River Conservation Trust (RRCT) staff and volunteers seek grants from foundations and government entities to work on specific projects to further conservation in the Royal River region. Grant support has been critical to our success to date. Over the past year, RRCT has received important funding awards from the following organizations:

- **The Horizon Foundation** for landowner outreach and our stewardship program.
- **The Bank of American Foundation** and **Patagonia** for invasive species management projects.
- **The Davis Conservation Foundation** and **The Maine Community Foundation** for our merger with the Pownal Land Trust.
- **The Town of Yarmouth** for replanting/trail work on preserves.
- **The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership** for the Pisgah Hill project appraisals.
- **The Fore River Foundation** for general operations.
- **Land for Maine's Future** for the Davis Farm easement purchase.
- **Wal-Mart** for riparian buffer replanting.
- **Hancock Lumber** for its generous donation of wood for bridges.
- **Maine Land Trust Network / LL Bean** for access improvements on our Intervale Preserve.

We are extremely grateful to each of these organizations for their confidence in and support of our programs.



*Deschampsia*  
Illustration by Amanda Devine

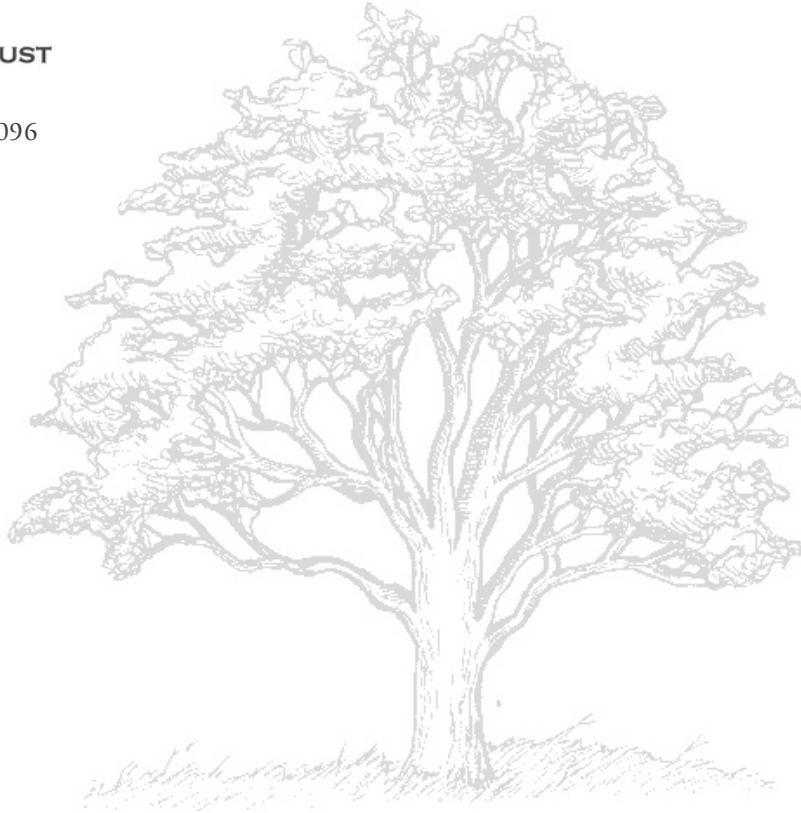


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## Calendar of Events

For additional information call RRCT at 847-9399 or write to [info@rrct.org](mailto:info@rrct.org)

**November 15th, 10am to 3pm.** Pownal Trail Work Day. Please meet at Edna and Lucy's Restaurant on Route 9 in Pownal to carpool/caravan to the trailhead. Late-comers, please park on the road shoulder just south of 837 Elmwood Road and follow the flagging.

**November 18th, 7:00pm.** The Acadian Coast by Kayak. A slide show by Michael Perry. American Legion Log Cabin, 96 Main Street, Yarmouth.

**November 19th, 6:30pm.** Pownal Scenic and Historical Society Annual Meeting. Join us for three short presentations about Bradbury Mountain State Park and RRCT's vision for Pownal. Mallet Hall, Route 9, Pownal.

**January.** Start of RRCT's Winter Photo Contest. Stay tuned for details!

**February 26th, 6pm.** (Almost) Full Moon Snowshoe at Shaker Bog. Check our website for details on where to meet!

**March, date and details TBA.** Lion to Lamb Party honoring our faithful members.

**March 13th, 10:00am.** Winter Tracking, Chandler Brook Preserve in North Yarmouth.

**April, date and details TBA.** Vernal Pool Walk in New Gloucester's Intervale.

### Membership Card

Thank you for sustaining the Royal River Conservation Trust with a membership gift. Our success is directly attributable to membership support from people living, working and playing in the Royal River region. Please make a gift of \$35, 50, 100, 250, 300 or more today.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ I wish to make my tax-deductible membership gift

of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ by check credit card

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

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I'd also like to help by volunteering.

Please contact me.  Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_



**THANK YOU!!!**

RRCT will not share your information with anyone. Member benefits include our biannual newsletter and invitations to special events.



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