



# Currents

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

## Purchases, Easements Advance Pisgah Hill Project

Two recent land purchases and a donated conservation easement have significantly advanced the Royal River Conservation Trust's ambitious land conservation project at Pisgah Hill in New Gloucester.

On Sept. 14 the trust purchased 46 acres from Jane Arbuckle. The parcel offers access to the crest of Pisgah Hill from the Dougherty Road. Last February RRCT purchased the 108-acre Hobson parcel for this same project, which will eventually provide public access to over 200 acres of wildlife habitat, nestled in a large block of undeveloped land in New Gloucester.

In addition, RRCT has accepted a conservation easement donated by Mark and Stacie Power of New Gloucester, covering 10 acres of forested land adjacent to the Hobson parcel. Mark Power also helped RRCT raise funds to purchase other parcels for this project.

RRCT plans to establish a trail system through its newly acquired parcels, ultimately connecting with the Bradbury to Pineland Corridor that runs seven miles through the region. It expects to open Pisgah Hill to the almost 200,000 people who live within the triangle bounded by Portland, Lewiston and Brunswick.

"Our Pisgah Hill Preserve is taking shape," said RRCT board president Merrie Woodworth. "This was a focus area identified in our Conservation Plan for the Royal River watershed."

Land for Maine's Future (LMF) contributed over half the purchase price for the Arbuckle

and Hobson parcels. Other funders included the Casco Bay Estuary Program, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, The Margaret Burnham Charitable Trust, The William Wharton Trust, and Maine Natural Resource Conservation Funds. The Quimby Family Foundation is supporting initial work towards a management plan on the parcel. RRCT raised the balance of acquisition funds through grants, business contributions and individual donations.

The Pisgah Hill Project provides wildlife habitat for many species, including raptors, songbirds, upland game birds, waterfowl, moose, deer, black bear, coyotes, snowshoe hare, fox, mustelids (weasels), beavers, porcupine, other small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

"We envision a matrix of conserved working landscapes (farms and forests), riparian lands, wetlands, and open space knitting our communities together," said Woodworth.

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## Dams and the Royal River



Seventy-five people attended the second of two forums on the Royal River's dams, sponsored by RRCT and Maine Rivers. See story on page 4.

## Letter from the President

Change is an interesting topic when you are part of a land trust. RRCT's mission is to preserve and protect special places for future generations to enjoy. We protect land to preserve wildlife habitat and to provide public access to woods, rivers and the ocean and places with hilltop views that might be lost to future development.

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### STAFF

Kyle Warren  
*Stewardship Coordinator*

We also protect local working farms. In this respect, we try to keep things the same in the face of change. Growth can be good, but we need to balance that growth with the stewardship of natural landscapes that make this region such a wonderful place to work and live.

Still, change can be the impetus behind new approaches to our work. It can energize us. For example, new technologies make it possible to communicate with our membership quickly and efficiently. Our Facebook page, for example, is where we share with you up-to-date information about what we are doing at RRCT. There you can see photos of some of our

latest projects and you can learn about upcoming events you might enjoy. We also email members who share their email addresses with us about events of interest. We may offer the newsletter by email in the near future. And, of course, our website contains a great deal of easily accessible information and maps of our properties.

The Friends of Royal River, which evolved into Royal River Conservation Trust, was organized in 1992. We are about to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its founding. There have been many changes in the world around us over those 20 years. It has been an exciting and productive time for this organization. For the past nine years, Henry Nichols has been the leader behind our successes. With the help of many of you, he has brought us to where we are today. We are very proud of what he has helped us achieve and thank him for leading the way. The organization is strong and poised to continue to pursue our mission as we head into the next 20 years of this organization's development.

We must now embrace the change that comes with new leadership. It is an opportunity to take another look at where we are as an organization and where we would like to go in the next 20 years. There are exciting possibilities. We continue to depend on your guidance, support and energy to help us achieve our goals.



— Merrie Woodworth  
President, RRCT

## Transitions at RRCT

Last summer, after nine years with the organization, Henry Nichols resigned as executive director of RRCT. During his tenure, Henry built a legacy to be proud of. Specifically, he:

- oversaw the merger of the Friends of the Royal River with the four land trusts in the Royal River watershed, creating one regional land trust for twelve towns.
- increased RRCT's membership base to over 350 households.
- recognized the need for RRCT to hire a stewardship coordinator and found the necessary funding to do that.
- led RRCT's strategic planning effort,

shepherding participants through many months of meetings.

- acquired conservation easements covering 1,500 acres and purchased ten properties with over 400 acres of conservation land for public use.
- raised over \$150,000 in dedicated stewardship funds to ensure that RRCT properties are always cared for.

Henry's unflinching loyalty and ability to get the job done with minimal resources was fundamental to RRCT's development from a fledgling organization to a regional land trust. He left his mark on this watershed for future generations. Our good wishes

follow him as he pursues another path. A search committee began screening candidates in early November, and the board of directors expects to hire a new Executive Director by the end of the year. "The experience level of candidates is incredible," said Bill Taylor, chair of the search committee. "RRCT is fortunate to have this talented cadre of people from which to choose a new Executive Director. Any one of these candidates can hit the ground running, building on our strong foundation."

This is an exciting time for RRCT, as the organization looks forward to new energy.

# Volunteer Profile: Lucy Taliaferro



Lucy Taliaferro of South Freeport recently graduated from the College of Charleston with a degree in biology. Reports have placed the unemployment rate for college graduates under the age of 25 as high as 54 percent, and while somewhat discouraged by this outlook, Lucy decided to volunteer while she ponders where she wants to live and work. She spent the fall volunteering for RRCT, working on a variety of stewardship projects with stewardship coordinator Kyle Warren.

"Nonprofits are a big part of the community and having the time to volunteer and help out is great," she says. "I know I won't always have that time."

Lucy has spent her volunteer time monitoring conservation easements, trail building and waging war against invasive bittersweet. "It is a nice feeling to see a project through to completion and I really enjoy meeting people and finding out more about the area," she says. "I especially like the monitoring work because I get to walk through fields and woods and enjoy nature."

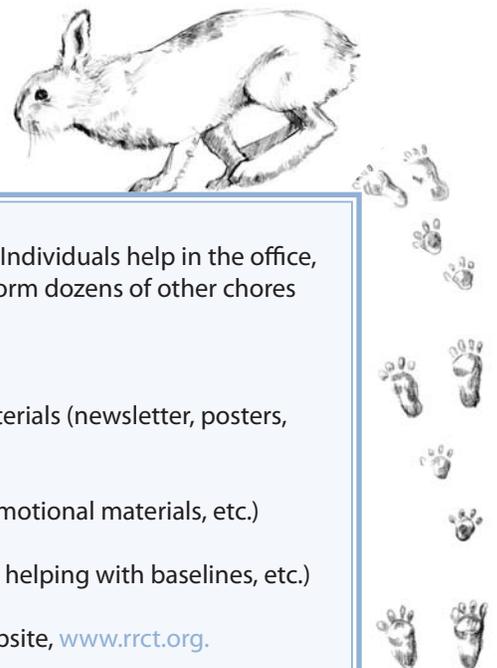
The employment outlook isn't entirely hopeless: Lucy will be heading to Sugarbush Ski area in Vermont to teach skiing this winter. Thanks, Lucy, for choosing to use your "down time" to volunteer with us, and enjoy the slopes this winter!

## Wish List

RRCT could use some up-to-date office equipment. Our needs include :

- a color printer (with help getting it on line and functioning)
- a wood conference table to seat three to four people
- a comfortable office chair with wheels
- ArcGIS version 10 software for map making.

If you're in a position to donate or know of potential donations of such items, call us at 847-9399 or email [info@rrct.org](mailto:info@rrct.org).



## Volunteer!

RRCT is a small nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers. Individuals help in the office, man our events, monitor easements, assist in stewardship and perform dozens of other chores around the watershed.

Specifically, we're looking for:

- volunteer artists/designers to help develop print and web materials (newsletter, posters, flyers, web pages, etc.)
- people to help plan and coordinate special events
- office helpers (mailings, filing, database entry, distributing promotional materials, etc.)
- folks willing to help with trail maintenance and construction
- volunteer stewards (including annual monitoring of preserves, helping with baselines, etc.)

If you'd like to help out, contact us at (207) 847-9399 or visit our website, [www.rrct.org](http://www.rrct.org).

## Films, Forum Highlight Royal River's Dams

The future of a pair of town-owned dams in Yarmouth was the topic of two well-attended meetings, both co-sponsored by RRCT and Maine Rivers. The dams at Bridge Street and East Elm Street both date from the 19th century, when they were built for industrial purposes. Today, despite efforts to provide fish passage and the existence of a small hydro plant at the lower dam, both dams have become problematical. Keeping them as they are will involve expensive maintenance (not to mention providing fish passage), while removing them translates into high costs as well.

The two existing dams are remnants, explained Yarmouth town manager Nat Tupper, who noted that at one time the Royal River was dammed at eight different places. Towns, industries, and citizens once used the river to dump their sewage and power their mills; today the river is far cleaner and valued for other purposes. "We now need to turn to face the river," Tupper remarked during the Nov. 1 forum, which attracted more than 75 people. "We need to live up to this special responsibility." What would the character of the river be without dams, he asked. What are the costs involved? Town councilors are so far undecided — "it's rather refreshing," he said.



Curtis Bohlen of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership served as moderator of the dams forum; in the background are two of the panelists, Mike Chelminski (left) and Andy Goode.

Andy Goode of the Atlantic Salmon Federation, a panelist at the Nov. 1 session, noted that unlike the Androscoggin River and waterways to the east, the Royal River isn't designated salmon habitat. Whether Atlantic salmon would swim upriver if the dams were removed is unknown, but other species including alewives and shad could be expected in the upper reaches. Providing fish passage with the dams still in place, Goode said, would be difficult and expensive. "It's hard to know [what would work] without drawing down" the impoundments behind the dams, he said. In fact, Yarmouth opened the lower dam recently and found that at low flow

the level drops about three feet, and that at regular flow there's no change. A drawdown at the upper dam at East Elm Street hasn't been tried yet because it's more complicated, but many in town agree that a drawdown there would be a good next step.

Mike Chelminski of Stantec Consulting Engineers, who studied the dams last year for the town of Yarmouth, shared information about other dam projects at Topsham, Wiscasset and Bradley in Maine, plus Rowley, Massachusetts. In all cases both removal and fish passage (the two alternatives in most situations) cost anywhere from \$55,000 to \$1.3 million.

Attendees at the Nov. 1 forum asked about often-unintended effects of removing dams, such as releasing toxics (not a large problem in the Royal except for a "hotspot" below Bridge Street), loss of a water supply for some hydrants upstream, effects on bridge abutments, and the loss of hydropower potential at Bridge Street. This last effect, Tupper said, would be inconsequential from a financial standpoint: despite 270 kilowatts of potential capacity, the dam has earned only \$2,600 for the town over the past 20 years.

An earlier meeting on Oct. 25 featured a pair of short films on dam removal in several other New England communities.



## Trail Improvements on Littlejohn

EnviroLogix, a Maine company located in Portland, chose RRCT as a partner for part of its first annual employee community service initiative. On a Wednesday in October, nine of the company's 116 employees joined RRCT Stewardship Coordinator Kyle Warren at Littlejohn Island Preserve to make trail improvements that will reduce sedimentation in Casco Bay and improve the recreation experience for our guests.

## Photo Contest Winners Announced



Grand prize winner of RRCT's photo contest was Bridget Gordan of Yarmouth, with her photo titled "Coexist." Her entry was chosen from a wonderful selection of photos from around the watershed. Gordan will receive a \$200 L.L. Bean gift certificate.



Coexist, by Bridget Gordan, Yarmouth, won first place

There were also five category winners. Chris Becksvort from New Gloucester won with "Red Eft," in the wildlife category. Natural landscapes category winner was "Royal River Moon" by RRCT board member Gro Flatebo from Yarmouth. For people and nature, the winner was "Snowshoe" by Jeff Gervais of Durham. "Trail bridge" by John Bald of Brunswick won in the RRCT property category and "July flowers" by Jamie Wiley from North Yarmouth was chosen as the winner of the nature category.

The judges for the first semiannual photo contest included Jodee Ristich from North Yarmouth. Jodee is the

daughter of the renowned mycologist and nature photographer Sam Ristich. RRCT hosted a retrospective by Jodee on her father and his work earlier this year. Also a judge was Mike Leonard, a locally well-respected photographer and member of the Portland Photography Club. Mike teaches informative classes for aspiring and seasoned photographers. Our third judge, Leslie Wagner, is a professional photographer from Yarmouth.

Thanks to all of the entrants and judges! RRCT will run another contest beginning in January 2012. Check our website for details.

## Intervale Preserve Opened to the Public

Three acres of once indistinguishable forest along Route 231 in New Gloucester now offer visitors marsh views and quiet forest walks. RRCT has opened up a little-known preserve in New Gloucester's Intervale region for recreational use, thanks to a grant from The L.L. Bean Land Trust Grant Program administered through the Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

When RRCT merged with the New Gloucester Land Trust, it inherited a three-acre preserve that had no trails, parking, or signage. Donated by Jan Erickson and Nan Butterfield in 1991, the parcel had sat quietly unused for two decades. It was a perfect fit for L.L. Bean's grant criteria, which are geared to improving public access to land trust properties.

With \$5,000 from this program, RRCT developed and marked a trail through the property, improving it with bog bridging where needed. It erected a kiosk and sign to welcome visitors. Volunteers came to two work days to mark and clear the trail and install bog bridges.

As a neighbor told Kyle Warren, RRCT stewardship coordinator, "We've lived next door for several years and never knew this property was open. Now we use it all the time."



RRCT Stewardship Coordinator Kyle Warren oversaw a bridging project.



Projects included construction of a kiosk with explanatory signage.



### Membership Card

If you are not already a 2011 Member or 2011 Annual Fund Giver, won't you please support RRCT's programs with a donation today? 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.

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I'd also like to help by volunteering.  
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**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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