

Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust

Winter 2015 Newsletter



U.S. Senator Susan Collins speaks at the Orbeton Stream Celebration

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Orbeton Stream Celebration - A Great Event for Conservation in Maine

The Phillips Area Community Center in Phillips, Maine was the scene of a great celebration on Saturday, February 21st, for the completion of the Orbeton Stream Project. There were a number of national conservation and political figures in attendance, including U.S. Senator Susan Collins, U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Arthur "Butch" Blazer, and Ben Tucker, the Regional Representative for U.S. Senator Angus S. King. A number of state and local representatives were in attendance (Senator Tom Saviello, R-Wilton, and Rep. Russell Black, R-Wilton, among them) as were representatives of the many conservation groups who were involved with the Orbeton Stream project.

The Trust for Public Land did a wonderful job of hosting the event and provided refreshments for the estimated 150 attendees. Special thanks to Diano Circo and Wolfe Tone, who put on a great show. The food was excellent.

This project could not have been completed without the local communities being on board and, as you can see, they really wanted to get out and celebrate this special achievement.

Linkletter Timberlands President Richard Linkletter was also in attendance, and of course this project could not have happened without Linkletter's generosity and assistance. The public will have access to ITS 84/89 snowmobile trails, the Moose Loop ATV system, the Fly Rod Crosby Trail and the new Appalachian Trail Berry Pickers side trail. An important section of the Appalachian Trail has been

buffered from incompatible development. Moreover, the conservation of the Orbeton Stream parcel will allow for a new official Appalachian Trail side trail to be constructed this summer.

The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust would like to thank our members and donors, without whom this project would never have been completed. With your help the Land Trust raised nearly \$200,000 for the purchase of the conservation easement which is now held by the State of Maine.

For more about the Orbeton Stream Project, please see the additional articles in this newsletter or check out website at www.matlt.org.



Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust Executive Director Simon Rucker speaks with Senator Susan Collins at the Orbeton Stream Celebration event.

Living with climate change: What a newly conserved Franklin County forest can teach us

By Peter S. McKinley Ph.D.

This article originally appeared in the Bangor Daily News on January 12, 2015.

The recently announced Orbeton Stream project that conserves 5,774 acres in Madrid Township represents a victory for Maine on many levels. The forests and waters of these slopes foster the region's core fish and wildlife populations and essential stands of northern mixed-wood tree species. As such, these lands exemplify the very heart of the forest values we expect and depend upon for jobs, recreation and our way of life.

After identifying the importance of these lands at a time when few others were taking notice, The Wilderness Society and Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust worked together over the past nine years toward this important conservation outcome. In 2006, I was fortunate enough to author an ecological study of the High Peaks region, including this Orbeton Stream parcel, as an independent consultant for the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, which submitted the initial application for funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Legacy program in 2010. After that, the Trust for Public Land was invited to the project for its conservation real estate expertise.

The Wilderness Society helped fund that initial study and several years later hired me to its office in Maine to continue working on behalf of this large, forested landscape that is so vital to jobs, tourism, hunting, fishing and conservation of Maine's wildlife.

The Orbeton Stream project makes sense as a means of conserving treasured forest lands in the face of development pressures. But the project also makes abundant good sense in light of a changing climate that will require our trees and wildlife to adapt and change in the coming years and decades. That adaptation and change will occur best in landscapes that capture the entire elevation range from valleys along the Sandy River to the alpine ridges and summits supporting plants and animals more typically found in arctic tundra or boreal forests of Canada. This conservation project is right in between those two extremes and includes the Orbeton Stream itself, which supports breeding Atlantic Salmon and exemplary native brook trout populations. The surrounding watershed area is home to moose, bear, deer, grouse, pine marten and multiple species of migratory songbirds that arrive from the tropics each year to breed. As the "middle zone" of this mountain

landscape, this area also serves as connective habitat that will be needed to support a variety of adaptation mechanisms to climate change. Many of these adaptation mechanisms will require the forest habitat as a longterm refuge and as a connector to other parts of the mountain landscape and to the greater forests spanning multiple states and Canadian provinces.

At The Wilderness Society, we recognize the need for a broad array of forest management options that will be required to conserve all the values we expect from our forests and waters. We call this a "portfolio approach" to conservation. Those options also are needed to maximize the chances for our forests and wildlife to adapt and transition as smoothly as possible to habitat disruptions caused by climate change.

The first step is to maintain "forest as forest" as the Orbeton Stream project does. Linkletter Timberlands, which owns the property, sold a conservation easement to the state of Maine. The easement protects the land from development and allows for a range of forest management and use options benefitting many human needs.

Under a portfolio approach to conservation in an era of climate change, we will need a range of land management tools, including active intervention and, just as importantly, areas where the management approach is in fact no management — where forests change at their own pace.

As with a financial portfolio managed to spread risk across a diversified array of investment strategies, a diverse conservation management portfolio also provides a range of strategies to conserve assets and assist adaptation in an uncertain future. The High Peaks landscape and this particular conservation project are valuable assets that provide returns to all of us today. Through protection from conversion, we expect these lands to be a valuable asset for generations to come.

The Wilderness Society thanks the project partners on the Orbeton Stream project, the easement funders, and the diverse stakeholders who collaborated and found common ground on the project. Most of all, we congratulate the people of Maine for this important step in conserving Maine's natural treasures.

Peter McKinley, Ph.D., is climate adaptation lead ecologist at The Wilderness Society in Hallowell. He has worked in ecological research and conservation for 25 years. He currently serves as Vice President of the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust.

Orbeton Stream – A Conservation Success We Can All Be Proud Of

By Lloyd Griscom

This article originally appeared in the Sun Journal on January 11, 2015.

As a local landowner with a camp near the Appalachian Trail in Madrid Township, I became aware of a desire to protect the back country area around the headwaters of the Orbeton Stream. I knew this was a special place — my uncle once owned forestland here, and despite living all over the country, this area is what we consider our home. I started taking people who had any interest for a hike to the summit of Saddleback Jr., which overlooks the Orbeton. One such group was the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust.

Late in 2006, I joined the board of directors of the Land Trust and, with many others, started to advocate for the protection of the Orbeton Stream area. The parcel, which consists of roughly 5,800 acres of working forest, features outstanding mountain vistas, pristine mountain streams, an ample road system, and recreational use and opportunities for ATVs, snowmobiles, cross-country skiers, hikers, hunters, birdwatchers and fishermen.

One of the most memorable stretches of Appalachian Trail runs along the northern border of the property and the experience of wildness it provides hikers is protected by the forests of Orbeton.

This beautiful, wild expanse of land was specifically indicated by Peter S. McKinley, conservation biologist at The Wilderness Society, as of critical importance as Maine enters a new era of climate change, forest products industry upheaval, and an aging demographic. McKinley's ecological study of the High Peaks for the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust led to a growing understanding of the importance of this area and to the creation of the High Peaks Initiative.

At about the same time, a group of local folks (myself included) formed the High Peaks Alliance with a mission to ensure and enhance public recreational access and opportunities in Maine's high peaks. Their objective was public access and finding a way to coordinate the various interests so that we could all get 80 percent of what we wanted by cooperating together. Early innovative and collaborative work by Chris Beach and others produced a compromise 100-foot corridor that was transferred from the National Park Service to Maine's Bureau of Public Lands, permitting a legal, multiuse route over the Appalachian Trail at Eddy Pond known as the Saddleback Connector.

That crossing permitted the creation of the Moose Loop ATV System and settled some difficult issues.

Sen. Susan Collins had language in a bill on the Appalachian Trail Corridor that was helpful in bringing resolution to that issue and her support for this project was essential to its success and funding.

An earlier 2010 Forest Legacy Project in the high peaks failed to get funding. The Trust for Public Land was brought in because of its larger capacity to see conservation projects to completion, like the one we are celebrating.

The key factor in conserving Orbeton Stream is the collaboration among the various groups, all of whom seemed to have divergent interests: forest products versus ecology, motorized trail use versus non-motorized, Private ownership versus state ownership. In the end, what we realized by coming to the table and working together was that conservation doesn't have to be about "getting what you want" – it can and indeed is about "getting what's best for everybody."

Would some environmentalists have been happier with an ecological reserve without ATVs and loggers? Maybe. Would some ATV and snowmobile riders have been happier with continued private ownership of the land? Maybe. But every single outdoor club, group or organization in the area supported the project and is excited to get out on the land with the rest of us.

The ITS 84/89 snowmobile trails, the Moose Loop ATV system, the Fly Rod Crosby Trail and the new Appalachian Trail Berry Pickers side trail all benefit from the guarantee of public access, not to mention Linkletter Timberlands getting support for its working forest operations.

In a celebration of the Saddleback Connector, Collins said, "in Maine, the environment is the economy." Conservation is a form of economic development that protects our brand.

Conservation benefits all of us, and the Orbeton Stream project is an excellent model for the future of Maine.

Lloyd Griscom serves on the board of directors of the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust. He owns and operates Peace and Plenty Organic Blueberry Farm in Phillips with his wife. He is also vice president of High Peaks Alliance and a trustee of the Sandy River Land Trust.

Lighthawk Conservation Easement Monitoring Flight

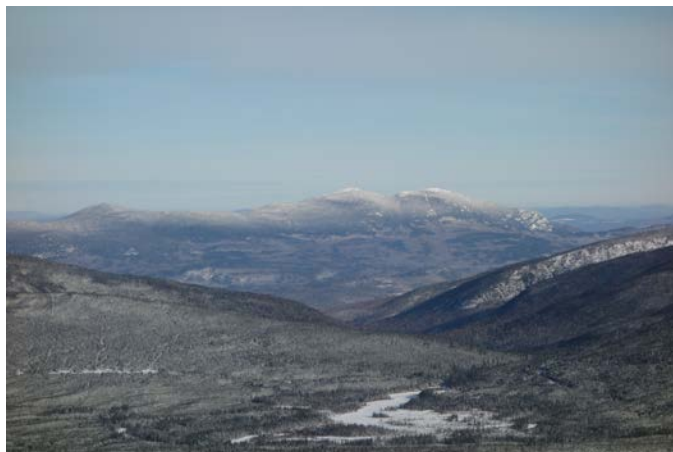
The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust was fortunate enough to receive a free monitoring and management flight from LightHawk, a national organization devoted to providing conservation services to land trusts for the purposes of collecting data, imagery, and observations about conserved lands.

This Lighthawk flight enabled Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust to aerially monitor the Mount Abraham easement and compile data and images for a new management plan for Saddleback Mountain. Without this generous donation, we would have had to expend many hours and many thousands of dollars on these critical land trust duties.

Special thanks to Jonathan Milne, Atlantic and Midwest Region Program Manager for LightHawk, and pilot Jim Knowles.



Mount Abraham



The Bigelow Range



Saddleback Ridge



Looking west towards the New Hampshire border

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Great Maine Outdoor Table Rock Snowshoe Hike

By Deborah Carroll



The view from Table Rock

Unlike most recent mornings, Sunday, February 22, 2015, dawned mostly clear and bright. With a few inches of fresh snow having landed the evening before and making for sloppy driving conditions, our merry all-girl band of crazy sisters, a mother-daughter duo, BFFs, and the fearless Shyla-dog arrived at the trail head 15 minutes late to find Simon, our Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust guide, waiting with a bag of fresh donuts and a big smile.

Snow shoes attached, packs adjusted and poles locked, we began our trek to Table Rock on Baldpate Mountain in Grafton Notch State Park. Table Rock is a gigantic and relatively flat rock that sticks out from the mountainside affording those brave enough to venture out onto it a 180 degree-plus view featuring Old Speck – a 4,000+ footer – that sits directly across the notch, and Sunday River Whitecap's peak in the distance.

With an elevation gain of just about 1,000', and just over a mile to our destination ahead of us, we trekked through a few inches of fresh snow on a small section of the Appalachian Trail that had, thankfully, been broken by someone else several days earlier. Throughout most of our hike the narrow trail was banked by hip-deep snow on either side. Anyone stepping off of the packed trail found themselves sunk deep into about 4' of light snow – especially once when Linda's snowshoe was off and earlier when a little instant karma caught up with Terri as she tried to dump snow onto someone's head from an overhead branch causing her to lose her balance, trip, and fall into a tree well, much to everyone's delight.

About a half mile into the hike, the AT meets up with Table Rock Trail on the right. By that point in time sunny skies had brought warmer (again, relatively) temperatures and most of us began removing and stowing layers of clothing.

As we continued on toward Table Rock, the trail climbed gradually through beautiful woods with filtered sunlight. We laughed and chatted our way past evergreens heavy with snow, hardwoods that had lost their leaves allowing us a few moments of glorious full sun, over the occasional fallen log and stream, and up several steep sections where the footing was difficult but which, with a little help from our friends and trusty snowshoes, we took in stride.

After an hour or so on the trail we walked onto Table Rock. Although the wind had picked up, we were rewarded with lovely views up and down the valley. Snacks and beverages were passed around and photos of vistas and happy faces snapped before it was time to turn around and head back down.

The hike out was very pleasurable, with soft snow treating middle-aged knees kindly and steep sections making for great snowshoe "luge" runs and lots of laughs.

Returning to our vehicles we said goodbye to Simon and made our way to the Sunday River Brew Pub for lunch and laughs, and to plant the seeds for our next adventure.

Deborah Carroll is one of the crazy sisters whose sense of adventure brings them to places like mountain tops and wild rivers. She is a freelance writer and photographer who "has a thing" for great food and has been known to jump out of airplanes on a moment's notice.



Maine Appalachian
Trail Land Trust
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We need your help! The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust depends on the support of our members – like you – in order to continue our mission of protecting the land along the Appalachian Trail for public use. In addition to our work on White Cap Mountain, we are currently in talks to work on projects totaling 12,000 acres along the trail. These substantial conservation lands would provide much-needed protection for the trail in the High Peaks Region of Western Maine.

To make a donation, please send in the form with your check or head over to <http://matlt.org/support-our-work/> to make your contribution online. **We also accept gifts of stock and can work with your financial advisors.** Please call us at 207-808-2073 or email at info@matlt.org if you'd like to discuss giving options with our staff.



Thank you for your continuing support of the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust! Your donation supports our ongoing project work and allows us to continue operations, fund stewardship activities and protect land along the Appalachian Trail.

____ \$1,000 ____ \$500 ____ \$100 ____ \$50 ____ \$25 ____ \$10 \$____ (other amount)

Please make checks payable to: **"Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust"**

Name: _____

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Your donation is tax deductible. Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.