We recently conserved 22 acres of land next to Tiger Hill Community Forest! This conservation acquisition protects critical wetlands and important upland forest associated with the Northwest River, Sebago Lake’s second largest tributary. Additionally, the land supports rare natural communities like a leatherleaf fen, and habitat for critically threatened species like the northern long-eared bat and small-whorled pogonia, a member of the orchid family.

The land belonged to the family of John Douglass for over 100 years. John Douglass’ granddaughters, Gloria Eldridge, Linda Deering and her husband, George, and Laurel Smith, didn’t want to see the land developed, and decided to sell it to the Trust.

The Douglass family long allowed public access on the land, including an informal hand-carry boat launch. The family wanted others to have access to the river so they can enjoy the unique and beautiful waterway for years to come.

Dana Deering, John Douglass’ great grandson, worked with LELT for over a year to see his family’s land conserved. “I am thrilled to know that the land we always called the Winn Meadow and which my grandmother gave to me, is now conserved,” he said. “I have wanted to make sure that significant wetland would be preserved and protected and now I know that it is in good hands going forward.”

As soon as conditions allow we will get to work constructing a small parking area off of Folly Road that will serve as the primary access point for the Community Forest. We will also formalize a hand-carry boat launch on the newly conserved property to provide better access for kayakers and canoeists to the Northwest River. We will finally get to celebrate the conservation of the whole Community Forest this summer with some paddles on the Northwest River, volunteer trail work opportunities, and walks to explore the cultural history of the area.

Funding for the expansion of Tiger Hill Community Forest was provided by the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, Portland Water District, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, Sebago Clean Waters, The Robert and Dorothy Goldberg Charitable Foundation and many other generous families and individuals.
This past year has been one of incredible change and loss. So many rituals, routines, and patterns that we all took for granted were suddenly and traumatically upended. For myself, and I imagine many of you as well, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel has helped to ease the emotional and physical pain wrought by the pandemic. Now, as vaccinations ramp up, there is finally the sense that perhaps the end is near.

...Oh how I wish we could say the same about our global climate crisis. While we collectively endured the temporary changes wrought by COVID, the permanent changes happening to the global climate system continue to accelerate. Changes in the Gulf of Maine, warming 99% faster relative to global seas, lead to a recent border dispute over lobster fishing grounds between Maine and Canadian lobster fishermen and women – the first dispute of its kind in modern times. Deforestation in tropical forests near the equator, the globe’s single largest terrestrial carbon sink, continues unchecked despite the outcry of the international community of nations.

Unlike COVID, we do not have the benefit of a truly miraculous vaccine to safely extricate ourselves from the global climate crisis. But we do have tools, and there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the best tools are “natural climate solutions” – i.e. mitigation efforts that fortify and improve existing natural systems to remove and store more greenhouse gases. And wouldn’t you know it, forestland conservation is perhaps one of the most useful and effective natural climate solutions we know of. Trees

process and store carbon (to the tune of 650,000 metric tonnes of carbon on lands you have helped Loon Echo protect since 1987), but we are also learning that healthy forest soils may store even more carbon than their strong limbed upstairs neighbors.

So what is Loon Echo doing to address the climate crisis? For starters, we are evaluating all of the conservation lands you have helped us protect to determine where and how we can improve the capacity of our forestlands to store more carbon. Removing low quality stems to increase the biomass of mature trees, converting former monoculture pine forests to enhance biodiversity and soil quality, and many other techniques are now at the forefront of our forest management decisions.

Likewise, as we embark on new land protection efforts with you, we are establishing review protocols that specifically consider the carbon sequestration capacity of any given parcel of land. And this is only the beginning. Later this year we’ll be announcing an innovative partnership that will enhance our capacity to conserve more forests and sequester more carbon from the atmosphere.

Friends, there is no miracle solution to our climate crisis. But there are actions we can take now to defend our planet’s natural systems, protect the most vulnerable human and wild communities, and in doing so pursue the noble causes of equity and justice for all. Supporting Loon Echo Land Trust and land conservation in Maine’s Lake Region, as you have so generously done before, continues to be one of the most impactful actions you can make – now more than ever.

Matt Markot, LELT Executive Director
IN 2020, WE BROUGHT ON TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS. WELCOME, STEVE & ALANNA!

STEVE MORTIMER

Steve has 45 years of experience in the for- and not-for-profit sectors, having served as senior operations executive at an international insurance company, chief operating officer at an HMO, senior manager at management consulting firm Accenture, and executive director at three Maine nonprofits. He currently serves on the boards of the Maine Assoc. of Nonprofits, Raymond Village Library, and Loon Echo Land Trust, and loves volunteering. Steve’s favorite outdoor activities include hiking, road biking, snowshoeing, and kayaking. He and his wife Alice live in Raymond.

Steve is thrilled to serve on the LELT board because of its vital mission, the important benefits that LELT brings to the region, getting to work with his passionate and talented board colleagues, and the superb LELT staff. It’s so rewarding to be associated with such an outstanding organization!

ALANNA DOUGHTY

Alanna works as an educator at Lakes Environmental Association. She lives in Sebago in the house she grew up in, with her husband and kiddos and their two rescue dogs and cat, Rosey Toes. Her recent house projects include building a flagstone patio and pathway and next up is an outdoor pizza oven. She loves to spend time outside in the woods and waters of Maine, and is learning to use her elbow during her fly cast. When not flailing in the stream, she can be found in the garden tending food for her family.

Alanna is excited to be on the LELT board to contribute back to our community and have a voice in land conservation for future communities.

Giving Tips

Did you know there are many ways to give financial resources to LELT? Some may have important tax benefits for you and your family.

Many Loon Echo donors prefer to makes gifts of appreciated stocks, bonds, because it can have a large impact on our mission, while maximizing potential tax benefits by avoiding paying tax on capital gains. Other LELT supporters are choosing to make tax-free gifts from their IRAs each year, or contribute from a donor advised fund.

To learn more about all the ways you can support LELT, visit LELT.org/donate or contact Maggie at membership@lelt.org or 207-647-4352. Note: We are not financial, tax, or legal advisors. We recommend you reach out to a certified professional for specific information about your individual scenario.

You Make It All Possible

Despite all the challenges of the past year there was sunshine, joy, connection, and always - always - a trail, a river, a hilltop, a special spot in the woods to escape to.

We never could have imagined the healing power that conserved lands and public trails brought to thousands of people last year. And yet, they did; these special places were there for whomever needed them, because of you. The best part? They’ll be there for thanks for propelling us forward and making it all possible.

“Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.”

– Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants
Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” I don’t know whether Bob Chase had ever read those words, but he certainly acted as if he had. Bob was trained as a forester, but he suffered from muscular dystrophy and was no longer able to tramp through the woods he loved. But in the 1980s, when rampant development had moved into the Lakes Region, Bob was determined to make a difference.

In 1987, Bob, who lived in Naples, got together with Om Devi and Erik Bartlett from Casco. On the towns’ Conservation Commissions, they were focused on the regional protection of water resources, and they sought an effective mechanism to do that. They listed others who might participate and looked at the steps to get it going. At the next meeting Erik and Polly Bartlett, Eric Dibner and Om Devi, Lou Dapas and Connie Cross, and Dan Peabody, an attorney, proposed forming a land trust. Some of us had never heard of a land trust, but all of us loved the forests, lakes, meadows and streams of the landscape around us. At the end of the meeting, we emptied our wallets so Dan could proceed with the legalities of creating a new land trust. Loon Echo Land Trust, then known as Loon Echo Inland Trust, began with $83.

Loon Echo Land Trust is still guided by a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens determined to protect the beautiful land of the Lakes Region. Changing the world will take a little longer. But I think Bob Chase, who died in 2009, would be proud.

Connie Cross, LELT Founding Member & Current Board Member

THE BEGINNING OF IT ALL

Tenny Protected

Thanks to the foresight of local landowners and community members, we expanded an existing 28-acre conservation easement along the eastern shore of the Tenny River in Raymond to include 25 more acres of forest and wetlands, including over 900ft of shoreline. An effort a decade in the making, the Tenny River remains wild & scenic for future generations.

While remaining privately owned, the 53 acres of land is legally protected by a conservation easement held by Loon Echo Land Trust. Keeping the land forested protects the water quality of the Tenny River and the waters it connects to (Panther Pond and Sebago Lake), preserves the forested river corridor for nature observation & education as well as low-impact boating and fishing. The land and river provide a rich habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife.

WE LIVE IN A SPECIAL PLACE

the view of Mt. Washington
from the top of Quaker Ridge . . .
a quiet spot for fishing along
Cockadew Basin . . .

open meadows where children
catch butterflies and pick
bouquets of daisies . . .

the bogs and swamps where moose
and beaver live . . .

winding trails through the woods
for skiing and snowshoeing . . .

the cry of the loon echoing
across a lake on a summer evening . . .
Over the past year, more and more people have discovered and fallen in love with Pleasant Mountain. The Bald Peak and Ledges trails saw a 50% increase in hiker traffic from 2019-2020. Pleasant Mountain is one of the most popular hikes in the state of Maine. It’s one of Maine Trail Finder’s top ten most popular listings and visitor numbers are on par with some Maine State Parks. The trails are showing wear from this increased use. In 2020, thanks to support from an anonymous donor, we were able to hire a professional trail crew from the Appalachian Mountain Club to give the Ledges Trail on Pleasant Mountain some love and attention. The crew built impressive new stone steps in areas where erosion & social trails had made the trail unsustainable. An AMC crew will be back on Pleasant Mountain in the summer of 2021 to address other erosion issues on the Ledges & Bald Peak Trails. In total, we will be investing over $20,000 into trail work on the mountain this summer.

Managing parking for the trailheads is also a challenge. We will be expanding the size of the Ledges Trail parking area and are actively pursuing options for the Bald Peak parking area in order to prevent people from parking along Mountain Road.

Funding for this work has been provided by the Maine Land Trust Network, the Onion Foundation, and LELT donors.

Everyone outside Bridgton has many incredible outdoor spaces, but few of them are accessible to all members of our community. This summer, we changed that with a new trail at Peabody-Fitch Woods.

The half-mile long loop trail, a first-of-its-kind in the Lake Region, is designed to accommodate strollers and wheeled mobility devices. It is gravel-surfaced, has gradual slopes, and features three benches spaced at equal intervals, perfect for taking a break. The trail weaves its way along rock walls, through a variety of forest types and bring visitors to a viewpoint of the farm, fields, and distant White Mountains.

Phase two of the new trail project will be completed this summer when we install a kiosk and interpretive signage to teach visitors about the ecology and cultural history of the land.

We are so proud to be able to support our community with this new resource. Thank you to everyone who made this project possible: State of Maine’s Recreational Trail Program, Chalmers Insurance Group, the Kendal C. and Anna Ham Foundation, L.L.Bean, and many generous individual donors. Warren Excavation of Bridgton completed the construction of the trail and a new parking area.
NOTES FROM THE TRAIL

A YEAR AGO WE WERE SAILING ALONG INTO SPRING WITH all systems go. By the end of March, we had entered stormy seas and uncharted waters. Under very difficult circumstances in April, we were asked to close back country access to protect first responders. As the days grew longer the numbers of visitors grew to October levels and the tender spring trails were wondering what had hit them. Each following month had something from the “never seen before” category—both good and bad.

As a staff unable to meet in person, daily meetings by other means were taking place to react to problems or try to get ahead of challenges we saw coming. We certainly struggled to juggle everything that was happening in real time. We did our best to greet the thousands of visitors seeking time outside on LELT trails to clear and detailed information, and encouraged them to be part of the solution.

Despite the many challenges, the summer of 2020 brought construction of new trails at Peabody-Fitch Woods. Our first opportunity to build an accessible walking trail exceeded expectations and the new hiking trail to the granite quarries makes for a first-rate excursion. The end result is a new standard for LELT and we are anxious to officially welcome visitors at our grand opening in August 2021.

As summer turned to fall, we turned our attention to the recently conserved Tiger Hill Community Forest and wrapping our brain around the scale of the property. It is perhaps our wildest place, yet there is cultural evidence to remind us of the community that thrived there 150 years ago. It will be a great story to unpack with you this summer.

The biggest impact of 2020 was not to trails or structures or staff, but to our communities. When LELT was formed in 1987 to protect land for current and future generations, we were confident of the many public benefits. But we never could have anticipated the past year. In 2020, Loon Echo lands became a place to escape to… to heal. It was incredible to hear laughter, to see big families out picking berries or going for a paddle. We heard from so many folks that our conservation work “saved their summers.”

Thank you to all that sustain LELT, because it truly is community sustaining work.

Happy Trails,

Jon Evans, LELT Stewardship Manager

MEMORIAL

ANDREW NORKIN

The trails lost one of their greatest champions earlier this year when Andrew Norkin of Denmark passed away. Andrew worked as the Director of Trails at the Appalachian Mountain Club, and was our main contact at there for two decades. He was a great friend and mentor to Jon (LELT Stewardship Manager) and to countless stewards of trails everywhere.

Andrew was a longtime supporter of LELT, participating in the Trek many times, and conserving his land with a conservation easement held by LELT. He knew how special and ecologically important his family’s land on the west side of Pleasant Mountain is. Andrew’s final project for LELT was to lay out the route for the new Quarry trail loop at Peabody-Fitch Woods in the Summer of 2020.

Andrew’s legacy lives on in all the trails he planned & built, in all the stewards he taught & mentored, and in the forever protection of his own family’s land. He is sorely missed. May we all be so lucky as to leave a legacy like his.
USDA GRANT AWARDED TO SEBAGO CLEAN WATERS A MILESTONE IN LAKE REGION CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION EFFORTS

Last summer, Sebago Clean Waters (SCW)—a nine-member coalition that includes LELT—applied for an $8-million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In September 2020, we received the great news that SCW was awarded the grant!

The grant, which was the second largest of ten grants awarded nation-wide through the USDA NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program, will allow partners to leverage an additional $10.5 million from public and private sources. This substantial influx of funds will increase the pace of conservation and facilitate other important water quality improvements in the Sebago Lake watershed.

The bulk of the funding, which will be distributed over five years, will go toward obtaining conservation easements on high-priority lands that drain to Sebago Lake, with the goal of conserving 10,000 acres of critical forestland. This work will be done by LELT and Western Foothills Land Trust in close collaboration with the grant’s lead partner, Portland Water District, and other SCW partner organizations. In addition, thanks to the grant, SCW partner Lakes Environmental Association will be able to expand their efforts to control invasive milfoil in Sebago Lake and upgrade stream crossings to reduce flooding, minimize erosion, and improve fish passage.

Sebago Lake is known for its extremely clear and clean water. One of the reasons it is so clean is because the Sebago Lake watershed is 84% forested and forests filter water naturally. The watershed, which is all the land that drains to Sebago Lake, includes more than a dozen towns and spans 234,000 acres. This land is largely privately owned and therefore at risk of development, which can contribute to water quality decline. This is why we’re thrilled that, in conjunction with our SCW partners, we can now make greater strides toward keeping the watershed healthy.

The conservation work LELT can accomplish as a result of this grant is a win for landowners and residents in the Lake Region, visitors to the area, and the 200,000 water users in Greater Portland who rely on this pristine natural resource. If you would like to find out more about land conservation opportunities in the Sebago Lake watershed, please contact Matt Markot at execdir@lelt.org. Learn more about the work of SCW and sign up for their e-news at sebagocleanwaters.org.
Environmental Education Grants Awarded

Every year, schools and libraries in Loon Echo’s service area of Denmark, Bridgton, Harrison, Naples, Casco, Raymond and Sebago are invited to submit grant applications to Loon Echo for environmental programs. These awards help youth in the Lake Region learn about the environment and the importance of protecting our region’s land and natural resources.

The 2021 LELT environmental education grants were awarded to:

• Raymond Village Library - To host a program an art & science program about Maine wildlife;
• Sebago Elementary School - To purchase a game camera to enhance student discovery and learning about local wildlife and their behavior;
• Casco Public Library - To create Story Walks at Mayberry Hill Preserve and Hacker’s Hill.

LELT’s Environmental Educational Grants are made possible thanks to a generous bequest by Helen Allen. Helen owned a beautiful hilltop farm on Quaker Ridge in Casco looking out to the western foothills and Mt. Washington. She was one of the first individuals to grant Loon Echo a conservation easement on her 60-acre property so that it would be protected in perpetuity. After her death at the age of 94, Helen Allen’s bequest to Loon Echo allowed LELT to create an endowed environmental education fund to support environmental programs & initiatives in local schools and libraries. If you would like to support LELT’s education endowment, please contact Matt at execdir@lelt.org or call 207-647-4352.

Loon Echo Land Trust (LELT) is a donor supported, non-profit organization that works to protect the natural resources and character of the northern Sebago lake region for current and future generations. An accredited Land Trust, Loon Echo protects over 8,500 acres of land and manages over 32 miles of trails in the towns of Bridgton, Casco, Denmark, Harrison, Naples, Raymond and Sebago. These important open spaces protect the region’s water resources and wildlife habitat, support the local economy, maintain the rural character of our region and provide public access to outdoor recreation.

Stay connected with Loon Echo!
• Like Loon Echo Land Trust on Facebook
• Follow @loonecholandtrust on Instagram
• Follow @loonecholandtl on Twitter
• Signup for our monthly E-News on our website, www.lelt.org

STAY UP-TO DATE WITH ALL THINGS LOON ECHO

Join our E-mail list!
• Project updates
• Event notifications
• Information on LELT lands & trails
• Photos and videos
• Volunteer opportunities

Get the latest LELT news delivered straight to your inbox year-round! You may unsubscribe any time, and we promise not to spam you.

SIGN-UP TODAY AT LINK.LELT.ORG/ENEWSPAGE OR SEND AN EMAIL TO MAGGIE AT MEMBERSHIP@LELT.ORG.