



For Everyone, Forever

On a sunny summer morning in August, dozens of community members gathered to celebrate the grand opening of a new accessible trail at Pondicherry Park in Bridgton. Folks young and old and of all types of abilities were on hand to mark this long awaited occasion. For two years, LETL led a fundraising and community awareness campaign to upgrade the Park's main trail corridor to a

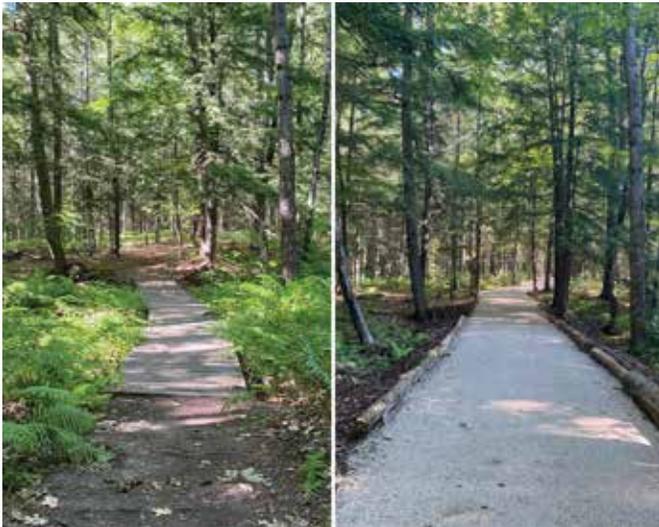
universal access standard. Where there were once rocks, roots, and failing boardwalks, there is now a six foot wide uniform gravel trail surface, easily navigable bridges, and gentle slopes.

Thanks to your support of LETL, the Park has been rejuvenated by this new trail. I've been making an almost daily trip into the Park since I joined LETL back in 2019. Located just across the street from our office, it is a sanctuary where I can step away from the computer, reconnect to the natural world, and find inspiration for the work ahead. Most days, I would not see another person

continues on page 2



LOON ECHO
LAND TRUST



Before, after Pondicherry Park

in the Park. After building LELT's first accessible trail at Peabody-Fitch Woods in 2020, we began to hear from folks that Pondicherry Park was in desperate need of a similar trail. In the heart of downtown Bridgton, the Park simply wasn't accessible to a large number of community members. So we set out on the goal to make that a reality, and since that sunny morning in August, I have not spent a day in the Park where I have not shared the trail with fellow walkers, runners, and strollers. All this to say, a beloved community Park has been made even more special, thanks to your support of LELT.

The process of developing these trails has been transformative for LELT. We've built new relationships with groups like Maine Adaptive Sports and Recreation, adaptive athletes like Enock Glidden, and have embraced a movement in land conservation seeking to reduce barriers to outdoor experiences. We've started to ask ourselves, who

ON TO NEW ADVENTURES

AFTER SIX YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE LANDS, WATERS, AND communities of the Lake Region of Maine, including a year and a half as President of the Board, Richard Lemieux has stepped off the Board to focus on new adventures both near and far with his wife Doris. Dick treated his responsibilities to the communities LELT serves with dignity, grace, an open mind, and constant curiosity. During those six years, Dick was both an active and engaged member of the Board, and a mentor and advocate for LELT's staff. Above all, he has been a tireless defender of LELT's mission to protect



land on behalf of human and wild communities in the Lake Region of Maine. Thank you Dick, and best wishes for your next adventure!

Your Impact

Despite all the twists and turns that life brings, there is sunshine, joy, connection, and always - *always* - a trail, a river, a hilltop, a special spot in the woods to escape to. These special places are there for whomever needs them, because of you.

Together we can save what we have and ensure a healthy future for generations to come. **Your financial support of Loon Echo Land Trust makes this work - this future - possible.** Please consider a donation to LELT before the end of the year. Thanks for propelling us forward and making an impact in the Lake Region of Maine.

else has been left behind or left out of the benefits of land conservation? Where might our biases limit our ability to serve our communities in the best way, and who can help us gain new perspectives and imagine new approaches to the critical work of living in relationship with the natural world?

This past spring, LELT adopted a new strategic plan, which we invite you to read on our website: lelt.org/about-us. You'll notice that what we've learned through the process of building more accessible trail infrastructure has influenced how we are thinking about this current moment in conservation. It's a moment where your support will enable us to tackle some of the most pressing issues of our time: climate change, community needs like food insecurity and housing, and the continued loss of forest habitat. At LELT, we feel better positioned to serve the needs of Lake Region communities, the State of Maine, and our planet than ever before. And that is testament to the impact of your support as LELT donors, members, volunteers, and advocates. As you take time over the next few weeks to reflect on the past year with your friends and family, please know that your support of LELT is making a difference in

the lives of countless people. Thank you.

Yours in conservation,



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WELCOME, RUTHIE!

WE'RE THRILLED TO WELCOME RUTHIE CLEMENTS AS THE NEW Sebago Clean Waters Conservation Coordinator! Based in Bridgton, she will be supporting SCW partners Loon Echo Land Trust, Western Foothills Land Trust, and Mahoosuc Land-Trust by developing and implementing land protection projects in the Sebago Lake watershed.

Ruthie graduated from the University of Maine with a Master's degree in Ecology and Environmental Sciences and most recently worked as a consultant to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. She has expertise in soil carbon storage and facilitating projects involving multiple stakeholders—skills she is excited to put to use in helping us achieve our conservation goals. If you see her exploring the watershed, be sure to say hi!

2022 EVENTS RECAP

WE HAD A BUSY YEAR FULL OF EVENTS, INCLUDING AN ADAPTIVE SNOWSHOEING day, hikes & snowshoes, three sunset concerts, a kite day, a film festival under the stars, trail running workshops, yoga on the hill, history walks at Peabody-Fitch Woods and more. Thank you to all who attended an event as well as our partners and supporters for making it all possible.

Conservation is about the trees, the trails, wildlife, clean water and climate, but it's also about community. It's all connected, we believe you can't have one without the other. Thank you for helping us create a place we can—and want—to live in.



LELT Board at 2022 Annual Meeting



THANK YOU, GRIFF!

From June-November Griff Northrop served with LELT as an AmeriCorps Environmental Steward through the Maine Conservation Corps. Griff was a great asset to the LELT team and we wish him the best of luck as he pursues a career in the conservation field!

Griff's Reflection on his Time at LELT

"I'm here for a good time, not a long time" - Drake, George Strait, Trooper. This sure has been a quick five months for me at Loon Echo. However, I accomplished so much more than I originally anticipated. Before going further, I would like to express my appreciation for the leadership at LELT. As I've detailed to Matt and many others before, I had no idea what a land trust was nor how much of an impact they truly make in the conservation world across New England just six months ago. Now I can't go a few hours without walking by any blade of grass pondering its conservation value or how it would fit into a future easement.

During my time with Loon Echo, I have been able to shadow under each of the amazing staff members to either gain or refine my skills in grant research, baseline documentation, easement monitoring and GIS map making. I also managed EAB monitoring, our game cameras & trail counters, and designed trailhead surveys. If you filled out a trail survey, thank you! With over 100 responses, we will be able to utilize this data for future grants and trail restoration projects.

Going over all of the tasks and responsibilities that I had over my time would be foolhardy. Anytime I was asked what my day-to-day looks like at Loon Echo, I simply couldn't give an answer they were looking for. This isn't because I didn't practice my elevator speech (trust me, I did!). But every day came with new responsibilities and thus new challenges. One day I could be restoring water bars at Pleasant Mountain in the morning and writing up a baseline supplement in the afternoon. The role of land trusts is always changing, just as the land itself. One day we have to be on the ground with our hands dirty after a heavy rainstorm. Another we might be deciphering twenty-year-old legal documents to understand how invasive species might impact tree harvests. Because of my experience here, I have found myself wanting to be a steward of the land in whatever capacity that may be. Thank you to everyone that has reached out with kind words or advice during my time here, I can't thank you enough.

PROJECT UPDATES



MAYBERRY HILL PRESERVE

Timber Harvest

Loon Echo's oldest preserve, Mayberry Hill, is beloved for its gentle terrain, blueberry fields, and short drive from Casco Village. This fall we completed a small timber harvest to manage a stand of white pine that was succumbing to needle cast disease. Needle cast disease can cause tree mortality, so we worked with our consulting

forester Northwest Forest Management, LLC to remove impacted trees and give the next generation of white pine trees the space and sunlight they need to grow. By removing impacted trees we have also made way for greater diversity in forest structure & species for the future. We're hosting a forestry tour at MHP on Friday, December 9th at 1pm. Register at lelt.org/events or email maggie@lelt.org.

Parking Area

The new parking area at MHP is nearly complete, and we're glad it will provide much safer access to the trail network year-round and allow us to host community events and school groups more easily. Volunteers have been hard at work creating a connector trail from the new parking area to the existing trail network, moving the kiosk and installing other signs. This project has been led by Baxter Engelman for his Eagle Scout badge. Thank you to Scout Troop 800 for all their help!

Trail Improvements

This summer LETL hired trail consultant Enock Glidden to evaluate the trail system at Mayberry Hill Preserve. He suggested LETL make some minimal impact changes to the field loop to provide better access to people of all abilities to the trail and blueberry fields. This fall, volunteer groups have been digging out large rocks and filling in around roots to provide a more even trail surface. We're excited to be able to make these improvements and open up this place to more people in the community.



Pondicherry Park ribbon cutting

BRIDGTON LAUNCHES OPEN SPACE PLANNING PROCESS

EARLIER THIS SPRING, LETL WORKED WITH THE TOWN OF Bridgton to secure a grant from the Community Resilience Partnership, which is a program of the Maine Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. Funds from that grant are being used to launch Bridgton's first ever open space planning process.

An open space plan will help guide future conservation work in Bridgton by identifying high priority properties to protect, and providing recommendations on programs, ordinances, and partners to help conserve those important open spaces. In addition, Bridgton's open space plan will identify opportunities to expand connectivity between open spaces, neighborhoods, and existing trail networks. Guided

by professional consultants, this process will help accelerate conservation efforts in Bridgton and ensure the most important ecosystems remain intact while also identifying areas where growth and development make sense.

LETL's role in the process will be to assist the consultants and the town with inventorying current open spaces, and to help design & amplify the public input process. Keep an eye out for opportunities to identify your favorite open spaces in town, pinpoint where trail connections would benefit you and your neighbors, and share what other outdoor recreational resources you would like to see in town.



LITERACY ON THE TRAIL

THIS YEAR WE HOSTED THREE StoryWalks on LETL conserved lands: one at Hacker’s Hill Preserve, Mayberry Hill Preserve, and in Pondicherry Park.

StoryWalk® is an innovative and delightful way for children—and adults!—to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children’s book are attached to wooden stakes, which are installed along an outdoor path. As you stroll down the trail, you’re directed to the next page in the story.

We heard great feedback from all those who enjoyed the stories throughout the summer & fall. Rachel wrote,

“We loved reading the story of Hector the Fox! What a great way for the kids to enjoy even more fun on this adventurous trail!” Ang & Rob said “Just two adult kids (36 + 35) who deeply appreciated this story on our hike!”

Thank you to Casco Public Library and Bridgton Public Library for their help & partnership, and IslandPort Press for their pre-made StoryWalk books. Funding for the Casco StoryWalk was provided by a LETL Environmental Education Grant and Bridgton StoryWalk funding was provided by the Onion Foundation. We can’t wait to bring back the StoryWalks next year with new stories!



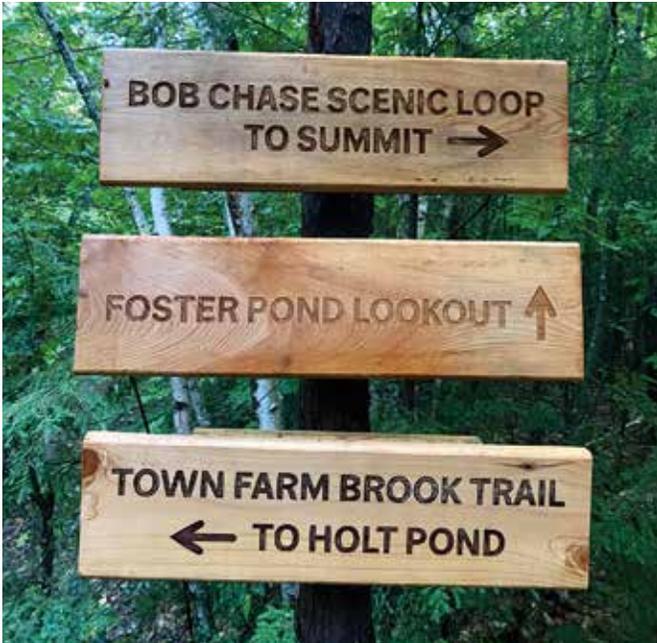
TREK FOR THE TRAILS A SUCCESS

THE TREK FOR THE TRAILS PRESENTED BY NORWAY SAVINGS BANK was a success again in 2022! Over \$10,000 was raised from the event, including entry fees, pledges raised by participants, and business cash and in-kind sponsorships. New this year we introduced Claire (de Loon), who flew around to four properties throughout the month of September, challenging Trekkers to find her in all four locations.

Trek for the Trails is Loon Echo Land Trust’s largest annual fundraising event. Funds raised from the Trek

help us steward over 8,000 acres of land and 30+ miles of trails in the Lake Region. The 2022 Trek for the Trails is generously sponsored by Norway Savings Bank, Pleasant Mountain Ski Area, Hancock Lumber, Chalmers Insurance Company, Minuteman Press, The Good Life Market, Squeaky Clean Laundromat, Wendy Newcomb - Artist, Clement Bros. Lawn & Landscape, Jones & Mathews PA, Bridgton Books, Pleasant Mountain Camping Area, Canyon Wren Coaching, and Ski Hot Ski Shop.

NOTES FROM THE TRAIL



AFTER A VERY LONG SEASON, THE CANADA GEESE REMIND us that things are going south. The days are shorter and colder, the rainy days more numerous and those scarlet red maple leaves are on the ground. But, late autumn is a neat time to hike even with the stark and bare surroundings, there is still great beauty. In November you learn how to dress in layers to account for the 25 degree start and the 55 degree finish. You get to wear blaze orange! Old man winter is on his way. November and December is rifle hunting season too and LETL properties are open to the public for this use. When land is protected, so are many of the traditions that Maine is known for.

This year, once again, volunteers made a huge impact on trail projects and their many hands have lightened the load. Thank you to all of you that took time out of your lives to help us out, you are making a difference.

- Some stewardship highlights from this season include:
- 12 new bog bridges on the Moose Trail and all new trail signs at Bald Pate Mountain.
- Stone steps were rebuilt on the Ledges Trail at Pleasant Mountain. This will allow the trail to better handle the increased volume of hikers and keep the trails sustainable long-term.
- A new kiosk was installed at the Southwest Ridge trailhead on Pleasant Mountain.
- A contractor was hired to begin tackling the knotweed infestation at Hackers Hill. The first phase was completed this summer with good results. The process will take at least 3 years to complete.
- Improvements at Mayberry Hill Preserve to provide better access to the trail network through the construction of a new parking area & connector trail.
- Over 500 stewardship volunteer hours.

Our stewardship budget is increasing 30% next year due to increased costs, new infrastructure, and new investment in our Stewardship program. **Your support is essential to ensuring we have the funds we need to care for our lands and trails.**

- Finally, LETL facilitated the trail improvement project at Pondicherry Park in Bridgton. Enjoying the wonders of nature is now possible for folks of all ages and abilities.

Enjoy the holiday season and before you know it, the Red Sox will be in Fort Meyers, the sap will be running and the Canada Geese will be honking their way back to one of our favorite places in the Lake Region.

-Jon Evans, LETL Stewardship Manager



PLEASANT MOUNTAIN TRAIL WORK

EVERY YEAR WE HIRE A PROFESSIONAL TRAIL CREW TO WORK ON our highest use trails. For the past few years crews from the Appalachian Mountain Club have spent time shoring up eroded sections of the Ledges Trail on Pleasant Mountain, which is easily our most-used trail. The new infrastructure is durable and long-lasting, and helps minimize the impact of heavy traffic on the surrounding landscape.



CROOKED RIVER FOREST SKI LOOP

THIS FALL WE CONSTRUCTED A MILE-LONG SKI & SNOWSHOE loop at Crooked River Forest in Harrison. It is very flat, and will be quite lovely for XC skiing. Our hope is to have the trail groomed starting this winter, and there is great potential for building more trails at Crooked River Forest in the future. Keep an eye out for updates on our social media pages!



It's one thing to know that we're protecting animal habitat, it's another thing entirely to see that habitat in action. Photos of a black bear, bobcat, and deer taken this year on LELT protected properties.

CAPTURING CHANGING LANDSCAPES

IF YOU VISITED HACKER'S HILL THIS SUMMER YOU MAY HAVE noticed our new climate change observatory station (CCON). CCON's are permanent stands where visitors can place their phone, take a photo, and then contribute it to a time lapse video that tracks changes in the landscape over time. We're participating in this community science project as part of a Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative program.

Photos taken at this observation post location will help LELT monitor recovery of an area from invasive Japanese Knotweed back to native species. This site also captures the evolution of grasses and wildflowers in the fields at Hacker's Hill as well as the hills and forests of Casco and Naples, allowing us to see changes in area land use over time. Visit chronolog.io/site/LET101 or scan this code to check out the timelapse:



Books for Sale

Writing the Land: Maine is available for purchase for \$25. This publication is an anthology of 13 land trusts and 27 poets who wrote poems inspired by their adopted lands throughout Maine, and includes poems from local poets inspired by Bald Pate Mountain.

For All Time is a coffee-table style book in celebration of LELT's 35 years of conservation in the Lake Region. It is for

FIREWOOD ALERT!

You have the power to protect forests and trees!

BUY IT WHERE YOU BURN IT.

Pests like the invasive emerald ash borer can hitchhike in your firewood. You can prevent the spread of these damaging insects and diseases by following these firewood tips.

- ▶ Buy locally harvested firewood at or near your destination.
- ▶ Buy certified heat-treated firewood ahead of time, if available.
- ▶ Gather firewood on site when permitted.



A THREAT TO MAINE ASH TREES

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an invasive beetle that harms and kills ash trees. All of Maine's ash trees (except 'mountain ash') are at risk of injury & death. There's a lot at stake if we lose all of our ash trees: loss of a food source for wildlife, ~\$320 million dollar impact to forest landowners, the loss of brown ash, which is a key material for traditional basketmaking - an important cultural tradition of the Wabanaki people.

For the past two years we've worked with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to monitor for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) on our conserved lands. We installed two monitoring traps this summer and unfortunately EAB was discovered in one of the traps in Bridgton. Now we are working with DACF to determine next steps and management options. By continuing to monitor & identifying local stands of ash, we can better inform future treatment and management to help save our ash trees.

Learn more about EAB in Maine: www.maine.gov/dacf/php/caps/EAB



sale for \$25 and features photos from LELT lands in addition to quotes about nature and the outdoors.

You may purchase books online by visiting link.lelt.org/books, stopping by the LELT office, or by mailing a check made out to "LELT" to 8 Depot St, STE 4 Bridgton, ME 04009. If you would like your book(s) shipped to you please add \$7 to your total.



8 Depot St., Ste 4
 Bridgton, Maine 04009
 207-647-4352
Address service requested



FOREVER & EVER

You are a valued member of the LElt community, and you've helped us permanently protect some of the Lake Region's most cherished places, and ensure public access to the outdoors for everyone. For this we are truly grateful. We invite you to help ensure the future of our land protection efforts by naming Loon Echo Land Trust in your estate plan.

Ways to make a planned gift:

- Name LElt in your will to receive a percentage of your estate, a fixed dollar amount, or shares of stock.
- Name LElt as a beneficiary of your Donor Advised Fund, retirement account, or life insurance policy.
- Bequeath personal property or property rights, such as real estate, land, or a conservation easement.
- Pursue a Charitable Gift Annuity.

Legacy gifts may provide you or your estate with important tax benefits. Be sure to consult with your attorney or a trusted personal adviser to determine which gift(s) is most appropriate for you. If you have general questions, please contact us at 207-647-4352 or email maggie@lelt.org.

Anyone who makes a planned gift to Loon Echo becomes a member of the Bob Chase Legacy Society. Bob Chase loved the natural world. Passionate and charismatic, Bob's vision and leadership were a driving force behind Loon Echo's initial formation and successes until his passing in 2005. In naming the Legacy Society after Bob, we seek to honor his lifelong commitment to make the world, and especially our special corner of the world, a better place.

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!

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- Follow @loonecholt on Twitter



STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH ALL THINGS LOON ECHO



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