

Annual Report



July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015

HARRIS CENTER
FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Director's Report

The following pages describe a very productive 45th year for the Harris Center. As an **environmental education center**,

our naturalists collaborated with 165 classroom teachers to design innovative environmental adventures that got kids outside and exploring the natural world. Our **community education programs**

offered environmental learning experiences for all ages in a year-round calendar of more than 120 events, including lectures, films, workshops, outings, camps, and more. As a **land trust**, we strengthened our focus on protecting and stewarding large blocks of connected conserved land – nearly 22,000 acres in all. We also conducted and coordinated **conservation research**, through citizen science programs and collaborations with professional scientists, to improve our understanding of local landscapes.

The year brought some challenges for the Harris Center as well, including changes in our staffing and major adjustments to several of our education programs. The skilled response of our board and staff to these transitions verifies that we remain an agile and dynamic organization, capable of adapting quickly and thoughtfully to new circumstances.

Through it all, Harris Center focus areas continue to support and build upon each other. Our land conservation program protects a fantastic diversity of local ecosystems, and models exemplary stewardship; our education program helps people understand the value of these natural resources, and creates future stewards; and our conservation research findings offer learning opportunities and inform the stewardship of protected lands. In all our work, the Harris Center strives to make local communities even more vibrant by fostering a positive and sustainable relationship with the natural world.

As always, I'm grateful to our fantastic supporters, dedicated staff, and amazing volunteers for helping us to ensure a bright future for the people, wildlife, and landscapes of the Monadnock Region. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you!

Jeremy Wilson
Executive Director



Our Terrific Volunteers

Diana Jacobs, Membership Coordinator

This year the Harris Center benefited more than ever from tremendous volunteer support. In addition to our board members – who all serve as volunteers – and our volunteer outing leaders, we've had a vast array of others helping us reach our diverse goals. Conducting conservation research, assisting our educators, helping with mailings, manning amphibian road crossing sites, providing legal counsel, overseeing Harris Center displays at local events, monitoring and clearing trails and vistas, working on grounds cleanup, providing food and flowers for events, and establishing and caring for gardens are just some of the many ways we've been supported by our wonderful volunteers. We appreciate their efforts more than words can tell. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to all. ♡

Partners and Cosponsors

We work with many others each year to connect people to the natural world. Our partners and event cosponsors this year included:

Antioch University New England	Nature Conservancy
Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee	Nelson Conservation Commission
Cheshire County Conservation District	Nelson Trails Committee
Cornucopia Project	NH Association of Conservation Commissions
Hancock Energy Advisory Team	NH Division of Forest and Lands
Hancock Inn	NH Audubon
Hancock Town Library	NH Fish and Game
Horatio Colony Nature Preserve	Peterborough Conservation Commission
Keene State College	RiverMead
Keene State College Film Society	Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
Local Girl and Boy Scout troops	The Stewardship Network: New England
Mariposa Museum	Town of Swanzey
Monadnock Center for History and Culture	Trout Unlimited
Monadnock Conservancy	UNH Cooperative Extension
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	US Fish and Wildlife Service
National Weather Service	<i>Thank you to all!</i>

Land Conservation

Eric Masterson, Land Protection Specialist

New Land Protection Projects

This year, the Harris Center completed four conservation projects totaling 261 acres, with still more in process.

At 185 acres, Camp Chenoa in Antrim is the largest of the four completed projects. Abutting New Hampshire Audubon's dePierrefeu-Willard Pond Wildlife Sanctuary, this strategically important parcel provides additional protection to the Willard Pond watershed. Almost 60% of it is ranked by the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan as Tier 1 habitat – the highest available ranking.

In Peterborough, the Corwin parcel adds 20 conserved acres to the north side of the scenic Hiroshi land. This important piece of the land conservation puzzle enabled the Harris Center to create a 2-mile loop trail along Nubanusit Brook, featuring a stunning viewpoint looking north across Dinsmore Pond to Thumb and Skatutakee Mountains.

Autumn reflected in the waters of Dinsmore Pond, as viewed from the Harris Center's Hiroshi land.

photo: Brett Amy Thelen



The final two projects, comprising a total of 56 acres, sit side by side off Eaton Road in

Hancock. The McCabe parcel conserves 53 forested acres, including 1,000 feet of Davis Brook. Adjacent to this piece is a 0.3-mile stretch of conserved rail trail, which we hope to incorporate into a future trail system.

Stewardship and Monitoring of Conserved Lands

Hard-working undergraduate and graduate student interns Ingrid Evans of UVM, Madison Poe of UNH, and Katie Koster of Princeton University worked with landowners to monitor approximately 100 conservation easements throughout the Supersanctuary this spring and summer. A huge thank you goes out to these adventurous interns for helping us achieve this enormous and critical task in our work as a land trust. ➔

Conservation Research

Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

Citizen Science

This spring, more than 120 citizen scientists participated in our **Salamander Crossing Brigades**, in which volunteers identify, count, and safely move amphibians across roads during the spring amphibian migration. We collectively crossed 4,781 frogs and salamanders in 2015, bringing our nine-year total to almost 25,000 amphibians. Wow!



Crossing Brigade volunteer Jen Newcombe carries a spotted salamander across the road on a "Big Night."

photo: Cheryl Martin

conducted in a partnership with the Peterborough Conservation Commission and the Monadnock Conservancy.

This summer, we also partnered with New Hampshire Audubon's **Project Nighthawk** to monitor the state-endangered Common Nighthawk in Keene, one of the last places in New Hampshire this aerial insectivore still breeds.

Research on Our Lands

In the third year of an innovative partnership with Keene State College (KSC), four outstanding undergraduates participated in a seven-week summer **conservation internship program** with the Harris Center. Under the guidance of KSC faculty and Harris Center staff, the interns documented vernal pools, inventoried forest communities, surveyed and removed hundreds of invasive plants, monitored conservation easements, and conducted a wildlife road mortality study.

A KSC class is also focusing on Harris Center lands for their two-semester **capstone research experience**, conducting pollinator and wildlife surveys, assessing road-stream crossings for fish passage and flooding potential, investigating the effects of road salt on plants and soils, and researching historic land use for one of our newly-conserved properties. They'll share their findings with us later this fall. We are grateful for all our citizen scientists and research partners, and look forward to more conservation research in 2016. ➔



KSC Environmental Studies student Elijah Wyman conducts bee surveys in the Harris Center's newly-planted pollinator garden.

photo: Will Holden



Our **Vernal Pool Project** volunteers documented 31 new vernal pools – which serve as specialized breeding habitat for those migrating amphibians – in nine towns, bringing our project total to nearly **200 documented vernal pools**. We're grateful to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for their continued support of this project, which is

Vernal Pool Project volunteer Noah Waller, with wood frogs eggs he found in the vernal pool on his family's land.

photo: Patti Waller

Outings and Events

In the past year, we offered more than 120 outings and events – most at no charge and open to the public – including snowshoe treks, hawk watches, rail trail hikes, bird counts, paddles, film showings, and much more. We're grateful for the many volunteers who led the majority of these events, sharing their love of the natural world with all. ➔

Environmental Education in the Schools

Janet Altobello, School Program Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist

During the 2014-2015 scholastic year, the Harris Center's school-based education programs – which aim to build environmental literacy through engaging youth in relevant projects in nearby nature – reached nearly 2,800 students from preschool through grade twelve in 29 schools throughout the Monadnock Region. Guided by Harris Center naturalists, they kept track of the spring bird migration in Keene neighborhoods; explored evidence of weathering on village cemetery stones in Jaffrey; traced the origins of their food in Antrim; continued a long-term study of bluebird house color preferences in Hancock; identified and mapped invasive plant species on the ConVal campus; conducted a pollinator inventory along the edges of the Chesterfield Elementary School yard; and gained confidence and competence as field ecologists all throughout the region.

Many schools now have ongoing projects to monitor local environmental conditions year after year. Some examples include:

3rd graders from Wheelock School scout for birds in Keene with teacher Abbie Olson and Harris Center teacher/naturalist Polly Pattison.

photo: Mrs. J. Ramirez



Rindge Memorial School's vernal pool monitoring project; Keene's new 3rd grade "Birds in Our Neighborhood" initiative; Conval's 10th grade invasive plants study; and mammal inventories that ConVal school district 4th grade classes conduct each winter.

Also this year, Carol Young, Science Department Chair at ConVal High School, was honored as the Harris Center's "Educator of the Year" for her leadership in re-establishing collaborative teaching with 9th and 10th grade science teachers, and expanding our continuum of educational experiences for high school students. Congratulations, Carol! 🐾

The Harris Center for Conservation Education worked with the following schools in 2014-2015:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Antrim Elementary School | First Friends Preschool (in four towns) | Jonathan Daniels School, Keene | Robin's Nest Preschool, Peterborough |
| Benjamin Franklin School, Keene | Francetown Elementary School | Keene Middle School | South Meadow Middle School, Peterborough |
| Chesterfield Elementary School | Fuller Elementary School, Keene | Marlborough Elementary School | Symonds Elementary School, Keene |
| Conant High School, Jaffrey | Great Brook Middle School, Antrim | Nelson Elementary School | Temple Elementary School |
| ConVal High School, Peterborough | Greenfield Elementary School | Peterborough Elementary School | Wells Memorial School, Harrisville |
| Dublin Community Preschool | Hancock Elementary School | Pierce Elementary School, Bennington | Wheelock Elementary School, Keene |
| Dublin Consolidated School | Harrisville Children's Center | Rindge Memorial School | |
| Faulkner Elementary School, Stoddard | Jaffrey Grade School | | |

Community Programs

Susie Spikol Faber, Community Programs Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist

This was an outstanding year for the Harris Center's community programs. Whether you were a three-year-old who wanted to catch frogs, a middle school student interested in learning how to build a fire, or an adult hoping to learn about spring wildflowers, the Harris Center had something to offer you. More than 500 people participated in one or more of our programs, including our ESI (Environmental Studies Institute) courses for adults, our *Nature on Tap* series with the Hancock Inn, the *Songs and Stories of a Winter to Come* family program with the Hancock Town Library, and the *Forever Evergreen* program for homeschoolers. These programs would have been impossible without our volunteers and, of course, participants. If you have an idea for a new community program for next year, we welcome your suggestions! 🐾



Pollinators love bee balm!

photo: Meade Cadot

Summer Camps

Jenn Sutton, Camp Director and Teacher/Naturalist

In 2015, the Harris Center celebrated its 40th year of summer camp! Since 1975, generations of lucky kids have enjoyed hiking, canoeing, camping, swimming, crafting, fort building, and, of course, playing time-honored games like *Bobcat*. This summer, Joey Bastarache of Antrim thanked us with a handmade pinecone owl and a card that said, simply, "Thank you! I love camp."



Jenn Sutton with Joey's Owl.

photo: Margaret Baker

What makes our camp program so special? We offer sessions for preschoolers through middle schoolers with varying levels of challenge and adventure, and our different offerings work together to prepare children to progress from year to year. Campers can choose to attend Wol's Nest day sessions with or without overnight campouts, hike and learn basic paddling skills in *Voyagers*, head out for a week-long canoe camping experience in *Spoonwood Adventure*, or hit the *Wapack Trail* for a four-day backpacking expedition with the *Wapack Wanderers*.

Summer comes and goes, yet Harris Center camps are timeless. Next year, come hike with us on a July day or revel in the laughter of children playing their favorite nature game. A camp day at the Harris Center brings out the childhood spirit in everyone! 🐾

Planned Giving

You can help ensure a grand future for the Monadnock Region by naming the Harris Center as a beneficiary in your will or estate plan. Anyone can make a bequest, and no amount is too small. For more information, contact Jeremy Wilson at (603) 525-3394, or wilson@harriscenter.org.



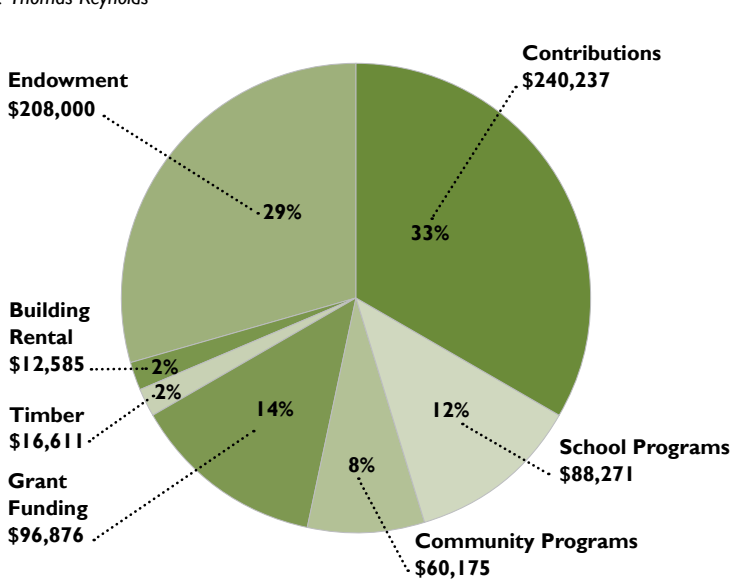
Harris Center Financial Report

Operating Budget – July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015

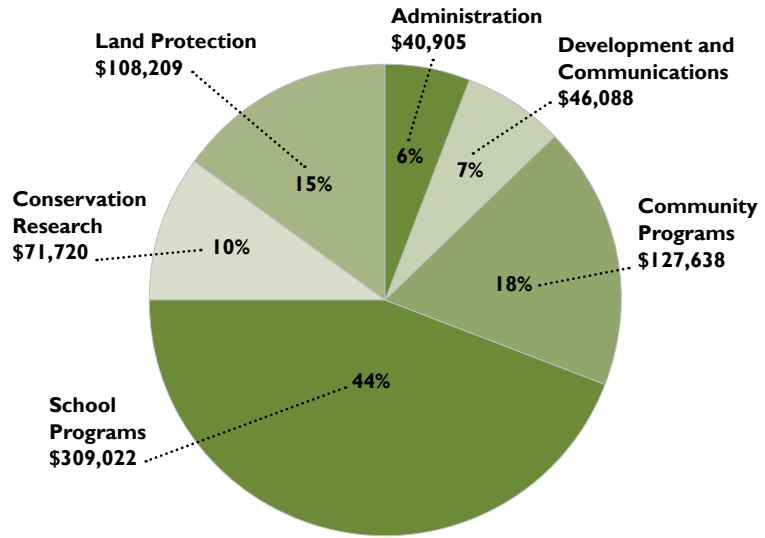
The financial statements of the Harris Center for Conservation Education are reviewed by Thomas S. Bates, Certified Public Accountant, P.C. of Keene, New Hampshire. The reviewed financial statements are available for public view at the Harris Center office in Hancock, NH.

Harris Center for Conservation Education, 83 King's Highway, Hancock, NH 03449, (603) 525-3394, harriscenter.org
 A tax-exempt, nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code

photo: Thomas Reynolds



INCOME TOTAL: \$722,755



EXPENSES TOTAL: \$703,582

During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the Harris Center received an additional \$608,334 in donations for land and easement purchases, and \$448,392 in donations and bequests for the endowment funds. We are so grateful to all our tremendous supporters.

photo: Deb Porter Hayes



Harris Center Staff

Jeremy Wilson, *Executive Director*
 Janet Altobello, *School Program Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist*
 Margaret Baker, *Communications Specialist*
 John Benjamin, *Teacher/Naturalist*
 Meade Cadot, *Naturalist Emeritus*
 Pete Carroll, *Maintenance*
 Dori Drachman, *Teacher/Naturalist*
 Jaime Hutchinson, *Teacher/Naturalist*

Diana Jacobs, *Membership Coordinator*
 Sara LeFebvre, *Finance Administrator*
 Eric Masterson, *Land Program Coordinator*
 James Newsom, *Land Protection Specialist*
 Polly Pattison, *Teacher/Naturalist*
 Jenna Spear O'Mara, *Teacher/Naturalist*
 Susie Spikol Faber, *Community Programs Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist*
 Brett Amy Thelen, *Science Director*

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