Our 47th year has been a whirlwind of activity, featuring many exciting accomplishments. Highlights include two large land conservation projects totaling over 800 acres, and great progress on opening sections of trail along the old Keene to Manchester railroad bed; welcoming two new teacher/naturalists to our staff and revamping our middle and high school collaborations in the ConVal School District; refocusing our camp programs to help kids develop lifelong relationships with the natural world; expanding our Salamander Crossing Brigade citizen science program; strengthening our internship offerings; and completing the transformation of an old fieldstone pool into a remarkable pollinator garden that's abuzz throughout the growing season.

In all our endeavors, Harris Center programs 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. Our conservation research findings offer learning opportunities and inform the stewardship of our 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.

It’s hard to imagine what our communities would be like if the Harris Center hadn’t been here, working so hard over the last 47 years. What keeps all our activities “on track”? I think the answer is simple: our extraordinary supporters and our inspiring volunteers. Thanks to their generous investments of resources and time, we’re able to continue working toward a bright future for the people, wildlife, and landscapes of the Monadnock Region.

Jeremy Wilson
Executive Director

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
- Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee
- Cheshire County Conservation District
- City of Keene
- Contoocook and North Branch Rivers Local Advisory Committee
- Delrossi’s Trattoria
- Distant Hill Gardens
- Franconia Land Trust
- Hancock Conservation Commission
- Hancock Town Library
- Harrisville Trails Committee
- Historical Society of Cheshire County
- Horatio Colony Nature Preserve
- Jon Atwood
- Keene State College
- Local Girl Scout and Boy Scout Troops
- Matthew Roy, Otter Brook Farm
- Monadnock Conservancy
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Weather Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Nelson Conservation Commission
- Nelson Trails Committee
- NH Audubon
- NH Fish and Game
- NH Rivers Council
- Peterborough Conservation Commission
- Peterborough Town Library
- Piscataquog Land Conservancy
- Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership
- Rindge Conservation Commission
- RiverMead
- Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
- Tenney Farm
- The Caterpillar Lab
- The Hancock Inn
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Stewardship Network: New England
- Town of Swanzey
- Trout Unlimited
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Windblown Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing

Thank you to all!
New Land Protection Projects

This year, the Harris Center completed three “and a half” land projects, totaling 805 acres. The first two are contiguous conservation easements that protect 211 acres in Harrisville, including a quarter-mile of frontage on Nelson Road and 1,800 feet of shoreline on Silver Lake. When paired with existing conserved lands, these new easements amount to more than half a mile of protected, connected, undeveloped shoreline on the northeastern edge of Silver Lake and add to a block of more than 6,000 acres of contiguous conservation land in the towns of Nelson, Roxbury, Harrisville, and Marlborough. The new easements also increase the proportion of conserved lands in the Silver Lake watershed to an amazing 75%, helping to protect water quality in both Silver Lake and nearby Childs Bog.

The third project is the acquisition of 14 acres off Jaquith Road in Harrisville. This small but significant parcel is surrounded on three sides by other Harris Center-conserved lands, and comprises part of the scenic road corridor along Old Dublin Road in Hancock and Jaquith Road in Harrisville. In addition to its scenic value, more than half the property holds the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan’s highest ranking for wildlife habitat, and the entire parcel was considered a high priority for conservation by the Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership land conservation collaborative.

The “half” project is actually the largest – Osgood and Hurd Hills in Nelson. This 580-acre parcel includes the highest peaks in Nelson and the second-highest peak in all of Cheshire County, as well as headwaters for three separate regional watersheds – the Ashuelot River, Nubanusit Brook, and the North Branch of the Contoocook River. The conservation of this property also greatly enhances an existing 1,700-acre corridor of protected land, which provides an expansive, unfragmented block of critical wildlife habitat and offers tremendous recreational opportunities. The Harris Center purchased this land in November 2015 (Phase I) and is in the process of selling it, subject to a conservation easement, to the Town of Nelson for use as a town forest (Phase II).

Outings and Events

This year, we offered more than 120 outings and events – all open to the public and most at no charge. We included hikes on trails both old and new, paddles, snowshoe treks, cross-country skiing, hawk watches, bird counts, film showings, presentations, and more. We’re grateful for the many volunteers who led these events, sharing their love of the natural world with all. We encourage any outing suggestions you may have, and welcome new volunteer trip leaders, as well.

harriscenter.org
During the spring amphibian migration, more than 150 Salamander Crossing Brigadiers moved a record 6,150 salamanders and frogs across 40 different roads in 22 towns, bringing our 10-year total to nearly 31,000 (!) amphibians.

In April and May, our Vernal Pool Project volunteers documented 46 new vernal pools – which serve as specialized breeding habitat for those migrating amphibians – for a grand total of more than 235 vernal pools in 16 towns over 10 years.

This summer, observations from our Project Nighthawk volunteers led to the discovery of the first confirmed Common Nighthawk nest in Keene since 2012 – complete with a healthy fledgling.

Lastly, after many years of planning and hard work by a dedicated team of conservation partners – including our citizen scientists – an undersized culvert in Swanzey was replaced with a new, flood-resilient and wildlife-friendly arch crossing. This stream restoration project reconnects more than 20 miles of habitat for wild brook trout, dace, and other aquatic wildlife.

Research on Our Lands
In the fourth year of an innovative partnership with Keene State College, four undergraduates participated in a seven-week summer conservation internship program with the Harris Center. The interns documented vernal pools, inventoried forest communities, surveyed and removed hundreds of invasive plants, monitored chestnut plantings, and conducted wildlife road mortality surveys, among other tasks.

Two KSC classes also conducted capstone research on Harris Center lands, assessing road-stream crossings for fish passage and flooding potential, investigating the effects of road salt on aquatic communities, evaluating recreational trail use, conducting pollinator and wildlife surveys, and researching land use history. Their work will continue through the fall.

In 2015, we planted 10 blight-resistant American Chestnut trees at the Harris Center and on the newly-conserved Hiroshi Land. In 2016, our team of conservation interns from Keene State College checked on the plantings – recording information on their location, height, and condition – as part of a status update for the American Chestnut Foundation.

In addition, a team of graduate students from Antioch University New England conducted winter bird surveys on our Hiroshi Land; undergraduate students working with Dr. Denise Burchsted of KSC have been monitoring water quality and instream habitat along Hunt’s Pond Brook; and an independent researcher tracked bobcat activity in the SuperSanctuary as part of a White Pine tracking internship.

Thank You
We’re grateful to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Caswell Family Foundation, Keene State College, and all of our citizen scientists and project partners for their invaluable support of our conservation research programming. Here’s to more great science in the SuperSanctuary in 2017! ✨
The Harris Center’s school programs are predicated on the delight of finding nature’s surprises. Our goal is to craft experiences that help children feel alive, peaceful, free, adventurous, and curious.

During the 2015-2016 school year, Harris Center teacher/naturalists collaborated with classroom teachers in 29 schools across the Monadnock Region to link their required curriculum to the stories right outside their doors, reaching nearly 2,800 students from preschool through 12th grade.

In Antrim, 6th graders explored Tenney Farm, where they thinned lettuce and compared the taste and nutrient content of carrots harvested that morning with carrots shipped across the continent. In Peterborough, 10th graders removed invasive bittersweet and honeysuckle from their campus woods. In Keene, all the 3rd grade classes set up bird feeding stations and began recording their observations. In Nelson, students looked for evidence of deer beds, scat, and tracks as part of a deer ecology study. Harrisville 5th and 6th graders spent a day at the Harris Center conducting a biodiversity inventory in our woods and fields.

Other highlights included designing and leading 24 elementary school field trips along the new Tenant Swamp boardwalk behind Keene Middle School; WMUR’s filming a television story about our 9th grade energy audit; and helping South Meadow School reinhabit their outdoor classroom gardening space by facilitating the design and construction of a portable chicken coop. In September, we also welcomed our newest naturalist, Michael Hightower.

This year, we honored Sharyn D’Eon as our Educator of the Year. The Harris Center first worked with Sharyn 26 years ago – initially as a student teacher, then as a teacher with her own classroom at Franklin School in Keene. Now, as principal of Chesterfield Elementary School, Sharyn places high value on kids exploring their local landscape and on teachers gaining confidence and competence with outdoor natural science investigations. Sharyn knows firsthand the power of collaborating with Harris Center teacher/naturalists, and she has had the vision to embed environmental education as a core value in Chesterfield’s school culture. Her work has enriched the lives of hundreds of children and parents over the years. Congratulations, Sharyn!

The Harris Center for Conservation Education worked with the following schools in 2015-2016:

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

Thanks for exploring nature with us this year!
Community Programs
Susie Spikol Faber, Community Programs Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist

This year’s community programs highlighted the Harris Center’s spirit and commitment to partnerships. From cosponsoring the In Bloom Conference: Promising Practices in Nature-Based Early Childhood Education with Antioch University and Sophia’s Hearth to our very popular Real Story of the Birds and the Bees Environmental Studies Institute (ESI) course with Keene State College’s CALL program and RiverMead, the connections we make with community partners enable us to offer more than we ever could on our own.

Over 500 people of all ages participated in one or more of our programs, including our Nature on Tap series with The Hancock Inn, The Small World of Mice with the Hancock Town Library, Sing in the Spring with folk-heritage musician Mary DesRosiers, and our many ESI courses for adults. None of the community program offerings would have been possible without our volunteers, our partners, and, of course, our participants. If you have an idea for a new program for next year, we welcome your suggestions!

Summer Adventure Camps
Susie Spikol Faber, Jenna Spear, and Jaime Hutchinson, Camp Naturalists

Summer 2016 marked our 41st year of offering hands-on, nature-inspired adventure camps. This July, 115 eager kids joined skilled Harris Center naturalists for six different summer adventures, including our newest offering, Rovers, an introduction to wilderness survival skills and wildlife for kids entering grades 4 through 6.

Our youngest, the Explorers, discovered tadpoles, played games, and investigated the woods. Woodlanders explored the Big Boulders, splashed in streams, and found shelter in local woods. Wanderers and Paddlers searched for salamanders, identified birds, built forts, and paddled on Spoonwood Pond. From learning safe fire-building skills to discovering the challenge of hiking in the Wapack range, our camps allow kids to find a comfort in the woods that comes from simply being there day after day. We’re dedicated to outdoor adventure and stewardship, and to teaching kids that being in nature is fun and rewarding when we share it responsibly with others.

Thank You to Our Hard-Working Volunteers

The Harris Center’s success this past year was due in great part to the work of our fabulous volunteers. In addition to our board members – who all serve as volunteers – and our volunteer outing leaders, so many others have helped us reach our important goals. Volunteers monitored and cleared trails and vistas, provided legal counsel, cared for gardens, provided food and flowers for events, assisted our educators, helped with mailings, managed Harris Center displays at local events, worked on grounds cleanup, conducted citizen science, and manned amphibian road crossing sites. These 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!

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.
INCOME TOTAL: $784,184

EXPENSES TOTAL: $790,460

During the 2015-16 fiscal year, the Harris Center received an additional $2,394,347 in donations for land and easement purchases and $243,000 in donations and bequests for endowment funds. We're so grateful for all this tremendous support.

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
Michael Hightower, 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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