

Annual Report



July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016

HARRIS CENTER
FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Director's Report

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



Jeremy Wilson trains KSC conservation interns Vic Drake, Shauna Sousa, and Rob Lanfranchi in forest inventory techniques

(photos: Brett, Amy Thelen)

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

Thank you to all!

Land Conservation

James Newsom, Land Protection Specialist

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,



Silver Lake and Mount Monadnock

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).

On the stewardship front, hard-working interns Adrien Benevides, Lara Kazo, and Arianna Zrzavy worked with landowners to monitor over 100 conservation easements throughout the SuperSanctuary this spring and summer. A huge thank you goes out to these intrepid and adventurous interns for helping us achieve this enormous and critical task in our work as a land trust.

Our land protection and stewardship work was made possible this year through support from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership, the NH State Conservation Committee (Moose Plate Program), the Caswell Family Foundation, and generous donations from many friends of the SuperSanctuary. 🐾



(photos: Brett Amy Thelen)

A spectacular autumn view of Spoonwood Pond (center) and Lake Nubanusit (left) from the East Pinnacle viewpoint on the Kulish Ledges Trail

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. 🐾

Hawkwatch at Pack Monadnock, Miller State Park

harriscenter.org



Conservation Research

Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

Citizen Science

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.



Volunteers plant native, edible plants – grown by the Keene State College Biology department and wild edibles expert Russ Cohen – along the banks of Falls Brook to help stabilize the shoreline

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

One of 151 wood frogs helped across North Lincoln Street in Keene by the Salamander Crossing Brigades on March 16, 2016



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.



KSC conservation intern Shauna Sousa measures the Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) of a hemlock tree on the Harris Center's Hiroshi Land

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! 🐸

(photos: Brett Amy Thelen)

Environmental Education in the Schools

Janet Altobello, School Program Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist

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.

1st and 2nd grade students from James Faulkner Elementary School in Stoddard examine beetle frass as part of an insect study

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! 🐾

(photo: Janet Altobello)



Symonds School students on a nature scavenger hunt at the Tenant Swamp Boardwalk in Keene



(photo: Tina Minardi)

(photo: Brett Amy Thelen)



South Meadow School 8th graders survey macroinvertebrates in Bogle Brook in Peterborough

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)

Francetown 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! ➔

(photo: Meade Cadot)



Harris Center naturalist Susie Spikol Faber discusses a porcupine den so old it could be on the historic register (!) during the Harris Center's Environmental Studies Institute course on field signs of porcupines, beavers, and bear

(photo: Meade Cadot)

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! ➔

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. ➔



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.



(photo: Meade Cadot)

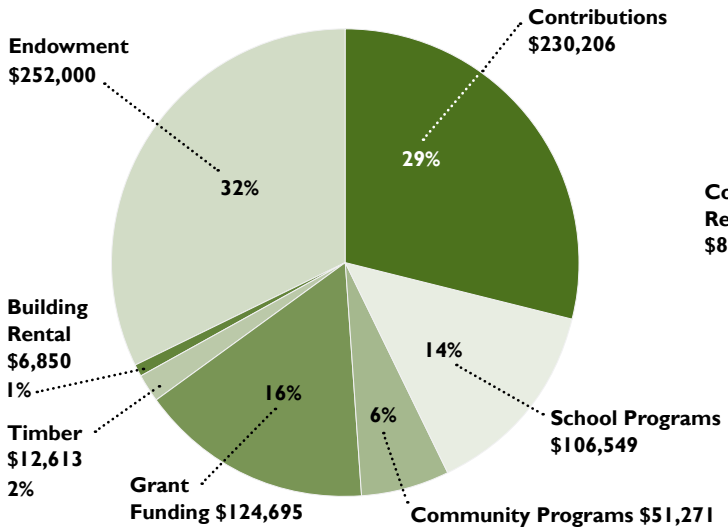
Harris Center Financial Report

Operating Budget – July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016

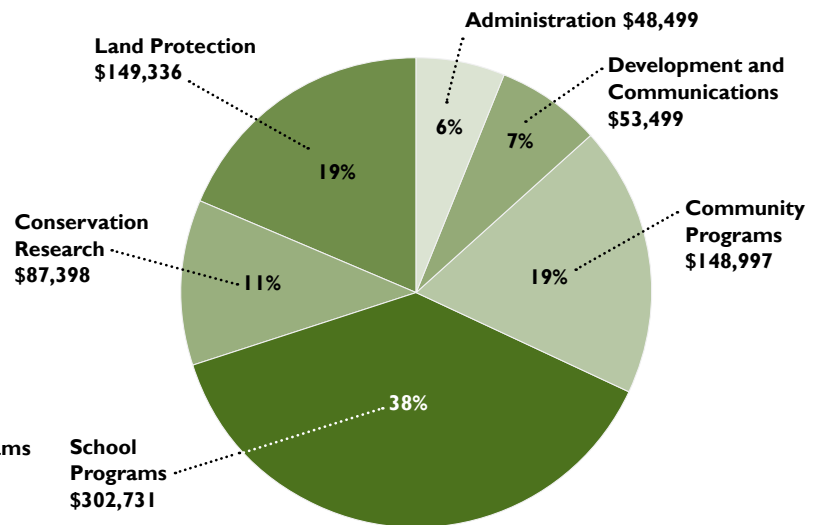
The financial statements of the Harris Center for Conservation Education are reviewed by Thomas S. Bates, Certified Public Accountant, P.C. of Keene, New Hampshire. The reviewed financial statements are available for public view at the Harris Center office in Hancock, NH.

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

Red-bellied Woodpecker



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.



Pollinator Garden (photo: Emily Lord, The Stewardship Network: New England)

Harris Center Staff

- | | |
|---|--|
| Jeremy Wilson, <i>Executive Director</i> | Diana Jacobs, <i>Membership Coordinator</i> |
| Janet Altobello, <i>School Program Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist</i> | Sara LeFebvre, <i>Finance Administrator</i> |
| Margaret Baker, <i>Communications Specialist</i> | Eric Masterson, <i>Land Program Coordinator</i> |
| John Benjamin, <i>Teacher/Naturalist</i> | James Newsom, <i>Land Protection Specialist</i> |
| Meade Cadot, <i>Naturalist Emeritus</i> | Polly Pattison, <i>Teacher/Naturalist</i> |
| Pete Carroll, <i>Maintenance</i> | Jenna Spear O'Mara, <i>Teacher/Naturalist</i> |
| Dori Drachman, <i>Teacher/Naturalist</i> | Susie Spikol Faber, <i>Community Programs Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist</i> |
| Michael Hightower, <i>Teacher/Naturalist</i> | Brett Amy Thelen, <i>Science Director</i> |
| Jaime Hutchinson, <i>Teacher/Naturalist</i> | |

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- | | |
|---|--|
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