



July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017

HARRIS CENTER FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Director's Report

It's been another fantastic year for the Harris Center! The conservation of Osgood and Hurd Hills was completed in June, with the sale of 580 acres of protected land to the Town of Nelson – a project 30 years in the making. Collaborating with Harrisville Trails and Friends of the SuperSanctuary, we're also close to installing an impressive footbridge over Jaquith Brook in Harrisville, opening an amazing section of rail trail in Hancock and Harrisville.



▲ **Jeremy Wilson teaches KSC student researchers about leaf structure.** photo: Brett Amy Thelen

During the school year, our team of talented teacher/naturalists engaged thousands of local students in studies of nearby nature. In the Contoocook Valley school district, we now reach every student in grades 2-10.

Thanks to support from 100+ Women who Care: Peterborough, Lab Girls – a pilot afterschool program to keep middle school girls engaged in science and engineering – was a great success and will be back again next year.

Last fall, we installed a series of study plots as part of a regional initiative to track woodland salamander populations. In the summer, our intrepid team of Keene State College interns collected data on forests, culverts, vernal pools, and invasive plants.

You can read about these activities, and many more, in the following pages. Through it all, we strive to ensure that our programs support and build upon each other. Our land conservation work protects a diversity of local ecosystems and models exemplary stewardship; our educational programming helps create future stewards; and our research activities provide exciting learning opportunities and inform the stewardship of our lands.

A fantastic mission, enduring supporters, inspiring volunteers, and a dedicated staff allow us to accomplish so much as we work towards a bright future for the people, wildlife, and landscapes of the Monadnock Region. Thank you, and save the year: in 2020 the Harris Center will be celebrating our 50th anniversary!

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
- Cheshire Walkers
- City of Keene
- Connecticut River Conservancy
- Fitzwilliam Conservation Commission
- Francestown Land Trust
- Hancock Conservation Commission
- Hancock Town Library
- Harrisville Public Library
- Harrisville Trails
- Historical Society of Cheshire County
- Horatio Colony Nature Preserve
- Jaffrey Conservation Commission
- Jon Atwood
- Keene Middle School
- Keene State College
- Local Girl Scout and Boy Scout Troops
- Monadnock Center for History & Culture
- Monadnock Conservancy
- Monadnock Humane Society
- Monadnock Rotary Club
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Nelson Conservation Commission
- Nelson Trails Committee
- NH Audubon
- NH Humanities
- NH Fish and Game
- Peterborough Conservation Commission
- Peterborough Town Library
- Piscataquog Land Conservancy
- Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership
- RiverMead
- Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
- Sophia's Hearth Family Center
- SPARCnet
- Tenney Farm
- The Grapevine Family and Community Resource Center
- The Hancock Inn
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Stewardship Network: New England
- Toadstool Bookshop
- Town of Swanzey
- Trout Unlimited
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- UNFI United Natural Foods
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Wild Roots Nature School at Stonewall Farm

Thank you to all!



▲ **Osgood and Hurd Hills in Summer Green** photo: Brett Amy Thelen

Land Conservation

Eric Masterson, Land Protection Coordinator

New Land Protection Projects

In **Nelson**, the final phase of the Osgood and Hurd Hill project was completed with the sale of 580 acres of land to the Town of Nelson. The Harris Center originally purchased the land from Ethan Tolman in November 2015 and – with support from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the New Hampshire Moose Plate Program – placed a conservation easement on the entire property in 2016. This parcel is notable because it contains the second-highest peak in all of Cheshire County, as well as the headwaters of three separate regional watersheds. It 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.

In **Stoddard**, the Harris Center acquired an additional 94 acres on two parcels, including the last 19 acres of unprotected shoreline on Robb Reservoir. Robb now joins Willard and Spoonwood Ponds as the only “great ponds” (waterbodies measuring 10 acres

or more) within the SuperSanctuary whose shoreline is 100% conserved. The second parcel protects 75 acres abutting the Robb Reservoir lands, and includes the archaeological remains of one of the

◀ **Hancock Rail Trail**

With its gentle grade and wide path, the Old Dublin Road to Eaton Road section of the rail trail in Hancock makes for great biking. photo: Dave Butler



original Stoddard Glass factories dating to the mid-1800s.

In **Hancock**, Friends of the SuperSanctuary donated conservation easements on three parcels, totaling 18 acres and protecting 760 feet of stream frontage along Moose Brook, as well as



▲ **Robb Reservoir** photo: Jeremy Wilson

the scenic approach into Hancock village on Route 137. With these projects, land conserved by the Harris Center now totals 23,178 acres.

Stewardship of Conserved Lands

On the stewardship front, industrious interns **Jocelyn Duffy** and **Ryan Paradis** worked with landowners to monitor 108 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.

Thank You

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. ➡

Thank You to Our Hard-Working Volunteers

So much of the Harris Center’s success is due 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 achieve our important mission. Volunteers monitored and cleared trails, assisted our teacher/naturalists, manned amphibian road crossing sites, cared for gardens, provided food and flowers for events, helped with our mailings, provided legal counsel, helped keep our grounds safe and beautiful, conducted citizen science, and more. We appreciate their efforts more than words can tell. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to all! ➡



◀ Summer Street Salamander

A spotted salamander is carried across Summer Street in Peterborough by a Salamander Crossing Brigade volunteer on April 15, 2017.

photo: Tyler Hogan

Conservation Research

Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

Citizen Science

During the 2017 spring amphibian migration, 125 Salamander Crossing Brigadiers moved a whopping 3,707 salamanders and frogs across 40 different roads in 23 towns, bringing our 11-year total to nearly 35,000 (!) amphibians.

In April and May, our **Vernal Pool Project** volunteers also documented 46 new vernal pools – which serve as specialized breeding habitat for those migrating amphibians – for a project total of 286 vernal pools in 16 towns.

Over the summer, we once again 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 where this aerial insectivore still breeds.

Research on Our Lands

This year, we installed six new study plots in the woods near the Harris Center as part of **SPARCnet**, a collaborative research effort aimed at understanding the effects of climate change on woodland salamander populations. We'll work with students and citizen scientists to monitor the plots for salamanders each spring and fall.

In the fifth year of an innovative partnership with Keene State College, four undergraduates participated in an eight-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 collected data on road-stream crossings, among other tasks.



▲ Surveying Culverts

The 2017 KSC conservation internship team surveys a road-stream crossing in Nelson. Their data will help to prioritize sites for potential stream restoration projects. photo: Brett Amy Thelen

Two KSC classes also conducted **capstone research** on Harris Center lands, assessing road-stream crossings for fish passage and flooding potential, identifying invasive plant infestations, conducting pollinator and wildlife surveys, investigating the effects of road salt on aquatic communities, evaluating recreational trail use, monitoring water quality, and researching the effects of wildfire on soil health and tree regeneration.



▲ Installing Salamander Study Plots

photo: Brett Amy Thelen

In addition, Dr. Denise Burchsted of KSC conducted **water quality and instream habitat studies** along Hosley Brook; an Antioch University New England graduate

student developed a GIS model for **predictive mapping of vernal pools** on Harris Center lands; and independent researchers continued to track **bobcat activity** in the SuperSanctuary as an extension of a White Pine tracking program.

Thank You

We're grateful to the New Hampshire Charitable 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 science in the SuperSanctuary in 2018! 🐸

◀ Documenting a Vernal Pool

The 2017 KSC conservation interns document amphibian breeding habitat. photo: Brett Amy Thelen

◀ Spotted Salamander Eggs photo: Dave Hoitt

Environmental Education in the Schools

Janet Altobello, School Program Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist

“When direct experience in nature falls to the wayside, the opportunity to explore the ditch gets replaced by memorizing lists of the plants you might find if you actually ever went to the ditch.”

– David Sobel, author of *Childhood and Nature*

“Exploring the ditch” is the Harris Center’s specialty! During the 2016-17 school year, Harris Center teacher/naturalists wove enlivening experiences into required curriculum to help nearly 2,800 students in 29 local schools discover nearby nature.



photo: Kristine Kennedy

2nd graders collected and sorted seeds along the wild edges of their schoolyards, then designed, built, and tested their own seeds to see if they would stick to the fur of a “bear” as it ambled about. 5th graders witnessed decomposers at work while peering into rotting logs. 8th graders looked under coverboards for salamanders and examined aquatic macroinvertebrates.

Other highlights included piloting a new, yearlong **Nature Study Fridays** program in four Nelson School classes; Keene 3rd grade



▲ Surveying for Salamanders

8th graders check coverboards for red-backed salamanders. photo: Jeremy Wilson

teachers taking an even greater leadership role in our collaborative **Birds in Our Neighborhood** project; and providing ConVal district 1st grade teachers with monthly afterschool professional development opportunities. ➔

► Professional Development: Collecting Macroinvertebrates

This year, eight ConVal district 1st and 2nd grade teachers met with a Harris Center teacher/naturalist to explore ways of integrating schoolyard nature study into their science curriculum. Meeting at a different school each month, we identified the natural history opportunities in each schoolyard – from acorns to aquatic macroinvertebrates, twigs to winter wildlife – and learned how to work with the Next Generation Science Standards in the context of nearby nature. photo: Michael Hightower



◀ Nature Study on Norway Pond

8th graders collect and examine aquatic macroinvertebrates on Norway Pond in Hancock. photo: Jeremy Wilson



The Harris Center for Conservation Education partnered with the following schools in 2016-2017:

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 three towns*)

Francestown 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*

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

In 2016-2017, the Harris Center's community programs put the emphasis on *community*! We worked with town libraries, family resource centers, colleges, preschools, local businesses, non-profit organizations, and other partners to create new programs in new places with new participants. Developing and deepening our connections with these partners enabled us to offer more learning opportunities for the community than we ever could have offered on our own.

More than 550 people of all ages participated in one or more of our programs this year, including *Lab Girls*, a pilot afterschool STEM club for middle school girls; nature talks at all the Peterborough-area retirement and assisted-living communities; collaborative dog walks and talks with the Monadnock Humane Society; a lunch lecture series with the Peterborough Town Library; and nature almanac classes with The Grapevine's parenting groups. None of these offerings would have been possible without our volunteers, our partners, and, of course, our participants. Let us know if you have an idea for a new program for the next year. We welcome your suggestions!



▲ Lab Girls: Investigating Circuits

This afterschool club brings women mentors with careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) into the classroom to share their stories and their science. Each week, the Lab Girls meet a different role model and then have a chance to experiment with the tools of her trade. ConVal high school students with an interest in science help the middle school girls navigate the hands-on experiments. photo: Susie Spikol Faber

Summer Adventure Camps

In our 42nd year of offering hands-on, nature-inspired summer camps, 130 eager kids joined skilled Harris Center naturalists for six different adventures.

Our youngest campers, the Explorers, collected insects, roamed forest and field, and "became" wild animals. Woodlanders hiked, built forts, and reveled in classic camp games. Rovers, Paddlers, and Voyagers traveled further afield, seeking out mountain-top blueberries, discovering woodland vernal pools, and canoe camping on beloved Spoonwood Pond. Highland Wanderers spent a week learning low-impact hiking, camping, and cooking skills in the hills of Stoddard. Cheers for another fun summer exploring the great outdoors! ➔



photo: Jaime Hutchinson



photo: Seth Andrews



photo: Jenifer Dickinson

Outings and Events

Again this year, we offered more than 120 outings and events – all open to the public and most of them free of 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. We encourage any outing suggestions you may have, and welcome new volunteer trip leaders, as well.

Judy Badot atop Pitcher Mountain ► with the Women Getting Back into Hiking ESI course. photo: Janet Altobello



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. ➔



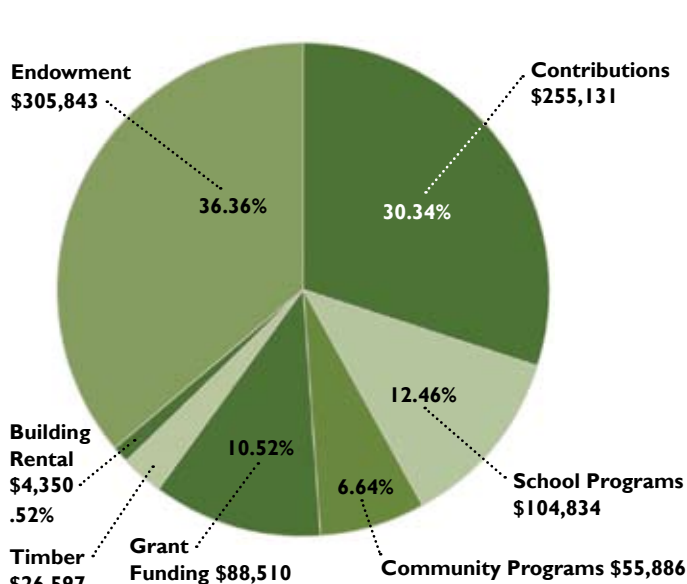
photo:Tia Strombeck

Harris Center Financial Report

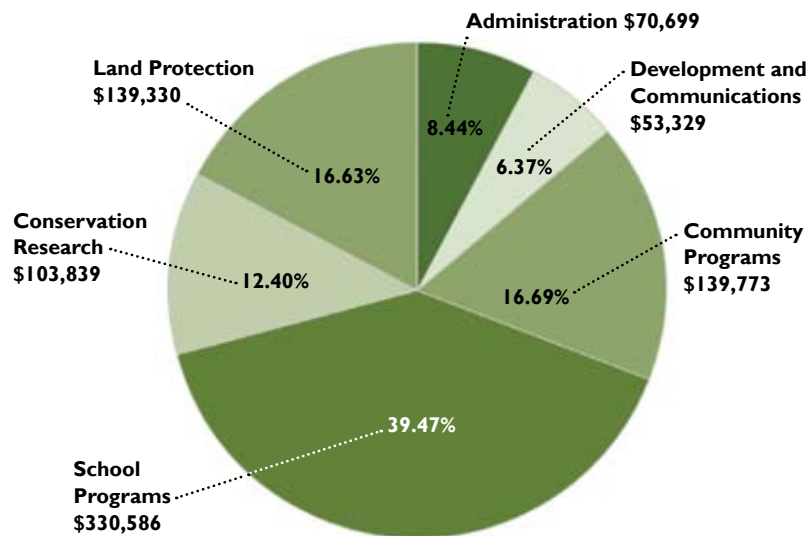
Operating Budget – July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

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.

The Harris Center for Conservation Education is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



INCOME TOTAL: \$841,151



EXPENSES TOTAL: \$837,556

During the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the Harris Center received an additional \$444,651 for land projects and easement purchases, and \$602,141 in donations and bequests for our endowment. We're so grateful for 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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A stone wall among autumn reflections in the beaver pond near the Eastview Trail in Harrisville. photo: Brett Amy Thelen