



**Belknap Range
Conservation Coalition**

2012 Annual Report

The Belknap Range Conservation Coalition (BRCC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the conservation of open space, responsible stewardship, and low impact public enjoyment of scenic, natural, recreational and historical resources of the Belknap Mountain Range. Participating members include individuals/conservation commission members from the project area towns of Alton, Belmont, Gilford and Gilmanton as well as dedicated individuals such as Dave Roberts who share an avid interest in the many resources that the Belknap Range provides. Conservation organizations with participating members include: UNH Cooperative Extension; Society for the Protection of NH Forests; Lakes Region Conservation Trust; Belknap County Sportsmen's Association; Belknap Range Trail Tenders (BRATTS); Gilmanton Land Trust; Lakes Region Planning Commission and the Belknap County Conservation District. The towns of Pittsfield and Barnstead have also supported the BRCC with memberships.

Along with working to protect the largely unfragmented natural landscape that makes up the Belknap Mountain Range, the BRCC also educates the public about the significance of the resources of the Belknap Mountain Range; develops, promotes, and implements methods and strategies for ensuring the long-term protection and responsible stewardship of these resources; and promotes opportunities for low impact public enjoyment and recreation.

The BRCC strives to facilitate cooperation and communication among conservation organizations, municipalities, other governmental entities and area landowners, and helps coalition members secure funding, technical assistance and other resources for carrying out programs in support of this mission.

During the year, the Directors met monthly at the Gilman Museum in Alton. The monthly meetings offer important opportunities for members to share information about parcels within the focus area.

At the annual meeting in October 2011, Alan Sherwood asked that he not be re-appointed because he was not able to attend half of the meetings. Alan was thanked for his many contributions to BRCC. He had been active on the Board since the first organizational meeting. Dave Lawrence also said that he would like to step down from the Board for multiple reasons, but he would continue until a replacement is found. Tom Howe and Nanci Mitchell were re-elected to the Board of Directors and Dave Lawrence was re-elected on a temporary basis. Russ Wilder was re-elected as Chair, Everett McLaughlin as Vice-Chair and Nanci Mitchell as Secretary/Treasurer. In April, Bruce Jacobs of Barnstead, NH was introduced as a new Director of BRCC. An active hiker, Bruce is a former president of Fountain Forestry in Pittsfield, NH; a member of the Board of Advisors of the New England Forestry Foundation and a member of the Barnstead Conservation Commission.

During the year we continued our outreach efforts. BRCC sponsored a winter wildlife walk at Camp Bell on February 25th. A light snow just prior to the hike made it possible to discuss tracks

observed including mink along Moulton Brook. Thanks to Andy Fast and Emma Carcagno from UNH Cooperative Extension Service for arranging and leading this walk.

In June, Russ Wilder worked with the Town of Alton to construct a kiosk at the Mount Major parking lot. The kiosk now displays a map of the primary trails to the summit of Mount Major along with trail descriptions. It also displays the Hikers' Responsibility Code and includes postings not to litter or build campfires; emergency information; Dave Roberts' annotated photo of the view from the top and information about Mr. Phippen's hut. Special thanks to the Alton Highway Department for supplying a backhoe and labor to erect the major posts of the kiosk.

Also in June, BRCC director Don Watson reported that 315 people have completed the requirements to receive a Belknap Mountains hiking patch.

On August 30th, Russ Wilder presented a talk on the value and natural features of the Belknap Range at the NH Boat Museum in Wolfeboro. 55 people attended this evening meeting and many expressed interest in the BRCC's conservation efforts. Additional contacts were made for future presentations to other organizations.

On September 22nd, BRCC sponsored another natural communities hike on Piper Mountain. BRCC director Andy Fast arranged for Pete Bowman of the Natural Heritage Bureau to lead the walk focusing on the rocky ridge natural communities found there. BRCC director Lisa Morin coordinated pre-registration of the hike through the Belknap County Conservation District. The hike was co-sponsored by the NH Natural Heritage Bureau, BRCC, UNH Cooperative Extension and the Belknap County Conservation District.

On Columbus Day weekend, the BRCC conducted another very successful outreach event at the Mount Major parking lot. Directors and members greeted the throngs of hikers on Saturday with information about conservation efforts in the Belknaps. It was estimated that nearly 2,000 hikers climbed Mount Major that weekend.



Brochures were made available at Town Meetings, at all Belknap County Conservation District (BCCD) public information sessions and in some trail kiosks. Information was also published in the SPNHF and LRCT newsletters.

The website created last year (www.belknaprang.org) has been used to provide information about BRCC activities. The e-mail address is info@belknaprang.org. The site has been revised and updated to be more comprehensive in supplying information to the public including more photos of the Belknap Range and maps. Links to the Alton, Belmont, Gilford and Gilmanton town websites have been established. Director Andy Fast has been maintaining the site.

Land Conservation Efforts. This year there was considerable activity pursuing land conservation projects. It is anticipated that the conservation of multiple parcels will be lumped into one large project that would require considerable fund raising. Organizations involved include the town conservation commissions, Lakes Region Conservation Trust, Society for the Protection of NH Forests, NH Dept. of Resources and Economic Development and NH DOT. Members of the BRCC Board of Directors met with the Alton and Gilford Conservation Commissions to discuss the status of land conservation efforts. Both commissions are supportive.

As part of our land conservation efforts, BRCC is supporting bio-inventory work involving the identification of threatened and endangered species and exemplary natural communities on the parcels proposed for conservation. The results of such a study will give BRCC a better understanding of the natural resources involved and will be helpful with any future fund-raising efforts.

BRCC has also supported an assessment of the condition of the trails in the Mount Major area. Directors Don Berry and Tom Howe have met with staff from the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and hiked some of the trails. AMC will give BRCC ideas and cost estimates for repair and future maintenance of trails.

BRCC also organized and conducted a survey of hikers on Mount Major. Mount Major is one of the most popular hikes in New Hampshire but the trails to the summit are largely on private land. The survey was organized by director Bev DiVaio with assistance from directors Everett McLaughlin, Nanci Mitchell and Elaine Grantham-Buckley. These directors and other volunteers spent numerous days counting the number of hikers and getting many of the hikers to fill out a questionnaire concerning where the hikers are from and why they chose to hike Mount Major. WMUR did a survey that ranked Mount Major as the #1 place to hike in NH, followed by Mount Monadnock. This is supportive evidence that Mount Major is a significant state-wide resource.

For more information on the BRCC, please contact the Belknap Range Conservation Coalition at PO Box 151, Gilmanton IW, NH 03837 or email us at info@belknaprang.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell J. Wilder
Chair