

## **Belknap Range Conservation Coalition**

**2014 Annual Report (October  
2013 to October 2014)**

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; 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.

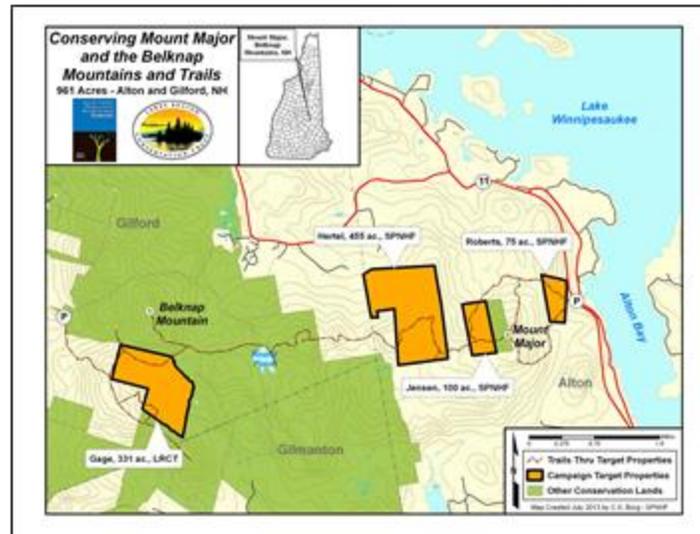
During the year, the Directors met monthly at the Gilman Museum in Alton. The monthly meetings offer important opportunities for members to share information about parcels within the focus area.

At the annual meeting in October 2013, Lisa Morin, Dave Roberts and Don Watson were reappointed to the Board. The current officers are Chairperson-Russ Wilder, Vice-Chairperson-Bruce Jacobs, Secretary-Lisa Morin and Treasurer-Nanci Mitchell. Everett McLaughlin's resignation to focus his efforts on conservation efforts in Gilford was accepted with regret. In the spring John Jude, from the Gilford Conservation Commission was elected. Andy Fast from NH Coop Ext resigned due to work responsibilities and Amanda Stone was elected to represent NH Coop Ext.

The most notable accomplishment this year was BRCC's support of the completion of the campaign led by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) and the Lakes Region Conservation Trust (LRCT) to conserve 4 parcels of land totaling 961 acres around Mount Major, Piper Mountain, Belknap Mountain, North Straightback and Quarry mountains. Three of the four properties were closed on during the year and the fourth is expected to close early next year. The Lakes Region Conservation Trust acquired the Gilford parcel and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests acquired the two parcels in Alton. The fund raising goal was \$1.8 million and was completed in September 2014. This included land acquisition costs, transaction fees, legal expenses and surveys and some preliminary stewardship improvements.

The towns of Alton and Gilford committed conservation funds in support of this project. Alton committed \$230,000 and Gilford \$110,000. The New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) also provided a grant of \$340,000. BRCC directors Bev DiVaio, Russ Wilder and Bruce Jacobs organized a hiker education and thank you event at the Mount Major trailhead on Labor Day weekend this year to let hikers know that the campaign was a success. BRCC had conducted a survey of hikers during the summer and fall of 2012. That information showed that hikers were from all over the United States and the world! We estimate that perhaps 80,000 people climbed Mount Major every year with the busiest time

being Columbus Day Weekend (~4,000 hikers). This year, we think that there were even more hikers than last – enjoying the fine fall weather. The next step, in conjunction with the Forest Society and other stakeholders, is to develop a management plan that will improve the outdoor experience on the acquired parcels and to address impacts to the trail system that has seen so much heavy use over all these years.



Other activities/items of interest include:

- BRCC continued to maintain the Kiosk at the Mount Major Parking Lot.
- BRCC supported a study of potential trail remediation needs in the vicinity of Mt. Major by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).
- BRCC worked to improve the website ([belknaprang.org](http://belknaprang.org)) that had been developed by Andy Fast. Don Hughes took over as Webmaster and has been doing a great job.
- Weldon Bosworth of Gilford produced a detailed Belknop Range Trail map with support from BRCC. This map is now posted on the Kiosk at Mount Major and is available for download as a pdf file from our website at: [belknaprang.org](http://belknaprang.org). Additions to the map in the future may include points of interest such as the Alton/Gilford/Gilmanton town boundary marker, charcoal kiln at Hidden Valley, Ames cellar hole on the Yellow Trail, Gunstock Iron Mine, the plane crash site on Belknop Mountain, Mr. Phippen's hut on Mount Major and the granite quarry.
- Thank-you event at Gunstock
- Hiker Education Day at Mt. Major
- National Public Land Day at Mt. Major
- Assisting with Stewardship issues and working with the BRATTs
- Continued to support working with landowners on conservation (the ARM funds applications)
- Met with many of the 80,000 people who hike Mount Major each year providing information about land conservation in the Belknaps

For more information on the BRCC, please contact the Belknop Range Conservation Coalition at PO Box 151, Gilmanton IW, NH 03837 or email us at [info@belknaprang.org](mailto:info@belknaprang.org).

Respectfully submitted,

Russell J. Wilder  
Chair