"You are responsible for 8500 acres of conservation land, and you have no stewardship staff?" This is a question we hear from our peers at other land trusts who have staff who do everything from hanging a new trail sign to monitoring and maintaining every property consistent with its management plan. As of 2018, MLT owns 18 preserves and boat launches, and holds 10 conservation easements where landowners have granted MLT permanent conservation restrictions, including on a 4,623-acre working forest.

The answer, for nearly 30 years, has been: "volunteers," lots of them. The Whitecap Stewards, MLT’s volunteer caretakers of the trails and facilities at the 1100-acre Rumford Whitecap Mountain Preserve, set the standard. Beginning when MLT acquired the first parcel on the summit of Whitecap in 2007, the Stewards have laid out, built and maintained trails, served as ambassadors with abutting landowners, and worked to make the visitor experience for summer hikers and winters skiers a good one.

The Whitecap Stewards are a model MLT is replicating elsewhere. This summer, MLT received what can be described as fair complaints about the popular Glassface Ledges trail in Rumford Center being overgrown. "Could you get someone out there to brush it out?" At times like this, it would be great to call a staff person and schedule the work - if there were one. The alternative plan took a little longer, but it worked: social media posts, emails and calls to some friends of MLT resulted in two work parties, continued on page 7.

L-R Lynn Saxton, Tom DeLuca, Cynthia Stanicoff, John Hoyt at Glassface Ledges
As the sun was rising on a Saturday morning in August, things were already smoking at Valentine Farm. At 6:00 a.m. two of our favorite Maine Guides, Mac Davis and John Wight, had a traditional campfire breakfast well underway in anticipation of the crowd of storytellers and listeners due to arrive for the first live storytelling event at Valentine Farm.

Nine storytellers entertained over 40 people with humorous, frightening, funny and unexpected tales of outdoor adventures. Our own Kirk Siegel told of the perils of keeping track of his clothes while swimming in the dark of night. Mac Davis chuckled while recounting watching students practice hypothermia prevention on a teacher, and Jeff Angevine reminded us that forest fires are often fought by volunteers and helicopters carrying vast amounts of water... two elements that when mixed can lead to a dousing of enthusiasm.

The storytelling event was co-sponsored by Mahoosuc Heart & Soul, an organization dedicated to community development based on broad participation from as many people as possible to determine what matters most about their communities. As MLT has worked on the Master Plan, Heart & Soul has provided us with wonderful ideas about how people envision strengthening our region’s cultural, social, and economic vibrancy. Those insights are certain to be critical to the Valentine Farm planning process.
WHERE HAVE THE INSECTS GONE?

Barbara Murphy, Development Coordinator

This summer I saw almost no pests in the three vegetable gardens I work in - no cucumber or bean beetles, very few cabbage moths or squash bugs. I would like to say this was due to my gardening skills, but other summer insects like June beetles and night flying moths were missing as well. As a gardener, I was thrilled, but as a global citizen, I was scared. Where are the insects? Should we care?

The short answer is yes. A 27-year study in Germany found an almost 80% decline in flying insects in nature reserves and protected areas from 1989 to 2016. (For a general summary of the study, see The Atlantic Magazine, October 2017.)

No one is certain of the cause - ecosystems are complex and resilient. While research continues, concerned scientists encourage all of us to enhance insect populations by adding flower-rich areas to our landscapes.

MLT is all in on this effort. In addition to our work conserving land for recreation and critical habitat needs, we are enhancing our properties to support a wider range of plants and animals. In addition, acquiring lands that create wildlife corridors is a criterion in our strategic conservation plan.

The pollinator garden at Valentine Farm is an example of this long-range plan. This summer, nine volunteers established the beginnings of a large-scale, diverse garden. Over 40 types of flowers and grasses have been planted in “nursery beds” to overwinter while black landscape fabric smothers weeds in preparation for planting next summer. We aspire to create a space for birds and insects as well as artists, photographers, naturalists and those seeking a quiet corner.

Join us. Call Barbara for more information at 207-824-3806 or email barbara@mahoosuc.org

A SPECIAL THANKS...

To the anonymous donor who provided a 2:1, $1,500, matching challenge to be used toward computer upgrades for the office. Seven members responded to the challenge, raising an additional $750. Kirk and Barbara are extremely grateful for this generosity which has greatly increased our efficiencies.
Mahoosuc Land Trust offers a fond farewell to Jean Bass who has left the Board of Directors to spend time enjoying her grandson. We will miss Jean’s thoughtful insights, her special relationship to the community, and her willingness to post event flyers all over town. Jean will remain active on the Outreach Committee.

We would like to welcome three new members to our Board of Directors:

**Mia Purcell**
Mia has enjoyed an extensive career in economic development at the national, state and regional levels. She currently serves as the Manager of Economic Development for Community Concepts Finance Corporation assisting in development and planning initiatives for 35 towns in Oxford County.

**Katie Stack**
Katie currently works at Gould Academy and is the Chair of the History Department, facilitates the ski patrol program and leads other experiential educational programs. Katie has worked for Hurricane Island Outward Bound school as a sailing instructor in Maine and Florida.

**Bob Withrow**
Bob is a retired timberland manager for Boise Cascade in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont and brings to the board over 30 years of land management experience. Bob is a past selectman and school board member for Dixfield and currently is active in several organizations in Weld.

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**Volunteer Spotlight**

Though Lizz Peacock is not a native of western Maine, you wouldn’t be faulted for thinking she was. Lizz’s easy-going nature, plethora of skills and contagious laugh have made her a go-to person for many groups and organizations looking for an additional set of skilled hands.

If you have enjoyed recent Facebook posts, you can thank Lizz. In addition to her responsibilities of Outreach Committee Chair and Board member, Lizz took on the job of updating and posting to our Facebook and Instagram pages. When her time is not completely consumed by MLT, Lizz works full time as the Operations Director for Maine Adaptive, is involved in the Maine Outdoor Coalition and, along with her husband, Andy, owns Puzzle Mountain Glassworks, a stained glass studio featuring works inspired by the natural world.
On May 21st, the quiet of a spring morning at Valentine Farm was shattered by the arrival of 78 second graders eager to experience Environment Day. While this is the first time Valentine Farm hosted it, Environment Day has deep roots in the area. Judy Coolidge Cross, a long-time educator, conceived the event over 20 years ago as a way to have children explore and be inspired by nature.

The Woodstock, Bethel and Andover students were given hands-on opportunities to ask questions, touch, experiment and create at 12 separate stations set up along the 1.2 mile accessible trail. It was fascinating to watch kids see and feel the difference between a red and gray fox pelt, to ponder which items to use to make a sun print and ooh and aah as the transformation occurred. Comparing geology to an edible, mixed salad was a big hit as was trying to make a working compass with a tub of water. The day was a huge success and MLT would like to thank all the presenters, teachers, chaperones and volunteers for their time and enthusiasm. We hope to make Environment Day an annual event.
Bob McQueeney

What tomorrow will we leave them?

Make a lasting impact in the Mahoosuc Region: Join the many MLT supporters who have made planned gifts. Leave a bequest to MLT in your will. Name MLT as a beneficiary of an insurance policy or retirement fund. Make a life income gift. Through annuities, trusts and other vehicles, you can receive payments for life. For more information, call Kirk Siegel at 207-824-3806
For anyone who has turned 30, it’s somewhat of a watershed birthday. You're bidding a fond farewell to your exuberant 20's, but you aren't quite ready to settle into middle age. You still feel young and crazy and ready to tackle the world. As MLT celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2019, we are feeling a surge of new energy and excitement and are ready to address a new level of conservation needs in the Mahoosuc Region.

We have a history we can be proud of. We are stewards for perpetuity on over 8500 acres of land including the beloved Rumford Whitecap and Step Falls Preserves. We have improved access to the Androscoggin River via our 4 boat launches, and MLT is one of only 400 accredited land trusts in the nation, a very difficult standard to achieve.

In addition to refining our strategic conservation plan, we are excited to build a future that creates more opportunities for member, friend and community engagement. In 2019 we will unveil a master plan for Valentine Farm, begin trail construction on the McCoy/Chapman Forest, expand our workshop, lecture and learning opportunities and maybe even throw in an ice cream social as well. Stay updated as our plans unfold at www.mahoosuc.org and our Facebook page.

How About a Birthday Present for MLT?

Last year’s US tax law made some significant changes for many individuals’ 2018 US income taxes. One thing that did not change, however, is the ability to make charitable donations directly from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

As in past years, if you have an IRA and reach age 70 ½ you must begin receiving “Required Minimum Distributions,” (RMDs), from your IRAs. These RMD distributions are taxed as ordinary income on your US Form 1040. The payments are distributed to you by the bank or investment company holding the IRA funds. The amount of annual RMD is based on calculations in IRS regulations. However, the US tax law also allows you to designate some, or all, of these RMD payments as a charitable donation, (think MLT!) thus directly reducing the owner’s taxable income from RMDs. The charitable donation is paid directly from the IRA to a qualified non-profit charity (think MLT!) at the direction of the IRA’s owner. These donations reduce the IRA owner’s taxable income. Naturally, you should consult your tax advisor about the tax benefit of such a donation.

If you will be receiving Required Minimum Distributions in 2018 and you are planning to make charitable donations, please consider naming Mahoosuc Land Trust as the beneficiary of your generosity.

Thank You!
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To receive updates on events and opportunities, sign up for our free e-newsletter. Email Barbara to be added to the list. barbara@mahoosuc.org

Thanks to our volunteers for all you do!