



SACO VALLEY LAND TRUST

PRESERVING LAND IN THE LOWER SACO RIVER VALLEY SINCE 1988

2015

SACOVALLEYLANDTRUST.ORG

Saco Valley Land Trust's mission is:

- to protect for future generations land of agricultural/silvacultural, recreational or biological significance
- to encourage and work toward the protection of the region's existing large unfragmented undeveloped blocks
- to maintain ecosystems, and to promote a more general understanding of the value of such conservation efforts.

SVLT meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7 pm at Saco City Hall

We are actively seeking new Committee members. Please contact us at:

sacovalleymaine@gmail.com



DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS SPOT?

Many of you are familiar with our Thurston Mill Site picnic area on Watson Mill Road in Saco. Today it is a shady ravine with a rushing brook, which is the Nonesuch River near its headwaters. In 1871 Ancyl A. Thurston purchased the original water powered "up and down" sawmill from Stephen Watson. It was converted to a turbine driven, circular sawmill in 1874. The mill continued to be operated by Ancyl and later his son, Albert A. Thurston, until it was destroyed by a freshet in 1916.

This was the year that the Saco River and local brooks flooded and took out nearly every bridge in the area. To quote the local paper on May 18, 1916, "At North Saco the Thurston sawmill was reported washed away, also the big bridge over the brook nearby."

Photo above shows the Thurston Mill on Watson Mill Rd, an active mill for over 60 years on the Nonesuch River.

Above: stone wall remnant on Cranberry Marsh North Easement.

Back page: Workers at Thurston Mill

Collaborations Continue

Last spring we began a conversation with an abutting landowner about beaver pond infringement that impeded access to his property. Since then, we have been working with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to find solutions that will keep the beavers reasonably safe and happy, and give the landowner his access.

During the past year, members of our Board of Directors have participated in stakeholder meetings concerning Biddeford's Thatcher Brook Watershed Management Plan and have expressed our concern about the lack of real commitment to improving water quality in this degraded stream. Real

Above: Snowshoers follow Middle Goosefare Trail, near Eastern Trail and Route 1.

progress towards improvement will require more demands on the large commercial developments in the Route 111 area.

We continue to work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, whose cost-share grants are helping SVLT create management plans and carry out appropriate forestry projects, including invasive species control.

Members of our Acquisition Committee are talking to and working with several local landowners, local businesses and governments, possible funding organizations and land trust consultants as projects are slowly worked through. Almost every transaction takes the efforts of many partners to become reality.

In February 2015, as part of The Great Maine Outdoor Weekend program, we teamed up with Saco Bay Trails to host a snowshoe hike on Middle Goosefare Trail. Over a dozen brave souls showed up to scramble over 8' snowbanks and hike through the cold of an approaching major storm. A good time was had by all! We also hosted a walk at the Moses Woodman Preserve in Buxton during last fall's GMOW

Middle Goosefare Trail, located on three properties and managed by Saco Bay Trails, was an early collaborative project for SVLT. When entering the trail from the Big Apple parking lot at 742 Route 1 in Saco, the trail winds through a parcel donated to SVLT by the Mobil Corp in 1993 with the assistance of Bill Johnson. Next the trail traverses a section of land owned by Sweetser School, which generously allows Saco Bay Trails a trail easement. The trail ends by twisting past Lew's Bench and picnic area, donated by the family of Lew Weston, an early proponent of conservation in Saco and located on a parcel donated to SVLT by Max Brandt and the Brandt family in 1996.

In 1946-47, the Brandt family created and ran a skating rink in the valley shown above. This photo shows the 101 steps that led up to a warming hut near Rte. 1. A series of warm winters ended the venture.

SVLT Board

Chair: Richard Rhames • Vice Chair: Nicol Tiff • Secretary: Susan Littlefield • Treasurer: Debra Hilton

BOARD MEMBERS:

Denis Rioux • Chris DiMatteo • Annica McGuirk • Joel Tripp

ADVISORY BOARD: Jim and Edna Leary • Nan Cone • Sue Sladen • Mike Brennan • Tamara Gallagher

Message from the Chair: Looking back (and forward)

It's been more than two decades since Saco Valley Land Trust was founded. The go-go 80s, with its sprawling subdivisions and official enthusiasms for "building out" the landscape roused some conservation-minded local people to action in the hope of conserving lands of lasting value—— forever.

Originally founded as Saco Land Trust, but with an acquisition area encompassing the lower Saco River Valley, over the years SVLT has quietly labored at its mission and permanently protected (through ownership or conservation easement), over a thousand acres in Biddeford, Saco, and Buxton.

In a state where the public owns a mere 5.6 percent of Maine's forested acreage, with conservation organizations holding a meager 1.4 percent, there is obviously much work left to do. Over the last quarter century SVLT has quietly pursued its mission in the expectation that future generations will come to value our modest accomplishments with a generous and respectful nod.

The work continues. We live in hope.
Richard Rhames



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

We greatly appreciate your support each year!
We use your annual membership dues for our general operating expenses.

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

I would like to receive my newsletter by email Yes No

Membership Level:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____ (any amount)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

What is a “conservation easement?”

A conservation easement, or conservation restriction, is a legal agreement between a property owner and a land trust or government agency that permanently restricts the use of the land to protect conservation values. According to Title 33, Section 476 of the Maine Revised Statutes, the purposes of conservation easements include “retaining or protecting natural, scenic or open space values of real property; assuring its availability for agricultural, forest, recreational or open space use; protecting natural resources; or maintaining or enhancing air or water quality of real property.” The landowner continues to own the land, which they can sell or pass down to their heirs. However, the land is permanently preserved or protected, so the landowner’s rights to use the land are permanently limited. A conservation easement may be designed to keep a parcel permanently in a “wild” state, or allow some residential uses, farming, and forestry. For example, a conservation easement on a farm might allow the landowner to continue to farm, and to build additional farming structures such as barns or stables - but the landowner might not be able to build additional houses, or use the property for commercial uses that are unrelated to agriculture.

Creating a conservation easement may enable a landowner to claim a tax deduction as a charitable donation. Placing an easement on one’s property may also result in property tax savings, if it lowers the value of the property for tax purposes.

The job of the land trust is to act as the “steward” of the property. The land trust makes sure that the easement’s terms are followed. Under Maine law, the land trust must monitor the property at least once every three years, and it must maintain written monitoring reports. If necessary, the land trust may have to file a lawsuit to enforce the terms of an easement.

Before accepting a conservation easement, a land trust will examine the property to make sure it fits the trust’s criteria – for example, if the land provides important habitat for plants and animals, or has scenic value. The land trust will usually request a survey of the property so that it will have as much information as possible about the land that it will be protecting, and the landowner will want to have the property appraised if they wish to claim a tax deduction. The land trust will also request an endowment to help defray future costs, such as monitoring costs, surveys, and potential future legal fees, so that it can continue to protect the land for future generations.

Joyce Leary Clark

**Join Saco Valley Land Trust
and IF&W Wildlife Biologist, Derek Yorks
for a Walk and Talk at
the Cranberry Marsh in Biddeford
Saturday, May 30th at 1pm
Raindate 5/31**

Within the 16,000 acres designated as the Biddeford/Kennebunkport Vernal Pool Complex are two significant SVLT holdings. One is Cranberry Marsh North, a 170 acre easement held by SVLT, which abuts what is known locally as the Great Cranberry Marsh, 54 acres donated by the City of Biddeford. The Vernal Pool Complex is home to a variety of plants and animals, including some rare and threatened species. A part of our holding and easement was farmed in the 18th and 19th centuries (see photo of stone walls, front page) and the rest was historically woodlots. Today it is protected by the Trust to ensure the delicate nature of the vernal ecosystem is preserved.

LAND USE HISTORY

This issue of SVLT's annual newsletter looks at some local history. We sometimes forget that the quiet forests and streams that we enjoy now as open space were often much busier in earlier times. While we are at our favorite peaceful spot, getting away from it all, it might be fun to imagine how other people once used the land.



Saco Valley Land Trust
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THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS

- Maine Coast Heritage Trust
- Dave and Melinda Anderson
- Scarborough office of NRCS
- Max Brandt
- Dr. Thomas Klak
- Saco Bay Trails
- Maine Water
- Samuel Anderson
- Terry at Worthing & Going
- Boy Scout Troop 371

The walk will focus on vernal ecology and the inhabitants of pools, with some discussion of upland forest and bog habitat. Walk participants will have the opportunity to examine the pools, and condition dependent, may see some of the special animals that call the Cranberry Marsh their home. Joining IF&W wildlife biologist, Derek Yorks, are board members of SVLT and Saco Bay Trails. As we explore the property it may get a bit wet at times so please wear appropriate footwear. All are welcome as the walk will be moderate in pace, although some portions will require leaving the trail.

The trail entrance is at the end of Georgetown Drive in Biddeford.

Please park with consideration of neighbors.

For more information please visit our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/saco-valleylandtrust> or our website, www.sacovalleylandtrust.org.

We hope to see you there!

