



Belknap Range Conservation Coalition

2022 Annual Report (October 2021 to October 2022)

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 who share an avid interest in the many resources that the Belknap Range provides. Conservation organizations with participating members include: Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF); Lakes Region Conservation Trust; Belknap County Sportsmen's Association; Belknap Range Trail Tenders (BRATTS); Gilmanton Land Trust (LRCT); New England Forestry Foundation and the Belknap County Conservation District. The town of Barnstead has also supported BRCC with a membership.

Along with working to protect the largely unfragmented natural landscape that makes up the Belknap Mountain Range, 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. BRCC strives to facilitate cooperation and communication among conservation organizations, municipalities, other governmental entities and area landowners. BRCC helps coalition members secure funding, technical assistance and other resources for carrying out programs in support of this mission.

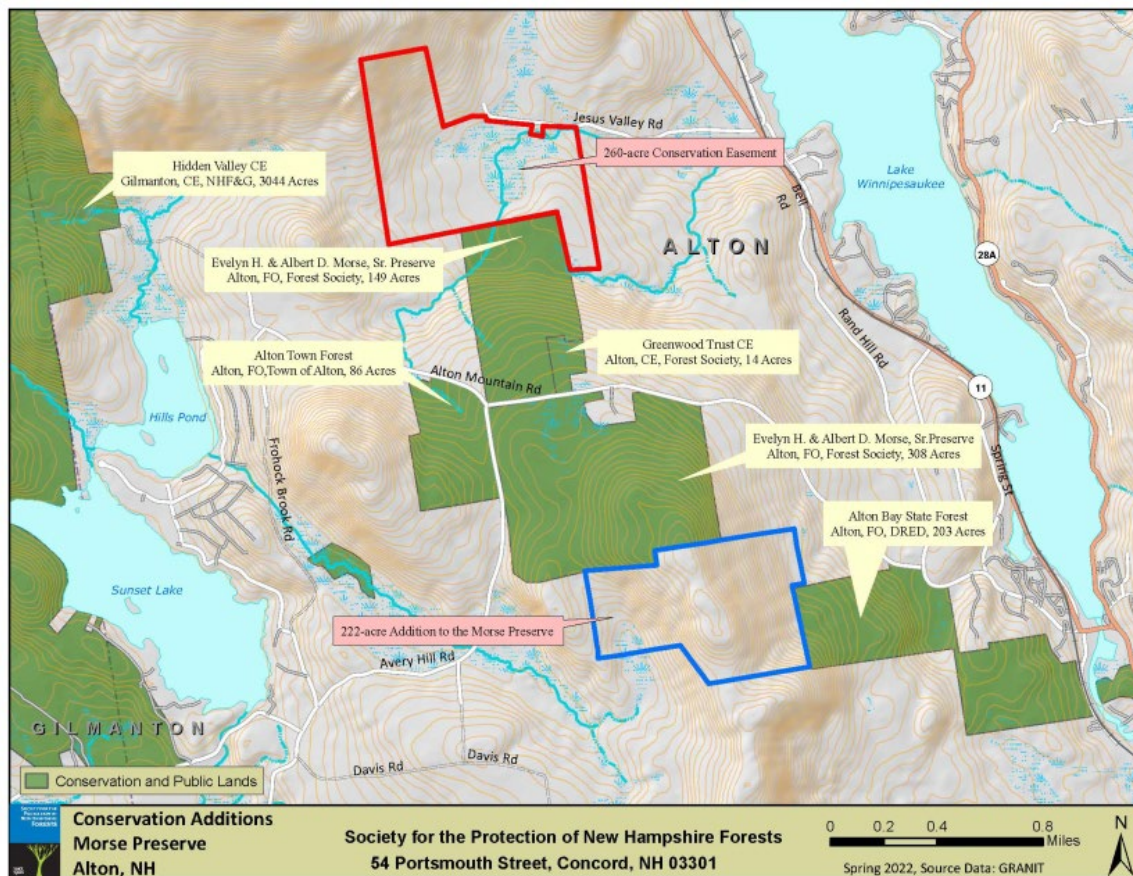
At our January meeting, forester Peter Farrell was appointed to the Board of Directors. At the annual meeting on October 21, 2022, the current officers: Russ Wilder, Chairperson; Bruce Jacobs, Vice Chairperson; Lisa Morin, Secretary; and Nanci Mitchell, Treasurer, were reappointed.

During the year, with the exception of July, the Directors met quarterly via Zoom conference. The meetings offer important opportunities for members to share information about parcels within the focus area. At these meetings we focused on sharing information on parcels of land that may be available for conservation in the Belknaps. We are monitoring several such parcels and are supporting contacts with landowners who might be willing to participate in a land conservation project.

During 2022, trail work continued on the 65-acre Weeks project in Gilford. A 5-car parking lot was constructed by the Gilford Public Works Department and a kiosk was erected by volunteers. Hiker use of trails in the Belknaps has remained heavy this year. The unofficial trailhead on Jesus Valley Road remains closed by the landowner.

The Forest Society's campaign to obtain nearly 500 acres adjacent to the Morse Preserve in Alton was completed in late October. To the south of the Preserve, a 220-acre parcel includes the ridgeline that travels south from Pine Mountain and links to the 203-acre Alton Bay State Forest. The landscape includes diverse topography and wildlife habitat, including a large beaver pond and great blue heron rookery, southwesterly facing cliff and rock ledges with talus slope below, and a black gum-red maple basin swamp. The landowner donated this land to the Forest Society as an addition to the Morse Preserve. To the north, another neighboring landowner donated a conservation easement on their 260 acres, which stretches from the Morse Preserve to Jesus Valley Road. Here, another large beaver pond and wetlands complex drains directly into Alton Bay. The conservation easement will permit pedestrian public access for people to explore the property.

Together, the conservation of these two properties creates a protected area at the Morse Preserve of almost 950 acres, and with Alton Bay State Forest creates a block of 1,250 acres of conserved forest land at the southern end of the Belknap Range.



BRCC continues to monitor management activities on acquired parcels and we continue to pursue additional conservation possibilities in the Belknap Range. BRCC, in conjunction with the Forest Society and LRCT, is helping to implement a management plan that will improve the outdoor experience and to address impacts to the trail system.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Russell J. Wilder

Russell J. Wilder, Chair