

**Belknap Range
Conservation Coalition**

2013 Annual Report (October 2012 to December 2013)

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.

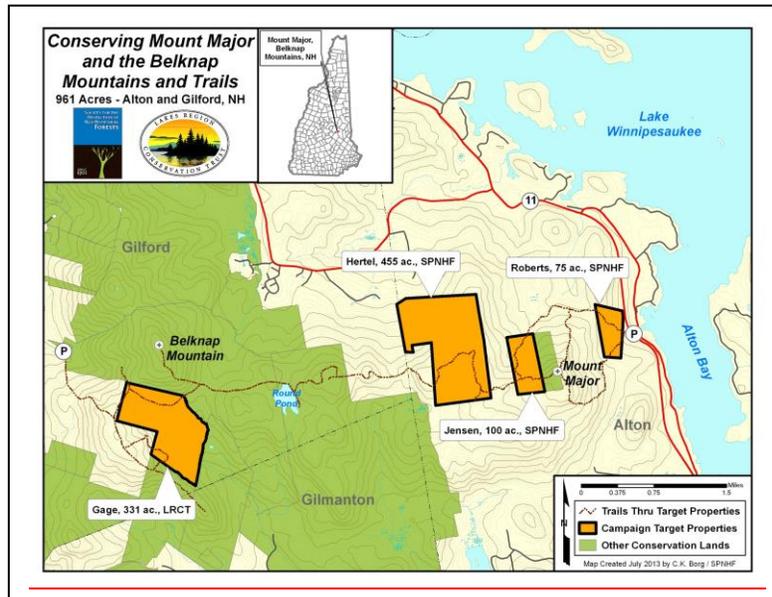
Along with working to protect the largely unfragmented natural landscape that makes up the Belknap Mountain Range, the BRCC also educates the public about the significance of the resources of the Belknap Mountain Range; develops, promotes, and implements methods and strategies for ensuring the long-term 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 2012, Don Berry, Andy Fast, Everett McLaughlin and Russ Wilder were reappointed to the Board. The current officers are Chairperson-Russ Wilder, Vice-Chairperson-Everett McLaughlin, Treasurer and Secretary-Nanci Mitchell.

The most notable accomplishment this year was BRCC's support 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 950 acres around Mount Major, Piper Mountain, Belknap Mountain, North Straightback and Quarry mountains. Purchase and sale agreements were obtained from the landowners by these organizations and a fundraising campaign was kicked off in June. The fund raising goal is \$1.8 million with a March 31, 2014 fundraising deadline. This includes land acquisition costs, transaction fees, legal expenses and surveys. As of the end of December 2013, three of the parcels had closed, with the Lakes Region Conservation Trust acquiring the Gilford parcel and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests acquiring two of the parcels in Alton.



The towns of Alton and Gilford committed conservation funds in support of this project. Alton committed \$230,000 and Gilford \$110,000. The Land and Community Heritage Investment Program also provided a grant of \$340,000. BRCC directors Bev DiVaio, Everett McLaughlin and Bruce Jacobs organized a hiker education program with BRCC members and other volunteers stationed at the Mount Major trailhead from mid-August through the fall. 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 information is being used in the campaign for grant applications.

The fundraising campaign also included:

- A YouTube video “Everybody Hikes Mt Major” at ForestSociety.org/MtMajor.
- BRCC participated in a press conference at the Mount Major trailhead on June 25th.
- BRCC helped sponsor informational hikes in the Belknaps.
- Russ Wilder made presentations about the Belknaps and the Campaign to the Alton Historical Society in April, the Tuftonboro Islanders Association in July, the Belknap County Conservation District and Sarah Thorne’s Prospect Mountain High School Class in October. Don Watson played the guitar and sang for the Conservation District event.
- A donation from the Belknap County Sportsman’s Association of \$1,000.
- Support from Prospect Mountain High School students doing a project on Mount Major.
- Jay Long, author of “Stepping Stones Across New Hampshire – A Geological Story of the Belknap Mountains”, contributed 50 copies to BRCC. They were sold at the Mount Major Trailhead for \$20 each.
- Mt Major Perseid meteor shower event: Rex Gallagher, a Fulbright Scholar and scientist, is conducted a dusk to dawn event on Mt Major on Aug 11th. There was a telescope to look at galaxies and an astronomer discussed the meteor shower. Mr. Gallagher made a generous donation to the Belknaps Campaign.

Other activities included:

- Bio-inventory work - Rick Van de Poll completed a Rapid Ecological Assessment of some of the Belknap Range. Some rare natural communities were noted, with 6 notable findings. BRCC contributed \$500 toward this work.
- 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) 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 Belknap 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. 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 Belknap Mountain, Mr. Phippen's hut on Mount Major and the granite quarry.



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.

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