



Belknap Range Conservation Coalition

**2017 Annual Report (October
2016 to October 2017)**

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: 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; New England Forestry Foundation and the Belknap County Conservation District. The town of Barnstead has also supported the BRCC with a membership.

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 2017, the current officers, Chairperson-Russ Wilder, Vice-Chairperson-Bruce Jacobs, Secretary-Lisa Morin and Treasurer-Nanci Mitchell, were reappointed.

The most notable accomplishment this year was BRCC's support of the completion of the campaign led by the Gilford Conservation Commission and the Lakes Region Conservation Trust (LRCT) to purchase 273 acres on Piper Mountain abutting LRCT's Jail Pasture and Piper Mountain Conservation Area. BRCC contributed \$1,000 to the effort. \$120,000 was raised by mid-January 2017 to complete the transaction. This acquisition completes a nearly 700-acre block of conserved land open to the public and forever protected by the LRCT. A celebration event attended by about 50 supporters for this key acquisition was held at the summit of Piper Mountain on May 20.

On July 27, BRCC, along with the Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA) Eastern Chapter sponsored a Fire Tower Hike on Piper and Belknap Mountains to learn about fire tower history and the work of forest fire wardens and to learn about the NH "Tower Quest" program. About a dozen people enjoyed a 5-mile hike and talk by Jack Kelley of FFLA. Hal Graham, watchman at the Belknap fire tower gave a tour of the tower and explained what a fire tower watchman does.

On September 9, BRCC participated in a Land Celebration for the Guinea Ridge Parcels. The Lakes Region Conservation Trust purchased 87.5 acres of land in late 2015 on Guinea Ridge Rd. in Gilmanton, encompassing part of a significant wetland and perennial stream resource, including land identified as having the Highest Ranked Habitat in NH (2010 Wildlife Action Plan), and contiguous to other conserved lands totaling over 7,000 acres. We are very grateful to the Fenollosas and Nancy Rendall for their generosity and dedication to the success of this project, as well as to the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund (ARM Fund) for its support.

Other activities/items of interest include:

- Don Hughes continued as Webmaster to maintain the website (belknaprang.org) and has been doing a great job.
- Assisted with Stewardship issues and working with the BRATTs who have volunteered time to work on trail rebuilding and maintenance
- Supported the Forest Society at the Annual Earth Day event in April and assisted with the Society's Mount Major Outdoor Classroom (MMOC) for elementary and middle school students

BRCC continues to monitor management activities on the newly acquired parcels and we continue to pursue additional conservation possibilities in the Belknap Range. As in previous years, the BRCC directors organized a hiker education and thank you event at the Mount Major trailhead on Columbus Day weekend this year to let hikers know that the campaign was a success and what conservation efforts are continuing. Columbus Day weekend and beyond was extremely busy this year. Mount Major continues to be one of the most hiked mountains in New Hampshire. BRCC, in conjunction with the Forest Society and LRCT, is helping to implement 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.

On a sad note, Dave Roberts, a longtime board member, friend of the Belknap Range and significant contributor to land acquisition projects, passed away in March of this year. He is and will be sorely missed.



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