



## **Belknap Range Conservation Coalition**

### **2019 Annual Report (October 2018 to October 2019)**

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 (SPNHF); 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 quarterly at the Gilman Museum in Alton. 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 2019, three land projects were active, and one was completed resulting in a 45-acre addition to the Forest Society's Mt. Major Reservation. At the annual meeting on October 31, 2019, the current officers, Chairperson-Russ Wilder, Secretary-Lisa Morin and Treasurer-Nanci Mitchell, were reappointed. The Vice-Chairperson is currently vacant.

On April 24<sup>nd</sup> – Earth Day Celebration - BRCC members along with volunteers from the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), helped to clean up the trails on Mount Major.

On June 8th, BRCC and LRCT led a guided hike to LRCT's Piper Mountain Conservation Area in Gilford and the land known as the Jail Pasture as well the summits of Piper and Belknap. Ten participants had the opportunity to learn about these conserved lands and their natural and human history. Russ Wilder, BRCC Chairman and Rhys Bowen, LRCT Trustee, led participants on this moderate/strenuous hike and shared their knowledge of the historic and natural heritage of this area. Mr. Bowen, a research ornithologist, helped us identify 18 bird species we encountered and what they were doing at this buggy time of year! We also saw a very large snowshoe hare already in its brown phase while we were ascending Piper.

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, BRCC led a guided sunset hike on Piper Mountain in Gilford. BRCC members Bev Divaio and Dan Tinkham met hikers at the parking lot at the top of Belknap Carriage Road. Piper Mountain has an elevation of 2044 feet and the trail is .9 miles long. The summit is rocky and flat with great vistas west and east. We enjoyed a nice evening watching the light fade in the west amongst broken clouds. We also played a questions game about the range with prizes sponsored by TD Bank in Gilford and Bolduc Park in Laconia, followed by an explanation of who owns Piper, and what the BRCC is all about.

During the week of June 17-24, BRCC helped support the Forest Society's "Leave No Trace Hotspot Activation Week" at Mount Major. With more than 80,000 people hiking Mt. Major every year, the popular hiking spot has seen its share of excessive trash, damage to vegetation, trail erosion, disturbance to wildlife, and more. As a result, Mt. Major was chosen as one of 19 Hot Spots nationwide to be the focus of training from the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. As a designated Hot Spot, Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers taught Forest Society staff, partners and volunteers in how to communicate the principals of Leave No Trace to the public. The goal of trainings and several other outreach and public service events was to help educate hikers about how to reduce impacts to the environment while enjoying the amazing natural beauty of Mount Major.

Other activities/items of interest include:

- Don Hughes retired as Webmaster and helped us transition to a new website ([belknaprang.org](http://belknaprang.org)) many thanks to Don!
- BRCC assisted with stewardship issues and working with the BRATTs who have volunteered time to work on trail rebuilding and maintenance, including the new kiosk at the Old Stage Road Trailhead.
- Assisted with the Forest Society's Mount Major Outdoor Classroom (MMOC) for elementary and middle school students in the Spring and Fall.



*Gilmanton Elementary School on Mount Major Summit. Courtenay Phillips*

BRCC continues to monitor management activities on acquired parcels and we continue to pursue additional conservation possibilities in the Belknep 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.belknaprang.org](http://www.belknaprang.org) or contact the Belknep Range Conservation Coalition at PO Box 151, Gilmanton IW, NH 03837 or email us at [info@belknaprang.org](mailto:info@belknaprang.org).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Russell J. Wilder".

Russell J. Wilder, Chair