A New Perspective…

Annual Meeting…a brief, yet special moment for an organization obsessed with perpetuity. This year’s meeting furthered the decade-long tradition of setting up in a new location. It’s not because we don’t own property, in fact we own twenty parcels. Choosing a new venue every summer helps keep the meeting fresh while showcasing newly conserved properties. We’ve been to farms, youth camps, and private residences. This year, we were fortunate to be at Lake View Farm, one of our recently conserved properties in Ashland overlooking Little Squam.

While each new location presents its challenges, our meeting is also an opportunity to see our watershed, and organization for that matter, from a new perspective. One aspect that doesn’t change is the tremendous help and support we get from our volunteers, such as when Bonnie Hunt arrives with scones (my favorite), Betsy Whitmore with the coffee from the Squam Lake Marketplace, Alex Kent and Bruce Whitmore to arrange parking, Tim Vaill to set up the sound system, Barbara Beal and Pam Simonds to assist with registration, and many others. Frank and Liz Stevens, our hosts this year, did all their work ahead of time, as the field was mowed and the gardens in full bloom.

Before long, a crowd of 170 had gathered as Tim Vaill approached the podium to begin the business meeting. The featured speaker this year was Larry Selzer, president of The Conservation Fund, our partner that recently purchased the 5,435 acre Beebe River tract on the north-side of the Squam Range. As we listened to the various committee chairs and to Larry, it occurred to me that our Annual Meeting is far more than just a business meeting; it’s a family reunion of sorts. It’s when all of us: members, staff, Board, partners, and interested parties come together and celebrate our collective accomplishments. This year, we had much to celebrate, and more on the way, as you will read in this newsletter. And it’s also a chance to change our perspective, and to think ahead to the time when our children, and their children, will inherit the responsibility of caring for this remarkable place we call Squam.

Coffee Cup Challenge

Unbelievable...that’s the only way to describe our members’ response to this year’s Coffee Cup Challenge! Ninety-five of you, approximately 56% of those in attendance, brought in SLCS cups to the Annual Meeting. And, thanks to five donors, your efforts raised over $4,500 for land conservation!

But is there even more to the Coffee Cup Challenge than meets the eye? Well, yes there is and what “doesn’t meet the eye” is a picture like this...95 cups, used once and discarded. Congratulations!

Communications Committee Chair, Molly Whitcomb is looking for eight or more sponsors to donate $1 to $5 per cup at next year’s Annual Meeting!

Disclaimer: No cups were trashed in making this picture!!
“We found nothing is impossible”
Excerpts from Larry Selzer’s, President and CEO of The Conservation Fund, keynote speech at the 2014 SLCS Annual Meeting in August. To view the full transcript visit squamlakes.com.

...You see, we are still losing about 3 million acres of open space across the country each and every year, including more than 1.5 million acres of working forest. And the rate of forest loss is set to increase dramatically as our population heads toward 600 million by the end of this century - the Forest Service projects that if we don’t change course we will lose another 30 million acres of forest by the year 2030.

Now, losing 3 million acres of open space is terrible under any circumstances, but losing our forests could be catastrophic. Remember, these are the lands that provide us with clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, habitat for wildlife, carbon sinks to help address climate change, not to mention the more than 2 million jobs that depend on them... And, of course, these are the lands that protect this beautiful lake and the amazing vistas all around it. Without these forests this place simply wouldn’t exist. We need these forests, and I suggest that we had better get busy conserving them...But in addition to all that, there is one more thing I need you to do. And that is to help prepare the next generation to inherit and be good stewards of these magnificent lands that we are conserving today.

You see, over the past 30 years, children of the digital age have become increasingly alienated from the natural world with disturbing implications, not only for their physical fitness, but also for their long-term mental and spiritual health, and of course, for the environment. Young people who grow up without spending time in nature are much less likely to be strong champions of the environment when they reach voting age. Twenty or thirty years from now, we will have a generation of leaders in our public, private and nonprofits institutions who will be asked to make policy and budgetary decisions about forests and wetlands who have never seen a forest, or waded a stream, or simply gotten their hands dirty in a garden.

...As I travel across all 50 states of this great country, too often I witness a culture of confrontation, rather than collaboration. Too often I am reminded of John Gardner’s phrase “The war of the parts against the whole.” Over fears of liability, we post ‘No Running’ signs in county parks. Over fears that our children may encounter a sociopath, we encourage sedentary, antisocial behavior by allowing our kids to spend hours in front of an electronic screen. And over fears of nature itself, we quarantine kids under virtual house arrest, thereby ensuring that they too will fear the very thing they need the most. For tens of thousands of years, kids went outside and played in nature, and we are reversing that in a matter of decades. The area beyond which children are free to roam has shrunk by 89% in the past 20 years. It simply doesn’t add up.

We need a Children’s Bill of Rights that is explicit about the freedom to explore and improvise, about the right to experience nature in a meaningful way. If the world of our future, with all its complexity, will demand people who are able to understand and adapt, who have creativity and compassion, can we afford anything less?

In the Declaration of Independence, it says: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” With all we know about the benefits of nature to children’s health, cognitive ability and socialization, shouldn’t access to nature be an unalienable right?

Christopher Reeve, the actor who was paralyzed in a riding accident, had on the wall of his room when he was in rehab a picture of the space shuttle blasting off, autographed by every astronaut then at NASA. On top of the picture it said “We found nothing is impossible.” And Reeve said, “That should be our motto. Not a Democratic motto, not a Republican motto, but an American motto. Because it’s not something one party can do alone. It’s something we as a nation must do together.” He went on to say, “So many of our dreams at first seem impossible. Then they seem improbable. And then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable.”

Whole and healthy children, vibrant communities, and vast, intact landscapes of forests and lakes – it is time we began to speak of these things as if they are not only possible, but inevitable.

“If you love a place enough…” as Nancy Grady said, it can be done. Let’s do it together. Thank you.
Forever Squam . . .

Laury & Nancy Coolidge Conservation Area

We are pleased to announce that Laury and Nancy Coolidge have donated a conservation easement to protect an important 15-acre tract in Sandwich. With 756 feet of lake frontage on pristine Intervale Pond, and over 1,700 feet along the Isaacs Conservation Area, the protection of this land is one more step towards the protection of land between Squaw Cove and Sandwich Bay, which has become known as the Sandwich Wildlife Corridor. Thank you Laury and Nancy.

Sturtevant Woods I, II, III

If the Asquam Lake Beach and Ski Club had come to fruition in 1963, Big Squam Lake would be drastically different, with funnel developments and much higher traffic and pressure on the lake and surrounding land.

As part of a legal settlement related to the location of two of the plotted lots, we are pleased to announce that the parties involved are protecting the closest 400 feet from Sturtevant Bay via three donated conservation easements. Ginny Welles and Dwight Gertz are donating an easement to protect their entire tract, and the Pierce family is donating two conservation easements protecting their lake front.

A Unique Opportunity

The Allen Preserve is a 25-acre tract located in both Holderness and Sandwich. Dick and Nelleke Allen have agreed to sell this spectacular property to SLCS at a bargain rate for the purpose of protecting critical habitat along Smith and George Brooks, major tributaries into Big Squam Lake. The parcel is bisected north-south by the Col Trail lying between the Rattlesnake Mountains, east-west by Smith Brook and has 700 feet of road frontage on scenic Route 113.

The Allen Preserve provides important woodland habitat for several terrestrial mammals, such as moose, bear, and deer, and other fauna and flora. The property’s wetlands and brooks contain spring salamanders and native brook trout. Trailhead parking is found by the Smith Brook parcel on the discontinued George Road (Col Trail).

The success of this project is subject to SLCS raising the necessary funds. The Squam Lakes Conservation Society (SLCS) and the Squam Lakes Association (SLA) are working collaboratively to purchase the land by the end of this year to ensure its permanent conservation. With the support of the community, this land would be conserved as a wildlife preserve while providing educational opportunities and access to the trail network for low-impact four-season use.

Your support and participation is welcome. For more information about how you can help please contact Roger Larochelle.
Preparing for Perpetuity… It’s never too early to start!

*Pete Helm, Stewardship Director*

When people ask me “What do you do for employment?,” I keep my response pretty simple. I realized that if I responded with “Conservation Easement Stewardship” to those not familiar with land conservation, their eyes either begin to glaze over, or they dart back and forth searching for an exit strategy. I can almost see them say “Uh oh, I wonder how long this is going to last…” I learned to respond to the question by telling folks where I work and then I gauged their response. If I sensed interest, I’d go a bit deeper.

Now, when I tell folks I am working at the Squam Lakes Conservation Society, their faces light up. Everyone seems to know the natural beauty of Squam. They talk of Squam as a place, or even a feeling. I’ve heard people describe other lovely places as being “almost Squam-like.” Although some of these folks have never been here, they know the good work that has been done here – it is legendary. The combination of organizations, businesses, communities, families and individuals working together has created something that is much bigger than the sum of the individual parts. It is the gold standard.

As the new director of stewardship for SLCS, one of my tasks will be to help you keep the “Squam” in Squam. Stewardship can mean different things to different people. It is a complicated blend of communications, relationship building, natural resource management, volunteer engagement, education, and law. To me, the most important aspect is communication. Without it, it is hard to build solid working relationships with landowners and volunteers. Without it, it is hard to explain or understand the values of the natural world, or why conserving it is so important. Without it, our volunteers will find other important things to do. Without it, we will expend more energy on enforcing rather than embracing conservation easement deeds.

I had a hard lesson in communication this fall, or rather, a lesson in why it is so important. My family’s cottage, originally owned by my grandparents, was sold and transferred out of the family. It was a tiny, one-bedroom place right on the ocean at the end of dirt road. It looked west past the lighthouse and harbor to the sunset. Sunrise, to the east, rose from the varying hues of the adjacent saltmarsh. So, why was the cottage sold after five generations had grown to love this place with the wind, rocks, and waves? Why was no right of first refusal offered any of the 11 grandchildren or 25 great grandkids? Call it a failure of communication and a failure to plan for the future.

While the loss of my family’s cottage is devastating, I am very fortunate to have a long history at Squam. Since my introduction in February 1978, I’ve paddled many coves, watched loon chicks learn to dive, visited Bowman’s and Moon, jumped off Jumping Rock, found the secret passage, watched the eagles fledge from Little Loon Island, and hiked Red Hill, Percival, Morgan, and Rattlesnake. I’ve sailed in many boats, finding solace in both the heavy winds and breathless air swirling around the islands. In the winter, I’ve skated and skied on the lake for miles. I know you all have stories about your place from your time here and I look forward to hearing them as well.

Stewardship of a special place like Squam requires all of us to be engaged, to provide financial support, and to plan. It requires us to effectively communicate with each other, and it requires us to listen and learn. It isn’t easy, but with open communication, different perspectives can lead to solutions that benefit us all and provide for a greater good.

I am looking forward to helping you continue your work to conserve the Squam Lakes region and to hear your perspectives on how we can ensure that it remains the remarkable place it is for years to come. Please stop by the office if you are passing through. I would love to meet you! Until then, I challenge you to communicate now with your friends, family, and advisors to ensure that the next generation of stewards is ready for the task!
Sharing the Squam Landscape

Judy Mack

We know they are out there. Protecting their habitat is one of the prime reasons for conserving open space. But, spotting one of the creatures that share the Squam landscape with us is a rare and special treat (unless it is eating our garden at the time.)

At the foot of our upper field and behind the shed we have an early-bearing apple tree that produces green apples that we have never cared for (although in recent years I have made some decent applesauce.) When this tree has one of its occasional prolific years it becomes a wildlife magnet, providing an early taste treat long before other apple trees have fruit ready to eat. We knew that porcupines were hanging around it -- Will needed to reconnoiter every night before the bedtime dog-walk -- and we saw deer there from time to time. Then early one morning we looked out our bedroom window, the only one in the house with a view of the tree, and saw an adult black bear sitting under it.

That did it! We needed to set up our wildlife camera. I had tried with little success to set the camera in various locations on Unsworth Preserve where I hoped to catch an otter, beaver, muskrat, or mink entering or exiting the water but only managed to capture a red squirrel hangout. But our bear sighting gave us hope that the apple tree would be a more successful location for wildlife filming. The apple tree had a shortage of suitable branches for the camera, ones with an unobstructed view where wind would not cause moving foliage to trigger it to go on. I finally settled on a location, set up the camera, and left it for 10 days before removing the card and downloading the photos.

What a show! The same deer with velvety antlers came at different times once or twice every day. A porcupine wandered into view several times, as did a fox. The turkey, crow, gray squirrel and coyote each came once, at least within camera range. Interestingly the coyote showed up just eight minutes after the deer on one day and the bear is seen just 20 minutes before the deer a few days later. Did the deer depart because it was aware of the coyote approaching, and did it lurk in the woods, waiting for the bear to depart? And there, the day before I took the camera down, was a bear cub! Was mom nearby?

The woods above where our little apple tree sits and along much of our side of Red Hill are protected by easements held by either SLCS, Lakes Region Conservation Trust, or the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forest. It is nice to know that wild visitors will always be able to travel through preserved habitat to check out the Mack’s apple tree.

Carnes Island Painting

Donated in Memory of Nancy Grady

“While I started this painting before Nancy died, later as it rounded into shape I thought that, with her strong and abiding love for Carnes Island and the SLCS, it might make an appropriate memorial for what she meant to this community. Nancy was a friend to all she knew, with an abundance of grace, generosity, good humor, patience and endurance. She is profoundly missed, but her spirit lives on amongst us.” Woolsey Conover

Woolsey’s tribute to Nancy Grady may be viewed in the SLCS office during regular office hours.
In 1919 a highly rated cricket player from Philadelphia named C.C. “Christy” Morris purchased a large swath of land at Squam including the area of Pinehurst where a few of his collateral descendants still maintain a summer residence. Christy qualifies as one of the early worthies who created and set the tone for the Squam conservation ethos with us even today. We owe the undeveloped 71 acres, more or less, of Five-Finger Point to his benevolence in donating the land in 1963 to the University of New Hampshire as a “Conservation and Wild Area” using practices and standards adopted by the Nature Conservancy, with the Squam Lakes Conservation Society acting as the prime reverter. Three years later he joined with the Rockywold-Deephaven camps and Frank Webster in donating land to UNH near the top of West Rattlesnake that became the Mary Alice Armstrong Natural Area.

In 1971, at age 91, Christy died intestate as a bachelor, leaving thirty-one heirs at law. Seven years of complex administration dealing with the cross-currents of interest among the heirs regarding the fate of Pinehurst followed, as did litigation. A settlement was finally reached: fiduciary considerations required Pinehurst to be sold, but the sale would be of building lots in a created subdivision allowing interested family members to purchase lots on a priority basis. Twelve dwelling lots were created with three more allowed but only on a re-subdivided basis. The total lots were limited to not more than 30% of the property area where four camps and a farmhouse already existed. The balance of 173 acres was treated as Common Property in favor of the new owners. Mindful of Christy’s prior sensibilities, the administrators (one of whom was a former SLA president) and concerned family members agreed to place restrictions running with the land that would contemplate the formation of a homeowners association to enforce a covenant that all new buildings “must comport with the natural terrain in order to maximize screening from the lake and buildings on adjoining lots.”

In 1978 a few Morris family members and a group assembled by realtor Jack Armstrong formed a partnership headed by a three-person committee of Tony Unger, Murray Swindell, and “Pete” Woodward. It purchased the subdivision, allocated the lots to the purchasers in accordance with a modus operandi developed by Jack, incorporated itself as Pinehurst Association in 1979, and adopted a second set of “environmentally oriented and ecologically conscious” restrictions concerned chiefly, but not exclusively, with the size, location, and architecture of new dwellings. In 1990 the Association conveyed a conservation easement to the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, with SLCS as reverter, of its Common Property. In due course it has also restricted the number of building lots from 15 to 13, and reaffirmed the prior practice of allowing pedestrian access on portions of its property via the relocated “Blue Trail” to Five-Finger Point and on other trails to the Rattlesnakes. In 2001, in an attempt to forestall the building of any “McMansions,” the Owners adopted a resolution urging future Boards to determine that any dwelling or addition thereto substantially larger than existing dwellings fails to comply with the intent of the Pinehurst restrictions.

Memories of Christy Morris are faint these days among those at Squam who recall him, but a belief exists that he would not have been displeased with Pinehurst’s ultimate fate.
On October 17th two more properties were listed on the National Register of Historic Places through the efforts of the Squam NRHP Committee.

Pointfield, designed by J.R. Coolidge, Jr., was built in 1911 on a point in the northern part of Squam for Natalie Whitwell, who descended from prominent Boston-area merchant families. Its V-shaped plan incorporates a porch at the end of each section, as well as several sleeping porches, all of which once afforded views of the lake. The property also includes a delightful guest house built in 2002.

The Shepard Hill listing includes sixteen historic cottages, two houses, a former chapel, and numerous outbuildings built between 1870 and 1921, and encompasses 111 acres. The enclave was started by academics from New Haven and the Sheffield Scientific School (now part of Yale University). It was the first summer colony on Squam Lake and home primarily to scientists, engineers, clergymen, and businessmen. Unlike later enclaves, the colony was sited atop a hill with spectacular views of the lakes and mountains.

On Labor Day weekend a number of Shepard Hill neighbors gathered together at Tannenruh, the former Nicolay house and current home of Mitchell and Kathryn Drew overlooking Squam to celebrate the nomination of their cottages to the NRHP and to thank Dick Davenport for spearheading the effort. Dick spoke eloquently about the nomination process and of reaching out to each of the owners to encourage them to contribute both their time and monies to ensure this project’s success.

For more information about these and other Squam NRHP projects go to squamlakes.com and click on the conservation link.

New Board Directors

Anne Lovett is the third-generation of her family to enjoy Squam. She has served on the Boards of the Squam Lake Association, Chocorua Island Chapel Association, and NH Lakes Association, where she is an Honorary Trustee. Anne and her husband Steve Woodsum have been dedicated members and avid supporters of SLCS for many years.

Chip Harris serves as Chairman and CEO of Upper Valley Press, Inc. Chip and his family discovered Squam thirty years ago while towing their boat around NH and exploring different lakes. The attraction to Squam was immediate and they eventually bought a home in Center Harbor where he and wife Wendy now reside full time. Chip and Wendy enjoy frequent visits by their six grown children and their families.

Ken Evans saw Squam for the first time in 1972 when he visited Jennifer Knox. Jennifer’s grandparents began vacationing on Squam in the early 1930s and first purchased property in 1960. Ken and Jenny were married here and eventually purchased their own cottage in 1988. After 40 years as summer residents, Ken and Jenny became full time residents two years ago. Ken spent his career with PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP as an audit partner. Since retirement, he makes wine, cheese, maple syrup and gardens. His service activities include Plymouth Rotary, Holderness Budget Committee, SLNSC and the Stewardship Committee of SLCS.
Passing it on

In concert with the Squam Lakes Association’s (SLA) Speaker Series, a presentation was offered on August 14 entitled *Passing it on, Leaving a Legacy in the land you love. Understanding Generational Transfer of Squam Property.* The goal was to begin a broad discussion about the strategies families have used in order to pass property along to future generations, starting with the stories of four Squam families.

The featured speakers, Julian Coolidge, David Preston, Will Twombly and Tom Derr, shared their own stories on how their families approached this important issue. Laurie Beeson facilitated the discussion, with Doug Hill and Roger on hand to provide a summary.

The speakers’ stories ranged from the sometimes difficult task of working and communicating with family members to the hiring of professional advisors to help in setting up a trust or corporation. Their stories exemplified the wide variation and challenges in ensuring that property remains in the family for generations to come.

Each speaker referenced the importance of the common good in leaving a family’s legacy. This was eloquently expressed by Tom Derr in summing up his family’s experience: “... (the trust) was the best we could have done ... you cannot engineer human nature, so you can’t make the perfect trust, done once and forever. The best way is twofold: one is to align self-interest with the common good as far as possible; the second is to build and foster, over the years, a sense of mutual family respect and friendship. That will serve you better than any document.”

Given the overwhelming interest in this topic, we will continue the discussion of generational property transfer next summer on August 13, 2015. In the meantime, please contact Roger to chat about options, or for a list of resources, as we have several books on the subject of property transfer.