

2019 Annual Report



August 2020

The land at the end of Berlin Road saw major improvements in 2019. Long a muddled mess of differing ownerships and uses, the area was in need of serious rehabilitation. So, WRLF led an effort to improve parking, install better signage, restore trails, and make the area more attractive to families. Now known as the Berlin Mountain Recreational Area, the project is nearly complete and ready to be explored. Read Dan Gura's story about the effort on page 2.



Keep in touch!



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President Malcolm Smith:

The Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation fuses two of my great joys in life: living in Williamstown and getting outside. I enjoy traveling for work and pleasure and it always strikes me when I return home how pretty our Purple Valley is. We simply live in one of the loveliest places in the world! It is lovely, primarily, for the unspoiled natural beauty all around us. Conserving our forests, fields and farms is a duty, a privilege, and a really good idea. I have found no better vehicle for doing so than WRLF.

My increasing involvement with WRLF began over a decade ago, shortly after moving to town permanently. My young children enjoyed a session at Sheep Hill, and asked us to stop by one Sunday evening. They leapt from the car and soon disappeared into a small building, emerging with butterfly nets. I began to reprimand them, assuming they had taken undue license. No, they assured me, the director had told them that this was their place to play, and that they were welcome to access the tools and toys in the Nature Cabin any time they came! I could only smile, and realize that somebody really knew what they were doing, winning the hearts and minds of kids to hook them on nature. Soon, I found myself a small part of our organization's good management, great work, and warm people. A year ago, I accepted the role of president of Williamstown Rural Lands. The joy goes on and on!

Lands and Trails Coordinator Dan Gura:

This was my sixth summer as Trail Crew Supervisor, a position created by WRLF and the Williams Outing Club, but my first working alone. Reflecting back, I'm reminded of how much work our crews accomplished together in years past. Collaboration: a defining lesson of this summer, just as it was during the Berlin Mountain Recreation Area project in 2019.

The effort began as a research project during fall 2018:

Williams College students enrolled in Professor Sarah Gardner's Environmental Planning seminar considered the Berlin Mountain area in detail. They took stock of its history and potential, then made proposals for the future.

At the start of 2019, WRLF took the reins. We brought together local landowners and crafted a common vision. The Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC), the Town of Williamstown, and Williams College agreed: Berlin Mountain could be a year-round recreation hub, providing outdoors opportunities to enthusiasts of all levels and interests.

Work got under way in the spring. The Williamstown DPW began the heroic effort of rebuilding the parking lot. They trucked in rocks and dirt by the ton, leveled the material, built a swale to keep it dry. They brought in boulders to deter off-road vehicle use. They set a high bar.

By the time summer came, our trail crew was ready. It was a burly group, and we took on projects larger in scale — and material — than we had tackled before. Rocks steps. Cribworks. We spent days hauling 8x8 and 2x10 lumber for bog bridges.

Behind the scenes, WRLF's Trails Committee furthered the effort. Some members proofread wayfinding signs and kiosk posters. Others hiked out and felled trees for us to use in trail projects. They loaned us tools: a chainsaw, a rock sling, spuds and drawknives.

As the trails began to shape up, we turned our attention to the planned campsite along the historic Class of '33 Trail. We received funds from the Fields Pond Foundation for materials, and signed on a local Boy Scout to help build the site. An abutter carted in lumber for the privy. He loaded it on his own tractor, hopping from the cab — chainsaw in hand — to clear the old forest road as he made his way to the drop-off site. **Continued on pg. 3.**



We thank all who supported our 2019 fundraising events, the "First Up" Party with live jazz at Bascom Lodge atop Mt. Greylock and our "Fall Fête" dinner and silent auction at the new Williams Inn. The bidding was lively, and a good time was had by all! We extend a special thanks to Emily Bourguignon and Gillian Sciacca, who helped put the "fun" in our fundraising events.

The weather turned cold, and in October I built a couple of kiosks. The Williamstown DPW installed them at the parking lots. We posted maps and safety information for hikers during hunting season. And now, when it snows, the Town is able to plow the expanded parking lot.

Looking back, everything seemed to fall into place. There are still a few loose ends that we're wrapping up. But there's the key: we are wrapping it up together.

Education Coordinator Kathy Chesney:

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in."

These words, written by Rachel Carson and published posthumously in her 1965 book *The Sense of Wonder*, were the ones that inspired me to pursue a forty-five year career in environmental education. In college, I came to appreciate how it features hands-on rather than rote learning. The subject offers other unique benefits to its pupils, too: In coining the term "nature-deficit disorder," writer Richard Louv makes the point that children raised completely removed from the outdoors will grow up to be adults with little or no interest in environmental concerns. Learning about the world we live in, our natural resources, and the role we play in it should be incorporated into all of our learning. Here in New England we are very lucky to have an abundance of opportunities to get our families involved with the outdoors whether or not it is a formal learning experience. Families can go for hikes, explore streams, ponds and rivers, collect rocks, identify flowers, trees and insects; the adventures are endless.

At Sheep Hill, we are able to provide all sorts of fun outdoor experiences for kids and their families: among them, after-school and vacation programs, field trips, and events like Sheep to Shawl, Firefly Hikes and harvest festivals. Furthermore, the nature cabin is always open for pond exploration and the trails, woods, meadow and stream are waiting to be included in your next adventure!

Educating our children to be responsible stewards of our earth is important. That education can happen in an organized setting or simply by chance. At our Woodchuck Wednesday program one warm spring day a few years ago, former Executive Director Leslie Reed-Evans was having a hard time getting the young participants to focus. She thought she might have sounded a bit frustrated because Emma, one of our frequent participants, stopped, looked at her seriously and said, "You know Leslie, sometimes nature class is just about being in nature!"

Executive Director David McGowan:

At the 2019 Annual Meeting, Jock Brooks and Dusty Griffin stepped off the WRLF board. Ever positive, Jock shared his love of the outdoors by serving on the WRLF Trails Committee. He also helped ensure the future of the organization by sharing his deep local knowledge on the

Nominating Committee. Dusty wore many hats during his 11 years on the WRLF board, admirably leading the Finance and Trails Committees. Dusty and his wife Gale have passionately supported WRLF's land protection efforts. Both Dusty and Jock will continue to sit on the Trails Committee. Thank you both for your many years of service to Rural Lands!

Malcolm Smith succeeded Phil McKnight as President. Phil was instrumental in ensuring a smooth transition when a new executive director was named in 2017. Always a willing volunteer, Phil is equally comfortable pulling invasive plants or picking place settings for formal dinners. Phil will continue his service to Rural Lands on the Executive Committee. Malcolm's thoughtful, measured leadership will benefit the organization.

We also welcomed Cosmo Catalano and Geraldine Shen to the Board. Cosmo brings vast trails knowledge to the board through his volunteer work with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Geraldine possesses a diverse background in non-profit management and fundraising. We look forward to working with them in the coming years.

The 2019 Lewis Conservation Legacy Award was given to Bob Hatton in recognition of his lifetime of service to the outdoors. Bob worked at Mt. Greylock State Reservation for 44 years. With a passion for hiking, he has selflessly built and maintained trails around the reservation and in Williamstown. If you've seen Bob's Ski Loop or the Hatton Trail, you know he's been busy in the area. Bob is a legend in the field and we're proud to honor him. The award was established in 2011 in memory of Mary Mink Lewis and R. Cragin Lewis, in order to recognize exemplary conservation leaders in the community, and who have been central to WRLF's success.

The Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation is successful because of the generous support of its members. Additionally, we are grateful for the hard work and financial support of these foundations and programs in 2019.

*Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation:
Williamstown Elementary School Endowment Fund*

*Center for Environmental Studies & Center for
Learning in Action, Williams College*

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Mountain One Community Dividend Grants

*Williamstown Community Chest, Mary and Henry Flynt
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† Deceased; ◇ Endowment; New members are indicated in **bold**; Dedications are *italicized*.

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Gifts to the Mathias J. Bartels Environmental Award Fund support an annual award to a graduating senior at Mt. Greylock Regional High School who has demonstrated environmental leadership. It is named in memory of Mathias Bartels, who set an example of leadership at Mt. Greylock. In 2019, the award was made to two worthy seniors: Sonya Carrizales and Karen Magnusdottir McComish.

Gifts for the Endowment of the Mathias J. Bartels Environmental Award Fund

Margaret H. Kensinger
Penny Low
Donna and James Heekin III



Additional Gifts in Memoriam

In Memory of Phyllis Blair

Leslie Reed-Evans and Art Evans
Peter Boudreau and Cathy Talarico

In Memory of John H. Foehl

Thomas and Wendy Gardner
Dusty and Gale Griffin
Phil and Kathy McKnight
Teresa Rodriguez
Robin and Jeffrey Sher

In Memory of Linwood Rhodes

Leslie Reed-Evans and Art Evans

In Memory of Peter P. Thurber

Kevin O'Rourke and Edith Thurber

In Memory of Suki Wilkins

Leslie Reed-Evans and Art Evans

Gifts in Memoriam of Marion Carey Alton

It was with great sadness that WRLF noted the passing of Marion Alton in April of 2019. Marion served as President of the organization in the early 1990s, during the major project to preserve the Phelps farm (now Cricket Creek) and at a time when a number of new land conservation efforts were begun. She served as a Board member for 10 years until 2002, but was best known in recent years for her weekly volunteer efforts, working primarily on the popular WRLF notecards. Marion was a dedicated conservationist, with a strong belief in the mission of WRLF. Her cheerful and optimistic attitude made Marion a welcome presence in the organization for more than 25 years. Her contributions will be even longer-lasting.

Robert and Judith Buhner
Kerstin Corne
Brian Corvo
Clara Dequasie
Leslie Reed-Evans and Art Evans
The Fessenden School
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William and Camille Broadbent will donate \$50,000 to the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation Broadbent Endowment for the 21st Century if an additional \$50,000 can be raised by Bill's 50th Williams reunion in 2023. Their passion for land conservation is inspiring and we appreciate their generosity and that of all donors. Gifts to the endowment fund will be a lasting legacy for all who appreciate Williamstown's fields, forests and purple mountains.

2019 Gifts to the Broadbent Endowment Fund for the 21st Century 50 for 50 Challenge

Bill and Camille Broadbent
Dr. and Mrs. Robert C. Eyre
Yumi and Pete Farwell
Kate and Chet Lasell
Dusty and Caitlin Lopez
Phil and Kathy McKnight
Peter Boudreau and Cathy Talarico



L-R: 2019 summer intern Brianna Bourne, summer trails crew Gabo Lewis and Jude Rourke, and Lands and Trails Coordinator Dan Gura

Each summer, WRLF is fortunate to welcome local interns to our team. In the summer of 2019, Brianna led nature education programming, helped set up a wildlife camera, and worked on community outreach. The trails crew worked with Dan to enhance public access by maintaining trails on Williamstown's beautiful conserved areas.

Comparative Financial Summary Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, Inc.

CONDENSED COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
December 31, 2019 and 2018

	2019	2018
Cash and Other Recievables	\$ 374,082	\$ 268,020
Conservation Land at cost	3,160,010	3,155,920
Property and Equipment	374,807	390,590
Investments & Endowment at Market Value	<u>1,189,715</u>	<u>1,052,618</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$ 5,098,614</u>	<u>\$ 4,867,148</u>
Total Liabilities	\$ 195,206	\$ 145,083
Total Net Assets	<u>4,903,408</u>	<u>4,722,065</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>\$ 5,098,614</u>	<u>\$ 4,867,148</u>

CONDENSED COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

	2019	2018
Membership Revenue	\$ 139,789	\$ 140,153
Donations, Fundraising, Grants and Other	<u>175,404</u>	<u>502,341</u>
Subtotal	315,193	642,494
Investment Income	48,850	117,070
Net <u>Unrealized</u> Gain/(Loss) on Investments	<u>149,742</u>	<u>(153,132)</u>
Total Revenues	513,785	606,432
Total Expenses	<u>332,442</u>	<u>303,398</u>
Increases in Net Assets	181,343	303,034
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	<u>4,722,065</u>	<u>4,419,031</u>
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	<u>\$ 4,903,408</u>	<u>\$ 4,722,065</u>

You can leave a legacy through your bequest to the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation

A bequest to the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation can have a lasting impact on the unique rural character and scenic beauty of Williamstown while protecting its working farms and forests, and natural and cultural heritage for the future.

Bequests allow you to make decisions about your estate and can be used to make a substantial gift to a specific fund, such as the WRLF's land fund, or the Broadbent Endowment to ensure annual support for our general work. In some cases, a bequest may reduce estate taxes. Your bequest will most certainly enhance the WRLF's ability to achieve its mission.

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*indicates term of expiration

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Our volunteers make things happen! Thank you for your dedication this past year.

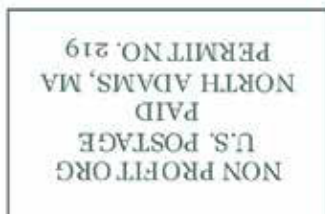
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