



# Pinnacle News

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association FALL 2017

## Celebrating Beverly Bruhn Major

**A Pinnacle Association Founder, Chair 1992-2006, Board Member to 2017**

*"The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association is one of the most satisfying things I have ever done in my life!"* Bev Major

Bev's statement rings loud and clear, because she has always been a prodigiously active community person. She is a person who does things, far beyond simply talking about them. She organizes well and can be relied upon to follow through on steps large and small to get something done. She knows people and in her friendly, direct way will recruit you, gently but firmly, into a project.

WHPA co-founder Alison Latham recalls, "From the very beginning, Bev was right there. It was she who suggested we use Jamie's memorial funds to acquire a right-of-way to the Pinnacle cabin. We had modest ideas back then. Bev provided the leadership, passion, and persistence to keep our small group on track for several years before we were able to make our first big land purchase, the Bissell property. And she was still there years later when we had gone through many different acquisitions and grant applications and with many new Board Members. I am deeply grateful for her many contributions."

We all have enduring memories of working with Bev, but I recall vividly when Bev decided that her fifteen years as Chairperson of the evolving Pinnacle organization were enough. She announced it to the Board and members at an Annual Meeting while looking squarely at me and saying, "A



In 1992, Bev Major was one of eight original founders of the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association, along with Robert Haas, Alison Latham, Sean Long, Michael McKernan, Arthur and Carol Westing, and Ellen Zimmerman. Their mission was to acquire and protect the Pinnacle overlook and gain public access to it as a memorial to Alison's son, Jamie, who had loved the spot. By 1995, WHPA was both a federally and State tax-exempt corporation. Over the years the vision for Pinnacle has expanded, as has its success, now protecting over 1900 acres and providing a 25-mile trail system. Read more history on our website.

year from now someone will take this over." I clearly knew I was expected to step up and take on that large responsibility, but Bev passed on a well-organized legacy.

One of the most tangible parts of Bev's legacy was a tall five-drawer Pinnacle file cabinet. Transferring it to my house was work, but the prospect of thereafter maintaining all of Bev's precise order was daunting! Her librarian talents were evident, as well as her deep grasp of the core categories of the substantive work of the organization she helped to evolve. Files were color coded by category of core function, each drawer dedicated to specific arenas. Within that they were organized either by alphabet or by chronological phases. Fifteen years of meeting minutes were arranged in hanging red binders. The cabinet held a masterful record of organized management that underlaid the Pinnacle's success – all evidence of Bev's practical and proficient skills at work. Regularly updated, the cabinet and its files live on!

Another memorable skill is Bev's remarkable ability to connect people. To be with Bev is to sense a simple, warm upbeat link to solid basics, be it a community supper, the library, an issue in Montpelier, or a local need. Through her, many individuals have found their opening to participate, to meet others, to learn about opportunity or events, and to side by side share an activity or moment that matters. In her humble way, she encourages others to shine and thrive. We know she recognizes our ability to contribute, so we rise to her challenge to do these things we both feel matter.

Bev's loving energy extends into widely diverse circles: from the barnyard of horses, dogs, cats, birdfeeders, and flowers to her large family, the church, the forests, her colleagues and friends in the area, and often to the legislators who handle statewide concerns. She is not shy, and she is not domineering. She is, rather, that lovely dynamic presence that is the hub of the wheel that makes community happen. Thank you, Bev.

Camilla Roberts, WHPA Chair, 2007-2013

**Bev's reminiscences are on the back page of this newsletter.**

## Recent Highlights

**Trails.** Torrential rains necessitated waterbar work on Holden, Headwaters, and Jamie Latham trails, plus additional drainage and occasional rerouting, all by our fabulous trail stewards and/or steward/Board Members Tony Coven, Stephen Dotson, John Foster, Joe Richards, and Sarah Waldo. Major weed whacking was done at Paul's edges to open up the Hemlock Trail that passes through the clearing.

**Maps.** New Windmill Hill Ridgeline and Athens Dome maps, created by Andy Toepfer to include the Radford and Brelsford properties, were hung at all kiosks.

**Trail Finder.** Jeff Nugent completed the registration and posting of the Dunn Nature Trail on the Trail Finder website, which is overseen by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance in cooperation with a variety of trail organizations. This is our first trails entry on that informational site.

**Athens Dome.** Tangled blowdown trees were cut by Andy Toepfer and Tony Coven to open the trail across the Cersosimo property. On Ledge Road, Camilla Roberts has been removing Japanese Knotweed that appeared after road repair.



## Volunteer of the Year

At the 2017 Annual Meeting, WHPA Co-Chair and Trail Steward Chair Sarah Waldo was clearly delighted to recognize Roger Haydock as the Pinnacle Association's Volunteer of the Year. According to Sarah, "Roger has spent countless volunteer hours hiking the Windmill Hill Ridgeline (even prior to the formation of WHPA), painstakingly searching out the most attractive and sustainable trail routes, and designing and often building many of the Pinnacle Association trails. WHPA is so appreciative of the time he has dedicated to expanding and improving the wonderful trail system we enjoy today."

A past WHPA Trustee and avid hiker (also ice skater!), Roger worked in documentary film production for PBS, traveled the world working on NOVA programs, 60 Minutes, Olympics, Ken Burns Films, and more. He puts his extensive knowledge of Vermont and New England geology and his knowledge and enthusiasm for special features to use in scouting and designing our trails. Thank you, Roger!

## From the Board

**Board Changes.** Bev Major, David Robb, and Paul Rodrigue retired from the Board of Trustees; John Foster of Westminster and Bob Gay of Springfield were elected to one-year terms at the Annual Meeting.



### New Board Trustees

**John Foster.** A former wildlife biologist volunteering on several community boards, John is a nationally recognized Healer, who aids clients with chronic pain and speaks nationally on Health, Disease [sic], and Healing. He moved to Southern Vermont six years ago and "promptly fell in love with the community and the landscape." He became acquainted with several members of the Pinnacle Board and says, "I was very impressed with the focus, vitality, and organization of the Board. In addition, many of the outstanding Pinnacle lands are virtually in my backyard."



**Bob Gay.** Until he retired in April 2017, Bob had worked mainly as an accountant and finance manager for nonprofit organizations and found their commitment to serving communities and improving the lives of people or animals very rewarding. His love of the outdoors started as a child in Saxtons River – hiking to high places and biking the old logging roads. He recalls, "When the Pinnacle Association formed, I hiked the Holden Trail when it was difficult to follow due to overgrowth. Being retired, I now have time to give back to the Association for the many years I enjoyed hiking on its trails and to help it thrive, so future generations can also enjoy its beautiful spaces." He's already passed that love of hiking on to his 12 grandchildren!



### Pinnacle Trustees & Officers 2017-2018

Rick Cowan, Cambridgeport; Chair  
Curtis (Tony) Coven, Westminster  
John Field, Putney  
John Foster, Westminster  
Bob Gay, Springfield  
Elaine Gordon, Westminster  
James Jordan, Westminster  
Alison Latham, Westminster; Treasurer  
James (Silos) Roberts, Rockingham; Assistant Treasurer  
Susan Roman, Westminster  
Vanessa Stern, Westminster  
Andy Toepfer, Athens  
Sarah Waldo, Westminster; Vice Chair  
Molly Wilson, Westminster; Secretary  
Paul Wilson, Cambridgeport

## Schedule of Events: Weekend Strolls

For more information and directions, visit [www.windmillhillpinnacle.org](http://www.windmillhillpinnacle.org) or contact the program person listed below.

**September 14, Thursday, 7-8:30 PM. Wet Sneakers and Muddy Clothes: The Importance of Nature-Based Play and Education.** Well-known author, teacher, and nature activist David Sobel will discuss why children need to play outside in nature for their own well-being and for their future stewardship of the earth. He'll suggest ways to get children off their devices and out into nature. Free. Presented by WHPA; co-sponsored by The Nature Museum, Putney Mountain Association, and Windham Woodlands Regional Association; and supported by the Bellows Falls and Springfield Rotary Clubs. At Compass School, 7892 US-5, Westminster, VT.



**September 16, Saturday, 10:45 AM-4 PM. Accessibility Day.** This year's site is a new one for this once-a-year opportunity for a vehicle ride to a remote and beautiful site for lunch. The private property, owned by a friend of WHPA, sits on the Windmill Ridgeline between the Pinnacle and Paul's Ledges, and its spectacular view offers a wide deep vista to the ski mountains of Mt. Snow, Stratton, Bromley, Okemo, and beyond. If you're an adult who has difficulty walking, this is your chance to visit a rural spot with a grandchild or friend. The free program's popularity and need for four-wheel-drive or other appropriate vehicles make advance registrations a MUST for riders. Hikers do not need to pre-register. Bring water, bag lunch, and sweater for chilly weather. Meet at Westminster West Church at 10:45 AM to carpool. Register with Bev Major at 802-387-5737 or Elaine Gordon at 802-869-6103. Held in sunny or cloudy weather; canceled in rain or bad weather.

**October 7, Saturday, 7-9 PM. Moonlight Hike at Bald Hill.** Join Vanessa Stern, Bald Hill Committee Chair and WHPA Board Member, for this special, free, full-moon experience where even familiar features look different and more mysterious in the moonlight. Meet at the Covered Bridge kiosk at 232 Covered Bridge Road in Westminster. For information and required reservation, contact 802-463-4948 or [davidandvanessa@gmail.com](mailto:davidandvanessa@gmail.com).

**October 28, Saturday, 1-4 PM. Walk to Ober Hill Gorge and Old Homestead Cellar Hole.** The walk, featuring the newly acquired Brelsford property, will start at the Bemis Hill Road trailhead, walk mostly downhill through rich mixed hardwoods to the long gorge, with its gurgling stream and charming waterfalls, and to the homestead complex with its remains of stone wall paddocks and a barn. Continuing then north on the trail to the Route 35 trailhead area, this walk is a great way to learn about the northern end of the Windmill Ridge trail system. A car shuttle will be arranged to return participants to cars parked at the starting place on Bemis Hill Road. Bring water, snack, and clothing appropriate for the weather, which can be chilly in late October. Pre-registration is required to plan for the shuttle by contacting Camilla Roberts at 802-869-1388 or [camil@vermontel.net](mailto:camil@vermontel.net).



### Cycling Adventures to Benefit the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association!

#### West Hill Grinder. September 24, Sunday, starting at 10 or 11 AM (depending on route)

Diny and Jim Sweitzer of the West Hill Shop in Putney, VT, are making the 2017 West Hill Grinder a fundraising thank-you for the Pinnacle Association's 25-mile trail system. Three different routes offer a variety of rural biking challenges for intermediate and advanced bicyclists. The West-West Loop is a shorter ride without technical challenges. Distances range from 19-39 miles and wind through Westminster, Athens, Brookline, and Putney on town dirt roads, Class-4 woods roads, and Pinnacle hiking trails, with a bit of pavement here and there. Individual, student, and family rates include lunch catered by John Labine of Taco Barn. Start and finish will be at host High Meadows Farm in Putney, VT – which is providing water, facilities, protected seating, and onsite parking. For directions to the farm, visit [www.highmeadowsfarm.com](http://www.highmeadowsfarm.com). **Go to [www.bikereg.com](http://www.bikereg.com) and search for West Hill Grinder** for information on the routes, bike recommendations, equipment requirements, prices, food, and registration. Visit [www.westhillshop.com](http://www.westhillshop.com) or [www.windmillhillpinnacle.org](http://www.windmillhillpinnacle.org) for information. For questions, email [info@westhillshop.com](mailto:info@westhillshop.com) or call 802-387-5718. **Help spread the word!**



WHPA founders Bev Major, at left, and Carol Westing walk a Pinnacle trail.

## Recollections by Beverly Major

"I remember walking along a trail years ago with a friend and we got to talking about what in life gave us the most pleasure and what made our lives meaningful. The Pinnacle was the answer for both of us, although teaching and family came close. It was a choice that required immense effort and time over the years. And patience; it was four years before we had any results on the ground, four years of what I remember as a board meeting a month. For years WHPA was both burden and gift, and demanding in both. For the first, that meant constantly paying attention to tasks that needed doing. For the second, it opened a pathway to learn about the natural world and, even more, a sense of real accomplishment.

"All this work was something I could never have done alone. Many of you who read this will recognize that you are among those whose help was critical at one time of another. There is, however, one person who deserves special mention: Alison Latham. She was there at the beginning, locating the one and only available trail route at the time and then buying the land it was on for the Pinnacle. She has been our treasurer for years and still serves on the Board.

"We envisioned our project as something we could do that had the potential to make a difference in the lives of many children and adults in southeastern Vermont and beyond. At the same time, the substantial blocks of conserved land provide room for all the living things to thrive in these green hills. I like to think that we have created something of worth that will last forever. I do know that nothing in the universe does that, but it is my hope that the Pinnacle property will be providing a place to hike and learn, keeping hills and valleys for the natural world to flourish undeveloped for as long as people walk this land."



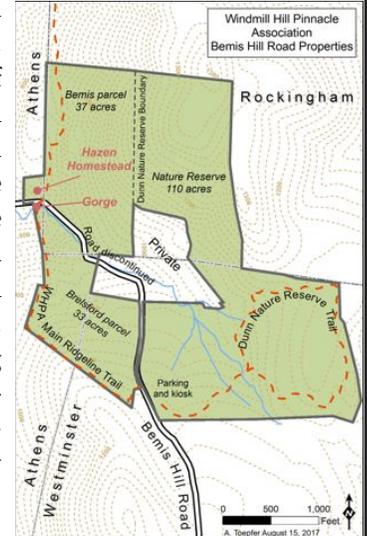
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**Wanted: Your Email**  
If you haven't done it, please send us your email address. Then we can send you our newsletter, updates, or last-minute notices about special events. That means faster contact with you while saving time, money, and trees.

## Welcome to the Brelsford Addition

The block of conserved woodland at the northern end of the Windmill Ridge recently grew by 32.7 acres. Pinnacle holdings at this location now total 180 acres of forest, protected wildlife habitat, and trails for public use.

The new property, purchased from Veronica Brelsford, has several interesting features. A beautiful stream runs east from the end of Bemis Hill Road west through a steep ravine down to Ober Road. The ravine becomes a gorge where it runs along the Class 4 old extension of Ober Road in Athens. The water, with small waterfalls, runs year round over large slabs of ledge. There is a lovely view of this gorge and stream from the cellar hole close by and above the old road. The cellar hole is part of the very old Hazen homestead that includes stone wall paddocks and a bank barn. Tall stone structures along the ravine by the homestead suggest a water impoundment or mill may have been present.



Veronica Brelsford previously had generously granted a trail easement across this property to WHPA. Now permanently conserved, the trail runs from the Bemis Road trailhead generally northwest and downhill to cross the ravine, very near the old homestead. Then the trail continues north to the Sleepy Valley Road and Route 35 trailhead area.

A Vermont Housing and Conservation Board [VHCB] grant helped make this project possible, including Vermont Land Trust [VLT] conservation easements on this parcel and the Bemis property. Joan Weir, VLT's Regional Director for Southeastern Vermont, played a crucial role in that arrangement. VHCB's investment of public funds in expanding the Windmill Ridge Reserve indicates a high level of trust in WHPA and its work.



A happy Veronica Brelsford, at left, celebrates with Libby Mills, former WHPA Trustee, the recent acquisition of 32 acres of her land. Said Veronica, "When Libby Mills contacted me for an easement through my property on Bemis Hill, I felt incredible peace. When that arrangement turned into a larger one where Pinnacle would actually acquire and protect forever my modest piece of the world, I knew immediately that was the right way to go. We are only stewards of our land for a little while. Then, hopefully, we turn it over for others to enjoy. Thank you to all at the Pinnacle Association."