



Pinnacle News

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association
Fall 2021

Fundraising Success and Other Updates from Lily Pond Highlands

By Camilla Roberts

We are pleased to report steady progress on the effort to conserve the Lily Pond Highlands 615 acres with two pristine wild ponds and wetlands!

The property is now owned by the Pinnacle Association, with the tremendous support from donors, local communities, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, and bridge loans from individuals and the Vermont Land Trust.

The overall project budget is \$805,000, including a purchase price of \$500,000, which included a significant discount by the prior owners from the appraised value. The Pinnacle’s endowment for long-term support of the property is \$83,000.



Grant funding has already been received from the Windham Foundation, Fields Pond Foundation, Davis Conservation Foundation, and the William Wharton Foundation.

A major award of up to \$250,000 has been issued by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, to be received when the conservation easement is accomplished.

Lily Pond Highlands was also funded through the Open Space Institute’s Appalachian Landscapes Protection Fund, which supports the protection of climate resilient lands for wildlife and communities. The ALPF is made possible thanks to major support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The OSI grant is for \$100,000.

The purchase has also been helped by generous backing from Pinnacle members and other supporters.

Careful planning for the management of the land and ensuring a lasting easement are essential to fulfilling the Pinnacle’s mission on this treasure. The Vermont Land Trust is working on the conservation easement process, which we hope to complete by April 2022 or sooner. The conservation easement will be co-held by the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

On the ground, ecologist Brett Engstrom has explored the area extensively over several long days, to observe and prepare a documented record of the many ecosystems and species of plants and animals living in this large tract of land. This report will assist the stewardship of this special area and guide the siting of trails. Members of the Land and Trails Committee have been looking at alternatives for hiking trails and exploring the wildlife, wetlands, and cultural features on the property.

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News from Lily Pond Highlands *(continued from p. 1)*

We are currently working toward opening the Lily Pond Highlands to the public by spring 2022. The “No Trespassing” signs from the previous owner are gradually being removed from the perimeter boundaries. A public parking area and trail will be the next step. A gate has been installed at the base of the woods road, near Grassy Brook Road. The property is not open to motorized vehicle use, to protect the soils and water quality from the erosion problems that occur from such use.

We welcome Bob and Kate Bova who have volunteered to be stewards of this property. The Bovas have lived in Athens along Brookline Road north of the property for 17 years. They have hiked most of the Pinnacle trails and are very familiar with the area around Lily Pond. They know many of the people who live in that area, and have a good understanding about the goals that will be addressed in the management plan. Management goals include reserving trees to grow old and protecting important wildlife habitat, riparian areas, sensitive ecological areas, and historic sites from damage.

The Bovas have already plunged in with energy by setting up the gate with board member Jay Maciejowski, and are developing signs for informing visitors about the property.



West Hill Grinder: Enjoying Biking, Views, and Food for a Good Cause

Thank you to West Hill Shop in Putney and to all the participants and volunteers of the West Hill Grinder! More than 90 people biked in the Grinder on Sept. 26, 2021. This event is an annual fundraiser with registration fees supporting the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association. Riders chose from a variety of routes over trails, dirt roads, and gravel, including several routes that traverse Pinnacle trails.

Thank you also to High Meadows Farm in Westminster West, which hosted the event.

Field Note: Black Bears More Active in the Fall

By John Gregg

Among the many types of wildlife that can be found on Pinnacle land are black bears, which typically are more active in the fall as they fatten up for hibernation over the winter.

As crepuscular animals, they are most active at dusk and dawn, but eating becomes nearly a full-time occupation in the fall. They are omnivores, consuming everything from berries to insects.

In a news release this summer, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department said the bear population has increased dramatically over the past five decades.

“Fifty years ago Vermont had less than 1,500 bears, and they were found mostly in the mountains and northeastern quarter of the state,” the department’s director of wildlife, Mark Scott, said in the news release. “Bears are now found statewide except in Grand Isle County, and although we have successfully increased bear numbers to close to 5,000, the human population also has increased, resulting in more encounters between humans and bears.”

The Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association protects bear habitat in both the Athens Dome area and Lily Pond Highlands, and bears certainly also can be found on other Pinnacle land. If you encounter a bear, wildlife officials say, treat it with respect and try to appreciate it from a distance. Remain calm, back away when possible, do not try to run from the animal, and, needless to say, do not feed bears.

Because hunting is allowed on most Pinnacle property, you should also be aware that Vermont has two bear hunting seasons, one that started Sept. 1 and runs through Nov. 12, and a second season from Nov. 13 to Nov. 21. Wearing blaze orange or other brightly colored clothing during hunting season is always a good idea.



Chester Scout Troop Honored for Shelter Construction with New Plaque

On August 19, Pinnacle trustees hiked the Athens Dome Summit trail with Chester Scouts and their families to install a new brass plaque honoring the troop for building the trail shelter.

The troop began the log structure in 2014 and completed it in 2017. Special thanks to Scout leader Tom Charlton and the three Eagle Scouts

who earned their badges on this project: Earl Grennan for the design and wall construction, EJ Bromley for the roof, and David Charlton for the floor and water collection system.

Grennan said he chose the project because he wanted to do something out of the ordinary, to create something that would “last a lifetime.”



Join Us for Upcoming Events on Pinnacle Lands

Sat., Oct. 16, 2021: Accessibility Day. 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Accessibility Day is an opportunity for people who have difficulty walking to get a vehicle ride to a beautiful site on the Pinnacle ridgeline for lunch.

Meet at the Old Athens Road turnaround in Westminister West, Vt., at 10:30 a.m. Because of the popularity of this free program, and the need for 4-wheel or all-wheel drive vehicles, advance registration is required for a ride from the turnaround to the ridgeline site.

To register, please call Tony Coven at 802-387-6650. Bring water and a bag lunch, and dress for chilly weather. Masks are required for the car rides.

Sun., Oct. 24, 2021: Athens Dome Loop Walk. 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Meet at 12:30 at the Nature Museum parking lot in Grafton Village for carpooling, as parking is limited at Turner Hill. Bring water and snacks, good hiking footwear. Weather dependent. Email Camilla Roberts to register, camil@vermontel.net, or call her at 802-869-1388.

This loop is an estimated 4 miles, from Turner Hill in Grafton, Vt. It starts and ends at the Turner Hill old homestead area. We'll start up the Bear Hill trail (steep) then head east on the Pinnacle Athens Dome trail, through varied woods including the spruce swamp area in the more remote area of Athens Dome, along an outcrop of the oldest geologic rock with Umbillicarium (Tripe) lichen, to old Kidder Hill Road.



A past year's Accessibility Day picnic

We'll turn south there to the height of the road and site of the legendary "Yellow House," then follow an old woods road west from there back to the Turner Hill homestead area. This is a long and beautiful fall walk after the leaves have fallen, to be able to see deeply into the forested terrain, no bugs, and cooler temperatures.

Sun., Nov. 7, 2021: Bald Hill Hike. 1 - 3 p.m.

Meet at the Covered Bridge Road kiosk in Westminister, Vt., for a woodland hike. We will be joined by Roger Haydock, a local geology enthusiast, to learn about the geology of Twin Falls, one of the sites we'll visit.

RSVP to Vanessa Stern, 802-463-4948 or by email at davidandvanessa@gmail.com. Please include your phone number in case plans change due to weather. Don't forget to check your watch, because Daylight Savings ends on Nov. 7 this year.

Thank you to donors who gave in honor or memory of a special person! You can read the full list on our website on the Support page.

Please **share photos or videos from your hikes on Pinnacle trails** by emailing them to WHPAtrails@gmail.com or posting them to the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association's Facebook page.

Photo credits:

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Lily Pond Highlands - Erin Rodgers
West Hill Grinder - Todd Miller
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