



Pinnacle News

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association

SPRING 2018

Radford-Smith Trail Progress

The fifty-three acres of land given in 2017 by Terry and Edna Radford of Atlanta, GA, are beginning to see enhancements. The plan was always to create a trail from the Pinnacle ridge-line's Cascade Trail down to Grassy Brook Road in Brookline and parts west while expanding the protected habitat of the larger WHPA holdings. When Sam Bourne of Brookline heard about the project, he offered to donate the necessary time, skill, and equipment from Sam Bourne Landscaping and Excavating to construct the parking area at the trailhead. Sam is a recipient of the Vermont Land Trust's Land Stewards Award, which recognizes outstanding students of agriculture and forestry enrolled in technical and vocational high schools across the state for their commitment to Vermont's working landscape. Sam has now cleared trees in the parking area. He will return to the project and resume work after mud season when Grassy Brook Road is open for large equipment. In the meantime, a footbridge to cross Grassy Brook is being built offsite by Phil Pellerin, who renovated the Pinnacle Cabin. Look for more progress with dry weather when the parking area can be completed and the bridge installed.



Above, trees cut will be used to define the perimeter of the new parking area off Grassy Brook Road.

At left, Sarah Waldo, Trail Steward Chair, and Sam Bourne, who volunteered his professional services and company resources to help create the parking area.

At right, John Barnett and wife, Libby Mills.

John Barnett – Bequest & Tribute

John W. Barnett's recent bequest to the Pinnacle Association states: "In honor of my spouse, Libby, who has devoted countless hours to adding to the lands that the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association serves." His gift makes clear that the tribute to his wife, Libby Mills – a past WHPA Board member and a vital past and present member of Pinnacle's land-acquisition team – is also a tribute to the dedication, determination, and skills of other Pinnacle volunteers who share a common passion for the land and work to preserve it and make it accessible.

The note accompanying the check from Elizabeth Barnett, one of John's daughters, confirms the intent of the gift. "When he first moved to Vermont my father was able to walk some of the Pinnacle trails to see the beauty of the area. He also learned how much these peaks meant to Libby and to others – thus this gift. My brother, sister, and I have also had the pleasure of learning about this remarkable effort to preserve these spaces so that so many others can enjoy them."

John Barnett came to know Vermont and the Pinnacle Association late in life...at 81, in fact...after he and Libby Mills – a college classmate and long-time friend who shared years of family experiences – married after their spouses had died and John moved to Westminster West.

Moving from New Haven, CT, John left a 50-year career as partner in the law firm of Wiggin and Dana, and a legacy of impressive legal services to local governments, colleges, non-profits, and community groups. Libby says he also left life on flat land – beginning with his childhood in Ohio, college at Oberlin, law school in Cambridge, MA, vacations on Cape Cod, and

(Continued on back page)



Recent Highlights

Trails. With snow still in spots, a thorough assessment of winter trail damage has not taken place. But WHPA's trusty Trail Stewards will soon be figuring out maintenance needs. Please let Pinnacle know if you see something that needs attention.

Meanwhile be on the alert for MUD SEASON, when both trails and dirt roads can get chewed up badly. Hiking and biking in mud season compact the soil, prevent the natural cover from germinating, and disrupt the drainage needed to keep trails dry the rest of the year. Walking around the muddy spots just makes the mud patch bigger and the de-vegetated track wider. So, please resist the urge to go hiking or biking on Pinnacle trails during wet weather. With luck and favorable spring weather, the trails will soon be dry enough to enjoy them safely.

Trail Finder. Jeff Nugent has fine-tuned another Pinnacle entry to the Trail Finder informational website: Hemlock Trail north from Jamie Latham Kiosk/ parking area, including Moosewood Trail, Undercliff Trail, Paul's Ledges, Athens Access Trail, and on to Sugar Grove Trail to Bemis Hill Road.

Vernal Pools. Daron Tansley of Westminster West is taking the Vermont Center for Ecostudies training in vernal-pool monitoring on April 7. Interested in a vernal pool he passes on the Pinnacle, he hopes to begin monitoring that and other pools on WHPA lands.

Athens Dome. Hitchcock Shelter. Improvements to the log lean-to shelter – located near the lookout above Creature Rock in Grafton and created by members of Boy Scout Troop #206 out of the First Baptist Church in Chester – have continued with additional projects every year since 2014. In the summer of 2016, EJ Bromley's Eagle Scout project had focused on the installation of a roof. In summer of 2017, David Charleton's Eagle Scout project included the installation of a floor and the creation of a water source for fire prevention. Projects still desired, and hopefully done by volunteers, are chinking of the log walls and construction of an outhouse.

Below, Boy Scouts from Troop #206 in Chester relax on the clean, new shelter floor that they built as part of David Charleton's Eagle Scout Project. At right, the water source for fire control that was devised by Charleton.



From the Board

WHPA Treasurer. Trustee Bob Gay of Springfield has taken over as Treasurer.



Pinnacle's 25th Anniversary!

Though a blink of the eye in geologic terms, 25 years is significant from the human perspective. Think of all that has changed since 1993, when a brave and resourceful group of friends and neighbors banded together to secure public access to a beloved local landmark. And given the speed with which humankind is degrading the air, lands, and waters of the planet, the mission of the organization that they founded has become even more crucial in the past quarter century.

Those of us on the Board of this remarkable volunteer effort still benefit from the wisdom and admire the spunk of one of those founders – Alison Latham. Though stepping down as Treasurer, a role she has fulfilled since the beginning, Alison remains a very active Board member. Other former Board members also continue to be important resources, such as founder and long-time Board Chair Bev Major and Libby Mills, whose contacts and knowledge of the region help to pinpoint and facilitate land acquisition.

I cannot list all whose dedication, skills, and hard work have enabled WHPA to preserve nearly 2,000 acres of precious open land and to build and maintain 25 miles of trails enjoyed by thousands of hikers every year. Thanks to our generous and idealistic supporters, the Pinnacle Association's crucial work continues, as with the new trail, footbridge, and trailhead parking area planned for the 53-acre Radford parcel.

Yet WHPA does more than protect open land. Nature education for schoolchildren and programs that bring adults into closer contact with the natural world are key to our mission. Creating new conservationists is perhaps the best way to ensure the survival of the beautiful ecosystem we inhabit.

Thanks to all who support WHPA's mission. I look forward to seeing you on the trails!

Rick Cowan, WHPA Chair



Schedule of Free Events: Weekend Strolls and More

For more information and directions, visit www.windmillhillpinnacle.org or contact the program person listed below.

April 21, Saturday, 10 AM-noon. Vernal Pool Walk on Earth Day. Becky Chalmers, Wetland Ecologist for VT Agency of Natural Resources, will discuss the life cycles of animals found in vernal pools and Vermont's rules to protect those special places and their inhabitants. All ages welcome. Wear waterproof boots. Meet at Westminster West Church to carpool. No bug repellent allowed on your hands if you wish to handle creatures we find. Register at 802-869-1166 or at chalmersbecky@yahoo.com or wilsonupaul@gmail.com. Check the Pinnacle website or Facebook closer to the event to make sure there is no change in the meeting location.



April 29, Sunday, 4-6 PM. Pinnacle Annual Meeting and Program: Cool the Planet: Food, Water, Soil, Climate, Hope. In an engaging PowerPoint presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session, Henry Swayze and Cat Buxton will discuss the natural systems that allow for planetary cooling and factors that contribute to understanding healthy soil and watershed function, as well as how the average person can effect positive change in the backyard and marketplace. At Main Street Arts, 35 Main Street in Saxtons River. WHPA members and members of the public are encouraged to come early, enjoy refreshments, peruse maps on display, and attend the brief business meeting before the program to learn about plans Pinnacle has for the coming year.

May 6, Sunday, 9:30 AM-noon. Spring Wildflower Walk. Libby Mills and Sarah Waldo will lead this favorite stroll to discover delicate ephemeral flowers of the hardwood forest. Meet at Westminster West Church to carpool to the mystery site. Wear waterproof shoes. Bring camera and water. For questions and requested registration, contact sarah_waldo@hotmail.com or 802-387-6036.



May 6, Sunday, 10 AM-1 PM. Herricks Cove Activity. Rain or shine. Vanessa Stern and Rick Cowan will host a table at the Herricks Cove Wildlife Festival with maps, program information, and a nature-based craft project for children. Off Missing Link Road (Route 5) in Rockingham, VT. Visit Pinnacle's website for more information closer to the event.

May 19, Saturday, 9:30 AM-noon. Hike to Champion White Ash. Tim Morton, Vermont State Forester, will lead this walk to the largest White Ash in Vermont and discuss factors that contribute to its success while identifying other trees on the way. Meet at Westminster West Church to carpool. For questions and registration, contact Elaine Gordon at esudgor@yahoo.com or 802-869-6103. Rain date: Sunday May 20.

June 10, Sunday, 3-5 PM. Before It's Too Late – Conserving New England's Forests and Farmlands. A presentation on the recently released 2017 Wildlands and Woodlands publication with speakers from the Harvard Forest, Petersham, MA. The report details the need to triple the pace for collaboration among conservationists and willing landowners to permanently protect both forest and farmlands throughout New England. Co-sponsored by the Putney Mountain Association, Vermont Land Trust, Windham Regional Commission, and Pinnacle Association. At Next Stage, 15 Kimball Hill in Putney. Visit Pinnacle's website for more information closer to the event.

June 23, Saturday, 9:30 AM-noon. Over the Hill Hike! Enjoy a 4-mile hike on the Jamie Latham Trail, past an old beaver pond and stone walls, through beautiful hardwood stands, with a stop to enjoy the view from the renovated Pinnacle Cabin. Bring water, lunch, snack, insect repellent, sunscreen. Meet at Westminster West Church to split cars and carpools between the start at Latham and finish at Holden. Register with Tony Coven at 802-387-6650.

July 14, Saturday, 3-5 PM. Healing Walk. Rain or shine. WHPA Trustee John Foster of Vermont Healing will lead a meditative walk on Dunn Nature Trails. The reflective walk will include poems or other readings and offer opportunities for both contemplation and sharing. A guiding premise of this walk is that it's essential to be still, to quiet the everyday mind, to interrupt daily routines, and thus to be open to other dimensions for healing to begin. Meet at the Dunn Nature Sanctuary on Bemis Hill Road. Register at John@vermonthealing.com or 802-451-6277.

SAVE THE DATE: Annual West Hill Grinder. Sunday September 23. Organized by the West Hill Shop in Putney, the event is a thank-you benefit to WHPA for its 25-mile trail system. Choice of biking routes and challenges – on both woodland trails and country roads – for intermediate and advanced bicyclists. Visit www.bikereg.com. Search for West Hill Grinder for information on routes, bike recommendations, equipment requirements, prices, food, and registration. For questions, email info@westhillshop.com or call 802-387-5718. Help spread the word about these special adventures!

John Barnett (Continued)

work on the Connecticut shore – to come to the hills of Vermont and the challenges of more rural life. But, as Libby states, John was immensely adaptable. “The woods and natural world were new to John when he came to Vermont, but he began to understand the connections and...really got the big picture.”

Libby describes John as a person who needed to be useful, to have a purpose, to carry through on a plan. He was a dedicated reader with a steel-trap mind and a continuing interest in economics, politics, and law. Walking and trail work were not his strengths. Using his legal training to advise and help others and worthy causes was. For the Pinnacle Association, he was an immense asset in both simple and complicated legal matters, always obliging with swift, pro bono, cogent, clear, understandable answers that could stand the test of any court.

Two important examples of his help were in getting Entergy to remove its big, glaring reflector disc from the Bald Hill Reserve and helping to get the State of Vermont to agree that WHPA did not owe the State tax money on all its land transfers unless those properties were sold – which would never happen.

Former WHPA Chair Susan Roman, who worked with John on several issues, said he was “generous with his time and intellect” and helped not only the Pinnacle Association, but also numerous other nonprofits with his pro bono legal advice and organizational skills. “He carved out his own place in Vermont life and his local community” – transitioning from more organizational, budget-oriented volunteer work in New Haven to hands-on, more personal efforts in Vermont – such as the Putney Planning Commission, delivering Meals on Wheels, and volunteering for Senior Solutions.

As John said in his book *Life Is Not a Rehearsal*, “Libby has made me at home in a strange place and introduced me to great people and new adventures.” The Pinnacle Association is grateful for John and Libby, all they have made possible, and the future efforts that are sustained by their financial and personal gifts to help protect our natural world and all that benefit from it.

Wanted: Your Pictures and Stories

What do Pinnacle lands and trails mean to you and your family? We’re asking you to share those thoughts, experiences, and the pictures that capture them with us so we can let them inspire others to walk our trails, investigate nature, and participate in our programs. Please send your pictures and stories to rickcowan@me.com.



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Wanted: Your Email

Please send us your email or changes to it so we can forward our newsletter, updates, or last-minute notices of special events. We love faster contact while saving time, money, and trees.

Saxtons River Valley Trails Initiative

This collaboration between WHPA, the Rockingham Conservation Commission, Bellows Falls Historical Society, and other community partners meets every second Thursday of the month at 7 PM at the WOOL building in Bellows Falls. Interest and membership are growing, and participants are excited to explore the possibilities of trail expansion between Bellows Falls and Saxtons River. The award to WHPA of a technical assistance grant by the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program allows NPS staff time to support the goals of this multi-partner project. Several hikes have taken place to identify obstacles and to brainstorm strategies. Anyone interested in participating should contact Vanessa Stern at davidandvanessa@gmail.com.



WHPA Board Members and area residents walked the proposed Saxtons River Valley Trails Initiative route with National Park Service RTCA project manager Jennifer Waite. From left to right: John Foster, Jennifer Waite NPS, Silos Roberts, Vanessa Stern, Rick Cowan, Kate Roome, Valerie Barry, and Bob Gay.

INVITATION TO MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association Annual Meeting and Program: “Cool the Planet”

Sunday April 29, 2018, 4-6 PM
Main Street Arts, 35 Main Street, Saxtons River

AGENDA

- 4:00 PM Maps, Reports, Minutes, Refreshments
- 4:30 PM Business Meeting: Highlights, Next Projects, Elections, Volunteer of the Year Award
- 5:00 PM “Cool the Planet: Food, Water, Soil, Climate, Hope”

For information, see Schedule of Events and visit www.windmillhillpinnacle.org.