

WONALANCET OUT DOOR CLUB

Newsletter



November, 2011

CARING FOR THE SANDWICH RANGE SINCE 1892

A SPECIAL ISSUE COMMEMORATING THE CENTENNIAL OF THE WEEKS ACT

Our Big Inheritance by Doug McVicar

One night last month I drove home from a lecture in Lincoln through the National Forest. It probably takes a few minutes longer to go on the Kanc instead of the Interstate, but I can never get a good comparison since whenever I take the Kanc I always stop, get out of the car and walk around.

This particular night was unusually lonely; I walked down the center of the highway unmolested. The night was still, dark and cool. Stepping carefully in the gray moonlight, I made my way out into a swampy field. Tall peaks all around hid the lights and bustle of Lincoln and Conway. On the other side of the Sandwich Range was Wonalancet. Imponderable silence echoed across four dimensions.

That was when it came to me. After twenty years gorging on forest history, I already knew the answer. But now I got the question.

Why is it like this here? . . .

This year is the hundredth birthday of the Weeks Act of 1911 that made it legal for We the People, through our Federal Government, to buy private land and make national forests. Weeks Act celebrations have been going on all over the country. But the biggest events came this summer in New Hampshire, the birthplace of the eponymous Mr. Weeks. In fact we had a very fine Weeks Anniversary celebration right here in Wonalancet last August. For just a day Wonalancet became one of only a few New Hampshire locales with both an art museum *and* a history museum. Historic homes were open, and we had speeches, a hootenanny and an excellent buffet.

But now that it is fall, and the weary year is drawing to a close, we need to get some perspective. With all due respect to Senator Weeks, who truly was a remarkable personage (see below), the Weeks Act – though a plausible excuse for a party every 25 years or so – was no great turning point in history. Mountain climbers appreciate a long view. So do historians, who often find that stepping back a few centuries reveals robust “truths” not easily seen from up close.

Four hundred years ago, the Algonquin people were managing

the great eastern forests of North America mostly on a sustainable basis. The earliest written descriptions of these forests come down to us from European explorers. They were impressed. Seemingly endless tracts of deep, wild forest contrasted sharply with the largely deforested landscape of their homelands. Over the next several centuries, however, we Europeans cut that great forest back until there was nothing left but remnants in remote areas and difficult terrain, such as mountainsides.

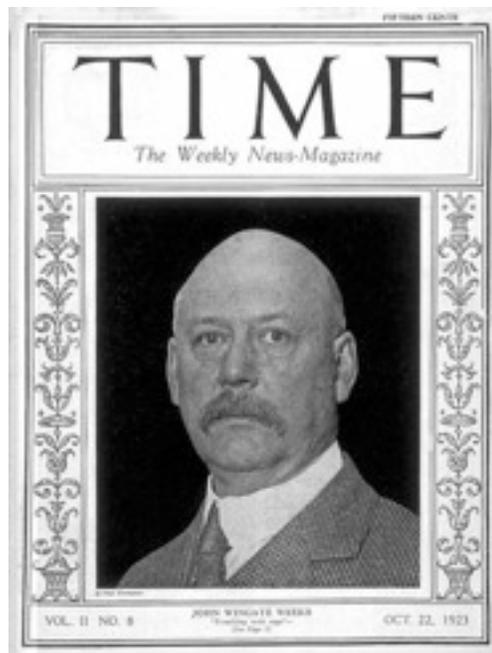
During the 1800s cities blossomed; wilderness shrank. Now that the Algonquin people were gone from New England and the great forests mostly gone too, we began to think how much we missed them. Americans increasingly went to the woods seeking their idea of an Indian relationship with nature: intimate, knowing, and close to God. Many Bostonians entering the White Mountains must have thought of Keats:

*To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven, – to breathe a
prayer*

Clergymen, poets, painters, hikers and snowshoe trampers all found something of great value here in the mountain forests. And, of course, so did the lumbermen. Not just in New England but throughout the Appalachians, cut-and-get-out logging and the resulting fires were destroying what was left of the forest just when the public at large – particularly the growing urban middle class – was waking up to the human need for Nature.

During the post-Civil War period, forestry in the United States emerged as a science-based specialty. The first professional foresters urged reforms to reduce waste, stabilize the flow of lumber to users, and enhance other forest benefits like watershed protection, recreation and wildlife habitat. A big problem with the case for reform, however, was the long lead-time for some of the expected payoffs. While the foresters' logic was reasonable – trees grow

slowly – their scheme was not compatible with the short-range economic lifecycle of the forest products industry at that time. Today national forests owned in perpetuity by the American people and managed for the long term by a professional forest service seems like an obvious solution. But the idea has evolved slowly. In 1874 President Ulysses Grant sent Congress a resolution passed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science citing timber shortages, climate change, and chaotic river levels as likely results if forest



management was not reformed. The scientists recommended “the attention of Congress” as “the proper source of power in whatever concerns the interests of the whole country.” The government was beginning to move. In 1876 Congress designated a Special Agent to report on the situation of American forests. In 1881 a US Division of Forestry was formed. In 1891 the Forest Reserve Act repealed prior law that had encouraged unsustainable logging. The same Act also enabled protection of timber lands already under public ownership in the West. Within six years, 40 million acres of western forest reserves had been created. In 1905 the United States Forest Service was founded, raising the profile of forestry within the federal government and easing the introduction of efficient and progressive practices.*

Demand grew for national forests east of the Mississippi – particularly in the southern Appalachians and the White Mountains. Creating national forests from land in the West that was already public had been relatively simple. But it would be much more difficult to establish national forests in the East where forest lands were a patchwork of private holdings. Seizure of forest land was never seriously considered. It would have to be purchased from willing sellers at a fair price. Accordingly, in 1901 a North Carolina senator introduced a bill authorizing just such purchases to create a southern Appalachian forest reserve. In 1904 members of the New Hampshire delegation introduced a similar bill for the White Mountains. As fast as congressional skeptics raised objections, the bills were rewritten. A veritable mountain blizzard of bills swirled around the Capitol. Sometimes the House passed the bill, but not the Senate, sometimes vice versa. Committees approved, committees wanted changes. Close, closer, closest yet; but no bill could get where it needed to go – the President's desk. As this frustrating situation was reaching its nadir, John Wingate Weeks, a Republican congressman from Newton, Massachusetts, joined the team.

Weeks was a powerful and persuasive man who made a good manager for the House's forestry effort. He had grown up on the family farm in Lancaster, New Hampshire. Although he traveled far from his Lancaster roots, farm work, the mountains, and wildlife – particularly birds – remained close to his heart. As a midshipman at Annapolis he had entertained his classmates by performing amazing feats of strength. Even years later, a former cadet remembered Weeks hoisting a 112-pound dumbbell overhead in one hand, then dipping down on his knee, taking an 87-pounder in his other hand and lifting it overhead as well. After his naval service, Weeks entered the business world, founding the brokerage and investment banking firm of Hornblower & Weeks in 1888, when he was 28 years old. The firm skated through the Panic of 1893 and the subsequent depression, and Weeks was soon a wealthy and powerful businessman.



Equally adept at politics, he became Mayor of Newton, then congressman, and in 1912 he was elected senator from Massachusetts. His legislative accomplishments include not only the Weeks Act but one of the first federal wildlife protection laws, the Weeks-McLean Act, which attempted to protect migratory birds from “millinery murder” by plume hunters. At the 1916 Republican National Convention in Chicago, Weeks ran for the presidential nomination with the support of the party's more progressive wing. On the first two ballots he received the second greatest number of votes in a divided field of more than a dozen candidates. Sen. Weeks later served as Secretary of Defense in the Harding and Coolidge administrations, but he was a man of such wide-ranging talent that President Harding reportedly also considered him for Secretary of the Treasury. A writer for the New York *Herald* thought Weeks was equally qualified for two other cabinet posts: Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of Agriculture.

But even the restless energy of John Wingate Weeks, even his deep love of the New Hampshire mountains, and yes, even his muscular 6 foot 1 inch 275 pound body and his personal fortune of millions couldn't give him the power to produce a forestry bill single-handed, like some congressional Rambo. By the time Weeks began to pull together his first draft, a large national coalition was functioning feverishly. New England's congressional delegation and all its Governors were on board. The Boston Chamber of Commerce hired a speaker to sell the idea in the West. Eventually the Chamber lined up its peers in sixty other large cities around the country to lobby their senators. Professional societies applied their influence. This powerful national forest alliance also comprised editorial writers on the New York Times and other influential papers, America's first trained foresters, early-day environmentalists, scientists, hikers, big-game hunters, tourists and second-home owners, innkeepers, the DAR and other women's clubs, electrical engineers, industrial waterpower users, and others.

Opposition to the bill, however, was well dug in. Of course, no person or organization actually went on record in favor of forest fire. But the House Judiciary Committee declared there was no constitutional authority for federal purchase of private land to make national forests. A national forest purchase law *might* be constitutional if the land was purchased solely to prevent flooding of navigable waterways, since protecting navigation was considered a federal responsibility under the

interstate commerce clause. But the Chief of the United States Weather Bureau told Congress that forests did not prevent floods – and could even make flooding worse! Then a flood-control expert from the Army Corps of Engineers testified that even if forests did reduce flooding, clover fields would be as effective.

Much of the opposition came from western states, already home to a vast system of national forests. One Wyoming Senator said that the West had been forced to accept national forests against its will, with the result that economic development had been stymied. He warned his eastern colleagues that if they passed the Weeks Act “the time would come when they would rue the day.”

The Portland *Oregonian* noted that among the nineteen members of the House Agriculture Committee – for many years the wellspring of national forest legislation – only two represented western states. A top-of-the-front-page story, under the head “GRAFT DISCOVERED IN FORESTRY BILL”, reported the views of the two western committee members: not only was the bill patently unconstitutional, but if forest protection was needed back east, the states should do it. Worst of all “the bill opens the way for the expenditure of millions upon millions, and possibly billions of dollars of public money.” They called the bill a “chance for unlimited graft” and said government demand would drive up land prices allowing owners of waste land to “unload onto the Government at a good fat price.” When the final critical vote came in the House it was close. But we did win: 130-111.

The Weeks Act, however, was no mighty engine of change. Its enactment in 1911 highlighted a gradual shift in American attitudes about forests, conservation and the federal government, but the law itself proved inadequate. Congress had to apply a fix the very next year, 1912. And two more in 1913, and another in 1914. In 1924 the Clarke-McNary Act swept away many of the restrictions that had been so carefully built into the Weeks Act to make it politically palatable. Tellingly, Clarke-McNary with its greatly expanded powers met little opposition and sailed smoothly into law only 13 years after the battle royal over the Weeks Act.

Considering the meager budgets available during the two decades following passage of the Weeks Act, the frustrated Forest Service made a remarkable start on the eastern national forest system. But the pace was glacial until the arrival of the New Deal, when the next generation stepped up and took the baton. It was the darkest moment of the Great Depression. Millions of willing workers were unable to find jobs. Yet FDR fearlessly increased the annual forest acquisition budget tenfold – and gained an additional bonus because land prices had dropped drastically. The unemployed went to work planting trees, improving existing timber stands and fighting fires. They built campgrounds, trails, bridges and access roads. By 1942 hard-working foresters and New Dealers had in place a bit more than three-quarters of the eastern national forest system we know today. The stripped and burned-over land slowly healed. The American public loved its new national forests, and soon came to take them for granted, as if they had always been there, a natural feature of the planet. Our consciousness continued to evolve and carried conservation law along a similar upward trajectory. By 1964 we had the Wilderness Act.

Here in the Sandwich Range the story is a miniature of the national situation: every generation inherited much, and added a little bit more for coming generations. We can trace the line of inheritance back to the first hotel keepers. There had been little access to the Sandwich Range even fifty years after mountain lovers began traveling to Crawford Notch and other areas where tourist amenities existed. On July 1, 1860, Nathaniel Greeley created one of the first openings for the

public in the Sandwich Range when he launched his hotel in Waterville. William McCrillis in Whiteface Intervale and “Uncle Jim” Shackford in Passaconaway started taking guests at their farms before 1876. Soon the Range was ringed with accommodations for mountaineers. In Wonalancet we were a bit slower to get started, but around 1891 the area suddenly changed as Kate Sleeper, Tom Wiggin, Albert S. Pollard and Ira Tilton all opened inns. Hotel keepers here, like their counterparts around the Sandwich range and throughout the Whites, tirelessly promoted the pleasures and virtue of the outdoor life. They threw their weight behind the push for a national forest. And they built trails, often recruiting their guests to do heavy trail work at no pay. These hotel-based work parties were the genesis of the Wonalancet Out Door Club, and many other clubs like it.



Photo ca 1945, courtesy of Polly Crane Bazemore

By 1908 most of the WODC trail system we know today was in place. Then began the eternal work of maintaining it. At first there were plenty of willing laborers. But by mid-century public interest in the outdoor life waned, the attention of summer visitors turned towards the lakes, and mountain climbers looked west. Still, a diminishing corps of devotees redoubled their efforts and managed to keep the trails open until interest gradually returned. The WODC became active again in the 1970s and '80s, with stalwarts like Zink, Chandler, Weymouth, Sidley, Bowles and Mersfelder laboring to add the heart of Sandwich Notch to the National Forest, and to secure a Sandwich Range Wilderness. They also sought to broaden the club's base and to excite new talent. They succeeded, for the next generation improved the trails, hardened them against erosion, joined the successful effort to expand the Sandwich Range Wilderness, and published the best-ever map of the Sandwich Range. Just this year Wonalancet's own Ian and Janet Cooke and their children made a major donation of prime trail-bearing land to the National Forest.

So today we have much to enjoy and be thankful for. But there is no rest: looming just ahead we have a new challenge. Increasingly the American people have come to mistrust their own government. The public questions whether the government makes good use of tax dollars. The result is not subtle: the current Forest Service budget for facilities, roads and trails has been cut 37% compared to last year. The White Mountain National Forest is considering permanent closure of trails, including some in the Sandwich Range. Thinking about such cuts within the framework of the Weeks Act and all it symbolizes does raise the question of costs. A quick calculation

shows that during the thirty years of Weeks activity that it took to build most of our eastern national forest system, the cost to American workers of land acquisition was about 6 minutes of earnings per year.

So, heirs and heiresses, what do you think . . . was it worth it?



Photo courtesy of Paul King

Whiteface Summit – November, 1999

Cold, still, timeless.
 Last night's snow
 Cloaks the fallow ground,
 Masks the dormant trees,
 Denies all things past.
 There was no summer,
 No wrestling boulders,
 No racing storms
 Across Squam lake.
 There is, was, and always
 Shall be only now;
 Cold, still, timeless now.

The summit clouds shift
 And fold– blankets
 Of an uneasy slumber,
 Teasing with glimpses
 Of a bare valley floor,
 The only hint of another time
 Until a sliver of light
 Should pierce the gloom.
 A rime-crystal spruce bud
 Briefly glistens, and dreams
 Of an august sun.
 I miss you.

by Chris Conrod



AND. . . why USDA? Doug spills the beans! (at last)

The National Forests were understandably quite a prize and powerful personalities did battle to control them. The Forests -- this was before the Weeks Act, so they were all out west -- started out in the Interior Department. Gifford Pinchot, wealthy Progressive, political ally and personal friend of Teddy Roosevelt, was the one who had the clout to bring the National Forests under his control in the Agriculture Department. During the New Deal, Harold Ickes made it a personal quest to get the forests back for the Interior Department. This was stoutly resisted by Henry Wallace, then Secretary of Agriculture (later Vice President, later pushed out of the New Deal inner circle for leaning too far left). The National Forest Reservation Commission -- established in the Weeks Act -- frequently became an arena for this battle since, by law, the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior were both members. (The Secretary of Defense sat as chairman, the other members were two senators and two congressmen. For most of the half century life of the NFRC one of the legislators was from NH, although of course the law did not so stipulate.) Ickes tried everything. On one vacation he took a motor tour through some National Forest lands in the west. He came home to Washington fuming that he had driven for hours in one of the "forests" and not seen a single tree. In his "secret" diaries, Harold Ickes often complained that FDR kept promising him the National Forests, but never seemed to do anything about it. So naturally the USDA would like everyone who enjoys a trip to the WMNF (or any National Forest) to know who to thank. Not Interior!

Looking East From Mount Lafayette

Beyond the mountain range a range
 Of mountains lies, and past its blue
 A still more misty range reclines
 Before the palest range in view.

Each line a sky to that in front,
 And each a range to that behind,
 The stone-heaped generations lie,
 And each by each is redefined.

by Susan Goldhor

**Trail Maker; Trail Mender
(or Saving Blueberry Ledges)
by Jedediah Talbot**

As we started hiking down from our base camp roughly halfway up Mt. Whiteface, a familiar yet odd sort of elation filled my body. The weariness from six plus weeks of hard labor along with the weight on my shoulders and hips from the gear lashed, strapped, packed, and stacked on my back simply melted away. As an involuntary smile spread across my grimy face, my beat up Limmer boots seemed to lighten and began hopping on their own accord from rock to rock along the trail that I had grown to know so well over the past three summers. It was our last pack out on the Blueberry Ledge Trail, and I knew I was going to miss this uniquely special place.

During the summers of 2009, 2010, and 2011, our crew spent over 17 weeks reconstructing the most eroded sections of this popular trail with the help of WODC members, volunteers, and Forest Service personnel. In many ways, the project represented the culmination of my experiences and passions as a trail builder. Rarely does a trail project encompass such staunch wilderness ethics with technical rock work, valued partnerships between federal and local organizations, customized low impact equipment, volunteer participation, a 4000 foot mountain, and some pretty darn good friends.

Its difficult to describe to many people what I do. Tongue in cheek, I often say that I spend my days rolling rocks uphill and digging holes in one place just to throw the dirt in another place. That's about it. Nothing to it. Mindless toilsome labor fit for those who are more brawn than brain. In reality, I cannot imagine another occupation that requires such a dichotomy of skill sets.

On the physical side, even the strongest of backs will weaken over time if the labor is not done thoughtfully and efficiently. Even the act of crushing rock (a major component of backcountry trail work) can be elevated to an art form. Proper body mechanics and breathing, reading the grain of the rock, knowing the impacts of a square face vs. a round face vs. a carbide tipped hammer make the difference between being productive and simply wearing yourself out. Similar examples can be made for rolling rocks by concentrating on their balance points, utilizing the mechanical advantage afforded by a 60" long, 18 pound rock bar and a fulcrum, or sizing and digging a hole into which a rock will be placed. These are age old techniques that our parents, grandparents and ancestors were intimately acquainted with as they settled this land and cleared the forested New England landscape with little more than axes,

stock animals and yankee ingenuity. There are great lessons to be found in these simple tools; however, that is just part of the story for the modern day trail crew.

We must embrace technology as well, for holding onto tradition without innovation runs the risk of stagnant, antiquated practices. "Looking back while reaching forward" I like to say. With that thought in mind, I spend days in front of the computer and on the phone, researching the tools of the modern day arborist, marine stevedore, cable logger, rock climber, and zip line canopy tour engineer. The steel wire rope coil that weighs 200 pounds has been replaced by a synthetic fiber rope with the same strength that weighs less than 30 pounds.

Advancements in mapping technology, satellite imagery, and communications have completely changed the way we view, catalogue, and present proposed developments on the landscape. The pick mattock carried on my back is now complemented by the iPhone carried in my pocket.

As wilderness advocates, we need to use every tool we have to protect what we love. For instance, something as simple as taking digital photos of backcountry work sites before, during and after a reconstruction project is now almost as important as the quality of the work itself. Those photos can be posted online while the crew is still in the woods which allows fundraisers, donors and agency supervisors to get a virtual view of what they may not be able to get into the woods to see. Although the danger of technology overshadowing traditional skills is a real one and the balance is delicate, I like to think that the inspiration of working in the natural world, amongst the Spruce giants and Bicknell's Thrush, helps to keep my perspective relatively clear.

I've been doing trail and conservation based work as my primary occupation since graduating college in 1998, but even in that first year, it felt like I'd been doing it my whole life, and in some ways I have. Growing up in rural Maine, my schedule when not in school was to grab breakfast, throw some snacks and a canteen of water into a pack and hit the woods with a buddy or a cousin for the day. My parents knew not to expect us back until nightfall, that is unless we got too hungry. With our hatchets and little saws we built forts and hideouts, burrowing under the raspberry bushes and digging out the soil behind an upturned tree for a makeshift bunker. I guess I haven't grown up that much.

While attending college in Minnesota, I lobbied to work on the Conservation and Trail Crew in the arboretum. The "arb" became second home, even when not at work. I slept there half the nights of the week, often showing up to class with sleeping bag in hand and campfire smoke wafting from my sweater. As



My family seems to be inclined to teach -- my grandfather, mother, father and both sisters were or still are teachers. Yet all I wanted to do was be outside.

After graduating, I enrolled in an 11 month residential Student Conservation Association (SCA) and AmeriCorps program based in Bear Brook State Park in Allenstown, NH. The focus of this wonderful program is split between environmental education and conservation based activities, with an overarching theme of service based learning. All the participants go through a Conservation Work Skills week where the lessons include building water bars, steps and walls out of rock, trail tread and drainage control, bog bridge and timber based construction techniques, along with the basics of backcountry rigging. All week I was giddier than I had been since building forts in my youth. I had found what I was supposed to do... unfortunately it didn't seem like such a job actually existed beyond the level of a volunteer or conservation corps member.

After the Bear Brook Program ended, I started leading trail crews of high school and college age volunteers for SCA. I researched and analyzed trail building techniques wherever I went, finding great inspiration in the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). I worked for masonry companies and two (of the few) well known trail contracting companies on the east coast. SCA continued to send me around the country to lead some of their more challenging backcountry projects and I soaked up the techniques I saw used in the High Sierra of California, the spongy taiga environs of the Alaskan interior, the rock hard red clay of North Carolina and soggy tropical rainforests of Puerto Rico. I was blown away that every local region had developed a unique style of work based on the immediate environment- species of trees, type of rock, weather patterns, and soil structure all affected how that style developed. Finding the sense and spirit of a place seemed to be a necessary component of naturalistic trail work.

I feel so fortunate that I am now able to meld the student, the teacher, and the giddy little kid in myself into a niche business that focusses on conservation. The scope of work often seems as varied as the regions I get to traverse. One day I may be assisting a trail advocacy group to plan, design and fund a trail system on a newly conserved piece of land. The next day I may be splitting stone with feathers and wedges for a backcountry rock work project. In the winter, I have taken up low impact logging and timber stand improvement, where I

utilize small tracked equipment to fit the gap in between a horse logger and a skidder operation. I set aside a good chunk of the spring specifically to train SCA crew leaders and other volunteers for the upcoming season. I return to Bear Brook every year and it fills me with hope to see faces light up as they learn about crosscut saws, adzes, and other traditional hand tools. In this era of increased mechanization and technology use, widespread obesity, and a disconcerting disconnect from nature, I get to spend days in the woods with some of the next generation of conservation leaders. They inspire me and keep me optimistic that we have not lost sight of where we come from and where we might go from here.

As I finished that final hike down Mt. Whiteface, the elation shifted to fatigue, then soreness- a feeling that most New Hampshire hikers are familiar with. Something in that elation remained though, and it continues still. When you spend your days and nights on a mountain, simple pleasures don't slip past you as easily as in town.

Perhaps it's a lesson found while trying to calm your mind from the agitation of black flies in your eyes, ears, and bellybutton. Perhaps it's found in the clarity of the air and color of the trees just after the rain shower passes. As I said before, I do trail work for the sake of the environment, but that may be a bit of a simplification.

In the last three summers, I was able to watch so many people pass by on their way to and/or from the summit of Mt. Whiteface. Some ambled, some huffed and puffed, some sprinted. One family

hiked past on the very day a patriarch passed away -- his wife, friends, children, grandchildren, and maybe even great grandchildren. They could think of no better testament to his life than to hike up the mountain. On more than one occasion, a youngster passed us on the way up looking tired and a bit fearful, only to return with a smile and an air of confidence having summited his or her first 4000 foot peak. One man was visiting his wife as he did at least annually, for some of her ashes were scattered from the summit years ago. Another pair of distinguished gentlemen were headed down to a bottle of mid-afternoon champagne after finishing the last of the New Hampshire 4000 foot peaks.

The transformative effect of climbing a mountain is indisputable. I think that for most trail workers, part of the pleasure is in the knowledge that you've helped shape someone else's wilderness experience, if only by protecting it.

(All photos courtesy of Jed Talbot. Above: "Hauling in a big stone." Many more photos available on Jed's website: www.obptrailwork.com)





Staircase 1 before

Low Impact Trail Construction- Tools and Techniques:

Trail work often involves a combination of balancing hiker safety and convenience with resource protection. The work on Blueberry Ledge was prioritized heavily in terms of resource protection. Some hikers love the new steps, some feel that it makes the climb more difficult. Others don't appreciate the "built" feel of a rock staircase, citing that it takes away from the wilderness character of a place. I enjoy hearing all these perspectives; however, in my mind, I am doing work for the mountain as much as for those who climb it. Mt. Whiteface is the client as well as the teacher. The mountain is scarred by erosion from our presence, yet it offers all the resources we need to armor that scar and minimize the damage, sometimes in a beautiful way. All we have to do is bring the tools. It only makes sense that we try and work with the least amount of impact possible. With that in mind, our crew employed specialized equipment to transport stone, soil and crushed rock from outside the trail corridor to the work sites.

We had two hand powered Griphoist brand winches (2000 and 4000 pound strengths) that were used individually or together to pull rocks along the ground or more frequently, lift them into the air. Using the aerial rigging system commonly referred to as a "highline" or "skyline", rocks can travel down a synthetic fiber rope that has the same strength and stretch as wire rope. The load's momentum is slowed by another fiber rope that feeds through a belay device so that everything moves in a

controlled fashion. Safety is paramount when using rigging so each component is used within a specified working load limit—generally set at a maximum of 20% of its actual breaking strength.

Using the highline, we could find a quarry site of good rocks off trail and uphill of the work area and fly them to the work area. Sometimes we were able to place the rocks into holes directly off the highline. Sometimes we had two lines set up so that a rock could fly to the trail on one line and down the trail on another without ever touching the ground. This sort of rigging increases efficiency, reduces strain on the back, and limits the impacts of rolling rocks across the fragile mosses, plants, and root systems of the subalpine ecosystem.

Our work on Mt. Whiteface consisted of building flights of rock steps that climbed out of the entrenched trail with a rock water bar at the top to divert water out of the trail corridor. Large "gargoyle" or scree rocks were placed on the sides of the steps to deter hiker traffic and stabilize the gully. The rocks were generally dug in about $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way into the ground, so that a step with a six inch rise would be buried 18-24 inches below the surface. When necessary, carbide tipped hammers and chisels were used to shape the stone for a better fit. The result is a very solid staircase that sheds water off the trail and will last centuries. After the stones are set, we naturalized and restored all signs of our work. Our aim is that the first hiker who travels up a completed staircase doesn't realize that the work is new and cannot find where any of the rocks came from.



Staircase 1 after

A Recap of the Blueberry Ledge Trail Project

Project Planning and Funding:

WODC has a long history of wilderness stewardship and trail maintenance; over the years they have explored numerous ways to get work done in the Sandwich Range. Always relying heavily on volunteers, WODC has also raised funds and leveraged their efforts with partners such as the Forest Service to secure SCA trail crews, interns, and local folk to get their annual maintenance needs met. With over 50 miles of trail to maintain, by the time these crews had diligently cleared the trails of blowdowns and cleaned out the drainages, the annual budget was usually exhausted. Numerous larger and more intensive projects were identified, but the crews lacked the time, equipment, and technical experience to tackle them. The Blueberry Ledge Trail was understood to be the top priority due to the number of steep, actively eroding gullies that were threatening to turn the popular hiking trail into something that more closely resembled an Olympic luge course.

Fred “The Finder” Lavigne worked closely with Cristin Bailey and Jana Johnson of the USFS, Saco Ranger District, to record the locations on the Blueberry Ledge Trail that suffered severe and accelerated erosion while still having some soil base above the granite bedrock. The November issue of the 2008 WODC Newsletter depicts one such eroded area with the caption wishing next year’s trail crew luck. After significant head scratching about how to get the needed work done, I received a call from Fred Lavigne requesting ideas for the project. Jack Waldron applied for a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant that could address some of the reconstruction. The Forest Service offered a challenge grant to match the club’s raised funds and the 2009 budget was determined. After a site visit with Jack, Fred, Jana, Bailey, and myself, the project goals for the year were set. The contracted Off the Beaten Path (OBP) crew managed to finish all the highest priority areas and start a few more.

After a good year in 2009, the USFS Saco Ranger District decided the Blueberry Ledge Project was well suited for a portion of the American Reinvestment and Recovery (AARA) funds they received. WODC had to nearly double its operating budget and actively recruit more volunteers to cover the match, but as per usual, Jack, Fred, and others found a way to make it happen. An AARA funds audit in 2010 found the Blueberry Ledge Trail project to be successful in terms of emphasis on partnerships, quality of work, transparency of costs, clarity of work reports and photo documentation. The result was that on our final day of work in 2010, WODC trail worker Dan Newton hiked up with the news that unspent federal AARA dollars were being earmarked for Blueberry Ledge for 2011! This unexpected news was delightful validation that the work put in by WODC, USFS, and Off the Beaten Path was seen nationally as a good model. WODC vowed to match the federal dollars with the needed volunteer hours and the result was another year of work on the trail.

2011 proved to be just as satisfying and productive as the previous years, with the majority of the WODC volunteer labor working on a relocation lower down on the trail. The OBP crew finished installing steps on all the severely eroded slopes, working their way up the mountain to above the junction of the Tom Wiggin Trail. We then worked our way back down doing smaller patchwork staircases and erosion control work to finish off the season.



Blueberry Ledge Trail: Work Log Totals 2009-2011

Rock steps installed: 288 (787 cu. ft.)
Gargoyles/ Scree rocks installed: 640 (1203 cu. ft.)
Rock drainages constructed: 26
Soil displaced: 1266 cu. ft.= 46.9 cu. yds.
Trees transplanted: 139
Area restored/rehabilitated: Approx. 7729 sq. ft.
Weight of material moved (solid rock, crushed rock, and soil):
Approx. 176.5 tons or 353,000 pounds
Total contracted hours on project: 2,586.5

**(All writing and photos by Jedediah Talbot,
Owner of Off the Beaten Path, Trail Work and Training)
www.obptrailwork.com**

Above: Setting rock off line. Below: Hiking gear down.



The Legacy of the Weeks Act
A talk by WODC President Jack Waldron
at the Wonalancet, Weeks & White Mountain Celebration

I'd like to take this opportunity to look back at the legacy of the Weeks Act, a compromise of the first order, and to look forward to what the legacy of our generation might be.

The middle of the 19th Century marked the beginning of two disparate developments. First, logging railroads made it possible to deliver increasing amounts of timber to mills. This resulted in large increases in the acreage of timber harvests. Frequently, the objective of logging operations was converting trees into cash, with little thought of the impact on forest ecosystems. Between 1850 and 1900 lumber production increased 8-fold, from 5.4 billion board feet to 44.5 billion board feet.

The second trend was an increasing environmental awareness as demonstrated by writers such as Henry David Thoreau and George Perkins Marsh as well as the Hudson River School of landscape painters. This mounting awareness led environmental advocates, up and down the eastern seaboard, to roundly criticize the damage being done to forests. One remedy they proposed was that the federal government purchase and protect forestland. They lobbied congress to this effect but their efforts fell short, unable to overcome the dominant, commercial ethos of the culture. The Weeks Act marked a significant turning point. That turning point was not an environmental epiphany but rather the loss of ecological connectivity and, we must confess, the ensuing damage to the economy.

The forests of Northern New England, and particularly northern New Hampshire, provided a ready supply of raw materials for the saw mills. Those same forested mountains also provided the power to run those saw mills in the form of rivers fed from the mountains. As forests fell to feed the mills, rivers also fell. Springtime floods became commonplace, only to be followed by a bare trickle of water in late summer and autumn. The ecological connectivity of the land had been broken.

The Weeks Act did not solve this problem but rather represented a compromise between two disparate groups, those seeking to convert natural resources into financial gains, and those for whom the healthy fabric of nature was paramount.. "Forest Reserves" would be set aside and managed to "provide for navigable streams". Those navigable streams would power the mills. The Weeks Act did not "preserve" the forests -- it changed the management of some forests from private to public interests. In the words of Gifford Pinchot, the public interest was to provide: "the greatest good, to the greatest number, for the longest time". The Weeks compromise lasted about 40 years, until the end of World War II. During this time the new National Forests east of the Mississippi recovered their ecological health. The dark regime of forest fires that had dominated the White Mountain landscape faded. Verdant green replaced the smokey, black char of desolated hillsides. The transition from private to public management of the forests worked well until politics overtook the Forest Service. During World War II, home building supplies had been rationed. After the war, the country faced a shortage of housing for returning veterans. The political powers in Washington decided that the timber in the National Forests was needed for home building. The Forest Service's annual timber quotas were raised and "getting out the cut" became the unofficial motto of the Forest Service. Where single tree selection or small patch cuts had been done by the Forest Service, now there were clearcuts. One hundred years earlier

forests were sacrificed for individual gain, now they were sacrificed for a perceived, public gain..

Public management of the forests had reverted to the same practices that had characterized private management. The short term interests of humankind were placed above the long term health and evolution of nature. Both private and public management of the forest had been driven by an anthropocentric viewpoint and both had failed. A new compromise was needed, and arrived in another Congressional Act, the Wilderness Act of 1964, which brought the first glimmer of an ecocentric philosophy to the National Forests. Under this Act, most of our public lands would continue under public management, but a portion would be set aside and left to evolve naturally. The Act stated, **"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."**

The Wilderness Act was a marvelous compromise. Most public land would continue to be managed within the ethos of the dominant, anthropocentric culture. But some public land would be set aside for natural processes to evolve free from the hand of man, an ecocentric approach. When viewed from an ecocentric perspective, man is considered an equal participant with all species and forms of life. Man is part of nature, not separate from it, and we are immersed in the mysterious dance of life, both physically and spiritually. Ecocentrism is not a new idea. It's been embodied in many cultures. In our own culture ecocentrism goes back at least to Copernicus who, in 1543, demonstrated that the earth was not the center of the universe and concomitantly neither was man. In the 18th century, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote about Copernicus: **"The world had scarcely become known as round and complete in itself when it was asked to waive the tremendous privilege of being the center of the universe. No wonder his contemporaries offered every possible resistance to a doctrine which authorized and demanded a freedom of view and greatness of thought so far unknown, indeed not even dreamed of."**

Goethe's words are poetry to my ear, but I'm sure they are not poetry to all ears. A diversity of ideas and opinions is as necessary for the health of a culture as a diversity of genes is necessary for the health of a species. This brings us back to our question: what is the legacy of the Weeks Act? We need only look to the north to see a Weeks forest, more verdant and healthy than the pictures of that forest in 1911. That is the environmental legacy of the Weeks Act. But what is the cultural legacy of the Weeks Act? As we look north to those mountainsides we see both managed lands and wilderness; we see compromise growing on the mountainside. That spirit of compromise requires tolerance. That tolerance allows our culture to evolve in concert with nature

What will be the legacy of our generation? Will we achieve as much as the Weeks Act generation? Will our culture continue to coevolve with nature? Will we continue to promote and encourage tolerance? Will we continue to embrace compromise? The answers to these questions will determine our legacy. I sincerely hope that in 100 years, in this Chapel, a speaker will describe our generation's legacy in Goethe's words: **"They demanded a freedom of view and greatness of thought so far unknown, indeed not even dreamed of."**

**THE TRAILS REPORT, with thanks to Jed & Fre
& all the WODC Volunteers,
and a sharp slap on the wrist to Irene**

The major event of the 2011 Trails season was Hurricane Irene. The southern slopes of the Sandwich Range fared much better than more northern areas. I recorded 6 inches of rain at my home which is 1/2 mile from the Chapel. To the north as much as 8-10 inches were reported. This washed out roads such as the Kancamagus Highway and Rt 302 as well as inflicting quite a bit of damage to trails up north. Wind was not really a factor so most damage was due to flooding at lower elevations. The Bennett St Trail did experience a small washout which we have repaired. There were also some heavy clusters of blowdowns on the lower sections of both Bennett St and Dicey's Mill Trails. Other than that we experienced scattered blowdowns on other trails. Due to the efforts of Fred Lavigne, Dave Giampetro, and Paul King, as well as many anonymous helpers, most of the blowdowns have been cleared.

The biggest impact of Irene was to delay the start of working on the 0.5 mile relo of an historically wet section of the Blueberry Ledge Trail. Fred Lavigne is leading this effort which is part of our match for the Stimulus Funds we received this year. Work is progressing well, and we hope to finish it before the snow flies. However, we'll delay opening the relo until after snow melt next Spring, due to our concern that a new, unblazed trail may be difficult to follow once snow buries the treadway. Next year the treadway should get broken in very well since Blueberry Ledge Trail is our most heavily used trail.

Jed Talbot and his crew from Off the Beaten Path completed a third successful season placing rock steps and drainages on the upper sections of the Blueberry Ledge Trail. Their work was supported by RNAV Foundation and USFS Stimulus Grants.

The cumulative effect of 3 years of work is quite impressive, well worth a hike, and should prevent undue impacts to the environment for decades, if not longer. Thank you, Jed, for all your excellent work and your exquisite sense of timing in packing out all your gear the day before Irene struck.

We also hosted 4 volunteer work days which culminated on Sept 24 (National Public Lands Day) when we officially kicked off work on the BBL relo with a crew of 15 volunteers. That crew accomplished more than Fred had hoped for, which says a lot about the work ethic of those volunteers.

On behalf of WODC I want to thank all the members, volunteers, and paid crew who contributed to this successful season. Most of all we need to thank Fred, who is literally the heart of our trails program. **Jack Waldron, Trails Chair**

Lib MacGregor Crooker Bates died in October in her 92nd year. A founding member of the Over the Hill Club in Sandwich, Lib was an active and successful conservationist, who added significantly to her town's holdings, spearheading the development of the 18 mile Bearcamp River Trail, as well as a shorter trail through town, of which Fred Lavigne was quoted as saying, "Lib would go out with a chain saw and just cut her way through the woods, walking until she found great spots for the trail to pass through." This past year, Lib was one of L.L.Bean's Outdoor Heroes. She donated the \$5,000 award to the WODC. If you go onto L.L.Bean's website, you can view a video of Lib talking about what hiking has meant to her. At the end she says, "The one place that I've been the most at home is on the trail. I just feel so comfortable out in the woods and up on mountains. It's the best place to be."

WODC ORDER FORM

PLEASE MAIL COMPLETED ORDER FORM TO:

**WODC MEMBER SERVICES
HCR 64, BOX 248
WONALANCET, NH 03897**

NAME

STREET

CITY, STATE, ZIP

PHONE (.....).....

EMAIL

QTY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	TOTAL
	1901 Guide to Wonalancet (Reprint)	\$10.00	
	WODC Map & Guide (3rd edition) Members Non-Members	6.00 8.00	
	Unfolded WODC Map & Guide	9.00	
	3 or more unfolded Maps - each	7.00	
	WODC Historical Collection (CD)	25.00	
	WODC Patch	3.00	
	Coolmax T-shirt <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> gray <input type="checkbox"/> Large <input type="checkbox"/> blue <input type="checkbox"/> X-Large	18.00	
	New Memberships (not for renewals!) <input type="checkbox"/> Pathfinder <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Blazer <input type="checkbox"/> Five Year	15.00 25.00 50.00 250.00	

Tales From the Trails: Lost on the Trail

Jed Talbot's gorgeous work raises a tantalizing question: How improved should a trail be? This question swam into what I fondly think of as my consciousness last month, as I was hiking up Mt. Israel. I was waiting for a section with boulders that I knew was coming, but an elegant stone staircase had materialized in its place. (Not Jed's by the way, but someone he trained.) And I had totally mixed feelings. On the one hand, I'm not as young as I used to be, and I appreciated the improvement. On the other hand, there was a part of me that wanted the trail to be rough. That's what trails are -- right? And I've been going back and forth ever since. It's like a conversation I had with a ranger, sitting on Blueberry Ledges, where the signage for the Cutoff and the regular trail had been put up, and he said, "You know, I don't think that there should be any signs in wilderness areas. But a lot of people got lost, so they put this up."

Well, I was one of those people, and because I got lost, that hike and that wrong turn are still clear in my mind, twenty years later. When I realized I was on an unknown trail, I panicked. I'm not proud of that, and I pulled myself back into rationality pretty quickly. But it was incredible -- the kind of mind altering experience that people usually achieve by ingesting expensive and illegal chemical substances. And that was fitting, for what is panic but the experience of Pan, the Arcadian god of wilderness? Sure, it was scary. And sure, hikers have died because they were lost or because they panicked. But I was lucky enough to have a mild case in good weather close to home, and it was a magical and transporting gift. (At least in retrospect.) So I figured getting lost was a great topic. But no one else did. It occurred to me that I might be the only WODC member who'd ever been lost. So I asked Mike Bromberg, who has done so much to keep the rest of us from getting lost, if this had ever happened to him. "All the time", he said. "I'm always going the wrong direction on a trail. No big deal". That was when I realized that what had been an extraordinary experience to me was so ordinary, that I might as well have asked about lunch on the trail. The two responses I did get each have a special slant: Janet's on living in the path of lost hikers, and Tom's on when the trail was lost, and he wasn't.

The Skull Cairn Trail:

On this particular overnight hike, in the mid '80s, we had opted for Chocorua and, after ascending the Liberty Trail a while, started looking for a campsite. While searching east of the trail we encountered a trail sign, seemingly in the middle of the nowhere. The sign looked much like the older AMC signs of the Whites, painted white with green letters. The sign read "Skull Cairn Trail" and under: "Please do not disturb the ancient Indian burial mound."

While this odd sign on a barely discernable track, if any at all, merited more investigation, we had a campsite to find and set up. We made a mental note and got back to the task at hand. A clearing with a fire ring was found, not too far, nor very close. Our group was typically poorly outfitted. One member, Ed, without a tent was looking forward to sleeping under the stars in his "Black Ice" sleeping bag. Few of us even carried sleeping pads. I loaned Ed a plastic ground cloth as protection against the damp. He slept by the fire and, in the morning, told us how cold he'd been. He awoke in the night shivering, directly from a dream of a Native American woman telling him to roll hot rocks from the fire into his bed. He did so, melting holes into my tarp, sparing his bag. This carried him through the night.

Upon hearing his dream, our thoughts immediately jumped to the spooky trail sign in the woods. Could we be camping on the burial mound?! It seemed like the spot would be a natural gathering place, suitable to the purpose. After breakfast we hunted for the sign. It could not be found at all nor could we find it on any map or guidebook.

Tom Holtey

Life at the Dickey's Mill Trailhead:

What about the many times we, as the first house down, have "rescued hikers"? Twice dogs have come down with quills in paws after encounters with porcupines. One was a wonderful husky. . . of course it is always Sunday late and we had to call the vet in North Conway and plead with them to stay open as the dogs have to be put down for the extractions.

Then there are the people who get hurt. Sometimes they are asked to dinner! And the ones who often, often used to come down Dickey's Mill instead of going over to the Kank. Before the map was put up on top of Passaconaway, we frequently had callers. "I can't walk a step further!" "My friends are waiting for me", etc. . . . For some reason it was always when Ian was away and I'd give the hiker (him, usually) a beer, and call Barbara Sidley and we would drive them over to their camp, and that would take two hours all told. Nancy Stearns has had some too, but of yore, long ago, it was quite frequent and rather fun!

Once a family just hiked down and left, and their German Shepherd took up residence in our barn in the early winter. They thought they had lost him and weren't all that sad. I remember Eddie Elliot coming to visit and the dog barked so frenziedly at him that we decided we had to do something. So, as he seemed not to trust men, I went with a T-bone steak into the barn and managed to pluck up courage enough to finger through the many medallions hanging on his collar, which proved that the registration had been paid. After a few false leads I found the latest one and called. We left a thermos full of coffee out for the Brookline doctor who owned him and in the morning the dog and the coffee were gone.

Just shows that there is RESCUING and rescuing!!!

Janet Cooke

So do I want all signs removed from wilderness? Do I want all trails to stay as they are? (Which actually means degrading with wear and water.) What is a trail but something carved by humans anyway? Whatever wild purity that site may have had (and our turf hasn't had much of that for a couple of centuries at least) was gone as soon as the trail was created. We're not talking Brooks Range here. And the real point that (being human) I've had trouble internalizing, is that Jed's work is not for me -- or you. At least not directly. It's for the trail. Parts of Blueberry Ledge need relocation, parts were eroding down hill, parts are so steep and slick that some of us avoid the boulders and clamber around the edges, but Jed's work will last for generations to come. I think of it as the trail eternal. And do I want all signs removed from wilderness? No. Getting lost once was memorable. And it was enough.

The next Tales from the Trails topic is: TRAIL MIX. There are no excuses this time for not sending in a Tale. So even if you've never done it before (or if you have), please send your story to susangoldhor@comcast.net.



Editor's Ramble. . . through the Invisible Forest. I always think that the more you know, the more you see, and the more you see, the more rewarding your time on the trail will be. I'm a biologist so I see plants, animals and fungi. Doug McVicar probably sees old stone fences, cellar holes, and ancient property lines, and I bet Jed sees where the trail is eroding or flooding, and where stonework should go. But recently, I've been thinking more and more about the things we don't see. I started a few years ago, envisioning the soil underfoot -- its constantly changing root hairs, its ever stretching and disappearing fungal hyphae, its mineral particles held together by bacterial glues, its invertebrates eating and being eaten -- the whole ecosystem underfoot on which we all depend. It's harder for me to envision the fact that the trail, the forest, the whole world is really mostly space. The particles that make up any one of the atoms that form our world -- the neutrons and electrons and protons -- are doing their spherical dances in ballrooms that are mostly empty, and each ballroom repels every other ballroom to keep space between them. Even rock is mostly space (although when Jed and his crew are hefting it, they probably don't think of it that way). And as for the sky above us -- our planet's atmosphere is a dilution of particles, each of which is mostly emptiness; and above that diluted blanket of air, that allows us to exist, is what we call "space", in recognition of the fact that there's even more space between each particle. And what particles they are! There's an entire spectrum of photons, quarks, leptons, bosons -- things that have mass but whose lifetimes are such a tiny fraction of a second that they can only be represented by sixteen zeroes after the decimal place; long-lived things that have no mass at all, but emit light while travelling 186,000 miles a second, and have been travelling at that speed for billions of years to bring us news of the birth of our universe and yet, as one physicist wryly commented, are angled to come just into the narrow scope of our vision. . . I'm trying to get my head around it all, but it's tough. Recently, I went to a talk by one of this year's Nobel laureates, Adam Riess, who was astounded to discover that as our universe expands, the rate of that expansion constantly increases. So when you finish your hike, you are a very tiny but real distance further from any other part of the universe than you were when you started. More space! I don't know which are more extraordinary: the things we see or the things we don't.

Susan Goldhor



Wonalancet Out Door Club

HCR 64, Box 248

Wonalancet, NH 03897