



# Update

*F.O.P. Newsletter, Summer 2013, V. 27, No. 2*

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## *From the President*

Greetings,

Dry, wet, hot, cold; that has been the state of the weather this Spring. This morning, on the day before Memorial Day, as the clouds lifted, snow had blanketed the ski slopes to the west. At least it hadn't blanketed our backyard...I must admit, not being a big fan of hot weather, I have enjoyed the cool temperatures and very much welcome the rain. There were too many days of too little rain, leaving streams dry when they should have been flowing. That is no longer the case.

I love being in the Park this time of year. The rich, dark tones of the trees contrasting with the brilliant greens from the explosion of leaves. And indeed it did seem like an explosion, everything poised and ready, waiting for the rains to come. Every venture into the woods brings some new discovery as the spring ephemerals continue to blossom. Purple and painted trillium can still be found and I recently came upon some beautiful specimens of jack-in-the-pulpit along the Old Chesterfield Rd. accompanied by a variety of Solomon's seal. Foam flower, wild sarsaparilla, Canada mayflower, star flower and choke berry are some of the other flowering plants taking advantage of the still-open canopy.

If you time it right and take a trek along the Southwoods Trail, you will be treated with a Great Blue Heron sighting as well as a variety of water fowl in the extensive wetlands that border the trail. The beaver pond along the Habitat/Wildlife Trail can also bring about such discoveries, as well as busy beavers, especially if it's later in the day. Approaching as quietly as possible can insure that the critters don't make a hasty retreat! Though the beavers do not seem too concerned, and are often curious about human observers.

Another reason to venture into the forest, especially during or after a rainfall, is to hear the array of bird song. A few days ago, we wandered into the Habitat beaver pond and were greeted by a wondrous, lyrical call and response of unknown origin. We simply stood in the gentle rain, marveling at the beauty of the song.

As you travel the trails, again when it has been raining, keep an eye open for the little red efts, of the newt family, who venture out onto the trails. We have seen many this Spring, from the tiniest little bright orange-to-red creature to the olive green of an adult. We have also encountered a wide variety of scat along the trails. Some we're pretty sure of its origin, some we're not. But one thing we are sure of is the abundance of wildlife thriving in Pisgah.

A number of folks in our community took it upon themselves to take on the maintenance of the Chesterfield Gorge. The Gorge was yet another state property that had suffered from budget cuts so these individuals, some of whom sit on the FOP Council, created the Friends of the Chesterfield Gorge. In the interest of stream-lining over-site and involvement with the state for such things as supplies, the FOP and the Friends of the Gorge have become collaborators. I recently benefited from this collaboration when we headed to the Gorge on our last FOP workday. I have to admit, I couldn't remember the last time I'd visited the Gorge. And what a treat it was to wander down the trail, waters rushing through the rocky Gorge, thanks, again, to a recent rainfall. I highly recommend a visit to the Gorge. The bridge at the bottom is a task that is in the pipeline to be replaced, but there's nothing wrong with a round trip! And I do encourage putting it on the calendar after a good rainfall. And thank-you to the folks who stepped up to the plate to care for another beautiful place in our community!

In closing, I wanted to give a warm "Thank-you" to Bob Smith, a now-retired FOP Council member, for the beautiful painting he recently donated to the FOP. The painting is of cottages that used to perch along the shore of the Pisgah Reservoir. For Bob, and no doubt many others, many fond memories are connected with days spent enjoying those summer retreats. Sadly, for the families and friends that frequented them, the cottages were torn down when the state procured the land to create what we now know as Pisgah State Park. We would do well to remember and thank all of the people whose properties became a place so many of us enjoy and will enjoy for generations to come. Here's to a Happy, Healthy Summertime.

*Kathy Thatcher*

## *The Necessity of Maintaining Old Growth Forests*

Hello fellow FOP members and those Park users who are not yet members. There may be many of you who use the Park but do not appreciate the difficulties of ensuring that the Park is kept as a recreational asset and not converted to a commercial resource. The Park is one of many assets in the world that does more than just ensures a pleasant recreational experience. What Pisgah represents in its older growth forest is an ecosystem that is rapidly disappearing from the nation's and the world's landscape owing to commercial development. The ecosystem of an older forest is an important component of the entire collection of ecosystems.

A great many of the creatures we appreciate in the world around us are dependent either entirely, or at some stage in their life cycle, on an old growth habitat. One of the great challenges in achieving support for old growth forests is that nothing is being extracted from them so they have no special monetary value. The direct monetary value of old growth habitat is not necessarily measurable in terms of monetary units. The role of old growth forests in enhancing the environment may be a very important reason for protecting them. Increasing carbon pollution is a significant player in global warming. As a means to protect the environment and the old growth forests, there is a growing body of scientists and others trying to put a value on the ability of these old growth forests to absorb carbon. I think there is value in our knowing that without these special places, our lives would not be as rich and may be significantly degraded. From what we take for granted outside our windows to the wonderful places we discover as we wander down a wooded path in Pisgah, these are places worth preserving. Please keep this thought in mind when you hear of activities that may degrade the old growth forests of New England and the world.

*Kathy Thatcher*

### *On the Trail*

#### **Pisgah Trail Maintenance - 2013-06-08**

David Weisel, John Bernstein, John Hudachek and Friends of Pisgah (FOP) trails Chief John Herrick met at the Kilburn Trailhead at 10:00. While discussing the activities for the day we noticed a group of 3 dead birch trees leaning over the parking lot. So our first job was to cut and remove the dead birch trees.

We then proceeded down the Kilburn Trail. After tropical storm Andrea dumped a lot of rain this morning, water was running down and across large sections of the trail. We determined this was an opportunity to drain water from the low spots and divert water flowing down the trail. Much work was done with potato hooks and a mattock.

On the trail the mosquitoes were very annoying. Sitting on the walkway above the Kilburn dam for lunch we enjoyed a strong breeze from the north that freed us from the mosquitoes. We observed two loons diving for their lunch. Back on the trail after lunch I saw my first deer fly of the season sucking her last lunch from my wrist. We were back at the parking just before 2:00 concluding a very productive day.

*John Hudachek*

#### **Pisgah Trail Maintenance - 2013-05-11**

Friends of Pisgah (FOP) President Kathy Thatcher, John Hudachek and FOP trails Chief John Herrick met at the Kilburn Trailhead at 10:00. It was decided to remove several dangerous trees leaning over trails at Chesterfield Gorge Natural Area. So we drove to the Gorge and removed a half dozen dead trees.

FOP had received an email the previous day that trees were down on the Bear Mountain Trail east of Plain Road. So on the way back to Kilburn we detoured down to the Plain Road Trailhead. While the two Johns ate lunch on the back of John's pickup Kathy hiked up the trail and found the fallen trees. After lunch we hiked up Bear Mountain Trail and removed the fallen trees and branches. The crew returned to John's truck, then drove to Kilburn parking lot at 1:15. Since the rain had become steady at this point we decided to call it a day.

*John Hudachek*

#### **Pisgah Trail Maintenance - 2013-04-13**

Krister Raasoch, David Weisel, Wendy Jacobs, Val and Jon Starbuck, John Hudachek and Friends of Pisgah (FOP) trails Chief John Herrick met at the FOP Dort property at 10:00. The Dort property is a piece of land located in Chesterfield between Route 63 and Pisgah State Park. The Dort Trail starts on Route 63 about 1.5 north of the Kilburn Trailhead and leads up to our proposed overnight shelter.

With Krister and John Herrick cutting branches and trees and the rest of the crew moving the cut wood off the trail the majority of the trail is cleared. John Herrick intends to continue leveling and moving stumps so that the shelter building materials can be transported up the trail to the shelter location beneath Hubbard Hill.

Lunch was enjoyed at our vehicles parked at the site vista. After completing the tree cutting around 2:00 the group checked out the proposed shelter location and then hiked to the Hubbard Hill vista. The crew returned to their parked vehicles just after 3:00.

*John Hudachek*

### **Pisgah Trail Maintenance - 2013-03-16**

Krister Raasoch, David Weisel, Wendy Jacobs, John Hudachek and Friends of Pisgah (FOP) trail chief John Herrick met at the Kilburn Trailhead at 10:00. With reports of numerous trees down on the Kilburn Loop the group decided to hike and clear the Kilburn Loop.

The woods were still full of snow and the trail was predominantly compacted snow with some ice. Many trees were found fallen across the trail - at one spot five trees were found across the trail that had been downed by beavers. Lunch was enjoyed on rocks overlooking water near the south end of the loop. The entire loop was cleared and, after a short excursion to the explosives site near the Hinsdale Town Forest, the group returned to the parking lot just after 3:00.

*John Hudachek*

### ***Chesterfield Gorge State Park***

Location, location, location! Situated directly alongside Route 9 near the center of Chesterfield, this multifunction State Park is a welcoming feature to travelers visiting the area or passing through Southwestern NH.

Offering a relatively short but splendid 0.7 mile hike featuring bridges and cascading, sometimes raging waters, the Park also provides convenient roadside picnic tables for the less adventuresome casual visitor. It's now not uncommon to see the a full parking lot during blue sky summer and early fall weekend and there always seem to be cars there any time of year. Recently the area was even visited by a school bus from Rutland, VT full of excited kids who led their chaperones down the trail.

Years ago the Visitor Center was open, managed by Pisgah Park and staffed by volunteers plus seasonal and year round Rangers from Pisgah Park. The Rev. and Mrs. Roger Day spent 1 or more days a week, usually Sunday afternoons, manning the Gorge Visitor Center for many years. Restroom facilities were provided in those days and a collection of old tools belonging to the FOP was on display. Sadly, the demise of state funding in the mid to late 2000s led to the closure of these facilities and, with further reductions in regular maintenance, the area became overgrown, littered and thoroughly unappealing.

Three years ago several local residents informally organized as the Friends of Chesterfield Gorge (FOG) and cleaned up the area, hauling away truckloads of debris and litter. The FOG did rejuvenating trail work, began mowing the roadside and picnic area regularly and put a more welcome face on the site. They also sought to ally with some organization and investigated guidance and support from the state.

As the Gorge is a State Park and administered as part of Pisgah State Park, a relationship with the FOP seemed natural. Such a relationship was initiated and additional support from the Chesterfield Conservation Commission was received. Even the Chesterfield Police Department offered support with an increased presence and vigilance.

This year a team from the FOP removed some trail-threatening trees (see photos on page 5). The Chesterfield Conservation Commission generously provided three new picnic tables for the roadside area and a Chesterfield Eagle Scout project with the support of FOP will replace the failed lower bridge on the main Gorge Trail.

Much progress has been made but there is still much to be done. Stabilizing the Visitor Center and storage shed, building, at the trailhead, an attractive informational kiosk which would feature information about the Gorge and other local outdoor opportunities like Pisgah Park, Friedsam Park and Madame Sherri's are the next order of business.

Rehabilitation of the Visitor Center and putting it to some use is a wonderful prospect. Rebuilding and making available rest room facilities is unlikely at this time for any number of logistical reasons. However, the main building area could serve a useful function. Any and all creative suggestions are sought and you may contact the FOG at the email address in the following paragraph.

Many thanks to all whose energies have rescued this site from the scrap heap. If you would like to add your thoughts or physical effort contact the FOP, the Chesterfield Conservation Commission or the Friends of Chesterfield Gorge at [friendsofchesterfieldgorge@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofchesterfieldgorge@gmail.com). This has been a wonderfully cooperative effort between all these organizations.

By the way, why don't you stop down at the Gorge for a little hike?

*John Koopman, FOG*

***Thanks Again for the Special Help of John Hudachek and John Herrick***

I am greatly appreciative of the efforts of all who work on the second Saturday Trail outing but I must specially thank both John Herrick and John Hudachek for the written reports on the Web site and the accompanying photos. Without these it would be much more difficult to publish our newsletter.

### *The West River Trail*

You might be interested in hiking the West River Trail which runs from Brattleboro west into the mountains along the old West River Railroad bed. The rail-trail has a nearly level surface, ideal for walkers, cyclists and equestrians, while a rugged section satisfies avid hikers. The railroad once traveled this corridor, linking the industrial communities of Brattleboro and Londonderry. The WRT is a 36-mile scenic all-season trail through the West River Valley. When connected, sections of the trail will link Brattleboro, Dummerston, Newfane, Townshend, Jamaica and South Londonderry. The lower section of the West River Trail is now open to the public for hiking, biking, xc skiing etc. This portion of the trail follows the old rail bed along the West River from Brattleboro to Dummerston. If interested, please check out the Friends of the West River Trail website ([www.westrivertail.org](http://www.westrivertail.org)) for more information regarding maps and access points.

*Jon Knickerbocker, FOP Council Member  
Vermont Representative to FOP*

### *FOP Needs a Secretary*

Our current officers and Council Members are shown below. You will note that, owing to the resignation of our Secretary Rob Parisi, there is an opening in the Council. If you would be willing to be the Secretary for FOP, it would be a very great help to the Council. We meet on the first Tuesday of each month once a month most of the year.

The current Council Members are:

#### Officers

President Kathy Thatcher  
Vice Pres. Gary Montgomery  
Treasurer John Hudachek  
Secretary Open

#### Council Members

Laurel Powell  
John Summers  
Matt Edson  
John Knickerbocker  
Jim Nikiforakis

John Herrick  
Matt Donachie  
Bob Miller  
Kim Nilsen

Please call Kathy Thatcher (363-4482) or Matt Donachie (239-6590) to discuss the position.

### *Photos from Recent Trails Activities*

You can see other FOP images on our web site ([www.friendsofpisgah.org](http://www.friendsofpisgah.org)).



Cutting a Birch on Dort Property Adjacent to Pisgah.  
John Herrick Doing the Honors



John Herrick Cutting a Leaner on the Bear Mountain Trail



Kathy Thatcher Checking Tree Soundness by Tapping It



John Herrick About to Take Down a Damaged Tree at Chesterfield Gorge State Park



Jon and Val Starbuck (left) and Krister Raasoch (right) on the FOP Dort Property Doing Trail Work



David Weisel at Trees Cut by John Herrick (left) on Dort Property



Krister Raasoch, David Weisel, Wendy Jacobs, Val and Jon Starbuck, John Hudachek and Friends of Pisgah (FOP) trails Chief John Herrick (not all shown) Having Lunch While Working the Dort Property



David Weisel (left) and John Bernstein Draining a Lot of Water from Kilburn Trail



Start of Bear Mt Trail



The Old Man of Chesterfield Gorge



John Bernstein Draining Water from Another Section of Kilburn Trail



Nice Table for a Critter's Lunch

Photos in this issue are courtesy of John Hudachek, John Herrick and Kathy Thatcher

### ***Infrastructure for the Pisgah Park Area***

Friends of Pisgah volunteers are about to embark on two separate infrastructure projects, one on the Dort Property in Chesterfield, and one at Chesterfield Gorge. Blanchflower Lumber of Alstead will deliver a truckload of sawn lumber in June. The majority of the timbers and boards will be offloaded at the Dort Property. Those goods are slated for a new lean-to large enough to sleep eight people.

Several of the longest timbers are going to be dropped at Chesterfield Gorge, where they will be moved downhill to the site of the former lower bridge. Eagle Scout Ben Stein is going to orchestrate the reconstruction of the former span. He has to complete his project by June 15th in order to earn his badge. He's chomping at the bit to get the project done. The bridge in the gorge is sorely needed and it will be a delight to have it back in service. Much of the old pressure treated boards and rails on the old bridge will be recycled into the new one. All the nails have been pulled on that material, so reconstruction should be able to go quickly.

The lean-to project does not have a date set as yet for construction. Six concrete pier footings will have to be poured and allowed to cure. Then the structure can be assembled in a nice glen on the Dort acreage. The lean-to is patterned after several structures that are now extant on the Cohos Trail in northernmost New Hampshire. They are deep three-sided buildings each with a substantial overhang that allows a camper to sit on the edge of the platform during a rainstorm without getting wet. The lean-to will eventually be accompanied by a composting latrine being prefabricated in the North Country. That latrine is also patterned after like structures near lean-tos on the Cohos Trail.

If you would like to volunteer on infrastructure projects such as these, please make it known by contacting Friends of Pisgah through the FOP website ([www.friendofpisgah.org](http://www.friendofpisgah.org)).

***Kim Nilsen***

### ***FOP: Watching and Helping Pisgah and More.***

Many of you are aware of the role FOP has played in the development and improvement of Pisgah Park. In the early years of the Park, FOP built and donated a nearly \$250,000 Visitor Center to Pisgah. The Visitor Center, on Old Chesterfield Rd just inside the Park boundary, is styled as an early 1800s farm house. In addition, when Pisgah had full time state staff on the premises, FOP members participated in a mid-week workday for Park trail and road maintenance. Tools were bought by FOP to use in trail work. Members such as John Summers donated the use of heavy equipment to grade the road. Other members provided tractors and back hoes for some work. A barn was acquired, moved from Westmoreland and re-erected on site opposite the Visitor Center.

The above are visible indicators of the extensive work the FOP has done for the Park. You may not be aware that FOP has been active in other areas of the Park Periphery. Specifically FOP has been the holder of many easements necessary for the system of trails from Hinsdale to Pisgah and Keene. A parcel of land on Plain Rd was acquired for access to the Wantastiquet Monadnock Greenway. Conservation easements were acquired along the trail route on parcels of land adjacent to the land purchased for parking. The Moon Ledge area was protected through ownership by FOP.

Conservation easements are essential to the creation and improvement of trails. Local conservation commissions and the Monadnock Conservancy play major roles in the use of conservation easements for outdoor recreation activities. FOP is proud of also having been able to play a role in such activities.

***Matt Donachie***

### ***From the Regional Director***

The NH Division of Parks and Recreation is pleased to announce that it has hired Whip Newell to be the new seasonal Park Manager at Pisgah State Park. Whip has a tremendous amount of experience and enthusiasm for the position. He has a great background in both the recreation and forest industries. Being from the area, and living only about 3 ½ miles south of the Visitor Center, Whip is very familiar with the property and has a great appreciation for the needs and uses of the Park. Whip will be working a part time schedule into the Fall, predominantly weekends so he will be active with the Friends of Pisgah. He has jumped in with both feet and will be sure to make a positive impact. We welcome Whip and thank him for joining the team.

***Bill Gegas,***

**Update** is published occasionally during the year by Friends of Pisgah, Inc.

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First Class Mail

Please use the form below and send to the address shown if you wish to join FOP, renew membership or give one as a gift. The Friends of Pisgah maintain a nominal dues structure with the intent being to encourage as many individuals and families as possible to join. Over half of the student/single/family dues provides for printing and mailing the Update and the Annual Picnic notice, as well as for the fine food at the picnic. Dues are as follows: student - \$10, single - \$15, family - \$20, group (club) - \$30.  
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