

LANDKEEPERS

REPORT

You can be a Landkeeper and...

- ...protect Tom Ball Mountain
- ...build new trails
- ...experience the beauty of nature regardless of abilities
- ...become a Trail Steward for your favorite BNRC place!

Photo by Gabrielle K. Murphy



LANDKEEPERS REPORT

Fall 2018

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Lenox Board of Selectmen Chairman Ken Fowler and BNRC Vice-Chairman Pat Callahan lop a festooned grapevine to officially open the Parsons Marsh Trail.

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

And it's the big things

A good sign—an 8 x 10 piece of metal that costs \$2—can make the difference between a happy and safe hike and one that produces anxiety, or worse.

The purchase of a key piece of land can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and take years or even decades to come to fruition.

Because of your generosity, BNRC can focus on the big things—the grand vision, the long-term goals. All can protect land like Tom Ball Mountain (see p. 5) forever, and build trails so you can enjoy it.

You can envision a network of trails to create a 100% walkable Berkshires, and you can make it happen.

To accomplish that, we must also stay focused on the details, and you make that possible as well. Some of the details I'm most proud of lately are the carefully designed curbs on the new accessible trail at Parson's

Marsh, so wheelchairs can traverse it safely.

The new grip hoist we purchased for our trails crews is another "small thing" that makes it possible to do big things. As I recently learned, a grip hoist lets you move big boulders around. You might be surprised to know how many boulders have to be moved when building a trail!

Your donation does big things. Whatever amount you can give, your gift helps make sure we have the right tools, the best people, the most expansive vision.

The collaboration that built the new trail at The Boulders proves that no matter what each of us is most passionate about as individuals, we can work together to create something wonderful for everyone.

— Jenny Hansell
President

PARSONS MARSH TRAIL AWAITS YOU!

Accessible trail opens serene woodland walk to everyone



BNRC Honorary Life Director Gige Darey and Ginny Akabane chat with trailbuilders Eddie Ryan, Erin Amadon, and Peter Jensen of Peter S. Jensen & Associates, LLC.

On a beautiful Saturday morning in mid-September, more than 200 people visited the Parsons Marsh reserve in Lenox to celebrate the opening of its new accessible trail.

People (and canines) of all ages walked the trail from the kiosk in the parking lot to the observation deck at the edge of the marsh, and back—a round trip of about 2/3 mile.

Kids decorated walking sticks, made seed balls, played cornhole and helped crank the antique cider press.

The Parsons Marsh accessible trail exists because of you, other BNRC supporters, the Town of Lenox (through its Community Preservation Fund), and the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program. Thank you! 🐾



Apples, cider donuts, and cider were enjoyed by all!

Photos by Gabrielle K. Murphy



Ed Neumuth of the Hoffmann Bird Club led a bird walk. Among other things, hundreds of migrating broad-winged hawks, in groups called kettles, were spotted high over the marsh.



The Russet Trio provided the perfect accompaniment for a festive gathering.



Parsons Marsh is located at 170 Under Mountain Road, Lenox, just a couple minutes from the town center. It's open dawn to dusk, free of charge, every day of the year. Please note that hunting and fishing are not allowed at the Parsons Marsh reserve, unlike at other BNRC properties.

NEW HEART HEALTHY TRAIL AT THE BOULDERS

BNRC partners with the Berkshire Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association

The Boulders in Pittsfield, Dalton, and Lanesborough has been a popular recreation spot for decades. The 685-acre property, donated to BNRC by the Crane Company in 2015, is open to the public for free for all non-motorized recreational use.

There are two main access points for the property: one from the parking lot on Dalton Avenue (Routes 8 & 9) across from the intersection with Hubbard Avenue (look for signage and access improvements there soon), and the other on Gulf Road across from the Appalachian Trail trailhead.

Until now, the route from the Gulf Road trailhead to the existing trail network has consisted only of two unmarked, steep, and eroding trails. That's changing!


In partnership with the Berkshire Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA), BNRC staff and volunteers completed the first section of a new access trail

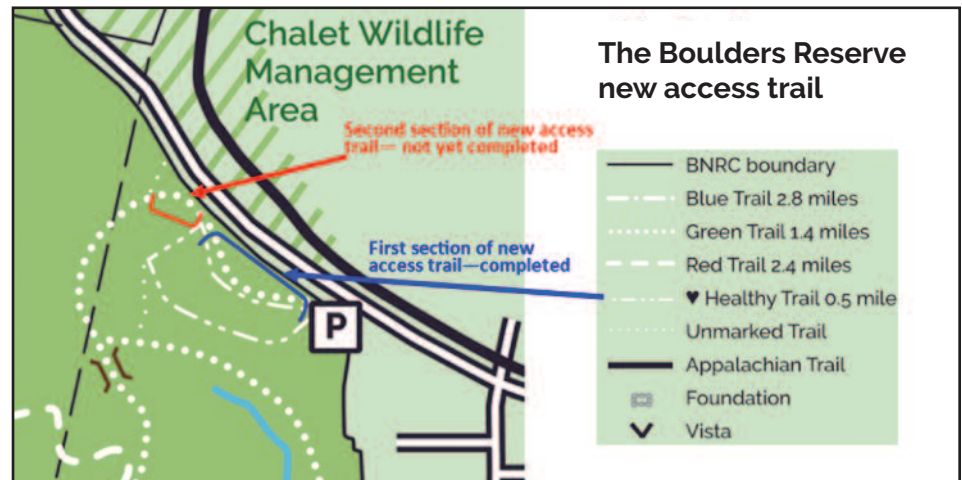
from Gulf Road. The new section creates a half-mile loop called the Heart Healthy Trail, through a beautiful, dark hemlock forest.

The second section of the new access trail will make the connection to the existing Green Trail and make it much easier for walkers, runners, and mountain bikers to access the property (see map).

Alison McGee, NEMBA Berkshire Chapter president, and Erik Forestell, NEMBA representative for The

Boulders, were instrumental in seeing the first section of the project to completion. In addition to the support in trail building, NEMBA has been encouraging the community to connect with the property through a new "Introduction to Mountain Biking" ride series, led by Kevin Delaney and Jeremy Manzolini.

For more information about upcoming rides visit the Berkshire NEMBA Facebook page. 



BNRC's hikers and NEMBA's mountain bikers find common ground working together to build a new access trail to The Boulders in Pittsfield. Photos by Gabrielle K. Murphy.



Volunteers help debark trees and build a footbridge at Basin Pond in Lee, and install bog bridging at Bob's Way in Monterey.

WRAPPING UP THE SEASON

Stewardship volunteers leave their mark on BNRC trails

Autumn is here and with that comes the time to reflect on the many stewardship projects accomplished by our dedicated volunteers.

We began our 2018 Volunteer Workdays in the third week of April, debarking hemlock trees for a footbridge at Basin Pond, with inches of snow still on the ground.

Also in April, we installed bog bridging next to a frozen pond at Bob's Way, and broke ground on a new trail at The Boulders with volunteers from BNRC and the Berkshire chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association. These folks are hardy!

In partnership with the Housatonic Valley Association, volunteers removed dozens of bags of invasive garlic mustard from the Old Mill Trail in Hinsdale, allowing for native vegetation to come back. The battle continues, as this is a repetitive, back-breaking task. Hooray for these stalwart volunteers who keep showing up!

Blue blazes!

The trail that runs through the hayed fields at Hollow Fields will now be

identifiable even under a blanket of snow, thanks to the blue-blazed bluebird box trail that was installed over the summer. The trail network beginning at Olivia's Overlook, the loop at Constitution Hill, and the Hoosac Range trails also have fresh blazes. These have already helped hikers feel more comfortable when embarking on adventures at those reserves.

Hooray for Trail Stewards!

All season long, our 22 trail stewards are our eyes and ears on the ground, regularly visiting 55 miles of trails to report fallen trees and keep the

trails cleared, maps stocked, and parking areas cleaned. They are also important ambassadors of BNRC, chatting with visitors and hikers they encounter along the way.

So far this year, BNRC volunteers have donated 471 hours of stewardship time. That translates to teamwork, shared laughs and stories, beautiful photos, a more welcoming experience for all trail users, and immense gratitude for our compassionate and dedicated team of volunteer stewards. Thank you, one and all! 🐾



Bluebird posts at Hollow Fields.
Photo by Ken Kelly.



Everyone pitched in this year!
Photo by Elodie Reed.



Once the land is purchased we can start planning the trail. It will start at Alford Springs, cross the newly acquired parcels to the summit of Tom Ball Mountain, and eventually (after a lot more work!) connect to West Stockbridge.

A PIECE OF THE HIGH ROAD DEVELOPS IN ALFORD

Your help is needed to seal the deal on Tom Ball Mountain

You have saved Undermountain Valley and opened it up for people of all abilities. You protected the Hoosac Range in North Adams, and helped build trails so that all who want to experience the peaceful forest or the breathless climb up a steep trail can do so, for free.

Now your help is needed to preserve the glorious windswept peak of Tom Ball Mountain in Alford.

Rising 1,933 feet along the border between West Stockbridge and Alford, Tom Ball Mountain is prime habitat for wildlife. Its rocky outcrops and pitch-pine groves have been

off-limits to hikers for generations.

To protect this special spot and open it to the public, the first step is to buy the land, 1116 acres in all, from John Springstube, whose family has farmed in Alford for generations. With some assistance from BNRC staff, John plans to place an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on the prime soils below the summit.

John has also decided that now is the time to conserve the peak of the mountain in perpetuity. Your donation will preserve the ridge of Tom Ball Mountain forever.

The Springstube land is just

one piece of a classic BNRC land-protection puzzle—there are three other landowners in the mix.

Dwight Lane sold 14 acres to BNRC—a small but very key connector parcel.

Henry Flint, a BNRC board member, purchased two parcels and placed conservation restrictions with trail easements on them.

Charlie Schulze is donating three parcels to BNRC and allowing a trail easement across his own property.

You can build on the generosity of these donors to protect Tom Ball Mountain forever at BNRC.org/donate.



STEVENS GLEN BRIDGE UPDATE

If you've walked to the overlook platform at Stevens Glen lately, you've no doubt noticed that one of the bridges needs repair. After several severe thunderstorms over the summer, it was overrun by the swollen creek. Rocks, gravel, and wood debris got caught under and even on the bridge itself. As a result, part of the creek now runs around the bridge rather than under it.

The fix isn't as simple as removing the debris to the streambank; in fact, conservation laws forbid it. Proposals to repair or—more likely—replace the bridge are being sought. Replacement might require re-routing the trail to a better crossing. We'll keep you posted.