



The Northern Rivers Land Trust *Newsletter*

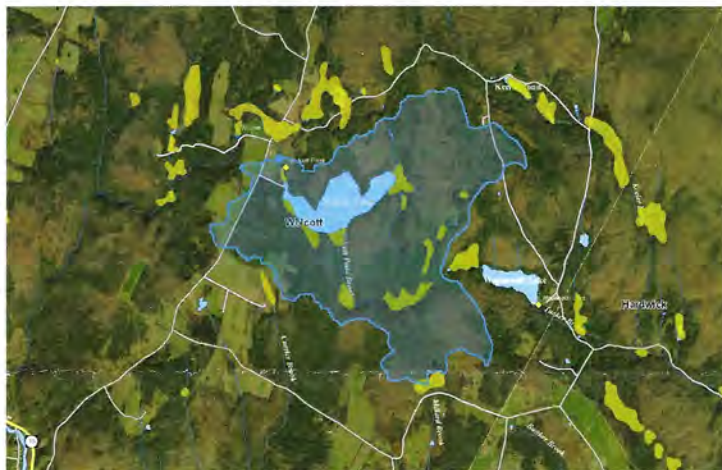
No. 19

www.NorthernRiversLandTrust.org

May 2019

Sterling's Farley Brown Studying Wolcott Pond Watershed for NRLT

NRLT has contracted with Farley Brown, Sterling College Ecology Faculty, to lead a study of the Wolcott Pond watershed. Our objective is to conserve and protect Wolcott Pond, its shoreline and watershed area, as well as some wild and undeveloped lands surrounding the watershed. Assisted by some of her students, Farley has researched historical land use and collected property deeds of the area. Members of her team prepared an inventory of natural communities including wildlife habitat last summer.



Wolcott Pond watershed enclosed in blue line



Wolcott Pond



June Cook signing easement agreement on her 94-acre parcel in Craftsbury. Also shown: NRLT trustees Steve Young & John Elwell. Craftsbury town clerk Effie Brown looks on.

June Cook Craftsbury Parcel Conserved in December

Our November 2018 newsletter described the 95-acre parcel between North Craftsbury Road and VT Route 14 that June Cook was about to conserve with the NRLT. The easement closed on December 16, making it NRLT's first conservation easement in Craftsbury.

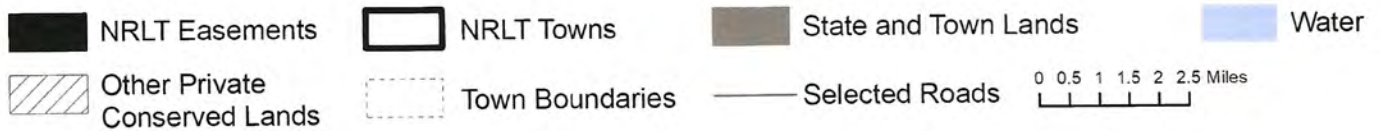
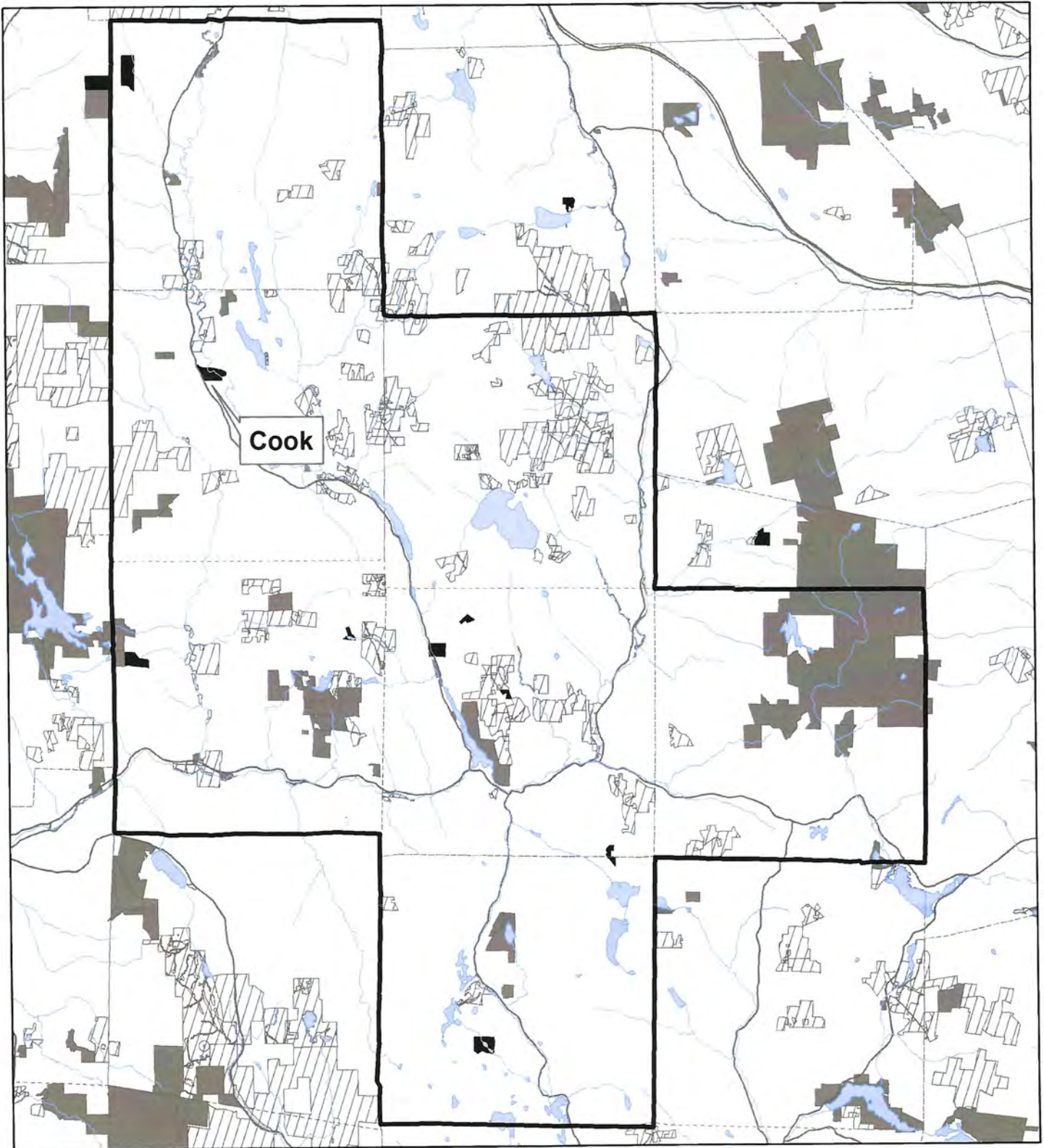
Sunday, July 7 at 3 pm will be a grand celebration of the Cook easement. The property is located on North Craftsbury Road with a half mile of Black River frontage. Park by the cabin on the north side of the road, where we will have terrific snacks followed by a riverside walk, guided by forester Ross Morgan. There is also an easy access by the bridge for kayaks and canoes to further enjoy this incredible river and landscape so bring a boat if you would like. **Rain date is Sunday, July 14.**

Elinor Osborn to Address NRLT Annual Meeting Sunday, June 16

All are invited to NRLT's annual meeting on **Sunday, June 16, 7:00 p.m.** at Fellowship Hall in Greensboro. After a short business meeting, **Elinor Osborn**, renowned Craftsbury photographer and naturalist, will show her *stunning* photos of owls in our area. Elinor was voted *Citizen Scientist of the Year* by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies.

Terrific refreshments and great company guaranteed!

Conserved Lands in the Northern Rivers Land Trust Region



About the NRLT

The NRLT is a partnership of people working together to ensure that, as Vermont changes, rural land in our region is not lost to development. Using legal tools called “conservation easements” or “grants of development rights,” the NRLT helps landowners to voluntarily limit development while keeping the land open for forestry, farming, and recreation. The landowner decides whether to allow public access.

Although not ordinarily reducing property taxes, easement donations qualify as charitable contributions for federal and state income and estate taxes. They can be deducted from adjusted gross income (AGI) at up to 50% of AGI per annum, and spread over 15 years.

We work with landowners who love their land and want to see it conserved. We have received support from the Woodbury, Green Mountain, and Craftsbury Community Funds. We partner with the Vermont Land Trust. But mainly we rely on funds raised from residents and friends of the towns we serve. In 2018, 89 households donated a total of \$12,365.

We talk regularly with potential conservators, and incur expenses for appraisals, surveys and stewardship. You can help by sending a check to *NRLT, Box 112, Hardwick, 05843*.

NRLT Conservation Easements			
<i>(listed by date of closing)</i>			
Landowner	Date	Town	Acres
Andrew Meyer	1997*	Hardwick	21
Paul Cillo	Dec. 2007	Hardwick	18
M.J. Dexter	Feb. 2010	Wolcott	94
Heartbeet Lifesharing	Dec. 2011	Hardwick	75
Pat Gahagan	Dec. 2011	Woodbury	93
David Ely	Aug. 2012	Wolcott	22
Lisa Lammi	Oct. 2012	Hardwick / Woodbury	33
Chris & Louisa Martin	Dec. 2014	Glover	35
Allison Van Akkeren	Dec. 2015	Lowell	87
Henry Coe	Dec. 2015	Albany	136
Bob Shay	Sept. 2016	Stannard	64
June Cook	Dec. 2018	Craftsbury	94
TOTAL			774
*first conserved with Greensboro Land Trust, transferred to NRLT in 2008			

NRLT Board of Trustees

Susan Houston, Craftsbury, chair
 Steve Young, Wolcott, vice-chair
 Jack Travelstead, Woodbury, co-vice-chair
 Marie LaPre' Grabon, Hardwick, secretary
 Diana Peduzzi, Woodbury, treasurer
 Paul Cillo, Hardwick; John Elwell, Craftsbury;
 Cate Garvey, Wolcott; Clive Gray,
 Greensboro; Bob Hawk, Walden;
 Steve Meyer, Hardwick; Ralph Monticello, Eden

- NRLT Advisory Committee -

Liz Chehayl, Albany; Jad Daley, Hardwick;
 Judy Davis, Craftsbury; Jennifer Lucas, Burlington;
 David McMath, Walden; Ann Ingerson, Craftsbury;
 Angela Ross, Albany; Susan Sawyer, Woodbury;
 Bill Wereley, Brookfield

NRLT Board Holds Retreat in Walden, April 26

The NRLT Board shared a potluck, lots of laughter and hard work at their annual retreat on April 26. A brief board meeting approved investing the bulk of NRLT reserves with the Vermont Community Foundation. Discussing future goals of our land trust, updating the strategic plan for the next 5 years, and training new (and old!) trustees on how to write baseline documentation reports occupied our morning session. The afternoon session tackled policy issues, the Land Trust Alliance accreditation process, and how to expand planned giving options for interested members. Trustees left energized and fully committed to being the best regional land trust in Vermont!



Greensboro's Green Mountain Monastery, being conserved with NRLT's sister organization, Greensboro Land Trust

WHY ARE OUR VERMONT WINTERS SO LONG AND COLD?

By Steve Young

It's late April, the snow is still knee deep in the woods. The last time we've seen bare ground was at the end of October. The ponds froze over then, too, and likely won't be ice-free until May. Close to six months of winter, but we're at least past the possibility of 30° below. In a few weeks, of course, the temperatures will reach the 80s; and the leaves, and biting bugs, will be out. The only thing temperate about our climate is its name.

Many years ago, we kept a weather station on a hill in Wolcott. I analyzed several years of data and found that we could be considered as lying within the subarctic zone, where no more than four months have a mean temperature above 50° Fahrenheit (10° C.) In the late 1960s, May averaged a degree or so below 50°. It might no longer be true with our (slightly) warmer current climate. But we are at the southern edge of the vast domain of boreal forest, characterized by moose, spruce forests, and, in the old days, woodland caribou. In Europe, you'd have to go up to Lapland, and well away from the seacoast, to find a similar climate.

NRLT's heartland lies just south of North Latitude 45 degrees, closer to the Equator than to the North Pole. We're a bit south of Venice, about the same level as the Italian Riviera, where palm trees flourish and they grow oranges. No citrus here in Vermont—why?

Actually, our northeastern climate isn't really unique, or anomalous, but, to find a similar situation, we need to look at little known—to us—areas in the Eastern Hemisphere: North Korea and the Russian Far East. What we have in common with Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, and Hyesan are locations along the eastern margins of huge continental land masses that extend northward into the Arctic. These locales, like ours, lie in the path of prevailing north-westerly winds that sweep down from the 'cold poles' of the continents. These are inland locations, far from the moderating influence of seas—even ice-bound seas—and where temperatures of 60° or 70° below zero (F) are usual. The air, passing over cold, dry, land, gains only a little heat as it moves southeastward, so continental winter climates are cold. On the other hand, dry land warms up much more rapidly than ocean under the influence of the rising spring sun, so the transition from winter to summer is abrupt in regions of continental climate.

The opposite situation occurs on the western edges of the continents, where winds from over the ocean moderate both summer and winter temperatures. The coastal regions of British Columbia, with mild winters and cool, moist

summers demonstrate this, as does much of Europe.

The distinction between continental and maritime climates is fundamental, but it isn't the whole story, and the analogy between northern New England and the Russian Far East is only partial. The northwest winds sweeping down on Vladivostok have traversed deserts, arid steppes, and mountain ranges that have squeezed all the moisture from the frigid air, so clear, cold winter weather with only modest snowfall is typical. Our winter weather in New England is more of a mixed bag; while we have our frigid winds coming down from Alaska and the Canadian Arctic, they encounter only the low hills of the Canadian Shield, and they pass over Hudson Bay and, often, the upper Great Lakes, picking up moisture. We all know the slow, steady buildup of snow here, inch by inch, on cold gray days of winter. And we often get the snowy edges of the temperate storms that plaster Boston.

The warming trends of March and April are offset by the amount of energy absorbed by the melting of the deep snow pack; we tend to get a 'bonus' month or so of winter each year at the time we least want it. The late April sun is as high and powerful as it is in August, but we're still waiting for the first bare patch on the south-facing slopes and longing for crocuses and snowdrops. Meanwhile, far to the north of us in the snow-free British Isles, the fields, even the trees, are green, and daffodils are passing by.

If you are a gardener, you'll be aware that the hardiness map is equivocal as to whether we are in Zone 3, where the minimum winter temperature is below -30° F, and zone 4, where it's below -20°. It's not really a clear distinction; on those frigid, sparkingly clear January nights, it's quite common to get -35° in a little hollow to which the cold air drains and have it ten or fifteen degrees warmer—or less cold—on a ridgetop a few hundred yards away. Here's the continental climate in action again. A frigid mass of dry, cloudless air has developed in the Arctic and spread down to northern Vermont, encountering no ice-free ocean to modify it. The clear skies allow energy to radiate away into space and the chilled air to pool in the frost pockets.

Why, if the global climate is warming, do we have to wait until May for spring, and why did the 2018 winter get started in early November? If there's an answer to that, it's too complicated (and too little understood) to go into detail here. Let's just say, first, that we need to avoid equating odd weather patterns with the much longer-term alterations in climate. Every year is different, and we've had a couple of especially long winters lately. But, if you ask one of our weather stations about the trend in heating degree days—a good measure of the severity of winters—over the years, you'll find that there is a marked warming trend. It's not impressive compared to Alaska, where spring breakup is regularly occurring weeks earlier than at the end of the 20th Century. Global warming isn't uniform throughout the world, and we in portions of the North Atlantic region are not getting our fair share of it—for good or ill—yet.