

Wonalancet Out Door Club Newsletter

April 2018



Caring for the Sandwich Range since 1892

The Future of the White Mountain National Forest Part II David Govatski

The first part of this article discussed the creation of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) starting with the public campaign for forest conservation in the early 1900's and the passage of the Weeks Act in 1911. This legislation allowed the acquisition of private land from willing sellers for the public good. The stated purpose of the Weeks Act was the protection of the headwater forests of navigable streams.

The first tract of land acquired on the White Mountain Purchase Unit was the 7,022-acre Bertram Pike Tract in Benton, NH which was purchased on January 2, 1914. Land acquisition proceeded rapidly and by May 16, 1918 an amazing 360,638 acres had been acquired. That is the date that President Woodrow Wilson issued Proclamation 1449, formally designating the White Mountain National Forest. In 1918 we were embroiled in World War I, often called the "war to end all wars". We were also in a global pandemic, the 1918 Flu that killed millions of people and perhaps as much as 5% of the global population.

As we approach the WMNF's Centennial the forest consists of 807,008 acres of land in both New Hampshire and Maine. This is a remarkable achievement considering what the land looked like a

century ago. This land is owned collectively by the people of the United States through the federal government and is managed by the US Forest Service. The WMNF is one of 154 national forests in the United States and Puerto Rico.

The WMNF is somewhat unique in the national forest system in that it was created by the active efforts of the public who continue working closely with the agency. There are 41, so called, Weeks Act Forests. But no other national forest comes close to matching what was accomplished by citizens then and now for the WMNF. This public involvement continues today in the work of volunteers and organizations like the WODC and others. New Englanders have a tradition of working together and compromising for the greater good. You do not often see this elsewhere. As we know, this relationship can be rocky at times.

The Greatest Good

As citizens celebrating the WMNF Centennial we should not just look in the rear view mirror at the past, or out the side window at the present. We need to look through the windshield to envision the future of WMNF. Gifford Pinchot was the first Chief of the US Forest Service. In 1905 he wrote what became the mission statement for the National Forests: "where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question shall always be answered from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Defining the "greatest good" in the "lands of many uses" is challenging. There are many conflicting

demands. How many ski areas, how many trails, how much timber harvesting? These are examples of the challenge in defining what is the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run. Fortunately, we have over a century of collective experience in deciding what the greatest good is. Sometimes we were right and sometimes we were wrong. We can look back and reflect on what worked and what did not. Did predator control work? Was it wise to preserve areas of primeval forest? We can answer those questions based on our experience. But the greatest good changes over time.



Newsletter Quiz: *Who is this Winter Hiker in Zealand Valley???*

The future presents a host of challenges. Some of these challenges are natural while others are cultural. We have a good idea what the natural challenges are what threatens forest health. We have faced threats and challenges in the past. We won some and lost the battle on others such as the demise of the American chestnut tree or the loss of passenger pigeons and the Carolina parakeet.

Natural Challenges

Climate change is generally accepted by scientists as the single greatest threat we face. Whether you believe it is a natural cycle as described by the Serbian astronomer and mathematician Milutin Milankovitch or is influenced by man matters less than knowing we are in a period of rapid change.

In the Northeast, climate change means warmer winters, less snow and erratic weather. For wildlife it means that food and habitat will change and that disease and other factors will make life more difficult. One example is the rapid decline of the moose population from winter ticks. Another example is the increasing number of forest fires that are occurring in November when we used to have snow on the ground. In winter, the White Mountains have a snow-based tourism economy. With less snow for snowmobiling will we see increased pressure for ATV use on the bare trails?

In the White Mountains we are very fortunate to have plenty of clean water. This is not true elsewhere as aquifers in the Southwest dry up. For some large cities, such as Miami and New Orleans, rising sea level threatens both drinking water and buildings. Previous research has indicated that over 13 million Americans will be displaced by rising sea levels in the next century. How will this affect our WMNF? We will probably become a climate refugee resettlement region because of our sparse population and availability of drinking water. We need to continue to protect our vital water resource.

Climate change can affect our food supply in both positive and negative ways. Longer growing seasons would be welcomed by many. But will we have more erratic weather characterized by more frequent cold snaps and heat waves? Warmer winters will hurt the forest products industry. Much logging is done in the winter on frozen ground. Logging on muddy ground is hard on the land, equipment and the sawmills.

Cultural Challenges and Threats

Gallup Polling did a survey at end of 2017 asking Americans what concerned them. The most pressing problem cited was bad government followed by health care concerns. The environment was not in the top

eight list of concerns expressed in this survey:
<https://www.cheatsheet.com/culture/worries-americans-poll.html/?a=viewall>

Bad government is a broad category and may reflect the way Congress works, or the leadership of a given administration. As we all know, our government is composed of the judicial, legislative and executive branches. The executive branch includes the President and all of the federal departments. Sometimes it seems we are watching a pendulum swing from what appears to be a social experiment to a robber baron oligarchy.

What are some of the threats that may affect public lands? For WODC readers, one issue is the future of Wilderness. That issue is being played out in a remote corner of Alaska on the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. A 12-mile road is proposed to cross a Congressionally designated Wilderness to allow access to King Cove, a town of 925 people. Other alternatives for travel exist. The Department of the Interior is supporting construction of the road. Many opponents feel this will become a precedent setting decision for other designated Wilderness Areas, including those in the White Mountains. We used to think that Wilderness protection as legislated by Congress and signed by the President was permanent.

Another issue that certain members of Congress propose is to give control of federal public lands to the states so that the states can manage the land. This is a perennial favorite with some in Congress, especially in a few of the western states. Most states don't have the resources to manage large tracts of land so the next step is for the states to allow corporations to manage the land. The process is called privatization and is being heard more frequently now in our nation's capital. Turning over federal lands such as the WMNF to the states of New Hampshire and Maine is not yet an issue but may be in the future.

Is the natural world less important to people today? That is the big question that we cannot answer with certainty. Richard Louv's book the "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Kids from Nature Deficit Disorder" has helped to awaken us to the problem of children and young adults not experiencing nature. The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

In my opening I mentioned the 1918 Flu Epidemic. Today we are facing an opioid epidemic that is killing about 65,000 Americans a year, more than died in the entire Viet-Nam War. The 1918 Flu epidemic killed mainly healthy young adults and today we are seeing large numbers of a young population succumbing to this epidemic. Why do people take these terrible drugs? Are we headed for a dystopian future? Can the natural world help heal some of those addicted?

Envisioning the future

I hope that we do not face that dark dystopian future, whether it be manifested in the drug epidemic or the endless cycle of conflict in the Middle East. We should all work to make things better. Our role is to work towards a place in harmony with the natural world around us. The need is greater than ever to help share the burden of caring for the land that we love, whether it be on our farm, our forests, or our national forest.

We can make responsible and informed choices. We can volunteer for trail projects or helping our friends and neighbors. We can help elect people who care about the future.

As you reflect on the past century of having this White Mountain National Forest in our backyard, think about the future of it. How can we preserve and protect it? How can we make it better through restoration and promoting resilience? This is our challenge.

David Govatski retired from the US Forest Service in 2005 after a 33-year career. He works today as a naturalist and is involved in the Centennial of the White Mountain National Forest exhibition at the Museum of the White Mountains in Plymouth, NH. The exhibition opens on May 16th. The views expressed are entirely his own.

Annual Meeting

The 2018 WODC Annual Meeting is Sunday August 19 at 6:30PM in the Chapel. There will be a Potluck in the Grove at 5:00PM.

Peakbagger Extraordinaire

On August 21st of last year, our very own Mike Bromberg became the first person on record to climb the 200 highest peaks of what Alaskans sneeringly call “the lower 48”, and what geographers call the Contiguous US. This list contains all peaks above 13,684’ in elevation. (Just like poor old Sandwich Mt. at 3,993’, I can only imagine the peaks at 13,683’ and below, green with envy and plant growth, yearning for a little geological push to send them upward.)

August 21st was not just a random date; it allowed Mike to celebrate the completion with a group of friends on 13,745’ Fremont Peak in the Wind River Range of Wyoming, on August 21 during the total eclipse which was visible for about two minutes on the summit. I feel that this is fitting for Mike, who has a good feel for the dramatic and is a lighting designer in his spare time.



Mt Eisenhower summit cairn during the second year of Mike's intense pursuit of NH 4000 Footers. From left to right Bill Jones, "Joe" Corkery, Mike Bromberg, and Dave Agans

Mike started peakbagging (the sport of climbing peaks grouped on a list) in 1971 in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. He completed the 48 NH 4000-footers in 1973, and continued with the 4000-Footers of New England in 1980, the 100 Highest of New England in 1981, the Adirondack 46 High Peaks in 1982, and the Catskill 35 High Peaks in 1988. He has also completed all those lists in calendar Winter. In 2005, he became the fifth person to

complete the NH 4000-Footers in every month of the year (a pursuit known as “The Grid”), and is the only one on record to summit each NH 4000-Footer at Midnight (1992), and again at Midnight in Winter (1999). As to these latter unique bags, Mike writes: “The midnight quest began when fraternity hiking buddy Jim "JC" Campbell and I were camped at the former Isolation Shelter, and were still awake at 11 PM. We decided to hike the one mile to Isolation by headlamp, arrived at midnight, and that began a list. The rules that I established were that I had to touch the summit between 12:00 and 12:59 AM (“the midnight hour”, to allow for delays getting there from camp), and I had to follow all camping rules in existence at the time of the climb. I got really good at finding legal campsites near or right on most summits. A rule change by the Forest Service allowing winter camping above treeline as long as it was on at least two feet of snow greatly facilitated this quest.”

While we think of Mike as our very own, wedded to WODC; Mike is actually more of a hiking polygamist, and he’d probably list his primary affiliation with the Vulgarian Ramblers, of which he is a founder. The original Vulgarians were a New York-based group which pioneered nude climbing in the ‘60s. (this undoubtedly limited them in both altitudes and seasons, so they stuck to the Gunks in summer.) For authoritative information on the Vulgarian Ramblers, I went to their website (www.vulgarianramblers.org): “The Vulgarian Ramblers are a small band of climbers loosely associated with the Delta Tau Delta fraternity house at MIT. Our unofficial leader is Mike Bromberg, a.k.a. Foo’ball. We get together each year to climb in the Sierra, Cascades, Rocky Mountains, or elsewhere in the West. However, the club was founded and is still active in New England’s beautiful Appalachian mountain range. Most of us could be characterized as “peakbaggers”. However, the Vulgarian summit aesthetic probably comes closer to defining the club than anything else. Look for us sprawled across the summit blocks enjoying gourmet delicacies ranging from marinated artichoke hearts to mandarin oranges in light syrup.”

Being a coward myself, I wondered if Mike was ever scared on any of these mountains, many of which make our 4,000 footers look like walks in the park.

“Yes, I was often scared, most recently right on the giddy summit of Fremont. I have great respect for heights (that's just a couple of clicks below "extreme terror"), and I don't like being on cliff edges. The scariest episode was the descent from the unnamed 13,722' peak south of Thunder Pyramid in Colorado. I had climbed a steep couloir full of loose rock to get to the ridge, and was descending that same couloir. I was standing on a boulder the size and shape of a large air conditioner, trying to figure out the safest way down a stretch, when the boulder broke off and started plummeting down a 2000 foot ravine. My brain must have gone into double-speed mode, because it seemed like slow motion as I thought "Gee, I'd better step off on that ledge over there" and did so. At that point full-speed action resumed, and I watched the boulder hurtle down the ravine, ending in a Road-Runner-esque puff of smoke at the bottom. Then I calmly stepped back onto the route and continued down.” But, despite this calm, Mike later emailed me, “I am starting to have my fill of scary, difficult climbs. I have one more tough roped technical Colorado peak (Coxcomb) to finish my Colorado 200 Highest list; that's scheduled for next summer with fraternity buddy Schmed who was on the Fremont trip. . . .Around here, I'm going after the NH 100 Highest (3 to go) and 3000 footers (14 to go), VT 3500 Footers (2 to go), VT 3000 Footers and 100 Highest (about 40 to go). Most of what's left involves bushwhacking and/or difficult access via 4WD roads and private land, but they're still much less difficult and scary than the Colorado 13500 Footers.”

It's occurred to me to suggest to Mike that maybe his bags are full. But, knowing Mike the hiker and Mike the cartographer, and having learned a little about Mike the engineer and Mike the theatrical lighting designer (actor and rehearsal pianist), I realize that Mike's bags always have room for more.

Go, Foo'ball!

- Susan Goldhor

Answer to Newsletter Quiz: The Canada Lynx was photographed on a wildlife camera on February 27, 2018 off the A-Z Trail in Zealand.



Captain Neal Brook on land purchased by George and Nancy Bates to complete the relocation of McCrillis Path to Whiteface Intervale.

Remembering George Bates

George Bates, unstoppable guardian of trails and wild lands in Whiteface Intervale, died there on February 20, 2018, peacefully in his sleep. He was 86. George will be sadly missed by friends and neighbors, but his work lives on. He secured access, including parking, for all three trails into the National Forest from Whiteface Intervale. He also bought and conserved prime backcountry skiing lands, then personally cut miles of ski trail – including a recently opened link between Whiteface and Wonalancet.

George was born in Boston in 1932. His youth was apparently blessed with the same qualities as his later life: athleticism, intellect and focus. As an undergraduate at Harvard he wrestled, played football, and graduated with honors. In 1958 he earned his MBA – again from Harvard, again with honors – and plunged into the business world, founding, managing

and advising a range of companies. He also plunged into the conservation world, working to protect land and build trails, first in his home town of Weston, Massachusetts, then across New England. As much as George accomplished in Whiteface, it is only a small fraction of his total achievement.



Brett St. Clair photo

George and his wife, Nancy, were drawn to the Sandwich Range, as many of us were, by the opportunity to ski and hike in these unspoiled mountains. George's explorations soon led him to the haunting and lonely "Lost" Pass between Waterville and Sandwich. He guided a group of WODC skiers over the old trails of Lost Pass and down into Waterville Valley. When some of the party found themselves floundering in unexpectedly tractionless snow, he rescued them with his special "Jack Rabbit" wax. (The next year he was asked to teach a WODC ski waxing clinic.)

Threats to trails that come out of the National Forest onto private land have been a perennial frustration for everyone who has faced them, including WODC, AMC, and the WMNF. Some 30 years ago, George turned to this problem in his own Whiteface Intervale

neighborhood. He recognized that it is not everyone's cup of tea to – as a New Hampshire poet wrote – "live in a house by the side of the road, and be a friend to man." George engaged his neighbors and the Forest Service. After "only" a few years he succeeded in relocating the lower portion of the Flat Mountain Pond Trail and the McCrillis Trail. This plan relieved the unwilling trail abutters of their burden, and moved the two trails to a new route on George and Nancy's land, protected by an easement. Characteristic of George's work, the new trail doesn't feel like the boring result of a necessary compromise; it's actually a little scenic adventure, a real improvement over the old way.

It took another twenty years to secure the last of the unprotected trails – the McCrillis *Path*. This WODC trail led from Wonalancet to Whiteface Intervale over an ancient road that passed right by the front door of McCrillis's inn. This feature of the layout was, of course, very convenient for the McCrillis family and their guests. But the inn closed and eventually a new owner found the stream of hikers to be a terrible nuisance. WODC's efforts to keep the trail open only aggravated the situation. George tried to mediate, but tensions rose over the years until both the club and the landowner were contemplating legal action. Disaster was averted when the club accepted that it had been stymied by a classic immovable object, and surrendered. We stopped maintaining that end of the trail and posted a sign to warn hikers away. And so it might have remained forever . . . except that George was unwilling to give up. And George was an unstoppable force. He and Nancy purchased a strategically situated parcel of land, which also happened to be home to spectacular pools, flumes and cataracts along Captain Neal Brook. They made the backcountry portion of the parcel a nature preserve, protected it with a conservation easement, and relocated the McCrillis Path to this new and more scenic route.

So George solved an ancient paradox: the unstoppable force is not unstoppable because it can move immovable objects, but because it has the patience to wait for opportunity, and the vision to find a detour that was the better route all along.

Thanks, George, for everything.

- Doug McVicar

Spring Trails Report

The only consistency left to winter is variability. This winter started mild, morphed to snowy, followed by very severe cold, warmed up enough to seem to be ending, then some Northeasters dropped a few more feet of snow. The current seasonal snow total of 87 inches provided some good skiing. The deep snow at higher elevations should last well into May.

Our Annual Maintenance will be challenging this season. The drenching October 2017 storms delivered 7.8 inches of rain and high winds. We patrolled most of our trails after the storms and cleared many, but certainly not all, of the blowdowns. The damage profile of these storms is similar to Hurricane Irene. In both cases WODC trails did not sustain the damage that locations further north in the forest experienced.

We are considering at a small project on the lower section of Blueberry Ledge Cutoff for a volunteer trails

day. There are no plans for a major trail reconstruction project this summer. We will again hire members of Jed's crew to help us with Annual Maintenance.

As usual we'll host 4 Volunteer Trailwork days:

May 19 (WODC Spring Trails Day),
 June 2 (National Trails Day),
 July 21 (New Hampshire Trails Day), and
 September 22 (National Public Lands Day).

We'll meet at the Ferncroft Parking Lot at 8:30AM on all our Trailwork Saturdays. Bring water, food, gloves, and clothing appropriate for the weather. Most of all, be prepared to spend a day outdoors deriving satisfaction from a job well done.

If you want more information on any of our trail projects contact Jack 323-8913, jackw@g4com.com or Fred 284-6919.

Trails Chair, Jack Waldron

WODC ORDER FORM

(Shameless Commerce and Stocking Stuffer Division)

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
	WODC Patch	\$3	
	WODC Map and Guide Members	\$6	
	Non-Members	\$8	
	Unfolded WODC Map and Guide	\$9	
	3 or more unfolded Maps - each	\$7	
	WODC Historical Collection(CD)	\$25	
	"Serene Green" Cotton T-Shirt (Old Logo) Specify M, L, or X-L _____	\$19	
	Synthetic Navy Blue T-Shirt (New Logo design at wodc.org) Specify M, L, or X-L _____	\$19	
	Memberships Pathfinder _____	\$15	
	Steward _____	\$25	
	Trail Blazer _____	\$50	
	Five Year _____	\$250	

Editor Emeritus's Ramble: One of my favorite trails is through the Big Pines Natural Area. (Yes, it's not one of "our" trails, but I'm open minded.) I love to look at, lean against, and admire the biggest pine (or, at least, what I think is the biggest pine). What I don't like to think about is that this area is a small, sad remnant of a massive white pine forest that stretched from northern Connecticut up to Nova Scotia, until European settlers came and cut it down. There's nothing unique about this; the history of our nation's landscape is a repetitive tale of bigger, grander, more numerous trees and animals that exist now (if they exist at all) as scattered and threatened genetic reservoirs. What I've been reading about, however, is the role that this huge forest of massive pines played in sparking the Revolutionary War and, more importantly, in winning it. (And, for those of you wishing to know more about this history, I recommend *American Canopy: Trees, Forests & the Making of a Nation* by Eric Rutkow.)

In 1691 King William III issued a royal charter in which (as a minor provision) "all trees of the Diameter of Twenty Four inches and upwards" not on private land, were reserved for British navy masts. (This provision explains why so many boards in colonial homes were 23 inches wide no matter the width of the tree; discretion being the better part of valor, or at least of resistance.) Many desirable trees were marked with the three strokes of the King's Broad Arrow, but it will surprise no one that these vast woodlands proved almost impossible to police. The crown despatched surveyors to the Colony; some corrupt and some hard-working and honest. It's difficult to say which category was more irksome to the colonists. But most infuriating were subsequent acts of parliament which took possession of all mast-sized trees — even those on private land. While mast tree seizure by the crown was not *the* cause of the revolution, it was *a* cause.

Of course, when the revolution started, the shipment of masts to England ceased. And this threw England back onto their pre-colonial source of Baltic firs for masts and ship building. Not only was Baltic shipping politically vulnerable, but the Riga firs were smaller so that masts were composite or "made"; i.e., weaker. As Rutkow says, "Robert Albion, one of the greatest naval historians, has argued that 'the lack of masts deserves more of a place than it has yet received among the various reasons for England's temporary decline in sea power' during the American Revolution". What Rutkow (who's written a terrific book) doesn't say is that the move to Baltic timber probably weakened the British navy far more, and far earlier, than can be assigned to inferior masts. Many mycologists believe that *Serpula lacrimans* (aka dry rot) entered England via Baltic wood. Although dry rot has destroyed many an English home, its greatest damage was to ships, which were often so riddled with this fungus that they sank in harbor, causing great anguish to the sailors on board and (somewhat less personally) to Samuel Pepys, who was Secretary of the Navy during the worst of this. Pepys, who predated the Revolution by close to a century, experienced early shipments of colonial masts and, in 1666, wrote in his diary, "There is also the very good news come of four New England ships come home safe to Falmouth with masts for the King; which is a blessing mighty unexpected, and without which . . . we must have failed the next year."

England was the greatest naval power of its day, but this power was dependent upon strong masts. Deprived of our white pines (in fact, we supplied them to the French, who were allies), they faltered. And that's how our Great Pines helped us to win the Revolutionary War.

Susan Goldhor



Wonalancet Out Door Club
HCR 64, Box 248
Wonalancet, NH 03897