



# Tidings of the Turtle



*Captain Sandy's mark from the collections of the Maine Historical Society*

**Francis Small Heritage Trust Newsletter – August 2015**

## Who are our hardest working volunteers?

Who are the hardest working volunteers for the Francis Small Heritage Trust? They just might be the families of beavers who have transformed ordinary streams into high-value wetlands on the Sawyer Mountain Highlands property. They are not only making a home for themselves, but have also created havens for waterfowl such as herons, wood ducks, pintail ducks, kingfishers, and red-wing blackbirds that regularly frequent the area. Over the winter, the family of beavers may run a free hotel as they share their lodge with muskrats, mice, and other animals. Their extensive network of dams has made homes for many turtles, snakes, fish, and frogs. Deer, moose, bobcat, and coyotes are all attracted to the water. Visit our website to view photos and videos of many of these animals.

Beavers are second only to humans in modifying the face of the earth. But when beavers create these wetlands, wildlife is not the only beneficiary. Beaver ponds slow the flow of storm water, store the water, and recharge groundwater resources. The water you drink from your well today may at one time have been saved by one of our local beaver



*A beaver adds a log to the dam giving credence to the saying "Busy as a beaver."*

dams! In times of drought, the beaver pond may be the only source of water for many forms of wildlife.

### Crimes against Nature

Earlier this year, FSHT directors noticed a dramatic drop in the water level in the beaver flowage off of the Shaving Hill Road in Limington. Investigation revealed that persons unknown had illegally removed some of the dams and had even installed a wire fence to prevent the beavers from repairing their habitat. Animals suffered as the wetland was drained of millions of gallons of water that was wasted as it flowed unimpeded downstream. Volunteers removed the fence and installed wildlife cameras to monitor the beavers' progress on restoring the dam. These cameras showed just how active the area is as it recorded all of the pictures on this page as well as many of the photos on our website. However one surprise was photographs of a man with a hoe and sledgehammer walking on one of

the dams. The cameras apparently had a deterrent effect as no more destruction has been observed.

While there are no established trails around the Sawyer Mountain beaver flowage, it is possible to walk through the woods or travel by canoe or kayak to enjoy the solitude of the area. Elsewhere, volunteers are working on the trail around the Heath at the Cornish/Limerick boundary where another beaver flowage can be observed.



*A deer prepares to walk across the dam.*



*A coyote searches for prey on the beaver dam.*

## Sign work

FSHT is focusing on signs this summer and fall. At the end of June, the Limerick Girl Scout Troop helped the Trust on Sawyer Mountain. We hiked from the Limerick parking lot to the Limington trailhead, stopping at the summit of the mountain for lunch. Along the way, nine 12-13 year-olds and their two leaders took down broken signs, put up a few new ones that we had made, and loosened the screws on others to give the trees room to grow. The Girl Scouts have been painting new signs for the trail, and will help put them up in September. You may notice the new, brighter colors for the turtle signs; we hope you agree these will be easier to see!

On the Bald Ledge property in Porter, the Trust is flagging a new trail to the summit that will avoid the area that was logged recently. The Forest Society of Maine holds the easement on this property, so the Trust will obtain FSM's permission for the trail location before we cut the new trail and add signs.

The Trust is also working on making signs for the Sisson Easement on the Limerick/Cornish line. A new trail around the



*Limerick Girl Scouts Shelby Biggs and Allie Finch point to the new red trail marker that they just installed on the Smith trail on Sawyer Mountain.*

Heath was cut last fall; our plans include trail markers, an entrance sign, and a kiosk at the parking area.

Finally, the Trust will be adding signage this summer to the Muriel Poulin Preserve in Limerick.



## The Trust begins its 25th year with a public conversation about the future of our communities

Those of you who receive this newsletter already know the Trust and what we do, and have provided generous support for our work over the years. But many members of your community don't know who we are....and we don't know what they think about the future needs of rural towns in southern Maine. The Trust is beginning a new initiative to broaden its base of supporters and to elicit new ideas and generate new energy for projects that further the Trust's work; we are beginning a conversation with residents of the nine towns where we operate. We have asked representatives of town governments, planning boards, historical societies, school systems, area non-profits, small businesses, and a health care organization to meet with some local residents, landowners, farmers, and foresters to come together and discuss what they think the Trust could

do to protect, promote, and utilize the best features of our communities. We will be able to accommodate up to 50 participants, and have invited people with a wide range of interests and points of view.

This conversation will be held in Cornish at the Cornish Inn on the afternoon of Sunday, September 13. It will be facilitated by Scott Collard, a landscape architect and Parsonsfield resident who has worked with many communities dealing with the issues of changing infrastructure and resources. The Trust's Executive Director, Alison Truesdale, and Trust Board members will also be present to listen and answer any questions participants might have about our interests, activities and resources.

And our expected outcomes from listening?

- We'll learn more about what people think about what is important to their communities—and this will make us more effective.
- We'll identify some projects that could make sense for us to pursue... and partners who will collaborate with us to work on those projects.
- Local residents will learn something about us...and can continue the conversations they think are important with us and within their communities.
- We'll tap into the creativity and energy of other people...some of the most important resources for our work.

We will keep you posted on what happens.





## Past Land for Maine's Future bonds have benefited our local communities.

Maine residents may be aware of the political struggle that has been playing out over the last several years over the release of bonds for the Land for Maine's Future Program. In the past, the Francis Small Heritage Trust has used LMF funds to help purchase parts of the Sawyer Mountain Highlands and understands the importance of this popular program for securing public access to Maine's most valued land. All of the photographs in this newsletter were taken on properties whose purchase was made possible by the support of the Maine people through the LMF bonding process. FSHT does not have any current projects dependent on the current bonds. While an exhaustive account of the situation would fill several newsletters, there are certain facts that should be kept in mind as readers follow the story in the papers:

The Land for Maine's Future Program was begun in 1987. Several LMF bond issues have been approved by the people of Maine since then -- each time, by decisive margins (state-wide as well as locally).

LMF project proposals must meet rigorous criteria even to be consid-

*The map to the right shows the Sawyer Mountain Highlands in Limerick and Limington, much of which was purchased with LMF funding; and the Sisson easement in Cornish and Limerick.*

*At the top of the page, a moose browses in the early morning in the Sawyer Mountain Highlands.*



Please accept my donation of \_\_\_\_\_ to aid in the educational and conservation activities of the Trust.

Please send me a free hiking map.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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ered by the LMF Board, and then they must compete for funding with other worthy proposals. Land appraisals must meet the highest professional standards. Purchase prices cannot be less or more than the appraised values.

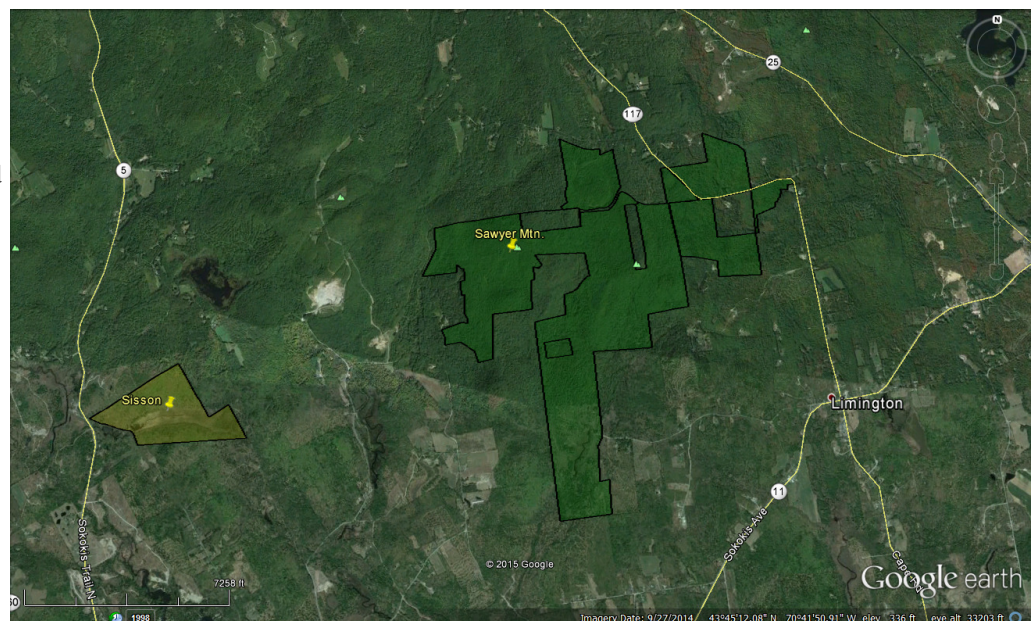
The State of Maine's website says that LMF projects protect "mountain summits; shorelines of rivers, lakes, and ponds; coastal islands; beaches; forests; grasslands; wildlife habitat; farmland; and wetlands. LMF assistance has put the following special places in the public trust forever:

- 52 water access sites
- 37 farms of more than 8,900 acres
- 20 commercial working waterfront properties
- More than 1,200 miles of shore lands and 158 miles of former railroad corridors for recreational trails.

- Over 560,000 acres of conservation and recreation lands. This includes 315,000 acres of working lands reflecting LMF's efforts to conserve the working landscape and keep lands in private ownership with permanent land conservation agreements.

The Land for Maine's Future has garnered broad based support because it respects landowner rights by acquiring land only from willing sellers, pursues a mission defined by the public, provides a tangible return to everyone who cherishes Maine's landscape (from hunters, to hikers, snowmobilers to birdwatchers), and leverages both federal and private funding for state priority purchases."

(quoted text extracted from <http://www.maine.gov/dacf/lmf/>)





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## Wildlife photographs

Recently FSHT has been using wildlife cameras to document the diverse wildlife that have made their homes on Sawyer Mountain.

Pictured here are a Great Blue Heron and a bobcat walking across the same beaver dam ... at different times of course! Look inside for additional photographs and the stories behind them.



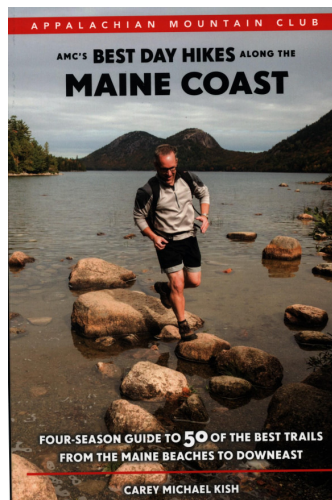
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## September 27, 2015: Ash Sunday at Willowbrook

The Francis Small Heritage Trust is a quarter of a century old! To celebrate this milestone, the Trust is partnering with Forest-Works! and the Willowbrook Museum to offer Ash Sunday on September 27, at the 19th century village in Newfield. Special activities will concentrate on the uses of the ash tree.

Expect activities for all ages: simple, hands-on wood projects, a Penobscot story teller, demonstrations and exhibits by craftspeople, and talks about the impending infestation of the emerald ash borer beetle.

Children will be admitted free. Watch for details in the Shopping Guide and Waterboro Reporter.



**Sawyer Mountain Highlands has been named one of the 50 best day hikes on the Maine Coast!**

The Appalachian Mountain Club has published Carey Kish's new book *Best Day Hikes Along the Maine Coast* featuring the trail from the Limerick trailhead up Sawyer Mountain. There is a great description of the trail along with some historical tidbits.