



## Important Happenings Fall 2017

Our 2014 newsletter asked a couple of challenging questions - "is Tumbledown being loved to death?" and what is "the future of land conservation in Maine?" In this issue we follow up on both of those topics.

Bruce Farnham, Mount Blue State Park Manager, explains how TCA's continued support of Environmental Steward positions is leading to greater understanding of the impact of human activity on Tumbledown. And as you know, public funding for land conservation has been severely limited in recent years, which has led to some promising projects falling by the way, but we want to tell you about an exciting land conservation effort in our area.

### York Hill Project

TCA has agreed to contribute \$25,000 to the Forest Society of Maine to help protect more than 600 acres next to Mt Blue State Park and highly visible from Mt Blue and the Center Hill nature trail. Bernd Heinrich and Lynn Jennings are donating an easement to



conserve their property on York Hill near the spring on Rt 156, but funds are needed to cover the transaction costs and an endowment for monitoring the easement. Well residents and visitors know of Bernd, who has written extensively about his land and his research there. Heinrich and Jennings'

generosity has inspired neighboring landowners to consider similar protections.

This opportunity for conservation has arisen from Bernd's long-term vision for his lands. The York

Hill Project will provide permanent stability to the lands so they will continue to:

- **Conserve** an area of old growth containing 150 year-old pines, spruces, and hardwoods;
- **Protect** Alder Brook that provides habitat for Eastern brook trout;
- **Provide** guaranteed public recreational access for traditional uses including: hunting, trapping, fishing, and other outdoor activities;
- **Ensure** the continued use for hands-on research conducted by students and professors On topics including animal and plant ecology and animal behavior in various habitats; and
- **Maintain** the historical significance these lands have had since the time of Maine's early settlers and the influence they continue to provide to American literature.

The Forest Society of Maine will hold and monitor the easements. The Society states as its mission: "Forest Society of Maine conserves Maine's forestlands to sustain their ecological, economic, cultural, and recreational values. Forest Society of Maine is your land trust for Maine's North Woods." The Society has been a nationally accredited land trust since 2009 and oversees easements on more than a million acres of forestland in Maine. See their web site [fsmaine.org](http://fsmaine.org) for more information.

The current administration in Augusta has been hostile to most land conservation efforts, and staffing cuts at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry have severely limited its ability to monitor easements. Thus, our involvement with the Forest Society of Maine represents a different approach to land conservation than we have used in the past.

### WE'RE ASKING FOR YOUR HELP!

We will use funds from this appeal for the York Hill Project, as well as for our continued support of the Environmental Stewardship positions. It is part of our promise to help with maintenance and management of the land, and for additional land conservation, in the Tumbledown/Mt Blue area. As in past years, we know we can count on your support of TCA. Please be as generous as you can be. Thank you.

## Is Tumbledown Getting Trampled Down?

*Summary of the Tumbledown Usage Report 2016  
Compiled by Sebastien Dumont, MCC Environmental Steward*

Tumbledown trails took quite a beating in 2016 and the top pond area was greatly impacted from all of the overnight camping. For the first time data has been collected to document hiking activity on Tumbledown and other trails in the area. By recording the high volume of vehicles parked at the Loop and Brook trailheads on the Byron Road, Sebastien was able to make a few predictions for usage in the time period of June 9-October 14, 2016. By his calculations, on weekdays with a 4 person per car average throughout the season at 41.81 cars per day, there would be upwards of 21,000 people using the Tumbledown trails. With the weekend average of 56.17 cars per day over the 36 days in the season with 4 people per car, there would have been around 8,100 visitors on weekends alone. On the busiest observed day (7/3/2016) there were 120 cars parked at the Loop and Brook trailheads. In a 4 person per car projection, this would translate as 480 people on the trails at the time of counting! It comes as no surprise that usage was very high on nice summer days, especially on the weekends, near holidays. It should be noted that these figures should not be viewed as actual numbers, however they do serve as an estimate to increase awareness of the actual situation on the mountain.

Sebastien worked alongside Tumbledown Ranger, Dan Muller, and Public Lands Ranger, Gardner Waldeier. Together they made many trips up the mountain assessing the condition of the trail, removing blow-downs, removing trash and dismantling fire rings at the top. Hikers with overnight gear and dogs were also educated about the leash law as well as NO FIRE laws on Public Lands. To begin work on a pre-management plan, Sebastien, Peter Smith (Manager, Western Lands Region), Jim Vogle (Senior Planner), Rx Turner (Outdoor Recreation Planner), and Gardner Waldeier made a hike up Tumbledown to assess the situation. Problem areas included damage caused by greater foot traffic on the Brook Trail and tree defoliation and destruction for fires on top of the mountain. Identifying these problems will help in creating a management plan that will allow all hikers to enjoy their experience but will also be kind to the mountains.

### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS IN WELD

Through the generosity of the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance and a grant from the federal Rails to

Trails program, Mt. Blue State Park was afforded the opportunity to have two Environmental Stewards again this year. The Stewards built upon endeavors of past Environmental Stewards, and they have created a solid foundation for continued work on the Tumbledown Mountain range as well as on park trails and the interpretive program at Mt. Blue.

Annie Jardin came to Mt. Blue from Mexico, New York. She worked out of the park nature center and helped lead and develop a variety of interpretive programs. She also was involved in the maintenance of trails in the park and on Tumbledown. She is an outdoor enthusiast and has a passion for sharing conservation and environmental information with the public. She graduated from Paul Smith's College in 2013 with a Bachelor of Science

Degree in Wildlife Management and a minor in GIS. While in college she also trained for the 2016 Olympics for Olympic trap shooting. During that time, she got to travel to several different countries in Europe and many states across the United States. She is an avid hunter and shooting sportswoman.

Michael Vanlouver is a native of Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. His primary focus was the Tumbledown Mountain Range, where he spent a lot of time maintaining trails, cleaning the summit and promoting the values of "leave no trace". Mike served our country for four years in the United States Air Force from 2003 to 2007. He was a Tactical Aircraft Maintenance Journeyman, and completed two deployments in the UAE. He graduated from Albright College with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science. There he discovered his passion for Ecology. His interests eventually led him to pursue a course in Wolf and Predator Ecology and travels to Minnesota. He learned on Tumbledown he had great stamina for hiking.



Both Annie and Mike, brought a great deal of enthusiasm, energy and a wealth of knowledge to the Mt. Blue, Tumbledown areas and were an asset to the goals of environmental stewardship.

Yes, I want to help the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance ensure continued access for hiking and other recreation, and to protect wildlife habitat, the forest resource, and the beauty of the Tumbledown-Mt. Blue area!

**ENCLOSED IS MY CONTRIBUTION FOR CONSERVATION:**

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

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

Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *I would like to become more involved. Please contact me.*

\$55 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$5,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

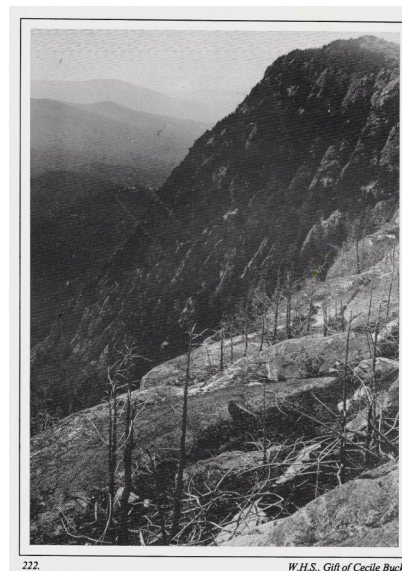
Please make checks payable to “Tumbledown Conservation Alliance” and mail to TCA, PO Box 24, Weld, ME 04285. Tumbledown Conservation Alliance is a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) charitable organization and all contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. **THANK YOU!**

## FIRE!

There are NO FIRE laws on Public Lands, but the Environmental Stewards on top of Tumbledown cannot monitor activity every night and day. The hiking seasons of 2016 and 2017 coincided with serious drought conditions. Stewards are constantly dismantling fire pits but they had to extinguish one potentially dangerous turf fire this summer, the result of an overnight camp fire.

Here is a chronicle from the Weld Historical Society’s book, *I Remember When....*”This 1903 photograph of Tumbledown’s East Peak shows the ravages of the fire that came over the mountain that summer. The year had been particularly dry and legend has it that a spark from a logging locomotive on the back side of the mountain started the conflagration. Anxious Weld families put their belongings into wagons and drove them and drove them in the lake anticipating that the fire which lit up the western sky would take their homes. Fortunately, the wind switched just after the fire came over the top and blew the flames back onto themselves. The town was saved and the scorched earth proved to be fertile ground for berries and mountain brush.”

Destructive fires in Maine’s forests in 1903 (268,000 acres) and 1908 (142,130 acres) led to the establishment of the Maine Forestry District in 1909 to protect the nearly 10 million acres in the state’s unorganized northern townships. By 1924, sixty-four fire towers had been built and were connected to 80 Warden’s camps throughout the District. Over the years, millions of dollars in damage has been done to woodlands by forest fires, the worst year having been 1947 when Mount Desert and many other areas were devastated.



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W.H.S., Gift of Cecile Buck

## In case you missed this....

A photo taken at the top of Tumbledown was featured in *Down East* Magazine’s “Where in Maine?” for September, 2017. The magazine also honored Tumbledown as the first on their list for THE GREAT MAINE SCAVENGER HUNT OUTDOORS.



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*Maintenance at Mt. Blue tower, summer 2017*

*Photo by Bruce Farnham*

**Address service requested**





