



TUMBLEDOWN
CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

FIRST MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE TUMBLEDOWN AREA PUBLIC LANDS IN THE WORKS!

FALL 2019

Twenty years ago - 1999 - in response to over 90,000 acres of forestland in this region suddenly coming onto the market, the first meetings of what ultimately became the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance took place.

Several representatives from TCA* met recently with Andy Cutko, Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands. We also were very pleased that Amanda Beal, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, was able to join the discussion. Rex Turner, a recreation planner for Lands, and Liz Petruska, who works with easements, also took part.

Our objective was to provide the new administration with an understanding of the history of TCA and the Mount Blue – Tumbledown Project, as well as a sense of our ongoing relationship with the Bureau and our overall priorities. In addition to TCA's early work with the Department of Conservation and the Trust for Public Land, which helped protect 26,000 acres in the Weld region, we noted that over the past ten years alone, TCA has contributed over \$66,000 towards trail work and Environmental Steward positions on the Tumbledown Range.

We learned that the Bureau is preparing to develop its first management plan for the Tumbledown area Public Lands and met Jim Vogel, who will be organizing the process. This will be a public process, with a public advisory committee as well as opportunities for direct public input. We anticipate that the usage impacts identified by recent Environmental Stewards, and on which we have reported in our newsletters, will be a topic of discussion. When we get more information about this process we will post it on our web site, and we encourage interested people to weigh in with their suggestions.

- Bruce Farnham, Conrad Heeschen, Pam Prodan, Gwyn Sewall, Michelle Wynn

In Memory of a True Friend of Tumbledown

Warren Robinson Keene, 76, of Weld, ME, and Travelers Rest, SC, passed away in February 2019. Warren served for several years on the Board of the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance. Warren arrived in Weld counting off 10,000 steps a day to improve his health. The local mountains quickly lured him to climbing their trails. He often went on long hikes five days a week. His favorite walk was to head up the Loop Trail, cover all five peaks, and return down Little Jackson. He had a Garmin GPS and logged every climb each year. His last full year was over 1000 miles. Whether hiking with his family, his German Shepard, his human friends, or alone, Warren never tired of the exertion, and certainly not of the scenery. He was an stalwart advocate of Tumbledown.



2019 Tumbledown Environmental Steward Season Summary :

By Emily Friedman , Environmental Steward 2019

Trail Maintenance

- Lopped the entirety of Parker Ridge, the Loop, the Pond Link, and the Little Jackson Connector.
- Partially lopped Little Jackson and the Brook Trail, with the goal of finishing them by the end of the season.
- Re-blazed the Loop Trail, the Pond Link, the Brook Trail, the Little Jackson Trail, and the trail from Tumbledown Pond to West Peak. Previous blazing on the Little Jackson Connector and the Brook Trail was adequate for this season.
- Cleared blowdowns from the Brook Trail, the Little Jackson Trail, the Little Jackson Connector, and Parker Ridge.
- Re-dug waterbars on the Brook and Parker Ridge Trails.



Fallen tree removed from the Morgan Road



New MCC stone staircases on the Pond Link Trail



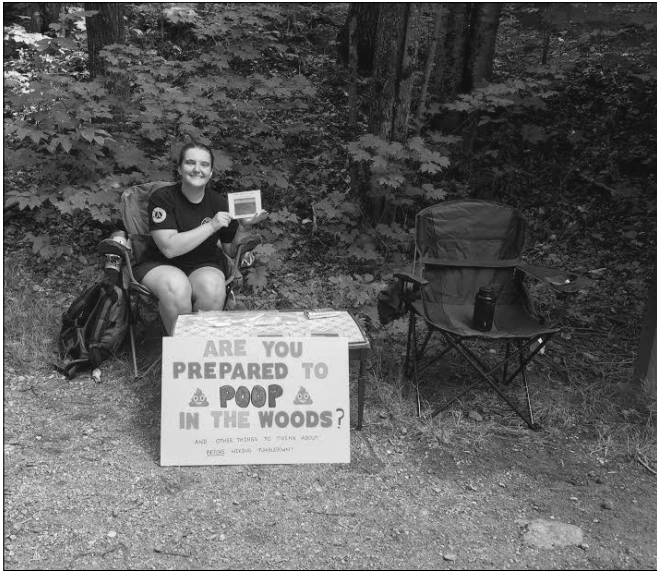
Emily with a fresh blaze on the trail to West Peak.



A fresh blaze on the Pond Link.

Visitor Contact and Education

- Leave No Trace Booth: I developed a portable booth for the base of the Brook Trail that was used a handful of times this season (on particularly busy Saturdays and Sundays). Mike, the Tumbledown Ranger, and I would sit at the trailhead asking people if they were prepared to poop in the woods! This question was segued into a larger conversation about Leave No Trace principles on the mountain. Children were also offered the opportunity to become Leave No Trace “Leaders.” Plastic bags with nitrile gloves were handed out; listed on a sheet of paper inside were the 7 LNT tenets and 7 related activities. The LNT booth was a very successful environmental education effort. It managed to capture an average of 20 people per hour.
- Webb Lake Association’s Lake Day: The Mt Blue State Park Naturalist Ranger and I participated in the Webb Lake Association’s Lake Day event. We hosted a table complete with maps, a volunteer sign-up, and “Tumble-brownies.” It was an excellent opportunity to connect with the community that has enabled Tumbledown’s existence.
- Overnights on the Mountain: Mike, the Tumbledown Ranger, and I spent a total of three nights on the mountain over the course of the season (1 each in July, August, and September). This allowed us to better understand how campers were using the area around the pond. We also managed to limit illegal fires on these nights, while providing information as to why this activity is discouraged.



Emily with the Poop Booth!



Emily and Annie at WLA's Lake Day.

- **What We Did Last Week Flyers:** This season, I created weekly “What We Did Last Week” flyers that were posted at the Brook Trailhead. Each flyer contained a picture of something that was accomplished the previous week, with a larger message about either our purpose on the mountain or the best ways to hike and camp sustainably.
- **Guided Hike:** For the second weekend of Great Maine Outdoor Weekend, the Tumbledown Ranger and I co-hosted a Guided Hike up Tumbledown on Sunday, September 22nd. 9 people joined us for a trek up the Brook Trail, down Parker Ridge, and across the Little Jackson Connector. We talked about trail maintenance, geology, land ownership, forest composition, and a bit of everything else.



An illegal fire pit on the east side of the pond.



Tumbledown Brewing Volunteer Day.

Volunteer Outreach

- **Tumbledown x Tumbledown:** I reached out to Tumbledown Brewing at the beginning of the season about coordinating a volunteer service day and they were eager to get involved. We scheduled it for Saturday, August 3rd and had a total of 7 participants (including the founder and his son!). Our goal was to complete maintenance on the Parker Ridge Trail. We managed to re-dig 8 water bars and lop 1/3 mile of trail. Afterwards, Mt. Blue State Park hosted a BBQ for the volunteers. The Brewery expressed interest in making this a repeat event.

- **GMOW Volunteer Day:** To celebrate Great Maine Outdoor Weekend, Mike and I scheduled two events: a volunteer day and guided hike. Our volunteer day was on Saturday, September 14th and drew in 4 people (including Gwyn!). We hiked part way up the Brook Trail and lined an eroded section with logs to keep people on trail.
- **Individual Volunteer Service Days:** At the beginning of the season, I reached out requesting volunteers through a variety of channels, namely Facebook community groups, flyers at the trailheads, and local businesses. I was able to generate interest in volunteering from a number of people, which eventually resulted in two days of service with individuals. One volunteer helped me blaze the Loop Trail and the other helped me re-dig water bars on the Brook Trail.



The group from the GMOW volunteer day. TCA Treasurer, Gwyn Sewall, on the left.

Future Needs

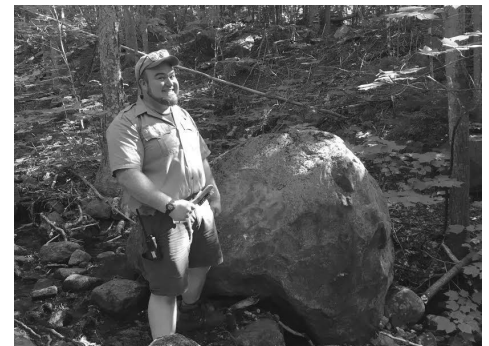
- **Trail Maintenance:** Water bars need to be re-dug every year and most trails will need to be lopped every year. Longer term projects on the mountain will likely include re-routing trails or hardening them with stone steps. The majority of Tumbledown's trails were built in an unsustainable manner and will need serious support in the coming years. There is a developing backlog of maintenance needs on the mountain.
- **Disrespectful Hikers:** Tumbledown is an incredibly popular mountain. Visitors don't always treat the area with respect, resulting in graffiti, carved up trees, and other abuses.
- **Increased environmental education and enforcement** will be necessary to protect the mountain.
- **Increased Camping:** On a busy Saturday night in July, Tumbledown will typically see about 15-20 camping groups. Campers often cut trees, build illegal fires, and leave garbage in their wake. Over time, these issues are likely to increase in frequency and scale, so camping will need to be addressed by a comprehensive management plan.



Cut stumps from campers on the east side of pond.



Mike kicking over wrongly placed cairn.



Mike cleaning off graffiti.

Please contact TCA if you want to be informed about the Tumbledown Public Lands planning process.

**www.tumbledown.org
tumbledownconservationalliance@gmail.com**

TCA has pledged \$10,000 to sponsor Environmental Stewards in 2020.

Please be as generous as you can to help us meet this goal!

ENCLOSED IS MY CONTRIBUTION FOR CONSERVATION:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel _____ Email _____

_____ I want to be informed about the Tumbledown Public Lands planning process.

\$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) public charity and all contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

THANK YOU!

Lands in Weld, Adjacent to Mt. Blue State Park, Now Conserved

*Letter from Karin Tilberg, Executive Director
Forest Society of Maine to TCA, April 2018*

The Forest Society of Maine (FSM) has some very exciting news to share! The York Hill project has been successfully completed– the final funds have been raised and the lands have been permanently conserved.

Culminating more than two years of work, the York Hill project helps buffer lands adjacent to Mt. Blue State Park in the Webb Lake watershed near Weld, Maine from development. The project also ensures that the land remains protected, forever, as a semi-wild forested area harboring examples of virtually all of the state’s woodland flora and fauna yet remains available to the public for a variety of uses. As you most likely recall, these forestlands have had a significant role in advances in science and the writings of Bernd Heinrich, the noted naturalist and author.



The project and its long-term results would not have been possible without the support from **Tumbledown Conservation Alliance** and others. The grant monies were spent in full to bring the project to successful completion. We recognize Bernd’s generosity in this effort, which inspired Bernd’s neighbor to conserve his forestland as well. This was a wonderful example of teamwork to permanently conserve some very special land. Everyone at FSM sends sincere thanks to the members of the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance– you helped make the vision for the York Hill project a reality.

Bernd tending to one of his birds



TCA Sponsors Environmental Stewards in Weld

Since 2014 the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance has sponsored 10 different Environmental Stewards through AmeriCorps and the Maine Conservation Corps for Mt. Blue State Park and the Tumbledown region. TCA will also be sponsoring a Steward in 2020. The Stewards have been instrumental in monitoring use on Tumbledown and maintaining the trails and the summit. They have provided a wealth of information and data to the Bureau of Parks & Lands which will be very helpful as they move forward with a Management plan for the region. The Stewards have also played a big part in the park's interpretive program and nature center. They have helped provide numerous environmental education programs. Their work has helped show the public the importance of the Mt. Blue / Tumbledown area to the state of Maine. Mt. Blue State Park and the Bureau of Parks & Lands is extremely grateful for the continued support of the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance.

Bruce Farnham, Park Manager