



The Alpine Steward

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Fostering the Spirit of Wildness and Conserving the Alpine Areas of Northeastern North America

The Alpine in Baxter State Park

By Glen Mittelhauser

Baxter State Park, at over 200,000 acres, includes some of Maine's most pristine and scenic alpine landscapes. Katahdin has a long and rich history of botanical exploration that began in the 1800s and continued into the early 1900s, although the other alpine habitats in the Park have not received similar attention. Much of this early botanical exploration was published in 17 journal articles between 1837 and 1945 and many pressed plant specimens from these early explorations were preserved in various herbaria in New England. Despite the number of historical surveys, there is no compiled list of alpine and subalpine plants for the Park that summarizes all of this historic information and includes the status and locations of all mountain plants.

In 2014, we began compiling a database of alpine and subalpine plants on mountains in Baxter State Park from all of the published and unpublished reports that we could find. We also visited herbaria in New England to compile a list of all of the historic pressed plant specimens collected from alpine areas in the Park (we found 1,302 pressed plant collections) and cross referenced this list against our database of alpine plants in the Park. Searching through these historic herbarium records, we learned that some important historic collections never made it into a report or published manuscript. During 2014, we also coordinated numerous botanical explorations in the Park to help fill out the species lists for alpine summits and subalpine habitat in the Park. We included volunteers on each of our field trips to help us with photography, mapping locations of uncommon and rare plants on each summit, and locating new plants. During our trips, we took numerous macro-photographs of the species encountered and acquired good photos for flowers, fruits, and vegetative characters for many alpine species.

What did we find? We documented 426 species of alpine and subalpine plants on 18 mountains within the Park. Katahdin had, by far, the most

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Waterman Fund Board Looks Forward: *Strategic Plan Completed*

by Charlie Jacobi

At age fifteen, the Waterman Fund, like any teenager (we hope) is approaching maturity. I think we are a little more grown up than the average 15 year old, but do we know what we want to be when we grow up? Do we even want to grow up? Do we know how we made it to age 15? Yes, yes, and yes.

The Board just completed a Strategic Plan that looks five years ahead to 2020. We are energized about it and pleased to be able to share it with you. The plan has been several years in development. We had a consultant guide us. We met with several founders of the organization, learned more about our past, and talked with them about our future. We relied heavily on their previous work, and even pirated their words exactly because they still resonated clearly with us. Let me take you through the plan highlights and encourage you to go on line for more.

Our raison-d'être is the same. Alpine areas are incredibly stunning, unique places, ecologically, culturally, and experientially, and deserve the highest level of stewardship possible. They are under ongoing threat from climate change and visitor use. Climate change is upon us. Alpine communities and humans are both now learning how to adapt to it, but do we each have enough time? A recent National Park Service study suggests that visitor use at parks in the northern half of the United States is expected to increase with rising temperatures. Where will they go to escape the heat? I think we know. Like mountain soils, the spirit of wildness is easily eroded in the high country. The Waterman Fund will continue to support research efforts to better understand the threats to these fragile areas and stewardship actions that mitigate visitor impacts, protect

ecological integrity, and promote wilderness values we cherish.

MISSION AND VISION

Our mission and vision have not changed substantially either, but I think they express more clearly what the Waterman Fund is about. We even have a new succinct “tag line” to express the mission: *Fostering the Spirit of Wildness and Conserving the Alpine Areas of Northeastern North America*. You’ll see this tag line attached to our new logo with its cairns and trail leading up the mountainside. Together, they tell everyone what we are all about. Perhaps the biggest change was broadening our geographic scope to include Eastern Canada, where the alpine areas and effects of climate change are similar, but there is generally less visitor pressure.

FOUR GOALS

The Strategic Plan lists four broad goals: 1. Strengthen the Stewardship and Understanding of the Alpine Areas of Northeastern North America; 2. Foster the Spirit of Wildness Through and Beyond Our Existing Programs; 3. Increase the Visibility and Relevance of the Fund; and 4. Increase our Endowment and Annual Gifts. I’m sure none of these is a surprise to you. Each goal has a set of action items, and I’ll just draw attention to a few of them to show how we are already moving ahead.

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE BE INVOLVED

First, like many conservation organizations, we recognized the importance of involving youth in our work. We will encourage grants combining youth, the spirit of wildness, and the alpine zone, and the attendance of young people at the Alpine Stewardship Gathering.

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TAKING CARE OF ALPINE TRAILS

Second, we want to build the endowment to better meet our mission. Long commutes and labor intensive work make any alpine trail project expensive. The size of a typical Waterman Fund grant does not go very far for trails and some trail leaders have told us they are not sure applying is worth the effort. But the need is great. On our summer field trip with Dave Govatski on Mount Washington, a short side trip to the Gulfside Trail revealed extensive trail widening and erosion. We watched hikers take the path of least resistance and walk on trailside plants instead of the rougher, rocky trail itself. Thanks to the efforts of our founders, your continuing support, and the work of previous Boards stewarding our financial resources, we've awarded \$173,000 in grants since 2002. That's amazing and commendable for such a small

group. But only 10% of that has been applied to trail projects. Building the endowment will let us do more for not just trails, but for research, education, the Alpine Stewardship Gathering, and the Essay Contest too.

Finally, we are laying the groundwork for all of the above. We will transition to nonprofit database software to keep track of our friends and partners. We'll again upgrade our website. And we'll also develop needed administrative policies to support moving forward.

Many thanks to all who helped pull this plan together. The Board is committed to it and will keep you posted on our progress. I encourage you to take a look at the full plan at our website and let us know what you think and how you might help.

OUR MISSION

The Waterman Fund fosters the spirit of wildness and strengthens the stewardship and understanding of the alpine areas of Northeastern North America to conserve their ecological, cultural, and recreational values.

We pursue this mission through education, trail rehabilitation, and research.

OUR VISION

*Alpine areas retain their ecological integrity.
Every visitor stewards the land and experiences its wonder.
Least intrusive management practices prevail
and human impacts are minimized.
The spirit of wildness pervades the mountains.*

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Seth Jones
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Treasurer's Report

by Matt Larson

For the year to date, The Waterman Fund has presented \$2,000 in prizes for the Essay Contest, provided \$3,000 to help support the Alpine Stewardship Gathering hosted by Baxter State Park in Millinocket, Maine and awarded grants totaling \$20,000 for ten projects advancing alpine research, education, and outreach in Northeastern North America.

The Fund has received contributions totaling nearly \$9,500 over the last ten months, up almost fifty percent from last year at this time. Operating expenses are approximately \$1,100, which is down slightly from the prior year. Since the Fund's operating expenses continue to be minimal in

relation to annual contributions, we should once again have an operating surplus at the close of the year.

The Fund's total assets are just over \$341,000, down significantly for the calendar year due to investment losses of nearly six percent since the end of 2014. Over the same time period, liabilities (grant payables, primarily) have declined from \$17,200 to \$13,100. The Fund's net worth, consequently, is just over \$328,000, down about \$22,000 for the year to date. Hopefully the recent stock market uptick will continue and our investment accounts will recover some of this lost ground before our next round of grant award decisions in January of 2016.

Trails Restoration Tops the List

by Peter Palmiotto

TRAIL RESTORATION GRANTS (3)

This past year the Fund made a specific request for trail restoration projects and was rewarded with a number of worthy proposals; we were excited to fund three projects along the Appalachian Trail. Under the **Appalachian Mountain Club's Volunteer teen trail** project 18 teen volunteers and their leaders created 206 feet of scree, filled in 75 feet of eroded braided trail, brushed 1,500 feet of overgrown trail and laid 40 square feet of pavers around Madison Spring Hut. The **Randolph Mountain Club** built 189 feet of screewall, 20 cairns and brushed 97 feet along the heavily traveled route to Mt. Adams and Jefferson. To the south the **Dartmouth Outing Club** installed nine rock waterbars on the Beaver Brook trail to help remediate the deeply gullied and eroded areas. This work should reduce the need to relocate the trail which would have heavily impacted the fragile alpine zone. All three projects had the added benefit of furthering stewardship education for the volunteers, the trail crews, and all the hikers who stopped to inquire about the work.

ALPINE RESEARCH GRANTS (3)

The Fund continued to support alpine research awarding three grants. **Dr. Nancy Slack** and her collaborators' research on the snowbed communities of Mt Washington received funding again. This year's work was devoted to combatting the dandelion invasion that was recently discovered on Mt Washington. The US Forest Service, Nancy and collaborators estimated they removed thousands of dandelion plants and flower heads totaling over 160 pounds. This effort highlights the concern of many across the region who have seen dandelions in the alpine. Hopefully, we can hold this invasion in check.

Additionally, the fund supported a plant phenology study in Acadia National Park, Maine, as part of **Caitlin McDonough MacKenzie's** doctoral research at Boston University. Caitlin along with research assistant Ella Samuel, an undergrad at College of the Atlantic, collected 5,684 phenological records for thirty focal species. Caitlin is still analyzing the data but did present her research in August at the Ecological Society of America's annual meeting in Baltimore and at the 9th Alpine Stewardship Gathering in Millinocket, Maine. Ella presented a poster at the Acadia Science Symposium in October.

The final research grant was awarded to **Elizabeth Finn** through the Green Mountain Club for a photo monitoring project on Mount Mansfield in Vermont. Photos were taken in 2015 to compare to baseline photographs taken in 2004. Photo-monitoring projects like this help us all better document and understand long-term changes in alpine vegetation. The additional goal of this project was to develop a comprehensive guide that encourages photo-monitoring research as part of the Mansfield Caretaker Program. Such a guide will be useful to all alpine programs and we look forward to helping the GMC disseminate this information when it becomes available.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH GRANT (1)

All the funded trail and research projects entailed an educational component that made good use of hiker interactions in the field. To further the Fund's support of environmental education, specific grants were also awarded to organizations whose primary focus was education and outreach. The **Whitefield (NH) Middle School's Wilderness Explorers Program's** mission is 'To expose students and their families to the wilderness that exists in their own back yards.'



Whitefield Middle School volunteers at the summit of Mt. Washington.

This program for 5-8th graders did just that this summer with Waterman Fund support. Janet Steinert reported that 31 students participated with one group summiting Mt. Hale and staying at the Zealand Hut. Another group summited Mt Washington and stayed at Lake of the Clouds Hut. All students received Leave-No-Trace (LNT) and alpine ecology training before and during the outings. Some students received additional 'Leadership Summit' training with help of the AMC staff when they climbed Mt Pierce and stayed at Mizpah Hut.

of Waterman Fund Grants

STEWARDSHIP GRANTS (3)

The Fund also supported **MERE's** (Antioch University) proposal to update the Fund's database of stewardship programs, including contact information, important changes, and trends over the past several years. Doctoral student Jill Weiss, who was the first to compile this data in 2010, then again in 2012, shared updates from this effort at the recent Alpine Stewardship Gathering in Millinocket and in a final report to the Waterman Fund. When examined as a whole there is an impressive network of stewardship activities in this region that we can all be proud of.

The Fund supported the **Maine Appalachian Trail Club's Caretaker** program on Bigelow and Saddleback Mountains. The proposed LNT courses and mailing of an educational packet with information on LNT, the A.T., and alpine ecology to 80 organizations (camps, colleges, high schools and scouts) that sponsor numerous back-packing trips was a tangible action to educate users. In addition, MATC proposed to host a pre-registration system where groups would email their hiking itinerary to caretakers so that they could manage the recreational traffic and reduce overcrowding. We are eager to hear about the impact of the effort and share it with our network.

The three year grant to the **Mount Washington Observatory** to support its exhibit 'Extreme Mount Washington: Be a Summit Steward' closed with the completion of the display and the opening of the exhibit in 2014. Visited by Waterman Fund board members and friends during our summer outing (see Laura Waterman's article, "Miracle of Survival in the Alpine Zone" on page 12) the exhibit consists of 20 alpine



A group of Maine Appalachian Trail Club's caretakers.

plant specimens contained in resin blocks displayed on three shelves encased in glass. Below each specimen is a LED light to illuminate the plant from below. Under the resin blocks, which stands at waist height is a panel describing the unique environment of the alpine zone including the importance of staying on the trail:

Although these hardy plants survive some of the harshest weather conditions in the world, they have difficulty coping with foot traffic. So, if you are hiking in the alpine zone of the White Mountains and elsewhere, remember to stay on the rocks and designated trails. You have an important role to play in helping us protect these important mountain ecosystems.

Project Leader Michelle Cruz, Director of Education for MWO, reported that in the first open season (2014) of Extreme Mount Washington, from mid-May through mid-October, 114,919 visitors explored the exhibit. The Waterman fund is proud its stewardship message is part of this wonderful new museum.

Finally, it was Gathering time again! The 9th NE Alpine Stewardship Gathering was hosted in Millinocket, Maine. The Fund allocates funds every two years to help offset the cost of the Gathering. We thank Jean Hoekwater, Chelsea Ehert, and all the staff of Baxter State Park who organized, hosted and participated in a wonderful gathering of our network collaborators.

Note: Grant applications for alpine project funding are due on **December 15**. See the back cover for more information.



Donor names adorn the wall of the *Extreme Mt. Washington* exhibition.

And the Winners Are...

By Laura Waterman

The Waterman Fund is pleased to announce the winners of our eighth annual Essay Contest. The Fund received 39 entries this year, and the reading committee, comprised of current and former board members, outside readers, and the editor of *Appalachia* chose Dove Henry as the winner of the 2015 Waterman Fund Alpine Essay Contest, with her piece titled “One Tough Gal,” and Erica Berry as honorable mention with “Lady and the Camp.”

Our theme this year centered on gender and was held in partnership with Plymouth State University’s Museum of the White Mountains’ upcoming exhibit called “Taking the Lead: Women and the White Mountains.” We posed the question does the spirit of wilderness transcend anything as human as gender? Is there a relationship between gender, wilderness exploration, and the management of these invaluable public lands? We found our two contest winners approached this theme differently.

Dove Henry, from New York’s Catskill Mountains, attended Reed College in Oregon and studied American Environmental History, graduating in 2014. For all four of her college summers she worked on the Adirondack Mountain Club’s Trail Crew. “In my essay,” Dove wrote us, “I

use my environmental history background to reflect on my experience as a woman working a manual labor job in the Adirondack Wilderness.” She drew on her own experience “to formulate my own narrative of gender, stewardship, and wilderness—what is wild out there...but also what is wild in our own bodies and minds.”

Erica Berry, who grew up in the mountains of Oregon, attended Bowdoin College, and spent some of her college years exploring the eastern seaboard. She is currently studying creative writing at the University of Minnesota. She has published in *The Morning News*, *High Country News*, and *Nowhere Magazine*. She wrote us that her essay, “stems from a summer spent at age 19, guiding teenage girls on wilderness backpacking trips, and my realization that I was not as interested in the Thoreau-ian model of self-reliance through solo wilderness adventures as a (perhaps) more feminine model of practicing motherhood through the mountains.”

Dove Henry’s essay will be published in the Winter/Spring 2015 issue of *Appalachia*, the Appalachian Mountain Club’s semi annual journal of mountaineering and conservation. Her piece appears, excerpted, on the following page. Both Henry’s essay and Erica Berry’s will appear in December on the Waterman Fund website, www.watermanfund.org.

The 2016 Alpine Essay Contest:

Guy and Laura Waterman spent a lifetime reflecting and writing on the Northeast’s mountains. The Waterman Fund seeks to further their legacy of stewardship through essays that celebrate and explore issues of wilderness, wildness, and humans through the Fund’s annual essay contest.

Although a “nation’s park” was first conceived in the United States by painter George Catlin in the 1830s, the first U.S. national park, Yellowstone, was not established until 1876. Other parks followed but it was not until 1916 that Congress created a bureau to oversee their management. 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service (NPS) and of Acadia National Park here in New England as well. Visits to the national parks are now nearly 300 million annually.

Can the National Park Service achieve its dual mission of conserving resources and providing for visitor enjoyment under this level of use? What is the role of the *Spirit of Wildness* in the national parks? Does it exist? If so, can it persist? How, where, or when should the NPS manage to foster that Spirit? And why? Think about the differences between the “frontcountry” (e.g. Yosemite Valley), the “backcountry” (e.g. Great Smoky Mountains), and federally designated wilderness areas (e.g. Wrangell St. Elias)? How appropriate or important is the Spirit of Wildness in a small park with many visitors, like Acadia? Does size matter? What does matter?

Emerging writers should address these questions and more in a well-crafted essay drawing on personal experiences—in or out of parks—in concrete examples.

an excerpt from Dove Henry's

One Tough Gal

My palms and forearms felt fragile, scraping against the jagged rock I carried to my half-built cairn. I added the stone to my growing pile of material and looked at the structure for a moment, contemplating where to place the new piece. People like to talk about feeling insignificant in the face of a starry sky, but I think looking down at the earth offers a much closer dose of perspective. There is nothing like a billion-year-old rock to remind you of your own brevity...

The day was so clear I could even see the lighter green of faraway fields and black of asphalt roads, cutting distinctly human lines and angles in the distance. A middle-aged man and his two daughters hiked past me a few yards away.

"You go, girl!" he shouted at me, smiling.

I politely smiled back. It was my second summer working in the Adirondacks, and it wasn't the first time I'd heard that phrase. It was certainly better than "Do you need some help with that?" which I have also had the misfortune of hearing on occasion. But still, even this man's well-intentioned words bespoke a subtle and deeply ingrained condescension that has become familiar to me as a woman working in wilderness areas.

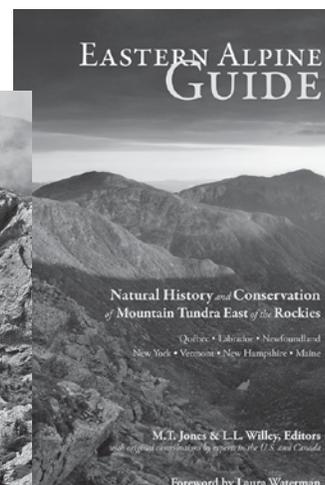
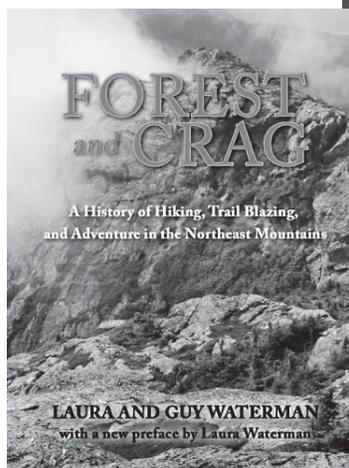
I looked away from the summit, where I could see my three male coworkers building their own cairns below me. While they were the only humans in my view, they seemed to belong to the terrain, as if they were composed of the same stuff. Each man wore pants softened and stained by earth, and each was shirtless, baring torsos browned by the sun and hardened by labor. I watched one place a rock on his almost finished cairn, which stood at least to the shoulder of his 6'4" body. I bet no one ever asked him if he needed help.

How to Enter

The deadline for submissions is **April 15, 2016**. We will announce the winners at the end of June. The winning essayist will be awarded \$1,500 and the essay will be published in *Appalachia*. The Honorable Mention essay will receive \$500. Both essays will be published on our website.

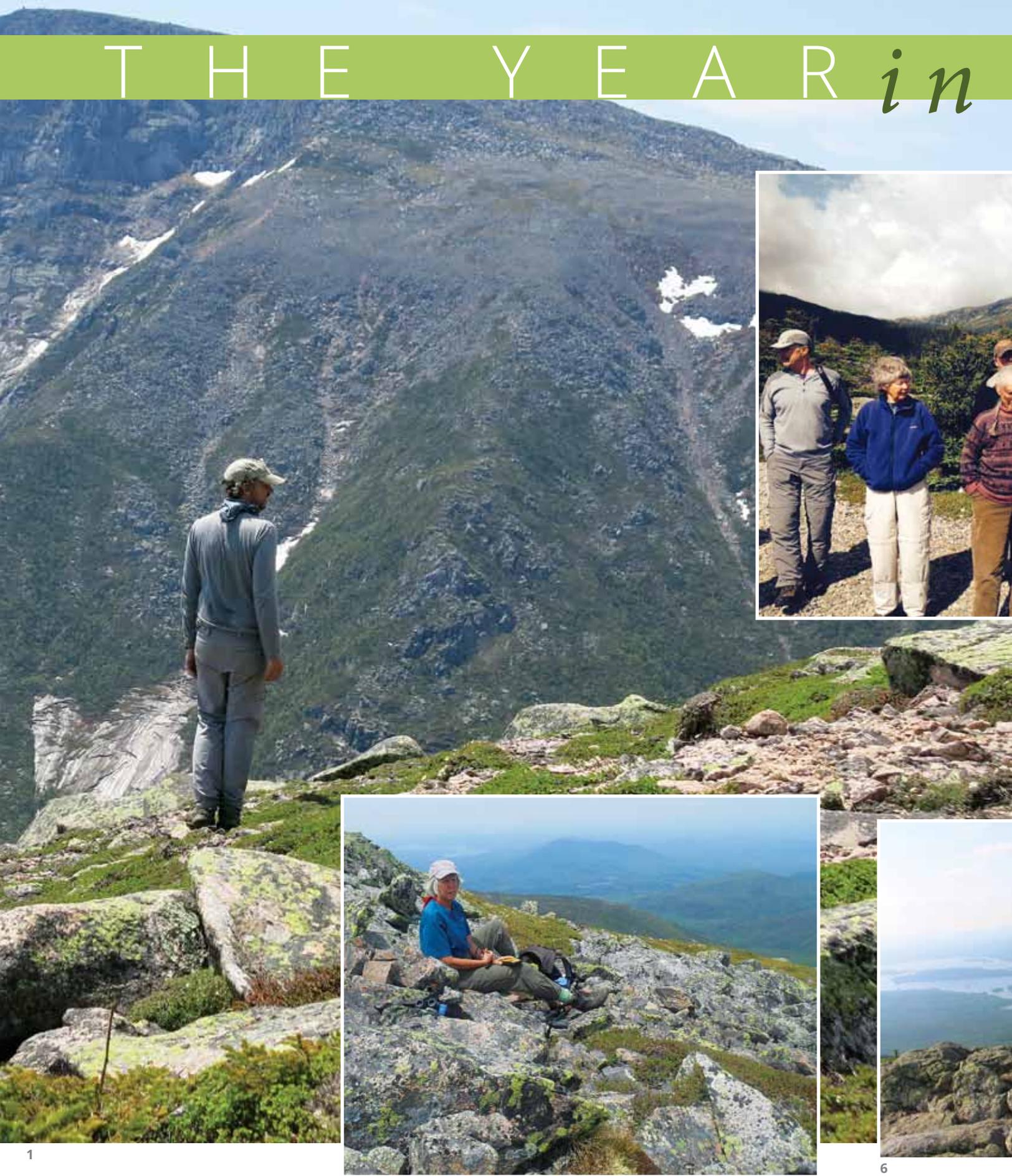
Submissions should include contact information and a few lines about why the writers feel their essay is appropriate for the contest. Typed, double-spaced manuscripts in a 12-point font are preferred. Online submissions are appreciated, but not required. If submitting by mail send to **The Waterman Fund, Essay Contest, P.O. Box 1064, East Corinth, VT 05040**, and include a SAS postcard or an email address. The receipt of all submissions will be acknowledged.

If you have not yet read these classics...



Forest and Crag is available on Kindle

T H E Y E A R *in*



1

7

6

Photographs

2



3



1. Glen Mittelhauser on Hamlin Ridge, June 2014.
2. A group on the Waterman Fund Field Trip soak up fascinating information from Dave Govatski.
3. New Waterman Fund botanical display at Mt. Washington's *Extreme Weather* exhibit.
4. A group of Waterman Fund grant recipients from the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, with AT sign.
5. Whitefield Middle School volunteers enjoy being on the summit of Mt. Washington.
6. AT sign at summit of Avery Peak where volunteers did summer work.
7. Kit Pfeiffer on North Brother, getting GPS locations of rare plants. Kit was a volunteer on the project.



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Guy Waterman 2015 Alpine Steward Award

by Mike Jones

Nancy Ritger was awarded the **2015 Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award** for her lifetime achievements in alpine education, interpretation, outreach, and conservation in the White Mountain region of New Hampshire. The award was presented by Laura Waterman and board president Charlie Jacobi November 7, 2015 at the 9th *Northeast Alpine Stewardship Gathering* (NEASG), hosted by Baxter State Park and the Waterman Fund at Twin Pines Cabins/Northeast Outdoor Center on Millinocket Lake, Maine—within view of Katahdin. The Waterman Fund presents this award each year to a person or organization that has demonstrated a lifetime commitment to protecting the physical and spiritual qualities of the



Nancy Ritger receives the award from Laura Waterman and Charlie Jacobi.

Northeast's mountain wilderness.

Following tradition, the Waterman Fund presented Nancy with a framed print (by New Hampshire photographer Jim Salge, jimsalge.com) of the northern view from Mount Pierce in the Southern Presidential Range, taken at sunrise on the first day of autumn. Nancy has long been familiar with the Southern Presidential Range, which looms over Crawford Notch and Nancy's town of Hart's Location.

Countless people of all ages have been inspired and trained by Nancy in her more than 25 years with the Appalachian

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• • • BOARD MEMBER UPDATE • • •

Spotlight on Seth Jones, Our Newest Board Member

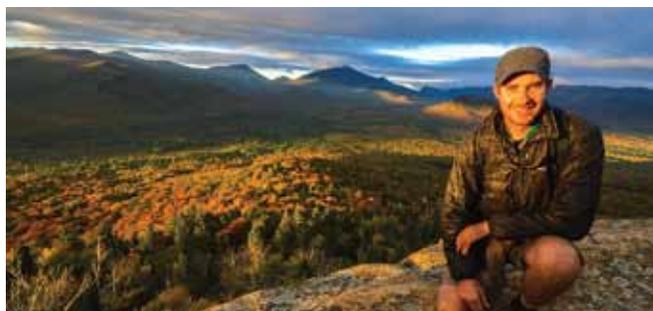
by Kim Votta

The Waterman Fund experienced a change in leadership this past year. The Fund was sad to say goodbye to Board President, Rick Paradis. Rick served on the board for six years, ably serving as President in his last two. Charlie Jacobi took on the role of President in 2015. We are excited to have Charlie in this pivotal role; Charlie has been a Waterman Fund Board member since 2010 and is ready to lead the board in its important work supporting efforts to conserve alpine habitats and wildness in the northeast.

To fill Rick's seat, the Board was fortunate to acquire the energy and skills of Seth Jones. Seth is the Education Programs Coordinator for the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK). He received his B.S. in Conservation Biology from the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Seth's love of the outdoors started at an early age, growing up in Rochester, New York. It was on a two-week Boy Scout trip in the mountains and rivers of Philmont, New Mexico, however, that his interest in working in the environmental field gained shape.

Alpine stewardship and environmental education became passions during his tenure as a Summit Steward for the



Seth Jones in his beloved Adirondack Mountains.

ADK. While on a hike in 2007, Seth came across former Waterman Fund board member, Julia Goren, who was Summit Steward atop Mount Marcy that day. Fascinated by her story and her job, Seth applied and was accepted to be an ADK Summit Steward in 2008 and came back in that role in 2009 and 2010.

He took a brief hiatus from the northeast alpine to spend some time in California working as a botanist for the Audubon Society, but the peaks and valleys of the northeast called him home. Fortunately for the ADK and the Waterman Fund he returned.

Seth's interests include fly fishing and mountain biking. He most loves canoeing either tandem or solo in his Wenonah canoes.

Ninth Northeastern Alpine Gathering



Smiling faces attest to the good time had by all at the recent Alpine Gathering at Baxter State Park in Maine.

by Seth Jones

The 9th Northeast Alpine Stewardship Gathering was held November 6-8, 2015, in the shadows of Katahdin at the New England Outdoor Center in Millinocket, Maine. Over 90 land managers, stewards, educators, scientists and students gathered from across the Northeastern United States for three days of thought provoking discussion and exchange. Baxter State Park, the Friends of Baxter State Park and The Waterman Fund did a wonderful job hosting this year's Gathering.

A small group of participants started the event on Friday with field trips to Katahdin Lake and South Turner Mountain, both in Baxter State Park. The clouds lifted, giving the South Turner group great views of Katahdin and on the way out a special Maine surprise—a bull moose feeding in the shallows of Sandy Stream Pond!

The event officially kicked off with dinner at River Drivers Restaurant and welcoming remarks by Morgan Taylor, Baxter State Park's Interpretive Specialist, Jean Hoekwater, Baxter State Park's Naturalist and Secretary of The Waterman Fund, and Jensen Bissell, Baxter State Park's Director. In the evening, David Little treated participants to a presentation on the art of Katahdin, showcasing art pieces that capture this beautiful region.

On Saturday, close to 40 people contributed to a busy day of presentations and discussion. The morning started with a keynote address from Glenn Mittelhauser, Executive Director of Maine Natural History Observatory and author of *The Plants of Acadia*. He spoke about his recent plant inventory of Baxter State Park and how his team looked at hundreds of old herbarium specimens and then worked on verifying them in the field.

The next session was a panel discussion about the spirit of wildness, which was moderated by Peter Palmiotto from

Antioch University. Panelists included Jensen Bissell; Laura Waterman, author of *Wilderness Ethics*, and Rebecca Oreskes, a retired Wilderness Specialist for the US Forest Service. A healthy discussion about wilderness and the spirit of wildness ensued.

We then heard updates from the various alpine stewardship programs in the Northeast. Each institution gave an update on how their program was doing and passed along any new initiatives they had been working on. Overall, organizations noticed a significant increase in visitation and shared some common challenges regarding human impact on the trails and summits.

After a wonderful lunch at the River Drivers Restaurant, Jean Hoekwater continued the conference with a presentation on Baxter State Park. It was a very appreciated program for those of us who were not familiar with the unique history and management of this beautiful park.

The next plenary session was titled *Keeping the Spirit Alive: Youth in the Alpine*. Alison Violette from Appalachian Mountain Club; Claire Polfus from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy; teachers Jessica Williams, Ashley Guilbeault and Donna McCusker from New Hampshire's Whitefield Elementary School and Aaron Megquier from the Friends of Baxter State Park inspired the whole group by the outdoor youth programming that they are doing in their areas.

The last plenary session highlighted a great selection of recent research done in the alpine areas of the Northeast. Presentations included *Monitoring and Evaluating Recreation in Alpine Areas* by Nathan Reigner; *Ants of the New England Alpine* by Aaron Ellison; *Where do Pool-breeding Amphibians Breed in Maine's Wetland-limited, Montane Landscapes?* by Cyndy Lof-tin; *Dynamics of Alpine Small Mammal Communities* by Con-

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Miracle of Survival in the Alpine Zone

• 3rd ANNUAL WATERMAN FUND FIELD TRIP •

by *Laura Waterman*

In the parking lot of the Glenn House, Dave Govatski, our guide looked up at the summit and said, “Fifty-five mile per hour winds are predicted for today.” Everyone—all fifteen of us—who had gathered for our Field Trip to the Alpine Zone looked up at the swirling mass above Mt. Washington’s summit with apprehension ... and anticipation.

This, the third such outing the Waterman Fund had offered to donors and friends, took place on Friday, July 31. It was soon discovered as we departed in the van generously donated by the Mt. Washington Auto road that Dave, a U.S. Forest Service retiree, was a gushing fountain of fascinating facts about everything having to do with our White Mountains.



Field trip attendees receive a wealth of information on Mt. Washington’s notorious weather from Mike Pelchat.

Today we were focused on the Presidential Range, particularly the Alpine Zone. We learned about fir waves (gray bands of dead balsam firs alternating with young green fir trees) and “flag” trees (exposed to the wind, the windward branches die, leaving green branches on only one side.) Dave pointed out these phenomena, and once seen one doesn’t forget. We saw worm lichen and tiny sundews that digest insects. We learned about the mountain sandwort, an alpine plant that deserves the term ubiquitous as it glories in colonizing wasted or damaged places.

As our driver, Dexter, propelled us upward 4000 feet through several distinct successions of forest growth to arrive in the treeless

alpine tundra where flourish a diminutive world of plants that survive in a climate where we humans cannot. Yet, as we all know, a footstep can obliterate these plants. They deserve



our protection and we had come up to see and learn more about how to do our work better.

From the summit of Mt. Washington, Dave led us up in a swirl of clouds and buffeting wind to a spot on the Gulf Side Trail. Here, watching the clouds cast the mountain's sides in deep shadows one minute and sunlight the next, Dave pointed out that because the trail's treadway was punctuated with sharp rocks and was narrow, hikers were forced out of the path onto the more comfortable footing of the alpine. As we discussed how paving with flat rocks could help this situation, the hikers streamed by, some on the trail, but more on the tundra itself, where a visible path had been worn through the plants.

After our lunch, homemade sandwiches by board member Judy Marden in the summit building, we met with Mike Pelchat, head of the Mt. Washington State Park, who, when asked the question, what is the toughest problem you deal

with up here, replied: the weather. Mike went on to describe that the weather forces that had torn the Presidentials to rubble, halving their height through the ages, tore at the summit buildings, cracking the concrete, eroding and wearing away the structures themselves. A never ending battle with the elements.

I suspect all of us listening to Mike thought of the plants. This alpine vegetation hunkers down, growing low and in thick clumps of many species, the Labrador tea, the diapensia, the sandwort, the cranberry and crowberry, the mountain avens, the sedges and grasses, and the stunted trees, ancient and sturdy, called krummholz. They live in this weather that keeps Mike continually at work repairing his buildings. It's hard to find words for the wonder of that. Yet, a booted foot can crush plants. I think all of us, as we descended back down through the forest successions felt a renewed commitment of keeping the alpine zone wild and healthy.



Thank You's from Page Hollow

Laura Waterman

Allison Bell for her alpine flower slide presentation and amusing anecdotal history of her work with Nancy Slack, our Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Awardee, at the annual dinner. **Rick McCarten and staff at the AMC's Highland Center** for meeting space for our board meeting and for facilitating the smooth running of our annual dinner in the Washburn Room. **Brian Post** for his careful management of our website. **Anne McKinsey** of AMCK Web & Print Design for the handsome and conscientious work she does on *The Alpine Steward* and on our website. **Howie Wemyss and Dexter** of the Mount Washington Auto Road for driving us up the mountain, and to **David Govatski**, U.S. Forest Service retiree, for being our guide to the alpine zone, fir waves, hiker impacts, and more on the Field Trip we

offer to donors and friends.

Chris Woodside, *Appalachia's* editor, for her continued generosity and far-sighted support of our Essay Contest, and for continuing to publish the winning essay in the December issue.

Rebecca Oreskes, Val Stori, Annie Bellerose, Michael Weychert, Julie Goren, and Peggy Dillon for reading for the Essay Contest.

Bethany Taylor for her loyalty and perceptive thinking as we continue to fine tune the Essay Contest.

Ken Linge and the Blake Memorial Library for providing very comfortable meeting space for our October board meeting.

Rick Paradis, our past board president, for his continued wise counsel as we finalized our Strategic Plan.

The Alpine in Baxter Park ... continued from page 1

species with 317 species recorded from both historic and current records. The Travelers had an impressive 164 species. All of our results are compiled in a database that links species to pressed plant collections, reports and publications, and observations. We also help to build a growing library of macro photographs of vegetative as well as floral characters of alpine plants.

Since our work in Baxter State Park, we have expanded our work to other alpine habitats in Maine and are in the early stages of building a field guide to the alpine plants of Maine, potentially expanding into Canada as well. The field guide will be designed to assist users identifying alpine plants based on vegetative characters.

Page 1 photo: Volunteer, Jordan Chalfant on Mount Coe.

Alpine Steward Award ... continued from page 10

Mountain Club. In her current role as Programs Manager for the Appalachian Mountain Club's Hut System and Cardigan Lodge, Nancy supervises the volunteer naturalist programs, and has coordinated the "Volunteer Naturalist Weekend" at Cold River Camp in Maine for 25 years. Nancy has also trained the hut naturalists since the inception of that Hut Naturalist program, introducing new recruits to the alpine, subalpine, and boreal environments surrounding the eight huts and Cardigan Lodge. Walter Graff and Chris Thayer, in their nomination of Nancy, noted her patience and grace, as well as her enthusiasm for alpine tundra and alpine ecosystems.

On a personal note, I was one of the many, many hut naturalists trained by Nancy Ritger. She may be tired of hearing me say it, but I can clearly recall my first few days above treeline at Lakes of the Clouds Hut with Nancy, who introduced me to the patterns, processes, and common plants of the New England alpine tundra, setting in motion a lifelong fascination with and appreciation for this breathtaking environment. For this, I'll always be grateful. Walter and Chris noted that one of Nancy's program participants had called her a "national treasure;" this is far from an overstatement!

Alpine Gathering ... continued from page 11

nor Wood; *Heavy Metal Concentrations by Distributions in Alpine Soils of Baxter State Park* by Tony Jenkins and *Patterns of Species Loss and Spring Phenology in the Plant Communities of Acadia National Park* by Caitlin McDonough Mackenzie.

After dinner the 2015 Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award was given to Nancy Ritger. Nancy is an Educator-Naturalist for the Appalachian Mountain Club and has spent thirty years impacting thousands of people with messages of stewardship for the alpine environment.

Saturday concluded with an energetic and inspiring oration from Teddy Roosevelt, who thanked us for all of the good we do for conservation. Colonel Roosevelt, played by Joe Wiegand, roused the crowd with patriotic messages, personal anecdotes and a review of his fascinating life, including the influences of outdoor guides from Maine.

This year's Gathering provided an invaluable opportunity to network and share ideas to help strengthen the stewardship work that we all do. We hope to see you in two years at the 10th Northeast Alpine Stewardship Gathering!

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Deadline for Grant Applications

Grant applications for alpine project funding are due on **December 15, 2015.**

For more information, visit: www.watermanfund.org or by contacting grants@watermanfund.org.

To apply, submit a proposal as a PDF file to grants@watermanfund.org. Paper applications are no longer accepted.