



Hooksett Conservation Commission

Explore. Protect. Reconnect.

Town of Hooksett
35 Main Street
Hooksett, NH 03106
March 26, 2018

2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT

For Town Council

Bio Control and New Benches for Hooksett Riverwalk Trail
Trail Enhancement Plan & Kiosk, Pinnacle Park
Clay Pond Conservation Area, Kiosk, and Easements
Timber Harvest at Laurel Road Conservation Property....

Hooksett Riverwalk Trail

Beginning in 2017, the Hooksett Conservation Commission (HCC) and Town Engineer started discussions with Allenstown, Pembroke, and Concord regarding a connecting trail system to southern New Hampshire Regional Trails. This year we were pleased to be informed that **Governor Sununu** listed the **Hooksett to Pembroke trail as a state priority** in the 10-year transportation plan as part of the Granite State Rail Trail system.

The state legislature will develop the final 10-year plan in 2018.



The HCC authorized **three releases of a parasitic wasp over the summer** to attack the Emerald Ash Borer, in the first phase of a three-year **Biological Control** project by the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) on the Hooksett Riverwalk property. The **Emerald Ash Borer** has been detected in the Merrimack River Valley, including on the Hooksett property. This non-native insect is responsible for the rapid destruction of Ash trees in other states. The tiny wasps do not sting people, pets, or wildlife and pose no other threat to the environment, according to extensive studies by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It will be several years before we can know the effectiveness of these efforts. *Residents are asked to stay vigilant and report any sightings of the Emerald Ash Borer, shown above.*



Figure 1: Emerald Ash Borer



Fifth Grade Teacher, Deirdre Brotherson, Hooksett Memorial School, was awarded a \$700 grant from Target to transport students to the Hooksett Riverwalk Trail. Educational site visits will be planned to explore the rich wildlife and natural resources of the Riverwalk area.

“This is a really rich piece of property,” said Brotherson. “I like to have my students go outside and just stop and listen to the birds. I like to get them more in touch with the environment.”



Figure 2: Two of three park benches at the Riverwalk

The Hooksett Riverwalk Trail system has seen brisk activity and enjoyment for Hooksett residents year-round. In July, **park benches were installed** at three locations for hikers and nature-seekers of all abilities to take in river views and scenery of this unique property.



The 1.8-mile trail system design takes into consideration wildlife enhancement, protection of endangered species, drainage and run-off, and scenic views of the river.

Pinnacle Park Kiosk, Trail Enhancement Design and Map

Over the winter, the HCC partnered with **Kathie Northrup of the Heritage Commission** and Bear-Paw Regional Greenways on **trail enhancements, improved signage, and a new kiosk**. Our plan was to clearly mark the trail to the summit and eventually provide a loop back to the parking area, as shown on the map below. Three distinct trails were named in consideration of the interesting and informative history of Hooksett’s famous landmark:

- Old Carriage Road to Summit
- Village Overlook Trail
- Pond Loop Icehouse Trail

The kiosk, contracted with Bear-Paw for design and construction, is scheduled for installation in 2018.

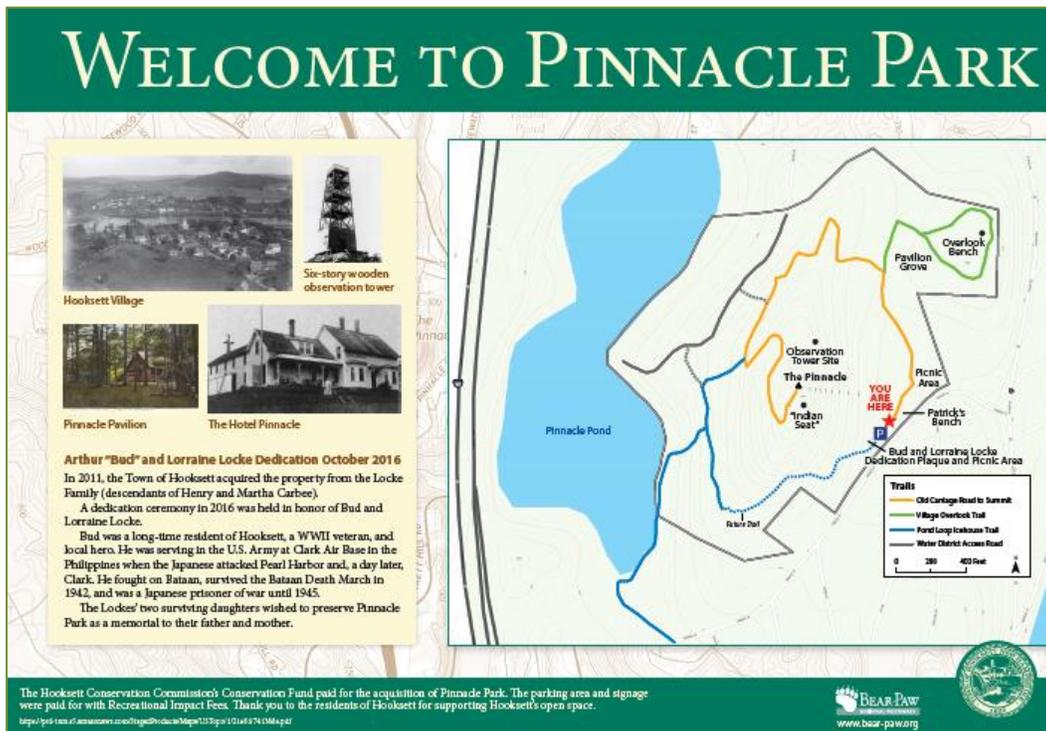


Figure 3: Pinnacle Park Kiosk, middle panel

Clay Pond Conservation Area – 750 acres

Under the direction of Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, the conservation easement for Clay Pond III was recorded in November 2017 and adds 73.5 acres to the Clay Pond Conservation Area. This property, acquired in 2009:

- Protects wildlife habitats identified in the NH Wildlife Action Plan
- Preserves surface water and groundwater to safeguard community drinking water supplies
- Conserves productive forestland
- Protects and provides scenic enjoyment for the public

The timber harvest at Clay Pond was completed and funding was received for:

- maps and brochures
- a kiosk
- new gates

Though we were too late for last year's report, Clay Pond was a featured property in the NHDES Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund's annual publication, December 2016.

Clay Pond I and II, 2009 and 2012
Awardee: Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
Award Amount: \$200,000
Total Project Cost: \$1.3 million

Photo courtesy Bear-Paw Regional Greenways



A little-known area of Hooksett located south of Bear-Paw State Park and off the Chester Turnpike has become a significant location of land conservation efforts to date. The Town of Hooksett and Bear-Paw Regional Greenways worked in partnership to conserve approximately 710 acres of high-value wildlife habitat in the Clay Pond Headwaters area, including over 130 acres of wetlands. Three stream restoration sites were also funded to improve 105 linear feet of perennial and intermittent habitat that were negatively impacted during historic settlement of the area.

In addition to the wetland mitigation funds, the Hooksett Conservation Commission, LCHIP, the NHDES Water Source Protection programs, and the Open Space Institute's Saving New England's Wildlife program worked to fund this important project. The site contains large wetland complexes, vernal pools of high habitat value, and the town-designated prime wetland, Clay Pond. The protection of these properties will add three parcels that total 733 acres of

protected land adjacent to other large protected parcels.

The property has an undulating topography, with the lowest elevation at 480 feet and is located in the southeast corner of Hooksett, close to Candia. The highest elevation is about 700-710 feet found in two locations. The property is located within a large unfragmented block of forests and embedded wetlands. This unfragmented block is estimated to be about 22,000 acres; roughly 99% is comprised of forests. There are over 14,000 acres of protected or publicly owned lands either adjacent to or near the property. These include areas such as Bear Brook State Park (9,977 acres), the Hinman Pond Preserves (767 acres), the Great Marsh Preserve (395 acres), and lands owned and managed by Manchester Water Works for protection of public drinking water (over 1,000 acres), as well as other protected parcels.

The project combined town ownership with a conservation easement(s) held by Bear-Paw and was a top priority in Hooksett's Master Plan, the WAP, Bear-Paw's Conservation Plan and others. The wildlife habitat management goals for the property include the following:

- Protection of water quality, wetlands and riparian areas.
- Maintenance or enhancement of wildlife habitat.
- Protection of unique or fragile natural areas.
- Conservation of native plant and animal species, and natural communities.

Figure 4: NHDES Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund Publication featuring Clay Pond

Laurel Road Conservation Area

Another timber harvest was undertaken, this time at the 155-acre **Laurel Road conservation property** south of Whitehall Rd; this harvest is expected to bring about \$25,000 in revenue for the town. Harvest will resume after July 1 under the direction of Swift Corwin of Calhoun and Corwin Forestry, LLC.

Hooksett Old Home Day 2017

The HCC prepared a **poster and flyer** for Old Home Day to publicize trail walks in Hooksett, including our latest initiatives at the Hooksett Riverwalk Trail and Pinnacle Park. Members staffed the booth throughout the day, interacting with residents.

Hooksett-Bow Forest Project

Established a conservation easement on nearly 38 acres, north of South Bow Road and west of Hackett Hill Road and I-93 near the Hooksett-Bow town line, identified in the 2004 Master Plan as one of the five prime natural areas to be conserved.

University Heights and Town Pond Area

The HCC plans to hire a consultant and develop a stewardship plan for this property in 2018-2019.

Conservation Stewardship

With greater than 25-percent of town land conserved, the HCC is **focusing on stewardship, trail enhancements, and educational opportunities**. Hooksett can be proud that it has **achieved the “gold standard” in acquired and permanently conserved lands** for the protection of wildlife, preservation of our natural resources, and enjoyment of future generations.

The Hooksett Conservation Commission meets **the second Monday of the month at 4:30 pm** in the Town Hall Chambers of the Municipal Building. All residents are encouraged to provide input on conservation related matters. Residents interested in becoming members or interested in participating in a specific project are urged to contact the Conservation Commission. All of us extend our deepest thank you to the community for your continued support and interest.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Couture, Chair Cindy Robertson, Vice Chair David Ross, Town Council Representative
 Members: Phil Fitanides Deb Miville JoCarol Woodburn
 Alternate Members: David Hess Todd Lizotte
 Leann Fuller, Staff Support

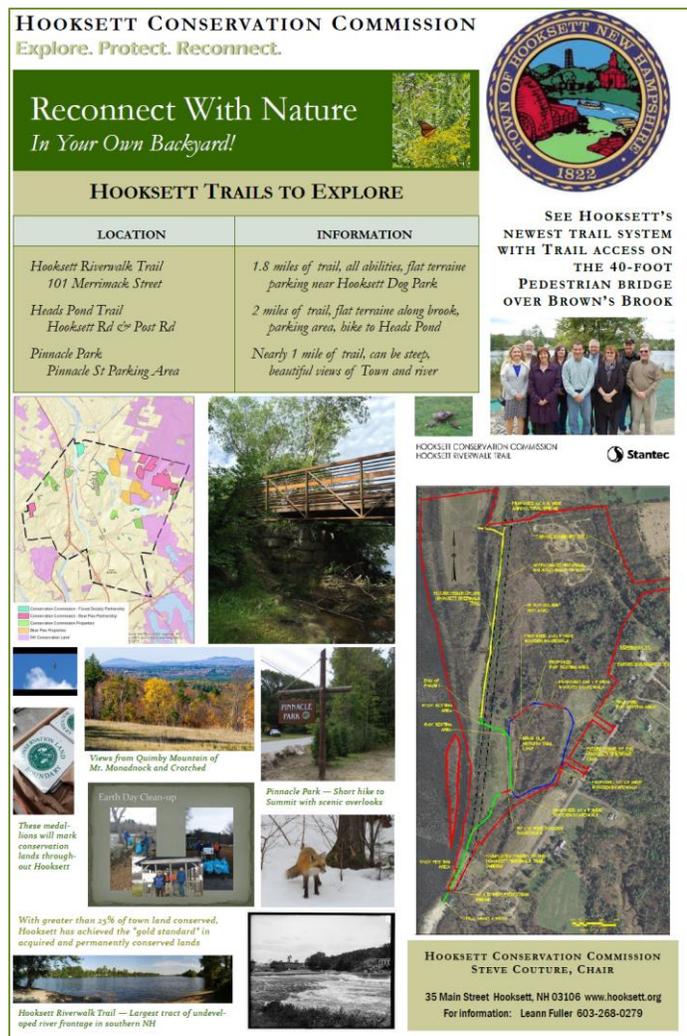


Figure 5: Old Home Day Poster