



## BELGRADE REGIONAL CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

BRCA News ~ Summer 2004

# BRCA's Denny Phillips and Jane Eberle Honored with Land Heritage Award



*Denny Phillips poses with the 2003 Land Heritage Award. Denny and fellow BRCA board member Jane Eberle received the award for their selfless dedication to the Kennebec Highlands project.*

We're excited to report that BRCA board members and Kennebec Highland supporters Denny Phillips and Jane Eberle were named co-recipients of the 2003 Land Heritage Award by Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT). Each year in May, at the Maine Land Conservation Conference, MCHT presents the award to an individual, organization, or coalition for exemplary conservation efforts in Maine.

"Thanks to the selfless dedication of Denny and Jane, a landscape scale project is achieving a visionary goal—creation of the largest contiguous tract of conservation land in central Maine," said Jay Espy, president of MCHT. Over the past six years, Denny and Jane have led BRCA, working with the Land for Maine's Future Program and other partners, in successfully securing 29 separate properties encompassing 5,400 acres spread over four towns in the Kennebec Highlands area west of Augusta. "The Kennebec Highlands project is one of the most imaginative, ambitious, complex and exciting regional land conservation projects in all of Maine," said Espy. "It provides

extensive public benefit including wildlife habitat protection, more than 20 miles of hiking trails as well as fishing and hunting opportunities in Kennebec County."

In presenting the award, Espy highlighted several factors that contributed to the project's success. They include extensive landowner education, promotion of public access, support for water quality projects, solid negotiating skills, and effective fundraising methods. In addition, the project has benefited from extensive stewardship planning and trail building activities. On a clear day, several of the high trails over hilltop blueberry barrens afford views of Mt. Washington, Mt. Blue, Katahdin, and the Camden Hills. Other trails wind through forested land to remote ponds providing outstanding trout fishing.

Congratulations to Denny and Jane on this well-deserved recognition. Read about more BRCA land acquisitions on page 3. If you're interested in supporting the Kennebec Highlands project or getting involved in trail maintenance, contact the BRCA office at 495-6039 or [brca@gwi.net](mailto:brca@gwi.net).

### Annual Meeting

The BRCA annual meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, July 25**. This year's event will be held at the Center for All Seasons in Belgrade and will feature guest speaker Jim Connors. See page 3 for more information.

## Milfoil: It Only Takes One Plant to Ruin a Lake

Invasive plants, such as variable-leafed milfoil and hydrilla, which threaten to choke out native plant and fish populations, have now been found in 19 Maine lakes, including our own Messalonskee Lake. Last summer 43 percent of boats leaving Messalonskee Lake's Route 27 ramp were carrying variable-leafed milfoil plant fragments. It only takes one plant to infest a previously pristine lake.

This summer is our Milfoil Committee's third year coordinating boat inspections at local launches to stop the spread of invasive

species in the Belgrade Lakes chain. Volunteers are busy conducting boat inspections on East Pond, North Pond, Salmon Lake, Great Pond, Long Pond, and Messalonskee Lake.

Because Messalonskee's Route 27 ramp has the most substantial infestation of variable leaf milfoil in the state, the state is controlling access at this ramp and handling inspections. BRCA inspectors are stationed on every other ramp for eight hours every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday this summer. In their first four weekends alone our inspectors inspected more than 700 boats.

From the Executive Director

## Watershed Wisdom—Cover Up!

Around many older, much-loved camps the vegetation has been worn away by generations of lake lovers. Often on well-wooded lots, grass and traditional groundcovers do not grow well. This leaves a serious threat to our lakes—bare soil. Raindrops hitting the dirt loosen molecules containing phosphorous, which are then carried over the bare ground and into the lakes to feed the algae. Planting buffers will help, but the first goal should be to cover bare soil.

What can be done? If grass won't grow because of shade or soil conditions, plant non-traditional shade loving groundcovers—such as bunchberry, lily-of-the-valley, or periwinkles. Under hemlocks (where few other plants will grow), you can let the little hemlocks grow and prune them to keep them low and bushy. If you can't get anything to grow, let the pine needles and leaves build up into a nice spongy duff layer. This is nature's filter to protect lake water quality. An alternative, instant duff layer is bark mulch, especially the "soil stabilizer" mixes available from local nurseries. Added in a four- to six-inch layer, bark mulch has the added advantage of helping to filter runoff.

Walking paths should be well-defined and stabilized, as should parking areas. Buffer strips can be planted downhill from the parking area to filter runoff. Paths can be covered with stone or mulch. Paths also should meander down toward the shore—such turns give water an opportunity to run off the path and into the buffer.

Still not sure how your property may be affecting water quality in our lakes or want more information? Conservation Corps project director Hilary Walter and I are available for on-site consultations. The Corps provides labor free of charge; and landowners pay for materials and any permit fees. Just call us at 495-6039 or fill out a site assessment form, available on the BRCA Web site at [belgradelakes.org/corps.html](http://belgradelakes.org/corps.html) or at the BRCA office.



Mike Little  
Executive Director

## Waterbars, Bog Bridges, and "Monataka"

Stewardship volunteers continue resource improvements in the Kennebec Highlands

The summer season is in full swing now, the weather perfect for getting out and enjoying all that the Belgrade Lakes region has to offer.

The Stewardship Committee had two very productive workdays recently, one in May and one for National Trails Day on June 5. Our first workday, on the Sanders Hill Trail, was May 8. I want to thank everyone that helped out that day. Volunteers were: Ellen Malloy, Roy Bouchard, Sue Burns, John Whitney, Steve Cowperthwaite, Laura Flight, Bill Swan, Denny and Sandy Phillips, and John and Mary Glucksman of Standish, who traveled the longest distance to join us. The trail improvements were waterbars, three sections of bog bridging, stepping-stones over wet areas, brush clearing, and stump removal.

The second workday was June 5, National Trails Day (NTD). (For more information on next year's NTD you can go to [www.americanhiking.org](http://www.americanhiking.org).) We started where we left off on the Sanders Hill Trail on the previous workday. Volunteers were: Ellen

Malloy, Priscilla and Ed Hinckley, Lois Hinckley, Laura Flight, and Paul Dodson. We added one more section of bog bridging, more waterbars, and did some brush removal. On the top of Sanders Hill a great resting rock (I'm big on rocks) was cleared of leaves and dead branches. The view was improved—a great place to sit and reflect while gazing at the magnificent views of Great and Long ponds and east to the Camden Hills. From the resting rock to the Kennebec Highlands Trail we focused on brush removal and trail definition. After that we all went to the Dolley property for a cookout.

Speaking of the Dolley property, Michelle Dolley, daughter of the former owners, informed us that the property used to go by the name Monataka. We are still waiting to find out about the source and meaning of the name. Anybody? The Stewardship Committee unanimously voted to rename the parcel Monataka, pending board approval.

There will be more opportunities for volunteerism this summer. If you



are interested in helping out or want a guided tour of the Kennebec Highlands or other BRCA lands contact me at 397-4877 or via e-mail at [BrianA@gwi.net](mailto:BrianA@gwi.net). Thanks and enjoy the summer!

—Brian Alexander

# Save the Date: Annual Meeting set for July 25

*Join your BRCA friends for an afternoon of food and fun*

Join fellow BRCA members, volunteers, community members, and friends for an afternoon of conversation, local conservation updates, and good food. Hear about what's happening with the Kennebec Highlands, land conservation, water quality, invasive species, and the BRCA.

Jim Connors, a long term board member of our neighboring Kennebec Land Trust, will give the keynote address—"Kennebec Land Trust: Stories from Our Neighbors." Jim's talk will be followed by updates on BRCA's own programs.

## **BRCA Annual Meeting**

Sunday, July 25, 1 p.m.  
The Center for All Seasons  
Route 27, Belgrade  
All are welcome.

Jim, a resident of Monmouth, will discuss KLT's recent growth, its role in the community, and long-term plans for protecting our "sister" watershed. Jim has served as KLT's president and is currently chair of its stewardship committee. He also is a senior planner for the State Planning Office's Coastal

Program and handles coastal water access projects for the Land for Maine's Future Program. Jim also calls himself a "consumer of trails and cross country skiing in the Kennebec Highlands."

Appetizers, salads, sandwiches, and ice cream refreshments will be provided starting at 1 p.m.

Help us get a headcount for the caterer by calling the BRCA office (495-6039) by Wednesday, July 21, to RSVP. A suggested donation of \$10 at the door will help us defray expenses and spread BRCA's money even farther.

See you there!

# Kennebec Highlands Milestone Reached, French Mountain Protection Expanded

At their May 18th meeting, the Land for Maine's Future Board (LMFB) voted unanimously to allow BRCA to substitute the purchase of two parcels abutting the north boundary of the Kennebec Highlands in place of the blueberry fields on top of Vienna Mountain, which were originally proposed in the project. Purchase of the May and Thorndike parcels will take place by the end of June and will include the last 300 feet of unprotected shoreline on Watson Pond as well as possible trail access to the Kennebec Highlands from Route 27.

Substituting the May and Thorndike parcels is a very favorable development for the Kennebec Highlands project. Negotiations for the blueberry fields had dragged on for the entire six years of the project, and we were not closer to an agreement than when we started. The regrettable death of the property owner recently put negotiations on hold while the probate court determines the dissolution of his estate.

The LMFB was anxious to close the book on this phase of the

Kennebec Highlands, especially from an accounting standpoint, and the substitution allows them to do so. Once the estate is settled BRCA will continue to pursue the blueberry fields, which are likely to be part of a future project encompassing land at the south boundary of the Kennebec Highlands. When an agreement is eventually reached BRCA will submit another application to LMF for the acquisition.

This substitution also has a financial advantage for BRCA. Had we reached an agreement on the blueberry fields, we would have needed to raise nearly the entire purchase price because we have nearly used up the state's "match" for the project. As part of a new project BRCA will be subject to a new 2:1 match requirement. In other words, we will only need to raise one third of the purchase price of the blueberry fields. Money already raised will pay for the May and Thorndike parcels with enough remaining to go a long way toward that figure.

Other great news in land protection is BRCA's acquisition of more than 50 acres abutting our French

Mountain property. This parcel begins on the east face of French Mountain near the summit and extends to the shore of Whittier Pond. It is bounded by the Mill Stream flowing from Watson Pond to Whittier on the north and encompasses the west shore of Whittier Pond, except for a four acre "out parcel," to the stream flowing to Long Pond. This purchase was made possible by the extremely generous donation of a longtime friend of the area and by grants from the Boston Foundation and Norcross Wildlife Foundation.

Negotiations are ongoing for the parcel with the hiking trail that adjoins the recently acquired top of Mount Phillip. Two conservation easements we have been pursuing, the Balgooyen Farm and West Road view, are moving toward completion as well and we hope to have news about their consummation soon.

BRCA could never have been so successful in these efforts to preserve the natural heritage of this region we love without the generous support of you, our faithful members. Thank you all so much.



**BELGRADE  
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**Mark your calendar.** The BRCA annual meeting is **Sunday, July 25**. See page 3 for details.

## Upcoming BRCA and conservation events

### **BRCA Annual Meeting**

Sunday, July 25, 1 p.m.

The Center for All Seasons, Route 27, Belgrade

Join fellow BRCA members, volunteers, community members and friends for an afternoon of conversation, local conservation updates, and good food. All welcome. (see page 3 for more information.)

### **Mushroom Hike**

Saturday, August 21, 8:30 a.m.

Kennebec Highlands

Join Ted Elliott and Michaeline Mulvey of the Maine Mushroom Association on a hike to explore the fungi of the Kennebec Highlands. Meet in front of the BRCA office. *Please call ahead to save a spot as space may be limited.*

## Equipment Needed

Do you have a **digital camera** or a **slide projector** you don't need or would consider donating to BRCA? These items would be a great help to our executive director and the Conservation Corps in their work.

*Please send items of interest for future newsletters to Alicia MacLeay, 17 Richardson Rd, Rome, ME 04963; phone: 495-2028; e-mail: alicia@macleay.com*

### **Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance**

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