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Downeast Lakes LAND TRUST ®

Downeast Lakes Traditions

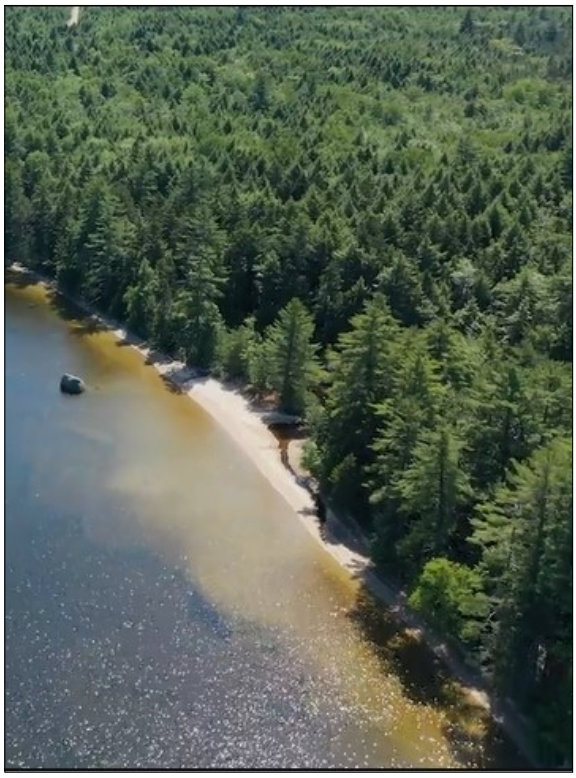
Forests and Lakes—For People—Forever ®

Big Sand Beach

At the southern end of Lower Sysladobsis Lake, there lies a pristine shoreline stretching out 1,500 feet known to locals as Big Sand Beach. This 17.6-acre parcel is surrounded on two sides by the Downeast Lakes Community Forest. After 30 years of private ownership, this remarkable property has become available for purchase.

The property is part of a 1.2-million-acre corridor of contiguous conserved land stretching from Nicatous Lake in Hancock County to the Gaspe Peninsula in Quebec. It is the historic landing site for watercraft portaging from Sysladobsis Lake in the St. Croix Watershed to Fourth Machias Lake in the Machias River Watershed. The Passamaquoddy Tribe recognizes its significance as a canoe route for millennia. The size and quality of its shoreline, its recreational significance, historical significance, and concentration of high-quality wetland ecosystems make it unique within our region.

The sweeping arc of Big Sand Beach



Downeast Lakes Land Trust is pleased to announce a campaign to secure and protect this remarkable property! The project's campaign goal is to raise $440,000 for acquisition and stewardship funding. DLLT is reaching out to public and private conservation groups in support of the project.

We need your help to achieve this goal! To date, more than $100,000 has been pledged toward the campaign. Giving a gift today will endure for generations as we work together to keep Big Sand Beach a publicly accessible treasure.

Donations can be made from the website, in-person, or by mailing in a check noted "Big Sand Beach" in the memo line.

Lakeville Adds Trails!

The Lakeville community has increased their recreational capacity this summer with the addition of two new trails: the Lee Academy Horseshoe Lake Trail and the Dobsis Narrows Trail. Trailhead signs are posted and parking improvements are underway. Maps are being updated and will be available soon.

The trail along Horseshoe Lake will take on the name of the school who provided the volunteer labor. A class from Lee Academy led by Susan Linscott worked with DLLT staff to rough in the trail by clearing the entire pathway. The class accomplished this impressive task over several visits to the forest.

Horseshoe Lake Trail work day with Lee Academy student volunteers

Thank you Lee Academy!

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Big Lake Milfoil Coalition Progress

New England Milfoil spent 12 weeks mapping and removing variable water-milfoil (VWM) from Big Lake this summer. Variable water-milfoil is an invasive non-native species capable of clogging a watershed and undermining the native fish population. Since its discovery in Big Lake back in 2019, our community sprang into action: DLLT organized the Big Lake Milfoil Coalition, volunteers have conducted extensive surveys, and Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection has been contracting with New England Milfoil (NEM) for diver-assisted suction harvesting every season since.

Coalition members include Lake Stewards of Maine, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Grand Lake Stream Guides Assoc., Woodland Pulp LLC, Big Lake Campmeeting Assoc., Big Lake Road Assoc., Princeton Rod and Gun Club, and Town of Grand Lake Stream.

This 2022 season, NEM mapped 38 acres of extremely dense VWM in Clifford Bay, including 26 acres near the mouth of Clifford Stream. The strategic approach for this season was to maintain a relatively VWM-free channel connecting Clifford Stream to Clifford Bay while completely removing other areas of lower density infestation.

Crews of volunteers worked from August through October, mapping the spread of VWM so that contracted divers could remove known patches. Teams started the removal effort by pulling all the known small patches in Long Lake before moving to Big Musquash Stream and Grand Falls Flowage. Little River and a cove near Peter Dana Point were entirely cleaned up. The remaining weeks focused more closely on Clifford Bay, where the milfoil is quite dense. NEM removed plant growth in the mouth of Clifford Stream and the southern end of the bay to reduce fragmentation of milfoil by boaters accessing the stream.

Typically, plants were found in 4 to 9 feet of water. Divers experienced certain areas where the VWM seemed to grow directly from the rocks! The rocks had to be moved out of the way to get at the roots which is no small task. Even if the entire summer's work had focused only on Clifford Bay, it would not have been possible to remove all the known milfoil growth due to the extremely dense nature of the infestation in that area.

Crews worked through most weather conditions, rain or shine, and strategically shifted areas based on weather and visibility. Their dedication to the project reaped a **grand total of 13,183 gallons of VWM removed** from Big Lake waters this season! The work is still far from being complete.

Volunteers and donations are welcome; please visit our website for ongoing updates, videos, and further information. Please do your part, and help the Coalition stop the spread of milfoil by checking your boat for plant materials before transporting, and by cleaning, draining, and drying all surfaces and compartments before launching on a new waterbody. The vigilance of local residents, boaters, and recreationists in the area is paramount to the future success of these collaborative efforts.

MISSION

Downeast Lakes Land Trust contributes to the long-term economic and environmental well-being of the Downeast Lakes region through the conservation and exemplary management of its forests and waters.

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President's Message

Dear Friends,

I hope you have enjoyed an autumn as glorious as the one we've had this year in Grand Lake Stream! This year we've seen the return of many staples of summer and autumn life here in Downeast Maine: July crowds, community picnics, the Grand Lake Stream Folk Art Festival, and all the little things that signal a return to normal in our sleepy corner of the world.

Over lunch with a couple of colleagues this fall, our conversation turned to the question of what, in fact, our work seeks to "conserve". The more we spoke, the more our conversation drifted away from discussions of forests, lakes, wildlife, and rare ecosystems. More and more, we began to talk about people, and about peoples' connections to the land and its resources. Again and again, we referenced "way of life", as the thing we truly want to capture, preserve, protect, and nurture into the future.

In the weeks and months since this lively conversation, my thoughts keep returning to the concept of a "way of life". What is the way of life of the Downeast Lakes Region? What are its hallmarks? Why do so many of us feel compelled to return, year after year, to these relatively ordinary Maine woods and lakes? I'd wager it has far less to do with the fishing, the hunting, the boating, or the scenery; and far *more* to do with the friendships, the casual waves at passing cars, the spontaneous conversations on the sides of dusty woods roads, and the silent companionship that surrounds a campfire at night.

I surely haven't seen it all – and I'm old enough to concede I never will – but I've seen enough of the world to know that there are thousands of beautiful places with silent forests, peaceful lakes, abundant sportfish, and awe-inspiring sunrises. The Downeast Lakes have all of those qualities, but they aren't exceptional in that regard. *And yet* those places aren't where I've chosen to make my home. They aren't places that draw each of us back year after year, and I've started to believe it's because the roots we've each grown in the Downeast Lakes Region aren't about scenery or nature: they're about community.

We make our community by *communing* with one another – sharing a place, a forest, and an intimate understanding of how *fortunate* we are. We are fortunate to have watched a salmon pluck an emerging caddisfly from the surface of a swirling eddy in May. We are fortunate to have tasted wild blueberries plucked by hand from the side of a trail in August. We are fortunate to have felt a throb in our chests as a bull moose bellows deeply on a frosty, golden morning in October. And we are fortunate to have stood in the falling snow on a night so still that you can *hear* the sound of snowflakes scraping through the spruce boughs. We share those experiences through our communion; we cherish them, and we want them for our children and for their children. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to wrest a living from these forests and lakes, we want others to share that same opportunity and to feel that dependence and connectedness to the cycle of the seasons and the ebbs and flows of the fish and forests.

I'm grateful to share this communion with all of you, the Downeast Lakes community. With your support, we can keep this way of life going into the future, so that the modern world is not a world without campfires, dusty dirt roads, or good friends with whom to share them.

Be well, friends.

David Montague

Corporate Sponsors

Corporate Sponsors support our vision for the economic and environmental well-being of Grand Lake Stream and the Downeast Lakes Region. These businesses made gifts in 2022, and are featured on downeastlakes.org through 2023.

Other businesses contribute to Downeast Lakes Land Trust through employee matching grant programs. Thank you to these companies, and to the donors who created the matching grant opportunities!

Brook Trout ($1,000 +)

- Bailey's General Construction
- Davis Forestry Products, Inc.
- Grand Lake Canoe and Paddle
- Hanscom Construction Inc.
- Machias Savings Bank
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Grand Laker ($250 +)

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- Furbush-Roberts Printing Co.
- Herbert C Haynes Inc.
- Leen's Lodge
- Pembroke Lumber Co.
- The Pine Tree Store
- Weatherby's Lodge

Interested in becoming a corporate sponsor of Downeast Lakes Land Trust? We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so all donations are tax deductible. For more information, please contact DLLT Development and Outreach Manager, Nicole Nygren, by email at nnygren@downeastlakes.org, or call (207)796-2100.

Volunteers Dig Into Projects

The 2022 summer was a season of many improvements to trails and campsites which can be attributed in large measure to the implementation of DLLT's new strategic plan for volunteer development. Downeast Lakes Land Trust has been blessed this year with over 120 volunteers! DLLT hosted volunteer trail days every Friday from June through August, welcomed school groups to complete service hours, and held a forest cleanup day, in addition to a wide variety of other opportunities to get involved.

An important (some may even say essential) project undertaken has been the creation and installation of outhouses in the community forest at each campsite. Al LaPlante supplied the privy design. Al also contributed to their construction along with Dave Dyson, Bruce Dubee, and Jessie Kuester. Volunteers included Maine Conservation Corps students who helped complete the installation at the Stone Dam and Princeton Island sites. Many other volunteers provided helping hands during the summer for the many stages of construction, too many to try to name them all here, but their work did not go unnoticed or unappreciated—Thank to you everyone who contributed!

The outhouse project was completed mid-November. Jessie Kuester, Lonna Perry, and Ashton Mabee worked diligently, rain or shine, to finish the job. Supplies for one more installation are ready to go for a new campsite development in Lakeville on next summer's agenda.

Would you like to join the volunteer program? Discover opportunities from the Volunteering page of our website under the News & Events tab!

Outhouse at Stone Dam

Volunteers Staining Wood for Privies

DLLT Honors Founding Supporter

At this year's Annual Picnic in Grand Lake Stream, members of DLLT's Board of Directors, staff, and community took time to acknowledge the many invaluable contributions to the organization by Jill McGrath.

Mrs. McGrath has been involved with DLLT since the first meetings of our founders, more than 20 years ago. She kept the minutes of those early meetings, and in the years since she has been a stalwart volunteer at DLLT events and a champion of DLLT's mission in the local community. DLLT President and CEO David Montague praised Mrs. McGrath's "enormous heart" while presenting her with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the board and staff.

Supporters like Jill McGrath have been, and continue to be, the most essential ingredients for DLLT's success!

DLLT Honors Two Early Supporters With Conservation Awards

This past July at Downeast Lakes Land Trust's annual picnic and meeting, DLLT celebrated the conservation accomplishments of the 2022 Downeast Lakes Conservation Award winners, Bill Mackowski and Roger Milligan. These men are noted Downeast woodsmen whose friendship and volunteerism were instrumental to the early formation and success of DLLT. Board member Steve Shaefer introduced the recipients and presented each an engraved white ash paddle.

Roger was born in GLS and grew up on Tough End Road with his two brothers. He is one of few around who participated in the legendary logging traditions of the area which included the use of horses to move lumber to water. During his career with the Forest Service, Roger was the Chief Forest Ranger. "Upon retirement, Roger became a committed founding father of Downeast Lakes Land Trust. When Roger spoke, people listened. Bottom line is we might not be here today without him," said Shaefer. Roger was also forester for the land trust in the early years.

Bill is a wildlife biologist and avid outdoorsman who is nationally renowned for creating traditional ash pack baskets, snowshoes, fishing creels and other goods. Schaefer introduced Bill as a "staunch advocate of DLLT from the very beginning. His enthusiasm and boundless energy were huge factors in the early days. His donations of wonderful handmade items have raised thousands for the trust."

After the applause quieted down and Bill rose to accept the beautifully finished paddle, he shared his experience of the formation of the land trust. "Being involved in this [DLLT] was one of the most significant and prideful things that I've ever done in my life. When we started there was so much energy and enthusiasm, and the message was so clear that it was easy. It was easy. It was a template for how land conservation should take place."

Their successes in conservation provide a lasting legacy in Grand Lake Stream for its residents and visitors. Thank you!

Above: Bill Mackowski (left), David Montague (right)
Below: White Ash Paddle engraved for Roger Milligan

Volunteer Profile: Sharon Brunner

Sharon Brunner is an avid outdoor recreationist, bird watcher, and volunteer. Sharon has a passion for things that get her outdoors and moving, protecting the very creatures she enjoys observing. In March, she put these two passions to work by assisting DLLT staff with hanging several owl nesting boxes in the Community Forest. She pulled the tools and boxes through the woods with a sled, held the ladder steady, and took turns securing the boxes to the trees.

Sharon is one of DLLT's education programs biggest supporters. She attended almost every event and program this past year! During the warm summer months, Sharon kayaked Big Lake as a citizen scientist, looking for Common loons. She adopted a nesting platform that she monitored for signs of nesting activity and documented hatching success. This was a new project for DLLT and one that we hope to continue into the future. It's a project that would not be possible without the help of wonderful volunteers like Sharon.

Sharon Brunner

Sharon looks forward to monitoring more loon nests next year as well as assisting in owl box mounting and monitoring. She hopes to expand her volunteer footprint by attending the weekly trail work days next summer and any other species monitoring. As an outdoor recreationist, she's always hiking the land trust trails or kayaking the lakes and streams in the Community Forest. She believes that helping to maintain the trails and monitor the wildlife is something she can do to give back and share her passions with others.

DOWNEAST LAKES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Get more information and keep up to date at www.downeastlakes.org

Downeast Lakes LAND TRUST®

Upcoming Programs & Events

December

Wreath-Making - 1st

An annual community favorite! Make your own wreath with balsam tips from the Community Forest.

Christmas Bird Count - 15th

A citizen science activity developed by Audubon in 1901.

February

Downeast Day on the Ice

Second annual day of ice fishing and family fun at Vining Lake Community Preserve in Cooper. Hosted by DLLT and Downeast Coastal Conservancy.

Summer 2023

Children's Programs

Summer activities will return beginning in July and running through August. Meetings are held weekly on Wednesday mornings, come as you are able to one or all, drop-ins welcomed!

Community Events

July 1st - Canoe Races

July 4th - Grand Lake Stream America Celebrations
Floating the stream, road race, parade and more!

July 29-30 – Grand Lake Stream Folk Art Festival

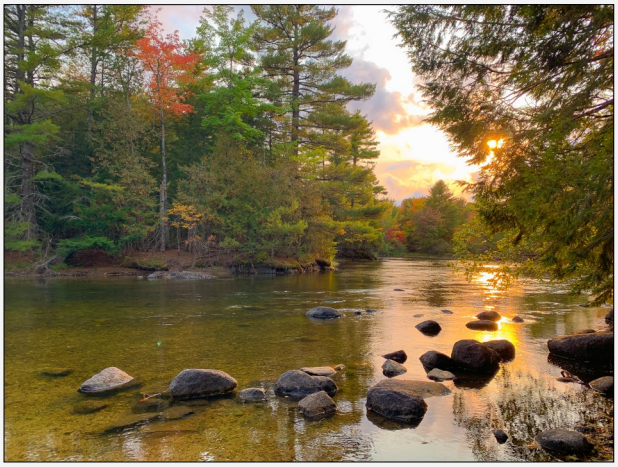
July 30 - DLLT Annual Picnic, West Grand Lake Shore

Other great community events will appear online and in DLLT's summer newsletter.

DLLT Photo Contest

DLLT is pleased to announce the start of the 2023 ***DLLT Photo Contest***. Show us your best photographs of the area! For official contest rules, please visit www.downeastlakes.org. All photographs submitted will be judged by a panel of DLLT Staff and Volunteers. Photos will be selected for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in each category. $25 gift cards to The Pine Tree Store for each category winner, and the "Best In Show" winner (voted on at the GLS Folk Art Festival) will win a guided day!

Email all submissions to: **photo@downeastlakes.org**
The deadline for submission is April 15, 2023.



(Pictured: 2022 Best in Show winner, by Corinne Claunch)

Downeast Nature Note

Chestnut-sided warbler | *Setophaga pensylvanica*

Photo by Shirley Donald/Audubon

The Chestnut-sided Warbler nests in early successional deciduous regrowth and other thickets, where small trees and shrubs have been regenerating for a few years after a disturbance such as logging or a wind storm. Due to the ephemeral nature of these habitats, this species is usually present for fewer than 10 years in any given patch. Although the Daugherty Ridge patch cut is intended to benefit grouse and woodcock, early successional species such as this warbler are likely to use these patches as well.

Migrating and wintering birds are found in a variety of brushy, successional, and mature forested environments. Chestnut-sided Warblers eat mostly insects, especially caterpillars and fly larvae, spiders, locusts, cankerworms, and leafhoppers. Warblers gather caterpillars and other prey from the undersides of leaves. This species is also known to consume fruit and seeds. Chestnut-sided Warbler populations have declined by about 1.2% per year between 1966 and 2015, indicating a cumulative decline of about 45% over that period, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Numbers have declined in part due to loss of habitat, especially in parts of the eastern United States where forests have matured.

A Year of Education

By Sarah Cote

As temperatures drop and autumn turns to winter, I find myself reminiscing on my first year at DLLT. I've been fortunate to lead the education programs and volunteer activities through all 4 seasons in beautiful Grand Lake Stream, Maine. After-school nature clubs, outdoor science classes, annual public events, and new events have helped the community connect with the outdoors. I've enjoyed teaching local students and learning from professionals who have spoken at our events such as astronomer Shawn Laatsch, mycologist Greg Marley, and pomologist Edgar Evenkeel.

July was busy! I watched canoes and kayaks race across West Grand Lake in the rain while volunteers grilled a fabulous lunch. I got to see the excitement on participants faces as they completed 4th of July Scavenger Hunt tasks. The weekly children's programs, boat concert, blueberry hike, and Little Wild Ones activities are more examples of our summer fun.

In October, over 30 participants came out on Apple Harvest Day to hike the Story Book Trail, pick apples, press apple cider, and join in all the activities of the day. The next morning was chilly but that did not scare off paddlers who went home with a bucket of cranberries. Four youth at the Cast & Blast spent one-on-one time with guides and lifetime sportsmen to shoot shotguns, bird hunt over dogs, and fly fish. The kids (and all of us) had so much fun, some shooting their first bird, or venturing into the stream for the first time.

The events and programs over this past year have me very excited and motivated for the year to come. This winter, I hope to host another Downeast Day on the Ice that's even bigger and better than last year. Festival of the Forest will take place in the spring with lots of activities for families. As always, the summer will be filled with children's programs, 4th of July activities, and new and improved educational workshops. Make sure to stay tuned and I hope that you come join us!

Volunteers hanging Owl Boxes

Words From The Woods

By Ernest Carle

View of Daugherty Ridge's next patch cut area overlooking a first entry cut

The excitement is building around the DLLT office leading up to improvements planned for Daugherty Ridge. The Grouse Woodcock patches that were created as circle openings 10 years ago have served their purpose and now need to be replaced by new openings in the acres nearby. The twelve new patches being created will once again let Grouse and Woodcock enjoy the openings they need for breeding and other activities. Each patch cut will have one or two drumming logs placed back into the patch cut for male Ruffed Grouse to use for drumming up the attention of a female.

Each year our land trust does a drumming survey, where members of the DLLT staff stop in one-mile increments along many of our access roads and listen for a few minutes. The results are tabulated and changes in Ruffed Grouse populations can be estimated. By executing phase two of the Daugherty Ridge Patch Cut plan in a few weeks, we can make conditions favorable for Grouse and Woodcock populations to increase. Some of the trees left behind include Yellow Birch, a tree that hunters commonly find Grouse "budding" in late fall.

Other animals living near town will also benefit. Moose and deer love to browse the young hardwood, especially the birches, maples and aspens. Hemlock and Balsam Fir branches are also occasionally browsed by moose. Larger birds that hunt, called raptors, will use perch trees intentionally left in those harvested patches, to look for mice and other small animals. Most of the twelve openings being created fall short of meeting the state definition of a clearcut, which is 5 acres or larger. Larger animals will have a short distance to travel back into cover, when necessary.

The patches will help DLLT work toward the balance of having all ages of trees in our forest. When we harvest all the trees in these patches, we will be starting new. Trees that dominate the natural regeneration initially, the shade intolerant aspen and birches, need full sunlight. At one million seeds per pound, Paper Birch will send seed on the wind to most every piece of ground where the soil has been disturbed. Aspen also sends seeds on the wind, but is more noted for root suckers, which burst from the roots near the surface of the ground. This is one of those events where we can look forward to a new start.

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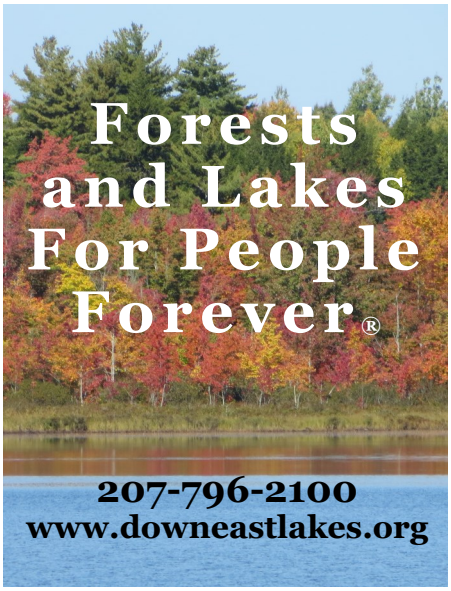

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All photos Downeast Lakes Land Trust's unless noted

DLLT's Board Membership

After 16 faithful years of leadership on the board and committees, Sue LaPlante has retired. A committed educator, Sue served as chair of DLLT's Education Committee, developing the program from humble beginnings to a year-round slate of educational offerings enjoyed by hundreds of local students and visitors of all ages. Sue was also instrumental in developing DLLT's Human Resources policies amid a growing staff, and she led efforts to craft the new strategic plan for volunteer development. Thank you Sue, for sharing your time, energy, and wisdom with us. May you have fair winds and following seas!

DLLT is proud to welcome two new members who have joined the board of directors: Jane Devereux and Van Wood.

A year round resident of Grand Lake Stream, Jane Devereux lives on Big Lake with her husband Brian Waters. Jane is a registered Pharmacist in England and has a PhD in nuclear medicine. Many years ago she moved to the USA. The majority of her career was spent in business development for a major pharmaceutical company in NJ handling mergers and acquisitions. Now retired, Jane enjoys wood working especially using Maine sourced live edge lumber to create tables and benches.

Van Wood and his wife, Molly, live in Greenfield, MA. They are retired from the manufacturing business they founded 50 years ago. Van has been a summer resident in Lakeville since 1946 at the camp that his grandparents built in 1929 on Lower Sysladobsis. His grandsons, Sam and Nat, spent many summers at Darrow Camp on West Grand and have been winners of DLLT canoe and road races. Van spent many years as a trustee of the Connecticut River Watershed Council and is a current director of the Almanac Region Land Trust in Lakeville.

Be sure to say hello to our new board members if you see them out and about in Grand Lake Stream or in the Community Forest!