



## The Stewardship Network: New England Meeting Notes:

Fostering a Culture of Stewardship: Can we Leverage the  
Stewardship Network Model Beyond New Hampshire?

### Compiled Comments

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 Extension

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension  
*Invites you and the conservation community in New England*

**Fostering a Culture  
of Stewardship:  
Can we Leverage the  
Stewardship Network  
Model Beyond  
New Hampshire?**

Thursday,  
November 17<sup>th</sup> 2016  
1 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
University of New Hampshire  
Durham, New Hampshire

Hosted by:  
UNH Cooperative Extension, with assistance  
from the Carsey School of Public Policy



## About the Meeting

The following announcement was sent to stewardship and citizen science organizations in Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont in September, 2016:

Would you like to see a more vibrant culture of environmental stewardship in New England? Are you looking for ways to better identify, recruit, train, or manage volunteers? If so, we invite you to participate in a meeting to learn about The Stewardship Network: New England, an initiative piloted in 2013 in New Hampshire by the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Don't know about the Network? [Learn More Here](#)

As a member of the conservation community in New England, you are invited to attend a special meeting: **"Fostering a Culture of Stewardship: Can we Leverage the Stewardship Network Model Beyond New Hampshire?"**

**Thursday, November 17, 2016**

**1:00 – 4:00 pm**

**University of New Hampshire**, Memorial Union Building, Room 338

**Hosted by:** UNH Cooperative Extension, with assistance from the Carsey School of Public Policy

**Meeting Objective:** For New England conservation partners to explore two questions about the Stewardship Network: New England model:

1. Should the Network expand its focus beyond New Hampshire to other New England states?
2. If the Network expands, what types of services would you find most valuable?
3. If the Network expands, who might be involved to help?

The Stewardship Network: New England has been working to foster a culture of stewardship in New Hampshire since our launch in 2013 (read more about the Network). Since then, organizations beyond New Hampshire have approached us about expanding the Network into Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont. The aim of this meeting is to identify whether the Network could be of value in other New England states, and if so, how might it expand.

### Who Should Attend?

We are looking for a diverse mix of participants from conservation, stewardship, and citizen science organizations in New England states beyond New Hampshire.

### Who Will Host the Meeting?

- Stewardship Network: New England [staff team](#): Malin Clyde, Emily Lord, Haley Andreozzi, Emma Tutein, Alyson Eberhardt
- [Charlie French](#), UNH Cooperative Extension Community and Economic Development Program Team, with expertise in meeting facilitation and community collaboration.
- [Michael Swack](#), UNH Carsey School of Public Policy with expertise in financial and governance structures to build scale in the nonprofit community sector, including analyzing and designing successful networks.

## Who Attended?

The meeting saw participation by 23 attendees, representing 21 organizations including:

1. Emerald Necklace Conservancy
2. Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge
3. Oceanside Conservation Collaborative
4. Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative
5. The Nature Conservancy – Maine Chapter
6. Maine Coast Heritage Trust
7. New England Forestry Foundation
8. Franklin Land Trust
9. The Nature Conservancy – Vermont Chapter
10. Gulf of Maine Research Institute
11. The Nature Conservancy – Massachusetts Chapter
12. Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust
13. Sudbury Valley Trustees
14. Greenways Center/Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District
15. Arnold Arboretum
16. Polatin Ecological Services
17. Massachusetts Audubon
18. Maine Island Trail Association
19. Vermont Woodlands Association
20. New England Wildflower Society
21. Broad Brook Coalition

After introductions and a short presentation about the Stewardship Network: New England's efforts in New Hampshire, the meeting moved into facilitated sessions focused on gathering input from all participants. All comments collected

### **Question #1: What are your challenges related to stewardship, citizen science, or working with volunteers?**

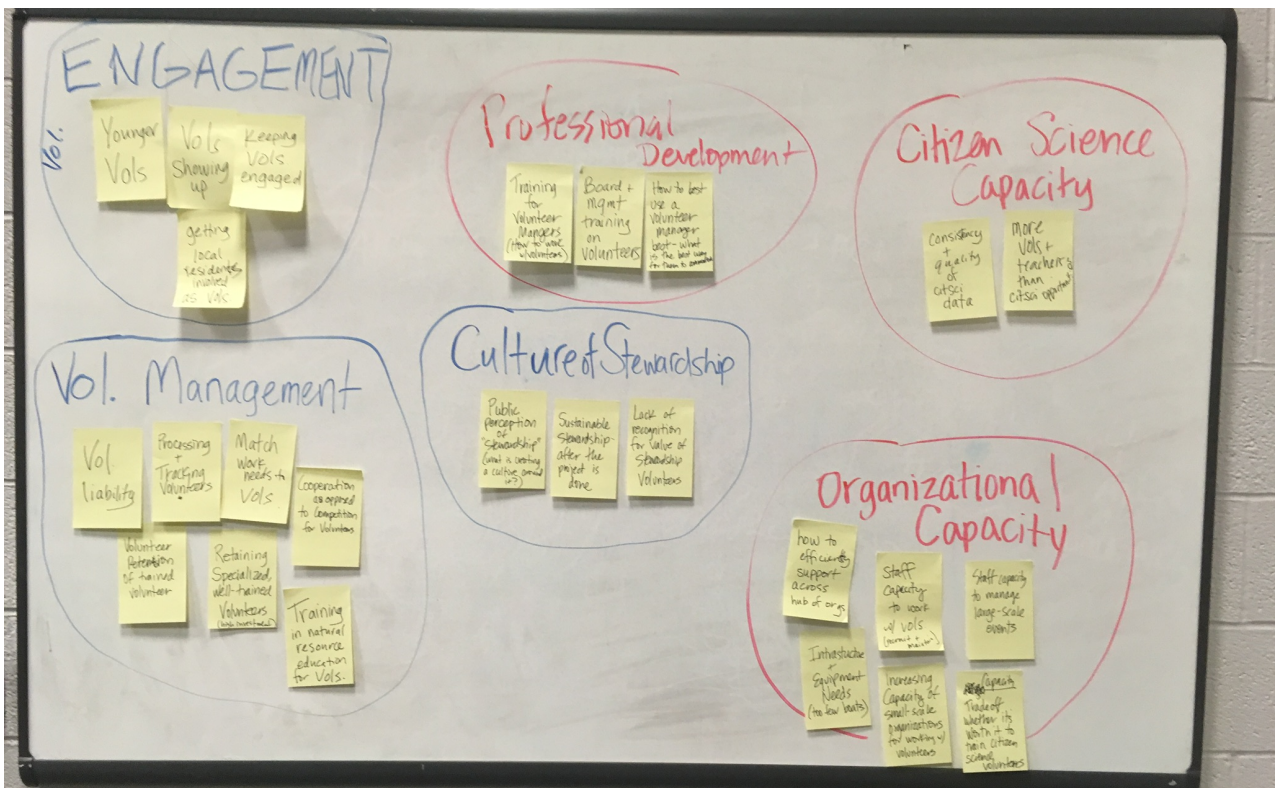
- recruiting and keeping volunteers
- special training for NEWFS projects
- Funding volunteer opportunities
- getting reliable data from volunteers
- Key: getting younger volunteers
- aging out
- Getting the next generation involved
- matching volunteers with appropriate opportunities and visa-versa; understanding the difference between different volunteers—the “right fit”
- Have a crowd of educators and students ready for opportunities, but are challenged with finding enough scientists with marine research opportunities.

- expanding in NH
- funding from community pretty well – biggest problem is getting volunteers, small fraction of people on list come to events, how to make it more attractive
- governance and committees are good
- how to interact with volunteers
- how to make them feel appreciated
- how to provide Natural Resource education
- training for volunteer managers
- marketing events, managing and maintaining volunteers
- technology limits
- how to gauge volunteer interest and what goals can volunteers help with
- volunteers to lead events – what policies apply – background checks?
- coordination
- manpower
- establishing a network
- public perception – We lack the stewardship culture to inform public perception of the landscape. Ex. Forestry and the woods are good but cutting trees is bad.
- having volunteer coordinator so important
- how to manage effectively (now have 35 – 40)
- want land stewards long-term
- want them to feel included
- range of communication methods and difference
- lack of understanding on part of management about volunteer opportunities and keeping them engaged
- before you look for volunteers, know what you want them to do and why - purpose
- not their land
- right and human power to address infestations
- aging volunteers....
- access to boats to move willing volunteers
- processing and tracking volunteers
- more training (monitoring)
- supervision/oversight, timely opportunities, management
- scheduling – link to groups schedule
- tracking follow up – processing job
- SMCC = Hub to leverage member organizations
- How can they do this effectively?
- How can the admin/ownership questions be answered?
- Everyone comes to the table with equal footing.
- Organizational Defense

- We all need funding.
- We all need to report to donors.
- How do we fund involvement?
- lack of staff capacity to maintain and recruit volunteers, run trainings
- limited resources, example: tools, # jobs to do
- lack of institutional recognition of volunteers and the benefits it can bring
- biggest problem – no single dedicated staff person for volunteers
- capacity problem recruiting and maintaining – staff person too busy to work on ground
- no current newsletter
- Citizen scientist plus citizen naturalist are how to have good scientific data and train volunteers on how to collect that data.
- Is it worth the time to train volunteers to collect standardized data
- no paid staff – no budget
- continuity of volunteers to maintain quality of data (need good - trained volunteers.)
- how do we engage all ages: children, family, teenagers
- framing it differently to attract a mix of people culturally, etc.
- making volunteering exciting, a challenge
- bringing volunteers to the small scale projects, land trusts, etc. to accomplish big things (strategic collaboration)
- funding
- We work in land stewardship in many different ways – we are a for-profit company (with a
  - non-profit heart) – but work with non-profits (invasive plant management - tree planting)
- how to build a sustainable program and instill culture of land stewardship (teach, train, inspire) (hard to get it started)
- for them, every property is starting at grass-roots level (want to connect to a “higher org.”)
- landowner outreach
- volunteer forest stewards, only 150-20 % time
- 140 community forests
- donated CE to monitor
- maintain engagement over time, communication, capacity for outreach
- background checks
- training on line
- finding quality volunteers that come back—make a commitment longer term
- finding week day volunteers!
- staff capacity to oversee large groups (small staff – in-house staff)
  - a) on weekdays

- maintaining relationship with a group of single volunteer – we don't get many returnees
- getting the local residents who could be the most directly impacted
- volunteer "ownership"
- administration legal/waiver
- poaching/camping
- Increased volunteer applications but nothing in Boston
- How can TNC be a hub for watershed wide opportunities without any property in city
- Urban programming is young
- Flood
- looking for partners and role related to programing
- competition
- staff capacity to manage events
  - difficulty linking up with quality, dependable, independent volunteers
- how to make connections / reach out to volunteers – where to find them
- finding people who can make long-term commitment

With these results written on index cards, each participant shared a top need, which were then grouped according to broader categories. This exercise resulted in the following groups of needs: volunteer engagement, professional development, organizational capacity, building a culture of stewardship, citizen science capacity, and volunteer management.



**Question #2: If the Network expands, what kinds of services could it offer or functions could it provide?**

- Starting from scratch versus building on existing networks to strengthen/expand them. (Example: ME Land Trust Network); Look into mission & services of other networks
- Sharing volunteers
- Sharing training of volunteers
- Funding to support volunteers
- Collaborative funding for stewardship professionals
- Shared volunteer coordinator
- Shared communication
- Funding for Network structure itself
- Shared interns across organization
- Converting volunteers into donors (but this requires infrastructure)
- Recruiting new volunteers (especially new retirees) – young, local, etc.
- Clearing house for volunteer opportunities
- Supply well-trained volunteers (built skills over time)
- Advocacy and drawing attention to stewardship excellence
- Tension between stewardship & land protection
- Connect with RCP's and Academics (will have interns on board) for land protection.
- There are regional efforts around land protection—a network focused around stewardship could make connections/partnerships
- Imagine a network of opportunities across the larger region (need a map for events)
- Shared information on trends across organizations—sharing it back to the Network
- Beware of being everything to everyone at all times
- Getting people together - in person - is valuable – inspirational – great to feel connected
- Citizen science and stewardship together is key—providing citizens science tools and technology expertise
- Potential for bringing stewardship organizations and people together in a conference—around a theme (not just a type of organization)
- Possible use conference as a way to reach volunteers and the public
- Public private partnerships—we are connected across the landscape
- Using conference model to train and educate volunteers (beyond what we can do alone)
- Connecting small groups to larger tools—curated collection of resources
- Presence at conference to focus on volunteerism/stewardship - track (timing of trails conference in MA)
- Problem – based information at conferences (how to, science, detail—oriented information regarding stewardship)

- Skill development (this is rare at conference)  
Webinars? Midwest does a good job.
- Staff want professional development (beyond the basics)
- Understanding volunteers, businesses, etc. (not just partners)
- Chris Fuert at Wells Reserve
  - Survey looking at opinions regarding conservation—look at her data!
  - Need to understand why people volunteer
- \*Share all these notes!
- Recognition—connection to volunteer leader board, scores, healthy competition
  - Keeping track of volunteer action
- “Boston Cares” – clearing house – leaders, volunteer recognition events (check it out)

**Top Priorities – after this brainstorming activity, the group collectively listed a few priorities (in no particular order):**

- Volunteer training (citizen science especially)
- Shared team that could help us work with volunteers (technical assistance, volunteer shared leaders)
- Pooled funding for value across organizations
- Shared data – volunteer data tracking
- Communication network among partners – closed section of website?
- Shared initiatives (example: Garlic Mustard Challenge) people like to think they are connected to something bigger.
- Conference
  - staff workday
  - volunteers weekend
- Looking at other large/regional partnerships to partner with them

**Concerns** – in the final minutes of the meeting, participants listed questions they would want answered as their participation in the process of expanding a network continues. Concerns included:

- Staff capacity? How much time will it take?
- How will it work?
- Equitable across size—everyone has value → universities can safely do this → not competing
- Who’s not here?
  - state and federal agencies
  - town conservation commissions
  - chambers of commerce
  - environmental educators
  - watershed organizations
  - businesses



- employee community service
- AMC
- all Cooperative Extensions
- universities(open and inclusive, very refreshing)
- private land owners organizations(need volunteers and are volunteers)
- environmental justice groups
- places of worship (particularly for urban events)
- Highlands
- Woodlands and Wildlands
- Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative—smaller scale but they are doing it—interested in connecting →

**Next Steps** – Lastly, the group agreed that there was consensus and broad interest in exploring an expanded Stewardship Network in Maine, Massachusetts and Vermont. Comments included:

- Need summary and distillation
- Come back together – meeting? survey?
- TSNNE should share results from 2016 partner survey
- Create report of this meeting to forward to other groups with an elevator speech
- Should we meet in other states?  
    To get state agency people?
- Need to have next actions meeting
  - Next meeting—scope, structure