

# **Silver Lake Land Trust**

## **Minutes of Annual Meeting August 15, 2026**

At Brantwood Camp

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Trustee Chair Doug Miller at approximately 10:15 a.m. Doug thanked Bill Gurney and everyone at Brantwood for allowing the Land Trust to use the camp again.

### **Secretary's Report**

Doug Miller presented the minutes of the Annual Meeting of 2025. After reviewing the minutes, a correction was noted to separate the names Andrew MacDonald and Rick Weyerhaeuser. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as corrected. There was no further discussion, and the motion was approved.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Bob Gogolen presented the Treasurer's Report. The SLLT had total income of approximately \$12,200, including approximately \$1,300 in special donations designated for the Harrisville Conservation Commission's Woolly Adelgid mitigation project. The \$1,300 was passed through to the Commission. Normal membership income was approximately \$11,000. Expenses were relatively low, resulting in a surplus of \$9,736.94.

As of June 30, the Land Trust had \$94,854.59 in its bank account. The organization continues to maintain a contingency fund for potential future needs, including possible conservation easement expenses. The Trustees have also approved a \$5,000 contribution to the Woolly Adelgid mitigation effort.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Treasurer's report. There was no further discussion, and the motion was approved.

### **Membership Report**

Bob Gogolen continued and noted that the membership year has now been changed to coincide with the fiscal year. Members were encouraged to renew their memberships when they return home for the summer so that membership will remain current through the following annual meeting.

Bob reported that the Land Trust does not yet have a final membership count for the year. The Trustees have been working for several years toward implementing membership-management software. The goal is to have a system in place by next year's annual meeting. Membership solicitations are expected to be mailed in September or October.

The Trustees discussed possible software options, including the software used by the Silver Lake Association and MembershipWorks. Bob explained that MembershipWorks is being considered because of its integration with QuickBooks, Mailchimp, payment gateways, and the Land Trust's different membership categories. Claire Gogolen has volunteered to conduct testing of the system, which has been the principal remaining obstacle to implementation. The group also expressed appreciation for the work Linda Braun performed in managing membership records in previous years.

## **Conservation Report**

Doug reported that there had been no known conservation easement activity during the past year. The Land Trust is continuing to develop a spreadsheet documenting existing easements, conservation activity, institutional knowledge, and potential future easement opportunities. The goal is to preserve this information and identify landowners who might be willing to discuss conservation easements with the SLLT, the Harris Center, or the Monadnock Conservancy.

Doug estimated that approximately 80% of the Silver Lake watershed is already protected by conservation easements, with additional opportunities remaining on both the east and west sides of the lake. Some properties are currently protected through Current Use, but permanent conservation protection would provide greater certainty. The Trustees intend to continue identifying and pursuing appropriate opportunities.

Kathy Miner raised a question about whether a property near Blueberry Cove, believed to include approximately five acres of conserved shoreline, was shown on the Land Trust's conservation map. Doug agreed to investigate and update the map if necessary.

## **Woolly Adelgid Mitigation**

Doug reported on the continuing effort by the Harrisville Conservation Commission to control Hemlock Woolly Adelgid through the release of *Laricobius* beetles. Beetles have been released at several locations around Silver Lake and elsewhere in Harrisville. Members reported that infestations in some areas appear to be less severe than the previous year.

The Trustees have contacted the Harrisville Conservation Commission about its plans for additional releases and have approved a \$5,000 donation toward the project. Members were encouraged to report Hemlock Woolly Adelgid infestations, even when only a small number of affected trees are observed, so that the Conservation Commission can use the information in deciding where additional beetles should be released.

Members discussed how the beetle population is being monitored, including observing beetles emerging from trees and measuring changes in the severity of infestations. The hope is that the beetles will establish and reproduce so that repeated introductions will eventually no longer be necessary. Questions were also raised about the introduction of a non-native species; it was noted that the beetles are believed not to create a significant new ecological problem.

## **Lake Management Plan**

Doug followed-up on a question by Ted Braun at last year's meeting suggesting that the SLLT and Lake Association should implement a Lake Management Plan to help identify and prepare for threats to important areas such as water quality, land use, invasive species, etc.; Doz Delori responded that a Lake Management Plan had been prepared by the Land Trust in years past. Doug reported that the Land Trust had located an older lake management plan, apparently dating from 1996. Although there may have been subsequent updates, if this is the last one, it is now 30 years old and clearly needs to be updated.

The 1996 plan identified several major concerns, including water quality, development, fish and wildlife, and invasive species. Just as an example, water transparency had declined in 1996 from readings of approximately 30–40 feet in the 1970s and 1980s to approximately 20–30 feet in 1996; current readings are around 30 feet. Other concerns identified in the older plan included oil and gasoline spills, shoreline erosion, increasing duck and beaver populations, invasive weeds, expansion of campsites, conversion of seasonal cottages to year-round residences, loss of natural vegetation, increased septic-system use, and undeveloped land in the watershed.

Members discussed the importance of maintaining the road drainage structures and culverts, particularly those along Eastside Road. The culverts and catch basins were installed to reduce the amount of sediment entering the lake during storm events. Members noted that many of the structures had required significant cleaning and maintenance several years ago and that continued maintenance is important. The Silver Lake Association meets with the Harrisville Select Board each spring and continues to raise this issue.

The Land Trust intends to establish a committee, working with the Silver Lake, to update the lake management plan. The purpose will be to identify potential problems before they become serious and to keep the plan current rather than allowing decades to pass between updates.

### **Fish and Wildlife**

Member Barbara Ross spoke about changes she has observed in the lake's fish populations over many years, particularly the apparent decline in perch and sunfish. She reported speaking with a New Hampshire Fish and Game officer who said that approximately 2,000 trout had been stocked in Silver Lake this year, compared with a normal stocking level of approximately 3,600. She also reported being told that Atlantic salmon might be introduced.

Barbara questioned whether the Land Trust and Lake Association should have a greater role in considering the effects of fish stocking on the broader lake ecosystem. Members discussed the possibility of reactivating the Lake Association's fish and game committee and seeking more information about how Fish and Game determines stocking levels and species.

### **Conservation Easements and Legislative Issues**

Members discussed whether changes in state law, court decisions, or other governmental actions could affect conservation easements. It was noted that conservation easements are enabled by state law and are also subject to relevant federal provisions, including provisions administered by the IRS. Members agreed that continued awareness of legislative and judicial developments is appropriate. The Land Trust's policy committee monitors developments that could affect conservation easements and land-use protection.

### **Trustee Nominations/Elections**

Doug Miller thanked the members of the class of 2026: Peter Allen, Claire Gogolen, Colin Kennard, Jazimina MacNeil, and Julia Pakradooni. Jazimina MacNeil has decided not to continue on the Board. Peter Allen, Claire Gogolen, Colin Kennard, and Julia Pakradooni agreed to be nominated for another three-year term, as the class of 2029.

A motion was made and seconded to elect the slate. There was no further discussion, and the slate was approved.

### **Program: New England Forestry Foundation**

Doug introduced Ryan Owens, former director of the Monadnock Conservancy and now Executive Director of the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF). Ryan spoke about the work of NEFF and the relationship between forest management and forest conservation.

Ryan explained that NEFF is both a land trust and a sustainable forestry organization. Its mission is to harness the power of forests for the good of nature, climate, and communities. NEFF cares for approximately 1.2 million acres, most through conservation easements, and owns a number of forest properties in the Monadnock region, including the 188-acre Wellington Wells Memorial Forest near Chesham.

Ryan described NEFF's "30% solution," which identifies four forest- and wood-based strategies that together could contribute substantially to the carbon reductions needed to reach net zero. These include keeping

forests as forests, building more with wood, using wood to displace more carbon-intensive materials such as concrete and steel, and applying high-quality, climate-smart forestry across the landscape.

Ryan described NEFF's approach of "exemplary forestry," which considers the broader landscape, wildlife habitat, water quality, aesthetics, recreation, timber quality, and climate benefits. He emphasized that active forest management and the strategic protection of unmanaged forest reserves can complement one another. Thoughtful thinning can help younger, densely packed forests develop characteristics of older forests while also producing useful wood products.

Ryan discussed the economic challenge of applying exemplary forestry. Lower-value trees often need to be removed to improve the health and growth of the remaining forest, but markets for lower-quality wood have declined. NEFF is using a federal five-year, \$32 million grant program to compensate large landowners for adopting more climate-smart forestry practices. He also described NEFF's work to protect old-growth forest in Maine by paying landowners to defer planned harvesting for five or ten years, allowing time for permanent conservation measures to be arranged.

In response to questions, Ryan discussed the history of forest clearing in New England, declining demand for paper, the role of reforestation and "pro-forestation," and the circumstances in which leaving a forest unmanaged may be the best choice. He said that landowners who do not need income from their forests can often leave them alone, while considering whether creating openings could improve wildlife habitat. He recommended consulting a qualified forester who understands the landowner's goals.

Ryan also discussed wildfire risk in this region, the decline of American ash because of Emerald Ash Borer, efforts to develop disease-resistant American chestnuts and elms, and ways for landowners to identify trustworthy foresters. He recommended seeking references from other landowners and examining the qualifications and values of forestry professionals.

Ryan explained that NEFF's federal grant had initially been awarded under the Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities program and was temporarily terminated after a change in federal administration. It was subsequently restored under a renamed program, allowing NEFF to continue approximately 90% of its original work. Ryan described this as an unusually fortunate outcome.

## **Adjournment**

With no further business, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The motion was approved, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.

Submitted by Doug Miller, Secretary pro-tem