

New Hampshire Coverts Project

Volunteers Working for Wildlife



2012 Annual Report

Written by:

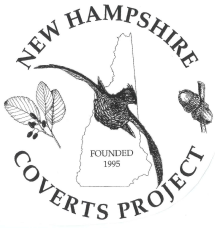
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December 1, 2012



The New Hampshire Coverts Project is sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension and New Hampshire Fish & Game. The program also receives support from the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Environmental Foundation, and the Quality Deer Management Association.

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Introduction to the NH Coverts Project - 2012

The New Hampshire Coverts Project is a program that trains volunteers to promote wildlife and habitat conservation and forest stewardship.

This report details Coverts Project programs in 2012, and summarizes efforts made by Coverts volunteers to bring the message of wildlife stewardship to a wide range of people across New Hampshire. A brief summary of this report, “Coverts Project - Program Highlights 2012” is included in the Appendix.

The New Hampshire Coverts Project continues to be one of the most effective ways to broaden the outreach efforts of UNH Cooperative Extension and its partners.



The Coverts Project – 2012

Project Goals

Since 1995, the New Hampshire Coverts Project has promoted wildlife habitat conservation and forest stewardship through volunteer education and outreach. The goal of the NH Coverts Project is to enhance, maintain, and conserve habitat for the rich diversity of native wildlife in New Hampshire through sound land stewardship.

Funding

Funding and sponsorship of the New Hampshire Coverts Project comes from UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE), and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department including funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Incentive Program.

Since 2010, the program has attracted over \$35,000 in private funding from the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative’s NH Implementation Team, and the Anna and Raymond Tuttle Horticultural Fund. These additional funds supported volunteer training and materials in 2012. A part-time staff person coordinates the program (Malin Clyde), while the UNHCE wildlife specialist oversees the project (Matt Tarr). The project also receives assistance from a network of 10 county foresters, the Extension specialist in forest resources (Karen Bennett), and the Wildlife Program Assistant (Emma Carcagno).

Volunteer Recruitment

Each spring, the application period opens with prospective participants applying for the fall Coverts training workshop. Potential applicants are recruited by Extension staff, project partners, Coverts alumni, town decision-makers, press releases, and through events. Selection criteria include the applicant’s enthusiasm for wildlife and natural resources, a willingness to commit volunteer time, and a recognized leadership role within their community. A copy of the 2012 application form is included in the Appendix.

The Training Workshop, 2012

Twenty-two new Coverts Cooperators were accepted and attended the 2012 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on October 3-6, 2012. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2012 workshop agenda, which includes a list of instructors and field trip hosts who assisted with the 3 ½-day workshop.

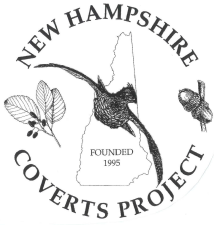
The cost of the workshop, including food, lodging, transportation, and reference materials, is funded by project partners. This “debt” encourages strong allegiance and commitment by the volunteers: in exchange for the workshop opportunity, participants agree to become Coverts volunteers and spend 40+ hours volunteering during the following year. Each Cooperator develops an outreach plan on how they will share their experiences and motivate others in their community. Registration requires a \$50 fee to reserve a place in the workshop. This fee covers a newly-instituted UNH policy requiring all new employees and volunteers to have a background check completed.

Workshop Evaluation

Upon completion of the workshop, each volunteer completes an evaluation of the workshop, used to gain feedback on both the workshop as a whole and on topics, materials, and speakers during the 3 ½ day training. We also assess how their experience at the workshop changed their thinking, attitudes, or plans for future management of their land or community lands. A summary of responses to the post-workshop evaluation summarizes some of the information collected about the trainee’s learning and intentions as volunteers (see box, page 4).

Evaluation Results – 2012 Coverts Workshop

- All 22 attendees were glad they attended the workshop
- Most (16/22) gave the workshop the highest ranking for how useful it was for their conservation and volunteer efforts
- In response to the question, “The most important thing I learned at this workshop was...”, attendees reported the following:
 - *The importance of clearcuts and fields to wildlife (6 people)*
 - *Clear cuts are not bad (3 people)*
 - *The importance of community outreach to accomplish conservation goals (6 people)*
 - *Networking and learning about resources and contacts (8 people)*
- **100% of respondents reported they would do something differently as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:**
 - *Become even further involved with the community, especially the planning board.*
 - *Have a forester assess our property for trees and especially wildlife*
 - *Managing my land, especially mowing-to be more critter friendly*
 - *Inventory and plan differently than I would have previously*
 - *Look at the land differently, especially brush o thickets*
 - *Manage property more actively for wildlife, lead hikes in community for conservation commission*
 - *Develop additional wildlife habitat on my property. Make use of additional resources*
 - *Proactive outreach*
 - *Work more with professionals and Coverts for town Conservation Commission*
 - *Use better forestry*
 - *Make sure there is enough wood in our stream and attempt to increase shrubland on our property*
 - *In addition to some practical advice on what to cut and when, why, and where- the take home message for me is more about focusing efforts and incremental gain*



New Coverts Volunteers: Action Plans for 2012

Below is a list of the new 2012 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Dot Banks** of Sanbornton looks forward to walking her land, calling a forester, and creating a management plan
- **George Beaton** of Bradford want to lead a moonlight snowshoe hike at the newly conserved Battles Farm 1.5 mile trail in Bradford
- **George Bishop** of Fryeburg (ME) and Madison looks forward to working with his land to serve as a model and point of interest for other landowners who own cut-over properties.
- **Craig Cadieux** of Bridgewater looks forward to helping to organize walks on local Forest Society reservations around Bridgewater
- **Nik Coates** of Belmont looks forward to getting his community more engaged in conservation lands by leading more events and programs on town lands
- **Bill Dumont** of Salem looks forward to a return visit to the Salem Town Forest's wildlife habitat plots by Matt Tarr, to review progress after 10 years and see about new projects
- **Mike Foote** of Laconia wants to design and lead tours on his (and wife Linda's) conservation land owned by his family trust
- **Ted Graham** of Francestown wants to work with Linda to host an artists and conservation lands event in Francestown, to raise awareness about town conservation lands
- **Bruce Kirmmse** of Randolph will continue efforts to protect river valley property in Randolph, with a special focus on unprotected wetlands along the Isreal River
- **Kirstin Lamb** of Nottingham wants to build public awareness of conservation land through walks and focus on bats and bat conservation
- **Naomi Levesque** of Berlin plans to connect with Bruce Kirmmse to bring environmental and outdoor experiences to the after school programs she runs in Berlin, including workdays, educational walks for families and trail sign-making
- **Everett McLaughlin** of Gilford plans to work with the Belknap Range Conservation Trust to protect four properties in the Belknap Range, helping with fundraising and photography to raise awareness
- **Christine McCarron** of Pelham looks forward to engaging volunteers to build trails and do management practices for wildlife on the Peabody Town Forest
- **Linda Mikula** of Francestown will reach out to family members about managing their land for wildlife, including hiring a forester
- **Lauren Montminy** of New Boston plans to manage land to benefit wildlife and diversity
- **Evelyn Nathan** of Kingston wants to begin mapping vernal pools in Kingston, and continue an ongoing effort to protect Bayberry Pond which adjoins the Dorre Town Forest
- **Peter Nelson** of Nashua wants to offer technical support to other Coverts volunteers with outreach - things like database management, GIS mapping or internet and web projects.
- **Linda Pilliod Foote** of Laconia wants to define landowner goals for she and Mike's property and learn more about town conservation lands and whether they have management plans or not



- **March Richmond** of Dunbarton wants to develop a management plan for her land, getting family members involved and meet with Emma Carcagno or Matt Tarr on her land to assess habitat
- **Susan Roman** of Webster looks forward to learning how to lead a vernal pool walk and hosting one in Webster in the coming year
- **Sigrid Salmela** of Lisbon wants to become a presenter for the Speaking for Wildlife program and offer presentations to her local garden club, historical society, and more
- **Alan Strickland** of Enfield Center wants to develop some management goals for town forest lands with the forester for the town, then begin to introduce them to the community



Active Coverts Cooperators

Cooperators become part of a volunteer network connected through the internet,, field tours, and continuing education workshops. After some attrition (due to dropouts, re-locations, deaths, etc.), we have 329 active volunteers today, working in over 130 different communities around the state (see map, page 7). A list of all active volunteers is available from Project staff (but is excluded from this report, due to space constraints). A yearly summary is as follows:

Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2012

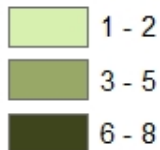
Training Year	# Coverts Trained
1995	23
1996	23
1997	22
1998	26
1999	28
2000	23
2001	23
2002	26
2003	25
2004	23
2005	26
2006	24
2007	23
2008	26
2009	23
2010	24
2011	25
2012	22
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	435
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/12	329
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/12	130+

Active NH Coverts Project Volunteers 1995 - 2012

Location of Trained Volunteers

of Coverts Volunteers

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town

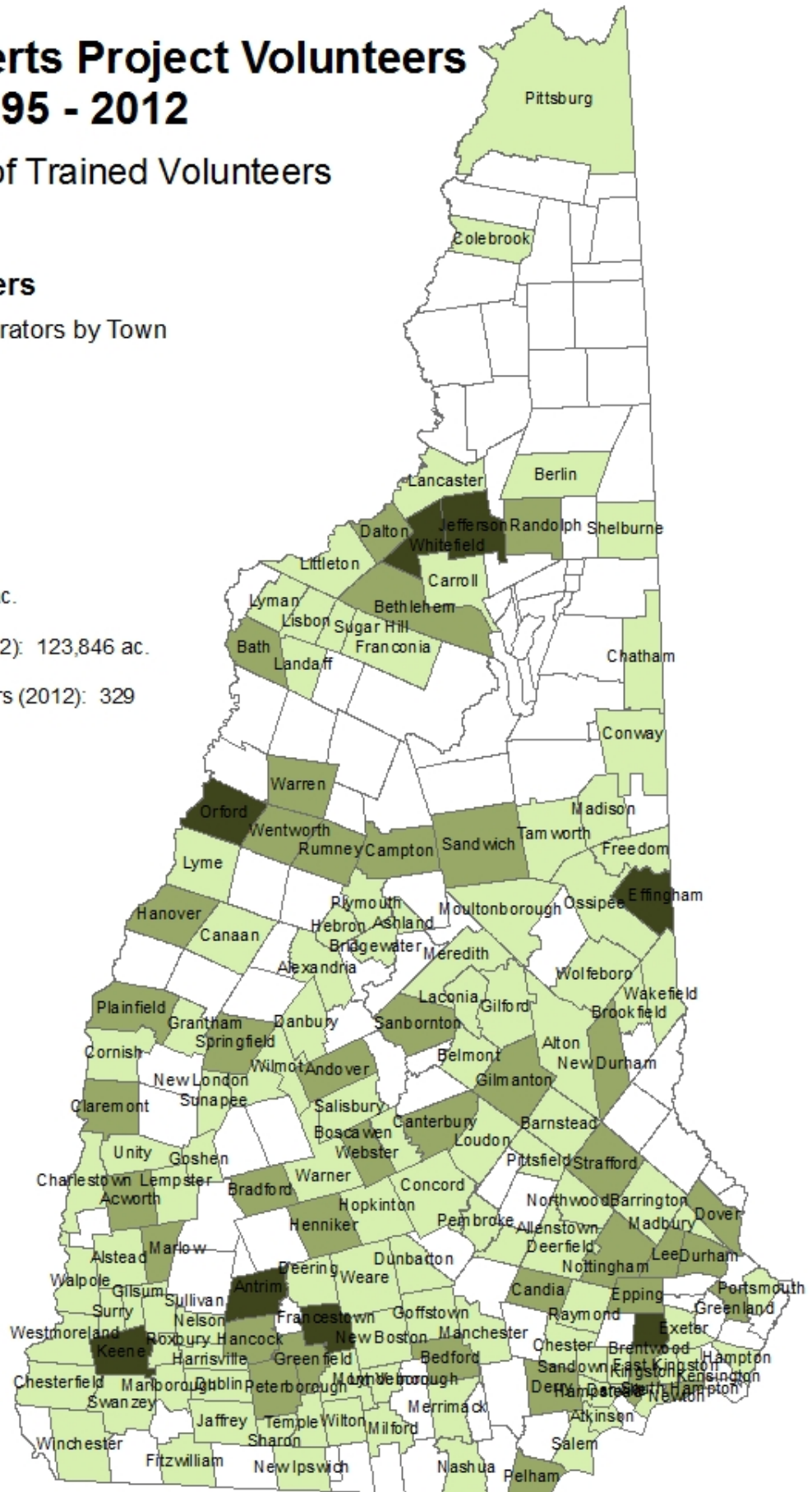


Total Owned Acres: 53,108 ac.

Total Managed Acres: 70,738 ac.

Total Acres in Stewardship (2012): 123,846 ac.

Total # Active Coverts Volunteers (2012): 329



Prepared by: Malin Clyde
UNH Cooperative Extension
12/3/2012



2012 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

The Coverts Project connects Coverts Cooperators to many events, workshops, news and new volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Through these activities, they build on their knowledge of natural resource topics, often with more in-depth material and presentations than is possible at the Coverts training workshop. Many of these activities are a result of UNH Cooperative Extension partnering with other natural resource volunteer programs, thereby broadening our training audience and offering more continuing education opportunities to all of our natural resource volunteers.

Coverts Blog, “Volunteers Working for Wildlife” – This web-based forum has become the main communication tool aimed at Coverts volunteers, and its contents are included on the Coverts webpage in a sidebar. Blog postings are also sent directly to Coverts Cooperators through email. In 2012, the Coverts Project office posted **133 different news items**. A sample page is shown below. The direct address for the blog is:

http://extension.unh.edu/blogs/volunteers_working_for_wildlife/

NEW HAMPSHIRE COVERTS PROJECT
Volunteers Working for Wildlife
Coverts Project Updates

A UNH Cooperative Extension BLOG

[Return to main index](#)

Connecting People to the Land: Volunteer Idea

By Malin Clyde - UNH Cooperative Extension on November 16, 2012 2:11 PM | [Permalink](#)

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I wanted to share the following message from new Coverts volunteer Dot Banks, from Sanbornton, who wrote to tell me about her efforts to get fellow townspeople out into the woods this fall:

[After leading a hike on Nov. 7, aimed at Seniors in Sanbornton]
"Just wanted to let you know what a blast we had yesterday. There were 7 of us. Tom and Bob, our historians, were so knowledgeable about the area and Tom discovered a well near a foundation we checked out....We looked at some wildlife 'leftovers' of partially eaten nuts, a photogenic tree stump overgrown with bright green moss and two hemlocks growing on it. The owner of the property at the start of the trail couldn't come, but he told me about deer, bear, a moose and coyotes he had seen at various times at the trailhead...[Afterwards] everyone came back to my house for another hour of conversation, coffee and eats. What fun! Everyone also wanted to do another hike and Tom and Bob suggested an abandoned homestead they knew of on a trail nearby. We all agreed to meet next week to do another hike."

Dot's story shows the power of your potential role as an organizer. Bringing people together for an informal hike outdoors is a great way to create community, share your enthusiasm, and share information about local conservation issues with others who may care.

To get started in your community, [consider signing up for "Field Trip 101" Training in Concord on Dec. 8](#). We're partnering with the Forest Society and NH Audubon to spread this program to all types of volunteers in New Hampshire. Our goal is for volunteers to lead nature walks on at least one piece of conservation land in every town in NH, every year. Wouldn't that be amazing?

Categories: [News](#), [Volunteer Opportunities](#)

Search

About this Entry

This page contains a single entry by Malin Clyde - UNH Cooperative Extension published on November 16, 2012 2:11 PM.

[Forest Laws Workshops in Unity & Barnstead](#) was the previous entry in this blog.

[Speaking for Wildlife Program - Lots Going On!](#) is the next entry in this blog.

Find recent content on the [main index](#) or look in the [archives](#) to find all content.

Links

[NH Coverts webpage](#)
[Coverts Newsletter: Making Tracks](#)
[Resources for Coverts Volunteers](#)
[UNH Cooperative Extension Forests & Trees website](#)
[Video: What is the Coverts Project?](#)

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Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2012: “Taking Action for Wildlife”

Coverts Cooperators are selected to participate in the program based on their commitment and enthusiasm for wildlife conservation and forest stewardship. It is therefore no surprise that Coverts volunteers are involved in a wide range of natural resource-related activities, putting the knowledge and skills gained or refined at the annual training workshop to work in their communities.

We present the following summary of Coverts volunteer accomplishments for 2012 based on the results from our **annual survey**, which Cooperators are asked to complete each year (a copy is included in the Appendix). We received surveys from almost 53% of active Coverts volunteers in 2012, surpassing our goal of a 50% annual response rate.

Coverts Survey Responses in 2012 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2012 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	293
# Cooperators returning surveys	157 (53%)

Summary of Coverts Cooperators Volunteer Activities (listed in order by amount of volunteer time)

Volunteer Activity	No. of Hours
Time spent working to conserve my own land	5249
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowner/town/land trust	3196
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	2847
Time spent helping to manage town forest or other conservation land (e.g. town forest, land trust land, neighbors)	2333
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	2138
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	1938
Serving on a conservation commission	1727
Writing and providing information to media about natural resources or conservation	1574
Serving on a selectboard, planning board or town council	1326
Other volunteer work	1279
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	1217
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	1063
Volunteered for a wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, Bio-thons)	993
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	899
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	837
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	523
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	444
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2012	29583

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2012 was **29,583 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 53% of active volunteers who returned surveys.

Special Opportunities to Volunteer

Speaking for Wildlife Project

The Coverts blog helped facilitate many new volunteer opportunities for Coverts Cooperators. Along with notices about volunteering for other conservation groups, the Coverts Project also continued to support a special volunteer project called “**Speaking for Wildlife.**” This project has been supported by four different grants from the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Wellborn Ecology Fund, and the Anna and Raymond Tuttle Environmental Horticultural Fund.

Since Sept. 2010, we trained over 100 new volunteers to lead walks and deliver wildlife-focused presentations all over the state. A brochure about the program is provided in the Appendix, along with a copy of the final grant report to the NH Charitable Foundation. Details about the program can be found on the web at SpeakingForWildlife.org. Accomplishments the program in 2012 include:

- Held 9 training workshops involving 111 volunteers statewide
- Developed 1 new presentation, “A Garden for Wildlife: Natural Landscaping for a Better Backyard” focusing on native plants, invasive plant species, and wildlife-friendly practices.
- Volunteers delivered 44 public presentations reaching 1,412 people
- Volunteers have led 31 field walks, with over 397 participants
- Volunteers have made 14 new referrals to County Extension Foresters
- Added 72 new people to our mailing list for *Taking Action for Wildlife* e-newsletter

The Stewardship Network Initiative

In 2012, Coverts Project staff resurrected an initiative to better connect Coverts volunteers (and other citizens interested in conservation) to meaningful, well-organized volunteer projects. The project, currently called “The Stewardship Network – New England,” sponsored a 3-day meeting with staff from a Michigan based non-profit (The Stewardship Network) on Sept. 27, 2012, attended by over 80 professionals from 55 different conservation organizations and agencies from across New England. A copy of the flyer and list of organizations is included in the Appendix. In October, staff submitted a joint grant proposal with The Stewardship Network to the US Forest Service to fund a 3-year project. News of the grant proposal will come in 2013.

More information about the initiative is available online:

<http://extension.unh.edu/FWT/NewHampshireStewardshipNetwork.htm>



Land Stewardship

Many Coverts Cooperators own or manage land and incorporate wildlife habitat management and good forest stewardship into their land management. The following quote from a volunteer this year comes after many years of involvement with the Coverts Project (and many years of talking with her family):

“My extended family, which owns our 900-acre property jointly, had been unable to agree to any forestry activities for several decades. We have now begun working with a forester and have an agreement for forestland improvement, including timber harvest, on about 100 acres, which is to take place this winter. He is very sensitive to wildlife needs. Accomplishing this required meetings with the family, walkabouts on the land, and discussions with adjacent neighbors. One of them will now also do some forestry work. I have also continued to pursue the easement issues...We continue to manage our grasslands, arranging mowing at appropriate times and also brush cutting of saplings and trees encroaching on the edges.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

	Total 2012 Survey Respondents
Acres Owned by survey respondents	23,382 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	60,575 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	106 (68% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	53,108 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed	70,738 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2012 (who responded to the 2012 survey).

Coverts Habitat Management, 2012 (# acres managed, by habitat type)	
Resource Inventory	12,106 ac.
Timber Stand Improvement	1,267 ac.
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	1,105 ac.
Hardwood Management	773 ac.
Early Successional Management	285 ac.
Wetland Enhancement	279 ac.
Softwood Management	191 ac.



Community Conservation

Many Coverts Cooperators serve as local decision-makers and help initiate or implement conservation and stewardship projects in their communities. One Coverts Cooperators reported this year:

“We began the process of updating our four existing town forest management plans, and started a new forest management plan for the small town forest that does not have one. We had a successful timber harvest of [one] Town Forest to maintain the health of that forest. Also participated in an annual assessment of a conservation easement on town land.”

# of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2012	12,528 acres
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Raising Public Awareness

Coverts Cooperators engage in many activities that promote forest stewardship and wildlife conservation to their families, friends, peers, and community members. One Coverts Cooperator reported this year:

“In cooperation with the Rey Center of Waterville Valley I was able to lead groups of youth and adults on hikes up Welch Ledges with the aim of educating about the landscape and promoting stewardship.”

Coverts volunteers participation in the *Speaking for Wildlife* program is an important avenue for raising public awareness (see outcomes, page 10)

Estimate of # of people reached by Coverts volunteers in 2012 with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, etc.	25,164 people
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Coverts Project Initiatives for 2013

Communication – Continue use of the Volunteers Working for Wildlife Blog, along with the Forestry & Wildlife Facebook and Twitter feeds, and “Taking Action for Wildlife” website (a collaboration with NH Fish & Game.) and “Speaking for Wildlife” website.

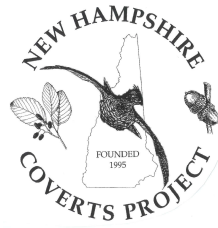
Improving Volunteer Opportunities – Offer continued trainings for Speaking for Wildlife; connect with more citizen science programs statewide to promote participation among Coverts volunteers.

The Stewardship Network - Partner with UNH Cooperative Extension’s “Stewardship Network” initiative to better connect volunteers to conservation groups who need volunteer help and to expand the reach of the NH Coverts Project message to a wider audience of interested citizens.

Annual Training Workshop – We are scheduled to return to the Barbara C. Harris Center for the Coverts training in 2013.

Advisory Committee – The Coverts Project Advisory Committee will meet in February, 2013, with 5 new members from the most recent 2012 class added to the roster of advisors.

Updates – Project Coordinator Malin Clyde will be on unpaid leave from Dec. 2012 – June 2013. In the interim, Wildlife Program Assistant Emma Carcagno will coordinate by the Coverts Project and Speaking for Wildlife. She is familiar with both programs, and volunteers know her through her instruction at the Coverts Workshop for the past 5 years. At the end of 2013, the Project Coordinator will continue yearly updates to all project partners. The report is promoted and made available to Coverts Cooperators on the Coverts webpage, www.NHCoverts.org. Also available on the website is a **Highlights Report**, summarizing the 2012 annual report.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2012

Includes:

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2012 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2012 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2012 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2012 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2012](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)
- Stewardship Network in New Hampshire – [Event Flyer](#), [Attendees](#)