

# New Hampshire Coverts Project

## *Volunteers Working for Wildlife*



# 2013 Annual Report

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## Introduction to the NH Coverts Project - 2013

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 2013, 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 2013” 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 – 2013

### 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 and Staffing

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 \$36,000 in private funding from the NH Charitable Foundation, the Davis Conservation Foundation, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative’s NH Implementation Team, the Anna and Raymond Tuttle Horticultural Fund, and the Quality Deer Management Association, along with funds from Speaking for Wildlife voluntary program contributions. In 2013, UNHCE received over \$400,000 in funds to expand the reach of the Coverts Project through The Stewardship Network: New England initiative (see p. 10). These supplemental funds helped support training, volunteer management, and outreach to Coverts volunteers in 2013.

The Coverts Project also saw staffing changes in 2013. From January – June, the Extension Wildlife Assistant, Emma Carcagno, coordinated the program during a leave-of-absence by Malin Clyde. In the second half of 2013, after Malin’s return, Emma left for a new position as Land and Water Conservation Field Specialist, leaving a vacancy in the Wildlife program. UNHCE undertook an extensive search for a newly configured position which would incorporate some of Emma’s and some of Malin’s duties, including coordination of the Coverts Project workshop. Haley Andreozzi has filled this new position (Wildlife Outreach Coordinator) as of February, 2014, with supervision by the UNHCE wildlife specialist (Matt Tarr).

The Coverts project continues to receive additional support by UNHCE's network of 9 county foresters and the Extension specialist in forest resources (Karen Bennett).

### **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 2013 application form is included in the Appendix.

### **The Training Workshop, 2013**

Twenty-one new Coverts Cooperators were accepted and attended the 2013 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on September 18-21, 2013. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2013 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 background check completed by UNH Human Resources before applicants can be instated as UNH volunteers.

### **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 – 2013 Coverts Workshop

- **100% of respondents were glad they attended the workshop**
- **Most (94%) gave the workshop the highest ranking for how useful it was for their conservation and volunteer efforts**
- **100% of respondents felt they gained an improved knowledge of wildlife & forest stewardship from participation in the workshop.**
- **In response to the question, “The most important thing I learned at this workshop was...”, attendees reported the following:**
  - *Networking and learning about resources and contacts (6 people)*
  - *The importance of clear cuts and fields to wildlife (4people)*
  - *The importance of setting conservation objectives (4 people)*
  - *The importance of community outreach to accomplish conservation goals (2 people)*
- **94% of respondents reported they would do something differently as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:**
  - *Joining my local conservation commission*
  - *Speak more directly with people about conservation and good practices*
  - *Managing my own property*
  - *Explore local conservation land and trails*
  - *Take a new look at our 20 acre property that up to now we have completely ignored*
  - *Joining or starting interest group, such as neighborhood backyard conservation planning*
  - *Allow volunteers more freedom to pursue ideas*
  - *Focus on specific projects recognizing that I now have a lot of support*
  - *Take a different approach to clearing, now able to cite beneficial effects on wildlife*
  - *Start reaching out to others*
  - *Log out own land to clarify and allow sunlight*
  - *Better equipped to move forward with existing plans for conservation commission*
  - *Know where to find the professions that can suggest the best way to achieve my goals*
  - *Become a more active steward*



## New Coverts Volunteers: Action Plans for 2013

Below is a list of the new 2013 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Sue Barnes** of Strafford plans to participate on the Strafford Conservation Commission and develop plans for habitat management on her own land
- **Paula Bellemore** of New Boston will have new connections and stewardship resources to use in her work with the Piscataquog Land Conservancy.
- **Yvonne Beran** of Milford wants to work with the Milford Conservation Commission to develop management plans and write species inventories on town lands
- **Mary Bradley** of Westmoreland looks forward to working with the local elementary school to develop education activities
- **Bobbi Burns** of Hampton Falls looks forward to using what she learned at the Coverts workshop to be an effective Chair of the Conservation Commission in Hampton Falls.
- **Deborah Campella** of Deerfield wants to work with community members to coordinate a nature walk with a local library, walk with a forester on school property, and promote/lead town land walks
- **Alicia Carlson** of Durham looks forward to calling on other Coverts volunteers in her work as UNH Cooperative Extension's new Forest Stewardship Program Outreach Assistant.
- **Ray Cilley** of Greenfield plans to recruit new Conservation Commission members, complete the town natural resources inventory, and help develop a forest management plan for the town forest
- **James Davis** of Colebrook wants to seek out the seek out the forest managers in his area and improve habitat on his own property
- **Angela Fico** of Somersworth looks forward to joining the Somersworth Conservation Commission, and working with the her school's PTA to promote outdoor education
- **Carol Foley** of Holderness plans to contact wildlife and forestry specialists to walk her property, and develop a management plan
- **Allison Gillum** of Peterborough will continue to promote land stewardship and community conservation through the Piscataquog Land Conservancy, in addition to joining the Peterborough Open Space Committee
- **Henry Howell** of South Sutton plans to promote stewardship and protection of the Blaisdell Lake watershed through presentations to the lake association, collaborations with groups, and outreach
- **April Hyde** of Colebrook looks forward to developing field trips focused on watershed protection
- **Daphne Klein** of Springfield plans to work to develop a management plan for four town owned lots, and meet with Glenn Gladders and Matt Tarr to assess habitat
- **Amanda Mandella** of Strafford looks forward to leading a family hike and picnic event on the Cummings Conservation Center forest
- **Liane Marciano** of Amherst plans to become a presenter for the Speaking for Wildlife program and offer presentations to her local library and other groups
- **Sarah McGraw** of Strafford plans to create a management plan for the property she lives on
- **Barbara Rossell** of Lancaster wants to develop a habitat management plan for her property and collaborate with neighbors



- **Jane Savage** of Brentwood looks forward to enhancing the town trail system and available trail maps
- **Jameson Small** of Strafford wants to become a presenter for the Speaking for Wildlife program and team up with Bear Paw Regional Greenways to host a presentation



## 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 350 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 – 2013

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
2013	21
<b>Total Trained Coverts Volunteers</b>	<b>456</b>
<b>Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/13</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 12/13</b>	<b>160+</b>

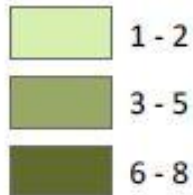


# Active NH Coverts Project Volunteers 1995-2013

## Location of Trained Volunteers

### # of Coverts Volunteers

### Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town

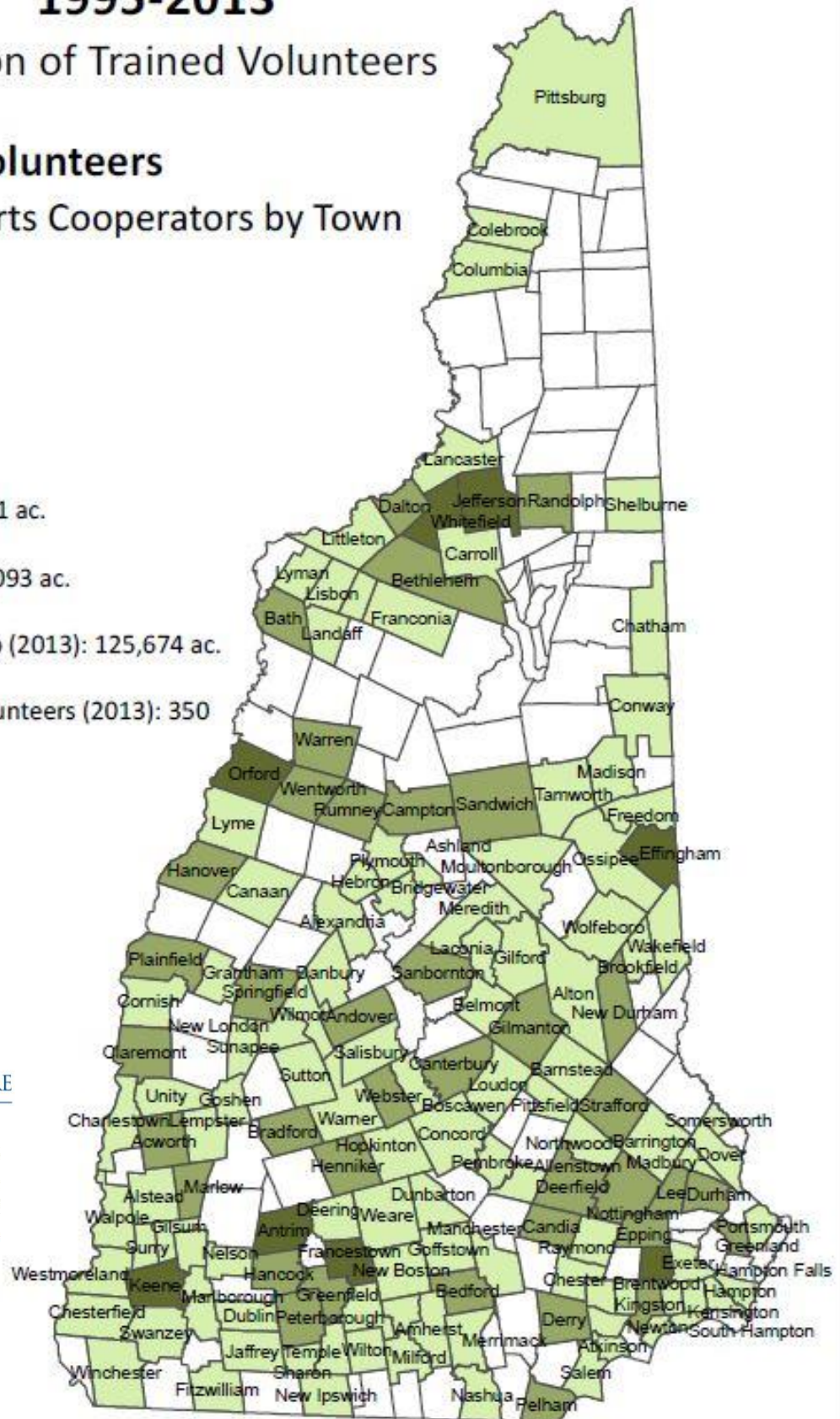


Total Owned Acres: 55,581 ac.

Total Managed Acres: 70,093 ac.

Total Acres in Stewardship (2013): 125,674 ac.

Total # Active Coverts Volunteers (2013): 350



Prepared by Haley Andreozzi  
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2/26/2014



## 2013 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 2013, the Coverts Project office posted **52 different news items**. A sample page is shown below. The direct address for the blog is: <http://extension.unh.edu/Article-Categories/Coverts>

**NH Coverts Facebook Group** – new in 2013, the Coverts Project created a Facebook group expressly for NH Coverts volunteers, which currently has 33 members. Many are also members of the Forestry and Wildlife Facebook Page (464 followers), but the project-specific group allows for Coverts volunteers to post their own pictures, updates, and stories, and allows staff to offer targeted updates.

The screenshot shows the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension website. The header includes the UNH logo, navigation links for Counties, Events, Publications, and Ed Center, and a search bar. The main content area features a sidebar with 'Recent articles' and a main article titled 'Stewardship Network coming to New Hampshire'. The article text discusses the establishment of an online Stewardship Network to connect volunteers with conservation projects, supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the US Forest Service. A photo shows a group of people participating in a conservation activity in a wooded area. The article includes a date (08/23/2013), author (Malin Clyde), and tags (Coverts, Volunteer Opportunities).





## Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2013: “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 2013 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 40% of active Coverts volunteers in 2013, a lower response rate than we normally achieve, but still offering a strong picture of active volunteerism on the part of Coverts volunteers.

**Coverts Survey Responses in 2013** are summarized as follows:

	<b>Total 2013 Survey</b>
# Cooperators surveyed	311
# Cooperators returning surveys	123 (40%)

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

<b>Volunteer Activity</b>	<b>No. of Hours</b>
Time spent working to conserve my own land	6077
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	2375
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowners/town/land trust	1855
Time spent helping manage town forest or other conservation land (e.g. town forest, land trust land, neighbors)	1627
Serving on a conservation commission	1228
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	1143
Serving on a select board, planning board or town council	1007
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	885
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	841
Volunteered for a wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, Bio-thons)	765
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	713
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	641
Writing and providing information to media about natural resources or conservation	538
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	479
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	460
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	302
<b>TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2013</b>	<b>20,936</b>

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2013 was **20,936 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 40% 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 have trained over 140 new volunteers to lead walks and deliver wildlife-focused presentations all over the state. A brochure about the program is provided in the Appendix. Details about the program can be found on the web at [SpeakingForWildlife.org](http://SpeakingForWildlife.org). Accomplishments of the program in 2013 include:

- Held 1 training workshop involving 10 new volunteers
- Began development of 1 new presentation, “NH Bugs: The Big Three” focusing on three of the non-native insects that are threatening New Hampshire’s trees and forests
- Volunteers delivered 42 public presentations reaching 747 people
- Volunteers led 23 public field walks with 262 participants

### **The Stewardship Network Initiative**

In 2013, Coverts Project staff received over \$400,000 in grant funds from the US Forest Service and the National Science Foundation for an initiative called “The Stewardship Network – New England.” The aim of the project, which will help expand the reach of the NH Coverts Project, is to mobilize volunteers to care for and study lands and waters, and to work with a wide range of partners to better match needed stewardship and citizen science work with people (such as Coverts volunteers) who are willing to help.

In 2013, the Stewardship Network: New England hosted five regional meetings to assess partner needs and interests related to stewardship and volunteers. Funded by a grant from the NH Charitable Foundation, the process involved 140 staff and volunteers from 86 different conservation organizations, federal and state agencies, watershed groups, and local Conservation Commissions. A full report of findings is included in the Appendix. Highlights include:

- Participants expressed support for The Network, interest in collaborating on stewardship, and a willingness to share expertise

- The most common stewardship topics discussed were trails and associated infrastructure, land management, invasive plant control, and lake and river shoreland stewardship.
- Participants saw an online hub as important to connecting volunteers, stewardship opportunities and training (including webinars, field days, and workshops) and would be willing to post events on The Network site.
- Relationships with volunteers are highly valued and many said The Network could help volunteers stay motivated by showing contribution to a broader stewardship effort (“collective impact”).
- Almost all participants reported a desire to recruit new, particularly younger, volunteers, and many expressed interest in connecting with schools. Many groups need help with identifying, recruiting, training, recognizing and retaining volunteers, and managing volunteer work days.
- Many participants were intrigued with the idea of sharing tools, field crews, and other resources.

More information about the initiative is available online:

<http://extension.unh.edu/Volunteer/Stewardship-Network-New-England>



## 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 two volunteers this year comes after participating in the Coverts Workshop several years ago:

*“The experience of the workshop has transformed how we think about our land and has had a lasting impact. It has helped us be aware and institute best practices in maintaining our land, i.e. eliminating invasive plants, creating habitats, etc.”*

### Land Stewardship Statistics:

	Total 2013 Survey Respondents
Acres Owned by survey respondents	14,985 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	86, 788 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	69 (56% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	55, 581 acres
All Coverts – Land Managed	70,093 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2013 (who responded to the 2013 survey).

<b>Coverts Habitat Management, 2013 (# acres managed, by habitat type)</b>	
Resource Inventory	4,533 ac.
Timber Stand Improvement	853 ac.
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	709 ac.
Hardwood Management	512 ac.
Wetland Enhancement	415 ac.
Early Successional Management	382 ac.
Softwood Management	104 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:

*“The most rewarding experience was the placement of a conservation easement on a local property - Culmination of several years of effort. In a way it also pointed to the need for increased community education on the benefit of conservation lands.”*

<b># of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2013</b>	<b>13,207 acres</b>
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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:

*“When I organized the senior hike last November, I had no idea that this group would be so fascinated with everything we saw and heard, an owl pellet, deer poop, and even bear scat! We continued our hikes on other trails; that we continue to this day to hike at least once a month if not more is just fabulous. Our varying interests and the trails in town (Sanbornton)*

*that are available, keep us going continuously and I've been able to talk with a couple people about conserving their land. That's just so exciting."*

Coverts volunteer participation in the *Speaking for Wildlife* program is, along with other types of outreach, an important avenue for raising public awareness (see outcomes, page 10)

<p><b>Estimate of # of people reached by Coverts volunteers in 2013 with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, Speaking for Wildlife, etc.</b></p>	<p><b>17,077 people</b></p>
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## Coverts Project Initiatives for 2014

**Communication** – Streamline use of the Volunteers Working for Wildlife Blog to focus on stories about Coverts volunteer activities and stories, as Stewardship Network: New England e-news bulletins take over notifications of volunteer opportunities and training news. Continue social media work with the Forestry & Wildlife Facebook and Twitter feeds, the NH Coverts Facebook Group, and “Taking Action for Wildlife” website (a collaboration with NH Fish & Game.) and “Speaking for Wildlife” websites.

**Improving Volunteer Opportunities** – Offer continued trainings for Speaking for Wildlife; expand opportunities for citizen science and stewardship volunteer opportunities through the Stewardship Network: New England new online hub and e-news bulletins.

**Annual Training Workshop** – In consultation with project partners and the Coverts Advisory Committee, the Coverts workshop in 2014 will change to a spring schedule. The workshop will take place at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield, NH from May 7-10, 2014.

**Advisory Committee** – The Coverts Project Advisory Committee will meet in Fall 2014, with new members from the most recent 2013 class added to the roster of advisors.

**Coverts Gatherings** – The Coverts Project will organize 1-2 field days at Coverts volunteer-owned properties, including a welcome picnic for new staff member Haley (see below) planned for summer, 2014.

**Updates** – Haley Andreozzi has been hired (beginning in February 2014) as the new UNHCE Wildlife Outreach Coordinator. She will be in charge of coordinating the NH Coverts Project training workshop, as well as running the Speaking for Wildlife program and serving on the Taking Action for Wildlife team and the New England Cottontail Outreach Working Group. The Stewardship Network: New England initiative is closely tied with the NH Coverts Project (and in fact is an outgrowth of the program), and Malin Clyde will continue to be involved in the NH Coverts Project. The Stewardship Network: New England will help connect Coverts volunteers (post-workshop) to meaningful, varied, and well-organized volunteer projects that improve wildlife habitat and environmental conservation in New Hampshire.





## Appendix

### NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2013

Includes:

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2013 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2013 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2013 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2013 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2013](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)
- [Stewardship Network: New England: Stakeholder Engagement, 2013 Report](#)