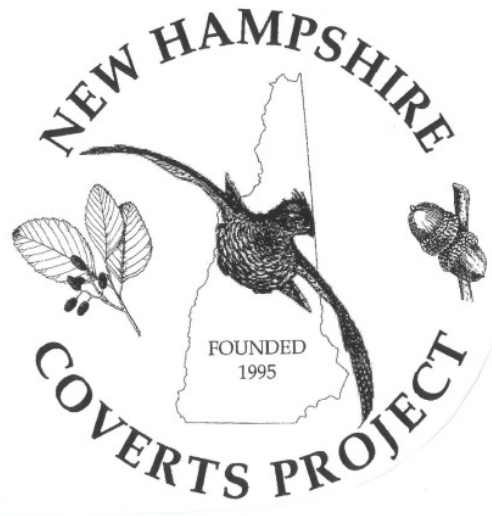




New Hampshire Coverts Project

Volunteers Working for Wildlife

2015 Annual Report



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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 - 2015

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 during the last year (October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015), 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 2015” 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 – 2015

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, with additional support from the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands.

Since 2010, the program has attracted over \$36,000 in additional 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 2015.

Haley Andreozzi, the UNHCE Wildlife Outreach Coordinator, coordinates the Coverts Project with oversight from the UNHCE Wildlife Specialist Matt Tarr. The Coverts project continues to receive additional support by UNHCE’s network of 9 county foresters, the Extension Specialist in Forest Resources Karen Bennett, UNHCE Community Volunteer Development Specialist Malin Clyde, and UNHCE Land & Water Conservation Field Specialist Emma Tutein.

Volunteer Recruitment

Each winter, the application period opens with prospective participants applying for the spring 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 2015 application form is included in the Appendix.

The Training Workshop, 2015

Twenty-three new Coverts Cooperators from 20 different communities were accepted and attended the 2015 training workshop held at the Barbara C. Harris Conference Center in Greenfield, NH on May 6-9, 2015. This marked the second year the workshop was held in the spring, as opposed to previous years when it was held in the fall. This change was made in order to better position volunteers to take action during the growing season, eliminate scheduling conflicts with other volunteer training programs that take place in the fall, and to increase opportunities to view wildlife in the field. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2015 workshop agenda, which contains 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, used to gain feedback on both the workshop as a whole and on topics, materials, and speakers during the 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 – 2015 Coverts Workshop

- **100% of respondents were glad they attended the workshop**
- **Most (91%) gave the workshop the highest ranking for how useful it was in providing information and resources they can use in 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 (7 people)*
 - *The diversity of options for creating and managing wildlife habitat (6 people)*
 - *The importance of community outreach to accomplish conservation goals (5 people)*
 - *The importance of clear cuts and fields to wildlife (3 people)*
 - *The importance of setting conservation objectives (2 people)*
- **100% of respondents reported they would do something differently as a result of the Coverts Workshop. Some responses included:**
 - *Become more active in my community*
 - *Consider cutting trees*
 - *Planning to do more in the greater community*
 - *Manage my own property more effectively and contribute more time to the town*
 - *Gives new focus to the outreach I’m already doing & information to incorporate into my management*
 - *Offer to work with my local Conservation Commissions*
 - *Stay on my Conservation Commission*
 - *Do more outreach*
 - *Become more involved in my town’s conservation activities*
 - *Get more people out on town lands*
 - *More – just plain old more*
 - *Connect with SPNH and town Conservation Commission*
 - *Develop stronger community & volunteer support*
 - *I have better contacts and I know who to go to with questions & ideas*
 - *Become more active in community action & serve as a role model*
 - *Try to promote active forest management*

New Coverts Volunteers: Action Plans for 2015

Below is a list of the new 2015 Coverts Cooperators, the town where they own land, and a description of one of the outreach projects they have planned as a Coverts volunteer:

- **Robin Bell** of Strafford plans to write articles for her local newspaper, and implement management actions on her property.
- **Bill Bittinger** of Hanover wants to develop a stewardship plan and explore a conservation easement for his family's property.
- **Bill Coder** of Bedford wants to review the management plan for a local conservation area, and consult with UNHCE forestry & wildlife staff to incorporate habitat management goals.
- **Donna Collins** of Landaff plans to meet with her County Forester, inventory forest stands and wildlife habitat on her property, and implement appropriate management practices.
- **Sarah Courchesne** of East Kingston wants to deliver talks and walks through Speaking for Wildlife.
- **Patty Furness** of Bradford plans to develop and organize educational programs that encourage youth to get outdoors and explore nature.
- **Selena Gallen** of Westmoreland wants to manage her land to reduce runoff, promote native plants, and create wildlife habitat.
- **Kathy Healy** of Concord plans to be volunteer as an easement monitor for a land trust.
- **Bart Hunter** of Wilton will continue to serve on his conservation commission and volunteer as a SPNH land steward, and hopes to help develop an educational series in the town of Wilton.
- **Debbie Lang** of South Sutton plans to join and participate in the Sutton Natural Resources Committee, and wants to incorporate natural resources information in the town's master plan.
- **Trish Leipold** of Wolfeboro Falls wants to continue development of demonstration habitat on her property, and develop educational materials to encourage better stewardship of water resources,
- **Bob Leipold** of Wolfeboro Falls will finish development of a forest stewardship plan for his property that includes wildlife habitat considerations, and plans to initiate land management for young forest habitat.
- **Pete McVay** of Atkinson wants to help his town write and apply for grants related to invasive species control and trail establishment and maintenance.
- **Paul Melanson** of Hampton Falls plans to manage his property for wildlife habitat and integrate his property's management with that of abutting conservation land.
- **Carol Moore** of Hampton Falls wants to identify and implement wildlife habitat management activities and Wildlife Action Plan strategies on her property.
- **Linda Moore** of Bethlehem hopes to join her town's conservation commission and will continue volunteering with her local land trust.
- **Michael Nerrie** of Walpole plans to reach out to local conservation commissions to offer assistance in mapping the vernal pools in each town.
- **Jace Porter** of Manchester plans to train in the Speaking for Wildlife program and lead habitat walks.
- **Lauren Schlichter** of Pike wants to be trained in the Speaking for Wildlife program, and also plans to engage her students in stewardship-related volunteer opportunities.
- **Charles Terry** of Wilton wants to develop and implement management goals for his property, and plans to participate in Stewardship Network activities.
- **Kier Walsh** of Dublin wants to meet with his County Forester, develop a management plan for his property, and plans to invite his neighbors to walk his property and hear about proposed management.
- **Susan Weiss** of Weare plans to conserve her land, contributing to the abutting conservation land.
- **Rob Wofchuck** of Brentwood plans to incorporate wildlife habitat information into the conservation commission's current project to develop land management plans for town-owned property.





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 386 active volunteers today, working in over 165 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 – 2015

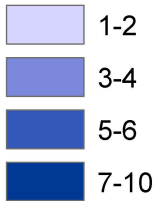
Training Year	# Coverts Trained
1995	23
1996	23
1997	22
1998	26
1999	28
2000	23
2001	23
2002	26
2003	25
2004	23
2005	26
2006	24
2007	23
2008	26
2009	23
2010	24
2011	25
2012	22
2013	21
2014	22
2015	23
Total Trained Coverts Volunteers	501
Total Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/15	386
Number of NH Communities with Active Coverts Volunteers as of 10/15	165+

Location of Active Volunteers

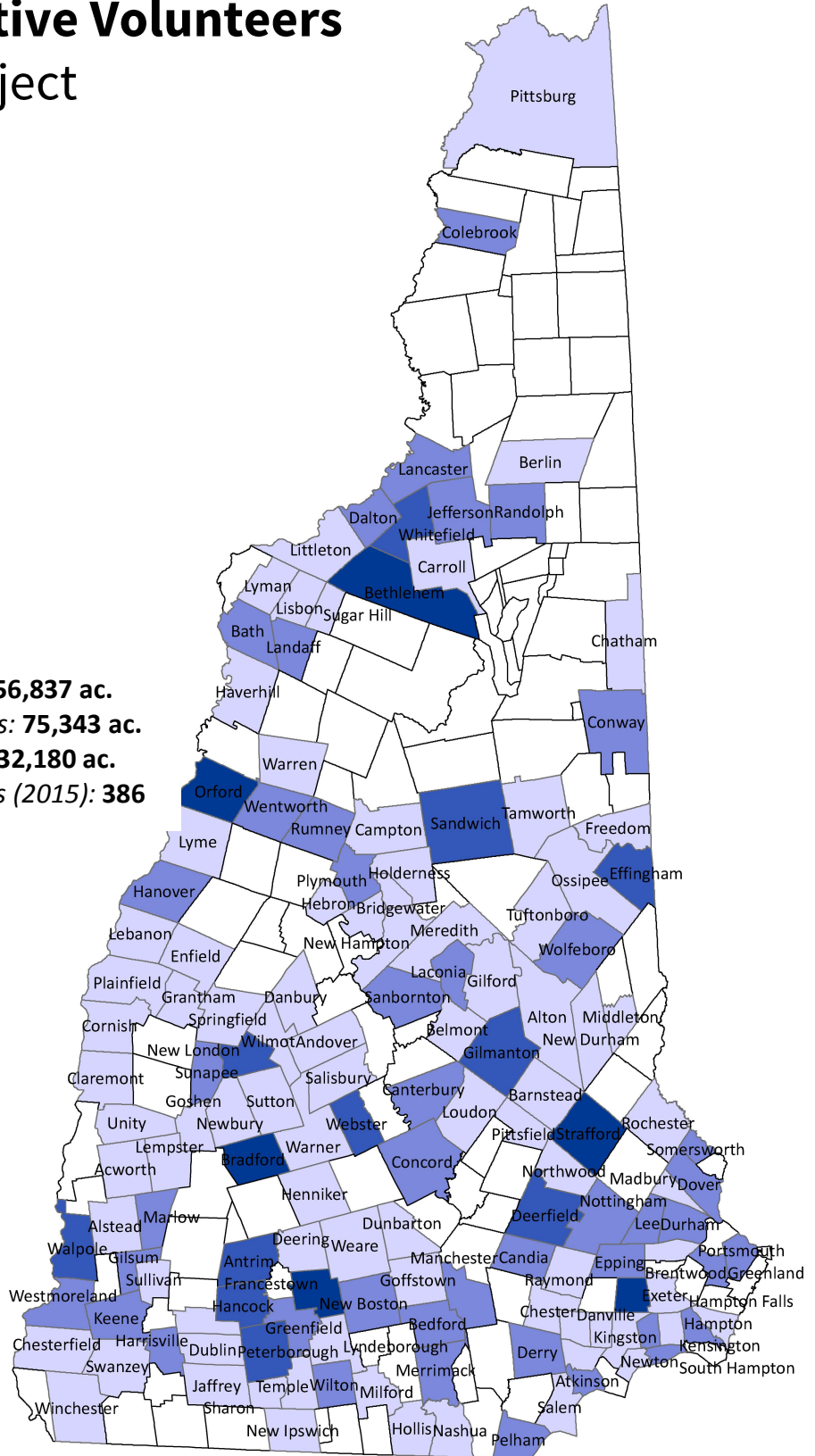
NH Coverts Project

1995-2015

Number of Coverts Cooperators by Town



Acres Owned by Volunteers: **56,837 ac.**
 Acres Managed by Volunteers: **75,343 ac.**
 Total Acres in Stewardship: **132,180 ac.**
 Total No. of Active Volunteers (2015): **386**





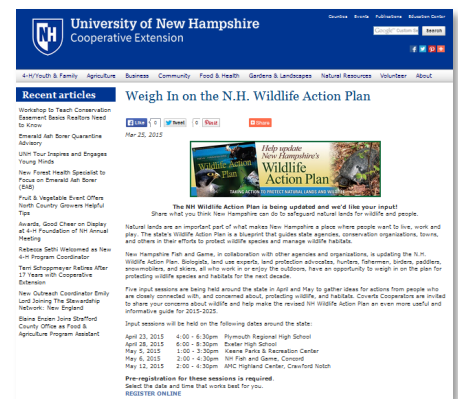
2015 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

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 Updates – these e-mail newsletters are the main communication tool between the project office and Coverts Cooperators. In 2015, 31 Coverts Updates were sent to Coverts volunteers, containing information on volunteer opportunities, workshops and trainings, relevant news, and updates related to the NH Coverts Project.

Coverts Blog, “Volunteers Working for Wildlife” – This web-based forum has become integral in providing information specific to 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 updates. In 2015, the Coverts Project office has posted 27 different news items. A sample page is shown to the right. The address for the blog is:

<http://extension.unh.edu/Article-Categories/Coverts>



NH Coverts Facebook Group –in 2013, the Coverts Project created a Facebook group expressly for NH Coverts volunteers, which currently has 58 members. Many are also members of the Forestry and Wildlife Facebook Page (1,165 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.

Alumni Gatherings – On October 4th, 2014 over 35 Coverts Cooperators and UNH Cooperative Extension staff members gathered at the NH School of Falconry for NH Coverts Project alumni event. Founded in 2005, the school is owned and operated by Coverts Cooperator Nancy Cowan and her husband, Jim. A long-term conservation advocate, Nancy Cowan attended the Coverts Project training workshop in 1998, and has been an active, involved member of the Coverts volunteer community. Attendees were introduced to the school, the history and art of falconry, and were given the opportunity to fly a falcon. Extension Forestry Specialist Karen Bennett and Wildlife Specialist Matt Tarr led an informative walk through the property to explore areas that were recently managed in a timber harvest the previous winter. Additionally, several workshops open to the public were hosted by Coverts Cooperators at their property over the last year. These included a *Woodcock Walk & Talk* hosted by Jim Kennedy in Etna, and a *Shrubland Habitat Management for Birds* workshop hosted by Fred Ernst in Acworth. Both of these events were coordinated in part by UNHCE and the Coverts Project, and included presentations from program coordinator Haley Andreozzi.



Coverts Volunteer Activities in 2015: *Working 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 2015 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 32% of active Coverts volunteers in 2015, a lower response rate than the 50% goal, but well above what is typically considered an acceptable survey response rate and still offering a strong picture of active volunteerism on the part of Coverts volunteers.

Coverts Survey Responses in 2015 are summarized as follows:

	Total 2015 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	375
# Cooperators returning surveys	119 (32%)

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	5504
Talking with other landowners or neighbors about stewardship or conservation	3445
Time spent working to conserve land of another landowners/town/land trust	2112
Serving on open space group, land trust board or conservation group board	1690
Serving on a watershed assoc., river coalition or other water resources group	1566
Serving on a conservation commission	1448
Time spent helping manage town forest or other conservation land (e.g. town forest, land trust land, neighbors)	1401
Serving on a select board, planning board or town council	1315
Attending forestry or wildlife conferences, workshops or seminars	989
Distributing written resource materials to others (neighbors, community members, etc.)	688
Leading or hosting natural resource tours in the field	564
Writing and providing information to media about natural resources or conservation	374
Giving presentations to adult groups (such as "Speaking for Wildlife" talks)	351
Volunteered for a wildlife monitoring program (e.g. RAARP, Audubon bird surveys, Bio-thons)	295
Helping a community with a master plan or natural resource inventory	289
Staffing natural resource exhibits or working at events	286
Other	723
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS 2015	23040

The total contribution of volunteer time in 2015 was **23,040 hours**. This is a conservative figure, as these are only the recorded hours from the 32% of active volunteers who returned surveys.



Special Opportunities to Volunteer

Speaking for Wildlife Project

The Coverts updates and blog help 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 was initiated in September 2010, and 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, and most recently has been supported by funds from the NH Fish and Game Department.

We have a group of 168 volunteers trained to deliver wildlife-focused presentations and lead walks 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. Accomplishments of the program in 2015 include:

- Held 2 training workshop involving 29 new volunteers
- Held a special training workshop for the Student Conservation Association New Hampshire Corps, involving 28 young adult volunteers
- Worked with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and NH Division of Forests and Lands to develop a collaborative training program for Emerald Ash Borer Naturalists, using content and materials from the Speaking for Wildlife ‘NH Bugs: The Big Three’ presentation
- Volunteers delivered 30 public presentations reaching 430 people
- Volunteers led 10 public field walks with 120 participants

The Stewardship Network: New England

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 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 who are willing to help. This widens the reach of the NH Coverts Project, and expands volunteer and training opportunities for Coverts volunteers.

Since it’s official launch in April 2014, The Stewardship Network: New England has connected volunteers to science and stewardship projects with over 123 organizations, agencies, and towns in New Hampshire. During FY2015, the Network’s weekly e-bulletin promoted 237 stewardship projects and 48 citizen science opportunities to a growing network of 1,600+ interested volunteers and professionals, including all active Coverts Cooperators. An estimated 2,837 volunteer hours 2343 been contributed towards environmental stewardship, training, or citizen science projects during this time. Stewardship Network: New England staff has also provided technical assistance to scientists and conservation organizations on how to work with volunteers, and implements a web-



based registration system that enables partner organizations to easily recruit and communicate with new volunteers. The project’s website can be found at <http://newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org>.

Land Stewardship

Many Coverts Cooperators own or manage land and incorporate wildlife habitat management and good forest stewardship into their land management. One Coverts Cooperator reported this year:

“Because of the Coverts program, I was able to work with my county forester and our privately hired forester and achieve the results that were best for my woodlot. We opened up a new hayfield after stumping a clear cut section of the woodlot. [...] This new field was contiguous with our established hayfield but the additional portion was enough to attract two pair of Bobolinks this past spring.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

Acres Owned by survey respondents	13,643 acres
Acres Responsible for Managing by survey respondents	39,940 acres
# Landowners implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	73 (61% of respondents)
All Coverts – Land Owned	56,837
All Coverts – Land Managed	75,343 acres

The chart below shows the acres of habitat actively managed Coverts Cooperators in 2015 (who responded to the 2015 survey).

Coverts Habitat Management, 2015 (# acres managed, by habitat type)	
Resource Inventory	3300 ac.
Grasslands/Old Fields Management	700 ac.
Timber Stand Improvement	677 ac.
Wetland Enhancement	670 ac.
Hardwood Management	537 ac.
Early Successional Management	359 ac.
Softwood Management	138 ac.



Community Conservation

Many Coverts Cooperators serve as local decision-makers and help initiate or implement conservation and stewardship projects in their communities. One volunteer describes his role in local land conservation and stewardship:

"I did my Coverts training this past spring and plan to use a lot of what I learned in my role as chair of [my town's] Conservation Commission. We have engaged [a private consultant] to develop land management plans for three town-owned properties. I will be able to use all my newfound knowledge from the Coverts program to be a proponent for incorporating land management for wildlife into these plans. Hopefully we will be able to look at the properties and create some habitat that may be missing from the area, and create a long term plan for managing the land to maintain and enhance the habitat for wildlife."

# of acres of land in New Hampshire that Coverts volunteers helped conserve in 2015	6,303 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 a highlight from this past year:

"I led a nature walk on my 33-acre parcel. We saw evidence of wildlife (scat, turkey feathers, etc.) and I pointed out areas of nesting and foraging. We talked about tree species, the need for diversity in the forest and the types of wildlife seen on the land (deer, turkey, red fox, barred owls, coyote, ruffed grouse, bobcat, moose, three varieties of woodpeckers). I distributed wildlife brochures and trail maps as the land is in conservation and open to public access."

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

Estimate of # of people reached by Coverts volunteers in 2015 with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, Speaking for Wildlife, etc.	15,549 people
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NH Coverts Project Initiatives for 2016

Communication – Continue the use of the Volunteers Working for Wildlife Blog to focus on stories about Coverts volunteer activities and stories, and use of Stewardship Network: New England e-news bulletins to promote volunteer opportunities and training news. Continue social media and website work with the Forestry & Wildlife Facebook page, the NH Coverts Facebook Group, 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, including a Field Trip 101 training to be scheduled for early 2016. We will continue to expand access to citizen science and stewardship volunteer opportunities and training through the Stewardship Network: New England's online hub and e-news bulletins.

Annual Training Workshop – The Coverts workshop will continue to be held in the spring for 2016. The training will take place at the Barbara C. Harris Center in Greenfield, NH from May 4-7, 2016. In consultation with project staff and presenters, we will continue to hold the workshop on a spring schedule. Holding the workshop in the spring allows for the incorporation of new and valuable content and provides the opportunity newly trained Coverts Cooperators to take immediate actions following the workshop.

Advisory Committee – The Coverts Project Advisory Committee meets approximately once a year to discuss emerging issues and new ideas for the continued success of the program. Committee meeting notes are available to all Coverts Cooperators (and the public) on the Coverts webpage. Four new members from the most recent 2015 class were added to the roster of advisors.

Coverts Gatherings – The Coverts Project will organize 1-2 field days for Coverts volunteers at Coverts-owned properties or other places of interest. A limited-capacity wildlife tracking workshop run by White Pine Program has been scheduled for February 2016, exclusively for Coverts Cooperators.

Updates – 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 2015 annual report.



Appendix

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2015

- [Coverts Project Brochure](#)
- [2015 Program Highlights \(Summary Report\)](#)
- [2015 Coverts Application Form](#)
- [2015 Annual Workshop Agenda](#)
- [2015 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form](#)
- [Annual Coverts Activities Survey form – 2015](#)
- [Speaking for Wildlife Program Brochure](#)