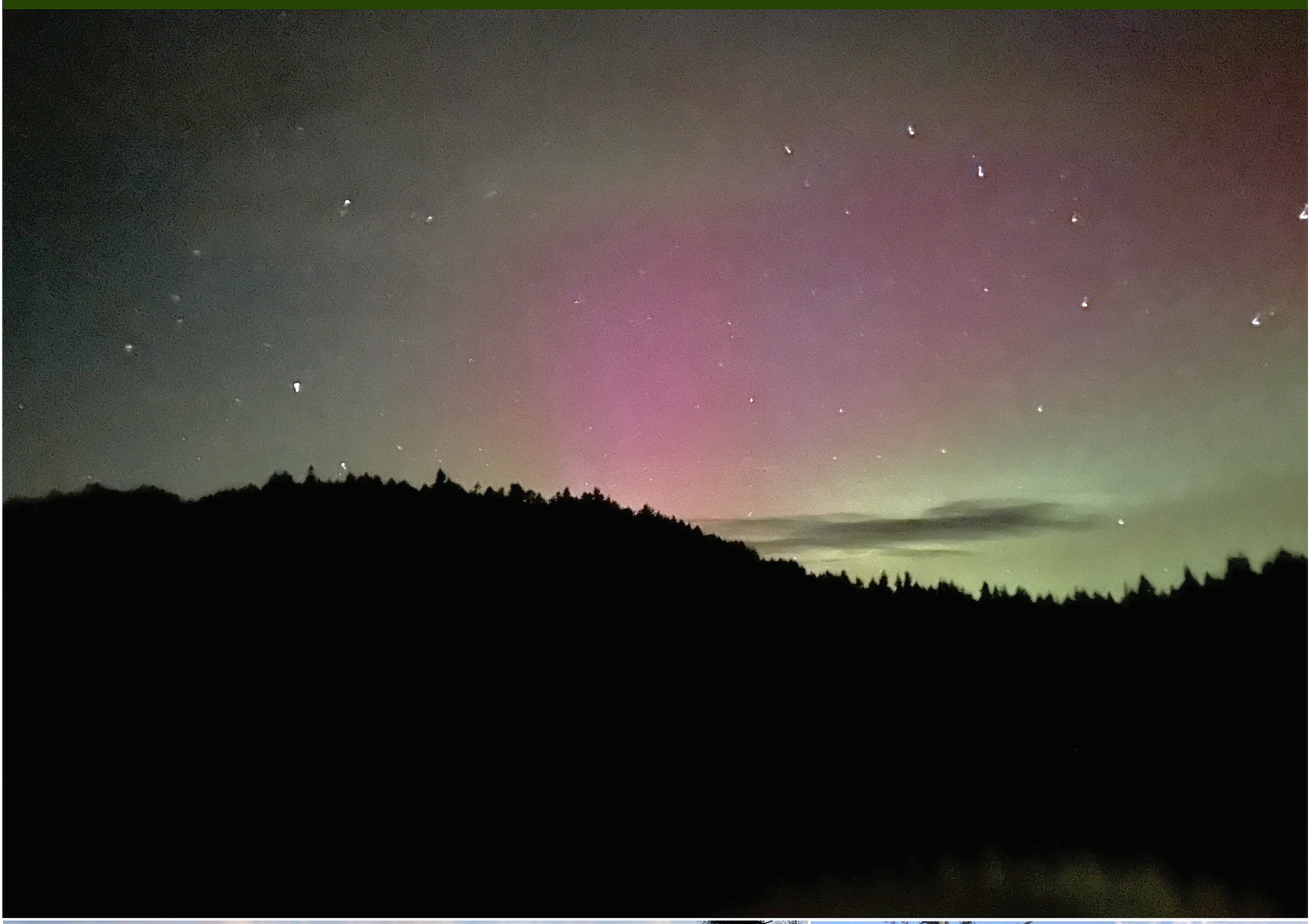
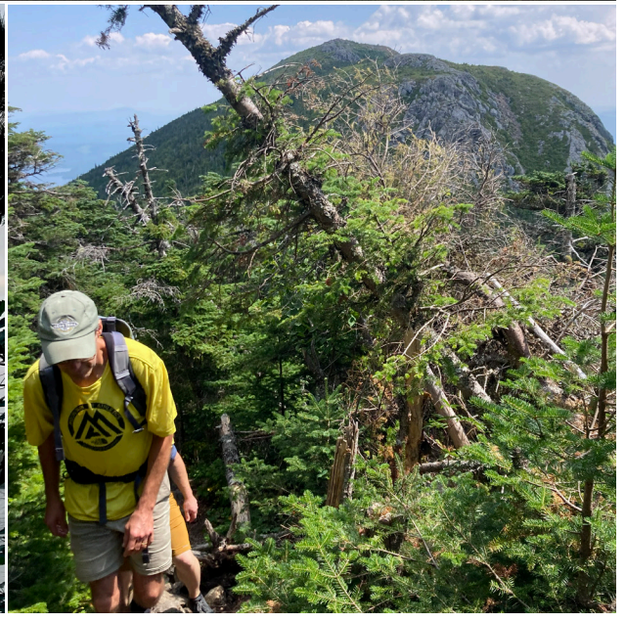
No. 23 / November 2025

THE WATERMAN FUND

The Alpine Steward ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

FOSTERING THE SPIRIT OF WILDNESS AND CONSERVING THE ALPINE AREAS OF NORTHEASTERN NORTH AMERICA





IN THIS ISSUE

THE WATERMAN FUND
P.O. Box 1064
East Corinth, VT 05040
watermanfund.org

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS
Clockwise from top:

Northern Lights on the Bigelow Range, Maine. Photo by Elliot Koeppel, 2025.

Board member Lars Botzojorns hiking to West peak. Photo by David Crews, 2025.

The Bigelows from Flagstaff lake. Photo by David Crews, 2025.

BACK PHOTOGRAPH

Summer Trail Crew at Lowe's Path. Photo by Randolph Mountain Club, 2025.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On Aloneness, Wild(er)ness

by David Crews

From the farmfield where I reside, in winter I can practically see the ridge that carries the Appalachian trail. When the sun sets behind the house it often lights this mountain ridge into a mosaic of reds and pinks and yellows. Here in southern Vermont this ridgeline also coincides with the Long trail.

For a good portion of my adult life I have lived quite close to this historic footpath. It is a hiking trail that holds an incredible allure for it proves one of the few places where, when I am traversing mud and moss-strewn rocks and glacial erratics, I sense a deep and profound feeling of wildness.

Sure that sentiment may be difficult to experience along the AT in areas of high human presence, though the wilderness just beyond my view holds more the echoes of bootsteps. It often feels quite desolate. The Glastenbury wilderness area contains over twenty-two thousand acres of protected forest, a patchwork of American beech, White and Yellow birch, Eastern hemlock, Balsam fir, Red spruce, Mountain ash. It is the second largest of Vermont's eight nationally-preserved wilderness areas.

> "ALONENESS HOLDS THE POTENTIAL FOR INCREDIBLE INTIMACY. IT SOMETIMES COMES IN SILENCE. THEN, A THRUSH SINGS."

At 3748 feet above sea level, access to Glastenbury mountain proves a difficult approach of over ten miles hiking from any direction. This remote landscape even holds whispers of mysterious lore: persons gone missing and strange backcountry villages deep in the Bennington triangle.

The mountain stands as one of the high points along the eastern ridge of what locals call the Vermont valley, a long stretch of land carved by the last glacial retreat, cradled by the southern Green mountains to the east and the northern Taconics to the west. It runs nearly twenty-five miles north from Bennington to Manchester, then splits into a northwest passage through Dorset and a northern corridor up towards Danby. The AT/LT travels alongside on the spine of the southern Greens.

Glastenbury trailhead, 2025. Photo by David Crews.

Historians suggest this fertile valley most likely served as shared winter hunting grounds between Muhheaconneok peoples venturing up the eastern mountain streams of the Hudson river watershed and western Abenaki tribes traveling up from the Connecticut valley.

In recent years I have been drawn to this stretch of AT trekking through the Glastenbury woods because it offers a space in which one can experience a great deal of aloneness. What, however, does aloneness really mean out here. What does wilderness mean, what did it ever mean. There was a time when a human being could venture into the woods and find one's self completely alone, in a sense, no one actually knew where they were. Now, even the phone in my pocket (on airplane mode) probably still gets pinged by cell towers or unseen satellites.

I call my mother at least once a week, though these days, I don't update her on all my wanderings.

One day back in the summer of 2020, I began an ascent up the Ridge of the Caps trail. It was the tenth hike I did in the White mountains in a couple dozen or so days of time. Life was a ranging pandemic, and I, without a home or a job and all my belongings packed into my little Subaru, not knowing what to even do with myself, decided to sleep among tall trees for a while and climb a bunch of high mountains.

On this day the plan was to summit Clay, Jefferson, Adams, and Madison. Not even a few moments into my hike I passed a woman with an Audubon vest and a camera as long as a child's arm. She was looking for thrushes.

She told me that on my way up to the ridge I could pass through the habitat of three different members of the family, Turdidae: Hermit thrush near the parking area, Swainson's thrush part way up, and Bicknell's thrush near and above treeline.

Aloneness holds the potential for incredible intimacy. It sometimes comes in silence. Then, a thrush sings.

For a month of time this summer I was gearing up for an ascent of Glastenbury mountain northbound on the AT/LT from Route 9. Coming out of mud season I was unsure how steady my legs would be over a long distance, so I slowly worked myself up. After a few hikes venturing farther and farther in my body felt good and ready to take a long eight hours on the trail.

On the big day I had not quite realized what was happening until it all happened. The way some strange events unfold right before one's sensibilities, only later offering a full understanding of the larger universal paradigm at work.

Glastenbury wilderness line, 2025. Photo by David Crews.

I left the car around 8:30, crossed the Walloomsac river and began to climb Maple hill. A few tenths of a mile in, I heard a Wood thrush sing. At the moment it did not really hold a significant place in my thoughts: back in New Jersey where I am from, in summer, one hears the song of the Wood thrush all over the thick woods at dusk. Though up here in Vermont they feel less common.

After a couple of miles, and about an hour later, I crossed the Glastenbury wilderness line at 2690 feet. As I was trekking through, now higher on the ridge, I heard a Hermit thrush as I often do at this spot.

I've always had a difficult time trying to describe the song of the deep woods thrushes. They feel ethereal, flute-like, with a wild intonation that sounds apart from most other songbirds I can think of. (At some point, even the most sophisticated ornithologists resort to onomatopoeia.)

Goddard shelter, 2025. Photo by David Crews.

The Wood thrush will often stutter a couple of beats to get going, and the riff holds distinct notes and movements, that while varied in tone and cadence, feel as though control and deliberateness are part of the composition. As one might expect the song of the Hermit thrush sounds similar, though has a lessened timbre. It sets down first a high note like a pitch pipe before beginning an elaborate riff that sounds less contained, more improvised. (The Hermit thrush is the Vermont state bird.)

Glastenbury firetower, 2025. Photo by David Crews.

It was just after noon, nearly ten miles in, when I reached the Goddard shelter at 3570 feet. As I took a moment to consider how far I had come, how good my legs were feeling, and how I was about to enter the mossy fairy world of the Glastenbury summit area, I heard a thrush song that was for sure not a Hermit thrush.

I pulled out my little phone robot on airplane mode and opened the Cornell bird identifier to learn what I had the feeling was to be true: the song came from a Swainson's thrush. I had heard this bird once or twice before and, the best way I could describe the song as it differs from his other two cousins, is that I sense a bit of a windup and slingshot feeling to how the song is released into the ether: an almost mix of the first two. There is sometimes that opening stutter, but the song takes shape slowly, almost tripping over itself, and then rises to a complicated and echo-like resolve.

A few tenths of a mile later, at about 12:30, I was standing under the Glastenbury fire tower. It was desolate, no one around. I passed maybe two or three folks on the trail in. The silence was palpable. And now, here I

was standing under this strange human contraption, far from a lot of other human civilization, taking in the quiet and the aloneness.

Suddenly, a thrush ripped off a song to shatter the midday silence.

> "HOW DOES ONE WRITE OF ALONENESS. THE ACT OF WRITING AND SHARING LITERALLY ANTIQUATES THE NOTION OF BEING ALONE."

Never in my life had I seen or heard a Bicknell's thrush.

I do remember reading a great deal about this endangered bird from a book written by one of my dear mentors, Darryl McGrath. In 2016, she published *Flight Paths: A field journal of hope, heartbreak and miracles with New York's bird people* with SUNY Press. Of the four high risk bird species that catalog this environmental journalism the Bicknell's thrush was the one bird of whom I had not ever read. This species winters in very specific forests in the Caribbean, forests that are diminishing quickly, like so many forests around the globe. And with the loss of such a specialized winter habitat their numbers, like so many bird populations, are crashing.

What I also had not expected was to hear one, here, in southern Vermont. I was not above treeline, and I figured they would more likely reside in higher elevations of north country. And still, here we both were. I had to use the app again to positively identify the strange sounds I was hearing.

The Bicknell's song has remnants of the other deep woods thrushes, though there is something way more mechanical (and dare I say) electronic about it. The flute feels replaced by some form of percussion, and I almost hear varied wren-like transitions carrying the movement.

It was an epic kind of day: from the Walloomsac river (1060 feet) to Glastenbury mountain (3748 feet), in four hours, passing through the habitat of four different thrush songs.

> "WHAT, HOWEVER, DOES ALONENESS REALLY MEAN OUT HERE. WHAT DOES WILDERNESS MEAN, WHAT DID IT EVER MEAN."

How does one write of aloneness. The act of writing and sharing literally antiquates the notion of being alone. And I used my phone robot to help me identify birdsong. What a world.

Perhaps, I can take a humble moment to say I'm not exactly sure what aloneness really is. Or, wildness for that matter. Though I feel a pull toward wanting both in my life.

Here, at the Waterman Fund, we are really pushing ourselves to explore what wildness means. Of course, we see it in those rare and endangered alpine plants. We feel it above treeline, and in the deep woods of wilderness. To preserve the intrinsic value of these living ecosystems is to preserve the dignity of life, for the sake of life.

There is so much happening in this world, more grief than I ever thought possible in a human lifetime, and I'm not sure any of us really knows what to truly do. So I would like to make a plea for aloneness, and the intimacy possible in wildness (let's make a movement).

Waterman Fund Financial Report

by Steve Crowe

Waterman Fund received annual contributions of $27,077 that included transfers from our PayPal account from 2022-2024.

Administrative expenses came in under budget, the largest expense for the important work communiating the year's updates with our *Alpine Steward* annual newsletter. Program expenses increased for the fiscal year, as we increased awards for our Emerging Writers Essay Contest. The selected first place essay receives $3,000 and the runner-up receives $1,000. This is significant prize money considering we do not charge any submission fees to enter. Program Funds also support our annual Stewardship Awards.

For the Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering we collected registration fees as well as over $5,000 in sponsorship monies from a variety of organizations and businesses, including: World Trails Network, Burgeon Outdoors, The Nature Conservancy, Citrin GIS Lab-Dartmouth, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Maine Mountain Collaborative, Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park, Mahoosuc Land Trust, Vermont Center for Ecostudies.

INCOME	
Annual Contributions	$27,077
NEASG Sponsorship + Registration	$9,650
Transfer from investments	$50,000
EXPENSES	
Administrative	$6,439
Programs	$17,717
Grants disbursed (previous years)	$32.881
Grants disbursed (current)	$33.200
TOTAL NET ASSETS	
April, 2024	$534,337
April, 2025	$520,058

We approved a $20,000 three-year Sponsorship for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, along with the third year of Sponsorship for the Franconia Ridge through the World Trails Network. Grant awards continue to be paid out to recipients when the field season finishes as organizations complete work and submit final reports for their research, education and trail work. Outstanding grants total $5,863.

As the Waterman Fund becomes more robust in our offerings we will need to find more donors. We did receive $15,000 from the estate of a friend of the Fund. Please consider adding the Waterman Fund to your will and estate.

The Waterman Fund's investment continues to do well in our Vanguard Fund, we withdrew $50,000 from the investment fund and only had $14,000 less in our account.

Waterman Fund Grants Report

By Kayla White

The Waterman Fund grants program has awarded three grants and two sponsorships totaling $48,556.40 for 2025. This funding has supported trail work, stewardship, education, and research across the alpine areas of Northeastern North America. The program has awarded a total of $450,158 since its inception over 20 years ago.

Three grants and two sponsorships went to supporting and sustaining alpine stewardship programs this year. Representatives from Universite de Moncton received $8,029 for research to resample a GLORIA (Global Observation Research in Alpine Environments) site in the Chic-Chocs Mountains in Gaspésie, Québec. This research would track potential changes in the composition of alpine vegetation in response to global warming. This will be the third sampling conducted, allowing for the observation of potential vegetation changes over time.

The Randolph Mountain Club was awarded $5,528 to conduct trail maintenance on Lowe's Path in the alpine zone on Mount Adams. The path tread needs to be repaired to keep hikers on trail and off fragile alpine vegetation. This grant helped fund a fall trail-crew to complete this important work.

The Franconia Ridge Summit Stewardship Program through the World Trails Network Americas received $10,000 for staffing Franconia Ridge with summit stewards. The Waterman Fund has continued to support this new stewardship program through grants and sponsorship funds. This program has implemented a photopoint monitoring program to track vegetation damage over time, educates hikers along the ridge, and conducts much needed trail work.

The Waterman Fund has continued to provide multi-year sponsorships to evolving projects that has proven successful in this new avenue of funding. Guidelines for sponsorships are that organizations can apply for up to three years and need to provide annual reporting. Qualifications for sponsorship are on the Fund's website.

In 2024, the Waterman Fund provided the Maine Appalachian Trail Club a three-year sponsorship of $10,000 a year annually to help cover expenses associated with the staffing and operation of two Appalachian Trail Ridgerunners in Maine's alpine regions. Since there was a greater need for funding, the board provided $20,000 last year and has continued sponsoring MATC this year at $10,000.

For 2025, the Green Mountain Club was awarded a sponsorship of $15,000 with $10,000 per year for the next two years to create a new volunteer stewardship program on the Long Trail in Vermont. The Long Trail Volunteer Steward Program will focus on protecting Mount Abraham, Camel's Hump, and Mount Mansfield, stationing trained volunteers at visitor centers and trailheads to help educate the hikers.

WHAT YOUR SUPPORT CAN DO...

help preserve fragile alpine areas in the Northeast by lifting up those individuals who work to protect them

$1,000 can fund scholarships for individuals in need to attend the Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering
$3,000 can fund the award for the winner of our annual Emerging Writers Essay Contest
$5,000 can fund independent research projects on fragile Arctic alpine ecosystems in both U.S. and Canada
$10,000 can fund hosting the Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering
$20,000 can fund a summit steward for an entire season who helps educate hikers on the fragile plants in the alpine zone

And the selections are . . .

by Laura Waterman

The Waterman Fund is proud to announce the winners of our sixteenth essay contest. We welcomed 67 essays of which thirteen made the final round. The committee is composed of current and former board members, outside readers, and the editor of *Appalachia Journal*. The first place winner for our 2025 Essay Contest is Shane Behler for his piece, "Immersion." Our Runner-up is Anderson Smith for "A Forager's Guide to the Wilderness." We have included ex cerpts from their selected essays!

The prompt for 2025 was as follows:

Wilderness and wildness have two distinctly different meanings. Yet we have observed they can be used almost interchangeably.

Wilderness is often spoken of as a means of protecting land through an act of legislation. In this country, the ideal behind it has preserved great tracts of land for public use. It has also allowed justification for times when governments displaced and took land from indigenous peoples. And perhaps the act of codifying or naming Wilderness (with a capital "W") only further distances humans, in an abstract sense, from their primal and profound connections to the land itself. The narrative is complex and nuanced.

Nonetheless, in today's day and age in this country wilderness areas contain some of the more rare, wild and undefined places available to citizens. The Waterman Fund invites submissions that explore how moving through mountains and rivers and wild lands brings out the uncultivated spirit, the unscathed, non-commercial, honest primal human in all of us. What is the wild in wild(er)ness?

SHANE BEHLER, "Immersion"

It started as hikes do, slow and lumbering, straps chafing shoulders, the pack's weight threatening to wrench me down from behind; then acclimating as the miles passed, hitting my stride the pack no longer bothersome, feeling like it had always been there. Finally, cruising into camp tired and happy under lengthening shadows.

We cleared the spruces soon after we started the next morning. My first time above tree line, and we experienced a rarity: a clear day in the Presidential Range. . .

Shane Behler is from Upstate New York and now lives in Washington, D.C. where he works in conservation policy. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and a Master's degree in Applied Economics from Clemson University. He spends as much time outdoors as he possibly can.

Shane writes: "I wrote 'Immersion' because my early experiences with nature were very formative in developing my conservation ethic. Without such opportunities, I could not imagine that I would care for wild places and wild things to the extent that I do, underscoring the necessity of exposing as many people as possible to the natural world and outdoor recreation."

Anderson Smith has worked seasonally in lodges, backcountry huts, and glacier camps in New Hampshire and Alaska. Currently in Colorado, she is a master's candidate in library science at the University of Denver where she is either in the mountains or getting back to them. She has a bachelor's in creative writing from Emerson College and is always working on a novel.

Anderson writes: "I wrote my essay because my experiences with foraging capture the irony of the wilderness: that even while we run to it to escape other people it's often where we have our most human moments with them. This irony has been following me on all my wilderness adventures—I can almost taste it."

ANDERSON SMITH, "A Forager's Guide to the Wilderness"

Wilderness has a taste. I first learned its flavor in the spring of 2020, when I entertained apocalyptic visions of plague besetting the land, gutted supermarkets, floundering supply chains and myself, stalking the autumn forests for acorns. I'd heard that if you prepare them right, you could make them into flour. I had to get a head start on winter, I said, and began to traipse the well-trodden paths low alongside the local golf course looking for fiddleheads, a spring delicacy. I plucked those sprouting May emeralds and carried them home, peeling away their papery husks under a stream from the faucet and setting them to boil I watched amber tannins leech into the water. The steam was earthy. . .

• 2026 EMERGING WRITERS ESSAY CONTEST •

Waterman Fund seeks new voices on the role and place of strewardship + wildness in today's changing world. Since 2008, *Appalachia Journal*, the mountaineering and conservation journal published by the Appalachian Mountain Club, and Waterman Fund, have joined to support an annual essay contest for emerging writers. Waterman Fund provides generous prize money of $3,000 for the first-place essay selection and $1,000 for a runner-up.

For 2026, there is no particular prompt. We invite essays that address any or all topics related to: our relationship to the natural living world, land and place, preservation/conservation, alpine ecosystems, wild(er)ness and the deep woods. We are particularly drawn to personal experience , an emphasis on memoir, that both entertains and edifies.

The submissions will remain open until March 15, 2026. Submissions should be between 2000 - 3000 words. Please include contact information and a few lines about why the writer feels their essay is appropriate for the contest. On-line submissions should be double spaced, manuscripts in 12-point font. Word .doc compatible files are preferred. If submitting by mail please include an email address. We select a first and second place selection with awards of $3000 and $1000, respectively. Winning essays are published in Appalachia and on the Waterman Fund website.

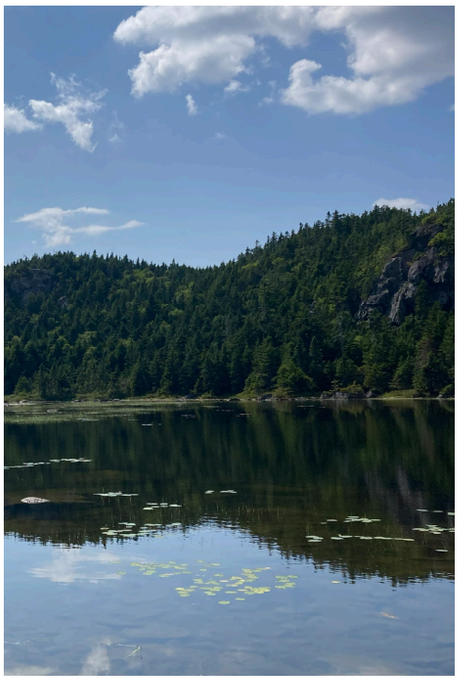
For purposes of this contest, we consider an Emerging Writer a person of any age who has not previously been published in a national magazine or written a book-length work of fiction or narrative nonfiction on topics of wilderness, wildness, or the ethics and ecology of environmental issues. We welcome personal, scientific, adventure, or memoir essays. Fiction, poetry or songs are not eligible for this contest. More information is available at watermanfund.org. Please send inquiries to essays@watermanfund.org.

Tori Jofery, VP with Maine ATC looks south along the Bigelow Range, Maine. Photo by David Crews, 2025

Horn pond, Bigelow range, Maine. Photo by David Crews,

TRAVERSING THE BIG

On August 11th, members of the Waterman Fund board joined representatives from the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) on a fieldtrip up the Bigelow range. We met vice president, Tori Jofery, and club coordinator, Holly Sheehan, in the parking area and began an ascent of the Fire Warden's trail. This path climbed to nearly 4000 feet and came to a juncture between West and Avery peak. It was here that we met with MATC ridgerunner, Elliot Koeppel. Once on the ridge, we turned west and began heading southbound on the Appalachian trail. After a few miles we climbed over The Horns and down to Horns pond. From here, we began a return down the Horns Pond trail. It was a great day getting to spend time with folks doing the good work of education and stewardship in Maine's alpine zones. Elliot shared the following thoughts with us for *The Alpine Steward*.



2025

Waterman Fund board members join Maine Appalachian Trail Conservancy on hike to Saddleback Mountain, Maine.

ELOW RANGE, MAINE

by Elliot Koeppel, MATC Ridgerunner

Each Appalachian Trail Ridgerunner serves as a steward of their section of trail—modeling backcountry ethics and Leave No Trace practices in the field. To fill this role carries similar responsibilities for us all, such as performing roving forest janitorial duties, maintaining the privies at backcountry campsites, and imparting information about the region of trail to its users. Aside from this is developing knowledge of the trails we patrol—noticing patterns of use as the season unfolds and witnessing the passage of trail users. Above all, it's an opportunity to form a unique relationship with a section of the Appalachian Trail and the landscape that surrounds it. Having thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail, I know that there is no stretch of trail exactly like another. Now having experienced the rise and fall of summer on the trails of the Bigelows, looking for subtle shifts brought by passing days brings novelty to the same stretches of trail each time I walk them.

The first time I saw the Bigelows was from down below on my 22nd birthday, in the fourth month of my Appalachian Trail thru-hike. As a little birthday treat to myself, I decided to cheat on the A.T. and take a blue-blazed side trail I'd heard was pretty and relatively chill for the first few miles. And it was! Until I missed the turn that would reconnect me with the trail. The lovely, rolling path following the brook turned into an active logging road, which dead-ended at an impassable pile of skeletal log remains as far as the eye could see. A true adventure—also known as being somewhat lost—that had me walk alongside the base of the mountain rather than cross up and over it. After the log pile I turned around and headed north toward a dotted line on my offline map, and ended up on a many-years inactive off-road vehicle trail, overgrown and taken over by

On the Bigelow Range. Photos by Elliot Koeppel, 2025.

A SEASON ON BIGELOW RANGE

about a foot and a half of marshy ground that swallowed my feet with each step. I squished through until hitting a real dirt road, which I walked until it hit the parking lot I'd intended to end the day. At many turns on this off-course birthday I stopped and looked up at the mountain, both awestruck by its beauty from below and trying not to beat myself up for dodging it so completely. I attempted to make peace with my mistake by promising the Bigelows that I'd come back to them soon. And two years later, as I began my season as the ridgerunner of these trails, I walked up the mountain beginning on the same side trail I'd started that day two years prior.

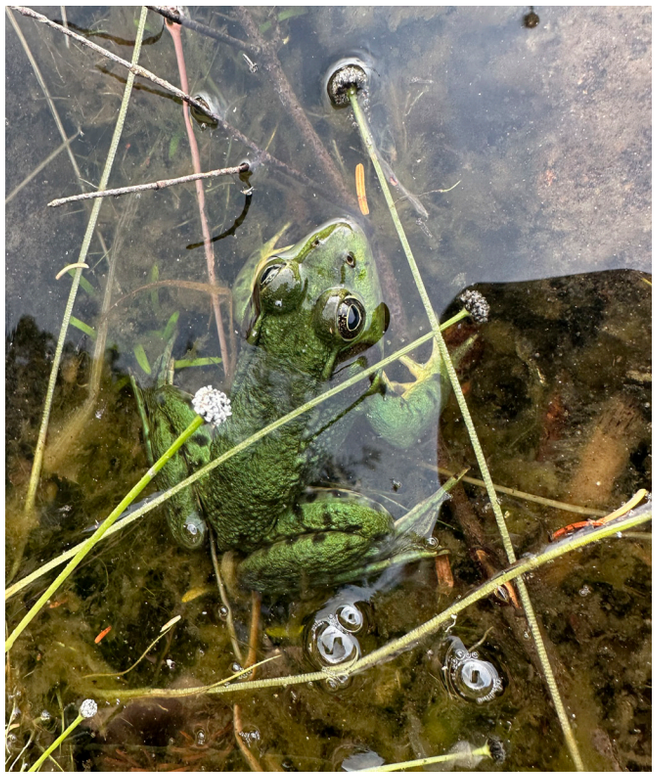
Creatures human and otherwise move through the forest in waves—the speedy thru-hikers with the smallest packs and least time to spare fly through with the biting bugs in the start of summer. The insects came in waves—each shift the first third of the season consisted of different ratios of biting bugs. Now that the temperature has dropped the season of the fuzzy caterpillars, brown moths and bumblebees has begun. These are vastly preferred to the mosquitoes, black flies, sweat flies and their buzzing henchmen which persisted in intensity and then faded into obscurity. Except for at the base of the mountain, in the parking lot along the rolling first miles by Stratton Brook—the biting creatures thrive there much longer than they do up above. The usual crowd follows them, migrating birds and bright insects, trail runners and college orientation groups and the long-distance hikers skirt the edges of Horns Pond. Berries spring up on the summits and the ridgelines and tempt the hikers to spend all day getting sunburnt on the rocky viewpoints and roll into camp well after the sunset.

The "Horns Pond Show" is my umbrella term for the routines of observation I've developed up here in the Bigelows. The morning program, my habit of perching gargoyle-style on the rock by the campsite entrance and listening to the early songbirds, has

had a great many contributors. The earliest consisted primarily of Winter Wrens until about halfway through the summer when they faded gradually into the chirping of Black-capped and Boreal Chickadees, with interjections from the pairs of Blue and Canada Jays that keep watch for crumbs. The background beeping of the Golden-crowned Kinglets and Dark-eyed Juncos is another consistent feature. The Horns Pond red squirrels (territorial, Napoleon complexes, decent aim with the small and dense pine cones, capable of malicious thievery) constantly butt in to yell at passing creatures for having the audacity to show face on their (the squirrels') mountain.

The Horns Pond Show afternoon program features the Frogs of Many Sizes, enjoyed on my near-daily Frog Walk around the pond. Rock hop around the pond to see the handful of bullfrogs and their smaller roommates. I don't know what kinds of frogs they are or if they're the same as each other, but the categories I sort them into are Tiny Froggy, Classic Frog, and Big Boss Frog (smallest to largest). I do know the Big Boss Frogs are American bullfrogs. Tadpoles grew into the Horns Pond Show frogs on the sunnier side first. They made a shoreline leaping with infinite little creatures—they camouflage in the water and hold perfectly still on the rocks before springing away right as you step close.

The mountains were dotted with yellow for only a moment before the stripes of brilliant crimson maple treetops began poking through and creeping their way up the mountain. Though I've grown accustomed to changing conditions with the passing weeks, they all seemed to happen close-by until this one—water sources drying up with the drought, blueberry season passing, the waves of bugs and birds coming and going. The oranges and browns of autumn in the valley and the mountains in the distance run upwards to the mountaintop and just a moment after I notice the maples up top going red, their leaves blanket the ground. It's been just over two years since I first promised the Bigelows I'd be back for more and it feels too soon to bid them farewell again. No goodbyes. See you later, Bigelow Mountain.



Randolph Mountain Club trail re

by Scott Meiklejohn

With support from Waterman Fund, the Randolph Mountain Club (RMC) began repairs to Lowe's Path in the alpine zone on Mt. Adams in 2025. Constructed in 1875-76, Lowe's Path is the oldest trail in the RMC network and one of the primary pathways on the Northern Peaks of the Presidential Range. It is heavily traveled and is one of only two trails on the Northern Peaks that is reliably passable in all seasons because it has no major brook crossings. The availability of the RMC's Gray Knob cabin (0.1 miles off the trail at elevation 4,375') with a year-round caretaker means that Lowe's Path is in use all year.

Lowe's Path begins on the south side of US Rt. 2 in Randolph and runs to the summit of Mt. Adams. From a point just beyond a rocky outlook called The Quay (elevation 4,429'), Lowe's Path offers an exceptional experience in the alpine zone. Here, hikers travel the broad, rounded shoulder of Nowell Ridge with expansive views to the north, west, and east, and increasingly dramatic views into King Ravine from the slope of Abigail Adams. Hikers see much of the Northeast Kingdom, Kilkenny Range, the Upper Ammonoosuc watershed, the forests north of Errol and the lakes region of western Maine. As stewards of this special place, RMC wants hikers to linger and take in what is special about the experience without wandering from the treadway, crossing krummholz and sedge to find a lunch rock, or leaving a trace.

In 2024, RMC identified ten areas with the greatest need for repairs, from treeline above The Quay to just below Thunderstorm Junction (elevation 5,473') over a distance of approximately one mile. RMC trail crew members addressed three of the ten sites in 2025; in these three areas the main treadway had become poorly defined, herdpaths had developed, cairns needed to be built or rebuilt, new screewalls were required, krummholz had to be brushed back to make the original treadway clear, and rock steps were missing or had fallen apart over the years.

The alpine zone repairs on Lowe's Path were solidly in the experience of RMC crews, which are directed by field supervisors and crew leaders under the guidance of our Trails Committee, which includes many former field supervisors, crew members, and other

Lowe's Path, first site above The Quay (before), photo by RMC, 2025

Lowe's cairn rebuild, photo by RMC, 2025

pairs on Lowe's Path

RMC trail crew alumni. The continuity of crew and volunteer experience has been an important part of the RMC's model for many decades.

For trail repairs, crews used a combination of rocks from the treadway and those quarried from talus fields nearby. For rebuilding and constructing scree walls, we blocked off herdpaths and social trails and reestablished the tread to the original corridor. We were able to close off heavily used herdpaths, which will significantly decrease impact and erosion. Several cairns were rebuilt and one new cairn added to provide line of sight. Crews also cleared brush to reestablish the main tread. In several locations, scrap branches from the brushing were used to fill in herdpaths that we closed off with scree walls, making it even more clear those paths should not be used. The Club plans to address the remaining seven sites on Lowe's Path in future seasons.

RMC is committed to educating hikers about the alpine zone through a combination of posters at Gray Knob and Crag, the two RMC camps used most often on Lowe's Path, and small kiosks donated by the district ranger (USFS) that will be placed along the trail. As devoted stewards of the alpine areas through which RMC trails pass, the Club shares the Waterman Fund's commitment to preserve and provide access to these special places while limiting the impact of the trail.

Randolph Mountain Club was founded in 1910 by year-round residents of Randolph and summer visitors who came to enjoy the northern Presidential Range of the White Mountains. RMC's original mission was to restore and preserve trails that had been built in the 1880s but were ruined when the old growth forest was logged off. Trails maintained by the RMC make up a network now 102 miles long; these trails lead to diverse forest types, many waterfalls, three glacial cirques, remarkable ridge walks above treeline, and the summits of Mts. Adams, Madison, and Jefferson. RMC also maintains trails along the Crescent Range and to the summits of Owl's Head, Starr King and Waumbek, as well as many trails in the Randolph Valley. The trail system includes a 2.2-mile section of the Appalachian Trail/Gulfside Trail in the alpine zone on Mt. Adams. Learn more at: randolphmountainclub.org.

Lowe's Path, second site above The Quay (before trailwork), photo by RMC, 2025

Lowe's Path, second site above The Quay (after trailwork), photo by RMC, 2025

Congratulations Dan Sperduto

The Waterman Fund would like to congratulate Dan Sperduto as the 2025 recipient of the Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award.

Dan's attraction to mountains began as a teenager when he started climbing 4k footers in the White Mountains with a local Explorer Post in Lexington, MA, which led to a deep interest in nature and ecology, and eventual college pursuits in forestry and plant biology. He was lucky enough to join the NH Nature Conservancy and the NH Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) as a plant ecologist/botanist where he worked for twenty years. This was followed by eleven years as lead botanist at the White Mountain National Forest, before retiring this past spring.

In the early 1990s Dan was part of a diverse collaboration on Franconia Ridge, including Guy and Laura Waterman, Charlie Cogbill, AMC, NH Natural Heritage, and the White Mountain National Forest. This was the first of two such studies, twenty years apart, to which Dan facilitated and contributed on Franconia Ridge, culminating in Charlie Cogbill's detailed reports on the scientific lessons from long term monitoring, and leading to helpful consensus on management directions.

After this work, Dan and Charlie teamed up to complete the first comprehensive floristic and vegetation study of alpine peaks outside the Presidential Range, including vegetation data from nearly all of the alpine peaks in the state of New Hampshire, leading to a comprehensive classification of alpine communities. Dan went on to produce two books at Natural Heritage, *Natural Communities of NH* with Bill Nichols (2004 and 2011), and *The Nature of NH* with Ben Kimball (2011).

With the Forest Service and many partners, Dan initiated the now eleven-year effort to control dandelions

on Mount Washington, which has met with substantial progress and still emerging lessons. This work led to the first detailed study (with Bill Nichols and Mike Jones) of non-native species in the NH alpine recently published in the journal *Arctic, Antarctic, and Alpine Research*, and contributed to the first alpine invasive management plan for an alpine zone in eastern North America (with Nichols at NHB). Dan, Mike Jones and Liz Willey also chronicled the first known extirpation of an alpine species in the U.S. with their case study of Sibbaldia procumbens in Tuckerman Ravine, not seen in thirteen years, and a demise believed to have been accelerated by humans.

Over the years Dan has been a part of wide-ranging collaborations with teams of researchers from the U.S., Quebec, and New Brunswick. He has participated in multiple GLORIA sampling efforts in NH, and in the Chic Choc and Uapishka Mountains (Monts Groulx), both in Quebec, and is mid-stream with a detailed study of alpine snowbank communities in eastern N.A., extending into Quebec, Newfoundland, and Iceland.

ALPINE STEWARD AWARDS: Nominate someone for 2026!

To nominate someone for the Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award and/or the Emerging Steward Award, please send nomination letters by August 1, 2025 to The Waterman Fund (forms are available on our website), citing specific examples of the nominee's stewardship of the Northeast's wilderness, along with other relevant personal or professional experience. If you have nominated someone in the past, the nomination remains in our files and is reviewed annually. Please visit watermanfund.org for more details. Anyone can be nominated!

BOARD UPDATES

Waterman Fund Welcomes New Board Member

Lorne Currier grew up in Maine and graduated from Keene State College with a degree in Environmental Studies and Geology. After graduating, he joined the Wyoming Conservation Corps for a season, only to quickly return to New Hampshire and settle in the White Mountains. There, he briefly worked at a social justice and peace retreat in Albany, before finding seasonal work with Appalachian Mountain Club. He worked in various roles with the AMC: as a cook in the Pinkham Notch kitchen, as a winter caretaker at Zealand, and as a hut naturalist at Madison Springs, Greenleaf, and Lonesome Lake Huts. Then, Lorne moved west to Vermont in 2017 and began working with the Green Mountain Club, where he is currently the Volunteer and Education Coordinator, responsible for supporting the Club's 1,000+ volunteers and delivering education programs to the hiking public. Lorne lives in Worcester, Vermont with his two dogs and enjoys rock climbing, running, gravel biking and keeping up with his sugar bush.

from Page Hollow ... Laura Waterman

Thank you to Tori Jofery, Holly Sheehan, and Elliot Koeppel at Maine ATC for hosting our annual board fieldtrip in the Bigelow Range.

The Essay Contest was efficiently steered by Annie Bellerose, with more than competent assistance from our volunteer readers: Meika Hashimoto, Rebecca Oreskes, Emily Mitchell, Steve Kurczy, Alice Tufel, Bethany Taylor, and valued reader Christine Woodside, *Appalachia*'s editor, who publishes our winners in the Appalachian Mountain Club's revered journal.

Our annual fall dinner was hosted by the Lake Morey Resort. A hearty thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make this event happen.

Finally, a shout-out to Brian Post who handles our website hosting and keeps our content updated.

Interested in supporting our work? Send a donation today!

Your Name: _____
(as you would like it to appear in our records and acknowledgements)

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Matching gift? ___ In honor or in memory of: _____

Please make your check payable to The Waterman Fund and mail to: P.O. Box 1064, East Corinth, VT 05040

☐ If your donation is for $200 or more, we are pleased to offer you a signed copy of Forest and Crag, 3rd edition. Check box if you would like us to mail you a book.

The Waterman Fund is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are fully tax deductible.

2024 – 2025 Waterman Fund Donors

INDIVIDUALS:
Carl Demrow and Tonia Aebi
Hilary Alvarez & Alex Streeter
Mark Alvarez & Holly Fitzsimmons
Larry Anderson
Bill & Barbara Arnold
Bob Capers & Stephanie Baldwin
Bill Barrett
George & Paula Bellerose
in honor of Laura Waterman
Peter & Emily Benson
David & Louisa Birch
Lars & Jen Botzojorns
John Bousman
Michael Caldwell
Annie Chappell
Matthew Chiarella & Ellen O'Meara
James Christmas
Steve Ciras
John & Jane Conner
Brian Cooley
Laura Cooley
Dorothy Corey
Louis & Sara Cornell
in memory of Marla Randell
Peter Crane
Ann Crews
in memory of Dr. John R. Crews who respected all people and who strived to keep our environment healthy
Stephen Crowe
Elizabeth Davis
John & Catherine DeLeo
Anne Dellenbaugh
in memory of Phyllis Austin of Brunswick, Maine
Bart DeWolf
Alicia DiCocco
Peggy Dillon
in memory of Guy Gosselin
John Dunn
in memory of Natalie Davis
Marge Dwyer
Scottie Eliassen
Midge & Tim Eliassen
Lynn Farnham
Karen Fiebig
David Field
Pete Fish
Sue and John Foster
Tom French
Darius Ginwala
Nancy & John Godina
Sara Goodman
Tony & Bunny Goodwin
Cath Goodwin
Julia Goren
Dorothy Goren
Katharine & Sebastian Gorka
Chip Gottlieb
Cat Hadlow
in memory of Yodel the Brave
Tami Hartley & Regina Ferreira
Sarah Heidenreich & Eddie Walsh
in honor of our children
Anne Hemingway
Nancy Hirshberg
Frances Hitchcock
Nancy Hood
David & Kathy Hooke
Charles Humpstone
Hope Hungerford
Charlie Jacobi
Steven Jervis
Will Kemeza & Charlotte Vallaeys
Lester Kenway & Elsa Sanborn
Nancy & Gordon Kittridge
Philip & Helen Koch
Eleanor & Ernie Kohlsaat
Robert Kruszyna
Stephen Kurczy & Jenna Cho
Agnes Bixler Kurtz
Marc Levesque
Farley Lewis
Robert Lincoln
Tim Loveridge
in honor of my friend Bob Schmidt
Margot Maddock
Peter Malinowski
Judy Marden
Reed & Penny Markley
Steven A. Martin
in honor of Brutus the Newfie dog
Bruce Maxson
in honor of Hugh and Jeanne Joudry, retired caretakers for GMC at Stratton mountain (VT)
Alex Mayer
Andy Mayer & Michele Roberts
Joyce McKeeman & Linda Weiss
Scott & Ellen Meiklejohn
in memory of Meg & Jim Meiklejohn
Betty Mobbs & Thomas Jones
Al & Sally Molnar
Susan & John Morris
James Mullen & Virginia Voronin
Hannah & John Narowski
Paul Neubauer & Clarissa Werre
William & Brenda Newman
John & Caroline Nininger
Andrew Nuquist
Mary Nyman
Ken Olson
Rebecca Oreskes
Peter & Jennifer Palmiotto
Rick & Susan Paradis
Sue Parmenter
in memory of Bill
Louise & Belden Paulson
Mike Peckar
Ellen Peters
in memory of good times together
Matthew Peters & Sacha Pealer
Carol Phipps & Keith O'Boyle
Claire Porter
Dana Query
in memory of Ken Query
Larry Randall
in memory of Marla Randall
Nancy Rich & Lee Manchester
Andrew Robinson
Ben Rose & Lori Fisher
in memory of Dave Hardy
Peggy & Alan Rosen
Peter Rowan & June Hammond Rowan
Barbara Rubin
Tom & Diane Sawyer
Stephen Schofield & Deirdre Byers
in memory of Peter Rossi
Elizabeth Seabury
Dennis Shaffer & Amy Emler-Shaffer
Judith Sherman
Steve & Carol Smith
Dan & Molly Sperduto
Dana Sprague & Monica Hastings
Kimberly Steward and Keith Force
Lisa & Robert Stockman
Leonard & Karen Stockwell
Sandy & Lucille Stott
in honor of Doug Mayer and Rebecca Oreskes
Todd & Donette Swain
Doug & Martha Teschner
Chris & Wendy Thayer
Ned & Jean Therrien
Sally Tomlinson
Heinz & Inge Trebitz
Catherine Tudish
Rick Van de Poll
Neil & Carol Van Dyke
Kate & Tom Villars
Deborah Wade & Robert Breen
Jack Waldron
Ed & Eudora Walsh
Laura Waterman
John Wesley
David & Carol White
David & Cynthia White
Ann J. Williams
William Wilmot
Geoff Wilson
Donna & John Wood
in honor of Mary Weeden Winants
Chuck Wooster & Susan Kirincich

ORGANIZATIONS:
Appalachian Mountain Club 4000 Footer Committee
Elizabeth H. Locke Fund Fidelity Charitable
Pemi Valley Flooring LLC
Sorg-Vogt Charitable Foundation Trust

Many thanks to each and all of you for helping support the Waterman Fund and wild spaces!

THE
WATERMAN FUND

Fostering the Spirit of Wildness and Conserving
the Alpine Areas of Northeastern North America

P.O. Box 1064, East Corinth, VT 05040

···FOSTERING THE SPIRIT OF WILDNESS···

Since its inception in 2000, over 500 individual donors and foundations have supported the efforts of the Waterman Fund. The Fund has awarded $450,158 in grant monies to various organizations and initiatives in areas of research, stewardship, and conservation of highly endangered alpine ecosystems and wild spaces. In this time, the Fund has also published over thirty emerging writers through its annual Essay Contest and has awarded $34,500 in prize monies to those individuals. Finally, on an annual basis the Fund also bestows recognition to individuals who do important work to protect fragile ecosystems through the Guy Waterman Alpine Steward Award and the Emerging Alpine Steward Award.

Help us continue the legacy in the spirit of Guy and Laura Waterman's important environmental work.