

## **Ninevah Foundation Annual Report 2018**



Photo Credit: Arrowwood Environmental

The Ninevah Foundation is a conservation organization dedicated to promoting the wilderness character and tranquil nature of Lake Ninevah and over 3,300 acres of surrounding land in Mount Holly and Plymouth, Vermont. For nearly half a century, volunteers with the Ninevah Foundation (and its predecessor, the Wilderness Corporation) have collaborated with area residents and conservation specialists to keep both lake and land in their pristine, natural state. Lake Ninevah and its environs are home to a wide array of wildlife and a treasured destination for people who enjoy nature-friendly recreation.

Dear [Salutation],

The Ninevah Foundation experienced a year of positive change and discovery in 2018. Continued efforts to learn from the land and lake ecosystems in and around Lake Ninevah proved to be fruitful through ongoing monitoring and surveys of the natural resources under our care. The new affiliation agreement with Farm & Wilderness, which we signed in May of 2018, set the groundwork for the continued care of the waters and land of the Lake Ninevah area. We will continue to maintain our name, mission, property ownerships, and finances. What we've

gained is the benefit of full-time professional staff provided by F&W. The search, then hiring, of a new full-time Conservation Director for both organizations certainly increases the joint efforts to provide conservation education and to offer responsible use of the land and lake for recreation and enjoying nature.

Last summer, Brett Engstrom presented an ecological survey at our annual Ninevah community event held at the Mt. Holly School. The presentation highlighted some exciting natural aspects of the Ninevah lands and waters. The presentation also showcased to the community our ongoing education efforts so that we all may steward Ninevah lands and water and protect this rare treasure.

We made many efforts last year to preserve Ninevah lands and waters (read on to find out more), and are looking forward to continuing those efforts in 2019. These included a renewed aquatic invasive species prevention program, plans for land invasive species management and education for Ninevah residents, possible partnership with the Mount Holly afterschool program around conservation education and recreation opportunities, and securing Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funding for wildlife habitat improvements.

Lastly, I want to appreciate the Ninevah community. Your help this past year in time, energy, and resources are both humbling and meaningful. We couldn't achieve the results we have without your commitment. Thank you for another great year!

In peace,

Rebecca Geary  
Executive Director

Rebecca Steinitz  
Clerk, Board of Trustees

# 2018 Highlights

## Lake Ninevah

### **Aquatic Invasives Prevention Program**

The town of Mount Holly once again received grant funds to continue aquatic invasive prevention in 2018. Efforts included a greeter (boat monitor) program which checks boats before they enter the water at the boat ramp for any invasive species, three diving surveys between May-October, and an aquatic plant inventory. Lake Ninevah was once again deemed free of Eurasian watermilfoil after diving and plant surveys were conducted.

Our Lake Ninevah greeters saw over 2,500 visitors with over 1,000 boats during the 2018 summer at the Joseph Wiltshire Boat Ramp. Monitoring by greeters began Memorial Day weekend and ran through mid-October. A rainy summer meant that the visitor numbers were a bit lower.

### **Aquatic Plant Inventory**

Based on Brett Engstrom's recommendation and as a part of a Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Aquatic Nuisance Control Grant, we hired Arrowwood Environmental to conduct a 2-day field study of the aquatic plant communities of Lake Ninevah. Arrowwood Environmental is a Huntington, VT-based company and the study was conducted by botanist and ecologist Michael Lew-Smith by boat, using GPS and sampling methods from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Department of Environmental Conservation field manual (2006).

*"Lake Ninevah is a mesotrophic, low alkalinity lake surrounded by 845 acres of forests, mountains, and wetlands. Lake Ninevah is exceptional not only because of its beautiful setting but because of the diverse array of habitats that exist here. Three different aquatic natural communities were mapped and assessed as part of this inventory: the Waterlily Aquatic Community, the Quillwort-Arrowhead Community and the Nitella Bed Community. These communities are home to a stunning 9 different uncommon or rare aquatic plant species. This diverse flora is an important component to the area's biodiversity. As such, efforts to protect this aquatic system from non-native invasive species and other threats should continue."*

*-Conclusion from the Arrowwood Environmental Survey*

## **Community & Education**

In August, the Ninevah Foundation and Farm & Wilderness co-hosted a community event at which Brett Engstrom discussed the highlights of his two-year ecological study of natural resources of Ninevah Foundation lands. This event was also marked by the joint representation of the Ninevah Foundation and Farm & Wilderness to celebrate joining forces. Many friends and neighbors attended this event to listen and ask questions about Brett's study and the new collaboration between the two host organizations. We are looking forward to hosting more joint events such as these with Farm & Wilderness to boost community engagement in our common mission of environmental stewardship and education.

## **Land Management**

### **Land Invasives**

Work continues on the land invasives plan that was outlined at the end of 2017. The plan priorities sites, actions, management, and costs associated with managing the 8 identified unwanted invasive and native noxious plant species on Ninevah Foundation property. The new Conservation Director will manage and execute this plan, promote educational opportunities, and develop a partnership with neighboring landowners that will be essential to control of these plant species so that they do not spread.

### **Forestry**

Ninevah foundation worked with the State of Vermont to allow access across Ninevah property to a state timber sale located at the end of Reggie's Road. The state started the preliminary work for the timber sale in 2018 and will complete in 2019. Partnering with the State of Vermont on projects like this are important to maintaining a good relationships with our neighbors and allow for abutting forests to be well maintained. A few timber sales began and completed on Ninevah property in 2018 as prescribed in the Ninevah Foundation's stewardship plan for maintaining a healthy forest as well as generating income to support more conservation efforts by the organization.

Ninevah Foundation and Farm & Wilderness worked to create plans for jointly awarded funds to improve wildlife areas which are already present and identified on Ninevah Foundation property. Improvements will include maintenance activities such as mowing areas to keep open for wildlife, releasing apple trees, and encouraging food sources such as blueberry patches. This grant funding will be important to assist Ninevah Foundation is making sure we keep these diverse habitats for wildlife from disappearing. This funding will be pushed to 2019 due to federal processing delays but work has already started in 2018 and will continue to 2019.

## **Recreation**

Small group efforts have been made to mark and clear Proctor Hill, aka Gork Mountain Trail, to make it more accessible for hikers in the area. Apple trees along the trail and at the top have been released for wildlife.

## **Wildlife**

### **Loons**

Volunteers from the Ninevah Foundation and the lake community worked with the Vermont Loon Conservation Project, placing signs around the island to protect the loon nesting site and reporting loon activity throughout the year. Between May and June, three volunteers put in 28 hours of surveying as well as sign posting and removal to monitor the loon residents and nest site. It was reported from the 2018 LoonWatch in July, that there was one successful nest with a single chick.

## **Townsend Barn**

The Townsend Barn, located on Sawyer Hill Road at the corner of Loop Road, is a classic 3-bay English Barn that was constructed in the first half of the 19th Century. Ninevah Foundation received two grants from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation that, together with the Foundation's own funds and donations from supportive residents in the Lake Ninevah area, enabled the foundation to repair and restore the Barn. The first grant, received in 2016, helped to pay for replacing the crumbling stone foundation walls with concrete walls and an "under-drain" to keep frost heaves from wreaking havoc with the footings. The first grant also paid for the site to be properly graded to shed water away from the structure. The second grant, received in 2018, helped pay to straighten and "true-up" the structure, which had warped and racked over the years when the old crumbling stone foundation failed to properly support the structure. This grant also helped to pay to strengthen the floor joists, replace rotted timber framing, repair the roof, replace broken windows, and replace rotted and deteriorating siding. Private donations also paid to plant apple and spruce trees around the restored structure. A few local contractors donated their time to and equipment to construct a stone retaining wall in front of the barn along the Sawyer Hill Road. Because of the restoration, a few Farm & Wilderness camp groups were able to use the barn this past summer, and it holds a lot of potential for future use by summer camp groups as well as the Ninevah community.



Before (left) and after (right) photos of the Townsend Barn



F&W's Classic Questers campers based out of Townsend Barn 2018

## Financial Report

Ninevah experienced a year of change and growth in 2018. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Ninevah entered into an agreement with the Farm & Wilderness Foundation (F&W) to become one of three nonprofit organizations run by a common board of trustees.

Ninevah's major sources of income in 2018 were funds from the endowment: \$44K, rental income from F&W: \$40K, timber sales: \$41K, contributions from our wonderful community: \$29.5K, and grants: \$27K. Despite the fourth quarter dip in the markets, our endowment remains strong.

Expenditures in 2018 were related to Ninevah's continued management of natural resources, education, general operations, and grant management, and fundraising. The greeter program was once again very successful, and several major projects were completed in 2018. Among these were the completion of the aquatic and terrestrial ecological surveys, renovations to the Townsend Barn, and the sale of the Venter property.

Thank you to Ninevah's dedicated volunteers, our greeters, the F&W staff, and our board of trustees for their hard work and the many long-standing supporters of our endowment. Because of our wonderful community's gifts of time and money, we continue to promote the wilderness character and tranquil nature of Lake Ninevah and over 3,200 acres of surrounding land in Mount Holly and Plymouth, Vermont. We are counting on your ongoing support as we advance our mission of stewardship for years to come!

Tonya Orme  
Treasurer

Shannon Keyes Ciucevich  
Chief Financial Officer