

The Pioneer Stage 1965 - 1975



The Road Through Franconia Notch

FORTY YEARS AFTER SAVING FRANCONIA NOTCH FROM BEING CLEARCUT, THE SOCIETY BEGAN A CAMPAIGN AGAINST A PROPOSED EXTENSION OF I-93 WHICH WOULD HAVE TUNNELED RIGHT UNDER THE OLD MAN'S NOSE. WORKING CLOSELY WITH OTHER GROUPS, THE SOCIETY FINALLY CONVINCED STATE AND FEDERAL HIGHWAY OFFICIALS TO SCALE BACK PLANS IN 1970 TO THE MORE APPROPRIATELY-SIZED TWO LANE FRANCONIA NOTCH PARKWAY.



Education

THE SOCIETY CONTINUED ITS EDUCATION EFFORTS, EXPANDING UPON ITS TRADITIONAL NATURE CAMPS AND TEACHER TRAINING UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF LES CLARK. LES HELPED IMPLEMENT MANY INNOVATIVE, HANDS-ON PROGRAMS AND PUBLICATIONS THAT INTRODUCED YOUNG AND OLD TO THE FORESTS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.



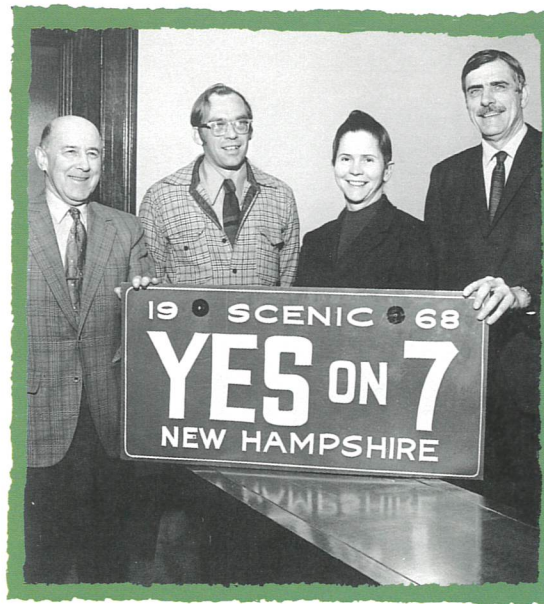
Pollution Issues

TRASH, WATER AND AIR POLLUTION ALL ATTRACTED THE SOCIETY'S ATTENTION DURING THE YEARS LEADING UP TO AND FOLLOWING THE FIRST EARTH DAY IN 1970.



Tree Farm

BROUGHT TO NEW HAMPSHIRE IN 1949 BY THE SOCIETY, THE TREE FARM PROGRAM ENCOURAGES LONG-TERM FOREST STEWARDSHIP BY PRIVATE LANDOWNERS. HELPING THEM GET STARTED WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TASKS ASSIGNED TO PAUL BOFINGER. TODAY, OVER 800,000 ACRES AND 1,600 LANDOWNERS ARE ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM.



Current Use

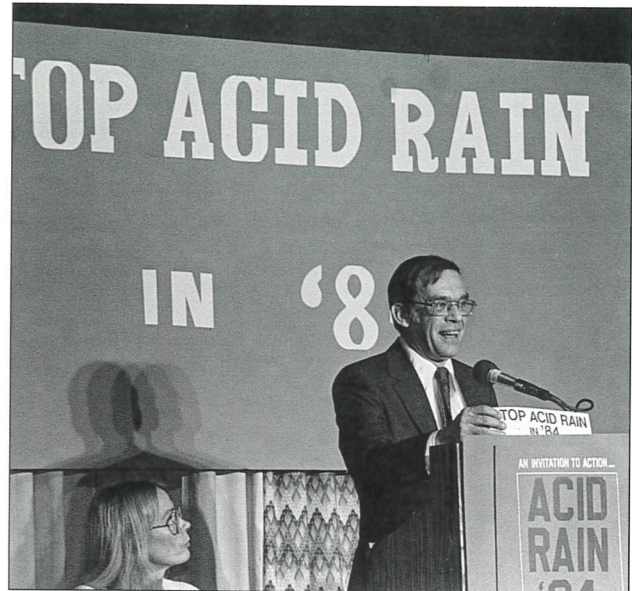
CURRENT USE ASSESSMENT WAS A MAJOR VICTORY DURING THIS DECADE, AS THE SOCIETY PULLED TOGETHER A DIVERSE COALITION TO PROTECT OPEN SPACE. SEE PAGE 22 FOR THE WHOLE STORY

Understory Grows 1975 - 1985



White Mountain National Forest

HAVING LED THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WMNF IN 1911, THE SOCIETY CONTINUED ITS CONSENSUS-BUILDING AND MEDIATION ROLE. SEE PAGE 26 FOR DETAILS.



Air Quality

ACID RAIN WAS A HOT TOPIC IN THE 1980S AND THE SOCIETY HELPED DRAW ATTENTION TO ITS DEVASTATING IMPACTS ON FOREST HEALTH. PAUL BOFINGER IS SHOWN HERE AT A CONFERENCE OF THE NH ACID RAIN TASK FORCE.



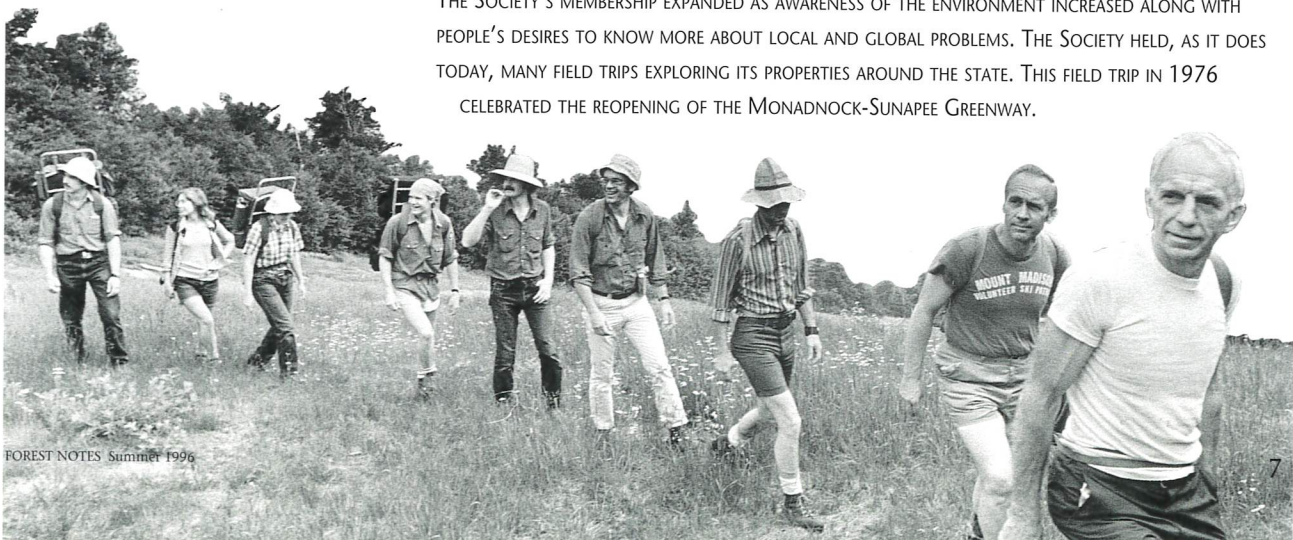
Conservation Center

ANOTHER WATERMARK DURING THIS DECADE OF GROWTH WAS THE GROUNDBREAKING OF THE SOCIETY'S HEADQUARTERS IN CONCORD IN 1978. THE AWARD-WINNING BUILDING SHOWCASED RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES AND BROUGHT TOGETHER SEVERAL CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY GROUPS UNDER ONE ROOF.



Membership

THE SOCIETY'S MEMBERSHIP EXPANDED AS AWARENESS OF THE ENVIRONMENT INCREASED ALONG WITH PEOPLE'S DESIRES TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LOCAL AND GLOBAL PROBLEMS. THE SOCIETY HELD, AS IT DOES TODAY, MANY FIELD TRIPS EXPLORING ITS PROPERTIES AROUND THE STATE. THIS FIELD TRIP IN 1976 CELEBRATED THE REOPENING OF THE MONADNOCK-SUNAPEE GREENWAY.



The Forest Matures 1985 - 1995



Northern Forests

WORKING WITH CITIZENS, INDUSTRY, CONSERVATIONISTS, AND TOWNS TO DETERMINE THE FATE OF THE 26 MILLION ACRE FOREST STRETCHING ACROSS MAINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE, VERMONT AND NEW YORK WAS NOT AN EASY TASK. FOR DETAILS, SEE PAGE 32.



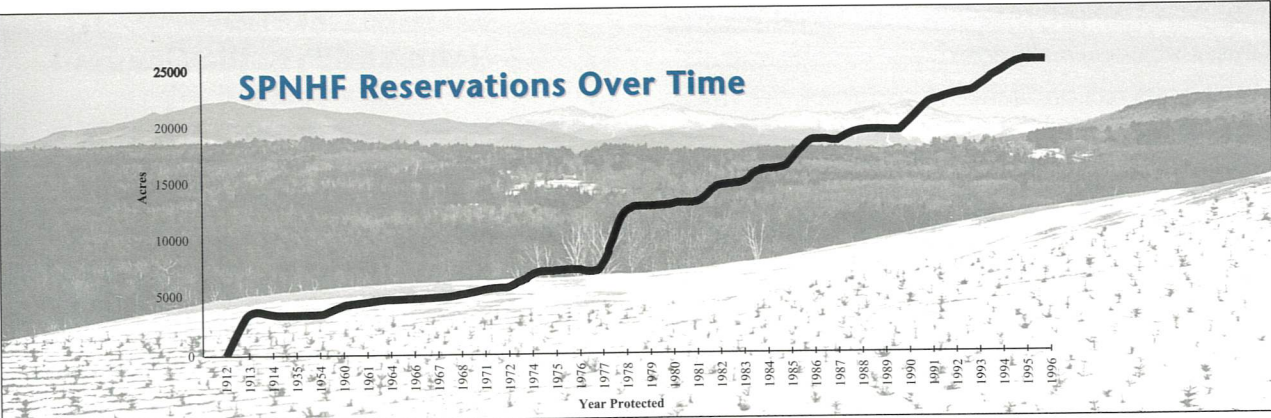
Forestry

THE SOCIETY NOT ONLY PROMOTES GOOD FORESTRY; WE PRACTICE IT. ISSUES LIKE WOOD-FIRED POWER, STATE LAWS, AND FOREST PLANNING DOMINATED THE POLICY AGENDA...WE CREATED THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CONSERVATION INSTITUTE IN LARGE PART TO RESEARCH AND PROMOTE EXEMPLARY FORESTRY...AND OUR OWN STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES GREW AS OUR RESERVATIONS TOPPED 25,000 ACRES.



Living Landscape Agenda

WORKING CLOSELY WITH PAUL BOFINGER AND THE ENTIRE STAFF, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ADOPTED A STRATEGIC PLAN IN 1995. BLENDING 95 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH EXCITING IDEAS, NEW TECHNOLOGY, AND EXPANDING PARTNERS, THE "LIVING LANDSCAPE AGENDA" WILL ENSURE THE SOCIETY CAN MEET THE STATE'S INCREASING LAND CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY CHALLENGES INTO THE FUTURE.



Society Reservations

UNDER BOFINGER'S LEADERSHIP, THE SOCIETY'S SYSTEM OF FOREST RESERVATIONS HAS GROWN STEADILY. IN MAY 1996, WE OWNED 96 RESERVATIONS, TOTALLING NEARLY 25,000 ACRES. WE ALSO HOLD CONSERVATION EASEMENTS ON ANOTHER 54,000 ACRES.

Highest and Best Use

Current Use has helped New Hampshire families keep their farms and forests intact.

L I Z L O R V I G



IT TOOK A BROAD COALITION TO CONVINCE THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PEOPLE AND THE LEGISLATURE THAT OPEN SPACE SHOULD BE TAXED DIFFERENTLY. AS IN SO MANY EFFORTS, PAUL BOFINGER WAS A KEY CATALYST.

The night before New Hampshire voters cast their ballots on current use taxation, Miriam Jackson called Paul Bofinger and told him to get out and distribute more leaflets.

Tired from months of heavy campaigning, Paul was reluctant. But Jackson's public relations firm had never led him wrong before. So Paul pulled on his boots and went out to leaflet cars in a Concord shopping center. The next day, Concord voters approved the idea

by a slim margin, leaving Bofinger to wonder if those leaflets helped swing the victory.

The 1968 vote amended the state constitution to allow undeveloped land to be taxed at significantly lower rates. Five years later, the legislature passed the specific laws implementing the program. Today, Bofinger and others call current use the single most important open space initiative of the past three decades.

Passage, however, did not come easily. The victory

followed an intensive, multi-year campaign by a broad coalition called SPACE—Statewide Program of Action to Conserve our Environment. The effort involved thousands of people in dozens of organizations, including the Society, the Audubon Society, the Farm Bureau, and the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association. The coalition's challenge was no less than to convince two-thirds of New Hampshire voters to abandon their deeply held Yankee beliefs about progress and taxes.

As difficult as this was, circumstances helped the cause. In the 1960s, demographics were changing the face of southern and central New Hampshire, as families moved in from other states to enjoy the quality of life. Land was still relatively cheap. New households brought new children into old schools. Taxes on a new home didn't cover the cost of municipal services to that home, and tax rates were creeping up. Some landowners were forced to sell to developers, thereby continuing the cycle.

In the face of this spiraling growth, SPACE tried to show that current use taxation was the only fair way to slow the disappearance of open space and keep farmers and forest landowners in business. Once voters approved the constitutional amendment, the coalition started lobbying the legislature to write the enabling law. One tactic was taking a busload of lawmakers through the southern tier to see recent development for themselves. Some "couldn't believe their eyes," remembers Parke.

Working with key legislators, including Howard C. Dickinson, Elizabeth Greene, Howard Townsend, and Marilyn Campbell, the coalition crafted a system of differential taxation which addressed many concerns and gathered broad bi-partisan support. A 10-acre minimum meant smaller landowners could participate. A development "penalty" allowed towns to recoup lost revenues. The influential farm and forest industries backed the plan. Municipalities without planning or zoning ordinances saw that they might get a little breathing room under the program. It even ended up with the support of conservative Gov. Meldrim Thompson, who signed the bill into law in 1973.

Since then, current use in New Hampshire has been the envy of other states, while still fending off some criticism at home. SPACE still retains a lobbyist, Charles Niebling of Innovative Natural Resource Solutions, to defend the program in the legislature. Niebling says it is to be expected that in a state which depends heavily on property tax, "any discounting program will come under scrutiny." There are perennial attempts to weaken or even eliminate the program.

But support remains strong, for three central reasons. First, everyone enjoys the benefits of current use every day. Just about half of all taxable land in the state is enrolled in the program, a figure which has held steady for some time. Many participants, says Niebling, are your neighbors. "The distribution of parcels is such that the vast majority are less than 75 acres," says Niebling.

Second, there is increasing evidence, most

recently in a study by UNH Cooperative Extension, that open space saves towns money. Any loss in revenue is more than offset by avoidance of new schools, roads, fire, police, and other expensive municipal services.

Most important, current use survives today because of the continuing partnership of environmentalists, natural resource industries, landowners, and others who came together more than 30 years ago to solve a common problem.

The original victory was the work of many, many people, including Tudor Richards, Ray Connolly (dec.), Dick Kelly (dec.), Win Wadleigh (dec.), Phil Heald, Jeff Smith (dec.), John Barto, Bob Norman, Isobel Parke, Patrick Jackson, and Miriam Jackson (dec.)

But in this coalition as in so many others, Paul Bofinger played a particularly important role.

Says Isobel Parke of Jackson Jackson & Wagner, the firm that still provides support for SPACE. "Paul really was the catalyst who brought the whole thing together."

— Liz Lorvig is a freelance writer. Forest Notes editor Richard Ober and Isobel Parke contributed to this article.

WHAT: Current Use Campaign

WHEN: 1968 - 1973

RESULTS: Land reserved as open space (like farms, forests, wetlands, etc.) is taxed at its "current use," instead of its potential development value. This one piece of legislation has done more to preserve the rural character of New Hampshire than perhaps anything else.

CONSERVATION PROFILE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

This dated back to times when the state was trying to encourage clearing of land, but now the policy was actively discouraging long-term forest stewardship.

Rathbun had big plans for the Society, but Mother Nature had other ideas. In 1938, a low depression system snuck up the east coast and became an enormous, full-fledged hurricane. The Hurricane. It barreled up the Connecticut River, flattening thousands of acres of forests. Regular operations were suspended at the Society and Rathbun organized a timber salvage campaign that would occupy him for several years.

Then came the War to End All Wars and the Society once again switched gears to help the war effort. By the time the country emerged from the other side of W.W.II, Rathbun was ready for a less stressful period. He continued to work on landowner education, hired a few staffers, and revived conservation camp. In the 1950s and early 60s, the Society's efforts included establishing town conservation committees — the forerunners of today's conservation commissions — and expanding the Tree Farm program it brought to the state in 1948.

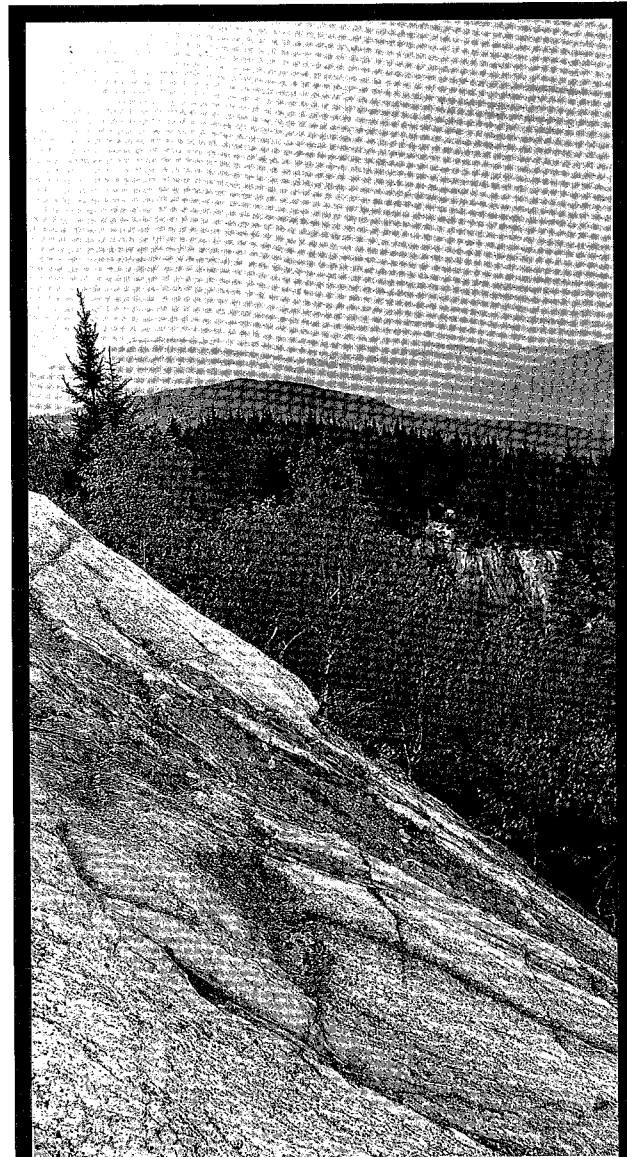
In 1961, Rathbun hired a young forester named Paul Bofinger to work with tree farmers and help out with land protection. Four years later, Bofinger would replace Rathbun as forester, and Rathbun became president of the executive committee. The country had changed yet again: young people were loudly questioning the old ways, the environment was re-emerging as a topic of concern, and rock 'n roll, it seemed, was blaring from every radio.

Bofinger was named both president and forester at the Society's 1972 annual meeting, and Rathbun formally retired. Rathbun's goals of raising awareness for good forestry, expanding nature education across the state, and working to get local people taking care of local lands had been more than well met. But he also accomplished a crucial, if less glamorous goal — keeping the Society alive and on track during some of the most difficult years this country has experienced.

Bofinger would lead the Society through a period of unprecedented growth in land protection, advocacy, and membership enrollment. But, without the two men who came before him, his work would have been impossible.

Now, as we approach the close of this century, the country is changing again — and once again, the Society is building on a strong foundation. ♻️

— Rosemary Conroy is managing editor of Forest Notes.



**This is what it
is all about.**

Please renew your membership promptly and participate in the annual fund. It really matters.

For more information, please call Margaret Liska at (603)224-9945.



SOCIETY FOR THE
PROTECTION OF
NEW HAMPSHIRE
FORESTS

White Mountains and Wilderness

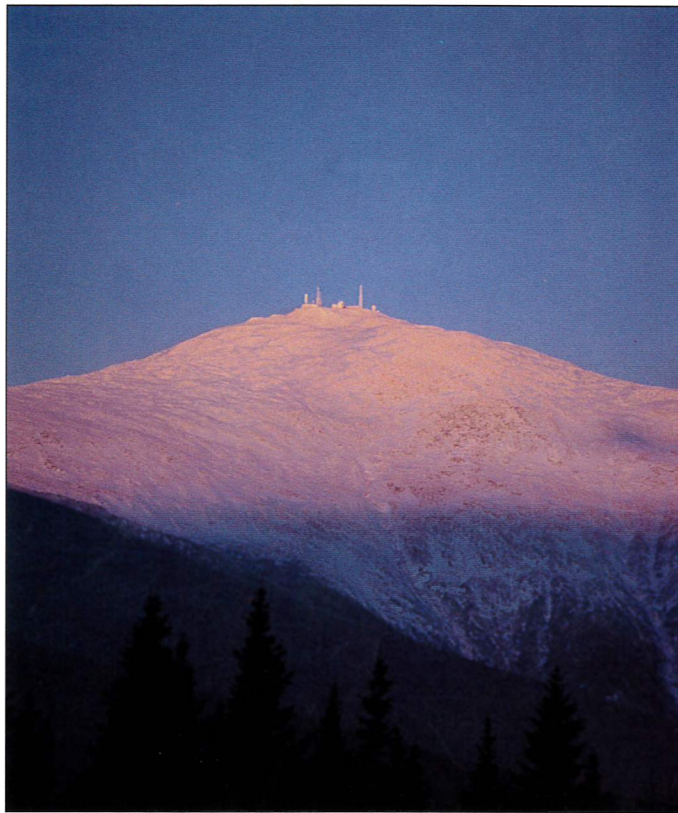
"These things take time. Here's what we need to do..."

N E D T H E R R I E N

During more than twenty years of work on the White Mountain National Forest, one of my most enjoyable responsibilities was assisting a group of citizens known as the White Mountain National Forest Advisory Committee. So it was that I came to know Paul Bofinger.

The committee had been instituted in the 1950s as a select group of leaders in New England who could help forest supervisors in addressing national forest issues. By the mid 1970s, the Advisory Committee had been enlarged to better represent the growing spectrum of recreation uses. At the table were now organizations with sometimes widely divergent views on how public lands should be managed.

Paul Bofinger was a member and regular participant in the committee's meetings. He was always thoughtful, extremely patient, and seldom confrontational. Most of all he was protective of the opportunity to meet face to face with all the participants, and dis-



IN TIME PAUL'S VISION AND COUNCIL MAY BE FORGOTTEN, BUT THE PRIME LANDS THAT HAVE BEEN ACQUIRED FOR THE NATIONAL FOREST DURING HIS TENURE WILL BE PART OF HIS LEGACY. PHOTO: NED THERRIEN.

cuss issues in a way that led to better understanding and positive results.

In 1977 the Carter Administration did away with official advisory committees as a "cost cutting" measure. The White Mountains committee was a victim. Jim Jordan (Forest Supervisor, 1979-1985) worked closely with Bofinger during these years.

"Doing away with the formal advisory committee hurt the Forest Service," Jordan recollected, "but it was through Paul's stubborn resolve to continue to make the committee viable and his understanding of the value of the good work that they were doing that

kept it functioning on an informal basis. People trusted Paul. They looked to him for leadership and he had a sense for what was possible."

Wilderness areas in the national forest became the focus of debate with various groups taking strong positions on whether New Hampshire and Maine needed more or less wilderness designated by Congress. New Hampshire's congressional delegation viewed the former advisory committee as the best

chance to bring about a workable solution. The committee came back together "ad hoc" for addressing the wilderness issue. Paul Bofinger was named as the chair.

After intense discussions the committee came to a consensus on developing legislation to add 76,000 acres of national forest to the wilderness system. This result was in large measure a tribute to Bofinger's quiet cajoling and ability to work with the represented organizations and their divergent views. The Wilderness Act became law in June of 1984.

I remember one particularly contentious meeting. Participants in the heated debate were frustrated by the length of the process. Through it all Bofinger remained a reservoir of calm. In response to one outburst he responded — as was his habit — in a slightly high-pitched, but soft-spoken voice. "Now wait a minute. These things take time. Here's what we need to do." He then laid out a scenario for bringing the issue to a logical conclusion. As usual he was out ahead of the rest of us, looking for workable solutions and determining how current decisions might impact future opportunities.

"Paul feels that there is no limit to what you can accomplish if you are not worried about who gets the credit. There, however, was never any doubt about who the leader was," says Steve Rice, former commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Resources & Economic Development.

In time Paul's vision and council may be forgotten, but the prime lands that have been acquired for the national forest during his tenure will always be part of his legacy. More than 21,000 acres have been added to the forest, including such notable tracts as Sandwich Notch, Bretton Woods, and protection of the Route 16 corridor north of Pinkham Notch. In many cases there were several organizations involved in these acquisitions. But it was largely Bofinger who put together the coalitions to raise the political support and the money to get the job done.

As one involved observer put it, "Paul Bofinger is the example of the citizen conservationist architect. In his responsible, constructive way he takes the leadership and makes things happen. Within the National Forest System in the United States the White Mountain National Forest is the model and Bofinger has played a key part." ♡

— Ned Therrien was public information officer for the White Mountain National Forest from 1972 to 1993. He is now a freelance photographer and writer who works from his home in Gilford.

From all your friends at

LEADERSHIP
NEW HAMPSHIRE



*"One Person Can Make
A Difference in This State"*

Paul, you have made a big
difference, all for the better,
a true New Hampshire leader!
Thank you!



Thank you and S.P.N.H.F. for all of the
land conservation leadership
over the last 35 years.

New Hampshire is a better place because of
Paul Bofinger and the Forest Society.

THE LYME TIMBER COMPANY
ON THE COMMON
LYME, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03768

Charles Thompson and the staff of
Thompson Appraisal Co., Inc.

wish Paul a great retirement!

You taught us to make a
difference by leaving
behind a lasting contribution
that showed we were
caretakers of the future.

You set the standard!

Land *for* New Hampshire

Sometimes, those temporarily entrusted with the earth today agree to bank some for tomorrow

R A L P H J I M E N E Z



IN 1985, PAUL BOFINGER RETURNED FROM A SABBATICAL WITH A SIMPLE, RADICAL FORMULA: \$3.7 MILLION IN PRIVATE MONEY + \$50 MILLION IN PUBLIC FUNDS = 100,000 ACRES OF PROTECTED LAND. ONE MAJOR PROJECT PROTECTED MUCH OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE SHORELINE OF LAKE UMBAGOG PHOTO: ALAN BRIERE.

A generation can leave behind no better monument than unspoiled earth, ground from which trees will always rise and rain run clear. As more of us crowd the planet and land becomes more precious, that has become difficult to do. But sometimes, those temporarily entrusted with the earth today agree to bank some for tomorrow. That is the story of the Trust for New Hampshire Lands (TNHL) and the Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP).

In the state's most far-reaching conservation effort since the creation of the White Mountain National Forest in 1911, the privately-funded TNHL and the public LCIP teamed up to protect 379 parcels covering 101,000 acres.

Preserved were Canterbury's Shaker Village, the back 40,000 of Nash Stream Forest, the wild New Hampshire shores of Lake Umbagog, stretches of Great Bay, working farms, habitat for threatened species, and recreational lands within walking distance of downtown. A child growing up today will

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

now be able to point out such landscapes to her children and grandchildren.

New state parks were opened, forests and wildlife areas expanded and new ones created. Protected as well were scores of lesser-known places — riverbanks and sugar bushes, quaking bogs and mountain tops, ponds, intervalles, and open vistas.

By March 1993, when the money (\$47 million in state funds and \$3.2 million in private donations) had run out, one New Hampshire acre in every 57 had been protected from the pressures of development. Many states began similar conservation efforts in the heady 1980s — none save Michigan came close to New Hampshire's success.

Thousands of people ultimately made that success possible. But one man, a sawmill hand and forester who traded his scale stick and marking paint for a telephone and yellow memo pad, brought them all together.

In the early 1980s, Paul Bofinger joined other residents who were watching with dread as fields and forests gave way to homes and shopping malls at the rate of 20,000 acres per year.

People were flocking here to live with wild land out back and an ocean, mountains, and major cities in their dooryards. Like a favorite fishing hole close to the road, much of New Hampshire was being loved to death.

Bofinger left to think the problem over. On a year-long sabbatical he traveled and studied land conservation in the western US and Europe. In the end, he realized that only a new approach, one suited to a frugal state with the most representative government in the nation, had any chance of working.

"The whole state was in a panic about the excessive growth and development," said Sarah Thorne, who was a Society land agent at the time and went on to become the key staff member of the TNHL.

A visionary seeks a path to places others suspect may not exist. Many who know him use the word to describe Bofinger. The place in his vision is a New Hampshire where working farms and forests,

wetlands and wildlands forever remain but a short walk or drive away.

The Trust began with a nugget of an idea: To use money from a public-private partnership to buy land or development rights from willing sellers. It was the size of the nugget that made those who first heard of it swallow hard. From the get-go, Bofinger wanted 100,000 acres. He figured it would take \$50 million to do the job.

The plan was so grand, even for good economic times, that a bit of the credibility the Society had spent generations accumulating would be at risk. And in launching the private fund raising, the Society was further postponing its own endowment drive. But Bofinger's enthusiasm won over his Board of Trustees, who agreed to pull together leaders from business,

government, civic groups, conservation organizations, tourism, and industry.

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation signed on early, putting up seed money for an inventory of target lands. Foundation president Lew Feldstein was a prime sponsor.

"Everyone will say now that they were for it in the beginning," Feldstein said. "But anyone with a really big idea gets that 'Oh, come now' reaction and this was no different. I think of the first half-dozen calls that I made, only one or two people were for it. Eventually, everyone came on board. But it was

Paul's calls that did it."

Bofinger knew that enthusiasm wouldn't be enough to overcome some predictable obstacles. Strategy was also necessary. New Hampshire loathes a bureaucracy, so the private Trust would fund all administrative costs, leaving the public money for direct acquisition. To stretch scarce dollars and protect local tax bases, conservation easements — rather than outright purchases of land — would be the tool of choice. And no matter how far short they might fall of its goal, Bofinger and other Trust leaders agreed to a life span of just six years.

Bofinger's plan was also designed to be grown locally rather than to be imposed from Concord. "It was a piece of political genius," Feldstein said of the decision to create political support for the program by asking towns to identify local landscapes they felt

WHAT: TNHL/LCIP

WHEN: 1986 - 1993

RESULTS:

100,000 acres permanently protected for wildlife, forestry, open space, watershed protection, and recreation.

were most worthy of preservation. The resulting wish list grew to more than 400,000 acres. To avoid any suspicion that favorites were being played, Bofinger's plan called for the list to be winnowed in public. "Paul wanted to demonstrate to people that it really was possible to come to some sort of agreement about what was most important to save," Feldstein said.

Two decades of experience in "pickup-truck diplomacy" had prepared Bofinger and the people he assembled behind his idea for challenges. They came quickly: First, the need to raise \$3.2 million in private money, which was spearheaded by *Yankee* magazine publisher Rob Trowbridge.

There was the need to convince Governor John Sununu that it made sense for the state to spend such a sum to protect its future. Bofinger met one-on-one with the man who would become President George Bush's Chief of Staff and Sununu soon signed on.

And then, in 1991 with the publicly-funded portion of the program only half-way to its goal, the state's economy began to falter, slide, and then race backwards. By then, Judd Gregg had replaced Sununu.

"It was not an easy exercise while I was governor to get the money to spend in that area," Gregg recalled. "We were in a severe recession by then but I was committed to it and with Paul's help and leadership we were able to get it through. That was truly an

outgrowth of Paul's energy. In the last 20 years, I don't think anybody has had a more positive effect on protecting the New Hampshire quality of life and the environment than Paul."

Like others who have worked with him, Gregg said Bofinger succeeded because he understood people from all walks of life and he always talked with and not to them. "I think the key to Paul Bofinger is that he is true New Hampshire. New Hampshire is a unique place to live. He understands that probably as well as anyone, and he has been a determining force on the state's core quality of life." 🐾

— *Ralph Jimenez*
writes for the *Boston Globe*.



BY MARCH 1993, WHEN THE MONEY HAD RUN OUT, ONE NEW HAMPSHIRE ACRE IN EVERY 57 HAD BEEN PROTECTED FROM THE PRESSURES OF DEVELOPMENT. MANY STATES BEGAN SIMILAR CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN THE HEADY 1980S — NONE SAVE MICHIGAN CAME CLOSE TO NEW HAMPSHIRE'S SUCCESS. THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ULTIMATELY MADE THAT SUCCESS POSSIBLE. PHOTO: DAN HABIB

Into the Wind

My enduring vision of Paul is him heading up Parmachenee in a gale, telling the lake that it really ought to calm down — and of course it then goes flat as a pancake.

J O H N H A R R I G A N



AS THE NORTHERN FOREST DEBATE HEATED UP, THE SOCIETY WORKED WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, THE STATE, AND THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE TO SAVE THE 40,000-ACRE NASH STREAM FORESTS. PAUL BOFINGER SPEAR-HEADED THE CAMPAIGN — AND THEN SERVED ON THE NORTHERN FOREST LANDS COUNCIL. PHOTO: BILL JOHNSON.

*P*aul Bofinger is a lot of things to a lot of people—husband, father, friend, fisherman and fellow conservationist—but to me Paul is the Great Facilitator, or maybe more accurately the Great Persuader. If he is on

a mission of persuasion he's harder to say no to than a shrill kid selling Girl Scout cookies. If the North Vietnamese negotiating team had been locked up in a room with Paul, we'd have wound up with Hanoi.

I well remember the day the telephone rang back in 1990. It was during a time when I was being mousetrapped into serving as one of the “New Hampshire four” on the Northern Forest Lands Council. The game had begun with my best friend John “Judas Goat” Lanier softening me up by telling me how important the Council’s work would be. Then other alleged friends urged then Governor Judd Gregg to ask me to serve. I didn’t want to do it and said so, citing various minor considerations such as three newspapers to publish, a printing plant to run, and a family still in the fledging-out phase.

Then Paul called with a classic Bofinger opener: “John, you’ve just gotta do this. We need you.” If it were bottled and marketed like buck-lure, this intangible skill would be called “Essence of Bofinger.”

After I had been smooth-talked into the Council I got used to the routine, which sort of reminded me of the Bataan Death March. We all plodded into one meeting after another, clutching briefcases full of the latest diatribes from what we came to call “the tyranny of the copier” as one group after another tried to shoot us down by circulating copies of what we had said and what we were about—or, more precisely, what they THOUGHT we’d said or were about.

We spent most of that first year hunkering down in the trenches while the people who were sure we were commie land-grabbers and the people who were sure we were industry pawns fired endless salvos. Yet we had an agenda to move on and an enormously difficult task ahead. I was soon thoroughly sick and tired of all the time we were wasting defending ourselves. I was ready to quit.

But there was this guy in a plaid shirt, corduroys and loafers, a guy with an upbeat attitude, a maddening ability to reason and a smile that never quit. I stayed on, and now of course I’m glad I did.

None of us will forget Paul, for he was the glue that held the Council together. And it had to be some kind of glue. The Council was, after all, made up of very strange bedfellows: ardent conservationists, government functionaries, capitalist-pig business owners

(that’s me), and people from the timber industry. Who should have been surprised that at several points we came within a whisker of falling apart? The public never knew it but it happened — not once, but several times. Each time into the breach stepped Paul, with a conciliatory calm built on years and years of turning conflict into cohesion.

Paul’s back bothered him, and during those long meetings there were often two empty chairs at the table — Paul’s and mine, for Paul’s back felt better when he stood and I just plain couldn’t sit still. The two of us would park ourselves somewhere on the periphery of the proceedings and listen, occasionally jumping in when we had something to say. I found that this behavior helped me see the big picture — the scope of what we were about and what we needed to do to work together and achieve it. I reached the conclusion that Paul was faking with this bad-back business. It just gives him an excuse to step back and take the wider look.

After many of the meetings I’d emerge into the parking lot to find Paul getting into a vehicle attached to a boat. Paul always seemed to have a boat, and to be headed somewhere — Willoughby Lake, Memphremagog, Parmachenee, God knows. He told me stories about big fish, and flies that worked, and flies that might, and harrowing trips back to camp on lakes whipped to five-foot white-caps by northwesterly gales.

“He’s the very thing my mother told me to try to be,” I thought. “He’s the kid that refused to grow up, and he’s done it.” I’d bet, I thought, that he grins into the wind as he tries to steer the boat into the waves.

That’s my enduring vision of Paul, the Great Persuader, heading up Parmachenee in a Force Five gale, grinning as he keeps his bow into the waves and telling the lake that it really ought to calm down — and of course it then goes flat as a pancake. ☹

— John Harrigan is an outdoor writer and North Country newspaper publisher (kind of the way Mount Washington is a hill.)

— John Harrigan is an outdoor writer and North Country newspaper publisher (kind of the way Mount Washington is a hill.)

WHAT: Northern Forest Lands Council
WHEN: 1990 - 1994
RESULTS: A consensus-based conservation agenda for the east’s last great stretch of working and wild forests.