



WILDPLACE

A POWERHOUSE TRAIL CREW

By Ned Olmsted, FOP council member

FOP trail crew volunteers, most of whom are on the far side of sixty years of age, infrequently have an opportunity to share trail maintenance work with younger volunteers. This September many of us got to do just that when the Friends of Pisgah engaged a crew from the Student Conservation Association and the NH Conservation Corps to assist with a major bridge restoration project. It was a treat and a privilege to work alongside this fine group of individuals, and by all accounts, their participation was an unqualified success.

The five-person crew, plus a peer crew leader (three women and three men), all in their early twenties and hailing from as far away as Montana, Maryland and Georgia, brought to the project a high degree of training and

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Matt Edson

Greetings,

It has been a productive summer/fall season for the Friends of Pisgah. Based on my own observations and feedback from the FOP community it also has been a time of collaboration, good cheer, and positive energy. Programming, membership, and volunteer participation all made strides forward. Infrastructure projects, especially bridge construction, restored a substantial number of failing structures, promising a degree of safe passage throughout the Park that has not been present for some time. These successes were, in large measures, due to the efforts of FOP's volunteer base.

The Friends of Pisgah relies on volunteers not just to maintain the Park's trail system. Volunteers cover a wide range of other tasks, activities and roles vital to the organization: council members, hike leaders, newsletter contributors; folks more than willing to give

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THE DIGITAL NEWSLETTER OF FRIENDS OF PISGAH

www.friendsofpisgah.org

skill. Other than transportation to and from the various work sites by the Park manager and FOP volunteers, the crew required minimal logistical support. They supplied their own food and tools, and camped on the lawn behind the visitors' center where they were grateful to have access to a kitchen and hot shower.

Prior to the crew's arrival, FOP volunteers put in many hours hauling materials to over a dozen backcountry bridges, a third of them requiring complete rebuilds. Trailering load after load of lumber over some of the Park's most rugged trails took its toll on bodies and machines, but these efforts to get materials in place ahead of time enabled the SCA crew to focus entirely on construction details. The combination of FOP prep work and the crew's efficiency led to a remarkably smooth-running project.

Amazingly, by the time the crew's ten-day hitch was finished they'd built from scratch, re-decked or repaired eighteen bridges, and done so with enthusiasm and seemingly with constant smiles on their faces. Their work ethic and competence left a big impression on us. Had it not been for their energy and drive, it's unlikely FOP would have been able to complete this huge project by the end of the year.



At a potluck gathering hosted by the Friends of Pisgah Council to recognize the crew's contributions, crew members reported that they felt appreciated and well looked after, were engaged in challenging and meaningful work, and thought Pisgah is a pretty great park.

FOP Council member, Chris Meidell, spent two days in the field with the crew photographing their progress, conducting short interviews, and talking with them about their commitment to land conservation, sense of volunteerism, and goals for the future. Chris gathered this information into a fantastic video which can be viewed on the Friends of Pisgah website.

(The five crew members who came to Pisgah were AmeriCorps volunteers based out of Bear Brook State Park who spent from April 2025 through October working hitches under the agency of Student Conservation Association and NH Conservation Corps in state parks and other land conservation organizations across the state of New Hampshire.)



FOP NEWS MAKERS

Beaver Activity in the Park

By Jack Kondos

Despite months of summer drought, Pisgah's beaver residents have been and remain noticeably busy. At Kilburn Pond there is a new dam between the John Summers Trail's short bridge and the pond, while the upstream dam there has been raised. This has created more wetland where a stream had trickled. A dam has also been raised on the inlet stream from Baker Pond above the long bridge on the Kilburn Loop Trail.

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At the main dam (human-made) on Kilburn Pond, beavers repeatedly have attempted to add height to the dam, but have found it difficult to secure mud and debris to the concrete superstructure.

Last fall, at the inlet bridge on the north end of Pisgah Reservoir, a beaver dam which abuts the upstream side of the bridge was low enough to allow considerable



space and light between the two. This fall, beavers heightened the dam, eliminating the gap completely which, in turn, forced high

water across the trail and threatened the integrity of the bridge. Less than a year ago beavers were busy expanding wetlands near the north end of the Lily Pond Trail; this spring, for reasons unknown, they abandoned the small pond they dammed there.

In October Friends of Pisgah asked Skip Lisle, founder of Beaver Deceivers to assess some of the most persistent beaver/road flooding issues in the Park. Skip recommended removing the ineffective, outdated pond leveler next to Winchester Rd. and raising the low-lying section of road there with gravel as the best solution in this perennially wet area. At two other locations, Skip will work with FOP volunteers in the spring to install state-of-the-art beaver deceivers to mitigate road flooding. Friends of Pisgah also invited Skip to address its Annual Meeting in November. Based on meeting turnout, beavers are a hot topic of interest for the larger Pisgah community. FOP's new beaver mascot Chester Winsdale was pleased with the size of the audience.

The John Herrick Award

By Ray Dunn

Earlier this year the Friends of Pisgah Council voted unanimously to annually present an award to an individual who has gone above and commitment has had an immeasurable impact on the support and preservation of

Pisgah State Park.” At the 2025 FOP annual meeting this award was presented to John Herrick. It's no surprise that John is deeply invested in caring for the Park; he's been roaming the Pisgah backcountry since he was a boy and knows it like the back of his hand. For decades, John has devoted countless hours helping maintain the Park's roads and trails, replacing culverts, building bridges, grading Old Chesterfield Road, hauling gravel, and expertly wielding his chainsaw. John has generously served on the FOP Council since the early 90's. He's known for leading informative hikes into the far corners of the Park. His knowledge of Pisgah's natural and cultural history is vast, and he enjoys sharing it with one and all.



John Herrick (left) with FOP president Matt Edson.

Skip White Talk on Explosives Testing in Pisgah's Past

By Ned Olmsted

On July 12th Chesterfield historian and storyteller Skip White answered questions in front of a crowd of thirty-five curious listeners about his time working for the Anderson D. Little company in the early 1960's at their explosives testing site in Pisgah State Park (before it was a park). Skip, armed with a microphone and seated in a chair next to remnants of re-enforced concrete walls in the woods along the Town Forest Trail, spoke about how the site was built, what explosives were used, how the charges affected the blast walls, and how he and others observed and recorded the effects of the explosions from a safe distance.



FOP Annual Fall Canoe and Kayak Outing

By Jack Kondos

The Friends of Pisgah annual fall canoe and kayak outing on beautiful Pisgah Reservoir was held on Saturday, October 11th. About a dozen paddlers spread out to explore the reservoir's many coves and inlets on a seasonably mild day.



They enjoyed a light southerly breeze and crisp fall colors even if a bit past peak. The reservoir features numerous islands and a varied shoreline with stunning rock formations. The largest body of water in the Park is quite remote and requires a long up-hill portage to reach, so this event is a rare opportunity. FOP volunteers shuttled boats and gear up the normally closed access road to the reservoir and its dam.

Harris Center/FOP Kilburn Pond Hike

By Jack Kondos

Sixteen hikers joined Harris Center for Conservation Education ecologist Brett Amy Thelen and Jack Kondos, FOP Council member, for a 3.5-mile hike into scenic



Kilburn Pond on a fine October afternoon. This lollipop hike (an out and back with a loop) featured excellent views of late season foliage and granite ledges sloping into the leaf dappled water. Along the way, the group explored stone walls, glacial erratics, various beaver activity, a 1930s-era dam, and whatever else the autumn woods had to offer.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued from page 1)

generously of their time providing educational outreach, increasing FOP's social media presence, building membership, etc. In this edition of the FOP newsletter, readers will find ample evidence of the volunteer spirit which is at the heart of the Friends of Pisgah.

Over the summer and fall, FOP sponsored or assisted with events ranging from Chesterfield resident Skip White's reminiscences of working for the A.D. Little Company at their Pisgah blasting test site in the 1960's, to Vermont's Skip Lisle's informative presentation and slide show on beaver ecosystem restoration at the FOP annual meeting, to transporting canoe and kayak enthusiasts and their boats to Pisgah Reservoir for FOP's annual fall paddling outing. Volunteers made it possible for a trail crew from the Student Conservation Association, who put in a ten-day hitch in the Park refurbishing eighteen backcountry bridges, to hit the ground running with all the lumber and materials they would need to complete their project delivered to the construction sites prior to their arrival.

The expertise and experience that volunteers bring to FOP's mission of protecting the wilderness-like character and wildlife habitat of Pisgah State Park is impressive. There's a camaraderie among the volunteers who go out into the Park as the weekly Monday trail crew or spend a Saturday tidying up the Visitor's Center or getting the Pisgah Garage ready for winter. It's been an absolute banner volunteer season, and I cannot express my appreciation enough.

EDITOR: Ned Olmsted LAYOUT: Kim R. Nilsen

PARK MANAGER'S REPORT

Needless to say, Pisgah State Park is large: biggest park in New Hampshire. But how large? In relation to what? Well, let's stack Pisgah's 13,361 acres up against a few towns and unincorporated places in the state. That might yield a clue or two.

In terms of land area, Pisgah is larger than the towns of Center Harbor, Gilsum, Hart's Location, Harrisville, Windsor, and Marlborough. It exceeds the dimensions of Tilton, Newfields, Hancock, and Bennington. Population disparities are also interesting to look at. Pisgah has no permanent human residents, (although its itinerant park manager does haunt its rugged terrain on a more-than-frequent basis). Laconia, on the other hand, fits a population of about 17,170 onto 12,720 acres. Erving's Location in Coos County, at 3.75 square miles in area, hosts a grand total of zero folks inside its boundaries. Portsmouth, boasting just 16.8 square miles, compared to Pisgah's nearly 22 sq. miles, sustains a population 23,000 times greater than the Park.

So, who takes care of a park as sizeable as Pisgah, some 3,600 acres larger than Bear Brook State Park, NH's second largest? The short answer: volunteers.

In 2025, The Friends of Pisgah will provide another year of 1,000-plus volunteer hours in support of the Park's mission. In fact, FOP has logged in excess of 1,000 hours for quite a few years in a row. Additionally, Mt. Pisgah ATV Club members have contributed hundreds of hours of labor this year. The Pisgah Mountain Trail Riders snowmobile club and the Monadnock Happy Trails equestrian club also help keep the Park's trails in shape. A sled dog aficionado from Vermont regularly can be found with saw and loppers in hand clearing blowdowns, and members of the local chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association currently are seeking formal authorization from NH Parks to work on some of Pisgah's longest and most remote trails.

The state employs a single soul to manage the Park, and he will be the first to inform folks that it is impossible for one individual to do a thorough job maintaining its roads and trails and improving a bogging array of infrastruc-

ture. However, when the volunteer hours are tallied, the equivalent of a second employee emerges from the data. Basically, the state gains something comparable to an additional employee at a lofty salary of zero dollars. There is a pleasing and efficient economy of scale to this arrangement through which the Park manager can spread his workload among a diverse and dedicated group of people.



FOP MEMBERSHIP APPEAL

The Friends of Pisgah is an entirely volunteer-run nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to support the work of maintaining trails within New Hampshire's Pisgah State Park.

JOIN AND BECOME PART OF THE FOP COMMUNITY

As a member, you'll receive our spring and fall newsletters as well as notifications via Facebook and e-mail about upcoming workdays, outings, hikes, and special events.

BECOME A NEW MEMBER OR RENEW

Visit our website — [_https://www.friendsofpisgah.org/](https://www.friendsofpisgah.org/) — for a printable form or use the attached membership form on the last page. For a video highlighting the many activities your membership fee make possible, please enjoy this short graphic presentation by FOP Council member Chris Meidell. Here's the link:

<https://youtu.be/dMpwPosHMmA?si=Rz1gPFmXR07jqeFU>

The Friends of Pisgah thanks you for helping sustain this extraordinary all volunteer-led, conservation-focused organization.

PINNING DOWN THE PARK'S HIGHEST POINT

By Ned Olmsted

It's sometimes assumed that the highest point in the Pisgah region is Mount Pisgah whose open ledges offer panoramic views to the east and west. However, it is the rather unremarkable (and viewless) Davis Hill on the southern border of Chesterfield that holds the honor of rising higher than any other body of land in both the Park and the town.



Last May Friends of Pisgah volunteers cleared a side trail which diverges from the main Davis Hill Trail just opposite the vista that looks towards Mt. Monadnock. The spur climbs sixty yards or so to the northern end of the Davis Hill ridgeline where embedded in a waist-high outcropping of granodiorite sits a patinaed bronze disc. On it is stamped “U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey Reference Mark No.2 - Davis”. It bears the date, 1957. Upon subsequent investigation this fall, an additional bronze marker thirty feet due north from RM#2 was re-discovered hidden underneath layers of leaf litter. Its inscription reads similarly to RM#2, but notes that the disk marks a Coast & Geodetic Survey Triangulation Station.

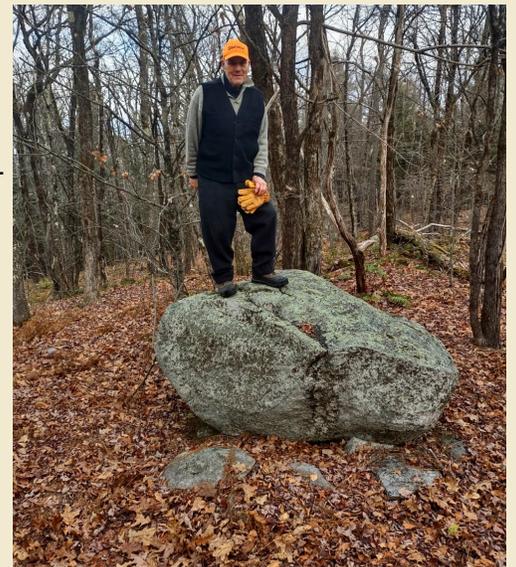
You may ask, why did surveyors in 1957 set two reference marks adjacent to one another on top of Davis Hill? Apparently, the redundancy of establishing two points of reference provides greater degree of assurance that as the decades go by surveyors will be able to locate a fixed triangulation point should one of the markers be vandalized or obscured by changes to the land like erosion or landslide.

Operating under the mistaken impression that triangulation discs are situated literally on the highest point of land, it was decided that this significant Pisgah landmark should be signposted and made accessible to hikers. Duly, a sign reading “Highest Point in the Park” was affixed to a nearby tree. However, confusion around height discrepancies persists. In the days of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, reference marks

were placed primarily “to form a network of known horizontal and/or vertical control points to serve as a basis for measuring other points' altitudes or positions.” Designation of the actual summit was of secondary importance. Other factors determining where reference marks were established had to do with accessibility, bedrock composition and stability, and favorable lines of sight for purposes of triangulation.

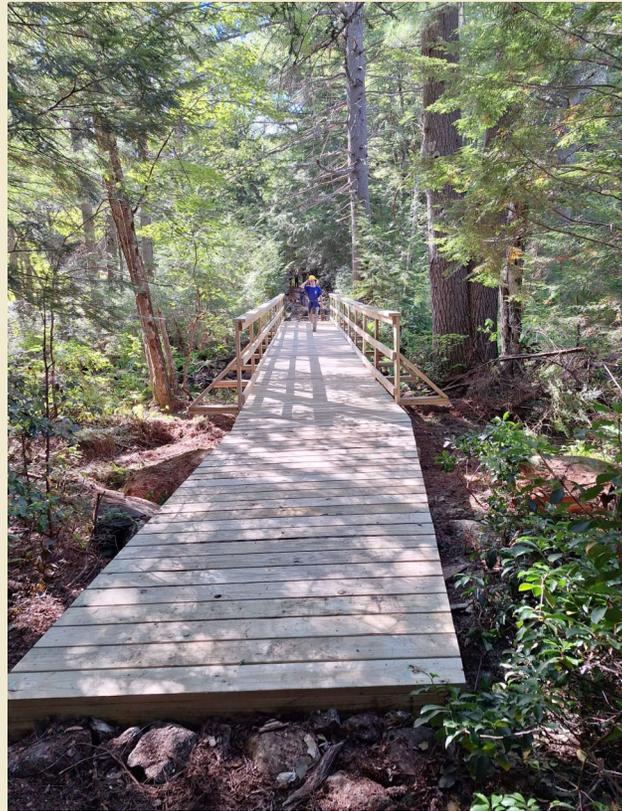
According to the current NGS Data Sheet for Davis Hill (The Coast and Geodetic Survey, which dates to 1878, was renamed the National Geodetic Survey in 1970), the *orthometric height* of Davis Hill is 1417 ft. However, the website of the United States Geological Survey (USGS), a different federal department, lists the *vertical datum* of Davis Hill as 1429.3 ft. To complicate the elevation question further, if you stand at the “Highest Point in the Park” sign and face southward along the ridge, it's quite apparent that you're looking ever so slightly uphill. And GPS readings of the area's general elevation seem to fluctuate considerably depending on whose device you happen to be consulting.

So, if you find yourself scratching your head under a sign that announces you have reached the highest point in Pisgah State Park, well almost the highest point, take this claim with a grain of salt. Next spring, FOP volunteers will extend the spur trail southward on the ridgeline for another sixty yards (uphill) to a large glacial erratic, away from which the terrain appears to gradually slope in all directions. It seems the only real certainty here is that determining the lay of the land in Pisgah can be elusive.





WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS



BECOME A MEMBER

Please use this form and send your request to the address shown below if you wish to join Friends of Pisgah, renew a membership, or give one as a gift. The Friends of Pisgah maintain a nominal dues structure with the intent to encourage as many individuals and families as possible to join.

Most of the dollars raised through membership goes, as we say, On The Ground, meaning we use the funds to improve trails and trail infrastructure in the park and organize events for members and the public to participate in.

ANNUAL DUES

Student: \$10.00

Single: \$15.00

Family \$20.00

Group (club) \$30.00

You may purchase your membership by sending a personal check to the following address:

Friends of Pisgah, Inc.
 Post Office Box 134
 Chesterfield, NH 03443

So that we may keep you informed, please fill in the following items below.

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
 FIRST NAME: _____
 LAST NAME: _____
 ADDRESS: _____
 STATE AND ZIP CODE: _____
 PHONE (not required): _____

If you might have an interest in volunteering, what sort of effort might you wish to provide?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> trail maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> social media posting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> infrastructure building | <input type="checkbox"/> fundraising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> website development | <input type="checkbox"/> grant writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public relations | <input type="checkbox"/> council member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> event planning | <input type="checkbox"/> guiding hikes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> newsletter (twice a year) | <input type="checkbox"/> beautification |

DONATIONS

Donations directly support the Friends of Pisgah's work in helping to maintain trails within Pisgah State Park and play a significant role in enhancing the experience of the many user groups who frequent it. Your donation can accompany your membership dues, or if you would rather donate online, go to www.friendsofpisgah.org.

If you would prefer to donate in-kind, i.e., lumber, tools, or equipment, these gifts would be most welcome. Please go the website and click on the contact tab so you may email us. Or, go to the Friends of Pisgah Facebook and post a message. Here's the link: <https://www.friendsofpisgah.org/>

