

# Welcome to Stoddard Rocks-Pioneer Lake Reservation



In 2012, this 731-acre tract of land was donated to the town of Stoddard by the Sweet Water Trust. Once threatened by development and posted against trespassing, Stoddard Rocks and the surrounding lands are now open to the public for hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and wildlife observation. In 2010, a "Forever Wild" conservation easement was placed on this property and granted to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Wildland areas do not have to be pristine areas untouched-by-man; they can heal or "rewild" ....as this area eventually will.

A "Forever Wild" designation seeks to protect the ecological integrity and the wild character of land, where human manipulation is minimal. Wildlands are "absolutely essential to the conservation of biodiversity . For example, some species in the northeast, including a number of neo-tropical migrant birds, certain lichens, and probably many species of invertebrates and fungi that we barely understand, thrive within mature or old growth forests that contain complex structural conditions such as a variety of size- and age-classes of trees, an abundance of standing and fallen woody debris, and intact soils that take hundreds of years to develop". Entire landscapes do not need to be "locked up" and completely off limit to human use. However, they should be a significant component of the conserved lands. In Stoddard they are: Of the 21,520 acres (63% of the town) that has been permanently protected, over 6,400 acres (19% of the town) is in a "Forever Wild" designation making Stoddard unique and distinct!

## History

If you look at one of local historian, Charles Peirce's old maps of Stoddard, your eyes may be naturally drawn to the seemingly empty northeast part of town. Although dozens of cellar holes are scattered throughout this area, most settlers shied away from this part of town where "half the hills and more than half the rocks of Stoddard were. Ownership patterns swayed between few and many over the years, but the stubborn land yielded little development.



### Stoddard Lumber:

In the 1850's Christopher Robb founded Stoddard Lumber Company, located in South Stoddard in a place locally known as Cherry Valley. He built a stone dam at the lower end of what was called Mud Pond, which connected Stacey and Hutchinson Ponds into a 7-mile waterway called Long Pond (later changed to Highland Lake). Over a 50-year period, Robb purchased a belt of land 12,000 acres in size that encircled most of Long Pond and Island pond....including land you are about to hike. He used the waterways to transport logs from the woods to his mill.

### Stoddard Rocks:

On a hill, formerly known as Chapman's Hill, several huge boulders, called glacial "erratics", comprised of Kinsman quartzmonzonite, were deposited during the last ice age. The largest boulder stands 35-feet tall and weighs an estimated 960,000 tons. When Charles Peirce viewed them for the 1st time, he identified their location when he made his first map of the town in 1902. Stoddard Rocks, as they are known today are included on the USGS topographic maps.

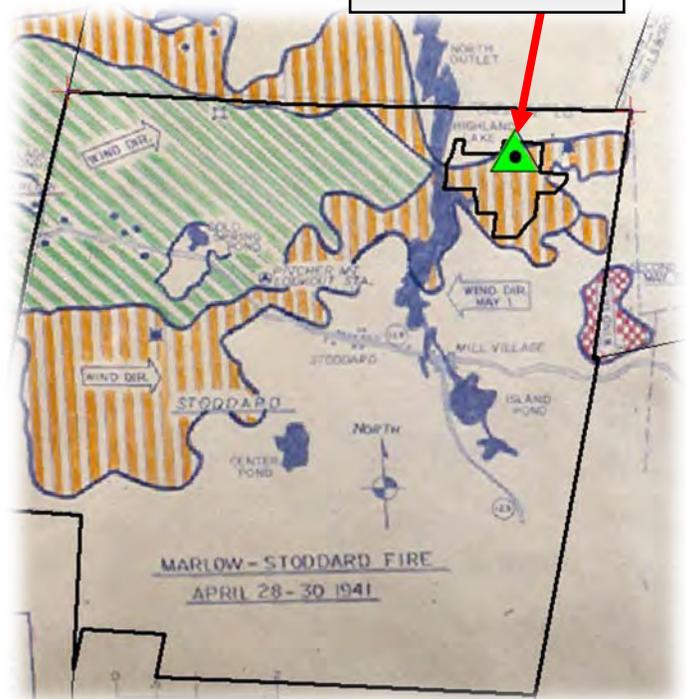


Stoddard Rocks

### Stoddard~Marlow Fire:

April of 1941 was the driest on record in over 60 years, having the highest average temperature and lowest rainfall since 1871. On April 28th, a fire broke out near Gustin Pond in Marlow. On the second day, the fire swept over Pitcher Mtn. and jumped across Highland Lake at the narrows near the entrance of Pickerel Cove. On the 3rd day it burned the top of Stoddard Rocks and headed up to Carter Hill, where an April snowstorm helped to extinguish the flames. Of the 24,000 acres that burned, over 10,000 acres were in Stoddard.

Evidence of the fire is represented in the stands of white birch and an occasional charred white pine stumps scattered throughout this property.

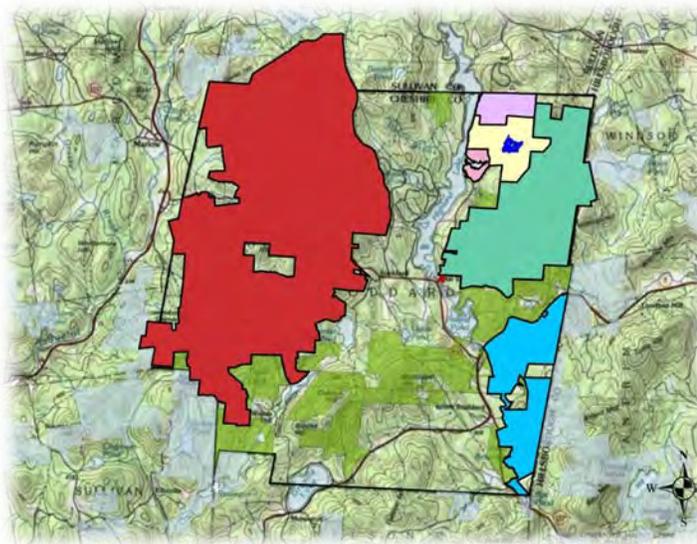


## Chronology of Land Protection

Stoddard is a small hilltop town perched on the high, rocky divide between the Connecticut and Merrimack River valleys. It was the last town in Cheshire county to be incorporated.....and it took a hardy people to do that. While its population is relatively small, geographically Stoddard is the second largest town in Cheshire County. For the past 30 years, land protection efforts have resulted in 63% of the town being permanently protected through the generosity of private individuals and the efforts of several land trusts, including: the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Sweet Water Trust, The Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society of NH, The Harris Center, and the Trust for Public Lands. Highlights of major land protection efforts in Stoddard are

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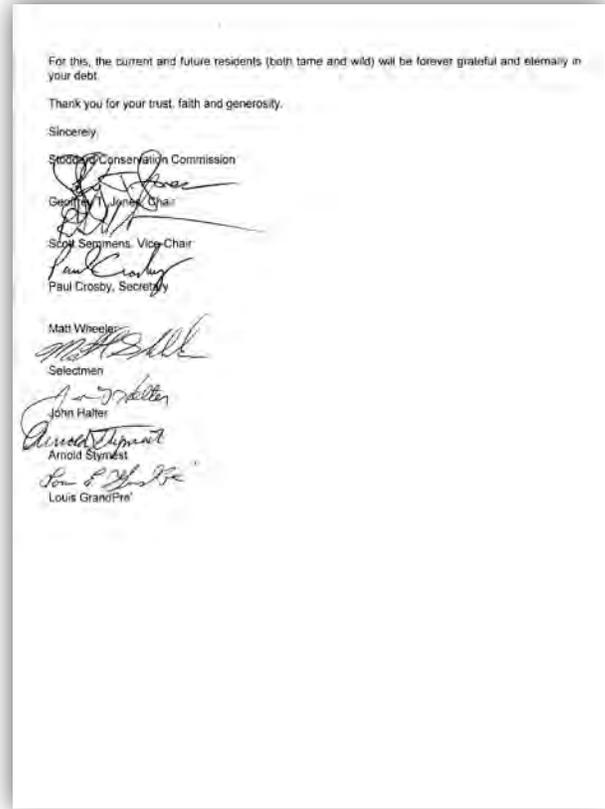
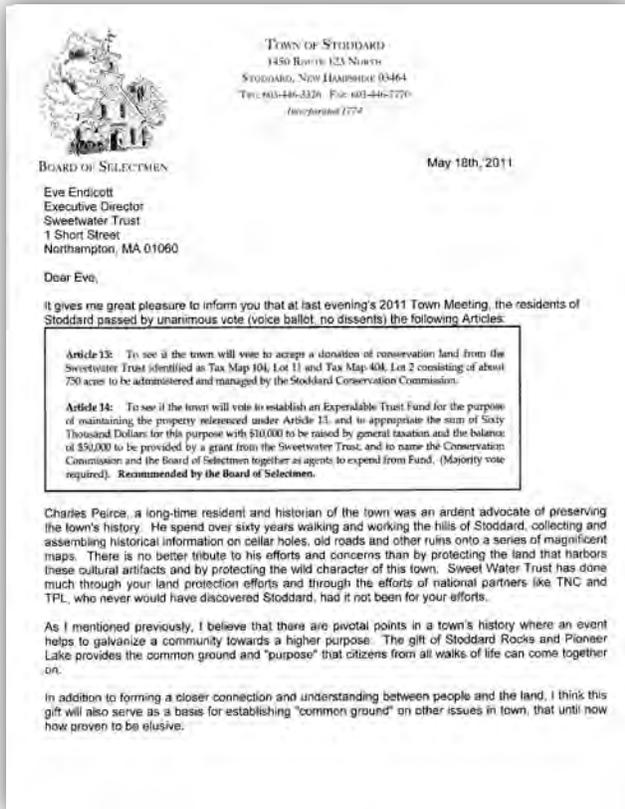
- 1978 Betty Babcock made a lasting tribute to Stoddard historian Charles Peirce by donating to the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF) 3,641 acres known as the Charles L. Peirce Forest & Wildlife Reservation (GREEN on map);
- 1979 Thurston Williams donated the 379 acre Williams Family Forest, that includes an old growth hardwood forest (LILAC on map);
- 1991, the Faulkner family placed a conservation easement on 11,000 acres of Andorra Forest ~ protecting the "stag haunted highlands & heart" of Stoddard (RED on map);



- 1991 townspeople rally to protect 123 acres surrounding Pickerel Cove from 94 units of fancy summer homes around

the cove by raising \$95,000. Had this property been developed then in all likelihood, so too would Pioneer Lake. This parking lot and trail to Pioneer Lake is on the Pickerel Cove property (PINK on map) ;

- 1994 SPNHF encourages the Sweet Water Trust to buy 731 acres, including Pioneer Lake and Stoddard Rocks ~ essentially "filling in the hole of the donut" and ending the threat of development (YELLOW on map);
- 2006 the Trust for Public Lands in cooperation with the NH Audubon & Harris Center protects 1,668 acres surrounding Robb Reservoir ~ which was also eyed for a large housing development in the 1980's. Town residents vote to contribute \$50,000 to this effort (BLUE on map)
- Since 1979, approximately 21,520 acres representing 63% of the town, has been permanently protected (ALL COLORS on map);
- In February, of 2011, the Stoddard conservation commission gets news that Sweet Water is transferring ownership of this land to another land trust and that the dam would be removed. The commission expresses concerns about the loss of habitat (in particular, nesting loon habitat) to Sweet Water. They in turn offer the land to the town, with the dam repaired. Furthermore, Sweet Water offers a \$50,000 stewardship fund that the town adds \$10,000 to. The letter below best chronicles the town's sentiment: and actions:



### Highlights of Stoddard's Rocks:

- 731-acres (110 acres of wetlands and ponds; 621 acres of forests);
- Stoddard Rocks~a hilltop scattered with huge glacial boulders;
- 50-acre Pioneer Lake with 2 miles of undeveloped shoreline and nesting loon habitat;
- 5+ Miles of woods roads & trails;
- "Forever Wild" conservation easement held by SPNHF, the purpose of which is to preserve the Ecological Integrity and wild character of the land. It strives to minimize human intervention and prohibits buildings, subdivisions, trapping, motorized vehicles, and commercial logging;
- Part of a 13,000 acre block of abutting protected lands.

### Goal of Town Ownership:

To provide a stronger link and sense of stewardship between towns people and conservation lands.

### Acknowledgements:

- The residents of Stoddard are perennially grateful to the generosity of the Sweet Water Trust for protecting this land in 1994 and donating it to the town in 2012 along with a \$50,000 stewardship fund;
- The residents of Stoddard appreciate the collective land protection efforts of other conservation groups and land trusts, including the Society for the Protection for NH Forests (in particular for allowing this parking lot on their Pickerel Cove property); The Nature Conservancy, The Harris Center, NH Audubon, & Trust for Public Lands, who collectively have helped protect two thirds of the town of Stoddard from development;
- The voting residents of the town for supporting these conservation efforts at town meeting.

This property is managed by the Stoddard Conservation Commission  
You are entering a large, wild area and are responsible for your own safety. While we strive to maintain trails for public use, we believe there is value in the lessons learned by experiencing the "rewards and penalties for wise and foolish acts that a woodsman faces on a daily basis, but the likes of which our modern lives have built a thousand buffers" ~ paraphrased from Aldo Leopold (forester, wildlife biologist, conservationist, author).

To volunteer for trail work: contact the Conservation Commission

For a map of this property & other public trails in town visit  
[www.stoddardconcom.org](http://www.stoddardconcom.org)

Please consider making a gift to the Stoddard Conservation Stewardship Fund

Please use this area with respect

Thank You!