

Conservation Matters

Title: Conserving Land. Connecting People with Nature

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This year marks the 50th anniversary of Quincy Bog Natural Area in Rumney. The date was June 22, 1974. Papers were signed and hands were shaken. That was the easy part. It was a long process.

Back in 1970, Joe Kent and local residents were concerned about forty acres of wetland and upland forest around an area known as Cranberry Bog Marsh. The developer Stanley Shmishkiss was from Massachusetts. He envisioned filling the bog and creating new residential lots on Cranberry Bog Road, a dead-end road. By the summer of 1970, the developer had already blown up a couple beaver dams and drained the marsh.

Rumney Planning Board Chairman Robert Berti, as well as the local conservation commission, were concerned about the impact of “a sizable development” on the site. Several leading conservation organizations were consulted. Joe Kent and his colleagues conducted bog coring and botanical studies on both sides of the access road and confirmed that the road had penetrated the wetlands. The evidence was presented to the developer and local officials. The bulldozing stopped and the land was put on the market. Joe Kent asked Mr. Shmishkiss for first refusal, which was granted.

The local citizens incorporated, forming Rumney Ecological Systems, so that they could acquire the land to insure its preservation as a Natural Area. It was to be open to the public for everyone to “learn by close acquaintance” the unique area. Scientific research within the area was encouraged.

Fundraising efforts were successful, and with a loan from the Nature Conservancy the developer sold the property to Rumney Ecological Systems (RES) for \$10,000. He gave the group a long term mortgage at low interest on the property and contributed one third of the payments. In addition, he joined the RES Board of Directors in 1975 and served as a director for over two decades. And, in the late 1990s, he helped raise funds to buy the last parcel of private land abutting the Bog.

Joe Kent and his colleagues understood how conservation efforts affect both people and nature. He understood the importance of relationships among humans and between humans and the environment. It's our QBNA motto, “Conserving Land. Connecting People with Nature”. Shmishkiss saw the land through a developer's eyes, it was business. Kent and the concerned residents were able to help Shmishkiss appreciate the biodiversity and wonder of this special place now known as Quincy Bog. As Joe Kent said at the time, they knew “How to sell binoculars” and helped him see the benefits of conserving the land.



George N. Kent of Rumney; Prof of Botany Albion Hodgdon of UNH and George A. Wendell of Rumney making a survey of the rare plant life of a Rumney bog.