



## Al Had a Vision...

Submitted by Deb Campelia

The **Great Brook Trail** runs for over 3 miles from Harvey Rd to Coffeetown Road. It meanders through permanently protected conservation land that is a virtual haven for wildlife, plants, and those who want to get out and be amongst it for a bit.

The protection of this large parcel is due to the vision of one man: local ceramic artist

Al Jaeger. In the early 80's, as he roamed about enjoying the woods around his property, he began to envision a future where things might remain undisturbed. He spent the next 10 years walking, snowshoeing, and having tea with his neighbors. He always managed to bring the conversation around to placing parcels of their abutting lands together into permanent conservation. A bonus came in 1987 with the statewide Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) that was to provide funds to protect NH lands with ecological and recreation value.

Al rallied the troops. Kate Hartnett coordinated the legal work with LCIP and the Deerfield Conservation Commission. Frank Mitchell inventoried the area for habitat values. The 7 abutters were convinced, and when all was said and done, nearly 700 acres were put into conservation easement.

Al laid out the trail, cut it and marked it. He doesn't believe that trails should merely go from point A to B; he thinks of them as an artistic and spiritual adventure. Along the main trail you will see some of Al's signs for side paths that will lead you to special spots: "Twin Rocks", "Vernal Pool", "Dam and Point". Perhaps more will be added, as the possibilities are limitless.



Others have made their contributions over the years. Eagle Scout Michael Behling and the scouts of troop 138 built benches out of fallen trees on two overlook areas and placed informative signs at the trailheads. Al Perkins walks the trail on an almost daily basis and maintains it, as does Al Jaeger. In 2012, AmeriCorps, under Denise Greig's leadership, put in the anchoring logs for 2 sturdy bridges that Al Perkins and Erik Berglund completed.

There is no need to long for a trip to a distant wild destination. It is all right here. Wetland vistas, a running brook with a number of crossings, boulder outcroppings, expanses of moss-covered areas, marshlands, and vernal pools. The area is forested with white pine and hemlock and varied hardwoods. There are a couple of trees at their northernmost and southernmost range (black gum and red spruce). On a still day, one can peer over one of the many beaver pond outlooks and spy large

snapping turtles in the shallow waters. Wildlife abounds here, so find a moment to be still and see what reveals itself!

Although this land is permanently protected, it is privately owned. Be respectful...leave nothing but footprints. Take away a lifted spirit.

Thanks Al, for having a vision and following it.

To find the Great Brook Trail:

From Nottingham Rd:

.6 mi down Harvey Road, trailhead on the right. Parking alongside the road

1.6 miles down Cate Road staying left onto Coffeetown Road, trailhead on the left.  
Parking alongside the road with limited parking off

