A National Park and a Vision of Conservation Stewardship
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

1999 ANNUAL REPORT
"...every middle-aged man who revisits his birthplace after a few years of absence, looks upon another landscape."

—George Perkins Marsh
BACKGROUND

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, in Woodstock, Vermont, is the only national park to tell the story of conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America. Woodstock born George Perkins Marsh, in 1864, wrote the book *Man and Nature*, one of the seminal texts of environmental thinking. Generations ahead of his time, Marsh described the global nature of environmental degradation and championed a new ethic of responsible stewardship and civic democracy. Strongly influenced by *Man and Nature*, Frederick Billings began reforesting the denuded and eroding slopes of Woodstock's Mt. Tom in 1874, creating one of the earliest planned and scientifically managed forests in the United States. The 550-acre woodland illustrates much of the history of forest conservation in America and is managed to also reflect best practices in contemporary sustainability and stewardship.

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park was established in 1992, when Frederick Billings' granddaughter, Mary French Rockefeller, and her husband, conservationist Laurance S. Rockefeller conveyed their estate's residential and forest lands to the people of the United States. The Rockefellers established the Billings Farm & Museum in 1983 to preserve and interpret the historic farm of the Marsh, Billings and Rockefeller families. Working in partnership, the Farm & Museum and the Park chronicle three generations of stewardship on this land and the emergence of a national conservation ethic. The Park also serves as the headquarters for the National Park Service's Conservation Study Institute, an organization that works nationally and internationally to promote education and training, conduct research, and build networks for the conservation community.
A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mount Tom from the Billings Farm & Museum
As together we build America’s first park about conservation, we celebrate the places that are closest to our hearts: our woodlands, riverbanks, open spaces, working landscapes and community centers, and celebrate the people who work so assiduously to care for these places. Newton B. Drury, a former Director of the National Park Service, has written:

There are certain values in our landscape that ought to be sustained against destruction or impairment, though their worth cannot be expressed in money terms. They are essential to our “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness;” this nation of ours is not so rich it can afford to lose them; it is still rich enough to afford to preserve them.

Our new national park has come into being at a particularly auspicious historical moment when we must make every effort to ensure that the places and values associated with our “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness” are not diminished or forever lost. In many tangible and intangible ways our rich natural and cultural heritage, our sense of place, recreation and general well-being, are the ingredients essential to the quality and sustainability of life. A stewardship ethic and a commitment to the commonwealth, based on tolerance and respect for democratic institutions are vital to any meaningful exercise of liberty. Responsible stewardship of our environment may be our only guarantee that in the pursuit of our happiness we do not burn out like a shooting star—but pass on to each successive generation the special places and experiences that have shaped our character and nurtured our souls.

Year 2000 marks the culmination of a remarkable year of growth for the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and the Billings Farm & Museum. It began with an ambitious project to renovate the 11,000 square foot Carriage Barn for stewardship programs, park offices and a new exhibit Celebrating Stewardship: People Taking Care of Places. It culminated with successful completion of the building and the exhibit that received a 1999 Vermont Preservation Award from the Preservation Trust of Vermont.

Across the road, the Billings Farm & Museum completed the renovation of their Visitor Center that is shared with the Park, a new exhibit, and a beautiful 100-seat auditorium. This renovation was followed by the rebuilding of the farm’s wooden silos—perhaps the last of an era.

As we look to the future we are wonderfully positioned to join with our many partners in presenting educational programs, demonstration projects, and stories that recognize the importance and role of places and encourage a culture of conservation and stewardship. We need to challenge ourselves in every way to ensure that in the focus and breadth of our programs we are taking the fullest advantage of our facilities, talented staff, diverse and knowledgeable partners, and most of all, this extraordinary place.

— Rolf Diamant
"... there is a mandate to invent an entirely new kind of park. It must be one where the human stories and the natural history are intertwined; where the relatively small acreage serves as an educational resource for the entire National Park Service and a seedbed for American environmental thought; and where the legacy of American conservation and its future enter into dialogue, generating a new environmental paradigm for our day."

— John Elder, Opening Day, June 5, 1998
Carrying the Vision Forward in 1999

The Park is focusing on the development of three core program areas; 1) Sustainable Land Steward­ship; 2) Stewardship Education; and 3) Building Conservation Leadership Skills.

DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO LAND STEWARDSHIP

The woodland that Billings created is one of the earliest planned and scientifically managed forests in the United States. The Billings and Rockefeller families continued the tradition of sustainable forest stewardship throughout the 20th century. Today, the 550-acre woodland is managed as a working forest demonstrating the best practices for long-term sustainability. The forest is a living exhibit and cultural landscape illustrating more than a century of forest stewardship in America.

Much of the wood harvesting and milling are done as part of an ongoing series of public programs entitled Working Woodlands, sponsored in collabora­tion with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service’s State & Private Forestry Program, Vermont Forests, Parks, and Recre-
Hardwoods from the Park's forest were used to build the furniture in the exhibit reading area.

A draft report on the park's art collection was also completed this year. The report looks at the role of Hudson River School artists in shaping 19th century public views on the environment and conservation.

"We must conceive of stewardship not simply as one individual's practice, but rather as the mutual and intimate relationship, extending across the generations, between a human community and its place on Earth."

—John Elder, "Inheriting Mt. Tom," Orion 1997
The new exhibit Conservation Stewardship: People Taking Care of Places traces the historic development of conservation thought and celebrates stories of stewardship from across the country and around the world. The exhibit also encourages visitors to reflect on their own communities and special places and offers them an opportunity to share their own stories of conservation by means of an interactive computerized journal.

Conservation Stewardship: People Taking Care of Places is complemented by the exhibit Upon This Land which recently opened in the Visitor Center located at the Billings Farm & Museum and the academy award nominated film A Place in the Land now showing in a newly built 100 seat theater.

STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION

Success can be measured in the many tens of thousands of people who visited the park this year and who reflect upon its message of stewardship, and in the special public programs sponsored by the Park, the Conservation Study Institute, and partners. There were 70,000 visitor contacts in 1999 and more than 19,000 people participated in guided tours. The tours explain the remarkable contributions of George Perkins Marsh to a global concept of husbandry and sustainability while moving through a once devastated landscape completed transformed and renewed by the Billings and Rockefeller families through generations of careful conservation and stewardship. The tours interpret the story of this transformation as well as the contributions of Frederick Billings and Laurance S. Rockefeller to American conservation.

The new exhibit Conservation Stewardship: People Taking Care of Places, opened in August, traces the historic development of conservation thought and celebrates stories of stewardship from across the country and around the world. The exhibit also encourages visitors to reflect on their own communities and special places and offers them an opportunity to share their own stories of conservation by means of an interactive computerized journal.

Conservation Stewardship: People Taking Care of Places is complemented by the exhibit Upon This Land which recently opened in the Visitor Center located at the Billings Farm & Museum and the academy award nominated film A Place in the Land now showing in a newly built 100 seat theater.

The Park, the Conservation Study Institute, Shelburne Farms, and The Orion Society are currently planning collaborative initiatives to promote place-based conservation education with national parks and their education partners. The Orion Society's Stories in the Land Program takes an interdisciplinary, field-based approach to environmental education that has the potential to lend greater depth to the educational initiatives in national parks. Shelburne Farms is actively involved in conservation education through year-round on-site programs for nearby school children, developing teaching resources, and working to integrate stewardship into Vermont's educational curriculum. The National Park Service and its many partners offer an extensive range of education programs in parks across the country. There is tremendous potential for furthering these educational opportunities as national parks offer excellent settings for institutes, courses, teacher-training workshops, and curricular planning sessions.

The Orion Society and the National Park Service have acknowledged their mutual aim "to develop a
The culture of conservation and stewardship through educational programs that promote a sense of place in parks, and their larger communities. The Orion Society, with its various publications, networks of teachers and writers, and field programs, is uniquely positioned to work with the National Park Service in developing national initiatives and demonstration projects to promote and expand place-based approaches to education. These projects will serve as a foundation for an extensive collaboration within, as well as beyond, the park system.

The Park and the Conservation Study Institute have also joined Shelburne Farms, the Green Mountain National Forest and the National Wildlife Federation to cultivate a stewardship ethic and understanding of forest concepts and management among teachers (and consequently students) in communities adjacent to Vermont’s public lands. This initiative would develop a core group of teacher leaders who will serve as mentors to their peers on forest stewardship, including ecosystem management and watershed education.
CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is a principal partner of the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute. The Park works with the Institute on a variety of projects to enhance conservation leadership skills.

The Conservation Study Institute’s mission is to create opportunities for dialogue, inquiry and lifelong learning to enhance the stewardship of landscapes and communities. The Conservation Study Institute was established by the National Park Service to enhance leadership in the field of conservation. In collaboration with the NPS, and academic and nonprofit partners, the Institute provides a forum for the conservation community and the public to discuss conservation history, contemporary issues and practice, and future directions for the field.

A first step for the Conservation Study Institute in 1999 was to lay the foundations for long-term partnerships. Collaboration brings varied perspectives on conservation from academic, government and private organizations, to shape relevant programs and cultivate a commitment to accomplishing programs with a diverse array of partners. The Institute’s founding partners include the University of Vermont, Shelburne Farms, and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment.

Another key step was to initiate an outreach effort to publicize the Institute and its programs. During the first year, hundreds of people were contacted through presentations at conferences, mailings, public programs, training programs on conservation history and current practice, and focused professional working sessions. A series of workshops on leadership was particularly successful. These workshops explored new styles of leadership for community-based collaborative work and emphasized the importance of reflection and articulation of personal and organizational stewardship ethics. The public programs and professional working sessions focused on the changing nature of conservation as reflected in heritage areas and large-scale regional landscapes, forest stewardship and sense of place. The professional working sessions, in particular, provided a forum to discuss current practice, assess recent trends, and explore emerging models of conservation.

The park, The Woodstock Foundation, Inc. and the Conservation Study Institute collaborated on a Feasibility Study for a Stewardship Initiative. This
project was designed to reach out to people and organizations involved in new and thoughtful approaches to conservation. Forty-eight individuals and organizations, whose work brings conservation to new audiences or extends stewardship activities in new ways, were interviewed. Insights on current conservation gained from this project are being used to strengthen the park’s interpretive program, shape programs that will recognize and encourage stewardship of special places, and promote the ongoing exchange of knowledge and experience from a network of conservation practitioners.
Forty-eight individuals and organizations contributed to the Stewardship Initiative.

Vermont:
- Atlas Timberlands Partnership
- Food Works
- Keeping Track
- New England Grassroots Environment Fund
- Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Shelburne Farms
- Vermont Family Forests
- Vermont Land Trust
- Vital Communities of the Upper Valley

Northeast:
- Champlain Valley Heritage Network
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
- EcoVillage at Ithaca
- Monadnock Institute for Nature, Place, and Culture
- Northern Forest Center
- The Orion Society
- The Trust for Public Land—Good Life Center

Southeast:
- Alliance for Sustainable Communities
- Tennessee Parks & Greenways Foundation
- The Conservation Fund—Suppernong River Greenway
- The Conservation Fund—Sustainable Everglades Initiative
- The Nature Conservancy—Virginia Coast Reserve

Midwest:
- Menominee Tribal Enterprises
- Mississippi River Basin Alliance

Intermountain West:
- AERO—Alternative Energy Resources Organization
- Cornerstones Community Partnerships

Forest Trust
- Native Seeds/SEARCH
- Sierra Business Council
- Sanoran Institute
- The Murie Center
- The Nature Conservancy—Yampa River Project
- The Trust for Public Land—Nez Perce Project

Pacific West:
- Golden Gate National Parks Association
- Whatcom County Land Trust

International:
- A-Projekt (Slovak Republic)
- CAMPFIRE (Zimbabwe)
- Ecorest (United States and Canada)
- Environmental Partnership for Central Europe (Czech Republic)
- Exmoor National Park (England)
- Foundation for Development of the Jizerske Hory Mts. (Czech Republic)
- Fundación pro Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Colombia)
- International Centre for Protected Landscapes (Wales)
- Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment (US & Canada)
- South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (Samoa)
- The Island Nature Trust (Canada)

Foundations:
- Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, (New York)
- Henry P. Kendall Foundation (Boston)
- New England Grassroots Environment Fund (Vermont)
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund Inc. (New York)
THE PARK AT A GLANCE

♦ National Historic Landmark in Conservation History
♦ 555 acres in public ownership including one of the earliest professionally managed forests in the country
♦ Vermont's first tree farm—11 historic forest stands
♦ 300 acres of scenic easements
♦ Operating Partnership with the Billings Farm & Museum
♦ 70,000 annual visitors (combined MBRNHP/BF&M)
♦ Two Visitor Center operations
♦ Exhibit on conservation history and practice
♦ Home of NPS Conservation Study Institute and NPS VT/NH offices of Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
♦ 20 miles of roads & trails including six miles of historic carriage roads
♦ 19th-Century Mansion with 50 rooms, 3000 volume library, 541 paintings and prints including landscapes by Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, and J.F. Kensett
♦ 16 horse drawn carriages and sleighs
♦ 23,000 museum artifacts
♦ 5 acres of landscaped grounds and formal gardens
FUNDING BY SOURCE, FY 1999

- Park Operating Base $992,000
- Fee Revenue & Income $61,000
- Park Fund (Endowment*) $154,741
- Grants & Projects $515,600

PARK OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURES, FY 1999

- Resource Protection & Forest Stewardship 21%
- Management & Administration 10%
- Visitor Services & Programs 31%
- Maintenance & Facility Operations 38%

* The Endowment is held and managed by The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.
CARRIAGE BARN
VISITOR CENTER &
STEWARDSHIP
EXHIBIT OPENING

The Park held a dedication ceremony August 7, 1999 for the Carriage Barn Visitor Center & Stewardship Exhibit. The Carriage Barn includes a Visitor Center and exhibit, Park offices and a new home for the NPS Conservation Study Institute and the New Hampshire and Vermont offices of the NPS Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program.

The exhibit Conservation Stewardship: People Taking Care of Places explores the prescient contributions of George Perkins Marsh to a global concept of husbandry and sustainability and illustrates the recovery of this once devastated Vermont landscape through generations of careful conservation and stewardship by the Billings and Rockefeller families. The exhibit also traces the development of conservation thinking and practice displaying early editions of many of the seminal books of the environmental movement including Henry David Thoreau’s Walden, George Perkins Marsh’s Man and Nature, John Muir’s Our National Parks, Aldo Leopold’s A Sand County Almanac, and Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring.

The exhibit also celebrates contemporary personal stories of stewardship from around the country and around the world. The Leach family speaks about conserving their diary farm in Vermont’s Mettowee Valley; Elvera Vigil Ogard tells the story of how her small New Mexican community came together to restore their adobe church; writer Rick Bass reflects on the efforts of he and his neighbors to encourage sustainable community forestry in northwest Montana’s Yaak Valley;
Che Macivun describes the conversion of vacant lots in Boston’s Dudley Street community into new housing and community gardens; rancher Lynne Sherrod explains how a new partnership between ranchers and environmentalists is preserving Colorado’s Elk River Valley; and Giles Romulus from the small island of Saint Lucia in the West Indies speaks of integrating the survival needs of local communities with broader conservation goals.

Because conservation work is constantly evolving, these narratives will be refreshed with ever-new voices of stewardship. To gather and present these stories, the National Park Service joined with The Orion Society and its quarterly Orion Afield, an award-winning magazine devoted to supporting grassroots environmental initiatives in conservation, restoration, and education across North America.

The exhibit also includes interactive computer stations with links to the web pages of conservation organizations across the country. Visitors will also use the computers to make “journal” entries about special places that are important to them. A running compendium of journal entries will be retrievable on each computer.

The exhibit was produced by the staff of the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the Conservation Study Institute, the NPS’ Harpers Ferry Center, the Quebec Labrador Foundation’s Atlantic Center for the Environment, and The Orion Society.
MARSH-BILLINGS-ROCKEFELLER NHP AND PARTNERS

PARK STAFF
Rolf Diamant, Superintendent
B.J. Dunn, Management Assistant
Mea Arego, Administrative Officer
Valeri Wolfe, Program Assistant
Tim Maguire, Chief of Visitor Services
Alton Staub, Park Ranger
Janet Houghton, Curator
Ella Rothgangel, Museum Technician
Kyle Jones, Park Resources Manager
John Gilbert, Facility Manager
Peter Glover, Wood Crafter
Kim Murray, Horticulturist

BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM/
THE WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION, INC.
David Donath, President

CONSERVATION STUDY INSTITUTE
Nora Mitchell, Director
Barbara Slaiby, Program Coordinator
National Park Service
University of Vermont
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment
Shelburne Farms

COOPERATORS
The Orion Society
Pennsylvania State University
The Watershed Center
Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation
USDA Forest Service
Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation

We thank the following for the use of their photography in making this report.

Cover: top, left and center: Jim Westphalen; top, right: Jon Gilbert Fox; bottom: Emily Sloan
Inside Front Cover: Emily Sloan;
text: Billings Family Archives
Page 2: Barbara Slaiby
Page 4: Kenneth Dudzik
Page 6, left: Kyle Jones; right: Barbara Slaiby
Page 7: Amy Thompson, Valley News
Page 8, top: Helen Scully; bottom: Rolf Diamant
Page 9: Rolf Diamant
Page 10: Greg Cimma, QLF
Page 12: Barbara Slaiby
Page 15, top, left: Jeff Nintzel; top, right: Emily Sloan; bottom: Jim Westphalen
Page 16: Jeff Nintzel
Inside Back Cover: Emily Sloan

Design: Brian P. Graphic Arts, Montpelier, Vermont
Printing: Government Printing Office
The cover was printed on Mohawk 50/10, a 50% recycled paper with 15% post-consumer waste. The text was printed on Neenah Environment, a 100% recycled paper, with 30% post-consumer waste.
Printed using soy-based inks.
Typeset in ITC Legacy Serif and ITC Legacy Sans.
Published by the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, July 2000
“The land ethic will begin one individual at a time”

-Aldo Leopold,
A Sand County Almanac