



THE *MISSION* OF THE NORCROSS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION, INC.



THE MISSION OF THE FOUNDATION

The Norcross Wildlife Foundation is actually a by-product of the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, established in 1939 by Arthur D. Norcross, with the following goals:

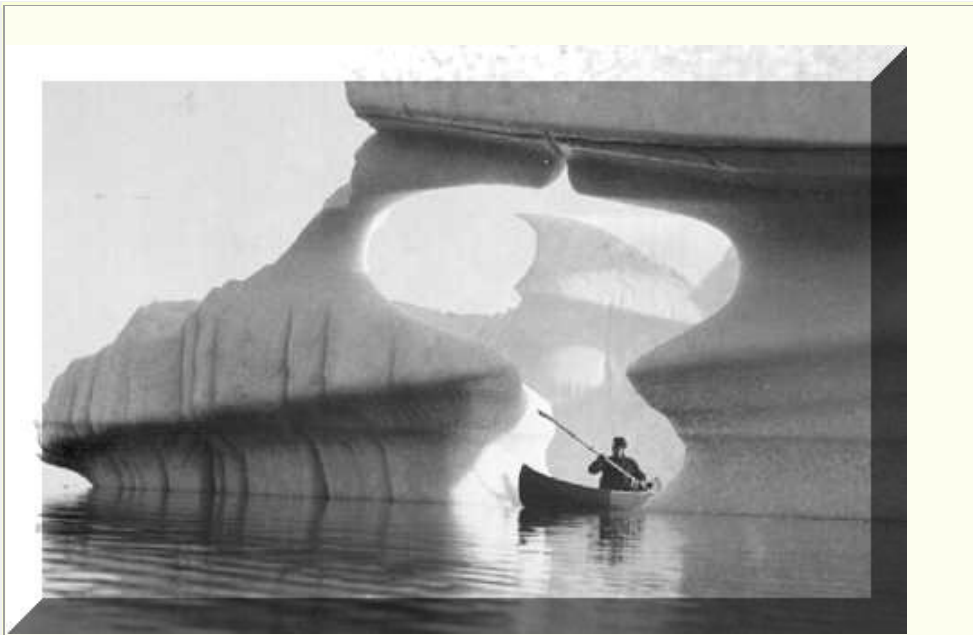
"It shall be a place of refuge where all wildlife is encouraged not just to survive but also to proliferate naturally, and where certain species, now threatened with extinction, may again attain more normal distribution and benefit the public by their survival."

Consequently, the Norcross Wildlife Foundation was established in 1965, being charged then and continuing now to ensure the integrity of the Sanctuary in perpetuity.

It was Mr. Norcross' wish that the Foundation be operated in the way he had chartered, with full emphasis on its public nature and with a view to ensuring that its wildlife-and wildland-conservation efforts benefit the public welfare.

The Norcross Wildlife Foundation, therefore, has this mission:

- To protect, enhance and expand habitat for wildlife primarily at the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary (known as Tupper Hill) in the form of holdings in the surrounding towns of Monson, Wales, Holland, Brimfield and Hardwick, Massachusetts and Stafford, Connecticut;
- To protect wild land wherever it is threatened;
- To propagate, establish, restore and maintain populations of threatened and endangered plants native to New England;
- To provide the public with educational programs in natural and environmental science; and
- To support, through grants, gifts, easements and loans-for-land, the activities of a national and international constituency of not-for-profit wildlife conservation organizations.



BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Arthur D. Norcross, a native of Monson, Massachusetts, founded the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary in 1939. An active sportsman and participating sponsor of several Arctic expeditions, Mr. Norcross early turned his lifelong interest in wildlife and the out-of-doors to his childhood "stomping grounds:" the wooded hills surrounding Monson and nearby Wales. Using as a core the 100-acre family woodlot/pasture-inherited from his father, A. D. Norcross, in 1916-Mr. Norcross began circa 1930 to gather nearby wooded acres, farmland, wetlands and other parcels. His purpose was to establish the Sanctuary, known locally as Tupper Hill. To assemble acreage, Mr. Norcross bought some parcels outright, traded some parcels and accepted a few gifts of land from sympathetic neighbors.

Founder and manager of the Norcross Greeting Card Company, Mr. Norcross lived virtually all of his working life in New York City, where he died in 1969. In 1965, just four years before his death, he sought to ensure the continuation of the Sanctuary by establishing The Norcross Wildlife Foundation.

Excellent models for some of the future works of the Foundation were to be found in the experience of the Sanctuary. Concomitant with its principal mission of providing healthy, secure habitat for natural fauna and flora, Tupper Hill has a history of providing the public-especially local school children-with extensive natural-and environmental-education programs. It is also an active center for plant propagation and distribution, with particular emphasis on rare and endangered plants native to the Appalachian range from the Carolinas through the Maritimes.

Always proactive in his pursuit of wildlife protection and conservation, Mr. Norcross put a good deal of time, energy and money into what he described as "rescue work." This involved responding quickly to news of impending habitat

destruction, draining of swamps, housing subdivisions, road building, reservoir construction and the like.

"In the vicinity of Belchertown [MA], we removed an entire colony of Hartford or Climbing Fern by truck before the bulldozer and flame throwers did their work and the area was flooded. This colony of Hartford Fern flourishes on the Sanctuary...In fact is increasing."

Probably his most remarkable salvage operation involved rescuing the flora of a parcel in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey and transporting it lock, stock and *Gentiana atum-nalis* (Pine Barren Gentian) to Massachusetts, where it still sits today. White cedars, gentians, cattails, pitcher plants, cranberry bushes, sphagnum moss, grasses and sedges, and several species of orchids all made the trip. Logistically, this was a daunting operation-and a successful one.

Given today's environmental regulations, such a venture might not be possible, but to the forward-thinking Mr. Norcross, a doomed bog in New Jersey, chock full of wildlife, was saved, found a home in Massachusetts, and is available for public education and enjoyment ... forever.

The founder was cautious and thoughtful about constructing roads on the Sanctuary. By reopening old coach roads from pre-Revolutionary times, regrading 19th Century logging roads and carefully planning new, naturalistic roads, Mr. Norcross established a network of approximately 25 miles of roadways, providing access to all parts of the Sanctuary without intruding on wildlife movement or breeding. The gravel roads, in fact, are frequent egg depositories for Tupper Hill's healthy populations of painted and snapping turtles, and gravel banks for roadbuilding are nesting sites for an unusually high population of Eastern spotted turtles.

As his age advanced, Mr. Norcross began to slow down, and by 1964 he could look back with satisfaction on twenty-five years of hard-won returns on the challenging and costly work it took to assemble the approximately 2,500 acres he estimated having under protection at Tupper Hill. Although he established The Norcross Wildlife Foundation in 1965, he did not endow it just then. Instead, with considerable help from his sister, June Norcross Webster (also the artistic force in his greeting-card company), Mr. Norcross continued to underwrite Sanctuary operations and expansion with his own funds.

In the late 1960's, his health failed rapidly, and when he died in 1969, he left the bulk of his estate to the Foundation, along with a well-defined administrative structure for the Foundation and-for the Sanctuary-very clear bylaws and a document titled *Instructions for the Future*.

Thus began a difficult period for both Sanctuary and Foundation. Because of a challenge to the will, it took until 1982 to settle the estate. Ultimately, the terms of the will were upheld, but in the interim there were lean times at the Sanctuary and virtually no charitable activity at the Foundation.

With the estate settled, there was some catching up to do in terms of postponed improvements and expansion of Sanctuary operations. So, too, with grantmaking: in 1982 the Foundation made up for lost time by placing almost

\$800,000 in grants and donations with non-profit organizations or NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). Grantmaking was, at the time, a relatively new activity for the Foundation, and its Directors struggled to identify, qualify and make grants to worthy organizations.

How Mr. Norcross regarded the actual grantmaking process was not entirely apparent. He was clearly interested in placing the money he had worked so hard to accumulate into the hands of groups that would put it to work too, showing tangible, lasting results. He reportedly said: "If you give someone money, a year later you ought to be able to walk up and knock on it."

Along these lines, the Foundation has established a pattern of placing grants with organizations that ask for specific amounts-to purchase and protect land, build nature centers and trails, print and distribute educational materials, provide services to clients and conduct ground-level program activities. Norcross has tended to eschew funding endowments, supporting personnel, or underwriting operations.

Over the past eighteen years, we've supported grants that have preserved many thousands of acres of land, helped organizations to purchase hundreds of computers and computer-related equipment and set up Geographical Imaging Systems (GIS) for precise mapping. Work trucks, patrol vehicles, septic systems, office supplies, school equipment and furniture, paper and pencils have been purchased with Norcross grant dollars. Newsletters, special environmental reports, trail guides and habitat-management handbooks all result from our gifts.

We have provided items as mundane but useful as septic systems for Manomet Observatory and erosion-preventing sandbags for an aboriginal archeological site on the flooding upper Mississippi.

In the spring of 2000, a year in which Norcross distributed just over \$1.7 million in grant checks, perhaps the most satisfying gift took the form not of cash but rather, an "in-kind" award. Bob Budd, manager of The Nature Conservancy's Red Canyon Ranch outside Lander, Wyoming, flew east with his wife, Lynn, and visited The Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary. Their plane tickets were one-way; to get home, they climbed into a somewhat dented but rust-free, one-ton, heavy-duty diesel pickup truck with 39,000 original miles-"nicely broken in," Bob said. It was love at first sight and, with CB radio crackling and snowplow secured in the cargo bed, Bob and Lynn literally headed into the sunset. Three days later we received word that truck, plow and the Budds had made it safely to Red Canyon, where their truck is busy at work and should continue to provide good service well into this still young Century.

Well-maintained work vehicles continue to serve as in-kind grants to selected NGOS: in 2001 the foundation donated a 1/4-ton Suburban to an order of community-service nuns in the Bronx, New York, for transporting neighbors to and from market, school, medical centers and the like. A mid-size SUV went to The Nature Conservancy's Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island, New York, to provide transportation for staff and equipment at the 2,100-acre preserve. And in 2003, another Suburban became the beach-patrol and staff workhorse for an environmental working group on Cape Cod.

However, owing to the reduction in assets caused by a poor investment market,

in 2002 the foundation made basic changes in its grantmaking policy (described in detail in the section titled "Grantmaking in Review"). This entailed reducing the overall *amount* going out to grantees without diminishing the actual *number* of grants.

The foundation also reduced the amount of funds allocated to land acquisition at the Sanctuary or close by. This was a conscious Board decision but, happily, it coincided with a steep drop in local lands available for acquisition-the market just seemed to dry up. In effect, then, Norcross did not really miss out on opportunities to add acreage to the Sanctuary holdings; rather, it was able to husband resources at a time when that was warranted.

We even recovered some capital through the sale of a few outlying parcels in a way that left the land protected in perpetuity through conservation easements. At present, the local real-estate market is showing signs of renewed activity, and the Board of Directors is ready to commit to purchase of land in fee or through easements-especially if acquisition adds key acres to the "core" Sanctuary.

In the meantime, Norcross has become a "land bank", helping others to protect open space, wetlands and deep woods. The foundation's No-interest Loan Fund for Land Protection, begun in 1999, now has resources approaching \$3 million dollars. It has proven to be a boon to grassroots organizations across the nation-especially local land trusts all too often faced with pressing deadlines on threatened acreage but without available funds to draw upon. Beginning in 1999 and through 2003, land protection loans, ranging from \$12,000 to \$250,000, have gone to thirty grassroots organizations in successful efforts to protect permanently a total of nearly 7,000 acres. Every loan coming due in that period has been paid back in full.

Recent trends are encouraging. With promotional assistance from umbrella groups such as the Land Trust Alliance, the Norcross loan program has become a very tidy and active business indeed, and the Board is contemplating expanding it significantly in the next few years. (Details of this are included in a section titled "Land Protection and Stewardship Programs").

- Richard S. Reagan,
Managing Director

Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Inc.

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Type of Grantmaker

Independent foundation

IRS Exemption Status

501(c)(3)

Financial Data

(yr. ended 12/31/06)

Total Assets: \$72,562,948

Total Giving: \$1,163,527

EIN

132041622

990-PF

[2006](#) [2005](#) [2004](#) [2003](#) [2002](#) [2001](#)