



Stantec

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To Whom it May Concern:

As a professional wildlife biologist and conservationist, I am writing in praise of the learning opportunities available at the Cathance River Education Alliance. It is truly a great experience for elementary and high school students, as well as adults, to have the type of high-quality ecological education found at CREA. Such forward-thinking educational programming in our community will help us approach innovative and lasting solutions to the issues of conservation, development and sustainability that we must face in the coming decades.

For the past two years I have been working on a wildlife corridor assessment and winter track survey for the Town of Topsham's Natural Areas Plan. The project was designed to gather baseline data on winter wildlife movements and potential corridor locations across the township in order to help guide future conservation and management decisions. With over three dozen potential corridors to survey, the field component of the project seemed overwhelming. The solution involved a partnership between CREA, the Town of Topsham's Department of Planning and Development, two local high schools, and Stantec. CREA provided a location and educational materials for snow tracking trainings, Stantec provided the training, the Town of Topsham orchestrated the project, and local high school students assisted in field data collection. It was a great experience for me to work with all parties involved, but especially with the students who were experiencing learning in a fresh new perspective. Not all of the students were receptive to the idea of snowshoeing through waist deep drifts in search of tracks, but some clearly had not thought before of the connections between tracks, ecology, and our society.

I believe such small lessons can grow into great understanding, but not without the will of determined educators. I am writing in full support of CREA and the great work being done by Executive Director Rick Wilson and Site Coordinator Cheryl Sleeper. We have a wonderful and valuable community resource in the Cathance River Education Alliance and I encourage full support of all their future endeavors.

Sincerest regards,

Patrick Burke

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