

The making of an Eagle Scout

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Becoming an Eagle Scout requires determination, ambition, organizational skills, support from friends and family, and undoubtedly some luck. Matthew Churchwell, a Kearsarge Regional Highschool Senior had joined the New London Boy Scout Troop 71 in 2013 and, after rising in rank through the years, decided to take up the Eagle Scout challenge last summer. This attempt could have been risky for him, because only 5% of Boy Scouts earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

As luck would have it, he contacted the Sutton Conservation Commission (SCC) and asked if they had any projects he might take on to earn the title of Eagle Scout. --That is, *lucky for the Sutton Conservation Commission!* The SCC told him they needed a boardwalk built over some jagged rocks on a hiking trail at the Webb/Crowell Forest Preserve in Sutton. After conferring with his scout master and family, Matthew said he would take on this not-so-easy project.

In order to earn that top scout rank, however, the requirements for Matthew were to:

- Design & submit-for-approval to SCC a board walk that could safely traverse the rocky terrain, meet building codes for walkways several feet high above the ground, and endure through all weather for many years to come.
- Organize & manage the crew to build it; the schedule that each construction phase would take; the delivery & staging for building materials & their method of transportation to the boardwalk site. (The boardwalk site was about ¼ mile from the nearest road and across a narrow foot bridge.)
- Raise all the necessary money to pay for the entire project.

Matthew said, "The hardest part of this project was designing a boardwalk that would fit the space and completing it within the Covid 19 restrictions." But by using many of the skills learned while a Scout, and working at the job whenever he could fit it in between his busy high school schedule, he methodically took on each step and, to the delight of the SCC, emailed them periodically to describe the latest step of the project he had completed.



MATTHEW CHURCHWELL cuts the ribbon to the boardwalk of his Eagle Scout project in Sutton. (Courtesy Photo).

By early spring footings were in place and by late spring a frame was built. By early summer the walkway deck was in place and by mid-July the railings solidly bolted on along with a beautiful board seat overlooking the Lane River. Having completed the project successfully, Matthew and his crew had at last fulfilled the many challenging requirements of organizing and managing a complex assignment --and Matthew had officially become an Eagle Scout!

The Sutton Conservation Commission, the surrounding communities, and all those who love to walk in the woods by a beautiful river are now the beneficiaries of what it takes to make an Eagle Scout. The Town of Sutton gratefully thanks Matthew Churchwell and New London Boy Scout Troop 71 for a job well done.