

Long-time wetlands scientist loves his work

By **JOAN GEARY**
Contributing Writer

the state required approvals. But, as soon as the regulations came out, everyone had to follow the rules.”

Hagstrom, 66, is a wetlands scientist, and partner in Monadnock Septic Design LLC. The

Fitzwilliam business provides site evaluations, septic design and installation to

clients in the Monadnock Region and beyond.

Well-versed in the intricacies of wetlands regulations, Hagstrom works with developers, contractors, commercial businesses and homeowners to ensure state requirements are met

More than 40 years ago, when Carl Hagstrom was working a part-time second job with a local land surveyor, New Hampshire

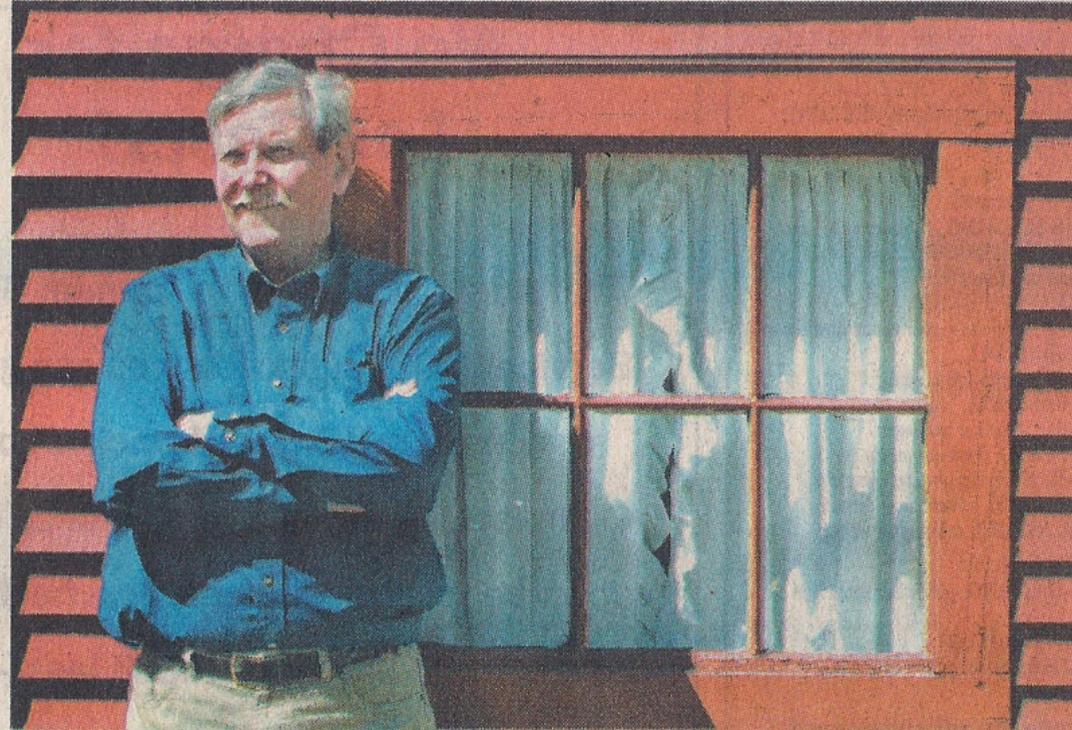
enacted one of the first laws in the country for wetlands protection. The historic 1967 regulations

eventually led to the formation of the N.H. Department of Environmental Services, and simultaneously set Hagstrom on a path to a brand-new industry and a reputation as an expert in his field.

“Suddenly, land subdivisions had to be approved by the state,” he recalled. “It was the first time

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Carl “Skip” Hagstrom of Fitzwilliam.

Fitwilliam man found his bliss in the land

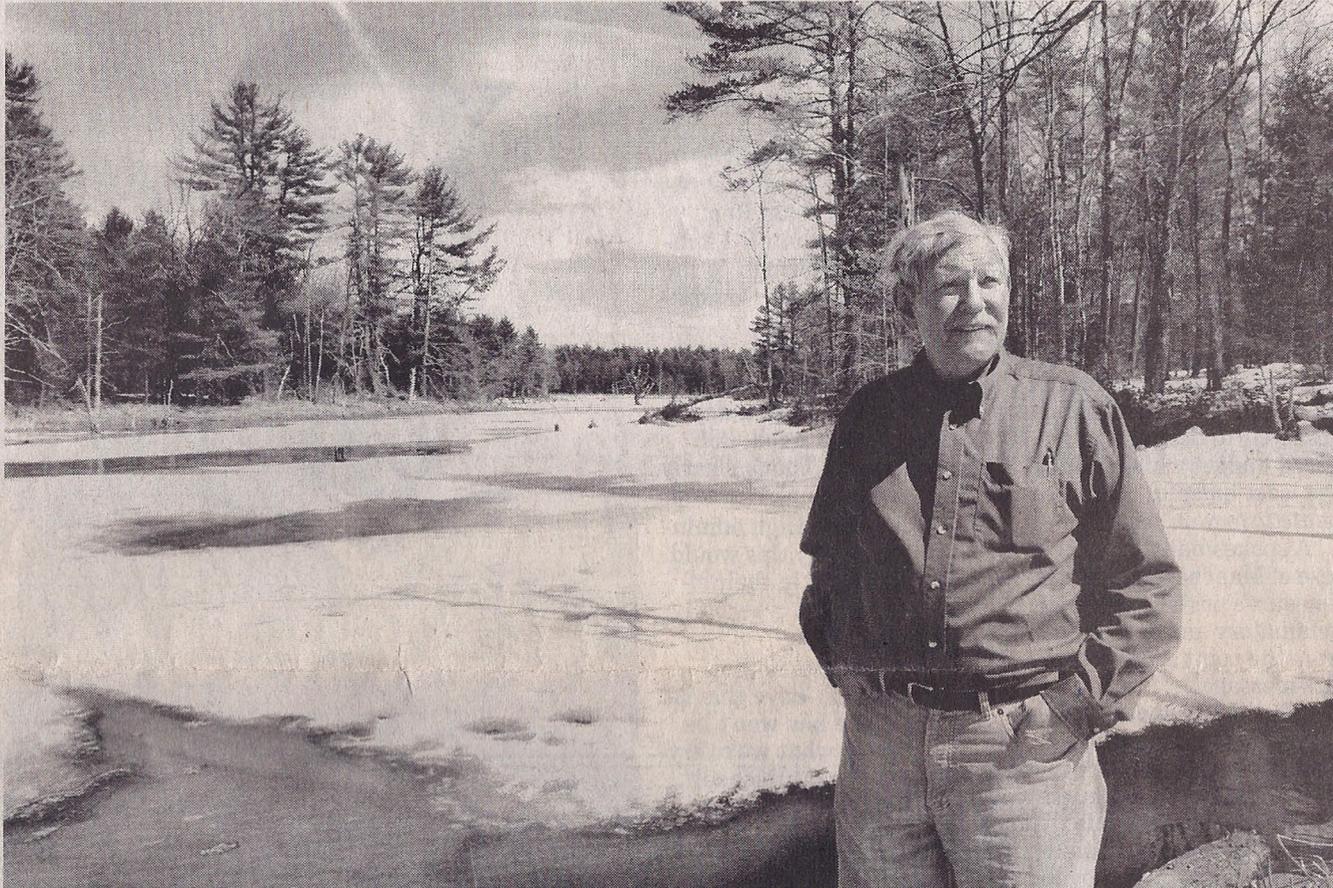
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and problems avoided.

He also helps clients conform to the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act, which limits construction and excavation activities on land near lakes, rivers and tidal waters.

"I like every single thing about it," he said. "On the nice days, we work outside; in bad weather, indoors. A wetlands scientist determines where the edges of the wetlands are. We do site evaluations. We can tell if the land is buildable or not, and where the wetlands and uplands separate. A lot of people buy land and find out too late that they can't build on it.

"People make mistakes," he said. "I help people with the Shoreland Protection Act. We try to get them out of trouble, to make sure that they meet the requirements. It could be something as simple as replanting a tree they cut down."



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At a glance

- ▶ **Name:** Carl Hagstrom
- ▶ **Age:** 66
- ▶ **Hometown:** Glen Cove, N.Y.
- ▶ **Residence:** Fitzwilliam, for 40 years.
- ▶ **Family:** Wife, Gail; five adult children; 11 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild, a second due later this year.
- ▶ **Education:** Bachelor of science, technology education, Keene State College, 1979.
- ▶ **Occupation:** Partner, Monadnock Septic Design LLC
- ▶ **Volunteer work:** Past chairman, Granite State Designers and Installers Association; chairman of the Town of Fitzwilliam Budget Committee and member of the Open Space committee.
- ▶ **Question:**
Do you work mainly in the Monadnock Region?

Hagstrom, who grew up in Glen Cove, N.Y., has always been drawn to science and education. Immediately following his high school graduation, he joined the Navy, serving as an inter-communications technician on a destroyer escort, which sailed out of Newport, R.I., to the Caribbean. Once discharged at age 21, he returned home briefly until 1965, when he accepted a position with a Nashua defense contractor, and moved to Jaffrey.

Within a few years, he married, purchased a home in Fitzwilliam and took a part-time second job with a Rindge land surveyor.

In the '70s, always juggling at least two jobs, he joined the now-defunct Honeywell Computer Co. in Peterborough; taught technical hydraulics and pneumatics at Keene High School for a few years; and enrolled in Keene State College for a degree in technology education.

In 1978, a divorced Hagstrom visited Nova Scotia where, by chance, he met his future wife, Gail.

A widow and mother of two young children, she

Wetlands scientist Carl "Skip" Hagstrom stands at the edge of a beaver pond across the road from his home in Fitzwilliam.

was on vacation with a female friend. When he left Canada, he invited the women to stop by his Fitzwilliam home on their return trip.

Surprisingly, they did, and three months later, he and Gail wed. The couple, who have been married for 33 years, have three children together.

Over the years, he continued doing site evaluation and septic design work, and advanced his education in the industry.

"Back then, because of the new rules, we followed a manual," he said. "I went to many state educational seminars and other educational programs. In 2000, I became a wetlands scientist. Today you have to take college courses, but then I showed them all the wetlands work I had done. They reviewed it and verified it and said 'I guess he knows what he's doing.'"

Always on the go, Hagstrom attends two to three continuing education events per month. He is a

former chairman and current member of the executive board of the Granite State Designers and Installers Association (GSDI), a trade association that holds monthly meetings in Concord.

He also serves on the steering committee for the state's programs for prospective septic evaluators. Besides writing the manual, he's teaching a class in May for the N.H. Septic System Certified Evaluator Program, sanctioned by the state environmental department.

Beyond that, he, with partner and son, Scott Hagstrom, regularly advocates for clients at meetings of planning boards, boards of adjustment and conservation commissions throughout the Monadnock Region, and frequently testifies in Concord on state Senate and House bills.

"We're out every day and night," he said. "We're the answer people. If someone has a question, they call us. We're in constant

communication with the state."

Hagstrom's professional life may be hectic, but he's equally committed to community service. He is chairman of the Fitzwilliam budget committee, of which he's been a member for the past 22 years; is a member of the town's open space committee, and hopes to be appointed to a pending economic development commission.

"I love it," he said. "It gives you the heart pulse of the town. I get to speak to many people who serve on other committees and commissions. I also get to talk to a lot of citizens who have concerns."

Scott Hagstrom, a designer, installer and commercial pilot, first learned the business at an early age by apprenticing with his father, whom he greatly admires.

"He's a highly educated, sympathetic guy," he said. "He genuinely looks out for homeowners, and treats other people the way he

wants to be treated. That's how it should be. With his teaching background, he's really good at what he does. He's just great to work for, and has been, ever since I was a little guy."

Ever active, Hagstrom somehow still finds time for personal recreation. Not long ago, he, with Scott, refurbished his classic 1970 BMW motorcycle. With Gail, he can be often found at live music and theater performances throughout the Monadnock Region, as well as in New York, Boston and Portsmouth. And some of his favorite times are spent with family and friends.

As for retirement plans? If you ask him, he'll tell you that he has none.

"I think we have the best of everything," he said. "We just really want to keep our health. I really enjoy being with family and extended family. But, I'm never going to retire. The day before they put me in the box will be the day of my last test pit."

■ **Answer:** "We work mainly in Cheshire County, Sullivan County and Western Hillsborough County. But, we've also worked in Portsmouth, Waterville Valley and Wentworth by the Sea. We're also certified well operators. We do water testing for the Mountain Shadow School in Dublin."

► **Question:**

You've lived in Fitzwilliam for about 40 years. Do you like the town?

■ **Answer:** "I love Fitzwilliam. It's the center of New England. If you take a compass and put it over Jaffrey and Fitzwilliam, you'll see that it really is the center of New England."

► **Question:**

What's been most important to you?

■ **Answer:** "Raising a family, getting everybody up on their feet."

► **Question:**

Scott's not only your partner, but your son. Is it easy to work together?

■ **Answer:** "Yes. We think the same. We're constantly bouncing ideas back and forth."