

The Strafford Rivers Conservancy and the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire are merging!

The Strafford Rivers Conservancy and the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire are pleased to announce their merger into a unified land trust covering southeastern New Hampshire and the coastal watershed of Great Bay.



*The unified organization will remain named **Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire** and carry on the mission of both organizations: protecting land and conserving natural resources throughout southeastern New Hampshire.*

The merger will create a stronger organization from two already successful groups that share similar priorities and values related to land protection in greater Strafford County and Rockingham County.



To our devoted members,

Putting down on paper the details of our proposed merger with the Southeast Land Trust signals once and for all that this is real and the deal is (mostly) done. So the writing of this letter is bittersweet. In a few short months, there will be no more Strafford Rivers Conservancy as we all have known it: that proverbial "little-engine-that-could" grassroots non-profit that chugged steadfastly along for 25 years, powered primarily by volunteers putting in super-human chunks of time to keep the machine running. It was a sweet thing to watch, and be part of. And more than 4,000 acres of protected land in Strafford County came out of those years.

But the time has come for the little engine to pull into the station and couple itself to the new-era bullet train. Suffice it to say, with the departure at the end of 2013 of long-time Executive Director Anna Boudreau came a unique opportunity to evaluate our organization and make a decision about its future. That's when Brian Hart, Executive Director of the Southeast Land Trust, approached us with this great idea. After discussions that lasted the better part of the winter, both organizations decided a merger would be in the best interest of *land conservation in the southeastern New Hampshire*.

See those italics? The italics are there to emphasize that it is not the two organizations that are benefiting from this merger or that there is a comparison to be made between big vs. small, flush vs. poor or well-staffed vs. skeleton crew. Because ultimately this is not about any of those things but is about, instead, the preservation of open space – and how best to go about this – in southeast NH.

For all the reasons explained to you later in this document, we are ecstatic about this merger. My most important task with this letter, however, is not to bore you with details but to encourage you all to support the new, stronger organization that will come out of it. From the very beginning of this process, we SRC people have been endlessly and regularly awed by the professionalism, warmth and capability of the Southeast Land Trust Board of Directors and staff. As the months have passed, our confidence has grown exponentially that our people and our easements are going to a better place. And we are working hard to ensure that Strafford County's conservation needs will continue to be met in a big way with the new organization that will be born this coming fall. Members of our Lands Committee have identified important properties in Strafford County that the new organization will pursue. More than half of SRC Board members will serve on the board of the new organization. The Ashton Hallett Conservation Award will continue to be given out each year to recognize outstanding efforts on behalf of conservation in Strafford County.

In short, what will come from this is a better, stronger Strafford County world of conservation. We hope you will join us in continuing this important work: renew your membership in the new Southeast Land Trust this Fall; volunteer on a committee; attend outreach and fundraising events. We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Warmly,

Sam Reid, *President*

About the Strafford Rivers Conservancy

The Strafford Rivers Conservancy is a non-profit land trust dedicated to protecting and conserving the natural resources, beauty and character of the land throughout the Strafford County region of New Hampshire. The Conservancy achieves its mission through the promotion and acceptance of conservation easements, education, and the acquisition and stewardship of land. Since 1989, the Strafford Rivers Conservancy has worked closely with all sectors of the community including public agencies, willing landowners, businesses and other non-profit organizations to preserve our region's special landscapes to benefit current and future generations to come. For more information, visit www.straffordriversconservancy.org.





Dear Friends,

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I want to convey to you our delight that the Boards of both the Southeast Land Trust and the Strafford Rivers Conservancy have agreed to merge the two organizations. The merger will create a stronger organization from two already successful groups that share the same priorities and values related to land protection in Strafford and Rockingham Counties.

The merger of Strafford Rivers Conservancy into the Southeast Land Trust began as an idea that, first shared between the two organizations, generated mutual enthusiasm and seemed to require little thought: combine the forces of two land trusts working in immediately adjacent regions, reduce necessary overhead, and better serve landowners and supporters. That said, we established a Southeast Land Trust merger committee and charged the merger committee members to meet regularly with their Strafford Rivers Conservancy peers. Over the past seven months the merger committees discussed, identified and resolved important issues related to combining the two organizations. I am pleased to report to you that the deliberate approaches taken during the merger negotiations in the areas of governance, program and land protection will indeed result in one very strong and influential regional land trust moving forward.

The merger is consistent with the core elements of the Southeast Land Trust strategic plan that many of you had a hand in shaping: strategic land protection relevant to the people in the region; increased impact through broader and deeper relationships with communities and people; and perpetual stewardship of the lands we protect. Indeed, the merger creates one organization working to protect agricultural, forest, wildlife and water resources within 99 percent of the Great Bay Watershed in New Hampshire.

The Southeast Land Trust is a strong organization in a good financial position and will benefit significantly from economies of scale. The new Southeast Land Trust will continue to be led by current Executive Director Brian Hart.

The newly merged Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire is a significant yet logical consequence of volunteer land protection in two adjacent regions over the past 30 years and will maximize the future conservation and stewardship efforts in which you will have a hand in supporting. A combined membership will better serve all of you who care so deeply about land protection in our region. We are grateful for the consistent and generous support from all of you who make the work of the Southeast Land Trust possible. I welcome your feedback and comments.

Enthusiastically,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Roger W. Stephenson".

Roger W. Stephenson, *President of the Board*

About the Southeast Land Trust

The Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire was originally established by concerned citizens as the Rockingham Land Trust in 1980. In 2006, the Rockingham Land Trust and the Seacoast Land Trust merged to become the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire. The Trust's mission is to protect and sustain the significant lands in our community for clean water, fresh food, outdoor recreation, healthy forests, and wildlife. In 2013, the Southeast Land Trust achieved the distinction of accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, demonstrating it meets the high ethical and legal standards of the land trust community. The organization has conserved more than 150 properties totaling in excess of 9,300 acres of land through conservation easements and ownerships. For more information, please visit www.seltnh.org.



Questions and Answers regarding the Merger of the Strafford Rivers

Why are the two organizations merging?

The Boards of both organizations believe that the unification of the organizations will result in many benefits to the people and communities we serve.

- **Better effectuate our mission of land conservation:** The natural resources and lands that we strive to protect cross the political boundaries of our towns and counties. Envisioning our service area as the greater Coastal Watershed, which encompasses 99% of the Great Bay watershed and surrounding lands, allows us to look beyond these political boundaries and work on a broader landscape scale that is more meaningful in the long-term. We also believe that a cohesive organization representing more than 30% of the state's population in two large and growing counties will strengthen the voice of conservation in the area.
- **More efficiently use limited resources:** The merged organization will gain efficiencies in administration by eliminating or consolidating duplicative administrative overhead (office space, phone, website, and certain staff functions) and allocating those savings to our core programs. In fact, the merger will allow for the hiring of two additional professional staff, critical to our ability to implement our mission. Specifically, in the fall of 2014, a new full-time land protection agent will be hired. In 2015, the organization intends to hire a full-time easement stewardship staff person to monitor and steward existing and new conservation easements.
- **Strengthen our capacity to fulfill obligations of stewardship in perpetuity:** Conservation is for the long haul, and the Boards believe that combined, the organization will better monitor and steward our conservation interests. The unified organization can better withstand potential legal actions by having greater resources available than would be otherwise available to each organization individually.
- **Better for donors:** Finally, we believe the merger will be better for you, our supporters. A combined organization will be stronger than two separate organizations pursuing the same funding sources. It will ease potential donor and funder confusion about the two organizations.

How did the merger come about?

Changes in an organization's leadership often offer an opportunity to evaluate the future of a non-profit. In December 2013, merger discussions were initiated after the departure of Strafford Rivers Conservancy's long-time Executive Director Anna Boudreau. After initial informal discussions, the Boards

of both organizations appointed representatives to a merger negotiation committee, who with professional facilitation from Alice Chamberlin, evaluated the benefits and risks of a merger. By April, the merger negotiation committee presented its recommendation to merge for consideration by the Boards. The Boards of both organizations separately voted in April to accept the committee's recommendation to merge and began planning for the formal implementation.

What will be the name of the merged organization?

The unified organization will be named the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire. The merger negotiation committee considered potential name changes; ultimately, the Boards determined that the name Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire accurately represents the service area and purpose of the organization, and that changing the name would cause unnecessary expense and potential donor confusion with limited short or long-term benefits.

Where will the land trust office be?

The merged organization will operate out of the existing offices of the Southeast Land Trust in downtown Exeter. To reduce operating expenses, the current offices of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy in Dover will be closed this fall. Long-term, the organization is evaluating potential new locations that are more centrally located within the new service area.

How will this merger affect land protection?

Our sincere hope and belief is that the combined resources of the two organizations will conserve more land in Rockingham County and Strafford County. Additional staffing and financial resources of the unified organization will increase the pace and quality of conservation in the entire region. In summary, we believe that unifying these two organizations will strengthen the strategic direction of land protection within southeast New Hampshire and better serve the individuals, landowners, and communities who will be able to rely on one regional land trust.

Where will the new Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire focus its land protection efforts?

The Southeast Land Trust currently has extensive land protection criteria that guide the evaluation and prioritization of potential projects under consideration by staff and the Land Protection Committee. These criteria focus on farmland, drinking water, wildlife habitat, wetlands, connectivity to other protected lands, and forestland. Beyond the evaluation of specific projects, this year the organization is drafting a comprehensive land protection plan for its work over the 2015–2018 period. This plan will evaluate existing conservation plans created by local, state, and



Echinacea (purple coneflower) growing wild on the Strafford Rivers Conservancy's Ford easement in Lee.

PHOTO CREDIT: LINDA MCCIVERN

Conservancy and Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire

federal agencies and organizations to identify the core focus areas for our proactive conservation work. These priority areas will be located throughout the service area, including Strafford County and Rockingham County. The plan will be available on our website in early 2015 for your review.

What happens to the existing conservation easements and lands of both organizations?

All existing conservation easements held by and lands owned by the Strafford Rivers Conservancy will be transferred to the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire. The deed restrictions, use limitations, and reserved rights listed in each specific easement or deed will remain unchanged, and the lands under the control of both organizations, whether through ownership or easement, will remain protected in perpetuity. At the time of the merger, the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire will be responsible for the stewardship and protection of more than 12,000 acres throughout the region.

What happens to my membership in the Strafford Rivers Conservancy or Southeast Land Trust of NH?

Current members of both organizations will automatically become members of the unified organization. The Southeast Land Trust has a fixed annual membership cycle (July 1 to June 30). This approach saves postage and printing costs, reduces the need for multiple mailings, and allows better forecasting of membership contributions for the year. If your membership in either organization is up for renewal, please visit www.seltnh.org and renew online. Beginning this autumn, members of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy will begin to receive communications directly from the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, including our quarterly newsletter *This Land*.

Will the organization remain accredited with the Land Trust Accreditation Commission?

Yes. Upon application for renewal of our accredited status in 2017, we will need to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards for all projects of the organization, including the Strafford Rivers Conservancy's existing portfolio of completed easements and ownerships. The scope of this work is understood and will be completed over the next three years.

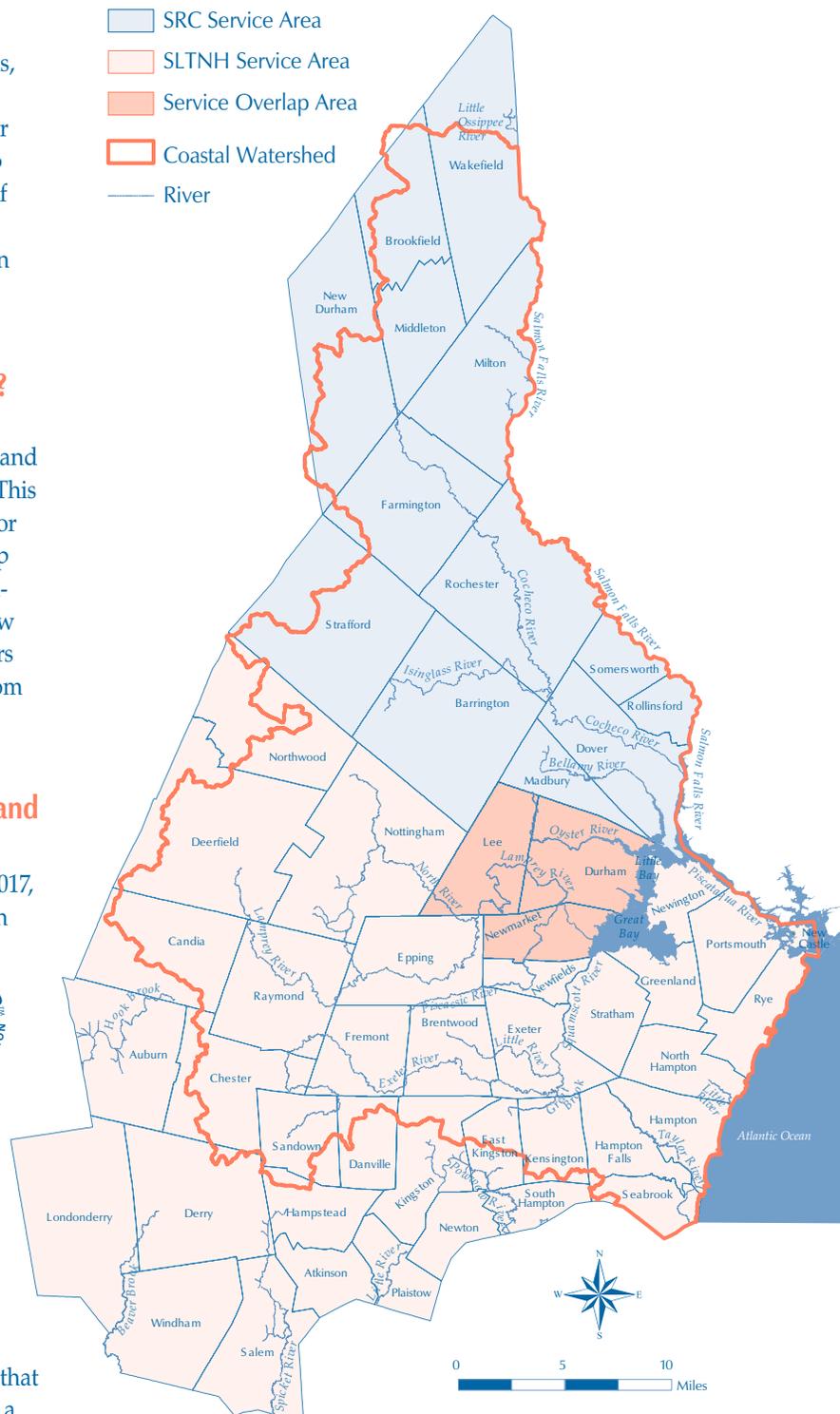


Will the Ashton Hallett award continue? Will the Jack Heath award continue?

Both organizations have a long tradition of recognizing their founding members, Ashton Hallett of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy and Jack Heath of the Rockingham Land Trust, through an annual award for conservation leadership in their respective county. The Boards have agreed that this tradition will continue with awards presented annually to a recipient from Strafford County and Rockingham County.

What will be the geographic coverage of the merged organization?

The Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire will work within the same communities currently served by each organization. This area includes 52 communities within southeastern New Hampshire and 99% of New Hampshire's portion of the coastal watershed of Great Bay.





Who will be the staff?

The current staff of the Southeast Land Trust will continue to work for the unified organization:

Brian Hart will continue as the Executive Director. He has worked for the Southeast Land Trust and its predecessor Rockingham Land Trust since October of 2002. Brian lives in Newmarket with his wife and two young children, where he has served as a member of the Town Council, Budget Committee, and Community Development Corporation.

Deborah Goard will continue as the Easement Stewardship Manager and will have primary responsibility for the stewardship of the merged organization's 160+ conservation easements. She will also assist efforts to complete new land conservation projects. Debbie previously worked as the Strafford County Forester and lives in Dover with her family.

Duane Hyde will remain as Land Protection Director. Duane came to the Southeast Land Trust in 2013 after working for nearly 13 years at the NH Chapter of The Nature Conservancy where he most recently served as the Director of Conservation Programs and the acquisition agent for the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. Duane lives in Durham with his wife, two school age daughters and aging black Labrador retriever.

Phil Auger is the Property Manager for the Southeast Land Trust and assists with land conservation projects. Phil is a licensed forester and for many years worked for UNH Cooperative Extension as a County Forester and Land Conservation Educator in Rockingham County. He and his wife Carolyn and dog Teak live in Strafford on land that they have permanently conserved.

David Viale has worked for the Southeast Land Trust since 2008 as a Land Protection and Stewardship Specialist. He is responsible for completing new land protection projects and supporting the monitoring and stewardship of existing protected lands, including both conservation easements and fee ownerships. Outside of work you'll find David playing his mandolin, attending Bluegrass festivals, and playing in a vintage baseball league.

Isabel Aley is the Office Manager and Outreach Coordinator. Born and raised in Midcoast Maine, Isabel has always held a deep appreciation for the natural beauty of New England. She graduated from Bates College, where she majored in English and Environmental Studies. Prior to joining the Land Trust, Isabel worked for Portland Trails, an urban trail-building organization, and The Sunrise Guide, a sustainable living resource guide in Maine. Out of the office, you can find Isabel exploring the great outdoors with her husband and two dogs.

Zoe Aldag is the Development Assistant at the Southeast Land Trust. She graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Conservation Studies. Zoe has interned with the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, BLH Writing Solutions, and the NH Department of Environmental Services. In her spare time she enjoys cooking, riding her bike, traveling, and enjoying all the area has to offer. Zoe is from Lee, and lives in Portsmouth.

For various reasons, the existing staff of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy will not continue as staff members of the merged organization.

Linda McGivern, who graciously agreed to step in as interim executive director on a temporary basis, will join the Board of the merged organization. **Kam Damtoft** currently serves as Membership & Outreach Coordinator. While Kam will not be continuing in this role with the merged organization, she is thrilled with the merger and has volunteered to help celebrate it as a member of the Fall Foliage Fundraiser committee. **Sara Callaghan** temporarily rejoined this spring to support easement monitoring during the transitional period of the merger. She previously had left in December for the birth of her second child and planned to be a stay-at-home mom with her two young children. She will be leaving her position when the merger is implemented. Coincidentally, she is married to the Southeast Land Trust's Executive Director, Brian Hart.

As previously described, additional positions of a Land Protection Specialist and an Easement Monitor will be hired in 2014 and 2015.

*Celebrate
the Merger!*

at the 2014 Fall Foliage Fundraiser

Please save the date of October 24, 2014, for the Fall Foliage Fundraiser in Portsmouth.

This annual party will celebrate the merger of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy and Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire with the theme "A Watershed Moment"! An invitation will arrive in your mail in late September.

Who will be the Board of Directors?

The Board will range between 15 and 21 members in size and initially start with 20 members representing both organizations. As part of the merger negotiation, Board members from each organization were asked to indicate if they wanted to continue serving. Long-time Strafford Rivers Conservancy Board members Nancy Carmer, Steve Dibble, Bruce Kerr, and Alex Roberts have decided to retire from the Board at the time of the merger. Southeast Land Trust Board members Dick Wollmar, Betsy Sanders, and Hunter Brownlie also decided to retire, effective this past June. We thank them all for their tremendous efforts and dedication!

The merged Board will include the following Strafford Rivers Conservancy Directors:

Kevin McEneaney (Dover)
Linda McGivern (Rollinsford)
Sam Reid (Dover)
Laurie Smith (Durham)
Ann Welsh (Durham)

and the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire Directors:

Don Briselden (Exeter)	David Kirkpatrick (Portsmouth)
William Campbell (Exeter)	Scott Marion (Rye)
Emma Carcagno (Newmarket)	Robin Najjar (Portsmouth)
Thomas Chamberlin (Exeter)	Joan Pratt (Exeter)
Terrence Coyle (Portsmouth)	Rick Russman (Kingston)
Anne de Cossy (Hampton Falls)	Ann Smith (Kensington)
Robert Eaton (Rye)	Roger Stephenson (Stratham)
Diane Forsyth (Rye)	

Who will be the officers of the new Board?

Upon the merger of the organizations, Roger Stephenson will continue as President and Terry Coyle will continue as Vice President of the Southeast Land Trust. Sam Reid, the current President of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy, will serve as Secretary. Ann Smith will continue as Treasurer of the unified organization.



Questions, Comments, Concerns?

We recognize that this is a significant change for supporters of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy and the Southeast Land Trust, and we welcome any comments, questions, or concerns you may have. Please stay in touch!

What is the financial status of the new organization?

Heading into the merger, both organizations are in strong financial shape. Consequently, the Southeast Land Trust will continue to be in an excellent position, both financially and organizationally, to achieve our continuing mission of open space protection throughout the region. The *2013 Annual Report* of the Southeast Land Trust can be downloaded at its website or requested by calling the office at 603.778.6088 or e-mailing info@seltnh.org. The audited 2013 Financial Statements of the Southeast Land Trust are available at request by contacting Brian Hart, Executive Director, at 603.778.6088.

How are the expenses of the merger being covered?

We are deeply grateful to the Thomas W. Haas Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for providing the necessary funding to fully cover the costs of the merger, including staff time. Your membership dues and contributions will not be paying for the costs of the merger and will remain focused on our shared land protection goals.

When will the merger become fully implemented and effective?

While a specific date has not been determined, the groups are proceeding this summer with the due diligence involved in the merger and expect the merger to be consummated in the fall of 2014.

Please visit www.seltnh.org for updates.

Cover photo credits

Clockwise from top left: Stonehouse Pond in Barrington was conserved by the Trust for Public Land, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Strafford Rivers Conservancy. Now owned by the Strafford Rivers Conservancy, it is enjoyed by thousands of visitors a year for fly fishing, rock climbing, and hiking. PHOTO CREDIT: JERRY AND MARCY MONKMAN

A view of the pond at the Tucker & French Family Forest in Kingston, owned by the Southeast Land Trust. PHOTO CREDIT: JOSH LENT

Strafford Rivers Conservancy board members Kevin McEneaney, Sam Reid and Nancy Carmer work to spot the bald eagle nest on the Three Rivers Farm easement in Dover, NH. Also pictured are owners of the abutting property, Orly and Avishai Shachar. PHOTO CREDIT: LINDA MCGIVERN

Left: The Oyster River. PHOTO CREDIT: JERRY AND MARCY MONKMAN

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Exciting Land Trust News!

The Strafford Rivers Conservancy and the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire are pleased to announce their merger into a unified land trust covering southeastern New Hampshire and the coastal watershed of Great Bay.

What others are saying about the Merger

"We value collaboration to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of nonprofits, and are pleased to provide funding for the Southeast Land Trust merger in partnership with Tom Haas through his donor advised fund at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. As the only land trust focused solely on New Hampshire's coastal watershed, the newly combined organization has the potential to improve the quality of life for generations to come."

Katie Merrow, Vice President of Community Impact, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation

"For years the Land Trust Alliance has been working nationally to help local land trusts accelerate the pace, improve the quality, and ensure the permanence of land conservation. This merger of two successful land trusts has all the hallmarks of doing just that. The merger allows more donor dollars to be spent on conservation – protecting more land, more quickly. The accredited status of the Southeast Land Trust will sustain the quality of its work. The daunting promise of conservation – perpetuity – can better be defended and advanced by one organization with greater human and financial resources. And finally, the unified Southeast Land Trust can better meet the evolving community goals of the greater coastal watershed of New Hampshire, one of the state's most rapidly growing regions."

Rand Wentworth, President, Land Trust Alliance



Please open for exciting news on the future of land conservation in southeastern New Hampshire.



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