



THIS LAND

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

525+ Acres Conserved Along *Wild & Scenic* Lamprey River

As this newsletter goes to press, the Southeast Land Trust is completing the conservation and acquisition of over 525 acres of forestland and wetlands along the federally-designated *Wild & Scenic* Lamprey River. These lands, to be conveyed to the Land Trust subject to a conservation easement held by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, will create the Land Trust's second largest ownership and represent the culmination of over two years of work.

Located in Epping, the land falls within a conservation focus area identified in 2005 by the Southeast Land Trust as a top priority for our work (*see map on page 7*). The property represents the highest co-occurrence of natural resource values within the area, with significant wetland resources, including more than 350 acres of diverse wetlands that include streams, extensive vernal pools, Red Maple floodplain forest, Black gum basin swamp, pitch pine-heath swamp, and over 3,200 feet of frontage on the Lamprey River. In addition, the acquisition includes over 150 acres of upland hemlock-hardwood-pine forest.

The property, owned by NH Public Golf Courses, Inc., was – as you guessed – considered at one time as a potential site for an extensive golf course and related residential and commercial development. However, its location on the Lamprey River and proximity to thousands of acres of conservation land in Epping, Exeter,

and Newfields conserved by the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, made its protection a top priority for local, regional, and state conservation organizations. Its protection will help connect a vast corridor of conservation land stretching to the Piscassic Ice Pond in Newfields. Where the soils and site conditions are appropriate, public access opportunities will be provided for passive outdoor recreation including hiking, skiing, fishing, and hunting.

“Because of the many public benefits, this land was a conservation priority both regionally and statewide,” notes David Viale, Land Protection & Stewardship Specialist with the Land Trust. “Conserving this land will help protect the water quality of the Lamprey River, preserve critical wildlife habitat, and ensure that large blocks of open space will remain undeveloped and available for passive recreation and enjoyment by the public.”

In 2008, with landowner permission, several conservation groups met to discuss how they might work together to conserve the parcel. The diverse wetland habitat and the property's restoration needs made the property a good candidate for funding from the federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The WRP is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity

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A heron rookery is one of the many wildlife features on the Friel Forest in Epping.
PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE SPELTZ, SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FORESTS.



Conservation Updates

Candia

As of the printing of this issue of *This Land*, the Southeast Land Trust has conserved more than 7,150 acres since 1980. One of our more recent projects has been our first-ever property in Candia. We partnered with the Town to acquire a conservation easement on 27 acres of forestland, owned by Walter and Patricia Rand. Using funds from its Conservation Fund, the Town paid \$70,000, the appraised value, for the acquisition of the easement and holds an executory interest. An executory interest allows the Town to enforce the easement should the Land Trust fail to do so. "Pat and I are pleased that we were able to do something that we feel is good for the town by protecting the open space on our property forever," explained Mr. Rand. The property, located between High Street and Baker Road in Candia, lies in the heart of a large unfragmented block of forestland. This block is over 3,000 acres in size and has been identified as a "supporting landscape" for critical wildlife habitat by the *New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)*. We hope it is the first of many projects in that area.

Epping and Raymond

November saw the completion of the Land Trust's purchase of a 158-acre property on the Pawtuckaway River in Epping and Raymond. Funding for this purchase was provided by grants from the Open Space Institute's Saving New England Wildlife, North American

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New England Cottontail Rabbits in New Hampshire

by Emma Carcagno, UNH Cooperative Extension

Despite the rabbit's reputation for prolific breeding, the New England cottontail is being considered for federal protection under the Endangered Species Act, and is currently listed as an endangered species in New Hampshire. The species has shown a sharp decline in population due primarily to habitat loss and fragmentation. The New England cottontail has very specific habitat needs, relying on dense, shrubby thickets for protection from predators. These habitats are often referred to as early-successional habitats, and are used by over 100 different species of wildlife including summer-breeding warblers, reptiles and amphibians, ruffed grouse, American woodcock, and white-tailed deer.

In New Hampshire, the decades following the large-scale abandonment of farmlands (1900s-1960s) were a time when early-successional habitat was relatively abundant. Over time, these habitats have naturally aged and reverted to mature forests that are no longer suitable habitat for the rabbit and other species that rely on dense, shrubby cover. As New Hampshire's human population continues to grow, other suitable habitats have either been lost or fragmented by development into parcels that are too small to support New England cottontails.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is taking action to create habitat for the New England cottontail with funds provided through the State Wildlife Grants Program. The multi-year effort to create hundreds of acres of the dense, shrubby thickets required by New England cottontails began last winter on four properties owned by the Department in the Seacoast region.

The management work being done in New Hampshire is part of a larger multi-agency collaboration throughout the New England cottontail's range, which includes Maine, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. State and Federal agencies are partnering with other conservation groups and non-profit organizations throughout New England to arrest the species' precipitous decline.



The New England Cottontail.
COURTESY OF US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

In addition to the work being done on state lands, the survival of this species depends on the cooperation of private landowners who are willing to create and maintain early-successional habitats on their land. There is both financial and technical assistance available to landowners who are interested in managing their property for New England cottontails. If you live in the Seacoast or Merrimack Valley regions and are interested in managing your property for early-successional species, contact Emma Carcagno, emma.carcagno@unh.edu. ■

Scamman Farm: Conserved Forever

This January, the Southeast Land Trust and Town of Stratham completed a two-year process of purchasing two conservation easements on the 206-acre Scamman Farm. The Scamman Farm is a highly scenic farm located on Route 108 in the heart of Stratham, with productive farm soils and important wildlife habitat.

This partnership achieved the shared goals of the landowner, the Town of Stratham, and the Southeast Land Trust. For the Scammans, the conservation easements allow the land to remain in family ownership, to be a working farm, and to honor the long agricultural legacy of the Scamman family.

"Wherever I go in this world I know this land will be open forever," said Doug Scamman, owner of the farm. The Scamman family has been farming in America for 13 generations, and originally bought the Stratham land in 1946. Doug took over farming the land about 40 years ago. Over the years the farm has supported a variety of agricultural enterprises, including cows, chickens, and crops.

For the Town of Stratham and its citizens, the protection of the Scamman Farm captures the spirit of the Town's Open Space Bond, passed back in 2002. Many may remember that the Town Meeting's overwhelming support of the proposed bond made this possible. In fact, many thought of the Scamman Farm as the most crucial Stratham landscape to be protected by the bond.

"[The Scamman Farm] is an iconic part of Stratham history," noted David Canada, chairman of the Board of Selectmen. "If you think of Stratham, you think of farming."

And for the Southeast Land Trust, the preservation of Scamman Farm continues its commitment to conserving the special places of Rockingham County, places that provide local food, clean water, wildlife habitat, and nearby recreational opportunities.

The Scamman family remains the owner of this land. They are free to sell it and use it in ways consistent with the easement. The Land Trust and the Town hold the conservation easements on the property and have distinct roles in ensuring that the owners manage and use the land consistent with the restrictions. These restrictions prevent future residential or commercial development, the subdivision of the land, or other uses that would degrade the natural resource values, such as mining. The Land Trust will annually visit the property, observe its condition and uses, report its findings to the Town, and if necessary, enforce its

provisions. The Land Trust is, in essence, protecting the substantial investment made by Stratham.

The easements include provisions that ensure public access for outdoor activities like hiking, cross-country skiing, and hunting. As may be expected with a working farm, the public's access is subject to sensible limitations, including the ability of the landowners to prohibit access during the agricultural growing season or during a timber harvest, so as to protect the hayfields, crops, and the safety of visitors. If you are interested in visiting the property, please respect any signs limiting access and do not walk across plowed or planted fields. More information is posted at the Stratham Town Hall and www.seltnh.org.

Second, the Scammans have granted groundwater withdrawal rights to the Town, allowing the Town the ability to pursue a public water supply system. The easement provides guidance to ensure that this right won't impact the farm or the key natural resources of the land.

Funding for the purchase of this valuable conservation easement was provided by the Town of Stratham and a \$950,000 grant from the U.S. Farm and Ranchland Protection Program through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. ■



Now protected, the Scamman Farm's landscape of hay, corn, and pumpkins will forever be available for farming, the woods for forestry and hiking, and wetlands for clean water and wildlife habitat. This year the farm grew more than 100 tons of pumpkins, selling many directly to local residents.

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Conservation Updates continued

Wetlands Conservation Act, and Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, as well as private gifts. Coupled with past and pending acquisitions along this pristine tributary to the Lamprey River, the Land Trust hopes to establish the Pawtuckaway River Reservation for wildlife, outdoor recreation, clean water, and sustainable forestry. To date, the Land Trust owns 250 acres along the river and has an additional 60 under agreement. Look for an update in the next issue!

Kingston and East Kingston
In late December, Land Trust Board member Rick Russman donated an easement on 11.49 acres of fields in Kingston and East Kingston. His land was adjacent to forestland and wetlands that Rick conserved through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The fields were not included in the Wetlands Reserve Program to ensure that they could be used for active agriculture in the future. Tilling is prohibited on conservation easements acquired through WRP.

GET *Out & About*

Mid-Winter Snowshoe at the Tucker and French Family Forests

Saturday, February 19 • 9a.m.–noon

Join us for a fun snowshoe/winter walk to explore the now protected 193-acre Tucker Forest and 370-acre French Family Forests. These are two wonderful properties that the Southeast Land Trust has recently acquired. They include an historic mill site, extensive marshlands, and the Little River corridor. Our tour leaders will be members of the Friends of Kingston Open Space (FOKOS) group and staff from UNH Cooperative Extension. We'll look for signs of river otters, mink, fisher, and snow shoe hare. Bring snowshoes, binoculars, and appropriate mid-winter clothing. The walk is moderately strenuous with some small hills and uneven terrain.

Tour & Conservation Celebration at Massabesic Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary

Saturday, April 2 • 9a.m.–noon •
Auburn

Over the winter, the Southeast Land Trust and NH Audubon took successful steps to permanently protect through a conservation easement 135 acres of fields, wetlands, and forests behind the Massabesic Audubon Center in Auburn. A collaboration of partners, including the Town of Auburn, Manchester Water Works, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the State of NH's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), helped make this project possible. Now, the land resources will be managed forever for people and wildlife for recreation, open space, and wildlife habitat.

Join leaders Phil Brown (NH Audubon's Director of Land Management) and Karin Rubin (Southeast Land Trust's Conservation Land Stewardship Manager) for a natural history tour of the recently-conserved Massabesic Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary. We'll pay particular attention to the many natural spectacles of spring that can be enjoyed here, such as returning migrant songbirds, breeding amphibians, and the return of life to the forest floor and canopy. After the walk, come inside to explore the Massabesic Audubon Center and enjoy some celebratory refreshments.

Bring binoculars, water, and appropriate footwear for up to 2.5 miles of muddy trails.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Friday, April 22, 2011 • 7–9:45p.m. •
The Music Hall, Portsmouth

For more details, see next page.

Third Annual Birding Walk at the Piscassic Greenway

Saturday, May 14 (rain date May 21) •
7–10a.m. • Newfields

Join avid birdwatcher Patience Chamberlin and past President of NH Audubon's seacoast chapter Roger Stephenson for a morning of exploration in Newfields and Newmarket. The 380-acre Piscassic Greenway and Cole Farm were conserved in 2006 by the Town of Newfields and Southeast Land Trust. Featuring hardwood and softwood forests, open fields, and extensive wetlands, the land is a haven for wildlife and an important stopover for migrating birds. This will be during peak migration, so we will observe breeding plumage and behaviors of migrants and residents!

Our field trips are free unless otherwise noted, and open to the public. Registration is required. Please call 603.778.6088 or e-mail info@seltnh.org. Directions will be provided to registrants.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival Arrives on Earth Day!

Celebrate Earth Day by attending the 2011 Wild & Scenic Film Festival at The Music Hall in Portsmouth on Friday, April 22.

The festival is a collection of films from the national Wild & Scenic Film Festival, a three-day film festival focused on environmental topics. Originally created by the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) to celebrate their landmark victory in gaining "Wild & Scenic" status of 39 miles of the South Yuba River in California, the festival now aims to inspire grassroots support for local and regional environmental work.

This evening festival is a natural extension of the Southeast Land Trust's work to protect the special places that make our region such a wonderful place to live and work. We promise that through this collection of short films you will laugh, cry, and learn a little, and be inspired to act!

Tickets are \$12.50 per person and can be purchased at The Music Hall or on line at www.themusichall.org, or by calling 603.436.2400. ■



Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers are needed to make the Wild & Scenic Film Festival a smashing success. **Our hope is to sell out the 900-seat Music Hall** – but to do so we need your help in spreading the word. Here's what you can do to help:

- **Invite your friends and neighbors** to attend – make it a night out for the environment!
- Better yet – **buy a \$25 gift membership for a friend and get a free ticket** to the Festival.
- **Spread the word** through your local civic organizations, churches, and other groups: **contact us for free postcards and handbills** to distribute or visit our website for an e-notice on the film.
- **Place posters in your community:** We'll provide the posters – just contact us.
- **Attend for free by volunteering that night!** Help is needed with set up, clean up, and staffing various booths.

Contact Karen McCormack at info@seltnh.org or 603.778.6088 to volunteer.



New T-Shirt Design Available



Show your support for land conservation with our new, beautiful t-shirts. Shirts are white with a full color design on the back and the Land Trust's logo on the front. Sizes available are S, M, L, XL, and XXL. Short sleeves are \$15 each and long sleeves are \$20 each, plus \$2.00 S/H per shirt. To order, call Karen McCormack at 603.778.6088 or order directly from our website.

Board Members

Tom Chamberlin, President, Exeter
Richard Adams, Vice President, Portsmouth
Hunter Brownlie, Treasurer, Newmarket
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Robin Najar, Portsmouth
Rick Russman, Kingston
Elisabeth Sanders, Danville
Ann Smith, Kensington
Roger Stephenson, Stratham
Chad Vanderbeck, Hampton



Land Trust Applies for Accreditation

This winter the Southeast Land Trust officially initiated the accreditation process through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (LTAC). LTAC is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance and awards the accreditation seal to community institutions that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever.

Land trusts applying for accreditation submit extensive documentation and make a significant commitment of time and money to participate. In a rigorous review process, LTAC examines each application, interviews the land trust, and evaluates multiple sources of information, including comments from the public.

“Already in preparing for the accreditation application process, we have learned much and improved greatly,” explains Brian Hart, Executive Director. “The ultimate outcome of this process is not simply becoming “accredited” but of best using the limited public and private funds to have the largest conservation impact now and ensuring we can protect and steward those resources in perpetuity.”

For more information on accreditation, visit the Land Trust Accreditation Commission website at www.landtrustaccreditation.org.

Trail Improvements at Piscassic Greenway Underway

The Piscassic Greenway in Newfields is getting a facelift with improved trails, new bridges, and a culvert, all to make enjoying this property easier. This past fall the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) led a great crew of volunteers on the fall United Way Day of Caring to install approximately 500 feet of bog bridging on the Cole Farm in order to elevate the walking trail above wet spots. A separate crew helped pull invasive plants in the open fields.

Earlier in the year, Altus Engineering generously helped design a new open bottom culvert for the main access between the two fields at Cole Farm. The culvert replaced a failed culvert and was designed to allow wildlife to traverse the stream safely and to deal with 100-year floods.

Finally, the trail crew from AMC came back in November to build a new walking and mountain biking trail and bridge on the Piscassic Greenway. Additional work is planned for this spring and summer and a grand ‘opening’ of the improved trail system is planned for later in 2011!

Look for updates on our website. If you are interested in volunteering for a work day, please contact Karin Rubin at krubin@seltnh.org or 603.778.6088. ■

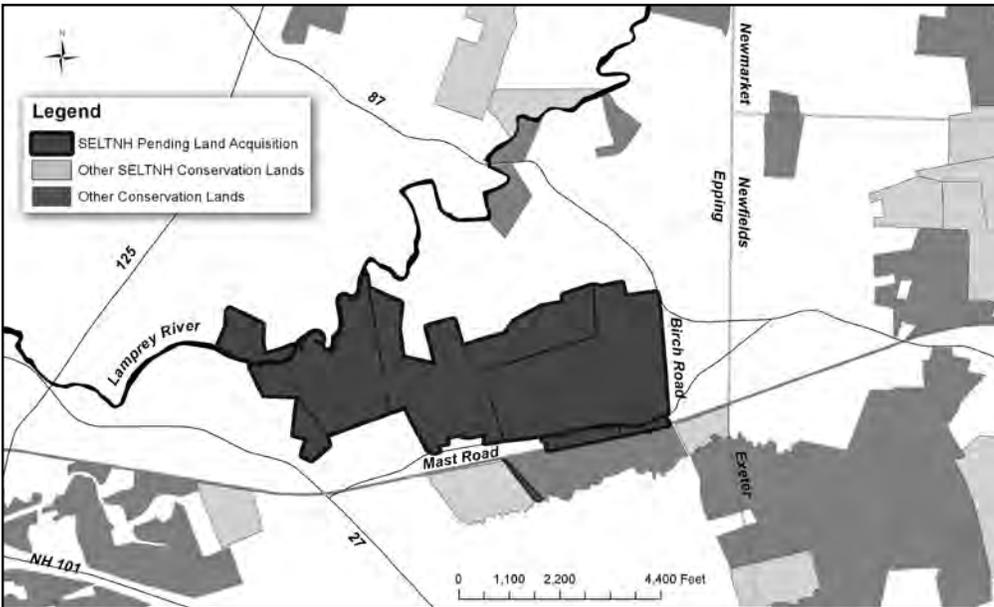


Right: Bog bridge being installed at Cole Farm.

Below: The United Way Day of Caring volunteer crew.



525+ Acres Conserved *continued from page 1*



MAP PREPARED BY THE SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST OF NH, JANUARY 2011. FEATURES AND LOCATIONS APPROXIMATE. THIS IS NOT A SURVEY PRODUCT.

to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property.

While the WRP program provided an opportunity to secure funding to purchase a conservation easement, the landowner also wished to convey the underlying fee ownership. Further, additional funds were needed to cover associated project costs and the long term management and stewardship of the land.

“The LRAC identified this parcel as one of our highest conservation priorities,” states Sharon Meeker. “Protection of this property is a major victory and we were pleased to partner with the Land Trust to make it happen.”

To secure the remaining funding, the Land Trust reached out to long-time conservation partner, the Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC), for their help. The Lamprey River Advisory Committee was formed in 1991 and serves as the local management advisory committee under the state Rivers Management and Protection Program and the federal *Wild & Scenic Rivers* program. The LRAC is comprised of appointed representatives from each of the four towns within the *Wild & Scenic River* designation (Epping,

Lee, Durham, and Newmarket), and focuses on protection of the ecological, cultural, and historic resources of the river.

LRAC had long sought the protection of the NH Public Course property, and agreed to provide key funding to match the WRP application and to support the long-term management of the property.

“The Lamprey River Advisory Committee identified this parcel as one of our highest conservation priorities,” states Sharon Meeker, chair of the LRAC land protection committee. “Protection of this property is a major victory and we were pleased to partner with the Land Trust to make it happen.”

“This new property will continue to be a focus of the Land Trust for several years, as we work to restore the property’s wetlands and reverse damage done by unauthorized users,” explains Viale. Illegal off-road vehicle use has created new trails, rutted wetlands, and damaged sensitive habitat. In addition, Birch Road, an unmaintained dirt road in Epping, has been illegally widened onto the property by users, beyond the road right of way. The Land Trust will be working with the Town and NRCS to block illegal access points, retire inappropriate trails and woods roads, and restore wetlands functions to the property. ■



Another Fantastic Fundraiser!

Last November’s Fall Foliage Fundraiser at the Discover Portsmouth Center raised \$37,000 to support the work of the Southeast Land Trust. Our volunteers outdid themselves in the time and talent they contributed and a good time was had by all! We wish to thank all of the businesses and members who supported the organization through their generous gifts of services and items, and give particularly warm thanks to our event co-sponsor, Cambridge Trust Company of New Hampshire, who underwrote the event. Plans are underway for 2011 – contact Karen McCormack at 603.778.6088 or info@seltnh.org if you would like to help out.



Eat, Play, Give

New Website Unveiled

The Southeast Land Trust is pleased to unveil our improved website! Over the past year we have worked with Exeter Internet Solutions to design a website that will offer you more of the information you are looking for and will allow the website to grow and change as needed. The address is the same – www.seltnh.org – but the look is brand-new! Find detailed information and photographs of specific properties in our “Protected Properties” section, see what events are planned, download newsletters, or find out more ways to help out.

Sign Up for E-news!

Want to save paper and postage and receive *This Land* electronically? How about get invited to local field trips and events? Sign up for our E-news – our e-mail based newsletter service. It’s free and easy – just visit our website and enter your e-mail address. ■



www.seltnh.org



Questions, Comments, Concerns?

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Friday, April 22 - The Music Hall, Portsmouth

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