



Protect Mount Molly and Expand Birch Ridge

In the heart of New Durham sits one of the cleanest lakes in the Northeast, a pristine three mile by one mile body of water carved into the forests of eastern New Hampshire. Merrymeeting Lake offers over 1,200 surface acres of crystal clear aquatic splendor, serving as the origin for the Merrymeeting River which flows all the way to Lake Winnepesaukee.

Merrymeeting Lake is flanked by thousands of acres of forested watershed, much of which remains undeveloped. Protecting the watershed is more than just preserving the incredible scenic vistas; it is a vital action to ensure that Merrymeeting Lake holds onto its crown as New Hampshire's cleanest lake.

But a 2019 study *Merrymeeting River and Lake Watershed Management Plan* found the Lake and River are at

serious risk for sustained water quality degradation as a result of potential new development in the watershed. Amongst a series of recommendations, the Plan recommends that towns collaborate with local partners, like SELT and Moose Mountains Regional Greenways, on conservation initiatives within the watershed.

Keep Merrymeeting Clean is a direct outcome of that recognition and the success of the 2018 effort to establish the Birch Ridge Community Forest: that by protecting the scenic, forested ridges ringing Merrymeeting, the water quality of the lake can be secured.

And now, with your help, we can protect an additional 1,100 acres to help ensure that Merrymeeting Lake will stay clean forever.

Guarding Water Quality through Watershed Protection

Prior to 2019, just 4% of the Merrymeeting Lake watershed was protected. Following the conservation of Birch Ridge Community Forest, that number rose to 19%. After the Protect Mount Molly and Expand Birch Ridge Community Forest projects, 29% of the watershed will be conserved forever.



Protecting Mount Molly

The Benevolent Sentinel

At 1,165 feet, Mount Molly stands guards over the northwest shore of Merrymeeting Lake. Hiking abounds at Mount Molly, as the current owner, the Collins family, has generously let others enjoy the panoramic views and the unique, natural experience Mount Molly provides.

And now they are making an even more generous offer to make this remarkable resource available to you for all time.

Inspired by the success of the Birch Ridge Community Forest and their own love of Merrymeeting Lake, the Collins family has pledged to donate 500 acres of Mount Molly to SELT. This gift includes the slopes and peaks of Mount Molly, home to four-miles of intermediate hiking trails that offer awesome views of Merrymeeting Lake and Birch Ridge.

SELT will own Mount Molly, keeping it open for public recreation. And, more importantly, it will fall into place as a critical piece of the Merrymeeting conservation puzzle.

The addition of the Stell and Young tracts to Birch Ridge will expand a swath of protected forestland while expanding recreational trail use.

Expanding Birch Ridge

The Community's Forest

The second piece of that puzzle is the expansion of Birch Ridge Community Forest. SELT is looking to purchase two parcels of land – the Stell and Young lands – from the landowners at their appraised, fair-market value and add them to the existing 2,000 conserved acres of Birch Ridge Community Forest, the foundation of the *Keep Merrymeeting Clean* initiative.

These lands will total over 640 acres (that's one square mile!) of prime forestland, including three additional miles of Corridor 22 (a critical east-west snowmobile corridor), and miles of forest roads brimming with wildlife like moose, bear, bobcat, snowshoe hare, and grouse.

One huge indicator of the value of these lands? The proposed expansion of BRCF was ranked the number three project in the country by the US Forest Service's Community Forest and Open Space Program. The result: a \$485,000 grant to jumpstart the fundraising for this expansion.

If protected, these 600+ acres will be managed as part of the Birch Ridge Community Forest, and overseen by the volunteer Community Forest Steering Committee.





Since the establishment of Birch Ridge Community Forest in 2019, the Steering Committee sought and received significant public input on the vision, goals, and uses of the Community Forest, and this August is expected to finalize a management plan that will guide public recreation, forestry, and wildlife, and water quality protection for the next 10 years. You can read a summary of the Management Plan at keepmerrymeetingclean.org.

Now Is the Time to Act

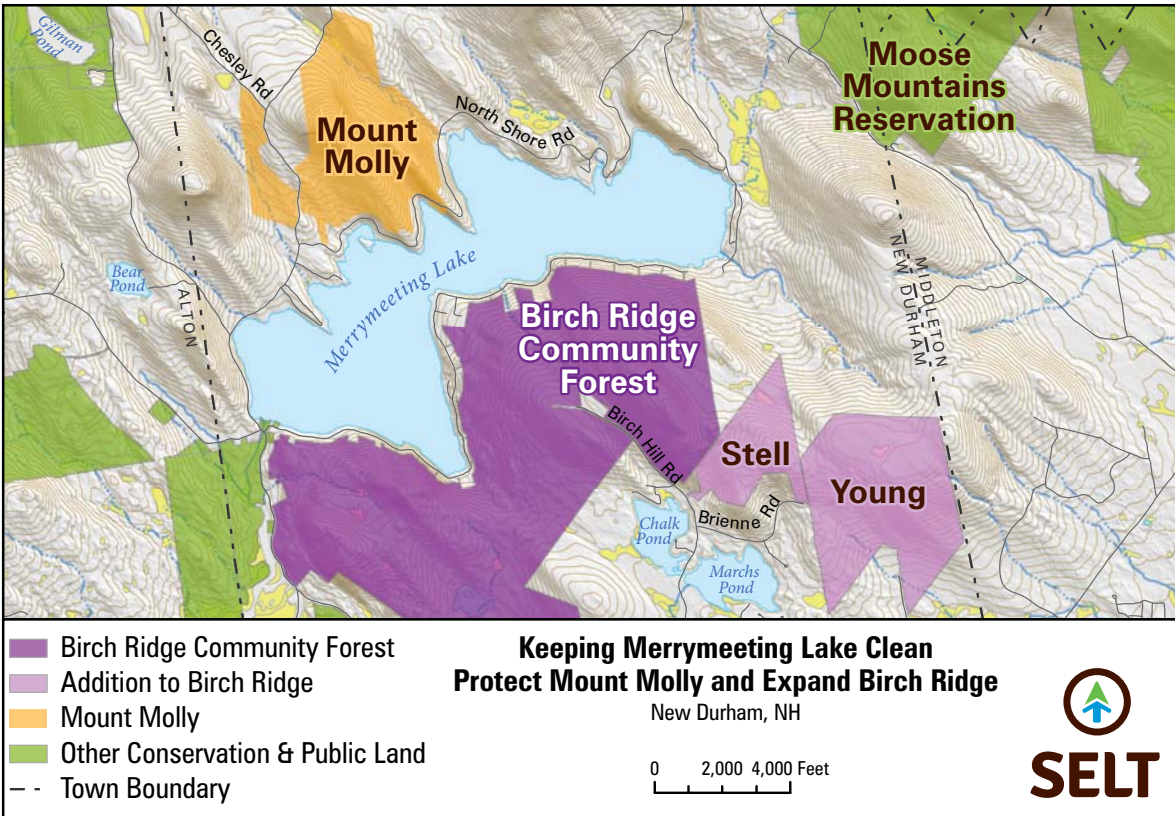
So what do we need to do? The total value of this initiative – including the cost to acquire, conserve, and steward these three remarkable properties – is \$2,250,000. Fortunately, with the Collins Family’s generous pledge of land (estimated value at \$750,000) and the USFS grant of \$485,000, more than 50% has been secured. **The \$1,015,000 that remains to be raised will primarily be secured through gifts from individuals** as additional public funding sources are limited.

And time is ticking!

In order for SELT to meet its contractual obligations to close on these properties by April 2021, **SELT must raise the remaining funds by November 1**, ensuring there is sufficient time to complete all due diligence and transaction obligations for the April 2021 closing.

Are you ready to make your impact last forever?

Call Executive Director Brian Hart at 603-778-6088 or email bhart@seltnh.org today to start a confidential conversation about how you can *Keep Merrymeeting Clean!*





Looking northwesterly, across Birch Ridge, with Merrymeeting Lake just beyond the forest.

Help ensure that Merrymeeting Lake will stay clean forever!

Ways to Give

Gifts by Check / Credit Card

One-time or monthly. Make checks payable to “SELT” with “Keep Merrymeeting Clean” in the memo field and mail to PO Box 675, Exeter, NH 03833. Or, give online at seltnh.org.

Securities

Giving stocks or mutual funds and other investment vehicles can be a smart, tax efficient way of giving. **Give us a call or have your financial advisor contact us to learn how to make such a gift to SELT.**

Distributions from IRAs

Gifts made directly to SELT can help meet your Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) while leveraging the power of your invested retirement funds. Learn more at seltnh.org/donate/planned-giving/ira-gifts/

Make a Pledge

Gifts over time through signed pledges will be accepted through 2022. To make a pledge, please contact Brian Hart, Executive Director at 603-778-6088 or bhart@seltnh.org.

Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
6 Center Street Exeter, NH 03833 603-778-6088
seltnh.org keepmerrymeetingclean.org

SELT is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization registered in the State of New Hampshire. Gifts made to SELT are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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