



IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 The H₂O Express
- 2 The Seeds of a Vision Come to Harvest: The Transformation of Burley Farms
- 3 Get Outside! Spring 2021 Outreach Events
- 5 Bubbling Up
- 6 Remembering Three Friends of SELT
- 6 The Pandemic and Our Trails
- 6 SELT Trail News Keeps You Posted
- 7 The GOAT Volunteer
- 8 The Mathey Center Matching Challenge

The H₂O Express

What does a conserved woodland have to do with what comes out of your kitchen faucet? Just about everything.

Let's close our eyes and conjure up a memory of elementary school: the gymnasium, a crush of people milling about, a buzz of excitement that mixes with the faint scents of vinegar and Magic Marker. That's right – it's Science Fair day.

As far as the eye can see: tempera-painted Styrofoam balls in orbit, papier-mache volcanoes belching out foul liquids, a handful of dirt cups, and, of course, that one kid with the working nuclear fission reactor made out of old VCR parts.

Amidst this menagerie, you can find the trusty Science Fair standby: the water cycle. Colorful posters! Cotton ball clouds! Fresh grass clippings from Aunt Hazel's front yard! Regardless of the presentation, the takeaway was always the same: few environmental processes in the natural world are as consequential as the water cycle.

And for good reason: because as we open our eyes and return to the present, we are reminded of how watersheds and evaporation and rainfall and filtration are as important as ever – and that conserving the lands that keep our drinking water drinkable is of the highest priority for SELT.

Which brings us to Auburn, NH.



Lake Massabesic's 2,500 acres sit within the borders of Auburn and Manchester, providing drinking water to Manchester, Hooksett, Auburn, Bedford, Goffstown, Derry, and Plaistow. Buttressing the lake are over 8,000 acres of watershed protection, as well as 70 miles of fire roads and hiking and biking trails. To say that Massabesic is one of the most important bodies of water in New Hampshire is not hyperbole; it is a literal life-source for over 160,000 people.

continued on page 4

Above: The sun shines through white pines on the shore of the Bellamy Reservoir in Madbury, New Hampshire.

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ECOPHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

"There are very few things in life you can leave that are permanent."

The Seeds of a Vision Come to Harvest: The Transformation of Burley Farms

In 2015, SELT took the first step into a bold new future, when we acquired the 237-acre Burley Farms in Epping, NH, a sprawling, bucolic farmland rich with history and surrounded by the majesty of nature. The vision was clear: this incredible space would become SELT's new home and a regional centerpiece celebrating people and nature.

And now, six years later, we are at the threshold of realizing that vision. It is a vision made up of three unique parts, fitting together to complete a picture of conservation and community.

First, there is Burley Farms, the landscape that supports everything. It will be a working farm – harkening back to its history – and a destination for nature-based education and outdoor recreation. Burley Farms lies nestled in an unfragmented and largely protected landscape of more than 1,000 acres along the Wild and Scenic Lamprey River, offering connections to abundant recreational opportunities and diverse wildlife habitat.

Second, The Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature will be the new headquarters for SELT. The building, to be constructed this year, will feature energy efficient design and will be powered, cooled, and heated by site-generated solar. In addition to staff offices, the Mathey Center will feature a community meeting room, tenant office space, and a base for partner programming for engagement in the surrounding farm and open spaces.

And, finally, there is the historic, 18th century John Prescott Chase Farmhouse, a stalwart building that echoes the agricultural history of Epping – and will be the future home to two workforce housing units. We envision one resident will be a farmer, once again actively cultivating the Burley Farms.

The late Nan Mathey (see *Remembering Three Friends of SELT*), a dear friend of SELT's, provided an incredible boost to this vision with a truly transformative seven-figure gift this fall. In honor of her and her late husband George's generosity and their commitment to conservation, historic preservation, and the relationship of people to nature, SELT has named the new building The Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature.

"Burley Farms will soon become the home of The Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature," said Brent Merriam, SELT Board Member and Epping resident. "This is a transformational project for SELT that will allow the organization to realize its vision of sustaining people and nature, providing endless opportunities to foster the next generation of land stewards."

Nan's amazing gift is buttressed by the generous contributions of many other donors who have contributed to date. This includes Joanie Pratt and her children Tim Pratt and Sarah Dawley, who launched the Pratt Family Fund in 2019 to honor their late husband and father, Charlie Pratt. This wildly successful matching challenge resulted in gifts from more than 100 families, generating over \$400,000. In supporting the Center, Joanie explained "[Charlie] would be very supportive of SELT's goal of 'connecting people to place' by moving our offices to this amazing 237-acre conserved property, with all of the possibilities it holds for engaging our staff, our members, and the public at large in discovering the woods, open farmlands, and pond in all seasons."

That vision is closer than ever to coming to fruition. Now, as the plans are complete and the construction crews ready to go, **SELT has only \$225,000 remaining to be raised.**

Our hope is that you, our SELTies, will invest in this vision and respond to another matching challenge to help cross the finish line! (See "Mathey Matching Challenge" for more details!)

The Mathey Center and Farmhouse are more than just buildings; they are the representation of our work to conserve land for people and nature, to share and steward the lands you love.

What's next? Construction is planned to begin early this summer. Move-in and occupancy is scheduled for March 2022, and we will all – hopefully! – gather together in June for the Grand Opening. For up-to-date information, announcements (like impacts on public access during construction), and multimedia, please visit seltnh.org/matheycenter.

Make an Impact with The Mathey Center Matching Challenge! (See page 8)

The Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature



Get Outside! Spring 2021 Outreach Events

Come get outside with us! Check out the events below and sign up at seltnh.org/events. Suggested donation is \$5 per person or \$10 per family. Please register early; our events fill quickly. Registration closes at noon the day before the event. Group sizes for field trips may be limited due to COVID-19. Read our COVID-19 Safety Policy at seltnh.org/covid19.

EVENT	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	 
APRIL			
Hosted by White Pine Programs – Guided Naturalist Walk	Join White Pine Programs’ Ryan Busby for an exploration of Piscassic Greenway. This event is in partnership with our friends at White Pine Programs: whitepineprograms.org	Piscassic Greenway, Newfields, NH	Saturday, April 17 10 AM – Noon 
Stonehouse Forest Perimeter Hike – Earth Day	Celebrate Earth Day with a hefty hike around SELT’s Stonehouse Forest.	Barrington, NH	Saturday, April 24 8 AM–Noon/1 PM   
MAY			
Kid’s Walk: Who lives in and Around the Pond?	Explore the wetlands at Burley Farms and discover the species that live around the pond.	Epping NH	Tuesday, May 4 3:30–5:30 PM 
Bird Walk at Mast Road Natural Area	The best way to learn your birds by sight and sound is with experienced birders!	Epping, NH	Friday, May 21 6–8:30 AM 
Hosted by White Pine Programs – Guided Naturalist Walk	Explore Stonehouse Pond and awaken your senses to the living landscape. This event is in partnership with our friends at White Pine Programs: whitepineprograms.org	Barrington, NH	Saturday, May 22 10 AM–Noon 
JUNE			
Hike the Barrington Trail – National Trails Day Hike	Join John Wallace for a hike on the Barrington Trail for National Trails Day.	Barrington, NH	Saturday, June 5 9–11 AM/Noon 
Clyde Farm Tour	Take a tour of Clyde Farm with SELT’s Jeremy Lougee co-hosted by farmers Kristen Klenow and Jimi Tutor!	Farmington, NH	Saturday June 12 1–3 PM 
Hosted by White Pine Programs – Guided Naturalist Walk	Join White Pine Programs’ Ryan Busby for an exploration of Burley Farms. This event is in partnership with our friends at White Pine Programs: whitepineprograms.org	Epping, NH	Saturday, June 19 10 AM–Noon 
SELT’s Virtual Conservation Celebration & Annual Meeting	SAVE THE DATE!		Wednesday, June 23 5–6 PM 

 EASY   MODERATE    STRENUOUS  TICKET REQUIRED

Generous support from the Center for Assessment makes these field trips possible. Learn more about our Get Outside sponsor at nciaa.org.



The H₂O Express continued from page 1

Conserving the Massabesic watershed, then, becomes an enormous priority, and is why when the chance to secure a conservation easement on the Sanborn property in Auburn surfaced, SELT and the Auburn Conservation Commission – who had long considered the Sanborn property a key conservation priority – leapt at the opportunity. These 220-acres that had been with the Sanborn family for six generations provide an important piece to the watershed jigsaw puzzle, highlighted by Murray Mill Brook, a Massabesic tributary that flows through the heart of the property.

“Protecting a watershed in its natural condition generates a ripple effect in nature,” said Jeremy Lougee, Conservation Project Manager and Farmland Coordinator for SELT. “The Sanborn easement will provide long-term benefits to wildlife, outdoor recreation, agriculture, forestry, scenic views, carbon sequestration – the list goes on!”

“We are thrilled,” said John O’Neil, Watershed Land and Property Manager for Manchester Water Works. “It is a great sized easement for southern New Hampshire and to have it along one of our main tributaries is fantastic.”

Robert Sanborn knew he could have pursued more lucrative paths for his highly desirable land (Auburn is, after all, one of the most rapidly developing towns in New Hampshire). But he felt the true value of his land was bound to a different future, one of drinking water protection, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation.

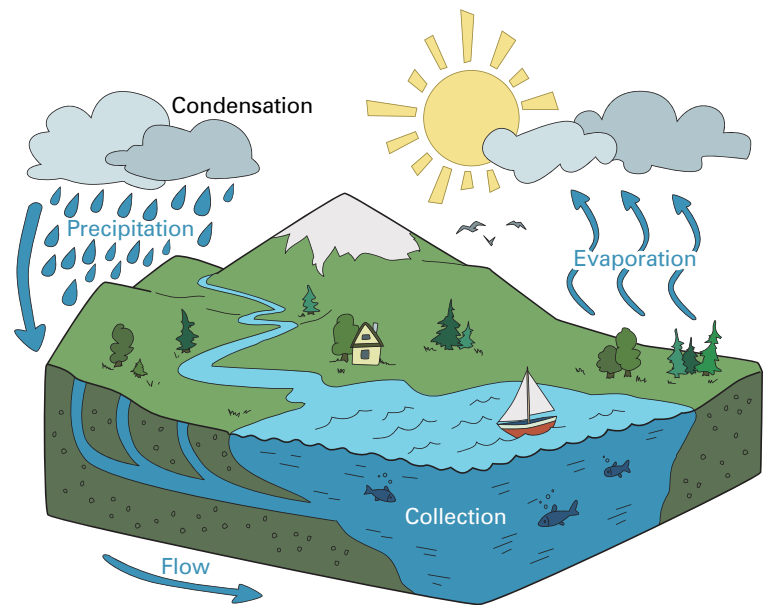
“There are very few things in life you can leave that are permanent,” he said.



Robert Sanborn points out Murray Mill Brook, which still flows under a sheen of winter ice. CREDIT: SELT STAFF

And it goes beyond a simple conservation legacy as well. There is deep-rooted family history woven into the property, a history that Robert and his wife Brenda, were unwilling to see swallowed up in a sea of cul-de-sacs. From the time it served as his grandfather’s dairy farm and Robert spent his formative years exploring the wilderness on the weekends, one memory stands out: as a young child, Robert got hopelessly lost in the sprawling woods and as a last hope he turned to Betty, the Collie with him and said “Let’s go home” and Betty promptly led him right back to the farmhouse.

The concept of a watershed is straightforward: when precipitation falls, the rainwater flows across the landscape before pouring into streams and rivers. As the rainwater snakes across the ground, it will pick up sediments and materials in its path. This “H₂O Express” will not discern among its passengers, so it is critical that what ends up getting deposited is as non-toxic as possible.



As development of these surfaces within watersheds increases, water quality is affected. Essentially: the more these areas are developed, the greater the chance water quality will be degraded (research has shown that development of over 5% of impervious surfaces can result in negatively impacted water quality).

Increased development on a watershed opens up the possibility of rainwater picking up chemicals, fertilizers, oils, pesticides, and various other sundry hop-ons. Watershed conservation easements ensure that nature’s organic buffers stay intact, filtering rainfall and remaining clear of ground-level pollutants.

Put another way: watersheds are the first line of defense between impurities and your kitchen faucet.

“These conservation easements are a great tool for our partners like SELT to take the lead on,” said John O’Neil. “They help us to expand the buffers on the tributaries that help keep the ponds and lakes free of sediment loading. These lands help filter runoff and keep water contaminant-free.”

“Lake Massabesic is a vital asset to the Greater Manchester community, and I’m glad to see continued investment in conserving the area,” said Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig. “By preserving our natural resources and guaranteeing this land will not be developed, we’re ensuring our water quality will remain pristine for future generations.”

Sediments don’t have to just tow along toxicities to throw the natural order out of whack. A lack of filtration means that sediment-piggy-backing nutrients can increase, and while nutrients are generally good and they help plants grow, too much flowing into a body of water can lead to a rapid increase in blue-green algae and cyanobacteria – both of which are water supply Kryptonite.

continued

“They are some of the biggest threats to water quality,” John said. “We work hard to minimize or eliminate these organisms in a water supply. That means you buffer everywhere you can.”



Heading due east brings us to the New Hampshire Seacoast – specifically, to Bellamy Reservoir in Madbury. Bellamy Reservoir provides over half of the drinking water for the Portsmouth Water System, a regional water supplier that serves Portsmouth, Newington, New Castle, and areas of Greenland, Rye, Madbury, and Durham.

According to Albert Pratt, Water Resource Manager for the Portsmouth Department of Public Works, the water demand averages approximately 4 million gallons per day. Which means when the opportunity arose to conserve more land along the shores of the Bellamy – and preserving another critical watershed – second thoughts were nowhere to be found.

The property is owned by Mary Ellen Duffy, a retired schoolteacher with deep roots in the community. When she expressed interest in placing an easement on her land – a longtime conservation priority thanks to its proximity to the reservoir – SELT and the City of Portsmouth were eager to see the project through.

“This was an incredible opportunity for SELT and we couldn’t pass it by,” said Duane Hyde, SELT’s Land Conservation Director. “The City of Portsmouth had evaluated the land surrounding the Reservoir to better understand the property most imperative for conservation to prevent detrimental water quality impacts on the Reservoir, and Mary Ellen’s property was one of the highest priority tracts.”

The easement covers over 107 acres of land along Mill Hill Road in Madbury and features over a mile of frontage along the Bellamy Reservoir. SELT worked with the City to secure funding from the NHDES Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund and the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. City funds rounded out the necessary costs to close on the project.

“The Duffy property is the largest undeveloped parcel abutting the Bellamy Reservoir,” said Albert Pratt. “The cost of protecting land from development far outweighs the costs for upgrading treatment systems and managing degraded surface water quality after forested land cover is lost to development. In its current, forested state, the property is naturally supporting the reservoir water quality by allowing precipitation to infiltrate through the soils and flow along small tributary channels and through wetlands to the reservoir.”

“I think it’s a very good thing for the town,” said Joe Moriarty, who had served on the Madbury Board of Selectmen for 44 years and helped Mary Ellen through the easement process. “It is critical that we protect the water resources that we have.”



It’s a bitterly cold February day in Auburn. Robert Sanborn is walking his newly conserved property, as he does almost every day. A recent storm has blanketed the surroundings with snow; Murray Mill Brook is almost entirely obscured by the accumulation, though the water dutifully flows under the sheen of ice and powder, doing its duty to recharge a water supply that hundreds of thousands of people rely upon.

As he walks, he notes the ancient stone wall where Betty the Collie loved to nose through to find hiding woodchucks. Or the vast open field where he once landed a small airplane he was piloting. Or the old Boy Scouts camp on the shore of Murray Mill that is still used today.

And while the conservation value of this property cannot be overstated, for Robert Sanborn (who is very much understated) the easement protects much more. When he looks out at the sprawling fields and the network of trees he sees beyond watersheds and water cycles and into the past, where the stories of six generations flow through the land like a bubbling brook, carried into the reservoir of shared memory, preserved forever.

Right: On the watershed of the Salmon Falls River.
SELT STAFF PHOTO

Bubbling Up

Looking ahead, SELT is working on several water protection projects in Rochester, NH which are slated to close later in 2021. SELT is partnering with the City of Rochester to conserve two important parcels along the Salmon Falls River, a tributary to the Piscataqua River and a critical water supply resource used by municipalities in Maine and New Hampshire to provide drinking water to nearly 50,000 people. A third project will protect additional land next to Rochester’s water supply reservoir.

SELT is working with landowners Zachary & Joanne Pallas to conserve their property, along with an abutting tract of land recently purchased by Rochester, known for its extensive trail network along the river. Conserving these properties will not only protect the future water quality of the river, but it will also protect an underlying aquifer that could someday be used by the City for future ground water supply.

“Rochester is a leader in protecting critical water supply lands,” said Jeremy Lougee, Conservation Project Manager and Farmland Coordinator for SELT. “Their forward-thinking strategy is to protect land in its natural condition before pollutants or excess nutrients are introduced by further development. Similar strategies in municipalities like New York City have saved the public literally billions of dollars by avoiding the need to build costly water treatment facilities, saving overall expenditures by a magnitude of 10 to 1.”

Upon completion of these three protects, another 75 acres will be added to a growing conservation block in Rochester – one that will have a forever impact on the quality of drinking water for thousands of people.



Remembering Three Friends of SELT

The first few months of 2021 were especially challenging for SELT, as we learned of the passing of three close friends of the organization whose passion for land conservation and SELT will have lasting impacts.

Nancy “Nan” Morris Mathey, 92, passed away peacefully at her Exeter residence on February 2. Celebration and camaraderie permeated Nan’s life. From the Fourth of July get-togethers in Ipswich filled with hamburgers, fireworks, and a parade of grand-children to the annual Montana family excursions, Nan found fulfillment in the serene visages of nature and joy with the people she treasured most in the world at her side to share in them.



Nan Mathey
COURTESY PHOTO

This passion for the outdoors and togetherness was reflected in Nan’s transformational gift for SELT’s forthcoming Center for People and Nature – now called The Mathey Center for People and Nature. We are saddened that Nan will not be with us to celebrate the new building she helped make possible, but take comfort in knowing the great pleasure it gave Nan to see her gift come to fruition before she passed.

Also leaving us was Dennis Lewis, lifelong Candia resident, extremely well-regarded general contractor, and easement donor. Dennis was a SELT member and one of SELT’s go-to contractors for repairs and improvements on our properties.

“There isn’t a piece of SELT-owned property in Rockingham and Stafford County that required work done that Dennis hasn’t touched,” said Phil Auger, SELT’s former Land Manager who became good friends with Dennis through the work together. “He was the most dependable, hard-working, honest kind of guy you can ever run into. He was extremely well-respected.”

One of Dennis’s crowning achievements was the complete rebuild of much of the stone structures on the Moses Tucker property at the Tucker and French Family Forest.

In February we lost Dick Wollmar, who served on SELT’s Board of Directors between 2004 and 2010 and then again from 2011 to 2014. In 1998, Dick donated a conservation easement on his land in North Hampton and facilitated the conservation of other land of his neighbors.

While a resident of North Hampton, he was one of the early advocates for municipal conservation funding and part of the North Hampton Forever group that passed the first open space bond in 2001, funding that eventually doubled the Town’s conservation land). This led to many communities following a similar model, which undoubtedly helped SELT achieve many of its conservation goals throughout the years.

“Dick was always engaged and supportive of SELT’s work, especially around farmland,” said Brian Hart, Executive Director of SELT. “He was kind, thoughtful, generous, and passionate, with a twinkle in his eye at the opportunities that he saw.”

Our deepest condolences and sympathies to the families and friends of Nan, Dennis, and Dick.

SELT TRAIL NEWS

The Pandemic and Our Trails

During the height of the pandemic season, SELT’s trails experienced sustained, unprecedented use as people from all over – no doubt desperate to leave the confines of their homes – journeyed on our lands to take in the scenery and breathe in the fresh air. Much of this use came in the late spring and early summer, when social distancing and lockdowns were at their highest peak.

“The parking lots on many of SELT’s larger reservations were at three to five times their capacity on any given day,” said Parker Schuerman, SELT’s Land Manager. “That means if a parking lot was designed for five to eight cars, we would frequently have an overflow of 15–40 cars at some trailheads on nice weather days!”

Along the trails, signs of big-time traffic use were easy to spot: vegetation and substrate along the trails were beaten underfoot and an increase in trash was found on many parking lots. Thankfully, many of SELT’s committed volunteers sprang into action to help mitigate the fallout from this almost “loved to death” use of the trails, helping to clean up debris and remove litter.

“We are so grateful to have such amazing SELT properties right in our backyard,” said Katie Libby a user of SELT’s trails. “While family time at home may have worn thin this past year, time spent with family outdoors never loses its shine.”

You can help!

You can help us steward these lands! Learn more about getting involved with SELT at seltnh.org/volunteer.

SELT Trail News Keeps You Posted

Did you know that SELT has a blog dedicated to news and updates about our trails? At the SELT Trail News, found at trailnews.org, you will find information about closures, construction, and conditions related to SELT’s network of trails throughout the region.

These reports are provided directly by Parker Schuerman, SELT’s Land Manager, who is constantly out and about with a first-hand view of what’s happening on SELT’s public recreation properties.

And don’t forget: if you’d like to subscribe to SELT Trail News, just enter your email at the blog and posts will be delivered directly to your inbox. Thank you and happy hiking!

[TRAILNEWS.ORG](https://trailnews.org)

The GOAT Volunteer

When Sue Mayotte was growing up in northeast Connecticut her favorite place in the whole world was the big white pine that had blown over during a windstorm in the forest near her house. It fell at the perfect angle, allowing her to climb it with ease, giving her a wonderful perch to sit on for hours, just soaking up the ambience of the natural world.

“I lived in a rural community,” she says. “There was a pack of us kids and we were always playing out back in the woods. Our parents’ biggest fear is that we would come back soaking wet because we fell in a pond!”

Those formative experiences imprinted an abiding love of the outdoors on Sue that has continued throughout her life. Now, retired, she has transformed that affinity for nature into an active and empowering volunteerism. In 2020, she was rightfully crowned Volunteer of the Year by SELT, and easily has a claim to be one of the members of the SELT Volunteer All-Time Dream Team.

“Ever since Sue started volunteering in 2017, she has been bringing energy, enthusiasm, and thoughtfulness to her many roles at SELT,” said Zoe Graves, Outreach and Volunteer Manager for SELT. “Our Volunteer Program is stronger because of Sue’s contributions.”

After Sue retired three years ago, she focused on building up her natural world know-how, as she became a Natural Resource Steward through the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension and graduated from the UNH Coverts Program, which trains volunteers in wildlife conservation, forest stewardship, and outreach.

“This gave me a lot of educational background,” Sue says. “It made me look at things in a different way. If I could do it over again, I think I would have been a forester, but as a SELT volunteer, I can still get out there and live a piece of the forester life!”



Sue Mayotte, SELT’s first official ‘GOAT.’
CREDIT: SELT STAFF

Sue has brought this new perspective to her volunteer activities, educating attendees about land management and conservation concepts on the many hikes and other programs she leads. As Zoe says, “her variety of experiences and knowledge have allowed SELT’s programs to grow and improve.”

Perhaps her biggest contribution is with the GOAT (Get Outside Adventure Team) program. GOAT members (GOATees?) are designated to assist field trip leaders and offer support at the back of the hiking group, engaging in conversation, keeping morale up during some of the tougher stretches, and even lending a hand with hikers who need to call it a day and head back early.

“Sue was our first official GOAT,” Zoe says. “She tested the waters for what would become one of our most active volunteer programs.”



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- Bev Shadley** Deputy Director

Questions, Comments, Concerns?

To contact SELT, please call **603-778-6088** or email info@seltnh.org.

6 Center St., PO Box 675, Exeter, NH 03833
Website: seltnh.org

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The H₂O Express
see page 1

The Mathey Center Comes to Life
see page 2

The GOAT Volunteer
see page 7

The Mathey Center Matching Challenge

As we go to press, SELT has only \$390,000 remaining to be raised to fully fund the Burley Farms vision. To help meet this gap, an anonymous donor has offered a matching challenge of \$165,000 to support the creation of The Mathey Center at Burley Farms. Your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$165,000, doubling the impact for SELT. However, SELT will only receive these additional funds *if we successfully raise the matching amount.*

To give, use the enclosed envelope and note “Mathey Center” or contribute securely online at seltnh.org/donate. All contributors to this matching challenge will be recognized as inaugural founders of the Mathey Center for People and Nature. Be a part of history in the making and support the future of SELT at the Burley Farms!

**Help us
meet our
goal!**

Your Gift	+ Matching Gift	= DOUBLE THE IMPACT
\$50	\$50	\$100
\$100	\$100	\$200
\$250	\$250	\$500
\$500	\$500	\$1,000
\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,000
\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000

