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Above: The Lamprey River snakes through the Mathes property.

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From Connecting to Protecting: Linking Lands along the Lamprey

Connectivity. That's the name of the conservation game. Linking blocks of conserved land together to form a chain of contiguous protected space is the Holy Grail of conservation. Swathes of conserved areas offer enhanced watershed protection, corridors for wildlife to travel unimpeded by cul-de-sacs and parking lots, and greater opportunities for outdoor recreation.

This concept lies at the heart of SELT's Pawtuckaway to Great Bay Greenway vision, an ongoing initiative to connect Pawtuckaway State Park with Great Bay and its surrounding conservation lands. Interlocked, unfragmented blocks of land, daisy-chained together, running from the coast and following the Lamprey River inland: that is ecological impact on a massive scale.

The Mathes Property: Expanding Burley Farms

Any effort focused on connectivity requires patience, perseverance, and time. And this year, SELT has reached an agreement to acquire and conserve the Mathes Tract, a 129-acre property that runs along the Lamprey River adjacent to Burley Farms.

Conservationists often use the "puzzle piece" metaphor to describe conservation connectivity, and it is especially apt here. Purchasing the Mathes tract will link SELT's Burley Farms to SELT's Lamprey River Wildlife Preserve, creating a unified ownership of 526 acres, embedded in a block of more than 700 acres of protected land!

This brings with it incredible opportunity; the natural resource value is vast and the recreation and programmatic potential is limitless.

With nearly one mile of frontage on the Lamprey River, the Mathes tract represents a crucial lynchpin for wildlife habitat and water protection. The Lamprey is among a select group of rivers designated as "Wild and Scenic" by the federal government, a distinction afforded to less than one quarter of one percent (0.25%) of all United States rivers. According to the Lamprey River's congressional designation, the Lamprey

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possesses “outstandingly remarkable” values that include a high degree of ecological integrity and variety.

“The Lamprey River has always been a priority for SELT,” explains Brian Hart, SELT’s Executive Director, “and our decades-long partnership with the Lamprey River Advisory Committee has achieved significant strides along this stretch of the river.” Permanent protection of the Mathes property builds on these past efforts, which began in 2003 to establish the Lamprey River Wildlife Preserve, with the most recent addition to it in 2019 with the Thayer Tract. Such focus ensures that the river continues to be a treasured asset for New Hampshire and the whole country.

Beyond being a designated Wild and Scenic river, the Lamprey is also a key drinking water supply – and the Mathes Tract is entirely within the UNH/Durham Source Water Protection Area and recognized as a “High Priority Water Supply Land” by the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES). In addition, rare or threatened wildlife call this land their home, including fish, turtle, and plant species.

This land’s significant natural resources augment SELT’s opportunities to connect more people to the outdoors. A larger, diverse landscape of more than 500 acres will allow our partners like White Pine Programs to offer additional nature-based education experiences at Burley Farms. Growing Burley Farms

with the Mathes tract opens even more of the great outdoors to young, eager learners.

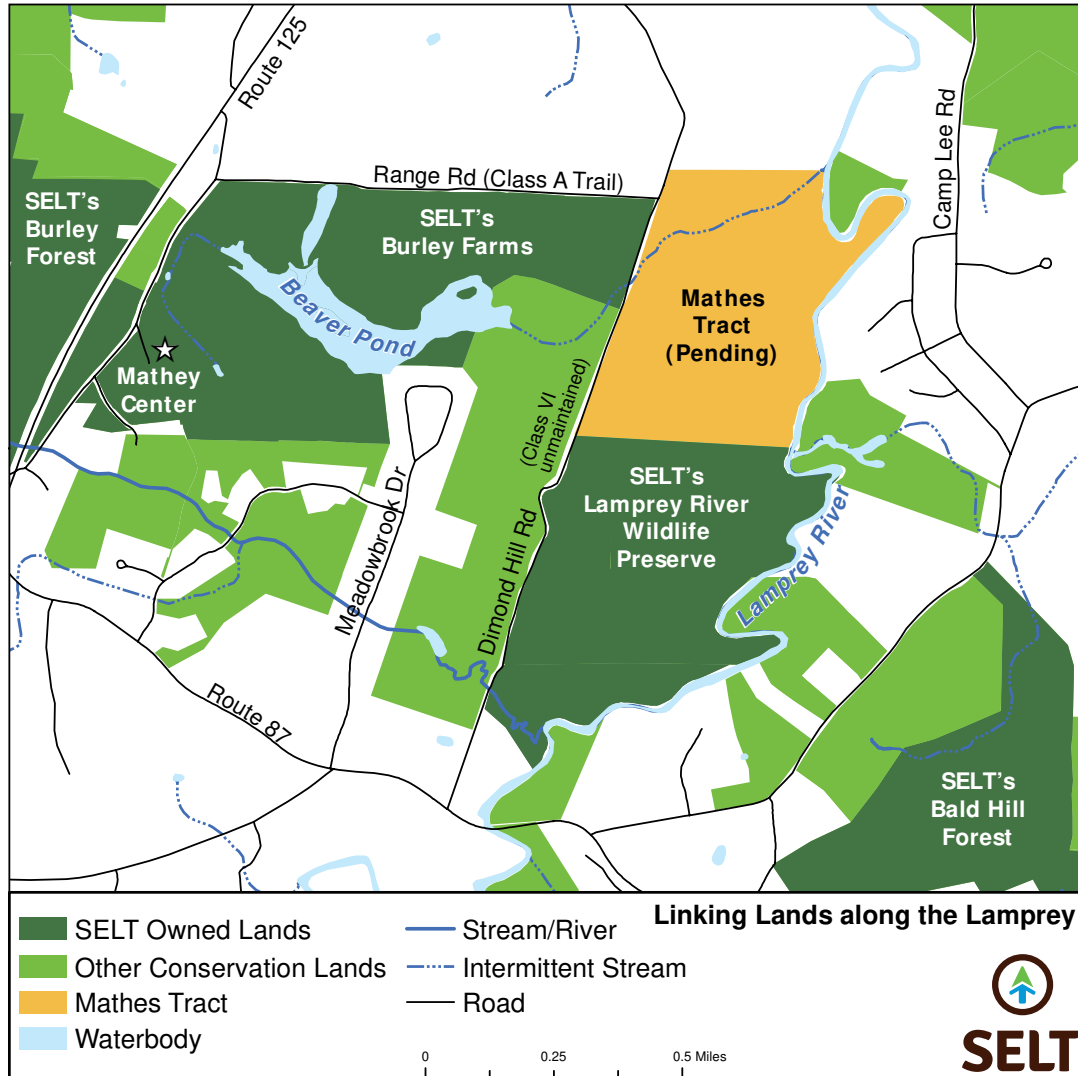
Taken together, the conservation and programmatic values of the Mathes property squares perfectly with SELT’s long-term strategic vision for Burley Farms and The Mathey Center: offering more land and habitats for educational and recreational opportunities and building on more than 20 years of work along the Lamprey River.

Help us link these lands with your gift today!

To make this vision possible, SELT must raise the final \$203,000 this year. Every gift will help link Burley Farms and the Lamprey River Wildlife Preserve! The total cost to acquire, conserve, and manage the Mathes Tract is \$545,000; to date SELT has been awarded generous grants from the Lamprey River Advisory Committee, DES’s Aquatic Resource Mitigation program, and the NH Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund. Use the enclosed envelope or give securely at seltnh.org/donate. To discuss a gift of securities, please call Deputy Director Beverly Shadley at 603-658-9752.



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The bird's-eye view of the Mathes property

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The Rix Property: A Deerfield Gem

As is the case with many land conservation projects, this one started with a simple conversation. Several years ago, Charlie Moreno, licensed forester and long-time SELT partner, brought up an intriguing opportunity: one of his clients, William (Bill) Rix, had expressed interest in donating a conservation easement on his 80+ acre property in Deerfield.

With that introduction, SELT's discussion with Bill began in earnest in 2020 with several exchanges and a site walk at what turned out to be a unique property with compelling natural resources.

"It is a very well managed forest with pine-oak forests and hemlock," says Duane Hyde, Land Conservation Director. "It quickly and steeply drops down to a large wetland system associated with the Lamprey River that is a mix of red maple forested wetlands, scrub shrub wetlands, and open wetlands."

COVID, unfortunately, disrupted the momentum spurred by Moreno's 2020 discussion, so the project entered a holding pattern. Thankfully, this May, the process restarted with a significant change: instead of donating the easement, Bill opted to donate the land outright to SELT, with the land to be named the Robert Rix Family Forest.

Why is this such an intriguing property?

The Rix parcel has beautiful, pristine, lengthy frontage on the Lamprey River, with associated wetlands which

are great for waterfowl and furbearing mammals," says Charlie Moreno, the forester who knows the property well. "In addition, it contains a steep-sided bowl area with older growth forest, and, generally, carefully managed pineland." In fact, this segment of the Lamprey flows south from its headwaters in Northwood to the Rix property.

Bill's main goal is to see the land remain in its natural state, and he is happy to have SELT manage the property as per our stewardship practices, in addition to having it open to hunting.

"I like the wildness of it," he said. "I didn't want to see the land developed and donating it seemed like the best option."

For SELT's part, "We're so appreciative of Bill's generosity," notes Hyde. "And our hope is his gift is the seed that sprouts additional opportunities to protect more of the headwaters of the Lamprey."

SELT is deeply appreciative of generous landowners like Bill who decided to trust SELT as the next steward of their land. Even with his generous gift, SELT must cover the transaction and long-term stewardship costs of this future ownership.

You can support the conservation of the Robert Rix Family Forest with a special gift on top of your annual support using the enclosed envelope or at seltnh.org/donate.

Home Sweet Home

The Burley Farms vision comes closer to reality with the opening of The Mathey Center

It has finally happened. After nearly eight years of vision-casting, white-boarding, architectural-rendering, fundraising, and permit-applying, capped by a ten-month construction process, The Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature at Burley Farms is a reality.

Thank you to all SELTies for making this vision possible!

From the outside in, The Mathey Center reflects everything we hold dear as a collective organization. Our shared love of conservation, combined with the desire to bring our communities closer to the outdoors can be found woven throughout this new building, the centerpiece of a sprawling vision at Burley Farms that you helped make possible.

Let's take a moment to look at some of the highlights of SELT's new home!

Mathey Center Tour

For those interested in a guided tour of the new building and learning more about its design features, Brian Hart, SELT's Executive Director, will be offering an in-person tour of The Mathey Center on September 8 at 6:30 pm. To RSVP please contact Kylee Noga at kylee@selttnh.org or call 603-778-6088.

Pratt Family Community Room

This large room, graciously supported by the Pratt Family Fund, provides sweeping views of the Burley Farms landscape. Designed to be a meeting room for local organizations, the Pratt Family Community Room sports cutting-edge audio/visual capabilities, plenty of space and flexibility to spread out, and easy access to the outside terrace gathering patio.

Room For Growth

On the second floor, just above the Pratt Room, sits a large open office space. This area is all about potential: potential for a nonprofit to lease it for admin space or for SELT to occupy it with future staff.

This second-floor flex space is part of the Wofchuck Wing, named for Joe Wofchuck, whose helped make this entire section of The Mathey Center possible. The Wofchuck Wing is made up of the flex space and the adjoining conference room on the second floor.

Below, the Wofchuck Wing continues with "The Hive" volunteer room, where SELT's awesome group of volunteers have space to work on projects (The Hive is a generous gift of Pam Hall); then you have the kitchen (a favored staff hangout!); and, finally, the Pratt Family Community Room. Thank you, Joe, for your wonderful support!

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Did you know? The beautiful ash that lines the Pratt Community Room was harvested at Burley Farms, milled locally, and, ultimately, installed throughout The Mathey Center – a homecoming to remember! CREDIT: SELT STAFF

Airtight and Energy Efficient

Keeping the heat and cool in the building is the key to efficiency. The Mathey Center is unique in that it has been built with an extremely tight envelope, utilizing construction that is designed to limit unwanted air loss and, thus, keeping the HVAC system from working overtime to control the climate. Meanwhile, on the outside the solar panels that line the roof and the five trackers that circle the barn can fully power both The Mathey Center and the John P. Chase Farmhouse.



Did You Know? The solar arrays can potentially capture so much solar energy that SELT may have the opportunity to return energy back to the power grid and realize energy bill credits. Saving green by going green – not bad! The solar array was a generous gift of the French Family. CREDIT: SELT STAFF

A Journey of Discovery and a Vision for Greater Access

Over the past year, the Board and staff of SELT have begun a process of self-discovery and learning regarding how SELT can begin to understand and address inequality in ways that are consistent with our mission. This work on diversity, equity, and inclusion is being led by a committee of volunteers and staff members, and is part of a three-pronged process of educating ourselves, building authentic relationships, and taking action. As one component of our work, we proudly presented the following Land Acknowledgement Statement for Burley Farms for the first time at SELT's Conservation Celebration in June:

Burley Farms is located on N'dakinna, which is the traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook and Wabanaki Peoples past and present. We acknowledge and honor with gratitude the land and waterways and the alnobak (people) who have stewarded N'dakinna throughout the generations.

Relatedly, SELT's DEI work has been moving forward with volunteer researchers exploring the history of SELT owned lands in precolonial and early colonial times, the recent purchase of equipment to assess the accessibility of existing trail systems, and the growth of the All Terrain Learning Adventures (ATLAS) program, which supports nature-based education programming for students in grades K–7.



Stewardship in Action at Birch Ridge

SELT's Stewardship team has been hard at work at Birch Ridge Community Forest. The recent timber cuts are prescribed activity in the management plan for Birch Ridge adopted by the Birch Ridge Community Forest Steering Committee. The cut consists of two adjacent treatments, each with different goals of 1) encouraging red oak and 2) encouraging blueberries.

Encouraging Red Oak

This area is 21 acres and was cut in the late fall, the goal of which was to return the area into a red oak forest. One of the challenges of a heavily cut property like Birch Ridge is that beech can become an unwanted dominant species due to its ability to resprout, but also because beech spreads via root suckers. (A beech-dominated forest is not a desired long-term outcome per the adopted management plan.)

"Beech is generally undesired from both an economic and ecological standpoint," says Connor Breton, SELT's Forest and Wildlife Habitat Manager. "Beech is usually only fit for low-grade, low-pay wood products like pulp for paper, or boards for things like wooden pallets. Ecologically, beech-dominated stands aren't always great mast producers and also suffer from several diseases, including beech bark disease and a new one called beech leaf disease. These diseases can also hinder mast production and make the trees less valuable for wildlife."

To redirect the forest to the red oak-dominated forest (which is what it was before the cut and what the management plan is striving for), the red oak needs a leg up in regenerating, a decision guided by consultation with forester Jon Martin and informed from New Hampshire research done by U.S. Forest Service scientists Ken Demarais and Mariko Yamasaki. This research indicates cutting all vegetation back when red oak is smaller will promote its growth at a faster rate than the surrounding trees, which in this case are beech. The treatment will also provide early successional habitat, which is in decline in New Hampshire and is important for migrating songbirds,

grouse, woodcock, rabbit, and other species for the next decade or so.

Encouraging Blueberries

The ridges around Merrymeeting Lake were once significant commercial blueberry operations, with some owned by the famous Table Talk pie company. These commercial barrens include a portion of the top of Birch Ridge. To help reestablish a portion of this area to blueberries this area was cut in late December, with oversight from wildlife biologists Charlie Bridges and Lee Alexander (both of whom are members of the Birch Ridge Community Forest Management Committee). The goal here is to reestablish and maintain the 36-acre cut area for blueberries for wildlife and for people to pick, while keeping larger-crowned oak trees as mast and seed trees.

Beech nuts – and large beech trees – are important food sources for bears, so while a beech dominated forest was not a desired outcome of these efforts, if there were larger beech that could serve as mast sources for bears, these trees were kept as well. "It visually looks like an oak-savannah," explains Deborah Goard, SELT's Stewardship and Land Engagement Director, "so if you were to visit this area, you would see scattered single or clumped trees of about 5–7 per acre, with an understory of blueberry and other shrubs." Future management in this area will be determined after we see the blueberry response.

In addition to the active forest management occurring, SELT and the amazing crew of volunteers will be completing a hiking and biking trail over Birch Ridge this summer. This trail will connect to Corridor 22, a major snowmobile corridor that bisects Birch Ridge. Additional trail planning and work is underway on other portions of the Community Forest, all guided by the completed Management Plan and annual work plan.

There is a lot going on at this incredible property! For all the latest news and updates, please visit seltnh.org/birchridge.

Above: Wildlife habitat creation at Birch Ridge.

CREDIT: SELT STAFF

Connor Breton Joins SELT as Forest and Wildlife Habitat Manager

We're excited to welcome Connor Breton, our new Forest and Wildlife Habitat Manager, who started with SELT in early July. Connor will be responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing the management activities for SELT's 10,000+ acres of owned land.

Connor comes to SELT via the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where he worked as a forester at the Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge up in Errol, NH. Connor is a UNH graduate where he received a B.S. in Environmental Science – Ecosystems, and a M.S. in Natural Resources – Forestry. "I've spent most of life in Southeastern New Hampshire, so I feel a deep connection with the land and the people there," says Connor. "I grew up in Somersworth and attended UNH for both undergrad and grad school. Though I've enjoyed "cutting my teeth" up north, I look forward to meeting new people and participating in SELT's mission to conserve and steward land back home."

Welcome to SELT, Connor!



Connor wasting no time to get into the woods!

CREDIT: SELT STAFF

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Questions, Comments, Concerns?

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

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Linking Lands along the Lamprey**
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Get Outside!

Summer 2022 Events Sampler

Check out these events and more at seltnh.org/events. Please register early; our events fill quickly. Registration closes at noon the day before the event. Suggested donation is \$5 per person or \$10 per family.

Meadows Mirth Farm Tour

September 10 • 9–11 am •
Brentwood, NH

Take a tour of Meadows Mirth Farm with farmer Josh Jennings and SELT's Senior Conservation Project Manager and Farmland Coordinator, Jeremy Lougee! We will tour the beautiful farm and discuss CSAs, land access, different growing practices, season extension, and what it takes to run a farming business.

Book Club with Phil Primack

September 22 • 5–7 pm • The Mathey Center for People and Nature at Burley Farms, Epping, NH

Join SELT, local Epping author Phil Primack, and our friends from the Water Street Bookstore for a book club meeting for *'Put It Down On Paper': The Words and Life of Mary Folsom Blair, A Fifty-Year Search* by Phil Primack. Phil was a reporter for newspapers from Boston to Appalachia and has written for, among others, the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *The Nation*. He has taught journalism and is the author of *New England Country Fair*.

