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Above: Covered Bridge Forest in Atkinson, slated for conservation in 2024, offers trails to explore and scenic beauty to enjoy.

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## Accelerating the Pace of Conservation

**A**llow me to start with a small story. One of my favorite parts of TrailFest every year is the kids “fun run.” This is typically the kickoff event for the event and features a gaggle of children (maybe already a donut hole or two into their sugar intake for the day) lining up at the Burley Farms trail kiosk, ready to take off. Duane Hyde, our Land Conservation Director, is our go-to “pace car” for the run, but in this case, he’s sitting atop his mountain bike and wearing the ceremonial “hot dog hat.”

Yep, it’s as fun and silly as it sounds but the kids and their families love it – and when they hear GO! It’s full throttle; this group of mini-nature-lovers are off and running into the woods of Burley.

I share this anecdote for two reasons: 1) TrailFest was a huge success this year and we had over 1,000 people come to Burley Farms for a day of free family-friendly fun and, 2) it serves as a solid metaphor for me to talk about acceleration.

Specifically: conservation acceleration.

As you see, I’m sure, every day, our region is faced with strong development pressure. Thankfully, we have also seen a hefty interest by landowners in discussing options for conserving



The Hart family exploring Mount Bet in New Durham, which will be conserved forever by the year’s end.

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## Habitat and Hiking at Harvey

In 2015, SELT worked with the Harvey family to conserve over 1,110 acres of their land, located in Epping and Nottingham. Not only is Harvey's Kennard Hill Forest a major keystone in SELT's larger vision of connecting the Pawtuckaway State Park to Great Bay through conservation lands, but it is also a beloved long-time destination for outdoor recreation.

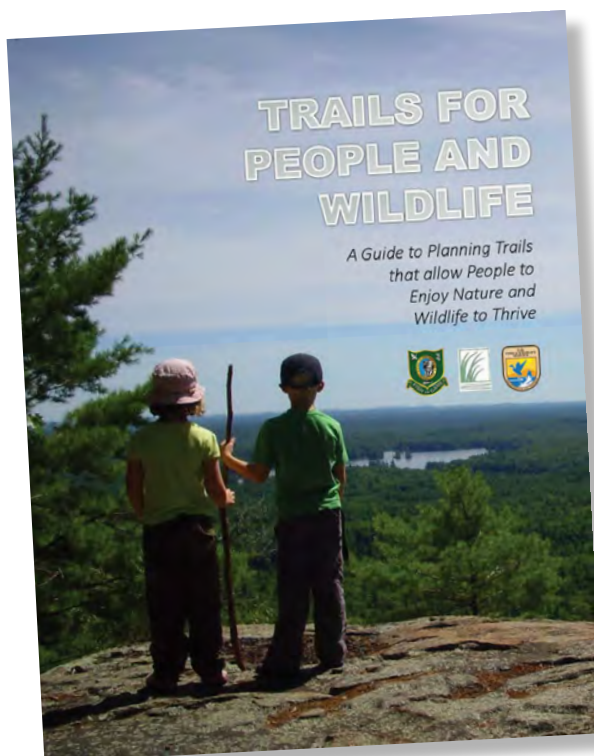
The conservation easement held by SELT and New Hampshire Fish & Game allows SELT to maintain a public trail system on this property, which was important to the Harvey family, who have allowed access for recreation for many years. In addition, Harvey's Kennard Hill Forest is recognized state-wide for its high-quality wildlife habitat, supporting species from great blue heron to bobcat.

Harvey's Kennard Hill Forest is home to 137 acres of high value wetlands that provide important rare turtle, migratory bird and waterfowl habitat. It includes over two miles of stream frontage that feeds into the federally designated Wild and Scenic Lamprey River, one of seven major tributaries to Great Bay estuary.

This fall, SELT's stewardship team focused on completing the trail system, while also working to preserve and enhance natural habitat. Work included the construction of three bridges, the completion of a loop trail to Kennard Hill (the highest point in Epping which gives explorers views all the way to Mt. Agamenticus in Maine), the installation of a parking area and kiosk off Blake Road, and the protection of sensitive stream and wetland crossings.

Future farm and forest management activities, current recreational uses, and the myriad of important resources this property helps protect were integrated into the design of the trail system, creating a great example of trails that allow people to enjoy nature and wildlife to thrive, both now and into the future.

Learn more about how Harvey's Kennard Hill Forest connects people to trails and strengthens wildlife habitat by reading NH Fish & Game's Trail Planning Guide at [seltnh.org/harvey](https://seltnh.org/harvey).



## Green Thumbs Up to Gwen and Laurie, SELT's Volunteers of the Year

Last year, shortly after SELT's move to the Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature, our new home at Burley Farms was beautified with new perennial pollinator gardens. Following the planting, an elite team of volunteer gardeners was assembled to steward the gardens and, due to the near-drought conditions of the 2022 summer, the new beds required consistent, careful watering and weeding. At the forefront of these efforts were Laurie Kelleher and Gwen Kenney, who stepped up in a big way to nurture the plantings, often being seen three to four times a week tending the gardens.

"Both Gwen and Laurie were quick to sign up for weeding and watering shifts, and ended up covering the bulk of the care for the gardens in those early months when it felt as though missing one watering could sink the whole project," said Zoe Graves, Senior Manager of Community Programs. "Gwen and Laurie were often out in the gardens when I arrived for the workday, happily weeding and watering away, and it became clear that they both had a deep appreciation for the work SELT does."



This year, Laurie and Gwen were asked to step into a new role, becoming SELT's first volunteer "Lead Gardeners" – and they both enthusiastically accepted. As SELT's Lead Gardeners, Laurie and Gwen have hosted an open

house for prospective gardeners, taken on a variety of larger garden projects, and have made themselves available on weekends and other odd hours to show new volunteers the ropes and help them understand what the gardens need, increasing participation in the Volunteer Gardener program overall.

In recognition of their hard work and dedication to SELT's mission, Laurie and Gwen have been awarded the 2023 Founders' Award for Volunteerism – a much-deserved harvest of the seeds that were planted over a year ago!

"It is rare that newer volunteers are eager to step into a leadership role," Zoe says. "But we are lucky enough to have two such volunteers in Laurie and Gwen and feel that they have gone above and beyond what was initially asked of them, making them deserving of the Founders' Award for Volunteerism in 2023."

## Updates from the SELT Team

We are excited to welcome Bridget Drake to the SELT Team! Bridget joined us at the start of October as our new Executive and Office Assistant. If you've recently visited the Mathey Center, you likely would have already seen her at the front desk.

Bridget comes to us from UNH where she previously worked for the Institute for Policy and Practice as the Administrative Coordinator. She was excited to join SELT – and not just because of her degree in outdoor education.



Bridget Drake SELT STAFF

*"I've always been an outdoor person," she says. "Nature is my happy place and I'm excited to be here at SELT. I love working with people and I love the outdoors, so it's just a perfect combination."*

So, a few months in, how's it been going so far?

"There's just a really cool vibe here, and good energy," she says. "Everybody is focused on doing good and you can feel it."

In addition, we would like to welcome Alison Watts to the Board, who joined us in June. Finally, a special thank you to departing board members, Rob Wofchuck, who retired in October and Malin Clyde and VJ Strehl, who both retired in June. We are grateful for their leadership and volunteerism in service of SELT's mission to save, share, and steward the special places in southeast New Hampshire.

## A Vision for the Next Ten Years

SELT has begun the process of crafting and launching our new Strategic Plan, which will chart a bold, exciting course for SELT's next decade of conservation, stewardship, and nature-based education work. Strategic planning in 2013 is what led to the Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature and the reality of Burley Farms.

Staff and leadership are currently developing a robust stakeholder engagement process – and your participation will be key. Our SELTies will be asked to take part in an online survey in early 2024 – stay tuned for the invitation!

**Conserve** *together.*  
**NH** *forever.*

Still not a donor to SELT? Inspired by Pam to increase your unrestricted giving? Then Pam Hall's *Conserve Together, New Hampshire Forever* challenge match is for you! Your gift today will be instantly matched dollar-for-dollar!

The *Conserve Together, New Hampshire Forever* campaign supports SELT's mission of saving, sharing, and stewarding the lands we all love.

Please give today to conserve scenic views, rural character, wildlife habitat, working farms, coastal and forest health, clean water, and trails for all.

Give securely at [seltnh.org/conservetogether](https://seltnh.org/conservetogether) or return the enclosed remittance slip to see your impact doubled!

*Accelerating the Pace of Conservation continued from page 1*

*their land. So that means we must strike while the iron is hot!*

*This strong landowner and community demand coincides with calls for a faster pace of protection: New Hampshire's Coastal Watershed Conservation Plan recommended a target of 4,000 acres protected annually, up from the current average of 2,500 acres. Heeding this call, SELT added a new position in 2023 to help SELT and partner agencies and land trusts complete additional projects.*

*While the impact of that hire will take time to build momentum, SELT's leadership team and Board are actively discussing additional actions and initiatives we can take to bolster our and the region's collective capacity to increase the pace of our conservation efforts.*

*SELT has twenty properties representing more than 3,000 acres of lands under contract, with an additional 1,000+ acres expected to be under contract shortly. This is an unprecedented number of opportunities, more than we have ever had as an organization – and I am thrilled to share some of these exciting projects in the pages to follow! From the Covered Bridge Forest in Atkinson to the Isinglass Preserve in Barrington, your giving allows SELT to respond to and pursue critical lands that support a vibrant healthy community here in southeastern New Hampshire.*

*You are an ally in this acceleration, and I am thrilled to have you by our side as we seek to make an everlasting impact on our region.*

*Thank you for your support and here's to a new year of saving, sharing, and stewarding the lands we all love!*

*Warmest holiday wishes,*



Brian Hart  
Executive Director



## A Wealth of Projects on the Horizon

### *SELT is turbo-charging local land conservation*

As 2023 comes to a close, SELT has more than 20 conservation projects under agreement for permanent protection. From outright gifts from generous landowners to complex sales with multiple partners, here's a snapshot of our current work underway through your support.

#### Jones Brook Easement

563 acres | Milton | Drinking Water

This parcel is rich with diverse habitats, and encompasses two miles of Jones Brook and Hart Brook, which are known to contain native brook trout and other aquatic species of concern. The property sits under the northern shadow of Mount Teneriffe, builds on the 2022 conservation of the Teneriffe Mountain Forest with Moose Mountains Regional Greenways, and represents the missing piece in a 4,000-acre block of conserved land. Through this project, the land will be permanently protected by a conservation easement held by SELT, and the underlying ownership sold to the Carl Simeon Charitable Trust.



**DRINK IT. SAVE IT.**

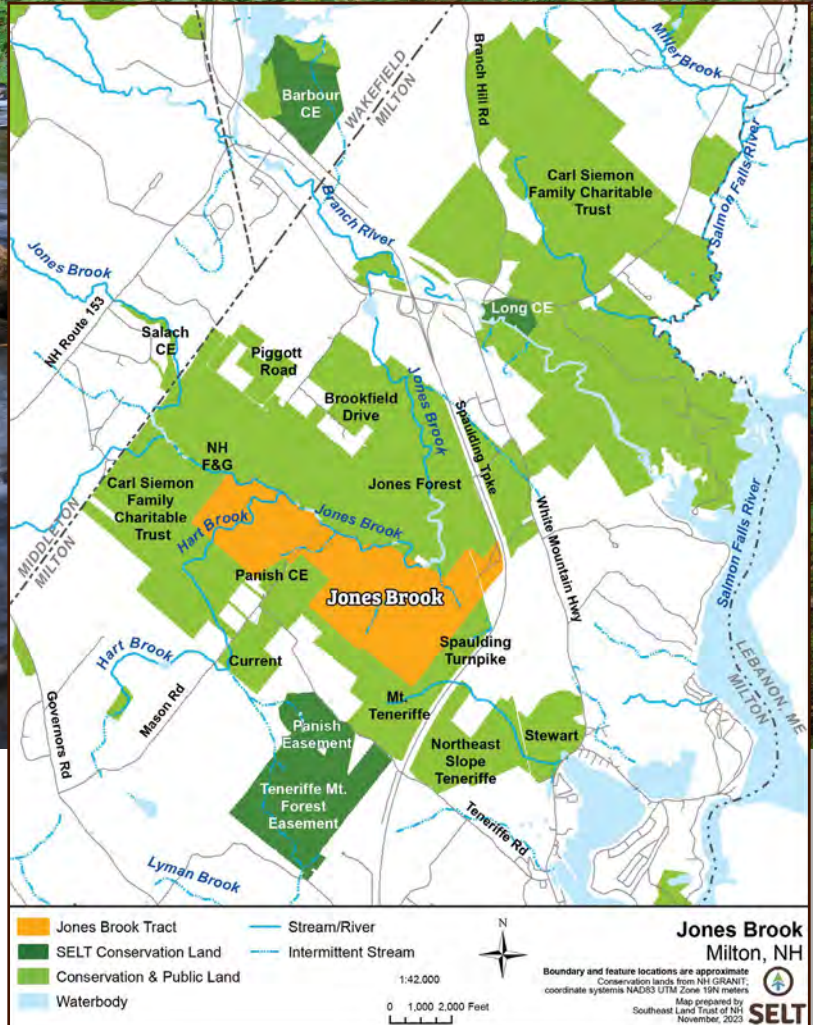
#### Griewank-Wakefield Easement

70 acres | Rochester | Drinking Water

This land includes 700+ feet of frontage on the Salmon Falls River, which supplies drinking water to Somersworth and Berwick. The property also contains significant wildlife habitat and connectivity corridors between conserved lands to the north and east including SELT's 163-acre Gauthier Farm conservation easement. The proposed easement will include an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV), SELT's second such arrangement, which helps ensure the land can continue under farmer ownership into the future. The current owners operate Shagbark Farm.



Jones Brook is a key parcel for wildlife habitat protection in Milton.  
 © JERRY MONKMAN, ECOPHOTOGRAPHY, LLC



## Isinglass Preserve

140 acres | Barrington | Living Landscapes

This land along the Isinglass River and Long Pond is filled with rich natural resources, including multiple vernal pools, mature forests, a Black gum swamp natural community, and significant state-identified wildlife habitat including multiple vernal pools. It will be owned by SELT with the potential to grow and connect more than 800 acres of potential conservation lands.

## Covered Bridge Forest

141 acres | Atkinson | Living Landscapes

**Breaking news!** Our newest reservation in 2024, the beauty of Covered Bridge Forest in Atkinson lives up to the whimsy of its name. This sprawling forest includes a well-built trail system and a hand-built covered bridge – truly a hidden gem to be shared with the community! The anonymous landowner is donating the property to SELT, as it was also the desire for it to be conserved and enjoyed.

## Kaifer Easement

22 acres | Hampton | Living Landscapes

A small, but mighty, property that fits snugly within the conserved Batchelder Farm on Exeter Road, this donated easement will protect an important stretch within a wildlife corridor identified in the Connect the Coast analysis.

### Eaton Easement

73 acres | Auburn | Drinking Water

SELT is once again partnering with our good friends at Manchester Water Works and the Town of Auburn to conserve this important parcel within the Massabesic watershed, the primary drinking water supply for Manchester. The Eaton easement abuts the Preston easement, donated to SELT back in 2003. And coming soon: an additional 120 acres linked to this property, via a conservation easement gift from Manchester Water Works.



### Mount Jesse

658 acres | New Durham | Living Landscapes

The latest addition to the conservation tapestry of Merrymeeting Lake is the well-known Mount Jesse, rich in flora, fauna, watershed protection, and stunning scenic views. Mount Jesse will be added to the Birch Ridge Community Forest, growing it to more than 3,000 acres. Currently, SELT is awaiting news of our grant request from the Land and Community Heritage Investment. If awarded, approximately \$500,000 remains to be raised in private gifts and grants to successfully acquire and steward Mount Jesse. Once conserved, 49% of the watershed will be permanently conserved, up from just under 5% in 2018. Stay abreast at [keepmerrymeetingclean.org](http://keepmerrymeetingclean.org).

### Great Bay Farm Easement

154 acres | Greenland | Farmland for the Future



FARM IT. SAVE IT.

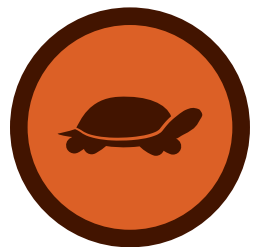
The iconic Great Bay Farm is a sixth generation, working family dairy farm, one of the few still around in Rockingham County. And given that it's located a stone's throw from the shores of Great Bay, the farm's conservation offers critical protection of the Great Bay Estuary watershed.



### Rider Easement

156 acres | Exeter, East Kingston, and Kensington | Living Landscapes

At the nexus of three towns, this property provides a tapestry of varied landscapes: fields, forest, and wetlands, all worth conserving. And the stakes are high, as, historically, this property has been a highly desired target for development. Fortunately, all three towns have voted to provide funding towards the project, to be matched with a pending grant request from the NH Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund and the landowner's generous bargain sale.



VIEW IT. SAVE IT.

## Big Fun at Burley Farms for TrailFest 2023

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2023 installment of TrailFest another rip-roaring, family-friendly success. Once again, SELT welcomed over 1,000 friends and neighbors to Burley Farms for a gorgeous fall day filled with food, fun runs, activities, and nature-focused presentations.



The Tailwinds presentation at TrailFest was top-flight! SELT STAFF

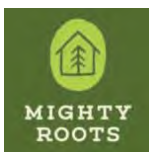
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**Tom and Patience Chamberlin**



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### Questions, Comments, Concerns?

To contact SELT, please call **603-778-6088** or email [info@seltnh.org](mailto:info@seltnh.org).

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## Accelerating the Pace of Conservation

*see page 1*

## New Projects on the Horizon

*see page 4*

## Get Outside!

*see below*



## 'Tis the Season for SELT Swag!

Looking for a unique gift or special stocking stuffer for the holiday season? Want to spread good cheer and share the mission of SELT? Be sure to visit the SELT Store at [seltnh.org/store](https://seltnh.org/store) to purchase some great SELT merchandise including hats, long and short-sleeve shirts, water bottles, coolers, utensils, Burley Beaver plush toys, and more!

## Get Outside! Winter Events Sampler

Check out these events and more at [seltnh.org/events](https://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.

### Full Moon Snowshoe

Birch Ridge Community Forest, New Durham •  
January 25, 2024 • 5:30–7:30 PM

Get your snowshoes and bundle up, SELT's Trails and Community Engagement Manager, Yohann Hanley, will be leading a walk under the light of the full moon at Birch Ridge Community Forest in New Durham, NH. This event is geared towards older children and adults with some snowshoeing or winter hiking experience.

### Owl Prowl with Center for Wildlife

Burley Farms, Epping • January 10, 2024 • 4:00–6:00 PM

Come and join Center for Wildlife as we spend the evening learning about regional owl species and hit the trails to have a look for owls right here in our own backyard. The Owl Prowl will start with a meet and greet with some of our non-releasable wildlife ambassadors and then we will head to the trails for some exploration time in which we will call for and have a look out for wild owls in the area.