



OSS�PEE LAKE REPORT

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KEY DATES:

- Saturday, April 21: NH Boating Education Course; Ossipee Town Hall, 9AM–4:30 PM. Also May 19 and June 30. Info @ 888–254–2125.
- Saturday, April 28: GMCG Drinking Water Protection Conference; Calumet Conference Center, Freedom. Info @ 603–539–1859.
- Friday, June 29: NH Lakes Association Lakes Congress; 3 Silk Farm Rd., Concord. Info @ 603–226–0299.

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OSS�PEE LAKE, THE BAYS, THE RIVERS
AND CHANNELS, DANFORTH POND,
LOON LAKE AND ROUND POND

David Smith, Executive Director
Susan Marks, Development Director
June D'Andrea, Program Coordinator

STATE IS PLANNING DAM IMPROVEMENTS



The northern spillway of the dam complex at Effingham Falls is one of only two narrow points where water can leave the lake. The state wants to increase outflow capacity. *Alliance Photo*

CONCORD — State officials are planning to make changes to the Ossipee River dam that they hope will improve its operating flexibility and increase its capacity to discharge floodwaters during times of extreme rainfall and spring ice-out.

In November the Dam Bureau issued a request for proposals from engineering firms and manufacturers of dam equipment seeking ideas and costs to repair and enlarge the spillways and install a remotely controlled automatic gate system.

The legislature has already earmarked money for the project but the timeline is subject to a variety of factors, including a final engineering design and the availability of equipment. Work could start as early as this fall but is more likely to take place in 2008, ac-

cording to Dan Mattaini, an engineer for the Dam Bureau, which is part of the state Department of Environmental Services.

The lake's water level has been managed since the dam was constructed in 1919, originally for the benefit of downriver commerce and later for recreation. Each fall the level is lowered to minimize ice damage to the shoreline and each spring it is raised to accommodate boating and swimming.

State officials say improving the dam control system could reduce flooding, but they concede it won't prevent it. That is because the channels that connect the big lake and bays create a series of natural bottlenecks that impede the flow of water to the lake's only point of egress, the Ossipee River.

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BUYING THE WOODS OF TROUT POND

By William Poole

Article courtesy of Land & People

FREEDOM — Like many conservation projects, this one began when a single community member encountered a "For Sale" sign on a much-loved property.

"I saw the sign, and I decided that I'd had it," says Jennifer Molin, a wry, middle-aged woman whom friends and neighbors invariably describe as "a character." They also describe her as determined in the face of ob-

stacles and the driving force behind an effort that eventually protected 12 percent of her town as a working community forest.

She thought: "We've got to do something about this. I didn't want to see another place where I played destroyed."

Freedom, New Hampshire, population 1,400, is tucked away in the state's lakes district, south of the White Mountains - a rolling region of water, woods, and low, dark mountains.

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BUYING THE WOODS OF TROUT POND



Freedom residents formed the Friends of Trout Pond and raised more than \$2 million in one of the region's largest and most successful grassroots initiatives. Photo: Jennifer Molin

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The town's name commemorates its freedom from neighboring Effingham, on the other side of the Ossipee River, from which it seceded in 1832. But the name also suggests patriotism, and on the week after July Fourth, Freedom was hung with American flags and red, white, and blue bunting.

In the southwestern reaches of town, lakeside homes and shady old summer camps grace the shores of Ossipee Lake, one of the region's major recreational attractions. Here a half dozen friends, neighbors, and conservation partners gather at a trailhead, preparing for a hike to show off their new forest to a visitor.

In addition to Molin, the group includes Chuck Depew, a retired business executive who served as a fundraiser for the conservation effort; Katie Gove, chair of the town's Conservation Commission; and Barry Keith, a professional forester who manages the new forest.

Also present: Blair Folts, director of the Green Mountain Conservation Group, a six-town watershed conservation group; and Rodger Krussman, a Trust for Public Land project manager whom Folts and the others called on when they realized that the scale and difficulty of the \$2-million-plus project demanded outside help.

"What I like about this project is that it started with one person," says Katie Gove.

"That person involved the community. Then a local non-profit got involved. Finally, we called in a national non-profit. It's nice to see it all come together."

Certainly the land was worth protecting. At 2,660 acres, it was the largest undeveloped parcel in town, and it also overlays an important aquifer. And since it abuts both the town forest of the adjoining community of Madison and The Nature Conservancy's Ossipee Pine Barrens reserve, protecting it would safeguard from development more than 5,000 acres of contiguous land.

Call to Action

When Jennifer Molin went into action, calling a meeting of folks from Freedom and Madison who might want to see the land protected, about 40 people showed up - the first gathering of a group that came to be called the Friends of Trout Pond, for the pristine, 20-acre pond that is the land's loveliest and most iconic feature.

One of those attending the first meeting was Chuck Depew, who had been concerned that the property might end up in houses since the late 1980s, when a developer announced plans to build an airstrip and a "fly-in" second-home community there. (Two of these already exist across the line in Madison: Windsock Village and Soaring Heights.)

Back then, the town passed a zoning ordinance that made the fly-in community impossible. But it was only a matter of time until someone tried to develop the land. By Depew's reckoning, town zoning would have allowed as many as 350 new homes.

"I simply didn't want the changes in town that 350 houses would have brought," Depew says.

Specifically, he worried about the increased cost of town services - schools, roads, and oth-

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STATE DAM BUREAU WILL REPAIR, IMPROVE OSS�PEE RIVER COMPLEX

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When the flow of water into the river slows down, the water behind it backs up into Berry Bay which then impedes the flow from Leavitt Bay.

The back-up effect is repeated throughout the channels all the way to the tributaries feeding the big lake, resulting in flooding.

Broad Bay resident Bob Smart, who has studied the management of the lake's water level, says there have been significant floods in modern times in 1969, 1976 and 1998.

During the 1998 flood more than 17 inches of rain fell from June 13-15, raising the lake level to 413 feet from the summer level of 407.25. Boats and docks were swept away and large parts of the shoreline were eroded.

MARINA CASE HEADED TO STATE COURT

FREEDOM — For the second time in four years a Superior Court judge will rule on the scope of operations at Ossipee Lake Marina.

Lake property owner Kathleen Keenan has appealed the Freedom Zoning Board of Adjustment's January 23 approval of unlimited boat storage at the business. Her attorney, Fay Melendy, cited state legal precedents, town zoning and previous ZBA decisions in her brief.

By approving more boats, Melendy said, the Board overturned two previous ZBA rulings without stating a legal basis for doing so. In 1997 the ZBA granted a special exception to construct storage buildings provided that there would be no more than 225 boats inside and no more than 10% additional boats parked outside the structures.

In 2002 marina owner Kevin Price of Londonderry applied to increase the limits but was denied when the Board ruled the increase would expand a non-conforming use and have an adverse impact on the surrounding residential area. Price sued the town and lost.

THE TIMES FINDS OSS�PEE TO ITS LIKING

OSS�PEE — Reasonably priced, refreshingly low-key, lots to do. That's Ossipee as seen through the eyes of New York Times reporter Jeff Vandam, who profiled the town in the paper's "Havens" column in January.

The best part of living in Ossipee? The outdoor activities, of course, with boating in summer, hiking in fall and skiing in winter.

What's not to like? "Not everyone is in love with the Ossipee spring," Vandam wrote, an obvious reference to the quadruple play of roadway frost heaves, mud, pollen and black flies.

A similar occurrence was narrowly averted in October 2005 when more than 11 inches of rain fell just days after the completion of a planned early drawdown of the lake to accommodate shoreline repairs by property owners and businesses.

"Human intervention can only do so much," Smart wrote several years ago in a news story for Ossipee Lake Report.

"When nature decides to dump on the area, the lake level will go up and stay up until the drainage system created by the glacier can bring the level back to normal."

Lake resident Tom Wilkinson contributed to this article. Bob Smart's Autumn 2004 article on managing the level of the lake can be accessed on the Newsroom tab at www.ossipeelake.org.

Melendy says the current Board should have been guided by a state legal precedent that limits the number of times an applicant can apply for the same denied special exception.

"It is unreasonable and unlawful to make the community again mount an opposition to the same use simply because the applicant has waited a couple of years to reapply," she wrote.

Melendy said the Board's 3-1 vote that there would be no adverse impact contradicts the findings of the 2002 Board and testimony by property owners and environmental groups, including the N.H. Department of Environmental Services.

She also noted that the town's fire chief, Gene Dow, declined to appear at any of the hearings on the matter, and his written statement approving Price's plan days before the final hearing contradicts his testimony in the 2002 ZBA case when he expressed concerns about storing boats in the wooded residential neighborhood.

Overall, however, the Times man found quite a lot to like, including local restaurant favorites Lazy Susan's and Yankee Smokehouse and friendly residents eager to rhapsodize about everything from golfing to backroad motorcycle riding.

"Then there is the lake," he wrote, "mostly quiet and tucked within a collection of low-rise, pine-covered mountains."

Observant readers of the story on the Times' website caught the fact that the accompanying picture of the pine tree with the name signs is actually in, oops, Freedom.

BUYING THE WOODS OF TROUT POND



Permanently preserved for recreation and spiritual refreshment, Trout Pond is the focal point of Freedom's community forest. Photo: Jennifer Molin

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er infrastructure - that the new residents might have required.

But after that first meeting, Depew didn't hold out much hope that the land could be protected. The potential cost was enormous, much more than a town of 1,400 people could come up with on its own. And how would Freedom manage and steward such a large amount of land?

"I thought it was useless to go to the second meeting," he says. But he told his friend Ed Reed, a banker who had also attended the first gathering, "If you come back, so will I."

Accompanied by Katie Gove's golden retriever, Murphy, and Blair Folts's lumbering Swiss mountain dog, Orion, the group heads up a shaded trail into the forest. The path, lined with pale birches and overhung with beach, maple, and oak, climbs gradually. The dogs range ahead, splashing in puddles along the trail.

Here and there chunky stumps bear witness to successive waves of land clearing and timber cutting since before the Civil War, when some of the land was denuded for farming. As they walk, the conservationists tell the story of their project, one voice giving way to the next.

Like many privately owned forests in the Northeast, this one had long been open to recreation, and many people in town simply assumed it was public, says Gove.

They had used it for years, for hiking, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling. They had hunted on the land; their fathers and grandfathers had hunted on it.

"They thought they already owned it," she says.

She remembers when she first heard the property was for sale. "I thought, someone should do something about that."

Blair Folts, director of the Green Mountain Conservation Group, at first was skeptical when Jennifer Molin asked for help with the ambitious project.

"The best thing I could think to do was to stall her," Folts recalls. "I asked her to gather some materials, lists of abutters, stuff like that, thinking it should take her awhile. She was back the very next day with everything I had asked for. I thought to myself: she can do this. There was just so much passion around this project."

But Folts also understood that the scale of the effort demanded more financial capacity and negotiating support than her local watershed association could offer.

One of the group's members had read about Trust for Public Land's (TPL) work protecting more than 170,000 acres of working forest around the Connecticut River headwaters in far northern New Hampshire. So they contacted Rodger Krussman in TPL's Northern New England field office.

Community Forests

The state of New Hampshire grants town conservation commissions the power to own and manage a town forest, and this option soon emerged as the most logical one for the land's protection.

The project might qualify for state and federal funds available for the acquisition of working forests. And proceeds for sustainable timber harvesting could be used to help support the land's management and improvement. If the town could come up with its share of the funds, and other public and private funds

"There was always recreation, and a lot of people thought the land was already owned by the public."
Katie Gove

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THE ABANDONED COMMUNITY OF SHAWTOWN RETURNS TO FOREST

By Carol Foord

Courtesy of the Carroll County Independent.

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series on the history of the former community of Shawtown, located in what is now the Freedom Town Forest. Shawtown was settled in the early 1830s, but was abandoned by 1900. All that remains are cellar holes and a graveyard.

FREEDOM — Pequawket Trail, which bisects Freedom's pine barrens north to south, was part of a Native American circular migratory route through interior woodlands where animals were hunted for meat and hides, to the coastal region where fish were netted, speared and dried for the winter-spring "starving time."

Pequawket translates as "fertile valley along-side river" as well as "punched up rock" (Jockey Cap, Fryeburg). Capt. John Lovewell and his infamous Indian raiders likely used Pequawket Trail on their ill-fated journey to Pequawket in 1725. Their intent was to rid the area of the remaining Abenakis in Maine (Massachusetts, then).

After the one-day battle, which ended in devastating losses on both sides, the small band of surviving Pequawket Indians left the region and settled in Canada.

Nonetheless, for the next few decades, this part of New Hampshire was not considered safe from Indian attack. Effingham was first granted in 1749, for instance, but few settlers dared to come.

The surrender of the French and Indians to the British in 1760 ended further threats of Indian attack in the colonies. Settlers left the crowded coastal towns and came north to turn wilderness into farmland.

The sandy soils of the Ossipee Plains/pitch pine barrens had little appeal to settlers. In fact, this desert-like landscape was deemed a "land of hopelessness" and thus remained uninhabited for over 200 years.

It did, however, provide important resources for both Native peoples and European settlers: blueberries, cranberries, acorns, and pitch pine "knots" for torch-lights and fire-starters. Pitch pine was also used to make turpentine, wharf pilings, and parts of ships.

The Barons of the Barrens

Not surprisingly, the pine barrens had especial appeal to a series of lumber barons.

The first of these was Ellis B. Usher (1785-1855) from Hollis, Maine. His beginnings were humble. Having lost his mother at an early

age, Usher was raised by his maternal grandmother.

When his father's business failed, he and his brother Abijah, ages 12 and 10 respectively, were each given a horse and sent on their way to eke out a living.

In Hollis, Maine Usher found good work with Col. Isaac Lane. By the age of 19 he bought a farm for his father and an interest in a sawmill in Hollis.

Within a few years, Usher began buying up pine lands along the Saco and Ossipee Rivers to feed his sawmills in Hollis and Saco, Maine. Beginning about 1821, Usher bought land in Freedom; by 1832 he owned 5,000 acres (including the pine barrens).

Log drives were a familiar sight on Ossipee Lake and Ossipee River for years. When the great land speculation era crashed in 1838, banks and other lenders forced Usher to sell his land. He made good on all his debts.

The era of log drives on the Ossipee River continued for another 30 or 40 years as ownership of Usher's land was passed along to a succession of lumber barons: Amos Towle, Jr. and John Kennett, through the 1850s; James O. A. Harmon, Joseph Hobson and Charles McKenney of Buxton, through 1861. After Harmon et al. came Stephen Lane, followed by Charles W. Lewis and a myriad others.

Log Drives on the Lake

In the "History of Carroll County," by Georgia Merrill, the story is told of how on a cold spring night in 1831 Elias Towle (1807-1881), Thomas Andrews (1798-1881) and others maneuvered a large number of pine logs they had cut that winter into Ossipee Lake, in anticipation of the spring log drive down the Ossipee River (perhaps Usher's mill on the Saco).

They secured all the logs inside a boom (a circle of chains) to which they hitched their oxen. With guidance from the workmen, the animals walked along the frozen shoreline, slowly towing the boom of logs down the lake, toward the river. The task continued well into the bitter evening.

At Rocky Point the animals and men found temporary shelter. Chilled to the bone and exhausted, most of the workmen left for the warmth of the lumber camp.

Tom Andrews soon quit as well, leaving Elias Towle to manage the operation alone. With perseverance and determination, Elias and his stalwart oxen managed to tow the boom around the point by daybreak.

"Log drives were a familiar sight on Ossipee Lake and Ossipee River for years."

THE ABANDONED COMMUNITY OF SHAWTOWN RETURNS TO FOREST

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It was said that the animals were so frozen that their fur fell out, and that Elias's clothes had become so rimed with ice that it was with great effort that he returned to camp. Elias's efforts netted him over one thousand dollars.

When most of the virgin pine forests were gone by 1870, lumbermen turned their interests to an untapped natural resource: hardwoods, especially oak. Stacy, Blazo and Mary's Mountains became a prized source of red oak for the mass production of barrels and shook (dissembled barrels) needed in the shipping trade of the early 1880s.

The shook industry was all made possible by the introduction of portable steam-powered mills that were operated on site. By 1900, with little mature forest woodland left, there was not a deer or beaver to be seen.

With an unmet need for paper (for books, wall-paper and newspaper) and for cheap wood to make shipping pallets, crates and boxes, lumber magnates such as George B. James of Publishers Paper Co. and later New England Box Company, bought big tracts of land to harvest young, pulpwood trees.

Two State Preserves

In 1924, lumber baron Simon O. Huckins (grandson of Shawtown's Miles Huckins) acquired a vast woodland tract including the pine barrens and land in old Shawtown.

From these holdings he gave land south of Ossipee Lake Road in 1928 for YMCA Camp Huckins in memory of his beloved, late wife, Nellie.

A few years later, he leased 1,000 acres to the State of New Hampshire for a "State Forest Reservation for the propagation of fish and wildlife". Due to non-compliance by the state, however, the land reverted to the Huckins family in 1936.

In 1941, the Huckins family re-negotiated the lease with the State. "Black Brook Preserve" contained 1,458 acres from Jackman Ridge to the Danforth Ponds, encompassing the entire drainage of Black Brook.

(Note: Black Brook probably got its name from oak and hemlock tannins that once colored the water. It used to be known as Tom Andrews Brook for it powered the lumberman's saw-mill. It is misnamed Cold Brook, however, on other maps.)

The lease for the new preserve specified this time that the land be used for the "protection and propagation of fish, game and fur-bearing animals." Deer and beaver were slow to come

back, and hunting was not permitted. Fingerling trout came from the state's fish hatchery on Route 16.

In 1952 Black Brook Preserve reverted back to the Huckins family again, due to non-compliance by the state. Now rampant with deer, the land was opened to hunting and over 150 deer were killed the first year. In 1961 Huckins's heirs sold the land to the New England Box Company (later known as the New England Lumber).

Fires

In 1947, fires that raged through towns in Maine and New Hampshire also burned several sites in the Trout Pond Preserve. Backfires were lit to contain the fires. The last known fire in the tract was in 1956.

In 1990, a huge fire-scarred oak tree, over 140 years old, was found growing on the slope of Stacy mountain; it had been the primary seed tree from which much of the oak on Stacy Mountain has regenerated since the 1880s.

Recent History

In 1978, the Carol and Will Foord family purchased the land. More parcels were added to the whole during the 1980s until the tract was nearly 4,000 acres.

In 1990 the Foords offered the former Black Brook Preserve on the Plains as well as the mountainous Trout Pond tract to The Nature Conservancy in Concord.

The Conservancy performed a heritage inventory to document rare plant and insect species on the land. When completed, the list was short and Conservancy efforts lost momentum. The tract was then promoted to LCIP (precursor to LCHIP), but without fruition.

The land was sold in 1992 to a Nevada investment group that sold almost half of the tract to various parties over the course of 10 years.

In 2001 a hopeful group called Friends of Trout Pond raised awareness, funds and grant monies to purchase the remaining land. In the spring of 2005 their efforts resulted in acquisition of a town forest that is now called Trout Pond Preserve. The Land of Hopelessness had forever in perpetuity become the Land of Hope.

Next Issue: In the final installment of this series, Shawtown takes its rightful place in the town's history.

Historian, naturalist and author Carol Foord lives in Freedom where she is writing a book on the history of Shawtown.

"When most of the virgin pine forests were gone by 1870, lumbermen turned their attention to an untapped resource: hardwoods."

BUSY YEAR FOR LAKE HOSTS AT OSSIPEE'S TOWN BOAT RAMP

By Mark Ciarfella

After our first summer managing the New Hampshire Lakes Association's Lake Host Program at the Ossipee Town Boat Ramp, I am very pleased to announce that the program was a complete success.

We began ramp coverage on Sunday, June 11th and finished on Sunday, September 10th. A total of 272 hours of ramp coverage was provided both in paid lake host hours, thanks to the grant we received, and volunteer time donated by myself and Jean Hansen over the fourteen weeks.

During that time we were able to provide a total of 506 courtesy inspections, raising public awareness and educating boaters on the potential dangers of transferring exotic invasive plant species from lake to lake.

Although no exotic milfoil was detected on boats entering or exiting the lake, several suspicious plants were detected on boats preparing to enter the lake. These specimens were removed and sent to Concord for testing to be ruled out as other types of exotic invasive plants found here in New England. I am happy to announce that all testing came back negative.

Once again I would like to thank everyone involved in making our first summer such a great success.

I could not have done this without the help of the very dedicated people that all took part in protecting one of our greatest natural resources. I am looking forward to working with all of you again next summer.

Ossipee resident Mark Ciarfella manages the town's Lake Host program on behalf of the Ossipee Conservation Commission.

STATE REQUIRES LAKE MANAGEMENT PLAN

By Amy Smagula

CONCORD — A new state rule requires lakes with milfoil, fanwort, water chestnut or any other exotic aquatic plant to have a long-term management plan that outlines the problem, the goals of management and what techniques will be used to achieve those goals.

In January 2006 the Department of Environmental Services and the Fish and Game Department entered into a memorandum of agreement about how exotic aquatic plant control projects, or any projects dealing with aquatic plant management, will be handled.

The purpose of these plans is to ensure that there is a structured, well-organized process that is tailored to manage growths of aquatic vegetation on a lake by lake basis.

New Hampshire is not alone in this new method for coordinating activities associated with aquatic plant management. New York, Massachusetts and Vermont also incorporate systematic approaches to planning.

Once the lake-specific management plans are created they will lay the groundwork for ensuring that matching funds are earmarked for lakes that are scheduled for controls.

Best Management Practices

They will also ensure that staff biologists have time allotted to work with individual lakes and that all best management practices are being employed to reduce nuisance growths of exotic plants.

It should be noted that the emphasis for control is still on exotic aquatic plants, and that matching funds will only be available for projects seeking to control exotic aquatic plants. Projects seeking to control native plants will still, however, need to have a management plan before any work is approved.

The Department of Environmental Services will take the lead in drafting the management plans, but it will include input from the lake residents, municipalities, Fish and Game, and other stakeholders in the health and integrity of the waterbody and its surroundings.

The management plans will include the following:

- The current status of the aquatic vegetation in the pond;
- The chemical, physical, biological, and ecological characteristics of the pond.
- The recreational values of the waterbody.
- The goals of aquatic management for the water body.
- The desired outcomes of any management actions.
- The use of integrated pest management strategies.
- The selected control strategies and monitoring plan following implementation of control strategies.

Ossipee Lake Alliance will be working with DES on this management plan.

Amy Smagula is Exotic Species Program Coordinator for the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

BUYING THE WOODS OF TROUT POND

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could be found, a community forest could give the town important new control over its own future.

Freedom is far from the only northern New England community to create a community forest in recent years. Town forests and woodlots are a tradition in Vermont and New Hampshire. In the past, harvested wood may have been used to pay the local schoolmaster, for example, or to defray the cost of other community services. Historically, these woodlands have been managed primarily for timber production but were also promoted for recreation, wildlife and watershed conservation, and other purposes.

More recent trends have prompted an upsurge of regional interest in community-owned forests. Many private timber companies - landowners of long standing - are getting out of the timber business, replaced by landowners who are more interested in turning a quick profit from the land, often through development. Millions of acres that long have provided jobs and recreation to local communities are coming up for sale. And in many communities, resources are being strained and community character is being threatened by second-home development that can only accelerate as private woodlands come on the market.

"Communities are realizing that protecting a local parcel as a community forest can be an economically feasible way to preserve recreation, rural culture and the environment," says TPL's Krussman. "Most of all, towns want some control over what happens to the land." Since 2000, TPL has helped create five community forests in northern New England while exploring new financing tools.

The ultimate success of Freedom's campaign was due to huge amounts of hard work. The conservationists organized an executive committee, each member heading up an area of focus. Jennifer Molin and the Friends of Trout Pond launched a public education campaign to explain the project's goals to residents. Rodger Krussman and TPL negotiated an option to acquire the land for \$2.3 million. Chuck Depew and Ed Reed spearheaded an effort that raised more than \$500,000 in private funds from foundations and 750 individuals, more than half the town's population. Katie Gove and the town selectboard worked to secure a \$100,000 appropriation from the Freedom town meeting, with more than 90 percent approval.

Key support for the project came from New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, which kicked in \$250,000, and especially from the USDA Forest Legacy Program, which granted \$1.2 million as direct-

ed by Congress. U.S. Senator Judd Gregg, a member of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, which oversees Forest Legacy Program funding, has been a longtime and energetic supporter of Forest Legacy projects in the state. Others in New Hampshire's congressional delegation, U.S. Senator John Sununu and U.S. representatives Jeb Bradley and Charles Bass, also provided support. The land was transferred to the town in June 2005.

Managing a Working Forest

The trail grows steeper, then suddenly levels off in a clearing beside the glassy expanse of Trout Pond. Towering white pines cast the clearing into welcome shade. There really are trout in the pond, says project forester Barry Keith - native fish and others the state plants each year. Elena Piekut, an intern with the Green Mountain Conservation Group, who has come along to test the water quality of the pond, wades in with her water analyzer and soon proclaims the pond first-class for low bacteria and high levels of dissolved oxygen. Farther out, a chunky loon, the first the conservationists have ever seen here, dives for his share of the pond's fish.

Make no mistake, this is a real working forest, declares Keith. "We will be managing it for forest quality, recreation, and wildlife habitat," he says. A forestry stewardship plan has been written and a 100-acre timber harvest completed, the proceeds helping to defray the costs of future forest management. Informational kiosks now stand at the head of major trails, and nature trails are being planned. The community has applied for state and federal grants to create and improve wildlife habitat. But managing a forest is an ongoing responsibility; Keith and Conservation Commissioner Katie Gove will be deeply involved in stewardship decisions.

"Not only did they get the money and acquire the land, but in only a year they've gone a long way in turning this forest into an important community resource," says TPL's Rodger Krussman. "This land is already generating benefits for the community."

As for Jennifer Molin, Chuck Depew, the Friends of Trout Pond and the other partners, this positive outcome has given them the itch to do more conservation. They've launched a new group called Freedom Lands and are talking to private landowners about protecting their property.

"There are other conservation opportunities in town. We've learned a little bit in getting this project done," Molin says. "Why not use what we know?"

"In only a year, they've gone a long way in turning this forest into an important community resource."



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INSIDE:

- Dam Repairs Are Needed
- N.Y. Times Discovers Ossipee
- Marina Case Headed to State Court
- Abandoned Shawtown Returns to Forest

Preserve. Protect. Educate.

