

Nearly 45 acres in Great Bay saved for conservation

By MICHAEL GOOT Portsmouth Bureau Chief
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NEWMARKET — Hiking, walking and enjoying views of Great Bay are all now possible after the Nature Conservancy bought the nearly 45-acre Pitman family property on Bay Road for more than \$1 million.

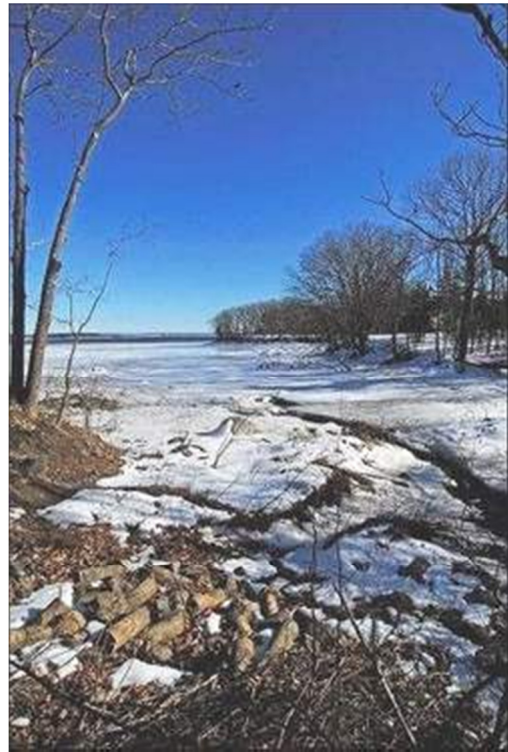
The agency spent \$1,070,000 to purchase the largely forested land that lies near the Durham town line at 261 Bay Road.

"This has been in the works for many years. There's just lots of little pieces to pull together," said Eric Aldrich, a spokesman for the Nature Conservancy. "The patriarch of the family, Mr. (Stanley) Pitman had passed away a few weeks ago. This was one of his dreams to see that land protected. Unfortunately, he didn't see that happen, but he knew it was heading in that direction."

Aldrich said the Nature Conservancy on behalf of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership completed its purchase of the parcel on Feb. 20. The land is mostly woods with oak trees, pines, hemlock and other vegetation. It will be used for hiking, walking and hunting. Ultimately, the Nature Conservancy will transfer the land to the Fish and Game Department.

He said that having this land protected — rather than developed — will improve the water quality of Great Bay. The land is a good source of "vernal pools," which are small temporary pools of water that form in the spring where amphibians, salamanders and frogs breed. Also, a healthy forest generates oxygen to improve air quality. In addition, now that the land will be undeveloped, there will not be the threat of water runoff.

Val Shelton, a real estate agent who helped broker the sale of the family property, said the family did not want to see the land developed.



The Nature Conservancy bought the 45-acre Pitman family property on Bay Road, a portion of which shown here, for \$1,070,000. This property will be open for recreational uses such as hiking. This property will be added to conservation lands the conservancy acquired last month in Durham and Madbury. (John Huff/ Staff photographer)



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"They had held that land for many years and they are avid outdoors people — particularly Stanley Pitman Sr. — and that was his wish to have that land protected," she said. "The saddest part about all this is he passed away literally days before the transaction occurred."

This new land is in addition to other previously protected parcels along Royalls Cove in Durham and Madbury to create about 70 acres of open space. In late January, the Nature Conservancy on behalf of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership purchased for \$1,170,000 conservation easements on the property along Royalls Cove owned by Gerald and Dorothy Smith of Durham and his grown children, Gordon Smith, Jeff Smith and Carol Smith Tuveson.

The Smith family continues to own and pay taxes on the property but the conservation easement prevents it from being developed. The conservancy will ultimately transfer the conservation easement on the Smith tracts to

the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire forests.

Funds for this conservation project also came from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Wendy Pitman, a spokesperson for the family, could not be reached for comment