

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact:
Duane Hyde, (603) 659-2678 x20,
dhyde@tnc.org
The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire;
Joel Harrington, (603) 224-5853 x28,
jharrington@tnc.org,
The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire

Five Sisters Protect 115 Acres of Family Farm in Follet's Brook

*Acquisition creates a contiguous block of 300 acres of conserved land in
Durham and Newmarket*



Photo Credit: Ellen Snyder

NEWMARKET, N.H. — The Nature Conservancy and the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership today announced the conservation of 115 acres of an old family farm along Follet's Brook belonging to five sisters. This open space acquisition adds to adjacent conservation lands, creating a contiguous block of over 300 acres of conserved land straddling the towns of Durham and Newmarket.

“We’re very pleased to be able to work with The Nature Conservancy and the Great Bay Partnership to place this land in conservation,” said Adrienne Rubino. “It has meant so much to our family, and it’s great to know the land will remain intact and healthy for generations to come.”

On behalf of the Great Bay Partnership, The Nature Conservancy acquired the property from five sisters who together owned the family property known locally as Knight Farm. The sisters' mother, Florence Arendt Smith, acquired the farm in 1965 from her uncle, John Knight who bought the property in 1952 after his farm was purchased for the construction of Pease Air Force Base. With their mother's ailing health and eventual passing, the sisters were forced to put the property on the market. Prior to the Great Bay Partnership showing interest in the property, it was under contract with a buyer who was considering subdividing and developing the property.

The property includes over 3,250 feet of frontage on both sides of Follet's Brook and permanently protects approximately 45 acres of associated wetlands that provide exceptional breeding habitat for Blanding's and spotted turtles, both of which are on the State of New Hampshire's endangered and threatened species list. The remainder of the property is a mix of open fields, which together total approximately 50 acres of excellent upland bird habitat, and forests.

In addition to its outstanding wildlife habitat features, the property provides important water supply protection for the Town of Newmarket. Newmarket was a critical partner in the project by providing direct funding support and assisting in securing a grant from the N.H. Department of Environmental Services.

"Newmarket residents, like most Granite Staters, are very supportive of conservation," said Ed Wojnowski, Town Administrator for Newmarket. "It is such a great feeling of achievement when we can be involved in a project that conserves so many resources that are not only important for our community but the Great Bay region."

Additional funding assistance came from the Town of Durham Conservation Commission, Lamprey River Advisory Committee, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Water Supply Land Grant Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetland Conservation Act, and private funds raised by The Nature Conservancy.

"The Department of Environmental Services is happy to provide the Town of Newmarket with a Water Supply Land Protection grant to preserve both the quality and quantity of its drinking water supply. Land conservation is one of the most effective ways to protect public drinking water," according to Holly Green who administers the grant program.

The Nature Conservancy conveyed a conservation easement over the entire parcel to the town of Newmarket and plans to transfer the property to New Hampshire Audubon who will manage the property including allowing for public pedestrian access, hunting and fishing.

This is the Great Bay Partnership's second acquisition in the Follet's Brook conservation area, which was identified as a priority for conservation through the Great Bay Partnership's "Ecological Inventory of the Cocheco River Watershed and the Follet's Brook Watershed" report prepared in December 2004. The Follet's Brook area has many important conservation features including known breeding populations of Canada goose, mallard, wood duck,

hooded merganser, and green back heron. Notable wildlife observed in the Follet's Brook area include American black duck, bobolink, eastern meadowlark, blue-winged warbler, Canada warbler, spotted salamander, four-toed salamander, black bear, moose, and bobcat. The Follet's Brook area also includes the state threatened small crested sedge and the state endangered knotty pondweed.

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership uses a comprehensive approach to identify Great Bay's most critical habitats and to protect them. With The Nature Conservancy as lead acquisition agent, the partners also include Ducks Unlimited, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Natural Resources Conservation Service, New Hampshire Audubon, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Local communities and regional land trusts are also community partners in the Partnership.

Since 1994 the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership has protected more than 5,000 acres of critical habitat around Great Bay. Local communities and other organizations have protected over 3,000 acres that the partnership has been able to use as match to leverage federal funding. The leading sources of funds include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, North American Wetland Conservation Act and private donations. A key player in securing those funds is U.S. Senator Judd Gregg who knows the Great Bay area well.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org/newhampshire

Joel M. Harrington
Director of Government Relations
jharrington@tnc.org
(603) 224-5853 Ext. 28 (Phone)
(603) 228-2459 (Fax)

The Nature Conservancy
New Hampshire
22 Bridge Street, 4th Floor
Concord, NH 03301



www.nature.org/newhampshire