

Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership Protects 5,000 Acres for Health of Great Bay

After 12 Years, A Milestone is Reached

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After 12 years of quiet, steady progress, efforts to protect one of New Hampshire's most important ecosystems has reached a significant milestone. The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership has passed the 5,000 mark in the number of acres protected since its first project in 1996 – spanning 24 communities in the Great Bay Conservation Focus Area. The Partnership and The Nature Conservancy recently completed five acquisitions – 121 acres in Durham and Newmarket – moving the Partnership's total of protected acreage to 5,328 acres.

“It's remarkable what the partnership has been able to accomplish just in the past 15 years,” said Daryl Burnett, state director of The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire. “That success is possible because of the collective strength of the partners. And it's possible because conservation leaders at the local, state and national level understand the urgency of conserving Great Bay's remarkable places while we still can.”

The Great Bay Partnership has undertaken a comprehensive, landscape-scale approach to conservation and habitat protection within 24 towns around Great Bay. Since 1994, the Partnership has operated as a unique cooperative effort intended to further collective conservation goals and promote conservation actions in the Great Bay region. Habitat protection strategies and stewardship activities are developed and implemented through scientific field studies and collaboration with local, regional, state and national conservation partners. Its principle partners include: Ducks Unlimited; Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; N.H. Audubon; N.H. Fish and Game Department; Society for the Protection of N.H. Forests; The Nature Conservancy; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge; and the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

“Great Bay is one of the most spectacular natural treasures in New Hampshire and ensuring its continued protection is critical,” said U.S. Senator Judd Gregg. “This area is home to more than 150 rare species and 55 natural communities and ecosystems; it also provides recreational areas for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy. I applaud the Partnership for their extraordinary commitment to protecting the Bay over the last 15 years and look forward to working with them to ensure future generations of New Hampshire residents and visitors alike are able to enjoy the Bay in all its natural splendor,” he said.

Formally designated as a National Estuarine Research Reserve and an Important Bird Area, Great Bay is identified as a conservation priority in the NH Wildlife Action Plan, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and the EPA's NH Resource Protection Project. Here, the intersection of saltwater, freshwater, and land creates a remarkably rich diversity of habitat.

The estuary sustains 75% of New Hampshire's wintering waterfowl along with nesting osprey, bald eagles, and countless other migratory and resident wildlife. Recreational boaters, fisherman, oyster harvesters, and local lobstermen have long plied its waters, while community members and visitors heavily utilize the expanding network of conservation lands and trails.

“Our family has always had a strong connection with the land,” said David Langley. The Langley family has been a part of Durham's history since 1714, even before the town itself was incorporated. The family has owned and farmed a large part of the Durham Point area since 1890. Over the years, the Langley's initial holding has been divided, with smaller tracts going to family members. In recent times the farm on the shores of the Little Bay section of Great Bay has been well-known for its bison operation, a business David Langley started in 1986 after serving in the military. “Our feeling is that we have a responsibility not just to the land itself, but also to our ancestors and the way the land provided for them. So we all felt the land here was worth protecting.”

“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 with a wonderful partnership that conserves so many resources that are not only important for our community but the Great Bay region.”

About the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership is a group of organizations committed to protecting the important habitats of the Great Bay region. The Great Bay Partnership has undertaken a comprehensive, landscape-scale approach to conservation and habitat protection within 24 towns around Great Bay. Since 1994, the Great Bay Partnership has operated as a unique cooperative effort intended to further collective conservation goals and promote conservation actions in the Great Bay region. Habitat protection strategies and stewardship activities are developed and implemented through the integration of scientific field studies and collaboration with local, regional, state and national conservation partners. For more information please visit www.greatbaypartnership.org