

Brett Farm conservation easement protects classic site

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Another 53 acres of land in town has been put in conservation. Such was Conservation Commission chairman Eric Fiegenbaum's good news when on Oct. 5 the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership celebrated its 100th conservation project at the Brett farm on Route 155.

Fiegenbaum, one of several speakers at the event, reminded his listeners that protecting land in Madbury is beneficial to the region since Portsmouth gets 60 percent of its water from the Bellamy Reservoir while Durham and Dover get water from the Oyster and Bellamy River watersheds. The Brett farm will be kept in the family with a conservation easement being held by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. It means ensuring about 1300 feet along Gerrish Brook, where a state Species of Concern, the red fin pickerel, has been found. A rare plant, the blue sedge, is found on this property as well.

Wesley and Helen Brett moved their family here in 1946, according to the Brett's son Nick who worked with the GBRPP to fulfill his father's wish to have the land kept open. At the celebration, he reminisced about how different living on this farm was for him and his siblings, after having lived in Durham: they had cows and chickens and chores. "It was a subsistence farm," he recalled.

Wesley Brett was a professor of design and art at the University of New Hampshire at the time — and later elsewhere before returning upon his retirement. The workshop he and Nick built on the farm reflects his talent. The house, barn and workshop are grouped at the top of a gradual rise from Route 108, not to be seen from the road. A more beautiful farm setting would be hard to find — a more serene setting even more elusive.

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