

SELT to acquire forest next to Stonehouse Pond
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Stonehouse Forest in the fall. Jerry Monkman/EcoPhotography

BARRINGTON — The Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire (SELT) announced it has reached an agreement to acquire approximately 1,500 acres of undeveloped forestland adjacent to the popular Stonehouse Pond in Barrington and that the project was awarded a highly competitive grant from the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). The \$420,000 LCHIP grant is its largest award of the 2015 round. “The Stonehouse Forest represents many of the reasons why we conserve land – clean water, outdoor recreation, and wildlife habitat – all valued greatly by residents in our rapidly growing region,” explains Brian Hart, Executive Director of SELT, an Exeter-based nonprofit that works with communities and landowners to conserve land for the benefit of people and nature. “LCHIP’s grant reinforces the statewide and local importance of this land and why we are so excited about the opportunity to conserve it.” The proposed “Stonehouse Forest” abuts the popular Stonehouse Pond property owned by SELT and managed in partnership with the NH Fish and Game Department. The 1,500-acre Stonehouse Forest lies to the east of the property, with frontage on the Franklin Pierce Highway (Route 9/202), Swain Road, Merry Hill Road, and the Nottingham town line, where it abuts the once proposed USA Springs water bottling facility. At one time slated as a private exotic game hunting reserve by its Italian owner, the Stonehouse Forest has been posted against public access for decades, making it one of Barrington’s best kept open space secrets. Behind all of the current “no trespassing signs” sits a well-designed woods road network with beautiful stone retaining walls that afford easy access for recreation and habitat/forest management. A schedule of public tours can be found on SELT’s website, www.seltnh.org. “Such a large privately owned forested tract close to Great Bay and New Hampshire’s coastal communities is a rarity and it was great the landowner agreed to work with SELT on a conservation option rather than pursuing his original approach of selling the land for residential development” says Duane Hyde, Land Conservation Director for SELT. In addition to the outdoor recreational opportunities that will be available at the Stonehouse Forest, the beautiful and unspoiled setting also provides important wildlife habitat and natural resource values. All of the water on the Stonehouse Forest eventually reaches the Great Bay Estuary via the Wild & Scenic Lamprey River or through the Bellamy River, which is one of the drinking water sources for the City of Portsmouth. The majestic Round Pond and Little Round Pond found within the Stonehouse Forest are natural undammed ponds that resemble ponds found in New Hampshire’s North Country. The terrain of the Stonehouse Forest ranges from relatively flat to steep slopes, and includes small cliff faces, rock outcrops, and large boulders left over from the last glaciation. This terrain provides a variety of habitat for animals including

denning sites for species such as porcupine, bear, and bobcats. “Working with SELT, the Town of Barrington has the opportunity to conserve a property that not only will be a place that future generations can enjoy, but also a place that provides and will continue to provide exceptional plant and wildlife habitat” explains John Wallace, Chair of Barrington’s Conservation Commission. SELT has introduced the project to the Barrington Conservation Commission and Barrington Board of Selectmen and requested financial support from the Town. The Commission endorsed the project at its December meeting and the Selectmen are still considering the project as part of its 2016 budget deliberations. SELT planned to meet with selectmen to further discuss the Town’s possible partnership on the project. LCHIP’s funding will be one of many public and private sources necessary to acquire the property and ensure sufficient resources to steward the land for generations to come. “Our effort to conserve this land has just started and we welcome help from area residents and businesses,” Hart commented. Those interested in volunteering their time and talent may call SELT’s offices at 603-778-6088 or send an email to info@seltnh.org. The Southeast Land Trust of NH is a member-supported nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and sustain the significant lands in our communities for clean water, fresh food, outdoor recreation, healthy forests, and wildlife. Since 1980, SELT has served 52 communities of southeastern New Hampshire to conserve more than 14,000 acres of land through conservation agreements and ownerships. SELT is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. For more information, visit www.seltnh.org or call (603) 778-6088. The New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program is an independent state authority that provides matching grants to New Hampshire communities and non-profits to protect and preserve the state’s most important natural, cultural, and historic resources. Its legislatively mandated mission is to ensure the perpetual contribution of these resources to the economy, environment, and the quality of life in New Hampshire. Up until the current grant round, 341 LCHIP grants have helped 143 New Hampshire communities conserve more than 278,000 acres of land and 180 historic structures and sites. The \$36 million of state money invested in these projects has leveraged more than \$234 million in funds from other sources. LCHIP grants are supported by fees on four documents recorded at the Registry of Deeds in every county of the state. For more information about LCHIP visit lchip.org or call (603) 224-4113.

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