

Piscassic Greenway adds acres of habitat in Newmarket

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NEWMARKET — The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership and Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire announced today the acquisition of 59 acres of valuable wetland, stream frontage and wildlife habitat as an addition to the popular Piscassic Greenway.

The Greenway is a part of an assemblage of over 760 acres of protected land in Newmarket and Newfields with over 3 miles of trails that are enjoyed by the public for its recreational and wildlife viewing opportunities.

The newly acquired Tucker tract, located off Neal Mill Road in Newmarket, boasts a large complex of beaver impounded wetlands, and nearly 3,000 feet of frontage along Piscassic Stream, which flows into the Piscassic River. The Piscassic River is a tributary to the Lamprey River which flows into the Great Bay estuary. The permanent conservation of the Tucker property contributes to the protection of water quality in the estuary.

The entire property is designated as “highest ranking habitat in New Hampshire” in the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's Wildlife Action Plan and provides high quality, diverse wetland habitat for waterfowl, migratory birds and other local wildlife. The open marshes are ideal for several turtle species of conservation concern, including wood, Blanding's and spotted.

“This is an important investment for water quality protection, but as important is the quality wildlife habitat found on the property,” said Duane Hyde, director of conservation programs for The Nature Conservancy. “Because of its value, we and our partners have been working to conserve this parcel for more than a decade. We are extremely proud and excited to be able to stand side by side with Southeast Land Trust and announce its permanent protection for the residents of Newmarket and for the entire region to enjoy.”

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), on behalf of the Great Bay Resource Protection partnership, negotiated with the landowner, Donald Tucker of Newmarket, on the sale of the 59 acres and directed the deed at closing to the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire (SELTNH) which will own and manage the land into the future. The Nature Conservancy holds a conservation restriction on the property ensuring its permanent protection from development.

“The addition of the Tucker tract to the Piscassic Greenway will strengthen our management opportunities for wildlife and provide for the option to expand our trail network to Neal Mill Road,” explains Brian Hart, executive director of the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire. “As owner of the adjacent 385 acres known as the Piscassic Greenway, the Southeast Land Trust has initiated a series of management activities in the past year to diversify wildlife habitat and to create sustainable, interconnected trail system for passive recreation. These activities include maintaining open field habitat and creating early successional shrub and brush habitat.”

Conserving land like the Tucker property has an impact on the health of the natural systems that wildlife and people enjoy. The Great Bay region provides a variety of wildlife habitats that

support more than 150 rare species and 55 exemplary natural communities and ecosystems. Encompassing the outflow of five rivers to the Atlantic Ocean, the area is known for providing North American waterfowl breeding, migration and wintering habitat for more than 20 species of migratory waterfowl species. It is widely recognized as an ecosystem of local, regional, state, national and international significance.

For nineteen years, the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership's commitment to the Seacoast and its collaborative approach to conservation have secured a diversity of habitats including open fields, shrub lands, and forests, and protected over 6,000 acres in the vicinity of Great Bay. Protection efforts have also ensured that thousands of acres of land remain available for uses such as hiking, snowshoeing, wildlife observation, hunting, and fishing.

The public is invited to a field trip to the Tucker tract and the Piscassic Greenway scheduled for Saturday, February 2nd at 9 a.m. To sign up, visit www.seltnh.org or call 603-778-6088.

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