

103 acres of scenic farmland preserved in Hampton

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HAMPTON – The town of Hampton and the Southeast Land Trust announced the completion of two conservation easements, protecting 103 acres of forestland and productive and scenic farmland in Hampton.

The Batchelder Farm is one of the most unique and historic properties in Hampton and has been a top priority for the town of Hampton for years.

The project achieves the shared goals of a broad partnership among local, state, federal and private entities including the town of Hampton, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Southeast Land Trust of N.H., N.H. Land & Community Heritage Investment Program, N.H. State Conservation Committee, and more than 130 individuals, businesses, and foundations.

“Because of the many public benefits, this land was a conservation priority here locally and also on the state and national levels,” said David Viale, land protection and stewardship specialist with the Southeast Land Trust. “Conserving this land protects productive soils providing opportunity for local agriculture, helps protect the water quality of the Taylor River, preserves critical wildlife habitat, and ensures that large blocks of open space will remain undeveloped and available for passive recreation and enjoyment by the public.”

As one of the largest undeveloped parcels remaining in Hampton, the farm has been identified by the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds and the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan as being important for maintaining clean water, productive forests, important wildlife habitats, and recreational opportunities.

“The impact of having this historic property protected is immeasurable, and will be felt for many, many years to come,” said Jay Diener, chairman of the Hampton Conservation Commission. “We are grateful to the Batchelder family for their foresight in realizing the importance of protecting this beautiful and historic property, and to the townspeople of Hampton for their unwavering support and generosity, which has been critical to being able to purchase these Conservation Easements. It is wonderful to know that the good people of Hampton realize that the preservation of open spaces is as important to the future of our community as is its well-planned development.”

The land was conserved through the purchase of two conservation easements for \$832,500, which is less than the appraised fair market value of \$850,000.

Funding for the purchase of the conservation easements was provided by the partnership, including \$425,000 from the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), \$250,000 from the town of Hampton warrant article, \$80,000 from the N.H. Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), \$66,000 from the Hampton Conservation Fund, and \$11,500 from private gifts.

The remaining project costs of \$111,320 are provided through a \$30,000 N.H. State Conservation Committee Grant, \$25,000 from the Hampton Conservation Fund, \$10,000 from the Fields Pond Foundation, and \$46,320, in gifts from private foundations, businesses and individuals.

The conservation easements limit future residential, commercial, and industrial development of the property so as to ensure that it remains as open space and restricts uses that would degrade the natural resource values. Forestry and farming of the land may continue, so long as they are done in accordance with best management practices. The easements also ensure the land will be kept open to the public for non-motorized, passive recreation such as hiking, wildlife observation and cross-country skiing.

As the primary easement holder of both conservation easements, the Southeast Land Trust is responsible for annually monitoring the property to ensure its use remains consistent with the goals of the conservation easement. The town of Hampton and LCHIP are executory interest holders of the conservation easements. Executory interest holders, serve as a “back up” or “substitute” should the Southeast Land Trust fail to enforce the easement or cease to exist. In addition, the NRCS has the right to monitor and enforce the easements. The conservation easements are in perpetuity and have been recorded at the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds.

The Batchelder family is donating a third conservation easement on an additional 17 acres of woodland bringing the total acreage of land conserved to 120 acres. The woodland conservation easement will be completed by the end of December 2012.

For more information call 603-778-6088 or visit www.seltnh.org.