



SACO VALLEY LAND TRUST

**PRESERVING LAND IN THE LOWER
SACO RIVER VALLEY SINCE 1988**

SPRING 2010

SACOVALLEYLANDTRUST.ORG

Turtle Habitat Saved

SVLT is happy to announce the acquisition of a conservation easement on a 167 acre parcel off West St. in Biddeford. The parcel is situated within the designated Biddeford/Kennebunkport Vernal Pool Complex Focus Area, which has been identified as a priority ecological area in the State of Maine Wildlife Action Plan. The biological significance of the "focus area" is due to the high concentration of pocket swamps and vernal pools that support the state endangered Blanding's turtle and the state threatened Spotted turtle.

The property is mainly forested with numerous granite outcrops containing vernal pool and upland habitat for the turtles. It borders and contains a portion of an ecologically significant peat bog and forested wetland known locally as the "great cranberry marsh" and thus has been named Cranberry Marsh North. The easement forbids all development, requires a forest management plan that favors carefully sustained harvesting that is sensitive to habitat areas, and discourages motorized access. Funding requirements include completing a study of the natural features of the property. The piece adjoins Shady Brook Farm, a working vegetable farm, and will still be open to hunting and hiking by permission of the owner.

The project took a year and a half to unfold and could not have been accomplished without a tremendous amount of help and guidance provided by Betsy Ham of Maine Coast Heritage Trust. The SVLT Board was assisted and instructed by Betsy through every aspect of the project. It was a great "learning experience" and one we hope we can duplicate in the future. The project was funded by the Federal Landowner's Incentive Program through Maine IF&W, Open Space Institute, Fields Pond, and the Davis Foundation.

Thirty Acres Conserved

In 2008, SVLT received a donation of 30 woodland acres in Biddeford near the Kennebunkport town line from Kevin and Denise Huff. The Huff parcel features tall pines as well as a younger stand of mixed hardwood. A meandering brook winds through one side of the lot. Old wire fencing in some of the trees testify to past agricultural use of this property, located within the Biddeford-Kennebunkport Vernal Pool Complex.

Using hand-held GPS equipment, Trust board members have been working to identify and locate natural features and monumentation as part of our monitoring program. As with all our lands, hunting and other responsible land uses are permitted.

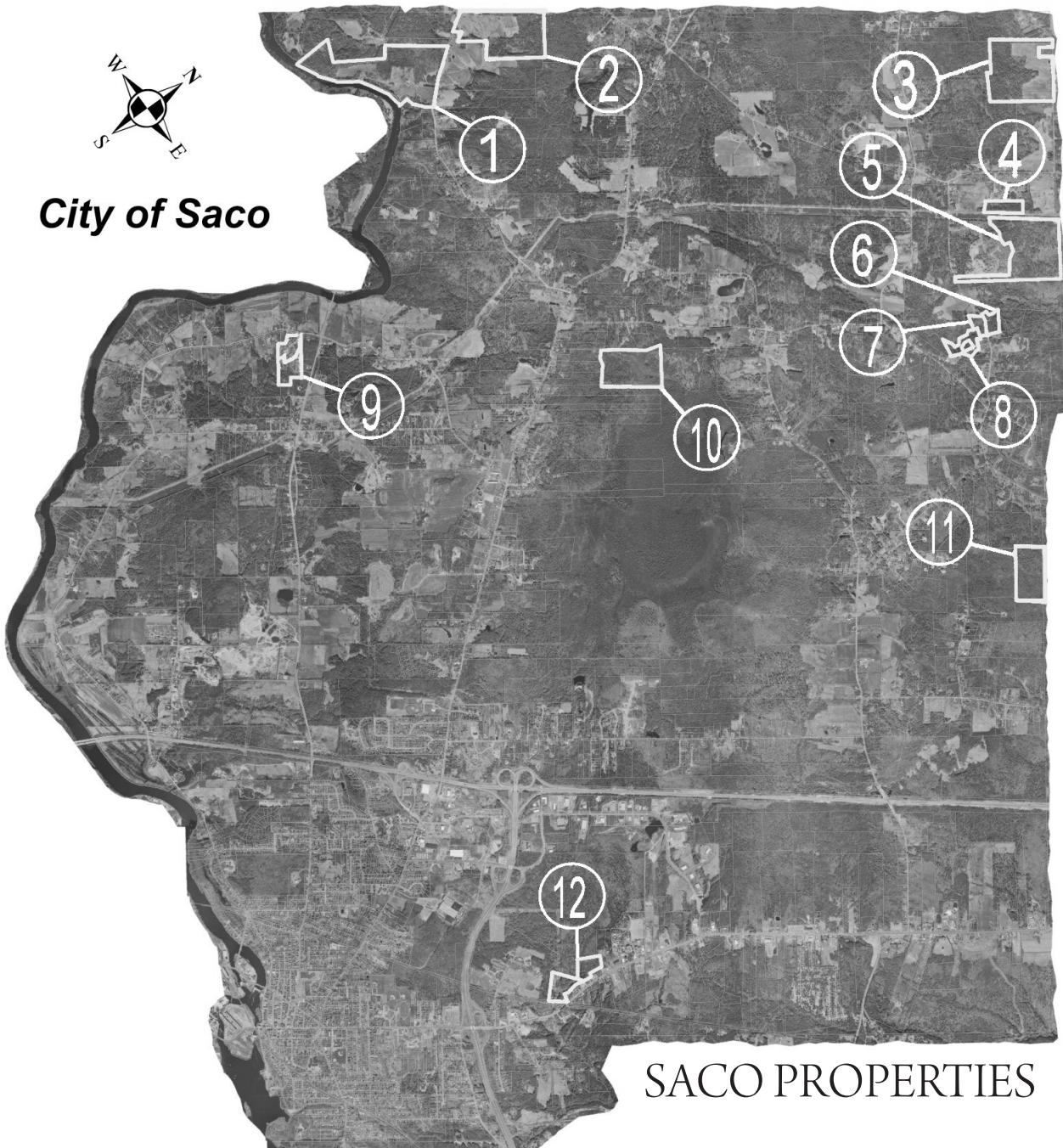
Our thanks to the Huffs for their generous gift.

13 acres protected in State Focus Area

The year 2009 saw another parcel of woodland acquired by SVLT. The 13 acre lot was conveyed by Pauline Garnache. Her late husband, George, had agreed to the conveyance as part of a subdivision approval process some years earlier.

The woodlot abuts a large lot owned by the University of New England currently slated to be conserved (See New England Woods article), and consists of forested upland and wetland. Like much of eastern Biddeford, it is located in an area of statewide significance, the Biddeford-Kennebunkport Vernal Pool Complex.

The Trust wishes to thank George and Pauline Garnache for their contribution to land stewardship in this environmentally sensitive natural area.



SACO PROPERTIES

1. **Riverbend Farm**- This parcel is privately owned with SVLT holding a conservation easement on 96 acres. Located on Simpson Rd. on a working horse farm, the property is a mix of woods, fields and intervals fronting the Saco River. Access is by owner permission only.
2. **TimberRidge Farm**- This parcel is privately owned with SVLT holding a conservation easement on 65 acres. Located on Simpson Rd. on a working horse farm, the property is a mix of woods and fields, a pond and small stream. Access is by owner permission only.
3. **Libby Parcel**- This parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located off Tapley Road in Saco. There are 53 acres of woods and fields, but unfortunately there is a small strip of land between Tapley Road and the parcel, which makes the

access available only with the permission of abutting landowners

4. **Hidden Fields Parcel**- This parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located off Burnham Rd., Saco, to the side of the Hidden Fields Development. There are 7.5 wooded acres primarily acquired to create a wildlife corridor from our Wedgewood parcel (#5) and the adjoining open spaces. Access is through a right of way from the development road.
5. **Wedgewood Parcel**- This parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located on the Watson Mill Rd., Saco, behind the current Wedgewood Development. There are 88.75 wooded acres, but the only access is a long unimproved 10 foot wide right of way all the way from Watson Mill Road
6. **Thurston Mill Monument** - This 4 acre parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located on the Watson Mill Rd., Saco, at the bridge crossing the Nonesuch River. A granite monument and informational kiosk documenting the history of the Thurston Mill are located next to a small parking area near the road. There is a lovely short walk into the woods to an overlook of the Nonesuch River descending over some picturesque rapids.
7. The **Nonesuch River Parcel** is across Watson Mill Road from the Mill Monument and is unimproved. It connects with the Gannon Parcel-see #8.
8. **Gannon Parcel**- This parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located at the end of Grace lane, off Mast Hill Road in Saco. There are 7 wooded acres and a short unmarked path along a tributary of the Nonesuch, descending over rapids from a pond. There is potential for a walking path to connect to the Nonesuch River parcel and even eventually to create a longer walk along the Nonesuch River itself. Be sure to park near our sign at the end of Grace Lane and not obstruct any of the homeowner's access.
9. **Apple Ridge Parcel**- This parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located at the end of the cul de sac of the Apple Ridge Development, off Boom Rd., Saco. There are 12.6 acres of former apple farm trees, woods, and mowed paths and a small farm pond at the back of the property (not on the property). Access would be through the apple orchard at the cul de sac and straight back behind the development. The parking is limited as it is an active cul de sac, and close by adjoining properties (whose owners generously keep open the paths and keep the grass cut under the apple trees.)
10. **Heath Parcel**- This land locked parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located off Heath Rd., Saco. There are 42.6 wooded acres. Access can be had off the old "middle road," which is now part of the Pathfinders Snowmobile network, and in fact the head of this "road" is on the other side of the street but close to the Pathfinder's clubhouse. The property is probably 1/2 mile in from 112, on the right. Unfortunately our signs are missing. There is room to get off the road at the head of this path
11. **Thurston Donation**- This land locked parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located between Fenderson Road and the Ash Swamp Road in Scarborough. There are 38.5 wooded acres, and a large portion is quite wet. It is essentially inaccessible except by permission of abutting landowners
12. **Brandt Donation**- This parcel is owned by the SVLT and is located off Rte 1 (Portland Rd.). There are 7.5 acres of woods, carefully groomed paths, and a lovely overlook of a marsh and the Goosefare which is located behind the Mobil Station on Rte. 1 (Portland Rd.) . The 6.3 acres of the **Mobil Donation** is part of the Saco Bay Trails trail network with a sign and trail information at the head of the trail. The trail interconnects and continues on the Brandt Donation . Park at the back of the Mobil station, and please do not obstruct any of the operation of the station and its customers.

BUXTON PROPERTIES

Moses Woodman Preserve- Donated by the extended Woodman family, this 60 acre parcel features marked trails which provides a pleasant walk from Simpson Road to the Saco River and around the property's woods. Limited parking off Simpson Rd.

Riverbend Farm, Buxton Parcel. A privately owned property that abuts the Woodman Preserve. Access by owner permission.

New Trail Opens in the Moses Woodman Preserve

Just recently, a new loop trail was completed in the Moses Woodman Preserve off Simpson Road in Buxton. Sean Longeley, an Eagle Scout candidate with Boy Scout Troop 371 in Saco, laid out and cleared the trail. He also built a footbridge to easily access the new trail, all with the help of several members of the troop and other friends. As a candidate for the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank in Boy Scouts, Sean had to design a project, find a community partner to work with, get BSA Council approval, find willing helpers, schedule work sessions, and oversee the workers to complete the project, write a final report and appear before an interviewing panel of adult Scout leaders. With way over 100 hours of time (his own and his volunteers'), Sean's project was invaluable to SVLT.

The new loop trail begins at the foot of the hill leading toward the river, off the existing trail. It crosses the footbridge, meanders to the river and loops back to the bridge through mixed hardwoods and ferny undergrowth. New trail signs were added to both trails to make them easier to follow.

Walking both trails takes about an hour and provides a variety of plants to observe, along with a good chance of seeing wildlife, from a wild beehive near the rock wall to eagles on the river and deer almost anywhere. Near the river, the ground is covered with trillium in early spring. Wood thrushes can be heard in summer and barred owls in the fall. You may also observe tree harvesting in some areas, as the Trust starts to improve the Preserve's tree growth. This gift from the Woodman family is waiting for you to come and enjoy.



Former Scout Nick Woodman, and Eagle Scout Sean Longeley carry in lumber for the new bridge.

Firewood Raffle

As a fundraiser for SVLT, Board member Joel Tripp and his son Forrest donated labor to cut, split and deliver a cord of firewood. Our raffle winner was Ann Cook of Saco.

Apple Ridge Volunteer Needed

The Saco Valley Land Trust is offering an volunteer opportunity for a master gardener/ apprentice to manage a grove of apple trees in one of our easements. The apple trees are in dire need of pruning, and the time to prune is upon us. If this is something you would be interested in you may contact nicoltaff@yahoo.com to discuss it.

New Property Signage

SVLT has invested in new property markers, featuring our logo (see front page). As we have time during our monitoring, we will be installing these markers at property corners to make it easier to relocate property lines.

Timber Harvesting

A limited amount of forestry improvement harvesting was undertaken this year. Excessively wet weather and tight quotas combined to make harvesting difficult. We are working on our forest management plans, with the combined goals of timber improvement, habitat protection, and a small income flow to fund other property maintenance needs. As our lands in fee reach over 600 acres, this part of our responsibility is becoming a primary focus. As weather and markets allow we will continue improvement harvesting using small equipment.

Our short term goals are to locate and permanently mark all boundary lines of the various properties. Our long term goals are to control disease and improve the quality of the standing timber, at the same time providing wildlife habitat and limited recreation by practicing sustainable forestry.

SVLT helps conserve “New England Woods”

In the Fall of 2009, SVLT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of New England ---- the first step in the Trust’s undertaking of a perpetual stewardship role conserving over 150 acres of eastern Biddeford woodland and forested wetlands.

The parcel, roughly half of the UNE lot between Rt. 9 and West Street, is to be placed under an easement held by SVLT, and will never be developed. The woodlot, known on campus as “New England Woods,” is currently used by faculty and students for environmental education/research projects and recreation. Those activities will continue.

Terms of the easement are being negotiated by UNE’s Alan Thibeault and SVLT (ably assisted by staff at Maine Coast Heritage Trust). (Thanks Steven and Betsy.)

SVLT already owns an abutting parcel and several others just across West Street in the heart of the Biddeford-Kennebunkport Vernal Pool Complex, a State-identified focus area noted for its fragile and unique habitat.

We hope to work with UNE to protect other lands in this critical natural area as a legacy for future generations, and critters we have never met.

Website and Email

We are looking for someone with computer skills, especially in the ‘social-networking’ aspects of the internet, to be a volunteer. Since most of the Board has little experience in this area, we would be enthusiastic supporters of a volunteer with a little knowledge and some good ideas in this area! Contact us, and help an organization that is making a difference in your community!

We Need You!!!!

Some ways to help:

Consider helping as a property monitor

Volunteer for a boundary-marking day

Encourage friends to join

Share our website with your email list

Become a board member or volunteer your skills

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Here's a reminder that your annual membership is what we use for our day-to-day operations. We greatly appreciate your support each year!

Name _____

Address or email _____

Membership Level:

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____ (any amount)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

If you are interested enough to be reading this newsletter, we hope you will become a member, or rejoin:

Saco Valley Land Trust has been working for over 20 years to help landowners protect properties that are special to them. In that time we have received as donations or purchased over 600 acres in fee and 400 acres of protective conservation easements. These small accomplishments, taken as a whole in the future, will help Saco and Biddeford remain special places to live and enjoy the unique scenery and places of the area.

As our plate becomes fuller, our need for new board members and volunteers grows. The current Board members willingly squeeze in a remarkable amount of work for the Trust each month, but there are so many other projects and tasks, big and small, that we would like to see accomplished. So if you would like to add your talents, whatever they may be, to the job of land protection, get in touch with us. From stuffing envelopes to public relations and land monitoring, any skills will be useful!

Beavers Welcomed at Middle Goosefare

Goosefare Pond is back. Located in Saco, near where Goosefare Brook and the new Eastern Trail cross the Portland Road, the pond is on property donated by the Brandt family to the Saco Valley Land Trust a number of years ago. The area is now known as Middle Goosefare, approximately midway between the source of this scenic waterway at the Saco Heath and its entry into the Atlantic at Goosefare Marsh. Adjacent to the pond are two small parks with nature paths created and maintained by Saco Bay Trails.

In the 1940s a cement dam was built at the brook for a skating rink next to an impressive embankment and granite culvert constructed in 1841 for the new Portland, Saco and Portsmouth Railroad. Goosefare Skating Rink operated for three seasons in the late 1940s and many Saco residents still remember skating there as children and in later decades when the skating rink was no longer operated as a business. Remnants of that old dam still remain and it probably was not the first dam in this area which was settled by the Isaac Scamman family in the late 1700s. Approximately two decades ago the dam was permanently disabled, perhaps unintentionally, during repair and renovations by the Granite State Gas Company, the former owner of the gas pipeline that still runs along the old railroad bed. Since then attempts have been made by local residents to repair the dam in hope of nurturing aquatic wildlife and winter skating, but Mother Nature continued to outmaneuver human hands until the beaver family moved in last year and claimed victory. We now find water in the pond, not quite up to the level of skating party days, but sufficient to keep ducks and possibly a few ice skaters busy into the near future. Other than the loss of a few small trees nearby for beaver housing and their water control project, the Land Trust and abutting landowners presently find no harm in letting the beavers have their way. We encourage people to visit this beautiful area, a little over one mile from downtown Saco, but ask that the busy beavers are given plenty of space and silence to continue performing what they do best.



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