



SACO VALLEY LAND TRUST

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

SPRING 2012

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New England Woods: Protected Vernal Pools

Wetlands Protection Partnership

In late December of 2011, SVLT was granted a perpetual conservation easement on 161 acres between West Street and Route 9 by the University of New England. Designated as “New England Woods”, the parcel is part of the Biddeford-Kennebunkport Vernal Pool Complex, recognized by the State of Maine for its high ecological significance. In addition to the easement, the university gave a generous stewardship donation to SVLT to fund permanent stewardship and monitoring.

Ideal Habitat

Ecologist Mark Ward, who worked with SVLT to prepare baseline documentation for the parcel, notes that the easement provides permanent protection for a large area that includes a broad array of wetlands, ranging from red maple swamps to tiny seasonal wetlands. The wetland diversity provides habitat for a number of wildlife species including the northernmost coastal population of a rare turtle which relies on just such a variety of wetland types over the course of the year.†

View of a vernal pool in the New England Woods.

The variety of wetlands in this property make it valuable habitat for many species. New England Woods will continue to serve as a study area for University of New England students while being protected through an easement held by Saco Valley Land Trust.



Because turtles are long-lived and move around seasonally from wetland to wetland on the landscape, they are vulnerable to unwanted encounters with cars, dogs, and people, making them especially difficult to protect. With this easement, core turtle habitat in a relatively undeveloped landscape has been protected by a research institution with the ability to engage its faculty and students in the study and adaptive management of this spectacular parcel. That's good news for turtles and for all of us who appreciate the beauty and complexity of the natural world.

Hard Work Pays Off

The New England Woods Project was a several year process. UNE's plans for development across Route 9 from its main campus impacted a number of wetlands and vernal pools. The university set about to permanently conserve other of its lands as mitigation, by agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers. In September of 2009 the university signed a memorandum of understanding with SVLT committing itself to the mitigation effort. Over the next two years, the details of the easement were negotiated, survey work completed, and the project moved to completion.

Keith Fletcher, Southern Maine Project Manager for Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) - who helped negotiate the New England Woods easement - calls the project one of the more important single conservation projects possible in the entire vernal pool area. MCHT has helped SVLT with several other projects within the

vernal pool complex and also holds an easement protecting the Boutin parcel in Biddeford's Clifford Park.

Says Fletcher, "This vernal pools region is very wet and not well suited for development, but it is terrific wildlife habitat. This project, together with several others completed in 2011 in Biddeford and Kennebunkport, starts to build a base of conservation land in the vernal pools region -- wild, wet places where native species can thrive. It is also a great place for UNE students to study and learn about ecology, and I know that the University's renowned environmental studies program will continue to make great use of the New England Woods for scientific research and education."

An Educational Resource

Pam Morgan, faculty member in the Department of Environmental Studies commented, "The protection of this land will allow us to continue to use the property as an outdoor laboratory to teach UNE students about local wildlife, plants and soils, and to continue ongoing research projects. Few universities in the nation have such an extensive piece of wild land within walking distance of campus - we are very fortunate."

Both UNE and SVLT hope that this 161 acre conservation easement is only the beginning. Says Richard Rhames, "It was a pleasure working with UNE to conserve this important property. We look forward to working with UNE again on possible future conservation projects in the area."

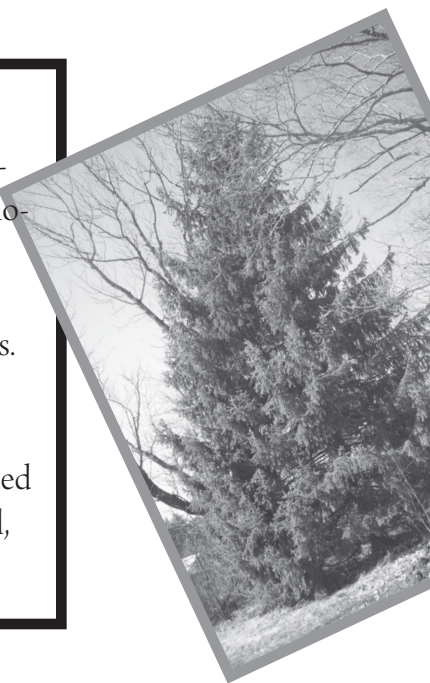
If you are interested enough to be reading this newsletter, we hope you will become a member, rejoin or become a board or committee member:

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, will help Saco and Biddeford remain special places to live now and into the future.

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!

My Pet Fir

Have you planted one of our tree seedlings? We would love to share your photos and stories about the trees we have been passing out at the Sidewalk Art Festival for at least the past fifteen years. You can either email stories or photos (preferably as a .jpg file) to sacovalley-maine@gmail.com so they can be added to the display board before the Festival, or drop them off during the day.



Refining Our Goals; Moving Forward

As SVLT approaches its 25th year, our all-volunteer board has committed to increasing our capacity as a strong organization that will attract more opportunities to preserve open space in the lower Saco River watershed area. Our twelve member Board has nearly 200 years of combined experience and has developed new expertise to manage the many changes in the land trust field.

The biggest change in land trust work has been the introduction in recent years of Land Trust Standards & Practices, a framework of best practices that was developed by the Land Trust Alliance. The Land Trust Alliance, which focuses on support of regional and local land trusts, also developed a national certification process that requires trusts to create, and operate by, a framework that insures strong, transparent organizational procedures.

For a small land trust, even one with years of successful projects, the job of bringing operations up to these standards is pretty overwhelming. We have been fortunate recently to have three very interested people join SVLT who have stepped forward and shared their skills with us. Their new energy has combined with existing experience to push several projects dealing with Standards & Practices forward.

Since we now either own or hold easements on 32 properties (over 1000 acres), getting our records for each property organized in a useful and secure way was a priority. Debbie Hilton of Saco used her organizational skills to create an Excel spreadsheet for us in which we can store all the various kinds of information that we collect on each property. Soon each board member will be able to access this file online, an additional advantage that will keep updated information readily available. The file adds another layer of record keeping to our existing paper files of deeds, monitoring, natural features inventories and essential information, all in a versatile form.

Another project to add to our records security was proposed by Chris DiMatteo of Saco, who has started to gather old papers from the closets and storage crates of Board members, prioritize them and scan the essential records as

digital files. We guess that Chris had no idea what he was getting into!

A crucial policy for land trusts is a conflict of interest policy that clearly describes Board members' responsibilities in this area. Tamara Gallagher of Saco reviewed and updated our policy and helped clarify our obligations to avoid any question of impropriety when one of us has a connection to a project. In a land trust with a

small geographic focus, this is an issue which is bound to arise, so we appreciate the improvements that have been made in this area.

The SVLT Board still has a ways to go to develop and institute all the policies required for certification, but we are encouraged by the progress that has been made in the last year. Thanks to "old" and new members for their efforts!

How Saco's Comprehensive Plan Addresses Natural Resource Protection

Saco's Comprehensive Plan, which looks at the City's many assets, also details Saco's vision for future land use. This plan is intended to describe desired development directions and serve as a guide for subsequent reviews of zoning ordinances.

Saco's development over the next decade will be encouraged primarily on the east side of the turnpike, with most of the west side reserved for single-family homes, farms and forested areas. Landowners will be encouraged to use open space, farming and forest management tax programs. Subdivision developers will be required to maintain the integrity of large habitat blocks by choosing building sites that avoid sensitive areas and to fit into the rural character by leaving vegetation screens. Saco plans to continue to work with the Saco River Corridor Commission, SVLT, and other groups that focus on land protection so land in this area can continue to be set aside for open space.

In addition, designated resource protection areas have been created, in which development is severely limited

and intense use is restricted. This includes wetlands with significant value, undeveloped 100 year floodplains, and stream corridors. Saco will encourage management of stream corridors that are potential "wildlife travel corridors" to maintain their value in expanding habitat range by linking larger unfragmented wildlife habitat blocks.

Large retail and industrial development will be encouraged to locate in the area east of Rte. #1, while infill residential development will be encouraged near the City center. Continued re-use and development of the mill area is a strong focus of Saco's plan. Clustering of new development within specific zones is encouraged to prevent sprawl and to preserve a ring of rural neighborhoods outside those more developed areas.

With the value of Saco's unique coastal, marsh, heath, rural farmland, and riverside areas recognized, these environments can more easily be protected through zoning, tax incentives and conservation easements while still providing value to their owners.

Saco's 2011 Comprehensive Plan can be viewed or downloaded at
www.sacomaine.org/news/1111-compplan.shtml

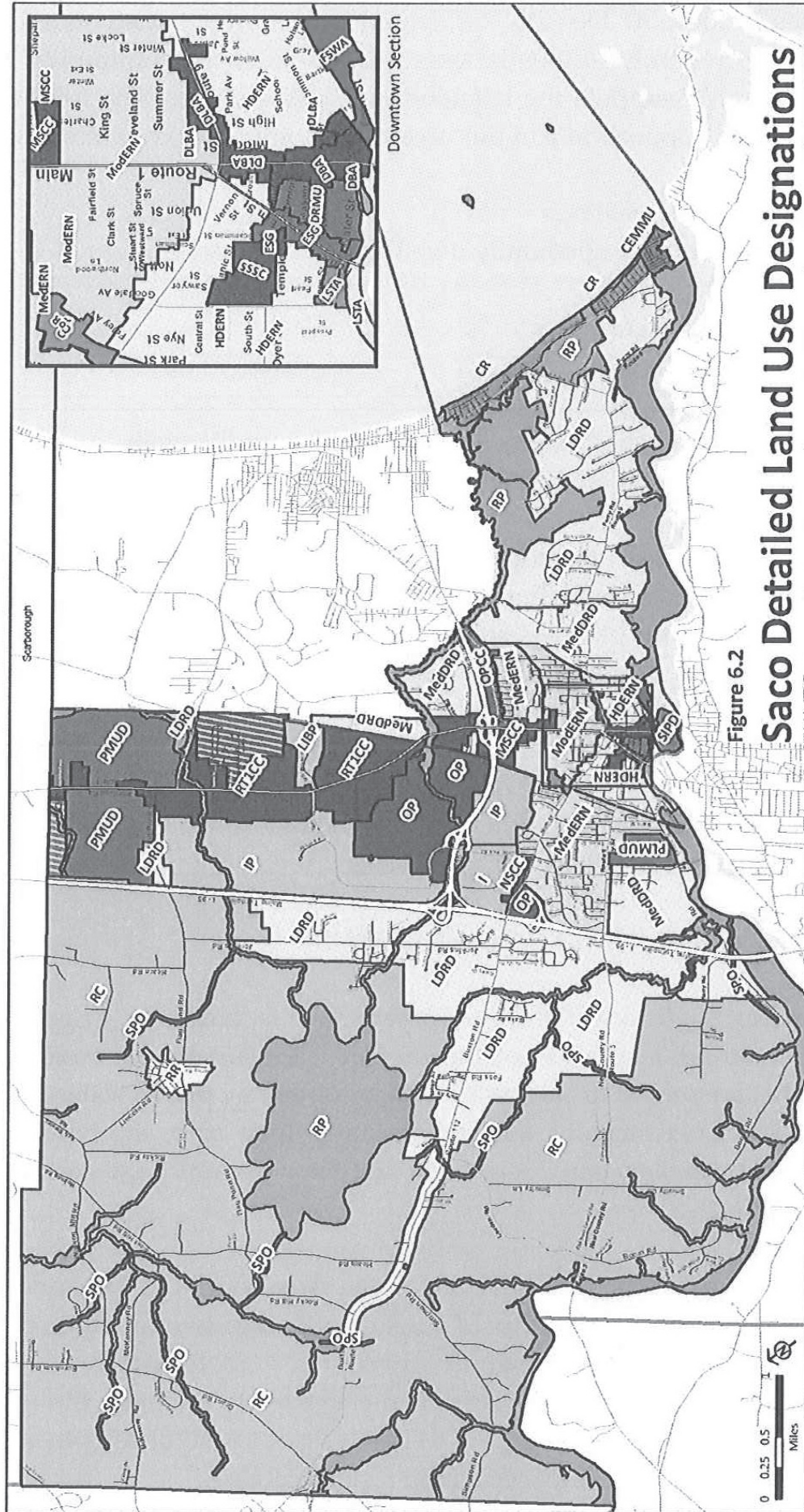


Figure 6.2

Saco Detailed Land Use Designations

- Legend**
- CR, Coastal Residential
 - HDERN, High Density Established Residential Neighborhood
 - MODERN, Med Density Established Residential Neighborhood
 - MODERN, Mod Density Established Residential Neighborhood
 - MODERN, Medium Density Residential Development
 - LDRD, Low Density Residential Development
 - RR, Rural Residential
 - DRMU, Downtown Residential Mixed Use
 - CEMMU, Camp Ellis Marine Mixed Use
 - PLMUD, Planned Limited Mixed-Use Development
 - PMUD, Planned Mixed Use Development
 - SIPD, Saco Island Planned Development
 - Mobile Home Park Overlay
 - OPCC, Ocean Park Commercial Corridor
 - ESG, Elm Street Gateway
 - CoR, Commercial Reuse
 - LSTA, Lincoln Street Transition Area
 - MSCC, Main Street Commercial Corridor
 - NSCC, North Street Commercial Corridor
 - DBA, Downtown Business Area
 - DLEA, Downtown Limited Business Area
 - RTICC, Rette One Commercial Corridor
 - SSSC, Scamman Street Shopping Center
 - OP, Office Park
 - I, Industrial
 - IP, Industrial Park
 - LIEP, Light Industrial Business Park
 - FSWA, Front Street Waterfront Area
 - RC, Rural Conservation
 - RP, Resource Protection
 - SPO, Stream Protection Overlay

Mills Farm – N
gravel pit
overnight cabins
Aquaboggan

Angel Farm – S
restaurant
drive-in theater
commercial development
trailer park
day care

Ayer Farm – S
golf driving range

Peaslee Farm – N
housing

Frost Farm – S
Cascade Lodge (restaurant and lodging)
service station
roadside lunch room
commercial building

Boothby Farm – N
commercial building

Conforth Farm – S
commercial buildings
housing development
auto dealership

Meade Farm – S
housing
commercial

Chapin Farm – S
overnight cabins
aquarium
auto dealership
Cinemagic

Stuart Farm/Phillips Farm – N
OOB water supply
gravel pit
Marvel Drive In/Go Carts
auto dealership
Funtown

McKeen Farm - N
auto dealership
commercial development

Growth at Timber Ridge Farm

Recently, the owner of Timber Ridge Farm sought SVLT board approval for the erection of additional structures consistent with the terms of an agricultural easement placed on the property by its former owner (and SVLT benefactor), Mary Merrill. The Trust's

Board gave Doreen Metcalf permission to build a 50'X100' hay barn and a separate shed for sawdust. The new buildings, which are allowed under the easement as "buildings necessary for farm operation" will fulfill a need in the farm's expanded haying operation.

THANK YOU !

- To Deering Lumber for their donation of lumber for the Woodman Preserve
- To Fred Going of Worthing & Going, Main St., Saco for providing bookkeeping services again this year , and to Terry for her cheerful and patient assistance!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

We greatly appreciate your support each year!

We use your annual membership dues for our general operating expenses.

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

I would like to receive my newsletter by email Yes No

Membership Level:

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

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Annual Meeting
All members and interested persons invited
Thursday, May 3, 2012
7:00 pm

Looking for a Way to Contribute to 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

Help us update our web-site

Become a board member or volunteer your skills

Get out and walk our properties and share what you find with others.



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Please share this newsletter with your friends!!! We are happy to mail, or email copies:
Contact us at sacovalley@gmail.com or POB 1581, Saco, Me 04072.