

(This press release is reprinted from The Nature Conservancy Web site: www.nature.org)

Preserving the Schoodac... Connecting the Blackwater

New projects expand and connect 12,000 acres of contiguous protected wildlife habitat.

WARNER NH -- The Nature Conservancy and Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust today announced the permanent protection of 680 acres of significant wildlife habitat located in the Schoodac Brook and Blackwater River watersheds, building on and connecting nearly 12,000 acres of protected forest, stream and wetland ecosystems in the towns of Warner, Webster, and Salisbury.

“The protection of these properties will consolidate a vital wildlife corridor along Schoodac Brook and establish an important linkage to the adjoining Blackwater River watershed,” said Daryl Burtnett, State Director, The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire. “These complicated land transactions could not have happened without our partners at Ausbon Sargent and the N.H. Fish & Game Department, foresighted and generous landowners, and vital financial support from several private and public sources,” said Burtnett.

In their latest project with Ausbon Sargent and the Conservancy, the Courser family placed a conservation easement on 308 acres which conserves almost a mile of frontage on Schoodac Brook and nearly two-thirds of the shorefront along the secluded Trumbull Pond. The Courser family has deep multi-generational roots in Warner and are no strangers to conservation. This was their fourth land protection project in five years with the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust and The Nature Conservancy, which collectively have resulted in an extensive connected network of conserved wetland and forest habitat in the Schoodac Brook watershed. Schoodac Brook provides critical habitat for a host of waterfowl, migratory birds, moose, black bear, amphibians, reptiles, and many other wildlife species including the state-threatened osprey.



View of Trumbull Pond. Mark Zankel/TNC, photo.

“This easement builds upon 895 acres already conserved by the Courser family and additional lands owned by NH Fish and Game and helps ensure the long-term viability of wildlife through an expansion of core wetland and upland habitat identified as a high priority in the State’s Wildlife Action Plan,” said Beth McGuinn, Land Protection Specialist, Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust. In addition to protecting significant wildlife habitat, the latest Courser easement ensures that the residents of Webster, Warner and beyond will be able to enjoy the quiet and seclusion of Trumbull Pond for generations to come.

Although they just moved to Webster in the last year, Steven and Susan Young have made their permanent imprint on the community by helping to conserve 372 acres that provides an important wildlife corridor between Schoodac Brook and the adjacent Blackwater River watershed. The property had been on the market and was the subject of several

cancelled auctions until the Youngs, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, stepped in and were able to acquire it. The land is strategically situated at the head of the Schoodac watershed, and extends just over the height of land into the Blackwater River watershed where it links up to federally owned flood control land. The forest is recovering from aggressive logging by the previous owner, and will be managed to allow for regrowth and restore the integrity of the forests and wetlands.

Once in the Youngs' ownership, 137 acres were immediately re-sold to The Nature Conservancy and subsequently transferred to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to be managed as part of the abutting Leonard and Knight's Meadow Marsh Wildlife Management Areas. The Youngs then conveyed a conservation easement to Ausbon Sargent and the Conservancy over the remaining 235 acres.

"We had never really considered ourselves to be significant landholders until this opportunity presented itself. But once we saw the property it seemed inconceivable that it could potentially be developed for private commercial interests," said Steven Young. "Our goal of land conservation meshed well with what The Nature Conservancy had in mind for the area, so it was a natural partnership. The Nature Conservancy's support for this was wonderful. We look forward to watching the land revert primarily to its natural state and are pleased to have a role in its preservation for the enjoyment of all," said Young.

The conservation easements will protect the Courser and Youngs properties from development, conserve wildlife habitat and riparian wetlands, allow for sustainable forest management, and provide for passive recreation.

Essential funding for these projects came from a variety of sources including the N.H. Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), the NH Conservation License Plate program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Open Space Institute's Saving New England's Wildlife Program, the Town of Webster, New Hampshire Fish & Game, several private foundations, and many private donors.

"The LCHIP Board of Directors and Staff are so pleased to be a partner in the Trumbull Pond project," said Deborah Turcott Young, Executive Director for LCHIP. "The conservation values of this land and its rich history made it a clear choice for funding in two separate grant cycles. It's preservation is a gift to the people of the state and we are thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this success," said Turcott Young.

Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust works to preserve and protect the rural character of the Mount Kearsarge/Lake Sunapee region for public benefit through conservation agreements that protect the farms, forest, streams and wetlands. Since 1987, Ausbon Sargent has helped to protect over 8,594 acres of land in the region. Visit Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust on the Web at www.ausbonsargent.org.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. In New Hampshire, The Nature Conservancy has helped to protect more than 270,000 acres of critical natural lands. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org/newhampshire.