

Wildlife land in Newmarket conserved

Exeter News Letter Feb 4, 2005

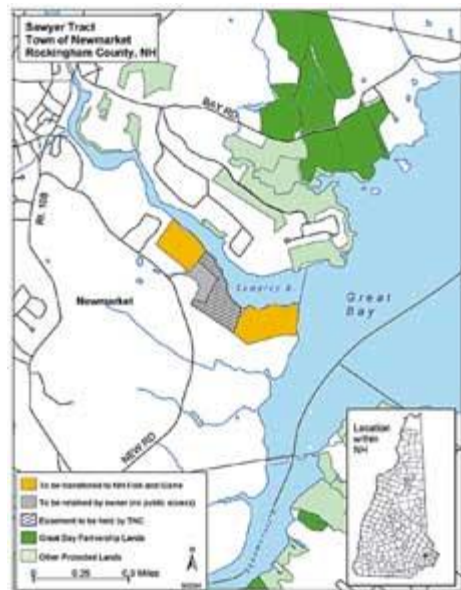
NEWMARKET - A pristine wildlife habitat at the confluence of the Lamprey River and Great Bay in Newmarket has been preserved forever, thanks to a consortium of state, national and private organizations that Wednesday secured the purchase of 87.7 acres of land either outright or through conservation easement.

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership worked to buy the land off New Road, known locally as the Sawyer Farm, for a total of \$3.65 million. Funding for the project came from the federal National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, said Eric Aldrich of The Nature Conservancy, which actually purchased the land for the partnership.

Involved in the land transaction are three parcels that once made up the Sawyer Farm, owned by the Sawyer family for generations until 2002, when Warren Sawyer Jr. died.

The first parcel is the 34.9-acre Shackford Point at the mouth of the Lamprey River. This parcel is not accessible by road, but can be reached by boat, kayak or canoe, and will have public access.

The second parcel, just up river from the point, has been bought by a private buyer and includes a house. Of the total 37.1 acres, the partnership has placed 27.3 acres in conservation easement. This land will be inaccessible to the public.



The third piece is farther upriver. This 23.5-acre parcel is accessible from New Road, and right now, there is an informal parking area nearby.

The acquisition protects 5,370 feet of frontage along the Lamprey River and 930 feet along Great Bay.

The first and third pieces are going to be transferred within two years to the N.H. Fish and Game Department, a member of the partnership, to own and manage.

"The mouth of the Lamprey River is one of the finest salt marsh habitats in the Great Bay estuary and supports significant numbers of wintering Canada geese and American black ducks," said Edward Robinson, a waterfowl biologist for the N.H. Fish and Game Department. "This area is one of the most favored waterfowl hunting areas in the bay."

Shackford Point is a wooded peninsula that's used as a perch site by bald eagles in the winter. Peter Wellenberger, manager of the Great Bay Estuarine Research Reserve, is among many who are thrilled to see this land protected.

"Since the reserve first began protecting land, we have always considered Shackford Point to be our highest priority," Wellenberger said. "If bald eagles ever decide to nest again on Great Bay, we have always felt that Shackford Point was the place they would most likely choose. To protect this area is a dream come true."

"This is really something to celebrate," said Bob Miller, Great Bay Project director for The Nature Conservancy. "In one deal, this remarkable partnership among agencies and organizations has been able to protect a significant amount of frontage along the Lamprey River and Great Bay. And because of its location and habitat, this property was one of the first to be identified as a priority for protection when the partnership began in 1994. We've been actively working to protect this piece ever since."

Rachel Stevens of New Hampshire Fish and Game, said the state is uncertain at this point just how the acreage accessible to the public will be managed and used. A committee of Fish and Game officials - including wildlife biologists, public access experts and others - will be meeting in the next few months to walk the land and begin discussions about the land's use.

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership includes, in addition to The Nature Conservancy and Fish and Game, the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, Ducks Unlimited, the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Since 1994, the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership has protected 3,466 acres of critical habitat around Great Bay. Local communities and other organizations have protected an additional 3,020 acres that the partnership has been able to use as a match to leverage federal funding. The leading sources of funds include the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, the North American Wetland Conservation Act and private donations. A key player in securing those funds was U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg.

86 acres are preserved in Newmarket

By Lisa Tetrault-Zhe , Portsmouth Herald, Feb 17, 2005

NEWMARKET - Preserving the integrity of Newmarket for future generations is a primary goal of town officials, who last week secured the preservation of 86 acres of land by the Nature Conservancy.

Now protected under this agreement are 34.9 acres at Shackford Point, 23.5 acres along the Lamprey River and an additional conservation easement along 27.3 acres of what many residents know as Sawyer Farm.



This area of Shackford Point, looking up the Lamprey River, will be protected as part of a \$3.65 million land purchase.

Courtesy photo

"The Seacoast is one of the fastest-growing areas in New Hampshire," said Eric Aldrich, director of communications of the Nature Conservancy. "The conservation we do now will define what the area

looks like in the future."

The \$3.65 million purchase by the Nature Conservancy, funded through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, was conducted through the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. Ownership eventually will be transferred to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department.

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership was established in 1994 to protect the critical habitats around Great Bay. In addition to the Nature Conservancy and N.H. Fish and Game, other agencies involved in the transaction were the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, Ducks Unlimited, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The effort to obtain the land was a 10-year project for the partnership, according to Aldrich.

"This land was on our radar right away, emerging as one of our priorities back in '94. We wanted to be able to protect the area from development and protect the land around the Great Bay," he said.

For some longtime Newmarket residents, the history of the land conjures up fond memories. For example, Zoning Board of Adjustment member Richard Shelton grew up with Warren Sawyer Jr.

"I remember the land - it is nice, with high, rolling hills. He (Sawyer) was a gentleman farmer, raised sheep and chickens, but he never really worked the farm."

In the past, Shackford Point was used as a perch site for nesting bald eagles. In addition, other wildlife and fowl could be helped with this effort, such as Canadian geese and American black ducks.

Deer also have been affected by development in recent years, a trend that Conservation Commission chairman Wilfred Hamel said he hopes to reverse.

"We're trying to attach land to form some type of corridor that's protected," he said. So far, the town has about 300 acres of open space that's preserved in three areas that are somewhat attached.

While the preservation of Shackford Point may not seem like much compared with other properties held by the conservancy - one as large as 10,000 acres in Stratford - it is the largest in the Great Bay area. In addition, the conservancy also supports Lubberland Creek Preserve on the Newmarket/Durham town line.

Also, town resident Gary Levy has purchased 37.1 acres of the former Sawyer farm. Shelton said he has faith that Levy will be a good guardian of the land in the future.

He is going to build one home, which is part of the deal, according to Aldrich. Also, two pieces on the ends will be open to public use, but the middle portion, including his land and the easement, will not have public access.

Levy could not be reached for comment.

Saving 40 more acres

By Susan Nolan , Exeter Newsletter, Aug 12, 2005

NEWMARKET - Another parcel of open space is expected to be saved from development in Newmarket, and residents are invited to walk the land this Saturday.

Open Space Commission member Ellen Snyder said the site walk of the 40-plus acre Silverman/Schneer property on Neal Mill Road Saturday morning begins at 9 a.m.

It is taking place in anticipation of a Town Council public hearing Wednesday, Aug. 17, at which that body is expected to approve the purchase of the development rights to the land.

Snyder called the \$275,000 purchase price "a bargain sale" for development rights to the land owned by Jean Silverman of Newmarket and her father, Cecil Schneer of Exeter. "It's below the appraised value," said Snyder.

The Neal Mill Road land includes 1,200 feet of frontage on the Piscassic River. It is located upstream from the Newmarket water plant. Because of that, said Snyder, the town will use \$175,000 from the town's Public Water Supply Protection Fund to purchase the easement. Another \$100,000 will come from the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, she said.

Snyder said the Silverman/Schneer property is currently used recreationally, and that will continue. "People can walk on this property and they can fish along the river," said Snyder, "and hunting is allowed in that part of Newmarket. It's really nice." Snyder said the easement purchase has been a couple of years in the making. Purchasing the conservation rights means that the land cannot be developed but must remain as a single undeveloped parcel. Snyder said Silverman currently has a home on the 40-acre parcel and will continue to live there.

The Neal Mill Road parcel is not the first one the town has purchased since approving a \$2 million open-space bond two years ago, said Snyder. She said the town purchased a 96-acre easement on the Hilton Farm on Grant Road. It also purchased two properties, she said: the Grant Road property of developer Joseph Falzone and the 46-acre Loiselle parcel on Route 152. "We bought them outright," said Snyder.

The greatest challenge, she said, has been finding land for more athletic fields for the town. She said the town is in the process of putting together properties on Packers Falls Road for that purpose. "It has actually been much harder to find land for athletic fields than it is to find landowners who are interested in conserving their land for open space," said Snyder.

Meanwhile, interested residents can meet with Snyder and other town officials for the site walk of the Silverman/Schneer property at 9 a.m. Saturday. The group will gather at the end of Neal Mill Road, she said.

The Town Council will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, Aug. 17 at the council meeting at 7 p.m. in the council chambers of the Newmarket Town Hall.

"We hope to have a vote (on the easement purchase) that night," said Snyder. "It's a great investment for Newmarket."

Wild turkeys flocking to Granite State

By Susan Morse, Exeter Newsletter, Oct 30, 2005

The eastern wild turkey is prospering in New Hampshire, and experts credit backyard bird feeders.

In the fall, flocks of turkeys may be seen, especially during the early morning, in yards and even strutting near busy highways.

The past two years have been especially good for flocks, said Ted Walski, the state Fish and Game turkey project biologist.



Wild turkeys peck for food behind the Portsmouth Transportation Center off Route 33.

Photo by Rich Beauchesne

"I knew by June 1 we were having a good hatch," he said. "They're very cold-tolerant. I never thought I'd see wild turkey in Coos County. Now, there's some in every town in the state."

Except New Castle. Walski said he's had no reports of turkeys on the island. As of August, Walski estimated 30,000 turkeys statewide. "I didn't think it would go beyond 10,000 turkeys," he said.

Walski has been watching the turkey population for 30 years. In the mid-'70s, the state initiated a trap-and-transplant program to invigorate the turkey population.

Walski released 20 to 30 birds in Lee, Durham, Newmarket, Brentwood, Fremont and Exeter. Then, he and other state Fish and Game officials waited.

"I used to lose sleep," he said. "I thought a bad winter would kill them." Deep snow cuts them off from their supply of food.

Walski believes backyard feeders have made the difference.

"Everyone has bird feeders now," Walski said. "It's getting better because they're getting enough food a couple months in winter." Development, as much as it has taken away turkey habitat, has helped feed the bird.

Turkeys eat apples, juniper berries and, especially, sunflower seeds. "People put out cracked corn," he said. "Every flock will visit backyard bird feeders." Their habitat is fields.

"Scamman Farm and Stuart Farm (in Stratham) they've always loved," Walski said.

While the number of dairy farms in the state has decreased to 135 from 435 recorded in 1984, according to Walski, the turkey population continues to thrive, even in developed areas such as Rockingham County. Walski talks turkey with other wildlife biologists from New England, New York and Ontario once a year. This year they met in early October "just us working turkey biologists," he said.

The report is the eastern wild turkey is doing well. Turkeys may be hunted in the fall with bow and arrow, a challenging way to bring home Thanksgiving dinner. Only 300 of the birds were caught by bow and arrow last fall, compared to 3,000 taken during the spring shotgun season, according to Walski.

Turkeys appear approachable, according to hunters, but they are wily in the woods. That same turkey you can photograph by the side of the road is different in the woods, said Paul Carlton of Portsmouth, who runs Affordable Adventures hunting trips. "You look and think, those dumb things, they'd be easy to hunt," Carlton said. "They're not easy at all."

The birds are secretive and have incredible eyesight and hearing. "You can't sneak up on a turkey," Carlton said. He hasn't gone out turkey hunting this fall. He usually hunts in Rockingham and Strafford counties, though won't say where. No hunter will, he said.

Turkey hunters must wear camouflage, use turkey calls, and be patient, he said. Hunting at backyard bird feeders is not hunting, said Raynold "Binky" Perkins, a Seabrook firefighter. Perkins has gone out bow-and-arrow hunting for turkey once this season. "I missed it," he said.

Neither hunter had a secret recipe for cooking the game bird. Both said wild turkey is tougher than the store-bought, farm-grown variety. But it is not gamy, Carlton insists. "Most people, given a turkey, talk about how good it is," he said, "not gamy, more turkey flavor."

Partnership aims to preserve 330 acres in Newfields and Newmarket

By Kristen Melamed, Portsmouth Herald, Nov 6, 2005

NEWFIELDS - Newfields is a small town that has seen a lot of growth, according to Alison Watts.

Watts, chairwoman of the town's Conservation Commission, understands the hard work and dedication it takes to fight for something you believe in.

Watts is one of many people aboard the Piscassic Greenway Campaign, which would save 330 acres of natural areas and shoreline in Newfields and Newmarket.

The campaign has an \$8 million goal, and \$525,000 is needed to meet the financial goal and Jan. 31 deadline to secure the property.

The Piscassic Greenway Campaign intends to link 2,000 acres of Newmarket, Newfields, Exeter and Epping together. While 93 percent of the money is raised, the Rockingham Land Trust, which is part of the effort, is hoping to secure the remainder.

Should those partners in the campaign not receive it, the 330 acres will be converted into a residential subdivision, according to Brian Hart, executive director of Rockingham Land Trust.

"A 300-acre block of land is unusual for this state," Hart said. "(The Greenway) offers opportunities for families to enjoy the recreation." The land was initially proposed for the development of a residential subdivision with more than 100 homes and more than two miles of road.

But Newfields, Newmarket and several other partners are on a mission to preserve the space. According to Hart, the money raised is a combination of both private and public funds. The partnership has received \$1.2 million in private funds, \$4 million from committed public funds, and \$2 million in pending federal funds. The towns of Newmarket and Newfields have donated as well.

The Greenway serves as a public recreation site featuring hunting, bird-watching, hiking, walking and cross-country skiing. Hart said in addition to those reasons, the land would be unsuitable for building because of the "unfragmented nature of the property."

Saving the land would also protect a mixture of upland and wetland habitats. It would also help to safeguard drinking-water quality for Newmarket residents.

Kim Gilman, public affairs manager for the Trust for Public Land, said her agency's role is to keep the land off the market.

The Greenway is a "special property," Gilman said. "The town of Newfields has made an amazing commitment," she said. "It's a good example of a real partnership effort."

The partners in the Piscassic Greenway Campaign are the Trust for Public Land, Rockingham Land Trust, both the towns of Newfields and Newmarket, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, and the N.H. Department of Environmental Services. "It's a property that a lot of people use," Watts said. "The town was incredibly strong behind (the campaign)."

But Watts was quick to point out that the campaign is still a significant amount of money short. "The deal's not done yet," she said. If the campaign meets its goal by the end of January, paperwork would be filed and the partners would need to finalize the legal transaction, which may take up to April 2006, Hart explained. "We have the opportunity."

Foundations donate \$28,500 to Greenway

Exeter Newsletter, AP – Nov 14, 2005

EXETER - The latest ray of hope to save a key natural area in Rockingham County came in the form of a \$25,000 grant from the Samuel P. Hunt Foundation of Manchester and a \$3,500 grant from the Fuller Foundation of North Hampton.

The Hunt Foundation and Fuller Foundation, in making these grants to the Rockingham Land Trust, have joined a roster of federal, state, local and private support to protect the 330-acre parcel in Newfields and Newmarket known as the Piscassic Greenway.

Even though the Rockingham Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land trusts have raised more than 94 percent of the money needed, the land could still be converted into a residential subdivision if they don't obtain \$518,000 in contributions by Jan. 31.

"The Rockingham Land Trust and The Trust for Public Land have raised nearly \$7.6 million toward our \$8.1 million goal to preserve the Piscassic Greenway," said Brian Hart, executive director of the Rockingham Land Trust.

"This land was slated for a residential development of more than 100 homes and more than two miles of roads," said Joanna Pellerin, board president of the Rockingham Land Trust. "But this property is not an appropriate place for such development with its trails, wildlife, wetlands, and frontage on the Piscassic River.

Conservation of the Piscassic Greenway will:

§ Link two islands of conservation land, one in Exeter, Newfields and Epping, and the other in Newmarket, to form a greenway of 2,000 acres spanning the four towns.

§ Preserve significant water resources, including 106 acres of wetlands, two vernal pools, and 1,200 feet of shoreline on the Piscassic River.

§ Protect habitat for a variety of wildlife, including moose, bear and four rare or threatened species.

§ Guarantee public access for outdoor recreation.

"The Hunt Foundation and Fuller Foundation know, as others have come to realize, that we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve this land. We're grateful for their support and the support we have received thus far, but we are not there yet. If we fail to raise the necessary funding, the land will be developed," Hart said.

Gary Blake Saab of Exeter joined the campaign early and underwrote the group's promotional materials. Newfields voters contributed \$2 million.

The N.H. Department of Environmental Services made a grant under its drinking water protection program.

And thanks to backing from Sen. Judd Gregg, the project received \$2 million from the federal Coastal & Estuarine Land conservation Program for fiscal year 2005, and is slated to receive \$2 million in fiscal year 2006.

But the project partners are relying on private donations from individuals to fill the remaining \$518,000 gap.

HOW TO HELP: Contributions may be sent to the Campaign for the Piscassic Greenway, c/o Rockingham Land Trust, 8 Center St., Floor 2, Exeter, NH 03833. The Rockingham Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and gifts are tax-deductible.

Feds grant \$2M more to preserve land

By Adam Dolge , Exeter Newsletter, Nov 25, 2005

NEWFIELDS - Local conservation groups are one step closer to purchasing 330 acres in Newfields but still face a half-million-dollar hurdle to clear by the end of January.

U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., and Congressman Jeb Bradley, R-N.H., announced last week that the Piscassic Greenway in Newfields and Newmarket will receive \$2 million in federal funding. The legislators also secured \$2 million earlier this year. Both grants are from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection (CELCP) program.

"Without this \$4 million, this wouldn't be possible," said Brian Hart, executive director of the Rockingham Land Trust, which is partnered with the Trust for Public Land and the Town of Newfields for the purchase of the land. "Especially this year, with the budget the country is facing, for this to be apart of the budget ... it's just amazing."

The first CELCP grant, slated in the fiscal 2005 budget, was the kick start for the project, Hart explained. "It helped persuade voters that this land was important enough for federal funding, and was also a good investment for them as well."

The Piscassic Greenway will connect 2,600 acres of conservation land in Newmarket, Epping, Exeter and Newfields. Newbury North, an Exeter-based development company, had proposed a 100-home subdivision on the land, but later decided to sell the property for \$7.55 million. The total cost of the land will be about \$8.1 million after a long-term management fund is established.

There is still a possibility the subdivision could come to Newfields if the funds are not raised by Jan. 31, 2006.

So far Rockingham Land Trust, which is leading the campaign efforts, has raised \$4 million in federal funds, \$2 million from the Town of Newfields, \$332,000 from the town's drinking-water supply program, \$30,000 from Newmarket's Conservation Commission, and \$1,235,000 in private gifts from residents in the greater Seacoast area.

This leaves an additional \$517,000 to be raised from private funds or additional funds from foundations or environmental agencies.

"We're definitely going to need some significant support from grants," Hart said. "But the key component is from private support. The response has been good, and I remain hopeful, although a little nervous, but this will be a busy time of year for the next months."

Kim Gilman, spokesperson for the Trust for Public Land, said the project could not have happened without the support of Sen. Gregg. "\$500,000 is a real challenge that needs to be met to finalize the project, but I think when government agencies make such a significant contribution, we can really recognize what Sen. Gregg has done to bring this project so close to completion."

If the funds are secured by deadline the land will be conserved and used for outdoor recreation, including hunting, hiking, fishing and cross-country skiing. Part of the tract will be reserved for future water supplies in Newfields, Hart explained, and managed long term for wildlife habitat.

"This property is the keystone parcel that links the best opportunity we have to link that much land," Hart said. "It's an opportunity we have only a few month on ... for Newfields it helps preserve their rural character, for Newmarket it helps preserve two public-drinking supplies. It's important for these communities but also for the region."

Wildlife that inhabits the land includes several rare birds, bear and deer. Hart said anyone wishing to make a donation to help this project should visit the Web site www.rockinghamlandtrust.org, or mail a check to 8 Center St., Exeter, NH 03833.

Hunting on recreation land questioned

By Liz Chretien , Exeter Newsletter, Nov 4, 2005

NEWMARKET - Some Newmarket residents are questioning the state's definition of "recreation" in open-space areas.

These areas are open for public enjoyment and hunting is allowed with other activities such as hiking, fishing and nature watching, but after a homeowner watched a deer get killed by a shot from a muzzleloader, she is questioning what "recreation land" means.

Lucille Behan was in her kitchen washing dishes when a hunter shot the deer, which was walking with her two fawns, at the edge of the woods.

"It was awful to see," Behan said. "I will never forget that sight. The whole idea (of open space designation) is to make this a nice, peaceful area, and hunting here is very contradictory to me."

Behan's home of 41 years faces the former Loielle property on Wadleigh Falls Road, land secured by the town in 2003 with the help of the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (L-CHIP) funds, Department of Environmental Services water-supply funds, and a Newmarket Municipal open space bond. She said in the past she has also seen turkeys being shot.

"I usually go out with a pan and a wooden spoon and try to warn the deer, but I didn't do it that day," she said. "I'm sorry I didn't."

Behan's neighbor, Debbie Berger, made some inquiries on the subject out of concern for her own goats and llamas. "I was told that hunting is a permitted use in these areas, but to me hunting in a recreation area is not compatible with recreation," Berger said. "Why do this in an area where people are out taking walks and enjoying nature?"

The Wadleigh Falls Road property is one of two open-space acquisitions where hunting is allowed under terms of the funding. The other is the former Fisk property on Grant Road.

According to Brian Hart, town council member and executive director of the Rockingham Land Trust, the L-CHIP funding provided to the town "requires public access including hunting, fishing and hiking.

"As long as these activities are done per state law, they must be allowed," Hart said. Hart did say that signs stating hunting was allowed were not posted on the properties. According to the schedule posted on the New Hampshire Fish and Game Web site, deer may be hunted from Oct. 29 through Nov. 8 with muzzleloaders, defined as a "single barrel, single shot firearm, 40 caliber or greater, loaded only from the muzzle."

"It literally tore everything out of this poor animal," Behan said. "I've never seen what a muzzleloader can do before. Not to mention, they are shooting close to residences and I just find that unbelievable, but they call it the law. People are not aware that this is happening on conservation land, and they should be made aware."

Behan said hunters should also have to ask permission to hunt on lands that are close to homes. According to the records found at www.nhdeed.com, deeds for both properties "conveying an Executory Interest and Public Access through the Land and Community Heritage Investment Authority are subject to the following conditions: Pedestrian access to, on, and across the property for hunting, fishing, and transitory, low impact, non-commercial recreational purposes, but not camping."

The deed states that the grantor (town of Newmarket) "may post against or limit such access with prior approval of the Executive Interest Holder if activities become inconsistent with purposes for protecting the property and or when public safety would be at risk."

Hart suggested people walking on the property this time of year wear orange and always be aware of their surroundings. "These (hunting) seasons are fairly short," he said. Archery hunting for deer is allowed from Sept. 15 through Dec. 15, and firearm hunting for deer is permitted from Nov. 9 through Dec. 4, after muzzleloader hunting ends.

Berger said it is "upsetting" that a place where hunting is allowed is considered a recreation area. "This land is posted, but the deer feel it is a safe place," she said. "To me, a recreation area is where people are able to share and enjoy wildlife and not kill it when it feels safe. I have no problem with hunting when no one is around, but having it in a recreation area is not safe." "These deer are acclimated to us, and it's just a sad thing," Behan said. "Not to mention, people let their dogs run loose, and there is danger lurking behind every tree."

Berger said she is not looking to deny hunters their rights, but there is a fine line. "The town wants open space which is a great thing, but they have to sell their souls to do it," she said. "It is a contradiction that people are out enjoying watching a deer with their children and someone comes along and kills it."

Behan said the image of the deer being shot is not one she is likely to forget anytime soon. "It's taken the joy out of conservation," she said. "It was the most pathetic sight I've ever seen."

Fish, Game to get 806 acres of land

Exeter Newsletter, Dec 30, 2005

NEWMARKET - In a sign of successful conservation around New Hampshire's Great Bay, a dozen tracts of land totaling 806 acres will be transferred next month from The Nature Conservancy to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department.

On Wednesday, the N.H. Executive Council approved the transfer of 12 parcels in eight Seacoast towns, all parcels the conservancy purchased on behalf of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. The conservancy will also transfer to Fish and Game conservation easements from an additional two tracts, totaling 220.5 acres. The actual transfer of the properties and easements is expected to take place in January.

The tracts and easements range in size from 10 acres to 359 acres and were purchased by The Nature Conservancy from willing sellers between 1999 and June 2005. The tracts were identified and purchased for their excellent habitat for waterfowl and other species and for their value in protecting Great Bay's water quality.

"These coastal properties include critical habitat for many wildlife species, particularly for waterfowl and marine resources in the state," said Lee E. Perry, executive director of the N.H. Fish and Game Department. "With the lands protected, the people of New Hampshire will benefit from the enhancement of water quality in the region, and from the opportunity to explore and enjoy them for generations to come. We thank our many partners who have worked hard to create this legacy."

Daryl Burtnett, state director of the conservancy in New Hampshire, offered his thanks to Gov. John Lynch and the Executive Council, "who are taking an important step in the protection and stewardship of the natural character of the Great Bay region. The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership uses a comprehensive approach to identify Great Bay's most critical habitats and to protect them. The Nature Conservancy is lead acquisition agent, and partners include Ducks Unlimited, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Natural Resources Conservation Service, New Hampshire Audubon, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Since 1994 the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership has protected some 4,000 acres of critical habitat in the Great Bay area. Local communities and other organizations have protected an additional 3,020 acres that the partnership has been able to use as match to leverage federal funding. The leading sources of funds include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admini