

Critical piece in Great Bay conservation puzzle put into place

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DOVER — The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, working with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, acquired a conservation easement on 33 acres in Dover at the mouth of the Bellamy River where it enters Little Bay.

"We're proud to partner with TNC and the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership to conserve this important section of the Great Bay shoreline," said Forest Society President/Forester Jane Difley. "This area of the state has been recognized as an estuarine ecosystem of local, regional, and national importance."

This property adds nearly 800 feet of protected shoreline, extending an unbroken string of protected Bellamy Riverfront properties that begins not far from downtown Dover. On the other side of the conservation easement, only another 800 feet separates this conserved area from the Madbury town line and other lands under easement with the Forest Society. From there the string of protected shoreline continues all the way to the Durham town line, with its cluster of conserved land around Wagon Hill Farm.

In addition to its importance to the estuary as a buffer, the property includes an unusual salt panne, a pond that sits a few feet above sea level but just a few steps from the bay. The pond's impervious clay bottom retains the water, which very slowly seeps away through a small outlet. The pond is replenished whenever an unusually high tide brings water up over its banks.

The easement has a system of zones to ensure that the management of the land continues to protect the bay. The property is managed to maintain a protective vegetated buffer of forest and scrubland along the shore.

Great Bay has been a focus of New Hampshire's conservation planning and



Photo courtesy of Dea Brickner-Wood. The recently conserved land includes this salt panne, a pond that sits a few feet above sea level. The pond's clay bottom holds water, which slowly seeps away through a small outlet.

management since the 1940s. The Bellamy River, along with four other rivers flowing into Great Bay, draws a tidal flush of salt water from the Atlantic Ocean nearly five miles east of the estuary itself. The mixing of fresh and salt water creates a rich aquatic habitat. The estuary's healthy salt and brackish marsh, eelgrass beds, and mud flats provide feeding, breeding, and nursery grounds for finfish, oysters, shellfish, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds.

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership is a group of organizations committed to protecting the important habitats of the Great Bay Region. Since 1994, the Partnership has conserved more than 5,500 acres within the watershed.

"The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership could never have achieved over 5,500 acres of conserved land around Great Bay without the willingness of landowners to work with us on conservation opportunities for their property," said Duane Hyde, director of protection for The Nature Conservancy.

The Partnership's conservation efforts include science and research based decision making for land conservation actions, collaborative landscape scale stewardship and management, and providing recreation and education opportunities. For more information, visit www.greatbaypartnership.org.