

# Consensus for Conservation:

## The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership

*When a broad coalition of New Hampshire conservation organizations gets together, amazing things can happen. The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership is using its collective clout to secure funds for protecting land around the bay. The*

**N**EARLY ANY GIVEN DAY in the spring or fall, you can go to a few places on New Hampshire's Great Bay and see more

than a dozen species of waterfowl. This 4,500-acre estuary is a treasure chest of natural resources,

from shellfish to striped bass. It is a destination for boaters, bird watchers, hunters and anglers. Its wetlands and saltmarsh serve as a natural check against flooding and a draw for

waterfowl and other migratory birds. For anyone who loves wildlife — especially waterfowl — Great Bay is an inspiring place.

In recent years, Great Bay has inspired scores of conservationists to

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*By Eric Aldrich and  
Steve Hickoff*

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take a hard look at the many resources here and the threats facing them. Although they come from different backgrounds and organizations, they all agree on a strategy to protect Great Bay's habitats for future generations.

Working as the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, these players know their effort is an example of how big conservation initiatives will work in the next century: lots of diverse partners using their own distinct strengths to

achieve one common goal.

The partnership, which started in 1994, includes the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, The Nature Conservancy's New Hampshire chapter, Great Bay Estuarine Research Reserve, Audubon Society of New Hampshire, Ducks Unlimited, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Working with willing sellers and generous, farsighted landowners, the partnership so far has protected several hundred acres around Great Bay. The partnership has many land deals in the works and many more to initiate. Over the next few years, the partnership has the potential to protect thousands of acres of important habitat.

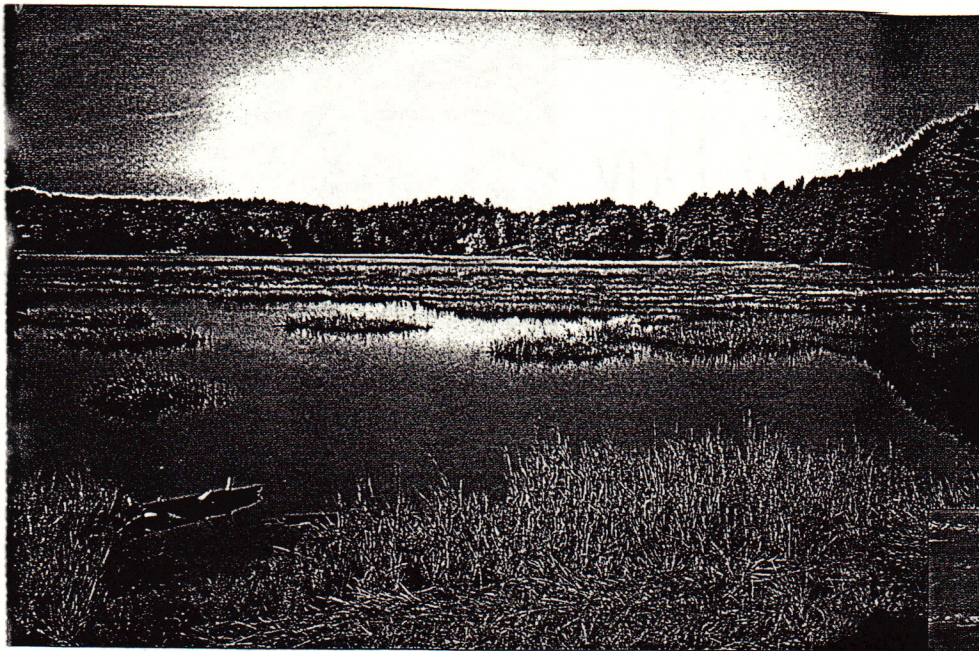
JACK ADAMS PHOTO



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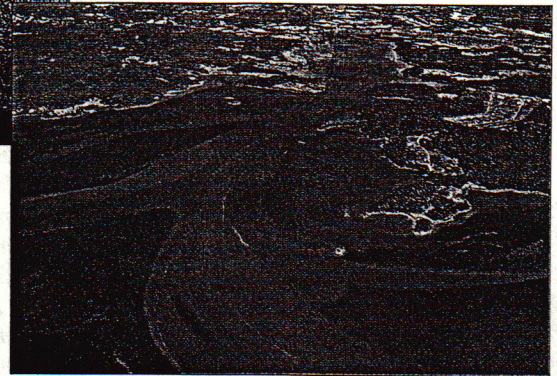
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WILLIAM PENHALE PHOTO

*It's easy to see why Great Bay is a magnet for breeding waterfowl. Extensive shoreline, shallow waters, and many inlets add up to excellent waterfowl habitat. Above, Adams Point. Right, looking north toward Adams Point on the left and Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge on the right.*



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"It's a huge watershed and a major complex estuarine system."

With that in mind, the Great Bay partnership has taken a landscape approach to its mission. The partners have scoped out the entire watershed, including 24 towns, looking for key parcels that: host important ecological elements (such as

waterfowl breeding habitat); that are at risk of being developed; have high potential for protection; and connect with other protected areas.

Drawing from work completed by Ed Robinson in 1986, the partnership has identified 14,200 acres of high value habitats as candidates for protection under the

North American Waterfowl Management Plan. New Hampshire's focus areas under that plan — Great Bay and

Umbagog Lake — were crucial to getting grants from the competitive North American Wetlands Conservation Act. But while thousands of acres merit protection, limited funding forces the partners to

focus on priorities. Among them are areas along the Piscassic and Lamprey rivers.

### Funds Make It Happen

One priority area that emerged early on was the undeveloped land around Crommet Creek in Durham, a remarkable habitat for waterfowl, osprey and other species. The first batch of funding for the partnership's work was aimed at Crommet Creek, a \$511,000 grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Helping to leverage the grant was the protection of 120 acres in the area by The Nature Conservancy and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. G. Ritchie White, the seacoast area Fish and Game commissioner, secured another \$100,000 in private donations.

Two years later, in 1997, the Great Bay Estuarine Research Reserve secured \$1 million — thanks to U.S. Senator Judd Gregg — from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Then another

