



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Generous Match Offered for All Donations to Finalize Tiger Hill Community Forest in Sebago**

BRIDGTON, ME – Loon Echo Land Trust (LELT) and The Trust for Public Land (TPL) have received a generous \$100,000 anonymous grant to match new donations for the protection of 1,400 acres of undeveloped land in the town of Sebago.

To date, the fundraising campaign to purchase and protect the property has raised nearly \$1.3 million. LELT seeks to raise an additional \$286,000 needed to purchase the property by the end of the year. Once conserved by the trust, the property will be known as Tiger Hill Community Forest, in recognition of the land's most prominent peak.

The land, to be owned and managed by LELT on behalf of the community, protects sensitive wildlife habitat and historic working forestlands, and will be open to the public for recreation.

“The property is currently used by local community members for hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting, snowmobiling, and other activities,” stated the Sebago Board of Selectmen in a letter of support. “Acquiring the property for conservation and recreation will secure these close-to-home recreation opportunities for Sebago residents and visitors.”

While still largely rural, Sebago and surrounding towns have experienced more than twice the population growth rate of the state as a whole. Conservation of natural areas like the Tiger Hill Community Forest will help to maintain the region's rural charm while benefiting the local tourism, outdoor recreation, and forest products industries.

LELT has partnered with TPL in the fundraising effort to acquire the property. Both organizations are members of Sebago Clean Waters (SCW), a partnership working to conserve 35,000 acres in the Sebago Lake watershed to protect the water quality of Sebago Lake, the water source for over one-sixth of Maine residents, many visitors, and businesses in the greater Portland area. Portland Water District (PWD), who is also a partner in SCW, has pledged \$345,000 towards the project. The Maine Drinking Water Program is providing a low-interest loan to PWD to fund its contribution.

“Tiger Hill Community Forest provides countless public benefits, including protection of drinking water for a sixth of Maine's population. Its forests act as a filter, purifying water as it flows into rivers, streams, and, ultimately, Sebago Lake,” according to PWD's Environmental Manager,

Paul Hunt. “Conserving this forest means Mainers will enjoy the benefits forever. We are excited for the residents of the town of Sebago and will continue to support projects like this in the Sebago Lake watershed.”

“This project would not be possible if not for our partnership with the Trust for Public Land, Sebago Clean Waters, and a dedicated group of local community members,” said LELT Executive Director Matt Markot. “This community forest will benefit residents, visitors, and businesses in Sebago, and will protect regionally significant wildlife habitat.”

LELT and TPL have raised approximately 80% of the funds for the project, but need to raise another \$286,000 to complete the purchase and care for the land forever. With a deadline for acquisition of December 31st, 2019, LELT is seeking to raise the remaining funds from private individuals, public resources, and additional grants.

Donations of any amount to the project will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the matching grant. For example, a \$10 donation towards the purchase becomes \$20, \$50 becomes \$100, and \$1,000 becomes \$2,000.

Donations to support Tiger Hill Community Forest can be sent to Loon Echo Land Trust, 8 Depot Street Suite #4, Bridgton, ME 04009 or made online at [loonecholandtrust.org/tigerhill](http://loonecholandtrust.org/tigerhill).

***Loon Echo Land Trust (LELT)** is a member supported, non-profit land trust that works to protect the natural resources of the northern Sebago Lake region for future generations. Loon Echo conserves 7,000 acres of land and manages 31 miles of hiking and biking trails in the towns of Bridgton, Casco, Denmark, Harrison, Naples, Raymond and Sebago. To learn more about Loon Echo Land Trust, visit [lelt.org](http://lelt.org) or call (207) 647-4352.*

***The Trust for Public Land (TPL)***

*TPL creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. TPL has protected nearly 200,000 acres in Maine and has helped more than 30 towns acquire and create Community Forests. To learn more, visit [tpl.org/our-work/maine](http://tpl.org/our-work/maine).*

***Sebago Clean Waters (SCW)** is a collaborative effort of nine conservation organizations working to protect water quality, community well-being, a vibrant economy, and fish and wildlife habitat in the Sebago region through voluntary forestland conservation. SCW’s goal is to protect 25 percent (35,000 more acres) of the Sebago Lake watershed in the next 15 years. To learn more, visit [sebagocleanwaters.org](http://sebagocleanwaters.org).*

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**Photo Credit/Captions:**

Photo 1: THCF and the Northwest River from above. Photo by Jerry Monkman // [ecophotography.com](http://ecophotography.com)

Photo 2: Community Planning Committee Visit the Future THCF