



SEBAGO CLEAN WATERS MAKES MORE PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL OF CONSERVING 35,000 ACRES OF WATERSHED FORESTLAND

Recent acquisition of 3,000 acres in the Sebago watershed by The Conservation Fund provides time to raise funds to purchase and manage land that will support clean drinking water, and the livelihood and lifestyle of local communities.

Oxford County, ME – June 16, 2020

Sebago Clean Waters (SCW) made great strides toward meeting its goal of conserving 35,000 acres of Sebago-area forestland on June 15th when The Conservation Fund, a national environmental non-profit with a field office in Freeport, announced its purchase of 15,408 acres from Chadbourne Tree Farms in Western Maine.

With approximately 3,000 acres of the purchased land located within the Sebago Lake watershed, this effort accounts for nearly 10% of SCW's 35,000-acre forestland conservation goal. Over the next several years, the Fund will manage the white pine timberland, located primarily in Oxford County, providing time for the organization and its major partners—Mahoosuc Land Trust, Mahoosuc Pathways, Western Foothills Land Trust (WFLT), and the U.S. Forest Service—to raise the funding needed to permanently conserve it under mostly private ownership. SCW partner WFLT will be seeking federal, state, and private support to complete this significant conservation effort over the next five years.

The Fund's acquisition is intended to protect this iconic and historic working forest landscape from fragmentation and development. It also enables the implementation of conservation strategies that will advance critical watershed protection for the City of Portland, conserve climate resilient ecological areas, and provide regional economic benefits through enhanced recreational access and continued sustainable forestry operations and timber jobs.

Originally home to Pequawket and Arosaguntacook bands of the Abenaki tribe, part of the Wabanaki Confederacy, this land was acquired by the Chadbourne family over more than 150 years. The family's history in the area dates back 12 generations. It has been

celebrated as one of the best managed forests in New England thanks to the family's exemplary focus on carefully cultivating the growth, composition, health, productivity, and quality of the forests.

"The Chadbourne family lands are some of the finest working forestlands in Western Maine that many drive through, recreate on, and even earn their livings related to the resources they provide," said Lee Dassler, Executive Director, Western Foothills Land Trust. "Securing these lands and protecting them as working lands forever will be our greatest challenge to date, and we look forward to working with our conservation partners, state and federal agencies, and local municipalities to achieve this goal."

The purchase includes the acquisition of the fourth largest privately owned forest in the Sebago watershed and 13.5 miles of frontage on the Crooked River, Sebago Lake's primary tributary. Sebago Lake is the drinking water source for more than 200,000 residents in the City of Portland and surrounding communities.

"Sebago Lake is one of only 50 public surface water supplies in the country that require no filtration before treatment. Conserving these forestlands is critical for the protection of the region's lakes that provide pure drinking water and recreational opportunities," said Karen Young, Coordinator at Sebago Clean Waters. "We are thrilled that The Conservation Fund and Western Foothills Land Trust are working together to protect the water quality and the enduring forest-based heritage of the region."



Songo Pond at the top of the Sebago watershed, surrounded by some of the forestland recently purchased from Chadbourne Tree Farms. Photo by LandVest.

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Sebago Clean Waters

Sebago Clean Waters is a partnership 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. www.sebagocleanwaters.org

Western Foothills Land Trust

Western Foothills Land Trust protects farmlands, wetlands, forestlands, unique natural resources and open space in the greater Oxford Hills area of Western Maine. The Trust holds conservation easements on privately owned lands and owns working forest lands and preserves in the region. The Trust also manages recreational trails on its preserves and collaborates within its community to create healthy opportunities. www.wflmaine.org

The Conservation Fund

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than eight million acres of land. With a field office in Freeport, The Conservation Fund has helped conserve over 450,000 acres of forests, coastal landscapes, and aquatic habitats that define Maine's environment, communities, economy, and way of life. www.conservationfund.org

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