



MAHOOSUC LAND TRUST CREATES ITS FIRST FOREVER-WILD PRESERVE

Conservation easement on 295 acres in western Maine allows nature to thrive through minimal human impact

Albany Township, ME – March 24, 2023

Mahoosuc Land Trust (MLT) recently closed on 295 acres of land in Albany Township to create the organization's first forever-wild property, for the purpose of allowing nature to flourish with minimal human intervention. Flint Mountain Wildlands preserve is located next to MLT's Flint Farm conservation easement, creating a roughly 500-acre conservation area that will be accessible to the public.

The Flint Mountain property will be different from the vast majority of MLT's 20,000 acres of conserved lands and easements, many of which allow active management, including timber harvesting, farming, and creation of trails for more intensive recreational use. Visitors to Flint Mountain will have access to enjoy the scenic beauty and other wilderness values through minimal impact, non-mechanized uses, such as walking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and nature observation and study. "It's an exciting idea for people when they realize that they will experience places like this in a different way," said Kirk Siegel, MLT's executive director.

Northeast Wilderness Trust (NEWT), the holder of the forever-wild conservation easement, worked closely with MLT to protect, in perpetuity, the ecological integrity and wild character of the land. "Forever-wild forests are allowed to grow old, acting as carbon stores while providing critical habitats for many species," said Caitlin Mather, land protection manager at NEWT. "It gives me a great sense of relief knowing that the signs of wildlife observed during our visits to the land will continue to be part of its story."

The Flint Mountain property has unmarked trails with views to the White Mountains, and MLT plans to work with NEWT on a trail improvement plan later this year that will be shared with the public when complete. Motorized uses are prohibited. Hunting of deer and other non-predator species will be welcomed, following the creation of a

management plan developed with NEWT. The conservation easement recognizes that the Wabanaki people have lived in this area for thousands of years, and will allow MLT to enter into tribal cultural respect agreements.

The Flint Mountain Wildlands preserve will be a modest first step to demonstrate how undeveloped and minimally managed lands play an essential role in forest ecosystems. The land will serve as a benchmark to understanding the benefits of wildlands within a landscape of managed forestlands. It contains large hardwood stands with abundant red oak approximately 100 years in age and pasture oaks of very significant girth possibly dating back well into the 1800s when the land was actively farmed. There has been little or no harvesting in recent decades on much of the acreage. MLT believes the lands are thus well on their way toward healing and restoration from human impact. The property's wildland status will also protect state-identified wild brook trout habitat on streams that feed the Crooked River.

Sebago Clean Waters, a coalition of ten organizations, including Mahoosuc Land Trust, contributed funding. "This project is an important part of a broader vision to create an expanse of conserved lands in the Sebago Lake watershed to protect drinking water, wildlife, and quality of life. Each time we add a piece of protected land to the puzzle, these impacts deepen," said Karen Young, partnership director of Sebago Clean Waters.

Sebago Clean Waters founding member Portland Water District provided additional funding. "The Portland Water District supports the work of Mahoosuc Land Trust because Sebago Lake, our source of drinking water, is downstream of the forests they conserve," said Paul Hunt, the district's environmental manager. "These woods naturally treat the water our customers drink and this property will remain wooded forever. This means cleaner water, healthier fisheries, more habitat for animals and birds, and outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors—all things that make Maine 'the way life should be.'"

Critical funding also came from donors to MLT's Ken Hotopp Wildlands Fund, inspired by and in memory of MLT board member and volunteer Ken Hotopp, a naturalist, conservation biologist, and defender of wilderness and the climate. Landowner Ken Wille of Albany Township made the transaction possible through a generous bargain sale to MLT. Maine Mountain Collaborative provided additional funding as part of its goal to conserve both well-managed forests and ecological reserves.

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[Mahoosuc Land Trust](#) is a nationally accredited land trust founded in 1989 with a mission to conserve and share the Mahoosuc region's important natural lands with our communities now and for the future. MLT welcomes visitors to enjoy nature-based activities at Valentine Farm Conservation Center, 14 MLT preserves, and 4 Androscoggin River canoe landings, and engages hundreds of volunteers per year to care for them. The land trust operates in both western Maine and northern NH, and has

conserved 22,000 acres of land in the region important to communities, including mountaintops, waterfalls, trails, boat landings, farms, and natural habitat.

[Northeast Wilderness Trust](#) is a regional land trust that focuses exclusively on protecting wilderness areas—lands permanently protected as forever-wild, where natural processes direct the ebb and flow of life. With its headquarters in Vermont, staff in multiple states, and board members across the Northeast, the Wilderness Trust protects more than 76,000 acres in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

[Sebago Clean Waters](#) is leveraging the power of partnership to conserve 35,000 acres of Sebago Lake watershed forests for water quality, community, economic, and ecological benefits. Established in late 2017, the 10-member coalition has permanently protected nearly 10,000 acres of forestland and raised more than \$9 million to further their work.

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