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Isinglass River Conservation Corridor Project

Daniel E. Kern
Bear-Paw Regional Greenways

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ISINGLASS RIVER CONSERVATION CORRIDOR PROJECT

A Final Report to

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project

Submitted by

Daniel E. Kern, Executive Director
Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
Post Office Box 19, 63 Nottingham Road
Deerfield, New Hampshire 03037
603 463-9400 / info@bear-paw.org

December 31, 2008

This project was funded in part by a grant from the New Hampshire Estuaries Project as authorized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program.



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ABSTRACT

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project (NHEP) provided a \$9,075 grant to Bear-Paw Regional Greenways to support the Isinglass River Conservation Corridor Project. The grant helped fund some of the transaction costs associated with the project that protected high-value conservation land along the Isinglass River and in other areas of the watershed in Strafford, New Hampshire.

The \$2.9 million project was a collaboration of Bear-Paw, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and the Town of Strafford that protected five properties and 868 acres of forest, over one mile of road frontage, more than three miles of frontage on streams and rivers (including more than 1½ miles on the Isinglass River), several ponds, and two historic mill sites. All of these properties are in areas that have been identified as important to protect in the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds, a Conservation Plan produced by Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

The project was primarily funded by a \$1.3 million federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant that TPL secured for the purchase of a 286-acre property on the Isinglass River as well as the value of donations of land and/or conservation easements on four other properties covering 582 acres that provided most of the 1:1 match needed for the CELCP grant. The Town of Strafford's Conservation Fund and the grants listed below as well as private contributions also helped provide the match for the CELCP funding and the rest of the cash needed to complete the project:

- New Hampshire Estuaries Project
- State Conservation Committee's Conservation License Plate Grant Program
- Samuel P. Hunt Foundation
- Fields Pond Foundation
- McIninch Foundation
- Davis Conservation Fund
- Fuller Foundation
- Individual gifts to Bear-Paw and TPL

The project helps implement the following NHEP Management Plan Action Plans by helping to:

- Limit impervious cover and protect streams (LND-2)
- Minimize urban sprawl in coastal watersheds (LND-6)
- Support land conservation efforts in shoreland areas (LND-15)
- Support implementation of state and federal land protection programs (LND-26)
- Encourage towns to dedicate current-use change tax penalties to conservation commissions (LND-28)
- Encourage appropriate buffers around important wildlife areas (LND-34)
- Encourage conservation easements (LND-36)
- Utilize the media to enhance educational efforts (EDU-1)
- Support volunteer organizations like Bear-Paw, TPL, and others active in water quality, habitat, or other estuarine watershed natural resource issues (EDU-5)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project (NHEP) provided a \$9,075 grant to Bear-Paw Regional Greenways to support the Isinglass River Conservation Corridor Project. The grant helped fund some of the transaction costs associated with the project that protected high-value conservation land along the Isinglass River and in other areas of the watershed in Strafford, New Hampshire.

The \$2.9 million project was a collaboration of Bear-Paw, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and the Town of Strafford that protected five properties and 868 acres of forest, over one mile of road frontage, more than three miles of frontage on streams and rivers (including more than 1½ miles on the Isinglass River), several ponds, and two historic mill sites. All of these properties are in areas that have been identified as important to protect in the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds (the Upper Isinglass and Blue Hills Conservation Focus Areas) and in a Conservation Plan produced by Bear-Paw Regional Greenways. Some are also included in priority areas identified in the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

TPL secured a \$1.3 million federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant for the purchase of a 286-acre property with almost 1 ½ miles of frontage on the Isinglass River that was near approval for a large residential development. The grant application was competitively ranked 1st in the state and in the nation and conservation of the Isinglass River property was a priority for the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the Town of Strafford, and Bear-Paw Regional Greenways. The value of donations of land and/or conservation easements on four other properties covering 582 acres provided most of the 1:1 match needed for the CELCP grant. The Town of Strafford's Conservation Fund and the grants listed below as well as private contributions also helped provide the match for the CELCP funding and the rest of the cash needed to complete the project:

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- State Conservation Committee's Conservation License Plate Grant Program
- Samuel P. Hunt Foundation
- Fields Pond Foundation
- McIninch Foundation
- Davis Conservation Fund
- Fuller Foundation
- Individual gifts to Bear-Paw and TPL

Bear-Paw and TPL jointly managed the project with assistance from the Town of Strafford and its Conservation Commission.

INTRODUCTION

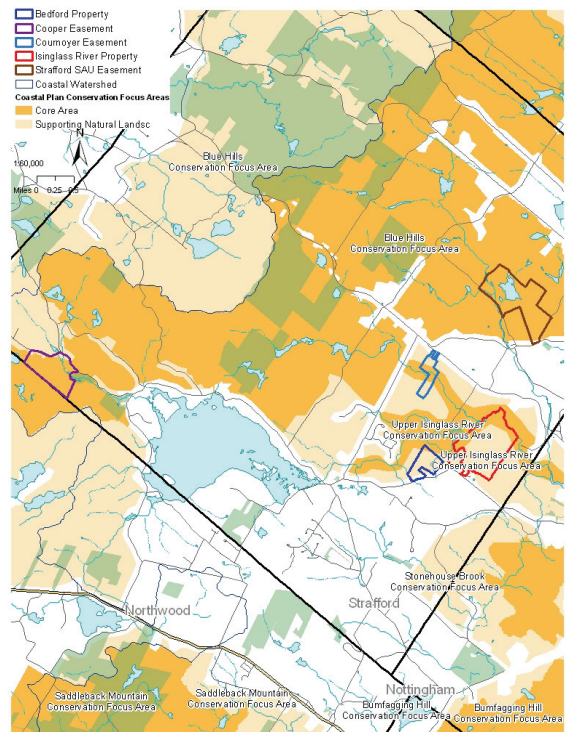
The New Hampshire Estuaries Project Local Grant for \$9,075 was primarily used to partially fund the transaction costs associated with three of the projects – the Bedford property, the Isinglass River property, and the Strafford school District property. A small amount of the grant (\$500) was used to fund outreach and education efforts to promote the use of Land Use Change Taxes (LUCT) for conservation project funding using the Isinglass River project as an example. NHEP Transaction Assistance grants of \$6,000 were also used to help fund the costs associated with two of the projects – the Cooper-Walworth property and the Cournoyer property. These grants were matched with \$6,000 in funding from the Strafford Conservation Fund not included as match for this grant. The project budget in Appendix B provides details on all grant and match funding.

The transaction costs associated with the project included project and grant administration, property surveys, appraisals, environmental reviews, legal documents, conservation easement preparation, and attorney fees. The costs associated with the LUCT outreach project included staff time to prepare and present materials to Bear-Paw members, Board members, and local officials. Additional information on the work done to complete the project can be found in the Activities section below.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project was to complete five land conservation projects protecting 868 acres. Two of the properties were protected by conservation easements and acquired by the Town of Strafford and three of the properties were protected by conservation easements and remained under their current ownership. The permanent protection of the Isinglass River property, as well as the other properties covered by this proposal, will help maintain water quality, conserve valuable native wildlife habitat and an important recreational fishery, and enhance opportunities for public access to the Isinglass River for educational and recreational uses.

All of these properties are in areas that were identified as important to protect in the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds (in the Upper Isinglass River and Blue Hills Conservation Focus Areas), the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan, and in a Conservation Plan completed by Bear-Paw. A map showing the project properties and Conservation Focus Areas from the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds is shown to the right and in a larger scale in Appendix A.



The Isinglass River Conservation Corridor project helps implement the following NHEP Management Plan Action Plan(s) and Activities:

- LND-2 Implement steps to limit impervious cover and protect streams.
- LND-6 Minimize urban sprawl in coastal watersheds.
- LND-15 Support land conservation efforts in shoreland areas.
- LND-26 Support implementation of state and federal land protection programs (e.g., Conservation and Reinvestment Act, Land and Community Heritage, Teaming With Wildlife, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Coastal Initiative Program, Farmland Preservation Program).
- LND-28 Encourage towns to dedicate current-use change tax penalties to conservation commissions for the purpose of natural resource acquisition, easements, restoration, and conservation land management.
- LND-34 Encourage appropriate buffers around important wildlife areas and rare or exemplary natural communities.
- LND-36 Encourage conservation easements.
- EDU-1 Utilize the media to enhance educational efforts.
- EDU-5 Support volunteer organizations active in water quality, habitat, or other estuarine watershed natural resource issues.

ACTIVITIES

Most of the activities completed for this project were related to the completion of five land protection projects. Bear-Paw also prepared outreach and education materials designed to help encourage Towns to dedicate current-use change tax penalties to municipal conservation efforts using the Isinglass River Conservation Corridor project as an example. These materials were presented to our member Towns at a “Conservation Roundtable” sponsored by Bear-Paw on December 9, 2008 and through letters and emails sent directly to Conservation Commissions in the region. See the table below for a description of the work tasks and products.

Activities		
Work Tasks	Description	Work Products
Property Surveys	Some level of survey was completed on all of the project properties.	Bedford – perimeter survey Cooper-Walworth – perimeter survey Cournoyer – perimeter survey Isinglass River – perimeter survey had already completed, survey of related land transfer completed Strafford School District – perimeter survey already completed, survey of “unrestricted area completed
Conservation Easement Plan Recording Information	Strafford County Registry of Deeds	Bedford – 95-018 Cooper-Walworth – 95-021 Cournoyer – 95-020 Isinglass River – 95-001, 95-002 Strafford School District – 93-001, 93-002, 95-019

Activities		
Work Tasks	Description	Work Products
Appraisals	Appraisals were completed on all of the project properties to provide documentation for the CELCP grant “match”.	Appraisals were completed for all five properties
Environmental Reviews	Environmental reviews were completed for the two project properties that were being acquired by the Town of Strafford.	Bedford – completed Isinglass River – completed
Miscellaneous Legal Documents	Deeds were completed for the acquisition and transfer of two of the properties to the Town of Strafford (Bedford and the Isinglass River properties) as well as a related land exchange.	Bedford – deed prepared Isinglass River – deed prepared, deed for related property transfer was also prepared
Conservation Easement Drafting	Bear-Paw drafted conservation easement deeds for all of the project properties and is a primary holder on all of the easements. The Town of Strafford is a co-holder on three of the easements (Cooper-Walworth, Cournoyer, and the Strafford School District).	Conservation easements were prepared for all five properties – drafts were reviewed / revised with CELCP, landowners, the Town of Strafford, and Bear-Paw.
Conservation Easement Recording Information	Strafford County Registry of Deeds	Bedford – 3667 / 411 Cooper-Walworth – 3667 / 430 Cournoyer – 3667 / 449 Isinglass River – 3667 / 384 Strafford School District – 3667 / 469
Attorney Review	Bear-Paw’s attorney reviewed all of the conservation easement deeds and other legal documents related to the project. TPL’s attorneys also reviewed the conservation easement deeds and produced other legal documents related to the project.	
Project and Grant Administration	Bear-Paw, TPL, and the Town of Strafford jointly administered the project (with TPL as lead for the CELCP funding). This included managing outreach and education efforts as well as assuring that project and grant-related requirements were completed. Bear-Paw was responsible for preparing the baseline reports for all of the project properties.	

Activities		
Work Tasks	Description	Work Products
Project Outreach and Education	Bear-Paw and TPL prepared outreach and education materials to generate public support for the projects.	Bear-Paw Newsletter Articles (Appendices C and D) NHDES Newsletter Articles (Appendix E) Other newspaper and newsletter articles were also published on the project.
Related Project Outreach – LUCT	Bear-Paw prepared outreach and education materials designed to help encourage Towns to dedicate current-use change tax penalties to municipal conservation efforts. Bear-Paw presented the materials to member Towns at a “Conservation Roundtable” sponsored by Bear-Paw on December 9, 2008.	2-page handout “Conservation Funds, Conservation Projects, Current Use, and Land Use Change Taxes” (Appendix F) Letter and announcement for Conservation Roundtable (Appendix G)

OUTCOMES

As noted above, all five land conservation projects were completed. The permanent protection of the Isinglass River property and the other properties will help maintain water quality, conserve valuable native wildlife habitat and an important recreational fishery, and enhance opportunities for public access to the Isinglass River for educational and recreational uses. Their protection also helps implement the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds since all of the properties were part of Conservation Focus Areas identified in the plan. The New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan and a Conservation Plan completed by Bear-Paw also identified these areas as important to protect.

The Isinglass River Conservation Corridor project helps implement the following NHEP Management Plan Action Plan(s) and Activities by helping to:

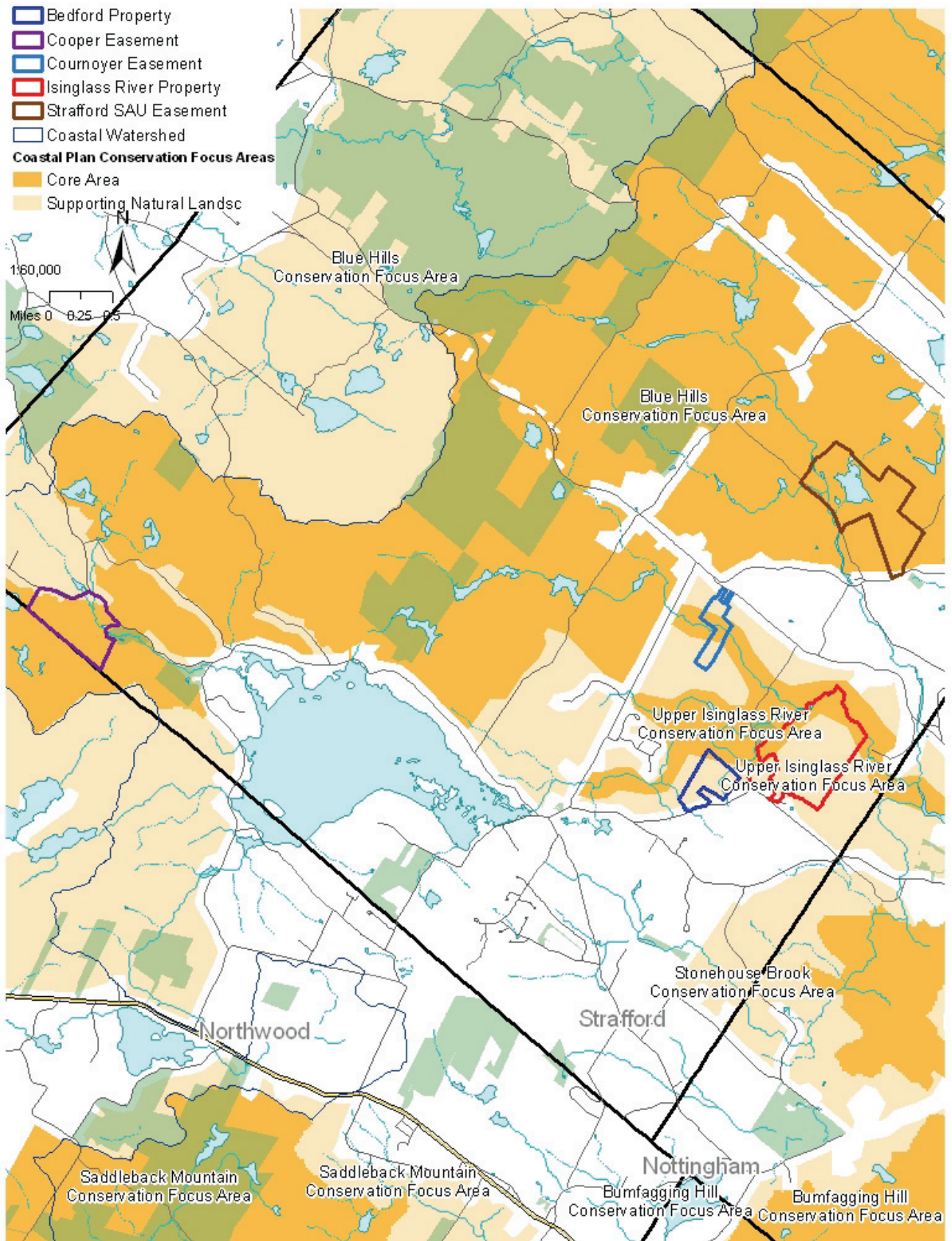
- Limit impervious cover and protect streams at the municipal level (LND-2)
- Minimize urban sprawl in coastal watersheds (LND-6)
- Support land conservation efforts in shoreland areas (LND-15)
- Support implementation of state and federal land protection programs – the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds and the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan (LND-26)
- Encourage towns to dedicate current-use change tax penalties to conservation commissions for the purpose of natural resource acquisition, easements, restoration, and conservation land management (LND-28)
- Encourage appropriate buffers around important wildlife areas and rare or exemplary natural communities (LND-34)
- Encourage conservation easements (LND-36)

- Utilize the media to enhance educational efforts (EDU-1)
- Support volunteer organizations like Bear-Paw, TPL, and others active in water quality, habitat, or other estuarine watershed natural resource issues (EDU-5)

Support for projects such as this and for the work of land trusts and other conservation organizations throughout the coastal watersheds is critical if the goals of the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds, the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan, and other local plans are expected to be achieved. Local and regional land trusts in particular need funding to support their work with landowners and municipalities – identifying important areas to protect, interested landowners, potential funding, etc.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendix A - Map of Project Properties and Coastal Plan Conservation Focus Areas



Appendix B - Project Budget

	NHEP Funding	Matching NHEP Funds (Town/Other)	Other Funds* (NHEP / CELCP)	Total Budget
BUDGET CATEGORIES				
Staff (Bear-Paw)	5,500.00		2,500.00	8,000.00
Staff (TPL)			15,921.89	15,921.89
Staff (Bear-Paw Outreach – LUCT)	500.00			500.00
Supplies/Materials/Other**	750.00	13.19		763.19
Contractual****				
1. Property Surveys		21,463.50	7,872.00	29,335.50
2. Appraisals		8,400.00	21,900.00	30,300.00
3. Environmental Reviews			4,250.00	4,250.00
4. Legal Fees	1,500.00	4,350.56		5,850.56
5. Other Project Related Expenses (TPL, etc.)			8,093.00	8,093.00
Other Cost (specify in space below)				
1. Title/Deed Searches		166.00	2,975.00	3,141.00
2. Title Insurance			500.00	500.00
3. Recording Fees		571.70		571.70
4. Stewardship Fund Fees		25,250.00	6,000.00	31,250.00
5. Acquisition Cost (CELCP, Other Funds)			1,500,000.00	1,500,000.00
Indirect Costs (indicate rate: 10%)	825.00			825.00
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS#	9,075.00	60,214.95	1,570,011.89	1,639,301.84
Cash Grants and Matching Funds				
CELCP			1,300,000.00	1,300,000.00
Strafford Conservation Fund		25,214.95	174,831.88	200,046.83
NH Conservation Plate Program			40,000.00	40,000.00
Samuel P. Hunt Foundation		25,000.00		25,000.00
Davis Conservation Fund		10,000.00		10,000.00
Fields Pond Foundation			15,000.00	15,000.00
McIninch Foundation			15,000.00	15,000.00
NHEP Local Grant	9,075.00			9,075.00
NHEP Transaction Assistance Grants			6,000.00	6,000.00
Fuller Foundation			5,000.00	5,000.00
Other Private Fundraising			14,180.01	14,180.01
Total Cash Grants and Matching Funds	9,075.00	60,214.95	1,570,011.89	1,639,301.84
Match Value of Donated Land (CELCP)				1,080,000.00
Match Value of Donated Land (Not CELCP)				220,000.00
Total Donated Value				1,300,000.00

Appendix C – “Bear-Paw Print” Newsletter Article (Fall 2008)

A land trust conserving ribbons of green in southeastern New Hampshire.



BEAR-PAW PRINT

NEWS & INFORMATION ABOUT BEAR-PAW REGIONAL GREENWAYS

MEMBER TOWNS CANDIA DEERFIELD EPSOM NORTHWOOD NOTTINGHAM RAYMOND STRAFFORD

About US

Bear-Paw Regional Greenways is a land trust with a mission to permanently conserve a network of lands that protects our region's water, wildlife habitat, forests, and farmland.

Established by resident volunteers, Bear-Paw works to conserve open space through outreach, education, and land protection project assistance.

Our Goal is to safeguard our irreplaceable water resources, important wildlife habitat and travel routes, and productive forests and farms.

We envision a region of scenic beauty and rural character where diversity and quality of life are sustained.

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Unique Natural Features

Generous Gifts Help Complete Isinglass River Project

By Dan Kern

Once again conservation-minded landowners and residents in the region have made a land protection project a great success. The recently completed Isinglass River conservation project, a collaboration of Bear-Paw, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and the Town of Strafford, protected five properties and 868 acres of forest, over one mile of road frontage, over three miles of frontage on streams and rivers (including more than 1½ miles on the Isinglass), several ponds, and two historic mill sites.

The project would not have been possible without a \$1.3 million federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant that the TPL secured for the project. But it would have been no more possible without generous

gifts from Carolyn and Pat Bedford, Randall Cooper and his sister Candace Walworth, Ed Cournoyer, and the Strafford School District. Their combined gifts matched the CELCP grant dollar for dollar. Given the level of funding available for land protection projects in New Hampshire, Bear-Paw often relies on gifts of conservation easements and land by landowners to complete projects. Since 1998, local landowners have donated over \$3 million in value!

continued on page 2



The 158-acre Cooper-Walworth easement includes 2,600 feet of frontage along both sides of "Buzzy Run", a tributary of Bow Lake and the Isinglass River, and 4,263 feet on Province Road and Wild Goose Pond Road. A conservation easement on the property was donated to the Town of Strafford and Bear-Paw.



The 79-acre Bedford property includes 1,180 feet of frontage along the Isinglass River and 874 feet on Ricky Nelson Road. The property was donated to the Town of Strafford with a conservation easement held by Bear-Paw.

A Note FROM THE CHAIR

As you see from the *Print's* lead article, many public grants and private gifts have made the Isinglass project successful. It seems to me, however, that the Bear-Paw region's land protection projects often start with a town's own Conservation Fund. If Strafford hadn't been able to put up the \$150,000 guarantee of its own cash, the search for other sources of funds couldn't even have begun. As Phil Auger pointed out at the Isinglass celebration on August 28th, using that town contribution to bring in the other monies is the best example of "leveraging" he's ever seen. You, the voters who support town conservation funding, provide the lever. We thank you!

Harmony Anderson

Harmony Anderson
Board Chair

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Executive Director **Daniel Kern**
Executive Assistant **Irene Cruikshank**

ILLUSTRATIONS
Al Jaeger

Generous Gifts Help Isinglass River Project *continued from page 1*

The 286-acre Isinglass River Conservation Reserve includes more than 7,800 feet of frontage along the Isinglass River and frontage on New Bow Lake Road. The property was purchased with funding from grants and the Town's Conservation Fund and is now owned by the Town of Strafford and with a conservation easement held by Bear-Paw.



PHOTO CREDIT: ALL BY DAN KERN



The 290-acre Strafford School District easement includes frontage on the 28-acre man-made Hill Pond and more than 3,600 feet of frontage on streams that feed into the Mohawk River, a tributary of the Isinglass River. Voters at the last Strafford School District meeting approved donating a conservation easement on a portion of the property to the Town of Strafford and Bear-Paw.



The 55-acre Cournoyer easement includes 720 feet of frontage along both sides of Huckins Mill Pond Brook, a tributary of the Isinglass River. A conservation easement on the property was donated to the Town of Strafford and Bear-Paw.

Financial support needed to help complete the project was provided by:

- NOAA Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- Town of Strafford through its Conservation Fund
- State Conservation Committee's Conservation License Plate Grant Program
- Samuel P. Hunt Foundation
- Fields Pond Foundation
- McIninch Foundation
- New Hampshire Estuaries Project
- Davis Conservation Fund
- Fuller Foundation
- Individual gifts to Bear-Paw and the Trust for Public Land



As always, Bear-Paw had to rely on the generosity of many people and groups to

support its mission of conserving a network of voluntarily protected lands in our region. Landowners, our members and other contributors, volunteers, Towns, and other organizations all helped us get to where we are today. Bear-Paw would not be able to complete its work without these supporters.

We continue to see an increase in the number of opportunities to collaborate with landowners, towns, and other organizations on new conservation projects. While we are proud of the past success, we plan to intensify our efforts since development threatens to replace much of the remaining farmland, unbroken forests, and scenic vistas that make our communities so special. 🐾

Appendix D – “Bear-Paw Print” Newsletter Article (Spring 2008)

A land trust conserving ribbons of green in southeastern New Hampshire.



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Unique Natural Features

Isinglass River Project to Protect 800 Acres Partners Need to Raise Over \$150,000 More to Complete

Normally it is all good news when you get a \$1.3 million grant for the purchase of a \$1.5 million property. However, when you have to “match” that grant dollar for dollar, it suddenly becomes a \$2.6 million project (\$1.3 million X 2) and you start scrambling to make it work. That is where our friends at the Trust for Public Land (TPL) found themselves last year when they learned that their \$1.3 million application for federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) funding was ranked 1st in the nation.

This conservation project was initiated when TPL negotiated an option to purchase a 287-acre tract of land with over 7,800 feet of frontage on the Isinglass River in Strafford for \$1.5 million – a local developer was in the final stages of having the property approved for a 70 lot subdivision. Working with Bear-Paw and the Town of Strafford, TPL spearheaded the effort to secure the federal funding to permanently protect this important resource for future generations.

In order to receive the CELCP grant, the project partners need to “match” that federal funding with an equivalent amount of local or state support. Fortunately, the match can be made up through the appraised value of other land conserved as well as other cash contributed to the project. Three local private property owners have agreed to donate conservation easements and/or land to the Town of Strafford and



The Isinglass River slips among snow covered boulders – over one mile of frontage will be protected.
PHOTO CREDIT: DAN KERN

Bear-Paw. The Strafford School District also recently approved conveying an easement on a portion of land that they own in Town. **These generous gifts will permanently protect 500 additional acres of land in the Isinglass River watershed and will provide over \$1 million of match toward the federal grant.**

continued on page 2

A Note FROM THE CHAIR

It began with the grant proposal by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and continued in hours and hours of meetings with town boards, commissions, and landowners by Bear-Paw and TPL to explain the project and gather support. The Strafford Conservation Commission, charitable foundations, and grant programs have all made commitments to the project. Generous private landowners have agreed to donate conservation easements or actual gifts of land to Strafford toward the “match” value for the grant. Strafford voters by a large margin have also contributed by supporting the conservation of 290 acres of School District property that will help complete the match.

Now we are looking for a last group of benefactors who will bring this project home. As explained in the article on these pages, there is the opportunity to answer an important financial need. Our thanks for contributions will be as public or private as donors wish.

Best wishes,

Harmony Anderson
Board Chair

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Frank Mitchell
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- Raymond **Cody Cramer**
- Strafford **Harmony Anderson**, Chair
Phil Auger

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ILLUSTRATIONS
Al Jaeger

Isinglass River Watershed Project *continued from page 1*

Despite those gifts and the Town of Strafford’s Conservation Commission’s commitment of \$150,000 to the effort, there is still a \$250,000 cash shortfall. TPL and Bear-Paw have been working to raise the rest for over a year. As of now, grants have already been approved by the Fuller Foundation, the McIninch Foundation, the New Hampshire Estuaries Project, the Samuel P. Hunt Foundation, and the State Conservation Committee through the Conservation

River, which runs through the rapidly developing southeastern portion of the state, is one of these select few. The 287-acre property that fronts on the river is located within a 1,500-acre block of relatively intact forest and is important habitat for a variety of wildlife species as well as a popular recreational destination for fishing, hiking, and boating.

The Isinglass River property is located within a Conservation Focus Area identified in the Land Conservation Plan for New



This wetland created by an abandoned beaver dam is just one example of a wide variety of habitats found on the project properties. PHOTO CREDIT: DAN KERN

Plate Program – with at least five other requests still outstanding. TPL and Bear-Paw are also contacting local supporters of conservation to secure additional private contributions. If you want to support this Isinglass River Watershed initiative please let us know!

Water, Wildlife Habitat, and Forests

Of the hundreds of waterways in New Hampshire, only 14 rivers are officially recognized as outstanding natural and cultural resources. The 18-mile Isinglass

Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds and was identified as important by the New Hampshire State Wildlife Action Plan. The property provides critical habitat for mink, otter, deer, moose, black bear, and bobcat. According to the Watershed Management Bureau at the N.H. Department of Environmental Services, six threatened or endangered species have been reported along the Isinglass River corridor, including: common loon, Cooper’s hawk, small-footed bat, bald eagle, osprey, and the common nighthawk.

continued on page 3

Isinglass River Watershed Project *continued from page 2*



Left: Betsy McGean, Michael Giammusso, and Gregg Caporossi from TPL explore the Isinglass River property with Phil Auger.

Below: Matt Leahy from Senator Gregg's office, discusses the project with Gregg Caporossi from TPL.

PHOTO CREDITS: DAN KERN



In addition to providing critical wildlife habitat along its shores, the Isinglass River is considered an important fishery. Naturally occurring warm-water game fish include small and largemouth bass in the lower portion of the river. The New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game stocks more than 3,000 rainbow trout and 2,500 brook trout in the headwaters and over 73,000 Atlantic salmon fry are being stocked as part of an ongoing anadromous fish restoration effort. Several species of concern are known to live in the Isinglass River, including the American eel, banded sunfish, bridle shiner, and the blacknose shiner, a fish located in only one other waterway in the state.

The Isinglass River property offers recreational benefits as well as habitat protection. A trail network already exists on the property, which makes hiking a popular activity. Pig Lane, the Class VI road that provides access to the Isinglass River property,

is used extensively for walking, snow mobiles and mountain biking. Hunting and fishing have long been historic uses of the property, and access for these activities will continue. Due to the free-flowing nature of the Isinglass River it also provides both challenging whitewater and relaxing flat water boating opportunities for canoeists and kayakers. 🐾



PRIVATE CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

To make a personal contribution to support this outstanding conservation opportunity, please send your gift to The Trust for Public Land, 33 Union Street, 4th Floor, Boston, MA 02108 or contact Patti Murray at 617-367-6200 for more information. Checks should be payable to TPL with a notation "Isinglass River Project".

Thank you!

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Congressional

DELEGATION PLEDGES SUPPORT TO ISINGLASS PROJECT

Senator Gregg

"As the nation's population continues to soar along the coasts, development is encroaching on thousands of acres of environmentally significant wetlands and coastal habitats. That is why I established this conservation program in 2001. I am pleased to know NOAA will join the efforts to conserve this property and I would like to thank the TPL, the Town of Strafford and the Bear-Paw Regional Greenways for the actions they are taking to reach this goal."

U.S. Representative Carol Shea-Porter

U.S. Representative Carol Shea-Porter, a resident of near-by Rochester: "I have the good fortune to live near the Isinglass River, and I know what a valuable resource it is for our community. I'm happy to be a part in helping to secure funding for this project and I'm very pleased that NOAA has placed it at the top of their list."

Senator Sununu

"Land along the Isinglass River in Strafford is among the most sensitive and vital wildlife habitats in New Hampshire, and I am pleased that NOAA recognizes its importance. Working together with local residents, conservation groups, and public entities, I remain committed to ensuring this acreage is protected for generations to come."

JAEGER

Open Space Lands

Appendix E – NHDES Tidelines Newsletter Article (December 2008)



Partnerships Make Isinglass Conservation

Initiative a Home Run

“We couldn’t do this without you. It was an incredible effort to pull all of this together,” said Rodger Krussman, Trust for the Public Land director, addressing a crowd of Strafford community residents and local, state and federal officials at the Isinglass River Conservation Project celebration in August 2008.

A partnership of organizations, including the Trust for Public Land, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, and the town of Strafford worked together for more than two years to conserve

five properties totaling 868 acres in Strafford. The land is located in the Upper Isinglass River and Blue Hills Conservation Focus Areas as identified in *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds*. The focal point of the initiative, a 287-acre parcel containing approximately 1.5 miles of frontage on the Isinglass River, was purchased with the help of a \$1.3 million grant from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. Three local landowners and the Strafford School Board generously donated property in fee or easement to increase the total conserved area threefold.



Isinglass River, Strafford, New Hampshire PHOTO: DAN KERN

CELCP is a tremendously competitive grant program where states vie for ranking on a national priority list. Projects are funded in order of rank;

the number of projects completed depends on the funding availability in any given year. The Coastal Program is the lead state agency for the CELCP program and coordinates the selection of projects to send to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration to compete in the national competition. The Isinglass project ranked Number 1 in the country.

Conservation of these parcels will help protect an important recreational fishery and

travel corridor for wildlife, maintain water quality, and enhance opportunities for public access to the river.

“It’s exciting to celebrate the success of this ambitious effort to protect the Isinglass River. It’s good for the environment, for wildlife, and for the people who want to hike, fish, and otherwise enjoy the natural beauty of this river. The Trust for the Public Land wishes to thank the town (of Strafford), the New Hampshire Congressional delegation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, all of our project partners, and the many donors who made this possible,” said Gregg Caprossi, Trust for the Public Land project manager.

Conservation of these parcels will help protect an important recreational fishery and travel corridor for wildlife, maintain water quality, and enhance opportunities for public access to the river.

Appendix F – “Conservation Funds, Conservation Projects, Current Use, and Land Use Change Taxes”

Conservation Funds, Conservation Projects, Current Use, and Land Use Change Taxes

What is a Conservation Fund?

A Conservation Fund is a specific fund authorized under RSA 36-A:5 that is established by a town's or city's legislative body. The town treasurer administers the Conservation Fund.

Unlike trust funds, the Conservation Fund can contain both town monies and private gifts. Funding for the Conservation Fund can originate from town appropriations, the land use change tax collected by the town when property is withdrawn from the Current Use Assessment program (RSA 79-A:25 II), gifts from private individuals, and other sources. The Conservation Fund is non-lapsing, therefore accumulating from year to year.

What can a Conservation Fund be used for?

The Conservation Commission has authority for expending the funds for a broad range of conservation related activities, as authorized under RSA 36-A:2, 36-A:4, and 36-A:4-a, including expenditures for land conservation projects.

Conservation Funds and the impact of Senate Bill 381?

Senate Bill 381 (SB 381) specifically authorizes Conservation Commissions to expend Conservation Funds on land conservation projects that involve private conservation groups such as land trusts without holding a legal interest in the property being conserved. There is also a section of the law that allows Conservation Commissions to expend Conservation Funds on land conservation projects outside of the municipal boundaries.

Conservation Commissions that want the option to expend Conservation Funds on land conservation projects without holding an interest in real estate or on land conservation projects outside of municipal boundaries must have one or both of the following warrant articles approved by the municipality's legislative body.

If a Conservation Commission wants the authority to expend Conservation Fund monies on land conservation projects without holding an interest in the property, the following warrant article must be passed:

"Shall the town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 36-A:4-a, I(b) to authorize the Conservation Commission to expend funds for contributions to 'qualified organizations' for the purchase of property interests, or facilitating transactions related thereto, where the property interest is to be held by the qualified organization and the town will retain no interest in the property?"

If this warrant article is passed, Conservation Commissions are **NOT** required to get further governing body or town meeting approval before specific expenditures are made. However, the law does require that a public hearing be held.

If a Conservation Commission wants the authority to expend Conservation Fund monies on land conservation projects that occur outside of its municipal boundaries, the following warrant article must be passed:

"Shall the town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 36-A:4-a, I(a) to authorize the Conservation Commission to expend funds to purchase interests in land outside the boundaries of our municipality, subject to the approval of the local governing body?"

If this article is passed, Conservation Commissions are required to get approval from the governing body (boards of selectmen or aldermen, city or town councils) before expending funds, just as they are for other land acquisitions.

SB 381 goes into effect on January 1, 2009. This means Conservation Commissions that currently expend Conservation Funds on land conservation projects without holding a legal interest in property, and wish to continue to do so, must be given the authority to do so by vote of the legislative body (town meeting, town council, city council, mayor and council, mayor and board of aldermen) after January 1, 2009. It also means that there will be a "blackout period" between January 1, 2009 and the spring town meeting when expenditures for conservation projects that do not include the town or city holding an interest in real estate will not be possible. If a Conservation Commission has a pending project any existing agreements may be completed as long as the expenditures occur before the end of 2008 or after the appropriate warrant article has been passed.

What is Current Use and how can the Land Use Change Tax be used for the Conservation Fund?

Current Use Assessment is a property tax program that encourages the maintenance of open space by allowing owners of qualified open space to pay a reduced tax rate, based on the land's ability to generate income in its current use rather than its potential developed use. This tax program has been in place in New Hampshire law since 1973.

Current Use Assessment is a voluntary program since it only applies to landowners with qualified parcels who choose to apply – towns must grant the lower tax rate to owners of qualified parcels who apply. Tax rates for these properties are set each year by the Current Use Board. Statewide, more than half of the all qualifying land participates in this program, with percentages

varying from 39% in Rockingham County to 68% in Sullivan County.

When Current Use enrolled property no longer qualifies (due to development, gravel extraction, etc.) a penalty, called the land use change tax (LUCT) is paid by the landowner to the town. The LUCT is 10% of the market value of the land when it no longer qualifies for the Current Use program.

Towns and cities can place some or all of the LUCT revenue collected into their Conservation Fund, as authorized by RSA 79-A:25 II. All the Towns in the Bear-Paw region dedicate all or a portion of the LUCT to their Conservation Fund.

Town	% LUCT for Conservation Fund	Cap on Land Use Change Tax for Conservation
Candia	100	No Cap
Deerfield	50	\$500,000 Balance
Epsom	10	No Cap
Northwood	50	No Cap
Nottingham	100	No Cap
Raymond	100	No Cap
Strafford	100	No Cap

Case Study: Conservation Funds and Conservation Project Funding

The Isinglass River Conservation Project was a collaboration of the Town of Strafford, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways (Bear-Paw), and the Trust for Public Land (TPL). Together they completed a project protecting five properties totaling 868 acres with more than one mile of road frontage and over three miles of frontage on streams and rivers, including more than 1½ miles on the Isinglass.

The project could not have been initiated without an early contribution from the Strafford Conservation Commission’s Conservation Fund. The keystone property in this project was a 286 acre parcel that was slated for a 70 lot subdivision. TPL negotiated an agreement with the developer that required a significant “deposit”. The Conservation Commission agreed to use \$100,000 from its Conservation Fund for the deposit with the condition that it had the option to purchase the “open space” land required by the subsequent subdivision of the property if the purchase could not be completed.

With the purchase agreement in hand, TPL secured a \$1.3 million federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant and then worked with Bear-Paw and the Town of Strafford to generate the rest of the funding needed to complete the project. The combined gifts of landowners donating conservation easements and land helped provide the match required by the CELCP grant dollar for dollar. Additional financial support was provided by the State Conservation Committee’s Conservation License Plate Grant Program, the Samuel P. Hunt Foundation, the Fields Pond

Foundation, the McIninch Foundation, the New Hampshire Estuaries Project, the Davis Conservation Fund, the Fuller Foundation, and individual gifts to Bear-Paw and TPL.

In the end, \$1.6 million of the \$2.9 million conservation project came from cash contributions and \$1.3 million came from the value of donated conservation easements and land. The Town of Strafford contributed approximately \$200 thousand from its Conservation Fund (7% of the total) – leveraging the Town’s contribution by more than 14:1.

Isinglass River Conservation Project

Strafford Conservation Fund	\$200,047
Other Cash Contributions	\$137,930
CELCP Grant	\$1,300,000
Landowner Donations (CEs and Land)	\$1,300,000
Total Project Value	\$2,937,977



View of Isinglass River Conservation Reserve.



Appendix G – Letter and announcement for Conservation Roundtable

November 14, 2008

Town of Candia
Conservation Commission
74 High Street
Candia, New Hampshire 03034

Dear Conservation Commission Members:

Board of Directors:

Harmony Anderson,
Chairperson
Sam Demeritt,
Vice Chairman
Elizabeth Kruse,
Secretary
Bruce Adami,
Treasurer
Phil Auger
Cody Cramer
Lucy Edwards
Al Jaeger
Judi Lindsey
Frank Mitchell
Mark West

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank you for your support of land conservation in the Bear-Paw region. Bear-Paw has now helped to protect over 5,500 acres in the region and we hold easements on 26 properties and over 2,288 acres. **In 2008, we will complete eight or more projects protecting more approximately 1,200 acres.** All of these projects are the direct result of close collaborations between landowners, Towns, other conservation organizations, and Bear-Paw.

Please plan to join us on December 9th for a Conservation Roundtable on Bear-Paw's strategic Conservation Plan for region. It will be held from 7-9pm at the Deerfield Community Church. Come to this roundtable to learn about the plan, its maps and data, and how to help turn it into action. There will be an opportunity to review the maps and data for your town or area of interest as we discuss the strategies and tools available to implement the plan.

With input from Towns, other conservation organizations, and the public, Bear-Paw recently completed this plan. Through the planning process, Bear-Paw determined that the most effective way to conserve the region's water, wildlife habitat, forests and farmland was through the protection of its remaining large **unfragmented forests, undeveloped riparian areas** (land along lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and wetlands), and **important agricultural soils** and farms. These focus areas represent the best opportunity to conserve the most important natural resources and features in the region.

Executive Director:

Daniel Kern

Bear-Paw Region:

Candia
Deerfield
Epsom
Northwood
Nottingham
Raymond
Strafford

This Plan is meant to complement others that address land conservation in the region. Results from the NH Wildlife Action Plan (WAP), the Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds, and local master and open space plans were integrated into descriptions of the focus areas identified. In that way, areas of common interest can be easily identified; facilitating the formation of partnerships within the region.

As with other plans, towns and other non-profit conservation organizations are expected to have an important role in its implementation. Cooperative action is crucial – not only for the health and diversity of wildlife and habitats in the region, but also to ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to experience and enjoy the New Hampshire we love and appreciate today.

Please pre-register at info@bear-paw.org, www.bear-paw.org, or (603) 463-9400 so that there are enough materials for everyone. A copy of the plan can be found on our website at <http://www.bear-paw.org/land-conservation/conservation-plan.asp>. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Daniel E. Kern
Executive Director



Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
Regional Conservation Roundtable on a Conservation Plan for the Region
Deerfield Community Church, 15 Church Street, Deerfield
December 9, 7:00pm-9:00

Please plan to join us for a roundtable to discuss Bear-Paw's recently completed **strategic Conservation Plan** for the region. Come to learn about the plan, its maps and data, and how to help turn it into action. There will be an opportunity to review the maps and data for your town or area of interest as we discuss the strategies and tools available to implement the plan. We'll also take time to discuss recently passed legislation (**Senate Bill 381**) that regulates Conservation Fund spending – something all Conservation Commissions should consider for the 2009 Town Meeting.

With input from Towns, other conservation organizations, and the public, Bear-Paw recently completed this Plan. Through the planning process, Bear-Paw determined that the most effective way to conserve the region's water, wildlife habitat, forests and farmland was through the protection of its remaining large unfragmented forests, undeveloped riparian areas (land along lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and wetlands), and important agricultural soils and farms. These focus areas represent the best opportunity to conserve the most important natural resources and features in the region.

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