

For Immediate Release

From: Blue Hill Heritage Trust
To: Ellsworth American
Date: 1-25-13
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Land Gift Caps a Successful 2012 for Blue Hill Heritage Trust

The gift of a 113-acre parcel of land in Brooklin put the finishing touch on 2012 for Blue Hill Heritage Trust. "A great way to end a great year for our organization," said Jim Dow, the Trust's Executive Director.

The land, located in North Brooklin, was donated by Stephen Winthrop and M. Jane Williamson, summer residents of Brooklin, where Winthrop's family has owned a home for 90 years. It is mostly forested, with a diversity of tree species, and includes small streams, wetland, blueberry ground, and an assortment of ledge outcroppings near the town's highest point.

"When we sold our house in North Brooklin 12 years ago, we kept the land behind the house because we had fallen in love with its trails and varied habitat," said Winthrop. "We couldn't stand the idea of it being chopped up for house lots. Now we have the peace of mind that the land will be protected forever, and that the public will now enjoy the recreational use of the land as much as we have."

"This is a wonderful natural area, with lots of evidence of its use and value to a variety of wildlife," says the Trust's Dow. "It will also be a great place for a series of walking trails, which we look forward to making available to the public." Winthrop and Williamson and their two daughters are active walkers, and their gift was motivated in part by the absence of attractive, peaceful off-road walking trails in Brooklin.

The family has affectionately referred to the land as "Hundred Acre Wood," after land in the classic children's story *Winnie-the-Pooh*. It is a name that will likely continue, says Dow. "How could we resist a name that carries such wonderful sentiment?"

This gift was the last of five new land projects that the Trust completed in 2012. The others include the gift of a conservation easement on a scenic parcel along the Newbury Neck Road in Surry and the purchase of an unusual natural area in Penobscot known as the Great Heath. Also included were gifts of a shorefront property near the Trust's John B. Mountain property in Brooksville, and a trail easement that will allow the Trust to construct a trail connecting those two properties.

The Trust's work in 2012 also included opening two new public walking trails, at its Snow's Cove property along the Bagaduce River in Sedgwick and at its Patten Stream property in Surry. Aided by an active corps of volunteers, the Trust now maintains over 14 miles of public access trails on land it owns or manages, including the heavily used Blue Hill Mountain trails. This trail

work is part of the Trust's annual land stewardship program through which it monitors or manages the 6,200 acres of conservation land now in its care.

A series of over 25 public educational programs organized by the Trust's volunteer Community Outreach Committee was another highlight of the year's work. Held on various conservation lands throughout the Peninsula during the year, these programs drew hundreds of people of all ages. Included was the Trust's third annual Mountain Day celebration in August, a family event celebrating the value of conservation to the community with music, activities and food on the slopes of Blue Hill Mountain.

2012 also brought the news that a partnership that the Trust had created with Maine Coast Heritage Trust, a statewide organization, and The Conservation Trust of Brooksville, Castine and Penobscot, a neighboring land trust, had been awarded a major grant from the North American Wetland Conservation Act program to help fund habitat conservation projects in the Bagaduce River watershed. The Trust and its partners began work on this in 2012 and will continue working with landowners to fulfill the grant obligations over the next two years.

Amidst all its other work, the Trust also completed a lengthy process of applying for accreditation by a new national land trust accreditation program. "We also finished the year in the black," adds Dow. "As always, we are grateful to all the people whose gifts make this work possible."

The Blue Hill Heritage Trust is a community-based, membership-supported non-profit land conservation organization founded by local residents in 1985 to help conserve land resources on the Blue Hill Peninsula that have special scenic, recreational, ecological, agricultural or cultural significance. For more information about the Trust, stop by the Trust office at 258 Mountain Road, Blue Hill, call 374- 5118, or visit its website at www.bluehillheritagetrust.org.

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