

Ballam Farm on Connecticut River Protected (NH)

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New Hampshire

Walpole, New Hampshire, 4/7/2008: The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Walpole Conservation Commission announced today the successful closing of the Ballam Farm Conservation Project—a conservation achievement that has been two years in the making. Walpole's Conservation Commission now holds a conservation easement over approximately 52 acres of farm and forestland that contain important frontage on the Connecticut River and are situated over the town's most productive drinking water aquifer. The project will also provide the town with eight acres as an addition to its wellhead property, which could support an additional wellhead if needed in the future.

TPL undertook the project as part of its Connecticut River Program, which works in four states to conserve land that is both prized by local communities, and representative of the outstanding resource values of New England's largest watershed. Ballam Farm's prime agricultural soils, and its direct impact on both the town's water supply and its riverfront location, made it a high conservation priority. Protecting such resources when they are threatened often requires the commitment of many partners, and the story of saving Ballam Farm is a case in point, with four funding sources and five partners.

Josh Kelly, TPL Field Representative, acknowledged the many private donations which brought the project to a close. "The Trust for Public Land would like to thank all of the individual donors whose financial contributions made this project a reality. Ballam Farm is conserved today because of the generosity and caring of area residents that continually support the needs of their community." Kelly also praised the landowners for providing the time necessary to complete the deal and acknowledged the work of the Conservation Commission, the Walpole Select Board, and other local residents, as well as the Monadnock Conservancy, which holds an Executory Interest in the conservation easement, and the Granite State Rural Watershed Association for its role in highlighting the importance of the aquifer's protection.

The Ballam Farm property, once part of Louis Ballam's family farm, was for sale in the spring of 2006 and an offer was being considered by a developer with plans for a car dealership and residential development. Perhaps of greatest concern to local residents was Ballam Farm's strategic location adjacent to Walpole's "River Well," which is the largest public water supply in town, serving 922 residents and businesses. The property makes up nearly 20% of this well's "source water protection area" or drinking water aquifer. TPL, after meeting with the leasing farmer, members of the Walpole Conservation Commission and Walpole Water Department agreed to try to protect the land. Over the summer and fall of 2007, TPL began a private fundraising campaign to complete the Ballam Farm conservation project. The campaign was

recently successful in raising almost \$200,000 of private funding to match public funds and complete the deal.

"Protecting the Ballam Farm property means protecting Walpole's drinking water now and into the future," said Mark Houghton, Walpole Water Department Superintendent. "The property sits next to our well head and beneath it is one of the most productive aquifers in the state."

Ballam Farm also possesses some of the best agricultural soils in the state and will continue to be farmed under the terms of the conservation easement. In addition, the property has outstanding natural resource values: it contains nearly half a mile of pristine Connecticut River shoreline, including a unique floodplain forest natural community that will receive greater protection under the terms of the conservation easement.

In addition to private dollars raised by TPL, the project was also awarded critically important funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), which supplied a grant of \$295,000 towards the purchase of the conservation easement. "We are thrilled to see this highly productive Connecticut River farmland protected," said State Conservationist George Cleek, IV.

The use of the FRPP funds for this project was strongly supported by the New Hampshire congressional delegation, led by U.S. Senators Judd Gregg and John Sununu and Congressman Paul Hodes.

Additional project funding came from a grant of \$153,000 from the NH Department of Environmental Service (DES), Water Supply Land Grant Program. "DES is pleased to have been able to help protect this important drinking water source while also protecting valuable farmland," said Program Coordinator, Holly Green.

Gary Speed, Chairman of the Walpole Conservation Commission said, "Ballam Farm is a prime piece of agricultural land that is situated entirely within the source water protection area of Walpole's public water supply. Unfortunately, it is also within an area of commercial real estate development. Now that it is permanently protected, there will never be a question about this property's development endangering the water supply." The Walpole Conservation Commission contributed \$50,000 towards the purchase of the conservation easement, which came from NH Land Use Change Tax revenues.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit organization conserving land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has helped protect more than 2.1 million acres of land in 45 states, including over 200,000 acres in New Hampshire. TPL depends on the support and generosity of individuals, foundations, and businesses to achieve our land for people mission. For more information, please contact TPL's Northern New England office at (802) 223-1373.