



Johnson Forest Legacy Tract, Massachusetts

January 1998

A long-time conservation advocate has relinquished her rights to develop her 47-acre parcel to assist in the permanent protection of significant areas on the Mount Holyoke Range in South Hadley, Massachusetts. On January 20, 1998, Elizabeth Johnson accepted \$47,500 from the USDA Forest Service as a conservation restriction valued at \$50,000 was placed on her land along the south side of Elmer Brook. The excess \$2,500 value is a donation. "Her donation," said Ed Griffith of the USDA Forest Service, who worked on the project, "helped make our Legacy Program dollars go that much further in protecting other areas."

The land is a rich mixture of oak, pine and hemlock trees, some of substantial size, and includes more than a quarter of a mile of Elmer Brook, a clear mountain stream. "The Johnson property is a critical piece in our continuing effort to protect a corridor along Elmer Brook and to protect natural diversity of the Holyoke Range," said Terry Blunt of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, who coordinates Forest Legacy efforts in the Connecticut Valley.

Mrs. Johnson and her family have had a long and abiding interest in land conservation, having been instrumental in establishing the South Hadley Conservation Society more than 30 years ago. They established the Society to protect land on the Holyoke Range.

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Elizabeth Johnson, Landowner

"Mount Holyoke and its surrounding forest became part of our backyard when we acquired property here in the 1960's," Mrs. Johnson said. "In return, I wanted to forever protect our part of the Elmer Brook watershed and preserve the natural beauty of the area." The Forest Legacy Program gave her the opportunity to accomplish that while retaining the use of her property. "I hope that other landowners will consider doing this as well," Johnson said.

According to her son Peter, Elizabeth Johnson, 84, keeps in shape by playing tennis 4 days a week and working on the Christmas tree farm during the holiday season.

"She's a firecracker," he said. "She cuts down trees for people 60 years younger than she is."

Massachusetts will manage the conservation easement as part of the partnership effort between the USDA Forest Service and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management.

The Forest Legacy Program protects important forests from conversion to non forest uses. Important forests have important wildlife habitat; protect water quality; offer outstanding recreation opportunities; provide outstanding scenic views; are home to historic sites; and/or provide the opportunity to continue traditional forest uses. A Federal-State partnership allows landowners to keep their land private while ensuring it remains forest forever with conservation easements.



Forest Legacy partners walk over a make-shift bridge to view another piece in the puzzle of the Mt. Holyoke Forest Legacy Area.
Photo by Terry Blunt