



Stockbridge Sportsmen's Club Forest Legacy Tract, Massachusetts

September 1999

The USDA Forest Service made a critical acquisition on September 13, 1999, when it purchased an easement on 67 acres owned by the Stockbridge Sportsmen's Club at the southern end of Massachusetts' Yokun Ridge Forest Legacy Area.

The tract represents part of the western flank of West Stockbridge Mountain. Visible for miles from many vantage points, including the Massachusetts Turnpike, this scenic mountainside parcel is integral to the "green corridor" between Stockbridge and West Stockbridge.

The parcel offers excellent access to the ridgeline of West Stockbridge Mountain, though most hikers, aware of the shooting ranges below, take alternate routes. The purchase price of \$60,400, for a per-acre price of approximately \$900, made the protection of this property a relative bargain.

"This acquisition complements land protection efforts currently ongoing under the purview of both private conservation groups and municipal water districts. It is a significant addition to protection of the southern terminus of the Yokun Ridge land form, and the myriad resource values represented along the ridge: water supply, working forest, recreational, and scenic values. We were pleased to see it come about," said George Wislocki, president of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council.

The protection came at the right time for the Sportsmen's Club. The Stockbridge club is one of the

Berkshires' most successful and sophisticated. Its clean and airy clubhouse, full-service amenities, and wide range of well-run programs for both adults and youth have put the club at the top of the county ranks for membership, attracting nonhunters as well as hunters.

But the expenses of buying land and building its clubhouse, combined with the ongoing operating expenses of an active program, had left the club in a situation difficult enough that it was being forced to consider sale of some or all of its vacant land.

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Berkshire Natural Resources Council

There were potential problems, for several reasons. For one, a club that sponsors shooting programs is necessarily hesitant when it comes to creating new neighbors. More critically, a number of youth programs, including an archery course and woodcraft sessions, take place at stations throughout the club's woodland. Selling house lots would have put those programs out of business, or at least would have restricted the club's use of the area.

The Forest Legacy acquisition solved these dilemmas.

Today the land remains open for organized programs and managed public access. Even for those who have never set foot on the property, the easement is a boon: A major piece of the scenic and wildlife-rich greenway between Stockbridge and West Stockbridge remains intact.

The Forest Legacy Program protects important forests from conversion to nonforest uses. These forests provide essential wildlife habitat, protect water quality, offer outstanding recreation opportunities, afford 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 through the use of conservation easements.



*View of the forest on the Stockbridge Sportsman's Club Forest Legacy tract
Photo by Jay Closser*

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