



Coventry Greenway

Forest Legacy Tract, Rhode Island

August 2003

Carving through bucolic Coventry, Rhode Island, is the old Hartford, Providence & Fishkill Railroad line. Completed in 1854, the railroad once provided service between the two State capitals. Today the reclaimed rail line provides the general public with an enjoyable outdoor experience as they cycle, hike, and jog along its length. Along the way trail users are treated to the historic and natural character of the area as they pass historic cemeteries and farmsteads.

The Forest Legacy conservation easement placed upon the 72-acre Coventry Greenway tract, together with an adjacent 38-acre parcel already conserved by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, ensures that that experience can be enjoyed by future trail users as they pass by the rolling hills, and working forest and farm lands, perhaps catching a glimpse of the abundant wildlife here as well.

On August 25, 2003, the State of Rhode Island acquired the conservation easement for \$296,000 in a creative transaction that involved the town of Coventry, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), property owners Dennis and Mildred Mahoney, and the State of Rhode Island. The Mahoney's donated the value of the conservation easement (at a bargain sale) to TNC in exchange for a lifetime annuity. TNC then immediately sold the conservation easement to the State, and the encumbered title was conveyed to the Coventry Land Trust, thus allowing the Mahoney's to take maximum advantage of the available capital gains tax reduction strategies.

"The Forest Legacy Program was an instrumental component of the success of this conservation effort."

Brent Narkawicz, Town Planning Director

"The Mahoney Farm is a prominent feature of the Route 117 viewshed and a recognized landmark within the community. The town is fortunate that Mr. and Mrs. Mahoney can continue to reside on the property and preserve its existing agricultural use, while managing the native forest," noted Town Manager Francis Froebel.



Adjacent to a rails to trails project, recreation users of the Coventry Greenway trail system will continue to enjoy the rural landscapes and quiet character in the town of Coventry. Photo by Paul Ricard

The Mahoneys' Stewardship plan calls for trails to be developed in the forested portion of the tract and used for passive recreation and educational programs by the town. The town is working with a local Eagle Scout to begin the development of that trail network. The plan also allows for timber production and utilization.

Conservation of the Mahoney property was important to the Coventry Land Trust because it protected one of the few remaining tracts of land in central Coventry that defines the historic and natural character of the area. It was only through the combined efforts of TNC, the town of Coventry, and the State, through the Forest Legacy Program, that the conservation of this unique property was made possible.

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.