



Wilderness Corporation

Forest Legacy Tract, Vermont

October 1996

Through the Forest Legacy Program, more than 2,000 acres of forest land will remain in production and under sound management, while one of Vermont's last vestiges of undeveloped lakefront has been permanently protected from development. The Wilderness Corporation tract is the first Forest Legacy tract to join the program under the new State Grant Option. On October 2, 1996, Vermont took title to a conservation easement on 2,086 acres in mid-state. The Forest Legacy Program supplied \$618,000 and the Vermont Land Trust provided \$153,000 for which it received an executory



Farm and Wilderness campers working on a service project on the Wilderness Corporation Forest Legacy property.

interest in the easement. The adjacent 560-acre Snow property was purchased for \$225,000 by the Conservation Fund, which will gift the fee title to the Wilderness Corporation and the easement to the State of Vermont. This will serve as the match required for the Forest Legacy Program. The Wilderness Corporation intends to use the money to purchase 665 more acres to cement their 30-year effort to conserve land around Lake Ninevah.

The Wilderness Corporation was established by a group of people who had been associated with the Farm and Wilderness residential summer camp. Their appreciation of the area caused them to band together and contract to purchase their first tract of land

minutes away from the signing of a contract by the landowner with an out-of-state developer. Once committed to the purchase, they had to figure out how to pay for the land and did so by creating a model of land conservation. Lots with strict covenants were sold, and the money raised was used to pay for large tracts of undeveloped land. The original landowners and corporation members are aging. To avoid risking the chance their heirs would not have the same commitment to the land, the Wilderness Corporation turned to the Forest Legacy Program. The Forest Legacy Program allows the land to be conserved in perpetuity, the original reason for purchasing the land.

"The use of the land has not changed. People can hike and ski as they have for hundreds of years," says Dan Wolfson, Forester for Farm and Wilderness, who wrote the Stewardship Plan. "This land ties in with the State of Vermont designated black bear corridor." The land connects to State land, thus working toward one of Vermont's Forest Legacy goals, that of protecting large contiguous forest blocks.

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"It is one of the most meticulous easements I ever drafted," said Pat D'Andrea of the USDA Forest Service, who worked on the project. "It protected wetlands and deer yards, had no cutting over 2,500 feet, and had special cutting provisions between 2,300 and 2,500 feet to protect scenery."

The Forest Legacy Program allows landowners to retain ownership, manage the property, and keep the land from development. At the State's request, the Federal Government may purchase, or grant money to the State to purchase, conservation easements (especially development rights) on private land. The landowner keeps all land rights not purchased by the government. Forests protected are important for key wildlife habitats, water quality, offer outstanding recreation opportunities, outstanding scenic views, historical sites, and for opportunities to continue traditional forest uses, such as timber harvesting.

The Forest Legacy Program is a Federal-State partnership. A State becomes a part of the Forest Legacy Program by completing an Assessment of Need. In this assessment the State tailors the Forest Legacy Program to fit its needs.