



Green River Reservoir Forest Legacy Tract, Vermont

March 1999

The New England tradition of allowing public access on private lands unless prohibited by the landowner led to public use of a tract of land owned by the Morrisville Water and Light Company. Known as the Green River Reservoir, it began appearing in vacation guidebooks as a destination. “(People) come from all parts of the region, the U.S.

and Canada, and for the most part seem to respect the area, enjoying activities that complement the quality of the surroundings,” said Jim Fox, onetime manager of the Morrisville Water and Light Company.

If the saying “to know, is to love” has any truth, evidence comes from the public support for the protection of Green River Reservoir when it became apparent that the Morrisville Water and Light Company had to sell their land. On March 30, 1999, the State of Vermont’s Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation purchased this beloved 5,113-acre tract outright with money from the Forest

dedicated solely to nonmotorized recreation. Extensive wetlands and 10 large islands provide important wildlife habitat, including a loon nesting site. A report of Vermont’s Summer Recreation Inventory and Survey in 1991 stated, “A unique feature of the reservoir is its large size in combination with its wilderness character.”



The undeveloped view and public recreation are two of many values that are protected at the Green River Reservoir.

Photo by Mike Fraysier

In the spirit of the Forest Legacy Program, forest management will continue on the property. The Nature Conservancy will co-hold an easement on the property with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, marking a new step for the conservation organization. “It could be the first sustainable forestry easement ever held,” said Bob Klein, executive director of The Nature Conservancy’s

Vermont chapter. For 8 to 9 years, Klein has been trying to coordinate the permutations for protecting the land and finding sources of funds to complete the project. “It’s wonderful to see it happen in my lifetime,” Klein said. “It turned out well and just in time.”

The Green River Reservoir Park was dedicated on July 21, 1999. Many involved with the protection of the Green River Reservoir were on hand at the dedication ceremonies. Vermont Governor Howard Dean noted, “What a legacy for everyone involved in this project!”

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.

“What a legacy for everyone involved in this project!”
Vermont Governor Howard Dean

Legacy Program (\$1,385,000), a Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund (\$750,000), and an interim loan by The Nature Conservancy (\$365,000) that made up the \$2,500,000 total. Plans are to use Forest Legacy funds to reimburse The Nature Conservancy.

The reservoir and surrounding lands are one of Vermont’s newest state parks. Public recreational use of the area will continue in the natural setting. The tract contains the 653-acre reservoir, which has one of the longest stretches of undeveloped shoreline (approximately 19 miles) in Vermont. The Green River Reservoir is Vermont’s largest body of water

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