

**More than 700 acres in the Belknap Mountain Range conserved by Charlie and Nanci Mitchell and permanently protected by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests**



**Gilmanton Couple See Conservation Vision Completed**

The Mitchells look out over Piper Mountain. The Mitchells' property is a highly visible section of the Belknap Mountain Range. Protection of the Durrell Farm tract, which contains portions of two hiking trails linked to an extensive network traversing the entire range and panoramic views from open ledges on Piper Mountain, includes guaranteed pedestrian recreation access for the public. (Courtesy photo)

**GILMANTON, NH (March 13, 2023)** – In 2006, Charlie and Nanci Mitchell permanently protected 664 acres in the Belknap Mountain Range by placing two conservation easements on their land in Gilmanton and Gilford. The couple donated one easement on a 304-acre portion of Swett Mountain Forest, where they lived, to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and the Forest Society was able to purchase a conservation easement on the Mitchell's 360-acre Durrell Farm tract, thanks to a generous bargain sale. Now, 15 years later, the couple has donated a conservation easement on the last 40 acres in their ownership to the Forest Society.

**“We think of the approximately 40-acre addition to the 664 acres we conserved in 2006 as a vision completed,” said Charlie and Nanci Mitchell. “We have always wanted to conserve all our land in Gilmanton and now we have realized that dream. This land was special to us from the moment we acquired it. The land is especially valuable to larger mammals who live there, the numerous songbirds, as well as whip-poor-will and woodcock. There are two perennial streams and many intermittent ones that contribute to water quality in Manning Lake, Crystal Lake, the Suncook River, and ultimately the Merrimack. It is a good feeling to know that people can continue to enjoy in perpetuity the views from the ledges and peaks and the sense of peace found in the mountains.”**

The Mitchells first bought the Swett Mountain Forest 32 years ago when they lived in Hollis. The couple moved to Gilmanton, where they built a log cabin on the south side of Swett Mountain. Motivated by strong conservation values, the Mitchells used retirement savings to purchase the neighboring Durrell Farm in 2006.

The Mitchells’ property is a highly visible section of the Belknap Mountain Range. Protection of the Durrell Farm tract, which contains portions of two hiking trails linked to an extensive network traversing the entire range and panoramic views from open ledges on Piper Mountain, includes guaranteed pedestrian recreation access for the public,

“We have reached an age where we can no longer care for our land the way we would like to, and shortly after this last 40-acre easement addition was completed we sold our property,” the Mitchells added. “Selling our home and land was difficult, but knowing that it was conserved ‘forever’ made it easier. Our dream from the start was to protect this land and now that is complete.”

“Charlie and Nanci are conservationists to the core,” states Jack Savage, president of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. “They purchased this land, built a life upon it, and found a way to conserve it for generations to come. We thank them for their vision, for their generosity, and for conserving such an important part of the Belknap Mountain Range.”

**ABOUT THE FOREST SOCIETY**

The Forest Society is a non-profit land trust and forestry organization established in 1901. The Forest Society owns 191 forest reservations constituting nearly 60,000 acres that provide wildlife habitat, walking trails, and watershed protection in 105 New Hampshire communities. In partnership with private landowners, the Forest Society protects an additional 135,000 acres by holding more than 750 conservation easements statewide.