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Conservation easement to preserve Gilmanton forest, stream, habitat and history

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Graham Wilson and Virginia Sapiro have granted a conservation easement covering 164 acres of forested land in Gilmanton to Five Rivers Conservation Trust. (Courtesy Photo)

GILMANTON — Approaching the four corners of Meadow Pond, Loon Pond, and Stockwell Hill Roads in Gilmanton is like experiencing “The essence of rural character in Gilmanton.” Now those 164 acres of scenic lands are conserved permanently, thanks to landowners Graham Wilson and Virginia Sapiro, who granted a conservation easement to Five Rivers Conservation Trust on Dec. 20.

The landowners have carefully managed their pine-oak forestland, and allow a neighbor to tap their sugarbush. Waterfowl and other terrestrial and aquatic life find productive habitats along more than three-quarters of a mile of Academy Brook. Vernal pools, beaver ponds, mill ponds, and the

surrounding expanse of forest augment the value of the land for wildlife.

Gina tends fertile gardens on the property and her produce and bread are available at “Gilmanton’s Own” market.



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Old-timers know the property as the former location of a thriving 19th-century Gilmanton landmark, Jones Mill. Millers used the power of Academy Brook to grind grain, manufacture clothes dryers, and make 73,000 shingles per day.

The landowners donated the conservation easement to permanently protect their land from development, subdivision, and mismanagement, no matter who owns it in the future.

Five Rivers Conservation Trust guided the conservation process and is responsible for ensuring the terms of the easement are upheld forever. To do that, Five Rivers will monitor the property at least annually, work cooperatively with all future landowners to determine appropriate land uses, and take action if future activities are not compatible with the conservation easement.

The Gilmanton Land Trust and private donors provided crucial financial assistance for transaction costs. Five Rivers is still accepting donations to cover those costs.