

News > State (/News/State/)

164-acre easement in Gilmanton donated to Five Rivers Conservation Trust

By NICK STOICO
Monitor staff

Tuesday, January 01, 2019

Landowners in Gilmanton have donated an easement on a large plot of land known for being the former site of a town landmark, Jones Mill, to Five Rivers Conservation Trust, protecting the site from future development.

The 164-acre site is in the area where Meadow Pond, Loon Pond and Stockwell Hill roads intersect and covers about three-quarters of a mile of Academy Brook.

The owners, Graham Wilson and Virginia Sapiro, first contacted Five Rivers about five years ago and completed the easement donation on Dec. 20.

“This is a really big block of land, and it makes a big difference for wildlife in the area,” said Five Rivers Executive Director Beth McGuinn. “Some (smaller) species can make their living in a small area ... but the more fragmented our landscape is, the harder it is for wildlife to live without interfering with people.”

For years, Wilson and Sapiro have carefully managed their pine-oak forestland and have allowed a neighbor to tap their sugarbush, according to a press release from Five Rivers announcing the donation. The area along Academy Brook is a habitat for waterfowl and other aquatic species.

“Vernal pools, beaver ponds, mill ponds, and the surrounding expanse of forest augment the value of this land for wildlife,” the statement reads. Sapiro takes care of the property’s fertile gardens and sells bread and produce in town.

Jones Mill was a Gilmanton landmark from the 19th century known for using the power of Academy Brook to grind grain, make clothes dryers and produce about 73,000 shingles per day when it was operating. Some remnants of the mill remain on the property.

McGuinn said that Five Rivers will organize a trip to the property sometime in 2019 that will be open to the public. Those interested should check the organization's website at 5rtc.org or visit their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/FiveRiversNH/>).

The conservation easement permanently protects the land from development and subdivision, no matter who owns it in the future, McGuinn said. Five Rivers is responsible for making sure the terms of the easement are upheld going forward.

The Gilmanton Land Trust and private donors provided financial support for transaction costs.

Five Rivers, which celebrated its 30th year this month, has conserved land in 17 communities across the capital region, including 69 properties and about 4,800 acres.

The organization recently hired its first full-time conservation staff member, Allison Scheiderer, who previously worked for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

"We're a growing organization, and we hope to do more and more of these projects," McGuinn said.

(Nick Stoico can be reached at 369-3321, nstoico@cmonitor.com or on Twitter @NickStoico.)
