

Forest Notes

SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FORESTS

Spring 2007



**Wood-to-Energy
Makes a Comeback**

The Art of Conservation



Taking the long view in



‘Future generations and critters’ will benefit from major contribution to the Belknap Range.

More than 600 acres of important Lakes Region habitat offering sweeping views of central New Hampshire are now permanently protected thanks to the generosity of two conservation-minded Gilmanton residents.

Charlie and Nanci Mitchell enlarged the protection of the Belknap Mountain Range by putting in place two conservation easements totaling 664 contiguous acres in Gilmanton and Gilford. The couple donated one easement on a 304-acre portion of the Swett Mountain Forest, where they live, and the Forest Society was able to purchase a second easement on the Mitchell’s adjacent 360-acre Durrell Farm tract thanks to a generous bargain sale.

“It’s a rewarding feeling to know that we’ve done something for future generations and also have demonstrated through our actions our commitment to land protection,” said Nanci Mitchell.

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

“The Mitchell’s have made possible a major contribution to the protection of the Belknap Mountain Range,” said Tom Howe, director of land conservation at the Forest Society. Coincidentally,

CHARLIE AND NANCY MITCHELL AND THEIR DOG SADIE ENJOY THE EXPANSIVE VIEWS FROM OPEN LEDGES ON PIPER MOUNTAIN—NOW PERMANENTLY PROTECTED.
PHOTO BY G.C. SLUDER

the Belknap Mountains



Howe also lives in Gilmanton.

The Mitchells bought the Swett Mountain Forest 16 years ago when they still lived in Hollis, where Nanci was deeply involved in land conservation and water supply protection efforts. Charlie and Nanci subsequently moved to Gilmanton, where they built a log cabin on the south side of Swett Mountain. Motivated by their strong conservation values, the Mitchells used retirement savings to purchase the neighboring Durrell Farm in September of 2006.

“When we purchased our first parcel in Gilmanton, our dream was to eventually protect it,” said Charlie. “Nanci has been involved with land protection efforts as a volunteer and has seen situations where people wanted to protect their land but procrastinated too long, with the result that their land was eventually sold for development. It’s a great feeling that our dream has become real and that our land is forever protected for the enjoyment of the critters and future generations.”

These newly protected parcels add to the existing

network of protected land in the relatively unfragmented 32,000-acre Belknap Range. By linking various other abutting conservation parcels, the Mitchells’ actions have resulted in one unfragmented block of 8,898 protected acres.

This large block of land is especially valuable to larger mammals with large home ranges and habitat needs. The Mitchells’ land includes a large deeryard, a red oak-pine rocky ridge natural community, steep south-facing rocky ledges and talus slopes favored by bobcat and denning bears, and an abandoned beaver pond. The Durrell Farm tract has an unusually large “rock dump” from the farm’s heyday 200 years ago.

These lands include the uppermost headwaters of Manning Lake, a high quality brook trout fishery managed by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Continuing downstream, waters from these lands feed Crystal Lake, the Suncook River, and eventually the Merrimack River.