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### **Beaver Wood Tree Farm now protected**



**Photo caption:** One of five beaver ponds now protected in Alstead thanks to a conservation easement on Beaver Wood Tree Farm off Route 12A. Photo courtesy of the Monadnock Conservancy

KEENE, N.H. — At the Monadnock Conservancy’s April board meeting, David and Jeanne Moody signed the final paperwork donating a conservation easement on their Alstead property.

The Beaver Wood Tree Farm conservation easement protects 220.2 acres along Route 12A from future development, including the wetlands surrounding Beaver Wood Pond and forest up to the southwestern slopes of Prentice Hill.

“The protection of this special place is the direct result of our conservation planning work with the town of Alstead through our Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership,” said Ryan Owens, the Conservancy’s executive director. “David Moody was on the conservation commission and that’s how we got to know each other.”

When the Moodys learned that the Conservancy often helps with securing grant dollars to cover transaction costs, it was the needed incentive for them to move forward with permanently protecting their land.

“This is a very special day for us,” said David Moody. “It’s a culmination of a dream.”

The Moodys bought the property in October 1979, having come to believe that you are not a true New Englander unless you own a wood lot. They moved here full-time from Virginia in the late nineties.

“Our first visit to the property was to Beaver Wood Pond, where there are lots of waterfowl and beaver, and there up popped an American bittern,” said project director Peter Throop. A reclusive relative of the great blue heron, the bittern is a bird more often heard than seen, its call resembling a rusty water pump. Endangered in parts of southern New England, it is sensitive to loss of its preferred wetland habitat. Throop has since seen evidence of moose, bear, coyote, bobcat, fisher, fox, porcupine, river otters and painted turtles on the property.

The Moodys wanted to see this property conserved for the wildlife and for future human generations. The Conservancy worked with the Moodys to craft a conservation easement that protected the outstanding habitat values on the property. The Conservancy also applied for funding to cover expenses that might otherwise have limited the Moodys’s ability to protect their land. Though threatened now by budget cuts, federal dollars were available specifically for land conservation in the New Hampshire portions of the Quabbin-to-Cardigan region. The Moody project fit this criterion and was awarded a grant from the Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership, a public/private effort to protect the Monadnock Highlands of western New Hampshire and north central Massachusetts. To learn more, visit [www.q2cpartnership.org](http://www.q2cpartnership.org). The Conservancy also utilized its Brooks Fund, which was established to enable conservation easement donations in cases of financial need.

The town of Alstead contributed money toward perpetual stewardship expenses.

The protection of Beaver Wood Tree Farm supports and enhances diverse wildlife habitat, sustainable forestry and clean water.

### **Wildlife**

This property is valuable for both the abundance and diversity of wildlife species found there. The unique combination of forest and wetlands offers a range of reliable food, cover and breeding sites, and the property’s size allows ample space for animals to move from one place to another (such as between seasonal denning and feeding areas) without having to navigate dangerous road crossings. The property is located amidst an even larger block of unfragmented forest land of more than 4,800 acres, according to the 2010 NH Wildlife Action Plan. Due in part to these factors, the Wildlife Action Plan shows that fully 184 acres of the Moody property are ranked as either “Highest Ranked Habitat in New Hampshire” or “Supporting Landscapes” of top-ranked habitat.

The Moodys will continue to manage the property for the benefit of wildlife, maintaining and enhancing diverse habitat.

### **Working Lands**

Complementing wildlife values is the fact that Beaver Wood Tree Farm is currently a certified New Hampshire tree farm and is managed under the care of a licensed forester. Ninety-one percent, or about 200 acres, of the property is forested (the remaining 9 percent is open and forested wetland) with mixed northern hardwood and coniferous stands. One hundred fifty acres are classified as prime soils for producing timber and other forest products.

**Water**

There is frontage on five ponds, including Beaver Wood Pond. The property is also situated in the Ashuelot River and Cold River watersheds. By preventing pollution, soil disturbance and erosion, the protection of these lands will contribute to maintaining the rivers' good water quality downstream.

The property is directly adjacent to the Monadnock Conservancy's Chase easement (135 acres) and is within a mile of three additional properties protected by the Conservancy and the town of Alstead.

**About the Monadnock Conservancy**

Founded in 1989, the Monadnock Conservancy is the only land trust dedicated exclusively to the 35 towns of the Monadnock Region in southwestern New Hampshire. Its mission is to identify, promote and actively seek protection of significant natural, aesthetic and historic resources in the area; and to monitor and enforce the protection of lands in the trust. Based in Keene, N.H., the Conservancy has protected 15,000 acres of forest, farmland, shoreline, wetlands, wildlife habitat and recreation trails in the region. For more information, visit [www.MonadnockConservancy.org](http://www.MonadnockConservancy.org).

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