

## Isinglass River Conservation Reserve

The Isinglass River Conservation Reserve was established by the Strafford Conservation Commission in 2007. The name refers to the assemblage of town and state owned properties that have been acquired and permanently conserved as open space. Currently there are five properties encompassing approximately 400 acres and more than 2 miles of the Isinglass River corridor that make up the Isinglass Reserve. The largest parcel is the 286 acre Hanson tract. This parcel was slated for conversion to 70 housing units. Thanks to the Trust for Public Lands, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways and the generosity of the residents and landowners of Strafford, this property was purchased and is now permanently conserved. Since 2007, four additional parcels have been added to the Isinglass River Conservation Reserve and three additional properties that remain in private ownership have been conserved along this section of river corridor.

The Isinglass River is one of the most pristine river corridors in southeastern New Hampshire. It has the highest rated water quality found within the Great Bay watershed. The river and its surrounding woodlands feature a rich diversity of plant life, habitat features and corresponding wildlife. Ongoing studies here have identified nearly 750 species of plants and animals on these properties including a number of which are quite rare.

This section of the river also has many historic sites. Early settlers to the area were attracted to the available water power along Pig Lane which features three significant flowages. First settled in the mid 1700's, this small valley had at one time a saw and grist mill and a number of homes. Thanks to its remoteness and recent conservation efforts visitors can walk down Pig Lane today and experience the pleasures of exploring cellar holes, cemeteries that hold the original settlers and the ruins of once bustling mills.

The Isinglass River Conservation Reserve trail network provides access to a number of the natural and cultural features found here. The beaver pond loop trail circles a large, active beaver flowage with outstanding views at a number of locations. The Foss Mill Trail hugs the Isinglass River from the first bridge on Pig Lane, past the grist mill ruins along rapids and pools that are beautiful in every season. The Meadow trail takes visitors north of Pig Lane across three small foot bridges to an outstanding view over 20 acres of beaver flowages and sedge dominated wetlands that were at one time actively farmed meadows.

Funding for the trails was made possible by grants from the NH Conservation License Plate and NH Trails Grants Program. Many volunteers contributed to their construction. All Strafford Town-owned properties are open to hunting and fishing. Motorized vehicles are prohibited from interior trails except on designated snow mobile trails and Class VI roadways. Please respect the rights of private property owners when exploring beyond the Isinglass River Conservation Reserve.