

## Strafford Town Conservation Lands

The Strafford Conservation Commission was established at the Town Meeting of 1968, and the Commission convened for the first time that April. Marjorie Foss, Neva Stiles, and Victor Bergstrom were founding members, while Roger Leighton and Don Poppema were also very much involved.

Strafford then lacked a town forest, and many members of the community as well as the Commission thought it was time to secure land for that purpose. By early 1971, Walter and Mildred Weidman had decided to donate the land across from their home. George Foss worked with them on the donation and Russ Shillaber helped with the legal work. The Weidmans donated the land, but it was agreed that the Conservation Commission would reimburse them for its timber value; the Commission did so over the next two years with the help of the Town.

The Town Forest now a reality, the Commission has continued to acquire land or negotiate easements at a modest pace ever since.

The Town now has hundreds of acres of conservation lands that protect many kinds of plants and animals and their habitat. Some of them are open to hikers. The properties are listed here in the order they were acquired.

To locate these properties, navigate to the interactive tax-parcel viewer for the Strafford (County) region, accessible through the Strafford Regional Planning Commission Website at:

<https://srpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ac1693718ca146ed9c329320ac1c7806>

1971 Weidman Lot—75 acres south of Parker Mountain on Route 126.

Walter and Mildred Weidman donated this property, which became the nucleus of the present Town Forest. White pine, hemlock, and a variety of hardwood trees surround a 5-acre pond. A self-guided trail system connects to the Edgerly and Storer Lots. (Tax Map 10, Lot 23) Town Forest Designation: 3/14/1989

1972 Annie French Lot—17.6 acres on Province Road north of Bow Lake (on Buzzell's Run, a major tributary to Bow Lake). Also known as French Meadows, this wetland includes an old mill site. Wetlands and uplands and good-quality marsh. A property survey was made in 1972 under a grant from the Ford Foundation. (Tax Map 1, Lot 8) Town Forest Designation: 3/14/1989

1972 McCabe Lot—54 acres on Evans Mountain. This lot is accessible by an old trail running off from the Class VI section of Evans Mountain Road and is primarily forested by mixed species with a high percentage of beech. Old farmstead cellar hole on site. (Tax Map 5, Lot 23) Town Forest Designation: 3/14/1989

- 1976 Storer Lot—375+ acres on the south slope of Parker Mountain. Donated by Theodore L. Storer through the efforts of Conservation Commission member Spencer Smith. A highly visible property, it contains valuable bobcat habitat and supports a threatened plant, the small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*). The ridge-crest of Parker Mountain offers fine views toward the seacoast and of Bow Lake. Trails connect to the Edgerly and Weidman Lots and to the Blue Hills Foundation land. (Tax Map 10, Lot 7) Town Forest Designation: 3/14/1989
- 1981 Foss Mill Lot (also called Swain's Mill)—17 acres on Pig Lane. Old mill sites and cellar holes on the Isinglass River which are under long-term lease to the Town from the State of New Hampshire Water Resources Board. Foss Mills are owned by the State of NH on the same deed that gave the state the Bow Lake Dam, etc., as the final owner of all the water rights associated with the Cocheco Mills in Dover. The Isinglass River Conservation Reserve Discovery Area trails loop through the lot and connect with the IRCR Hanson Lot. (Tax Map 12, Lot 3)
- 1985 James H. Edgerly, Jr. Lot—76 acres on the south slope of Parker Mountain. Important wildlife habitat linking the Weidman Lot with the Storer Lot. Logged in the early 1989s, this lot contains a young, vigorous, mixed forest. Donated to the Town through the James H. Edgerly Jr. Wildlife Conservation Fund. (Tax Map 10, Lots 24 and 26) Town Forest Designation: 3/14/1989
- 1985 Spruce Ponds Wetlands—11.9 acres south of Spruce Pond Drive, important wetlands habitat. Shallow wetlands bog, including a stand of black spruce, tamarack, and black gum. Part of the area was once a gravel pit and the Conservation Commission agreed to let nature reclaim the area. Significant beaver activity: water levels tend to rise and fall with the beaver population. (Tax Map 4, Lot 21-1) Town Forest Designation: 3/14/1989
- Tax Map 8, Lot 56-14, 56-15, and 56-16 at the southerly end of the Spruce Pond Drive cul-de-sac adjacent to the Spruce Pond Wetlands are town-owned, and provide an additional 22.1 acres, including significant wetlands habitat; conserved as part of the IRCR project.
- 1990 Berry River Lot—5.7 acres along the Berry River off First Crown Point Road. Donated by the developer of the Kristie Lane subdivision. (Tax Map 20, Lots 22 and 34) Town Forest Designation: 3/10/1992
- 1990 Big River Basin Lot—60 acres of wetland habitat located near the headwaters of Big River. Donated to the Town by the Prestons. (Tax Map 17, Lot 35) Town Forest Designation: 3/10/1992
- 1991 Helen Foss Saxton Lot—15 acres adjoining Big River Basin Lot to the north—additional wetlands habitat. Donated to the Conservation Commission by the family. (Tax Map 18, Lot 46) Town Forest Designation: 3/10/1992

- 1992 MacKay Lot (also called May Howard Lot)—5 acres between the south side of Route 202A and the Sloper Road, near the junction of the old Roberts Road. (Tax Map 16, Lot 4A) Town Forest Designation: 3/10/1992
- 1992 Wathne Lot—6.65 acres of wetlands at the top of Whig Hill in an area of residential development. Donated by the Wathne family. (Tax Map 36, Lot 70-1)
- 1998 Parker Mountain Beaver Pond (Merrill's Lot)—73 acres southeast of Parker Mountain. This lot contains portions of two valuable beaver wetlands. Logged in the late 1990s. Scattered old hemlocks remain. Donated by Merrill and Kathryn Steward and Phyllis M. Steward. Adjacent to the westerly end of the Storer Lot. (Tax Map 6, Lot 9) Town Forest Designation: 3/9/1999
- 2004 Pig Lane Lot (Stiles)—4.8 acres of uplands on Pig Lane, adjoining the Foss Mill Lot. Purchased from Walton and Betty Stiles with funding from the Conservation Lands Rights and Easement Fund. (Tax Map 12, Lot 5)
- 2006 James Stiles Lot—44 acres adjoining Merrill's Lot, Storer Lot, and the Edgerly Lot, Strafford Town Forest. Purchased from James Stiles with funding from the Conservation Lands Rights and Easement Fund. (Tax Map 10, Lot 25-1)
- 2008 Isinglass River Conservation Reserve/Hanson Lot—327 acres on Pig Lane, including a mile of riverfront and a beaver pond. Purchased with funding from a number of private individuals and foundations and major funding from the Conservation Lands Rights and Easement Fund, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, The Trust for Public Land, and a Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program grant awarded by NOAA. A self-guided trail system with multiple paths loops through the property and connects to the Bedford Lot. (Tax Map 12, Lots 2 and 42)
- 2008 Isinglass River Conservation Reserve—Bedford Lot—80 acres along Ricky Nelson Road running to the old Bunker Road and the Isinglass River. Donated by Clay and Carolyn Bedford as part of the IRCR project. (Tax Map 8, Lot 10)
- 2010 King Lot—9.09 acres on Pig Lane, including a wet meadow along the Isinglass River, adjoining the Bedford Lot and the Eliasberg Lot, and providing a connection with the Hanson Tract across Pig Lane. Purchased from William and Joyce King with funding from the Conservation Lands Rights and Easement Fund and a federal Wetlands Reserve Program Easement. (Tax Map 8, Lot 19)
- 2011 Eliasberg Lot, Pig Lane—9.97 acres of wet meadow adjoining the Bedford Lot and the King Lot. Purchased with funding from the Conservation Lands Rights and Easement Fund and a federal Wetlands Reserve Program Easement. (Tax Map 8, Lot 18)

- 2011 Eliasberg Lot, Spruce Ponds—10 acres near the Spruce Ponds Wetlands at the southwesterly end of Spruce Pond Drive. Purchased from Michael Eliasberg with funding from the Lands Rights and Easement Fund and a federal Wetlands Reserve Program Easement. (Tax Map 8, Lot 68)
- 2012 Evans Mountain—468.06 acres along the southerly side of Evans Mountain, including the southern peak and continuing along Evans Mountain Road. Adjacent to the Storer Lot and Merrill's Lot of the Town Forest. Merged with the adjoining McCabe Lot for a total of 522.06 acres. Offering views of and from Bow Lake, the recently timbered lot features a mix of uplands and pockets of wetlands providing high wildlife values, including a bobcat habitat. Purchased with funding from the Lands Rights and Easement Fund, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, and the NH Department of Environmental Services Aquatic Resources Mitigation Fund. (Tax Map 5, Lot 23)
- 2016 Dupee Lot—28.95 acres along Pig Lane adjacent to the IRCR including an important stretch of riparian habitat along the Isinglass River upstream from Pig Lane and the old Foss homestead and graveyard. Donated by the children of David and Leslie Dupee in honor of their parents. (Tax Map 12, Lot 1)

Other important public conserved lands in Strafford:

- Strafford School District Land, Johnsonboro Road at the foot of Mile Hill. 290 acres of mixed forest were preserved in 2008 through a Conservation Easement with Bear-Paw Regional Greenways. The tract includes Kenneth Hill pond; the Mohawk River runs through the northwesterly corner of the tract. (Tax Map 16, Lot 14)
- Blue Job State Forest—Although the summits of both Blue Job Mountain and Little Blue Job are located in Farmington, the designated parking area for the trail system is located on First Crown Point Road in Strafford on land of the Bartlett family, who also generously allow two trails accessing the summit to cross their land. Please stay on the designated trails! (Tax Map 18, Lot 39)