



Francis Small
Heritage Trust

Tidings of the Turtle



View of West Pond in Parsonsfield

Great Oaks Wilderness Sanctuary: A Natural Wonder



In February 2026, Francis Small Heritage Trust (FSHT) became the official holder of a conservation easement on very special land in Parsonsfield owned by the Northeast Wilderness Trust (NEWT) and named the Great Oaks Wilderness Sanctuary.

This extraordinary property is known locally as Dearborn Mountain with its scenic summit to the south of the North Road in Parsonsfield, and northerly to land across North Road down through a field and woodlot to 1,600 feet of frontage on West Pond. These 553.65 acres were formerly owned by the Arthur and Laura Lougee family, and were gifted by their heirs, acting legally as the Lougee Conservancy, to the Northeast Wilderness Trust to conserve as defined by a conservation easement now held by FSHT.

In essence, the protected property will be held as forever wild land that will allow passive public use but prohibit any use that would impair or interfere with the natural life of the property. Although there are no official trails and none are planned, the land remains open for pedestrian access.

The conservation easement outlines the intention of the Lougee Conservancy to protect the native plants, animals, soil, and water of the Great Oaks Wilderness Sanctuary, and the Francis Small Heritage Trust has agreed to regularly monitor the property to assure that the well-defined terms of the conservation easement are upheld in perpetuity.



FSHT has Exciting Events Coming up this Summer!

June 6, 10-11 am: Black locust flower foraging at Ingalls Pond. Black locust flowers are a short-lived flower that taste somewhat like sweet fresh peas. We will be foraging black locust flowers on young trees along the railroad tracks and sharing recipes for the flowers. FSHT is offering this course in conjunction with Sacopee Valley Adult & Community Education. See below for registration and information.

June 13-July 31: For the children and the child in all of us, there will be a storywalk at Jagolinzer Preserve (Moon Over Malibu, Maine, by Tonya Shevenell, a story about the moon, full moon fun, and cooperation)

June 26, 8:30 pm: Moonlight hike, Jagolinzer Preserve. Join us for a full moon hike at Jagolinzer Preserve. Please bring red lights only to prevent night blindness. We will also have red cellophane to cover white lights if you don't own a red light. FSHT is

offering this course in conjunction with Sacopee Valley Adult & Community Education. See below for registration information.

July 17 - August 31: FSHT Trail Challenge: Two ability level challenges to hike multiple FSHT trails, take a rubbing at the end, learn a bit about our properties, and if all are completed, win a local prize. A raffle will also be drawn from the names of the people who complete all the trails for an REI gift card.

August 8: Mushroom foray by Alisha Langerman and Evan O'Day of Meadowfall Farm and Forage at Bald Ledge. We will meet at the Colcord trailhead.

For more information about SVACE collaborative events and to register ahead, visit the SVACE website maineadulted.org/location/sacopee-valley-adulteducation/, email rpayeur@sad55.org, or call (207) 625-3092.



Tidings of the Turtle

Proposed Accessible Trails: Community Voices Shape the Future of Outlet Park in Waterboro and Norton Hill in Porter

FSHT has taken a significant step forward in its mission of inclusive conservation with its recent hosting of public listening sessions on two separate "All Persons" trail proposals. The Trust is seeking grant support through the Maine Trails Program (MTP) to bring these community resources to life.



Location of the accessible trail in Outlet Park.

April 8: Outlet Park in Waterboro

Summary:

- 11.7-acre parcel located on New Dam Road with 600 feet of water frontage on Lake Arrowhead.
- A level, compacted stone-dust trail that complies with ADA standards for wheelchair access.
- A loop design for the trail.
- Daytime-only access to the public for hikers, walkers, and runners.
- Accessible park benches.
- Leashed dogs would be welcome.
- The proposed park would NOT have water, restrooms, or electricity.
- The project will go through the Planning Board process with a formal public hearing.

Highlights:

- ◇ Abutters shared concerns about unleashed dogs, litter, parking on neighbors' driveways, and disrespectful or unruly behavior.
- ◇ FSHT acknowledged and assured that we are open to installing trash cans, putting up bounda-

ry signs, "Stay on marked trail" signs, and working with the town on "No Parking" signs along New Dam Road. FSHT can also install additional signage as necessary if behaviors of trail users necessitate it.

- ◇ Residents expressed appreciation for the work of FSHT to preserve natural lands.
- ◇ Abutters asked for the trail to be centered in the property and FSHT is planning on having generous vegetated buffer areas between neighboring properties.
- ◇ Several residents noted the importance of providing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible outdoor recreation options and provided suggestions to ensure that the site is truly welcome to those with mobility limitations.



Listening session at the Porter Town Hall

April 16: Norton Hill in Porter

Summary:

- Ten to twelve vehicle parking area at 250 Norton Hill Road.
- A half mile wheelchair accessible, compact gravel trail with a gradual 165 foot elevation gain leading to a minor summit with scenic northern views.
- Trail design maintains 100 foot buffer from vernal pools and intermittent wetlands.
- Commitment to preserve the land's history, including the David Colcord and Thomas Brooks homestead sites.

Highlights:

- ◇ Attendees expressed general support for the project, as Trust board members addressed specific questions regarding potential increased road traffic, possible inappropriate use (such as by motorized vehicles), erosion due to rain water, and desired environmental protection for local wetlands.



An accessible trail in the Sanford Community Forest

Special thanks to Waterboro Town Planner Mikala Jordan, who arranged and summarized the Outlet Park listening session; Steve Thistlewood who moderated the Waterboro session; Rob Heard who moderated the Porter session; Tadd Stuart who prepared slide shows; Karl Gifford who helped with trail design; and all of the community members who participated in the listening sessions.

New Acquisition Projects:

FSHT is also currently working to secure grant funding for the purchase of a 50-acre parcel in the Sawyer Mountain Highlands and a 162-acre parcel below Devils Den in Porter.

Cold Temps, Warm Hearts: Snowshoeing Sawyer Mountain in January



On Saturday, January 31st, the Maine winter put our "sense of adventure" to the test. With temperatures dipping into the single digits, fifteen dedicated hikers met at the Cape Road trailhead in Limington for a guided snowshoe trek on the Sawyer Mountain Nature Trail.

The group completed the educational loop, which features nine distinct stations highlighting the unique

ecology of our preserved lands. From the ancient stone walls to the "Nursery Trees," the group took the time to appreciate the quiet beauty of the winter woods. Special thanks go to Cassie, who stepped up to read the station descriptions aloud, keeping the group engaged as we moved through the fresh powder.

After nearly an hour on the trail, the "brave fifteen" were rewarded for their efforts. Volunteers Dick, Robin, and Sheryl had a hospitality table waiting at the finish line, complete with steaming hot chocolate, tea, and a variety of "tidbits." The star of the show, however, was undoubtedly the coconut chocolate chip cookies.

This event was a collaboration with Sacopee Valley Adult and Continuing Education (SVACE) and serves as a reminder of why we protect these spaces—to enjoy them together, regardless of the thermostat!

We want to extend a sincere "thank you" to Sheryl for her hard work in putting this event together. It is because of our dedicated volunteers and hardy community members that the Francis Small Heritage Trust continues to thrive.

