

# Open Space Tour with LPAC

## January 21, 2017

The Town of Falmouth currently owns over 1,700 acres of public land. It also assisted in the purchase of an additional 381 acres of protected land.

<b><i>Italics:</i></b>	Properties we will visit
<b><u>Underline:</u></b>	Properties we will observe

Town-owned conservation properties that we will see on the tour include:

**1. *Woods Road Community Forest:*** This property encompasses one of the oldest forests in this part of the state. It also contains several miles of scenic trails popular with hikers. It is closed to the public in winter months in keeping with its status as a Maine Dept. IF&W designated deer wintering area. Periodic wood harvests are also conducted to maintain its value as a deer wintering area. A parking lot was added to the site in 2013. It was acquired to mitigate the impact on a deer wintering area when the Woodlands County Club was developed in the late 1980s. It is protected by a DEP order.

**2. East Branch Conservation Area:** This 55-acre parcel includes over a mile of shoreline along the East Branch of the Piscataqua River, beginning at Woodville Road, and many vernal pools. Much of it is a hardwood terraced floodplain forest, a relative rare forest type. It was acquired in 2010 and entirely paid for by a Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program grant. There are no trails on the property, or as yet no easy public access, but there is a canoe/kayak launching area. When water levels are high enough, this is an excellent water trail, with take-outs at both Field and Falmouth Roads. The town is negotiating the purchase of an additional three acres that would allow for public access and a trail.

**3. Town Forest:** Acquired by the town in 1941 for back taxes and connected by a trail to **Community Park North.** Easement protected.

**4. *Suckfish Brook Conservation Area:*** Suckfish Brook Conservation Area is a 94-acre parcel that includes extensive wetlands, including portions of Falmouth's only northern peat bog, ±1,500 feet of frontage on Suckfish Brook, and 40 acres of upland hardwood forest. An additional 38-acres on the southern end have been conserved by the City of Westbrook. There is a mile of woodland trails on the northern portion of the property, with connections to additional trails on private and Land Trust parcels. On the southern end, a ¼-mile long trail that provides access to an elevated walkway into the bog. The Falmouth property was acquired in 2012 with funding from the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program and the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership. Most of the property was part of the original ±500 acre Huston farm, a prominent early Falmouth family. A memorial gravestone for the Huston family is located on the northern edge of the parcel, just off the loop trail. The Westbrook portion was acquired in 2013 through Falmouth's efforts and is managed by Falmouth. The town will soon add another 43-acres of land on the west side of Mast Road that will protect over 2,200 feet of shoreline on Suckfish Brook, 400 feet of lake frontage, and 15-acres of wetlands. The entire cost of this parcel was paid from Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program and DEP grants. The Falmouth Land Trust holds or will hold, an easement on all three sections of the property.

**5. *North Falmouth Community Forest:*** North Falmouth Community Forest includes ±373 acres of the most remote property in town. As the name suggests, the property is entirely wooded with a mix of hard and softwood species. The property includes a key snowmobile trail and over 4-miles of hiking trails. The Forest is entirely wooded and home to a variety of woodland species of wildlife, especially whitetail deer. Several vernal pools are also located on the property. Land for Maine Future and US Forest Service grants paid for much of this acreage. It is protected with a combination of easements and funder project agreements.

**6. Blackstrap Hill Community Forest:** Most of this property was acquired in 1995 as part of the Wilshire Farm conservation project, in part with Land for Maine's Future funds. Its 234-acres includes over eight miles of trails that connect with trails on the adjacent Land Trust owned Blackstrap Hill Preserve. Those trails also connect to both N. Falmouth and Hadlock Community Forests. The property encompasses nearly a mile of shoreline along the West Branch of the Piscataqua River. It is popular with mountain bikers, hunters and fishermen. It is permanently protected with a conservation easement held by the Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Dept.

**7. Hadlock Community Forest:** Located between Hadlock Road and Winn Road, and almost 300 acres in size, Hadlock Community Forest (HCF) is one of the largest contiguous open space areas in Falmouth. Over four miles of marked hiking trails lead to Winn Road, Blackstrap Hill Community Forest, and Range Road and the Rines Forest in Cumberland. There are also snowmobile trails on the property. The HCF forest is managed to improve its wildlife habitat value and the overall health of the forest. Ninety-six (96) of its 292-acres is easement protected.

### **8. High Meadows Property**

This property is a 15-acre subdivision parcel abutting Route 100. Access is very limited and it remains unmanaged.

---

Other properties include:

**Brookfield Conservation Area:** The town acquired this 17-acre property in 2016 as conservation set-aside land in the Brookside Road sub-division. It includes several hundred feet of frontage on the Presumpscot River, but has no formal trails. Subdivision agreement provisions protect it. Another 11-acres abutting this property will likely accrue to town ownership as a result of a proposed subdivision in the area.

**Falmouth Nature Preserve:** Foreside Rd.: This 83-acre property abuts another 23-acres owned by the Falmouth Land Trust. Several narrow trails wind through a young, mixed forest of hemlock, beech, maple, and yellow and white birch. The two main trails, marked with red or blue blazes, lead to the unspoiled Mill Creek tidal estuary and salt marsh. Although some of the trails are flat, many have a varied elevation through the forested areas abutting the salt marsh. The property consists of three separate parcels, only one of which is easement protected.

**Hardy Road Conservation Area:** This 68-acre parcel follows the Falmouth-Westbrook town line between Hardy Road and Blackstrap Road. Several trails are located on the property, which begin at the Hardy Road parking area. The property contains several vernal pools and areas of forested wetlands that will be damp under-foot during the spring. This location was the site of the Town's first dump. It was closed and capped in 1974. Subdivision agreement provisions protect all but the original dump area.

**River Point Conservation Area:** Adjacent to West Falmouth Crossing Shopping Center, River Point is a 41-acre jewel of a property in the middle of an otherwise highly developed area of town. Known historically as Three Rivers Farm, it borders the Presumpscot River and both east and west branches of the Piscataqua Rivers. With its water features, including two small ponds and diverse habitat, the property is home to a wide variety of plants and wildlife, including the endangered New England cottontail rabbit. Eagles, hawks and ospreys can be seen here, along with many songbirds. Coyotes, beaver, fox, deer, and many small mammals can also be found. Over a mile of walking trails are located on the property. Informational tags identify many of the indigenous trees. The property was obtained at no cost from the shopping center developer. Pets will soon be prohibited on the property.

