

For Immediate Release: Foss Mountain Preservation Partnership

Will Rogers once said, "Land, they ain't making anymore of it." Those who have hiked to the summit of Foss Mountain in Eaton, NH with its stunning 360 degree views would surely claim that while "they ain't making anymore of it.", they certainly did not make many lands more magnificent. The Town of Eaton owns over 2,000 acres of forestlands, including 62 acres at the summit of Foss Mountain where it maintains a public hiking trail, productive blueberry fields and working forest. When the opportunity arose in 2008 to purchase an abutting 99 acres of blueberry fields and forest on the ridgeline of Foss Mountain, a partnership was forged.

The Eaton Conservation Commission and Select Board approached the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust to ask for assistance in purchasing the property to preserve it in perpetuity. The Land Trust is a local not for profit working to preserve the land and waters that define our communities and enrich our lives. The Land Trust has preserved nearly 4,000 acres, predominantly through the donation of conservation easements on 30 privately owned properties. More information about our organization and our protected lands is available on our website www.usvlt.org.

The Land Trust is pleased to announce that we recently signed a Purchase and Sales Agreement to acquire the property in February 2010. A Capital Campaign has been initiated to raise the \$337,900 needed to purchase the land and cover all associated expenses. The Land Trust will purchase the land, permanently protect its conservation values with a conservation easement and transfer ownership of the property to the Town of Eaton.

In announcing the Foss Mountain Project, Tom Earle, USVLT President states, "Foss Mountain is one of our great gifts in this community. It has been cherished for generations. Even though it is a major undertaking for us, it is one that defines our mission "to preserve the ecological systems and cultural values of the upper Saco River Valley...and provide for the continued availability of land benefiting natural and human communities." We are grateful for our partnership with the Eaton Conservation Commission and Select Board, as well as so many in the community, in preserving this land for today and for the generations to follow."

The Foss Mountain property is located in the middle of a large area that is undivided by paved roads and maintaining it as open land is important to the Town of Eaton. The property is mapped in the NH State Wildlife Action Plan as significant mid elevation rock outcrop and ledge habitat. Important natural resources on the property include prime lowbush (wild) blueberries that have been mowed and burned for over fifty years. The town organically manages blueberries on its abutting land directly downhill from the property's blueberry acreage. Visitors to Foss Mountain enjoy walking the length of the ridge with its excellent views. The remainder of the property is forested and will be included in the Town of Eaton's Forestry plan, which is designed to increase biodiversity as well as improve forest resources.

The Land Trust and Town of Eaton share common goals for the outcomes of this project including: to provide for and enhance public recreation, to preserve the scenic value of the prominent ridgeline property, to protect the long term ability to produce forest products, to protect the productive blueberry fields, to preserve special wildlife habitat in an unfragmented forest and ridgeline system, and to help the Town of Eaton preserve its most valued natural resources.

This purchase is the largest fund raising campaign we have undertaken in our 8 year history. To ensure the success of this project, support will be needed from our members, area citizens, the Town of Eaton, and private foundations. Donors familiar with the project have all ready contributed nearly \$40,000. The Land Trust currently has applications pending before the Open Space Institute and Ham Charitable Foundation to help fund this project. We encourage all those for whom Foss Mountain is a very special place, including residents and visitors alike, to contact the Land Trust and provide support at this time. The Land Trust can be reached at 603-356-9683 or info@usvlt.org