



Protect America's Climbing



FRIENDS OF THE LEDGES



Land Trusts and Local Non-Profit Team Up for Conservation and Recreational Win in the Mount Washington Valley

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September 17, 2018, Bartlett, NH - Access Fund, Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, and Friends of the Ledges are pleased to announce the successful acquisition of nine acres of land critical for access to Cathedral Ledge and Whitehorse Ledge in the Mount Washington Valley. This acquisition was a collaborative effort among the three organizations, and is a significant step towards protecting the forest lands below the two iconic ledges.

Thanks to the generosity and foresight of the land's previous owner, Jim Ansara of Essex, Massachusetts, the property has remained open to public use and retained its natural character from the time he purchased it in 1997. Jim graciously donated the property to the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust to ensure that the property retains its natural values in perpetuity.

"I spent many years living part time in the North Conway community living on Bow Lane at the foot of Cathedral and Whitehorse Ledge. I had great enjoyment with my friends and family hiking, climbing, and running on the cliffs and trails, and I wanted to see that future generations of climbers, hikers, and those who love the outdoors have the opportunity to enjoy the park and the cliffs to the same extent we have," says Ansara.

Upper Saco Valley Land Trust has taken ownership of the property, and Access Fund will hold a permanent conservation and recreation easement on the property as an added layer of protection to ensure long-term access and support conservation of the property.

"The land between the ledges is an important access and conservation priority for Access Fund," says Mike Morin, Access Fund's Northeast Regional Director. "This acquisition not only secures long-term access to the Bryce Path and Bryce Link trail, used by climbers descending from Whitehorse Ledge, but it also preserves several quality boulders that reside on the property."

The land between the ledges has long held a special place in the hearts of climbers in the Mount Washington Valley community. In 2015, Friends of the Ledges formed to preserve the unique character of climbing areas in the eastern White Mountains and serve as a liaison between the climbing community and land managers. Since that time, the group has been working to promote volunteer stewardship of local climbing areas and also to ensure their ongoing public access.

“The forested lands between Cathedral and Whitehorse are essential to the experience of these historic and spectacular cliffs,” says Sarah Garlick, Friends of the Ledges President. “Cathedral Ledge, Whitehorse Ledge, and Echo Lake make up one of the natural gems of New Hampshire—and really all of New England. Losing access to the Bryce Path or seeing development right in the heart of this special area would be a major blow, not only to the climbing community, but also to mountain bikers, hikers, and local residents.”

With a strong commitment to conservation, Friends of the Ledges has stepped up as volunteer land steward for the newly acquired property, in partnership with the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, putting long-term care solidly in the hands of two local organizations deeply rooted in the region.

“Many residents and visitors have probably crossed this land not realizing that they were on private property,” notes William Abbott, Upper Saco Valley Land Trust Executive Director. That’s because the land is nearly surrounded by the Echo Lake in Cathedral Ledge State Park. Because of this partnership, those same visitors and residents can now rest assured, that public access has been secured in perpetuity. Partnerships such as this are an important component of the conservation strategy. Access Fund and Friends of the Ledges will help ensure we will have a dedicated group of volunteers to call upon when stewardship needs arise.”

This is the first collaborative project between Access Fund and Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, two nationally accredited land trusts. This project marks a continued partnership between Access Fund and Friends of the Ledges, which worked together to reopen Band M Ledge in Madison, New Hampshire to climbing last year.

Community Support Needed

We now need the community’s support to raise \$48,000 to complete this project. While the initial steps of the project are complete, we need to establish a long-term stewardship and defense fund and begin trail and other stewardship improvements. Thanks to two generous donations of \$10,000 each from Jim Ansara and the John R. & Margrite Davis Foundation, fundraising is off to a good start, but public support is needed to raise the remaining \$48,000 to meet these conservation goals. You can learn more about this project and donate today at www.accessfund.org/ledges.

About Access Fund

Access Fund is the national advocacy and conservation organization that keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. Founded in 1991, the Access Fund supports and represents millions of climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing: rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering. Six core programs support the mission on national and local levels: climbing management policy, stewardship and conservation, local support and mobilization, land acquisition and protection, risk management and landowner support, and education. Since 1991, the Access Fund has supported 71 land acquisitions by land trusts, public entities, and local climbing organizations, totaling 17,319 acres across twenty-seven states. For more information, visit www.accessfund.org.

About Upper Saco Valley Land Trust

USVLT is a non-profit organization working with local landowners to permanently protect the lands and waters that define our communities and enrich our quality of life. Founded as a grassroots initiative in September 2000, USVLT preserves land for community benefit in the watershed of the upper Saco River in both Maine and New Hampshire. USVLT's goal is to promote a healthy, sustainable balance between developed lands, natural lands and productive rural landscapes. Together with project partners, USVLT has now completed 67 land conservation projects and protected over 12,000 acres and 14 miles of river frontage throughout its service area. For more information about USVLT, visit www.usvlt.org.

About Friends of the Ledges

Friends of the Ledges is a volunteer organization dedicated to the stewardship of local climbing areas and to preserving the historical tradition of climbing in the eastern White Mountains of New Hampshire and Maine. Friends of the Ledges works to serve as a liaison between the climbing community and landowners/land managers, to preserve the unique character of the different climbing areas in this region, to maintain these climbing areas with minimal infrastructure and impact, and to convene community-wide conversations about climbing-related issues and concerns when needed. For more information, visit www.nhledges.org.



Cathedral Ledge - Photo by Mike Morin