

NORTH COUNTY LAND TRUST



COURTESY BEN HOWARD

A westward look from the south slope of Mount Watatic, which was recently secured by the North County Land Trust.

Conservation org buys Mt. Watatic's South Slope

Staff Report

LEOMINSTER » North County Land Trust has recently purchased over 200 acres of land on the south slope of Mount Watatic, adding to existing conserved lands blanketing the mountain, according to a release from the Trust.

The acquisition is part of a land protection effort supported by local and state partners and generous donors.

"I want to thank to NCLT for its leadership in pre-acquiring this land," said Ron Amidon, Department of Fish and Game Commissioner. "The Baker-Polito Administration is pleased to partner with the North County Land Trust to permanently protect these natural resources and conserve them to remain open for current and future generations to enjoy."

Located just south of the New Hampshire border in Ashby and



COURTESY TERRY HOWLAND

This view from the south slope of Mount Watatic shows Ashburnham and Ashby.

Land

FROM PAGE 1A

Ashburnham, Mount Watatic rises 1,800 feet above sea level. Due to its proximity to Boston, views, and the confluence of the Midstate and Wapack Trails, the mountain is a popular destination for hikers, hawk watchers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

As part of a multiphase land conservation effort, NCLT pre-acquired the land.

Pending funding, NCLT will transfer 186 acres to the Department of Fish and Game and its Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, adding to its land holdings in the vicinity.

“NCLT will retain 15 acres of property that will provide space for the collaborative environmental education and low impact outdoor experiences which our organization values and for which it is known,” North County Land Trust Executive Director Anna Wilkins said.

The property features a mix of mature and young forests, pastures, ponds, and wetlands that provide critical wildlife habitat and protect the site’s biodiversity. Old farm roads link to trails on adjacent publicly owned land. Hiking, hunting and other nature-based recreation will be allowed on the property, according to the Trust.

North County Land Trust took the lead on coordinating the \$1.3 million financing for this project. The Conservation Fund provid-



COURTESY NCLT'S ANNA WILKINS

A pond on the south slope of Mount Watatic.

ed a low-interest loan for a portion of the purchase price, the Fields Pond Foundation contributed generously, and NCLT friends and members, as well as allies at the Ashby Land Trust and Ashburnham Conservation Trust, helped spread the word and gave significant donations.

“Mount Watatic is a special place and holds the hearts of many. North County Land Trust could not have achieved this goal without the generosity of key donors, hundreds of individuals, and groups such as the Friends of the Wapack Trail, Midstate Trail Committee and many more,” Wilkins said.

North County Land Trust Inc. is a regional land conservation organization serving northern Worcester County. NCLT owns seven other conservation areas including the nearby Kirby Conservation Area off Wilker Road in Ashburnham.

A membership organization, NCLT relies on its members’ support. For more information about the property, or how to become a member, call North County Land Trust at 978-466-3900, email info@northcountylandtrust.org or visit northcountylandtrust.org.