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# New conservation land celebrated in Gilford

Jan 19, 2021



Carole Hall and Russ Wilder give thanks in November for the acquisition of the John M. and Eileen R. Weeks Conservation land. (Courtesy photo)

GILFORD — Virtual celebrations erupted across the Lakes Region and down into Florida in November 2020 as the Lakes Region Conservation Trust and the Gilford Conservation Commission concluded an agreement with the Weeks family to buy a 65 acre parcel of forested hillside and scenic meadow off Belknap Mountain Road in Gilford. The John M and Eileen R Weeks Conservation land offers both conservation and recreational assets.

At its January meeting, the Gilford Conservation Commission will establish a steering committee to start the work of restoring abandoned trails on the property and connect them to adjacent trail networks. These trails will bring hikers again to the spectacular view from Sunset Ledge, and on to an abandoned iron mine and the site of Gilford's first ski tow with connections to the huge network of trails in the Belknaps.

Most parcels of land that find their way into conservation usually follow a familiar path, a willing seller finds a willing conservation buyer and a deal is struck. In the case of the Weeks project, the road had a few twists and turns. Eileen Weeks knew she needed to sell the parcel after her husband died; she and her children wanted it to go into conservation and she knew her husband, whose family had owned the land for generations, would have wanted that too.

The Weeks family had lived in Clearwater, Florida, however, since the 50s and Eileen didn't really know where to turn. Serendipity happened. Eileen's daughter mentioned the dilemma to a fellow ex-New Hampshire and he called Carole Hall, chairperson of the Gilford Conservation Commission, and she contacted the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, which already had its eye on the land. The rest is victory.

Victory, for Gilford which gets new recreation land and protection for valuable land; for the Weeks family which knows the land will be protected forever; and for the LRCT, with several conservation parcels nearby. Russ Wilder, Chairman of the LRCT Board of Trustees and the Belknap Range Conservation Coalition, noted that this parcel has high conservation value because it is nearly surrounded by conserved land, is part of a large unbroken forest block and is highly visible.

The LRCT and the Gilford Conservation Commission are grateful to the many donors, to the Belknap Range Conservation Coalition, to Rick Muehlke of the abutting Muehlke Family Tree Farm, who brought this land to the LRCT's attention, and to Gilford and its residents for their support of this and other conservation efforts.

The LRCT is not resting on its laurels; the Trust recently finished fundraising for its next project, the 127 acre Mt. Pleasant property in Tuftonboro and Wolfeboro, and will announce completion of that project soon.

For information on the work of the Trust please visit the website: [LRCT.org](http://LRCT.org).