



News Release

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Contacts: Chris LaPointe, Project Manager, 617-367-6200 ext. 558
Kim Gilman, Public Affairs Manager, 617-367-6200 ext. 526

Grafton's Pell Farm is Permanently Conserved

Grafton, Massachusetts: The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit conservation organization, and Grafton town officials announced today that the town has completed the protection of 153 acres on George Hill Road and Soap Hill Road formerly owned by Roger and Luping Pell. The purchase insures that this important landscape will never be developed.

Christopher LaPointe, Project Manager for TPL, said, "Having grown up here in Grafton, experiencing the outdoors as a child, it is especially rewarding for me to help this community protect resources like Hassanamesit Woods and Pell Farm so that others may have the experiences that I had in this wonderful corner of the world."

The Pell property is a mix of open and wooded land that includes a Christmas tree farm. Under the terms of the purchase, the Pell family will continue to harvest and sell Christmas trees for ten more years – ultimately leaving the tree farm as an open hay field that will provide a wonderful vista and important wildlife habitat along the forest/field edge.

LaPointe said further, "The Trust for Public Land is pleased to have brought forward this conservation opportunity for Pell Farm. We understand how important Grafton's rural character is to the quality of life in the area, and this entire property has now been protected at a very reasonable price. It's an example of strategic land conservation that connects people and land via trails, and gives children the opportunity to experience nature close to home."

The land was a key parcel for conservation because it connects several other conservation and recreation areas nearby. It is adjacent to the Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area (259 acres) in Upton. It contains three trails that link two adjacent conservation areas as well as connecting to the 20-mile Grafton Loop Trail. The entire Pell property is within the Miscoe, Warren and Whitehall Area of Critical Environmental Concern, a state designation recognizing this area as critical for the protection of high quality surface water and unfragmented, diverse wildlife habitat. The conservation of the Pell property has created a nearly 400-acre block of contiguous open space.

Brook Padgett, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, said, “The most valuable asset to a community, besides its people, is its land. We are excited by the possibilities this land purchase represents and are grateful that the state and community supported this endeavor. The staff who worked on this project should be proud that this land will be preserved for future generations.”

In addition to its wildlife and recreational attributes, the Pell Farm was identified as a “Scenic Landscape” by the Commonwealth and contributes to the qualities that drove the designation of George Hill Road as a “Scenic Road.”

Funding for the \$2,175,000 purchase price came from the Grafton Community Preservation Act funds, which were approved unanimously at a Town Meeting in October 2008; and a \$500,000 state LAND Grant (formerly the Self Help Program) through the Division of Conservation Services. A small portion of the property was purchased by a private buyer, but future uses of this parcel, including continued agricultural use, will be guided by a permanent conservation restriction held by the Grafton Conservation Commission.

Representative George N. Peterson, Jr., a strong supporter of the project, said, “I am pleased that we could secure the \$500,000 LAND Grant to make this a reality. This is truly a wonderful area for all kinds of passive recreation, and it is outstanding that we can keep this land protected from future development.”

Paul Vigeant, a member of the Grafton Conservation Commission said, “The Commission is grateful to the Pell family and The Trust for Public Land for bringing this project forward. We would also like to thank the Division of Conservation Services and commend the Grafton Community Preservation Committee and especially the voters of Grafton for their dedicated support of the Town’s efforts to protect our precious open space. The Commission is presently working on a Management Plan that will ensure the future enjoyment of the property by all.”

Ken Holberger, President of the Grafton Land Trust, said, “The Grafton Land Trust was pleased to advise and facilitate this important conservation purchase. The property has an important role in the community for passive recreation, for its scenic beauty, and for protecting water quality in the Miscoe watershed, including Silver Lake.”

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has helped to protect more than 2.3 million acres nationwide, including nearly 12,000 acres in Massachusetts. The partnership of TPL, the Town of Grafton, and the Grafton Land Trust was forged in 2004 during the successful effort to protect Hassanamesit Woods. TPL depends on the support and generosity of individuals, foundations, and businesses to achieve its land for people mission. For more information, visit www.tpl.org.

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Note to editors:

To have a digital photo or map emailed to you, contact Chris LaPointe at the Trust for Public Land, (617) 371-0558.