

## **November 2020 Heath Easement Fulfills a Life Goal and Adds to an Unfragmented Block of Conserved Land in Frankestown and Weare**

Scot Heath has fulfilled one of his life goals. He and his wife, Lisa, own a substantial piece of undeveloped land and are protecting it in perpetuity. Recently, Frankestown Land Trust purchased a Conservation Easement on 87 acres owned by the Heaths that lie between Candlewood Road and Dennison Pond Road on the north slope of Kingsbury Hill up to the Weare town line. The Heaths sold the easement at less than market value.

Scot was raised in Merrimack and saw his family's open land sliced away for development; eventually the family was able to save and donate the last twenty-five acres to the town to create the Gilmore Hill Town Forest. Scot moved to Frankestown in the mid-1980s and soon after became the chairman of the Conservation Commission. Under his leadership, between 1986-1991, Scot negotiated the donations and easements that created the Crotched Mountain Town Forest. Even as that property was being protected, Scot envisioned a large town forest on the other side of Frankestown in the northeast corner abutting Weare and New Boston.

While a town forest has never been established in that area, several large tracts are protected. 835 protected acres either abut or are near the Heath land in this corner of Frankestown. These lands include Kingsbury Farm, and property protected by the Edmunds, Ames, and Rogers, as well as the Dennison Pond Forest. These conserved properties are within a more than 4000 acre unfragmented tract that extends north into Weare to the Ferrin Pond Town Forest. Such a large area is increasingly unusual in southern New Hampshire. Unfragmented blocks are lands not crossed by maintained roads nor do they have subdivisions or commercial development. These blocks serve as important habitat for long-ranging species, like bobcats and bears and some songbird species.

Numerous logging roads and trails make the Heath Easement accessible for recreation – hiking, nature observation, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or mountain biking. Timber harvesting and agriculture are permitted on the property; a substantial amount of the soil is in the highest suitability category for forest products in New Hampshire.

The property is within the Buxton Brook watershed including a portion of a remote ponded wetland; there are intermittent streams. Buxton Brook is a tributary of the middle branch of the Piscataquog River. More than fifty acres of the property is classified as the highest ranked habitat in the biological region. This easement furthers the open space conservation goals and strategies spelled out in the Frankestown's 2017 Master Plan: "Preservation of natural resources and open space is a key goal town wide." It is also consistent with the goals of the Frankestown Land Trust of which Scot was a founding member.

With satisfaction, Scot observes "it is important to me that I practice what I preach; between this easement and the Gilmore Hill Forest in Merrimack, I feel that I have achieved an important life goal. In my years of advocating for land conservation in Frankestown, I have never asked anybody to do anything I wouldn't do."