



Forever Squam

Case Statement

2021-2024

Forever Squam

The world is changing rapidly, yet the essence of Squam remains. We are grateful to the many visionaries before us for laying the groundwork for Squam to be a national model of a conservation-minded community, with 30% of its land permanently protected.

Prompted partly by the pandemic, development pressure in the region has surged. Squam's beauty, easy access to the outdoors, and strong sense of community all play into the increased demand. To build on past successes while charting a path for its future, the Squam Lakes Conservation Society has launched the "Forever Squam" Initiative and Campaign.

The goal of the Forever Squam Initiative is to increase by one third the amount of conserved land by completing up to 60 new projects, resulting in 40% of Squam's land permanently protected. We will achieve this by offering meaningful financial and logistical support to willing landowners throughout the watershed while energizing a new generation of participants to continue the sacred trust of stewarding Squam's lands and natural resources.

Forever Squam

Conservation is a matter of urgency. The rapid growth in the area has led some in the press to refer to New Hampshire as the “New Colorado.” Demand has exhausted supply and average prices on those few lots that have sold in the last year have gone up significantly. The region has experienced surges in building permits, boats registrations, hikers, and school enrollments. Rapid expansion of development threatens water quality, wildlife and the natural beauty of our surroundings.

Forever... Legally conserving land forever is not a simple process. There are several associated costs, such as surveys, appraisals, legal fees, title work, and environmental studies. Furthermore, the task of conserving land does not end with the transfer of an easement or land. Rather, the land trust takes on the daunting responsibility to monitor compliance with the terms of the easement “in perpetuity.” On a practical level, the monitoring of compliance requires regular visits to each property and documenting continued compliance. Field visits are conducted by either staff or the team of a hundred or so dedicated and trained volunteers. Meanwhile, our staff provides advice and resources to landowners as part of the ongoing stewardship of each conserved property.



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When SLCS accepts the responsibility of holding a conservation easement in perpetuity, we typically request a cash donation from the landowner.

Understandably, this becomes a burden and even a disincentive. Under the Forever Squam initiative, we are offering a compelling incentive to landowners by covering the mandatory \$15,000 stewardship fund contribution and most of the other transactional costs. With up to 60 new projects, \$900,000 would be invested in the Stewardship Funds and \$600,000 available for transactional costs.

The means to achieve this vision is the creation of a pool of funds of at least \$5,000,000 to advance our land conservation priorities across the Squam watershed. We are fortunate to start with approximately \$1,000,000 from the Squam Uplands project, an effort launched seven years ago prioritizing the conservation of upper elevation land, which resulted in permanently protecting over 7,000 acres. Forever Squam is the logical next chapter. The Forever Squam campaign goal is to raise at least \$4,000,000 in new contributions.

As of December 31, 2021, generous major donors, including all of the SLCS Board, have raised approximately \$3,000,000 in new gifts.

These funds will be allocated to the following three categories of expenses:

- 1.) \$3,500,000 for bargain-sale purchases of conservation easements or land;
- 2.) \$900,000 for their perpetual stewardship;
- 3.) \$600,000 for costs related to land owners donating a conservation easement.



A photograph of a person in a red and yellow kayak on a calm lake. The person is wearing a red jacket and a blue hat. The lake is surrounded by tall, thin trees with bare branches, suggesting a forested area. The water is still, reflecting the trees and the kayak. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

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The Forever Squam initiative focuses on high conservation-value properties throughout the watershed, from the lakeshore to its highest peaks. These lands include wetlands, forested lands, upper-elevation lands, and properties adjoining existing conservation lands. Priority areas include Squam Lake islands, upper elevations on the Squam Range and Mt. Prospect, White Oak Pond and its highlands, the Rattlesnakes, Upper Dog Cove, Upper Asquam Preserve, and a score of other conservation opportunities throughout the watershed.

Encouraging landowners to donate an easement or consider a bargain sale is central to this initiative. We are making the case that conserving one's property not only preserves the beauty and character of that land forever, but doing so in conjunction with others across the watershed enhances its impact, reinforces the ethic of a community bound by the stewardship of its natural resources, and builds on Squam's tradition of conservation and community.

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What can you do?

This is a community-wide campaign.

Protecting land, particularly on a community-wide basis, has been shown to enhance community character and social networks. The goal is to engage the wider community in the protection of its natural resources while providing common areas for exploration, recreation, and serving as a resource for students of all ages.

Squam Lakes Conservation Society has typically raised funds for the acquisition of easements or land on a project-by-project basis by soliciting support from adjacent landowners and other interested parties.

Forever Squam is our first truly community-wide campaign. We will solicit donations from all who love Squam, starting with our members and then branching out across the watershed. Along the way, we look to increase membership, volunteers, and community engagement.



Forever

Squam

What we love about Squam is worth conserving. The Forever Squam Initiative and Campaign's vision is to build on past conservation successes while challenging the community to extend its commitment to protecting its natural resources at this critical time.

Please join us by making your commitment to Squam's future by completing the Forever Squam pledge form or making an online donation. You are a vital link in Squam's ever-evolving story.

Conserve

What you love.

foreversquam.org