

# *Spencer Brook Property*

Land conservation requires long-term vision and commitment...sometimes it just takes a long time for it to happen. The 954-acre Spencer Brook project is a classic example. Since 2006, SLCS has been working on the permanent protection of this important, but easily overlooked, tract. Did you know the Spencer Brook parcel includes over ½ mile of the Crawford-Ridgepole Trail between Mt. Morgan and Mt. Percival? It's a long story, but also an interesting one. This is the *short* version.

Over the last century, this Campton tract was logged regularly and heavily. The neighboring Beebe River Railroad (and later truck road) known as "The Grade" allowed logging teams to extract spruce, beech and maple for the Beebe Mill, located downstream and once the largest wood-mill in New England with 325 employees. About 40 years ago, the value of the wood (timber rights) was sold separately (severed) from the ownership of this land. A real estate developer bought the land to create a recreational area near Waterville Valley and the Squam Lakes. It would have been relatively easy to do as most of the tract was clear-cut, except for the 60 acres that lies in the Squam watershed with the Crawford-Ridgepole Trail.

In 2007, with the commitment of conservation giants, Laury & Nancy Coolidge, and Tim & Audrey Fisher, SLCS brokered a deal for the purchase of the land from the developer with the expectation that it would be conserved. The Coolidges then successfully negotiated the purchase of the timber rights to bring the property back to whole. The Coolidges then sold their interest to the Fishers, who transferred ownership to their land-holding company, Burleigh Land Limited Partnership (BLLP). You may recall BLLP also sold the development rights to conserve 2,500 acres in the Squam watershed. With the Crawford-Ridgepole Trail, 3 miles of Spencer Brook (inhabited with wild, native Brook Trout), and its unbroken 954 acres, conserving this land has been a top priority of SLCS

Leaping ahead to 2014, one of our partners, The Conservation Fund (TCF), acquired the abutting 5,441 acre Beebe River tract from Yankee Forest. After discussions, TCF agreed to seek federal funds through the federal Forest Legacy Program to conserve the combined 6,395 acres. SLCS agreed to raise the required 25% matching funds via the Squam Uplands project. TCF was successful in obtaining the federal grant in FY2017, but there was still need for a boundary survey, due diligence, and restoration work on the streams and woods roads.

In December, 2021, the Spencer Brook conservation marathon crossed the finish line! We applaud TCF, the Coolidge and Fisher families, donors to the Squam Uplands project, and the larger Squam community for making the conservation of this overlooked portion of the Squam watershed a top conservation priority. And, the next time you hike Mt. Morgan or Mt. Percival, enjoy the view and be grateful for the foresight and perseverance of many!

And... the Beebe River tract is slated to finish in February, 2022. Stay tuned...