

Forever Squam Update

Conservation Stories

#182 Pemi Oxbow Preserve DONATED Conservation Easement September 2024

In late August, the final details were set in stone to complete a conservation easement protecting 250 acres of land that straddles three towns and will be forever known as the Pemi Oxbow Preserve. The multi-use property is situated in the floodplains of Plymouth, Holderness and Ashland and includes public access for walking, biking, swimming, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, and education. It also

provides diverse habitat including forestlands, wetlands, managed hay fields and other exemplary natural communities.

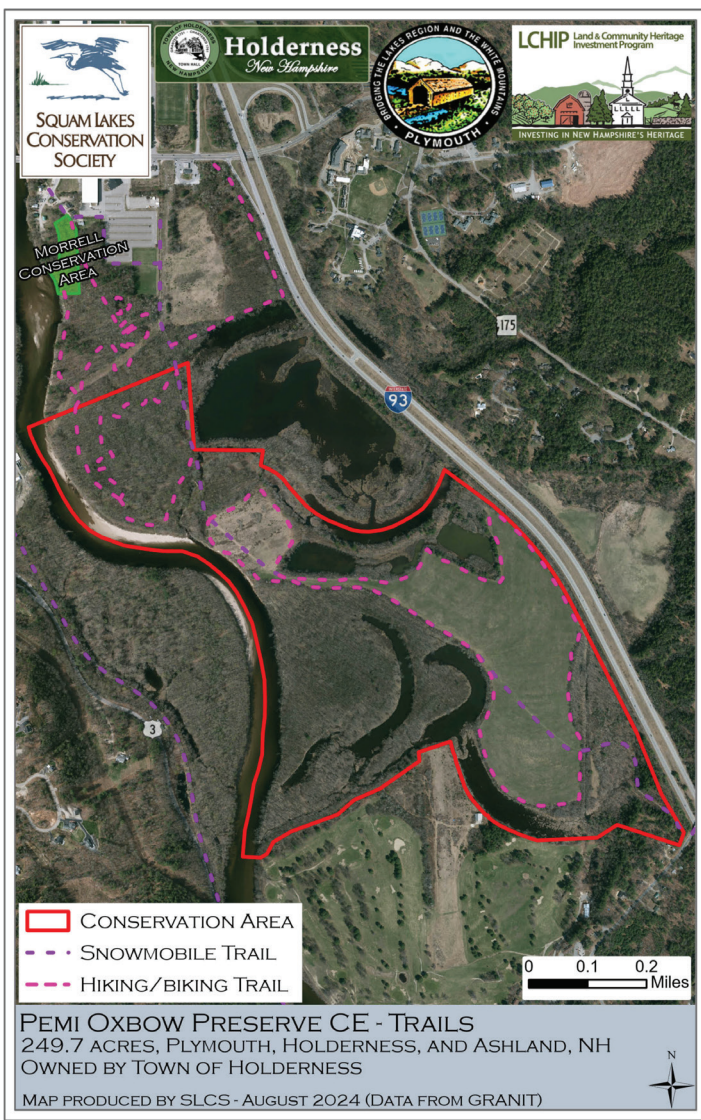
The community owes a debt of gratitude to the many people who dedicated their time and resources to find a way to protect this sensitive area, including Larry Spencer of the Holderness Conservation Commission and Plymouth State University (PSU),

Lisa Doner of the Plymouth Conservation Commission and PSU, and Phil Friel of Lakes Region Golf Courses, Inc. The late Chris Buckley, a local involved with the Holderness and Plymouth Conservation Commissions and PSU, was also instrumental in beginning the push to conserve this land.

The conservation commissions of both Plymouth and Holderness worked for years to secure funding to be able to conserve this property and protect its diverse habitat and use. Finally, in November of 2023

they were successful in acquiring a \$210,000 grant from the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) to help complete the purchase and protection of the Preserve. The LCHIP grant required that the property be permanently protected by a conservation easement. The Town of Holderness requested that the Squam Lakes Conservation Society (SLCS) hold the easement. With the LCHIP grant and money from the Holderness Conservation Commission's fund, the Pemi Oxbow land was purchased by the Town of Holderness in a bargain-sale from Lakes Region Golf Courses, Inc. (owned by Phil Friel) and in turn the Town of Holderness donated a conservation easement to the SLCS. Phil was very supportive of this project and patiently waited for all the pieces to fall in place. This land had been owned by Phil's family business for over 20 years, his father having originally purchased it from Milton Huckins in the 1990's for the potential of an additional 9-hole golf course. Twenty years later, the golf course was never built, and conversations of conservation began. The rest is history.

The Pemi Oxbow Preserve will be overseen by the Holderness Conservation Commission. As holder of the conservation easement, SLCS will monitor the preserve every year to ensure the terms of the conservation easement are upheld. Moving forward, many partners will come together to manage the Pemi Oxbow Preserve and surrounding land including the Plymouth Conservation Commission, Squam Trail Busters, New England



To read more about these and other conservation projects, visit our website at www.foreversquam.org.

Mountain Bike Association, Henry Ahern of Bonnie Brae Farms, PSU, the Holderness School, and others.

The Chris Buckley Pemi Oxbow Management Fund was created to financially support future management activities on the property. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please contact the Squam Lakes Conservation Society.

The New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) is an independent state authority providing matching grants to New Hampshire's municipalities and non-profits, helping to preserve the state's most important natural, cultural, and historic resources and ensure their contribution to the economy, environment, and quality of life in New Hampshire. Since 2000 LCHIP has awarded 589 grants, investing \$62 million in 200 NH communities to help conserve 241,000 acres of land and rehabilitate 172 historic structures. Learn more about how LCHIP is helping to preserve and protect New Hampshire's heritage at LCHIP.org.

What is an Oxbow? An oxbow wetland is a bend of a stream, river or creek, that has become separated from the flow of water through the natural evolution of the stream, river, or creek. Oxbow wetlands, like most wetlands, are important because they store excess water that might otherwise lead to flooding, filter water to improve water quality and provide habitat to a variety of wildlife. If you look at the map of the Pemigewasset River, you can see the classic u-shape of the Pemi Oxbows, where the river used to flow.



Bell-Ringing Ceremony

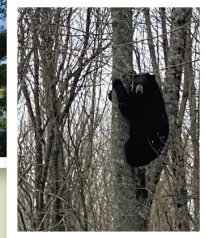
After the final details were set in stone and the ink was dry on the conservation easement, three towns came together to celebrate.

On Tuesday, August 27 the bell was rung. A symbolic act that gathers neighbors together to acknowledge and recognize the incredible effort put into permanently protecting this 250 acre multi use, multi town tract of land.

After the ceremony many walked the property, see it as it will remain in perpetuity, a sanctuary for wild life, a



place to recreate, and an agricultural resource. When you are spending time on the Pemi Oxbow preserve, think about the number of people, the time and unrelenting effort it took to accomplish...and if you happen to be on Secret Beach, share the story.



ACCESS FOR ALL

by Emily Landry
Land Acquisition Director

Like most conservation easements, the Pemi Oxbow easement protects natural features. However, it also protects public access and the ability to recreate on property. There's no shortage of activities you could partake in on the 250 acres and over 4 miles of trails at the Pemi Oxbow Preserve and additional trails on an adjacent property! Walking, running, biking, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling are just a handful of activities to pique your interest.

The Pemi Oxbow Preserve is a gem for members and visitors of the Plymouth, Holderness, and Ashland communities. Plymouth State University and Holderness School are within walking distance. The SLCS office is less than 15 minutes away by car. Just in the past year, the SLCS has hosted a full moon walk, participated in a birdwatching tour, led a Plymouth State University class field trip, and organized an Earth Day cleanup! Many other organizations are involved with this property as well. It is open to all and conserved in perpetuity. We hope to see you out there!