

Easement preserves Quarry Woods

By Bryn Keating (published: September 14, 2006)

FREEPORT – The Freeport Conservation Trust and the Town Council completed a conservation easement Sept. 6 for the Quarry Woods and Wetlands property. The purchase of the easement, approved by councilors July 11, ends more than three years of uncertainty for the future of the land.

FCT, a nonprofit corporation operated by a 15-member volunteer board of trustees, holds easements on 820 acres and owns 369 acres of land.

According to FCT Trustee Louisa Moore, half of the nearly 35-acre property was purchased by Freeport from the White family in 1987. The other half was given to the town by the Whites in 1991, though the family reserved a right for the public to hike and ski on the property.

The property has also been used by students and teachers at Mast Landing School for outdoor educational programs, including writing, snowshoeing and bird watching.

Bob Santomena, an FCT trustee, told councilors July 11 that the conservation process for the land began in 2003, when an ad hoc committee considered selling a portion of it for development.

Since then FCT has raised \$65,000, the amount set by the Town Council last year, to purchase easement rights to Quarry Woods.

Support for the easement came from state, federal and private sources: The Land for Maine's Future program awarded FCT \$50,000, the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership granted \$21,000 and the Nine Wicket Foundation donated \$5,000 in private foundation funds.

For Moore, FCT's success is preserving the land for children. "It's hard to put a price on the joy of the children enjoying these trails, woods and wetlands," she said. "As many adults can attest, these are experiences that stay with us forever and influence how we lead our lives."

The town will continue to own the Quarry Woods property, which includes a historic quarry, 16 vernal pools and a trail system. The Conservation Commission will manage trail improvements and signage, Moore said, although FCT will enhance the property through volunteer and community coordination.

The Conservation Commission is also working on a draft management plan for the property, which will come to the town for public review.

A celebration reception will be held later this fall, Moore said. FCT is continuing to accept donations for stewardship of the property at Freeport Conservation Trust, 101 Lower Flying Point Road, Freeport, Maine 04032.

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Children climb on granite slabs in the nearly 35-acre Quarry Woods and Wetlands property in Freeport. The Freeport Conservation Trust recently gained easement rights to the property, which includes trails, vernal pool habitats and the quarry abutting Mast Landing School.

Courtesy Louisa Moore