

Walking in Windham

a guide to Windham's
open space



WELCOME TO WINDHAM'S CONSERVATION LANDS AND

TRAILS...Enjoy nature, its plants, birds, and animals - walk, ski, bicycle, and horseback ride. Please be considerate. Public lands are in the public trust. They are to be shared and cared for by all.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION REGULATIONS:

1. No trespassing dusk to dawn
2. Fires and overnight camping are not allowed without permission of the Conservation Commission
3. No alcoholic beverages are allowed
4. Motorized vehicles are not permitted
5. Hunting and using firearms are not permitted at Foster's Pond or Deer Leap
6. Carry out all litter

A complete list of the regulations and bylaws may be obtained through the Building Department. Breaking regulations is punishable by fines.

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Lettered numbers following land titles refer to the grid on town map.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION TOWN OF WINDHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE Fall 1998

SOUTHEAST LANDS and TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEES Fall 1998

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nancy Surette drew the maps and provided the cover design.
Bernie Rouillard drew maps and designed the trails guides.
Gerry Capron, Pam Skinner, and Doris Mowson designed the trails guides.
Southeast Lands Subcommittee promoted awareness for conservation in Windham.
Wayne Morris and the Trails Subcommittee provided trails network information.
Cherie Howell of the Windham Conservation Commission compiled this booklet.

INTRODUCTION

The Windham Conservation Commission is pleased to present the First Edition of the Windham conservation lands trails guide, "Walking in Windham." This guide contains five maps of the town's most used and popular conservation lands. Recognizing that Windham's conservation lands are one of the town's most valuable assets, we have published this trail guide to encourage more townspeople to enjoy the natural beauty of our town.

Windham first established its conservation commission in 1968. Conservation lands have been acquired by gifts and donations, land transfers, and out-right purchases, one land being acquired through a matching funds program with the State of New Hampshire Land Conservation Investment Plan (LCIP). Most recently at the town meeting of March 1998, and with many thanks to the Southeast Lands Committee, we redesignated the Bayberry town land as a Conservation Area. Windham currently has 530+/- acres in conservation, only 2 percent of the land in town.

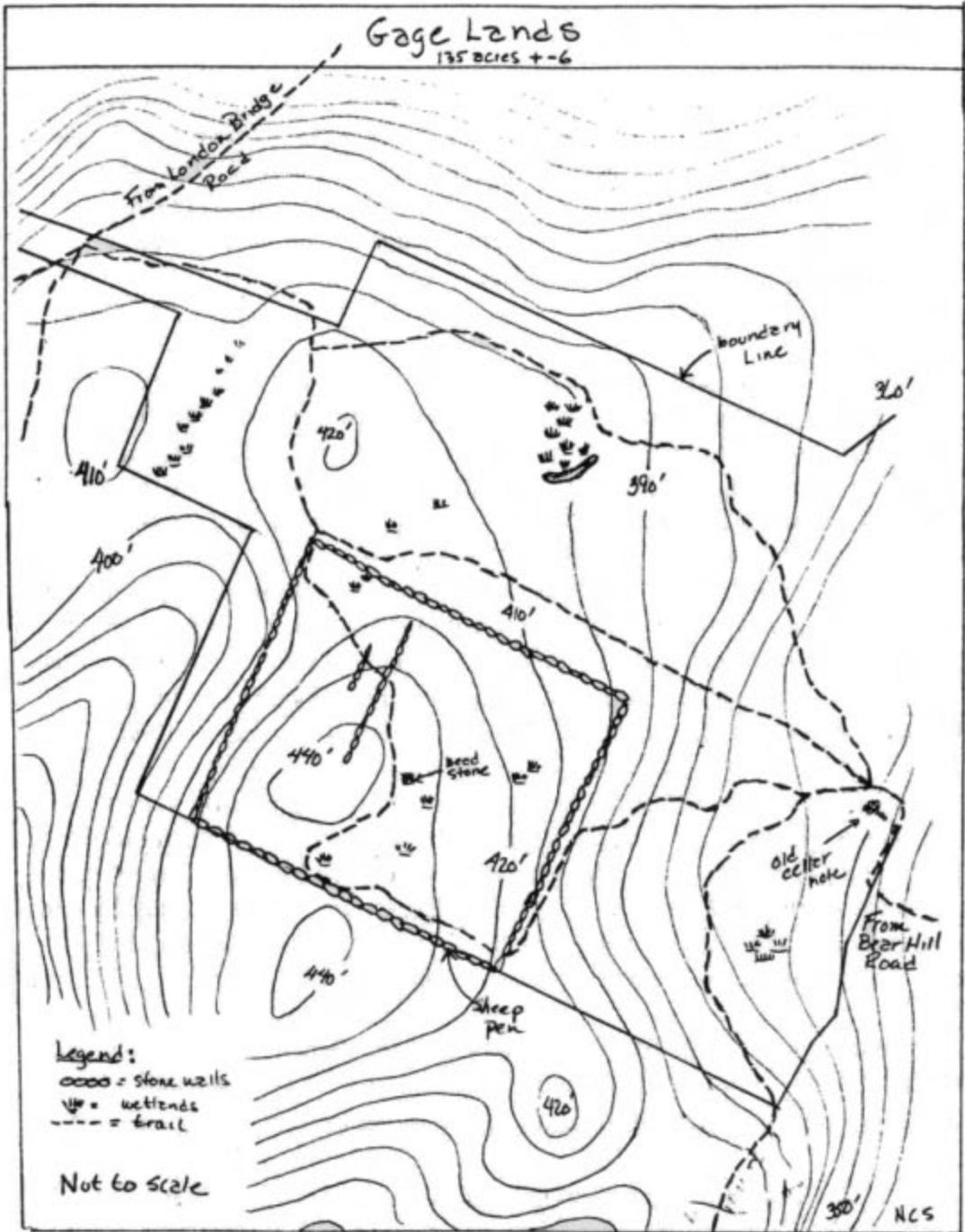
While Windham may still appear to be a rural oasis, there is much pressure for growth and development in our town. Echoing the town sentiment from the 1985 Master Plan, the 1998 Master Plan survey results indicate that townspeople are in favor of conservation and consider it a priority. The conservation commission looks forward to our first year with the NH-mandated current use tax being completely used for its original intention of conserving land as a balance to development. In addition to acting as steward for the town conservation areas, we promote the importance of preserving wildlife habitats; corridors of green space for plants, animals, and trees; and protecting wetlands (important for flood control), as well as surface water and ground water quality. The commission is also working with neighboring towns in establishing a regional land trust.

Preserving open space stabilizes the tax rate and increases property values over time. Green open space is desirable to homebuyers and is part of what makes Windham a great place to live. Furthermore, it has been shown through several studies for nearby southern NH towns that keeping open space makes dollars and sense economically. At a certain point, the influx of tax dollars from development cannot balance the fees for increased town services.

All the conservation lands and trails in Windham are shown on the maps in this booklet. For each conservation land with trails, an individual map and description are included. Parking areas, where available, are marked with a **P**.

At the present time the trails are maintained by the Conservation Commission and through individual Eagle Scout projects. If you are interested in helping to maintain trails in the conservation lands or getting involved in another way, please contact the Conservation Commission. We will be happy to hear from you.

GAGE CONSERVATION LANDS
F3



The Gage Conservation Lands, also known as the Central Town Lands, were designated as conservation land in 1978 by the townspeople at the Windham Town Meeting. Historically, these 135 acres were first settled in the 1600s by Scotch-Irish settlers who used the land for sheep farming. At that time, the land was kept as meadows for sheep grazing. Some unique stone structures built by these farmers remain standing today, including a 17th-century cellar hole from a one-story farmhouse and high-walled sheep pens on the hilltop. These features can be seen when walking the Gage Lands.

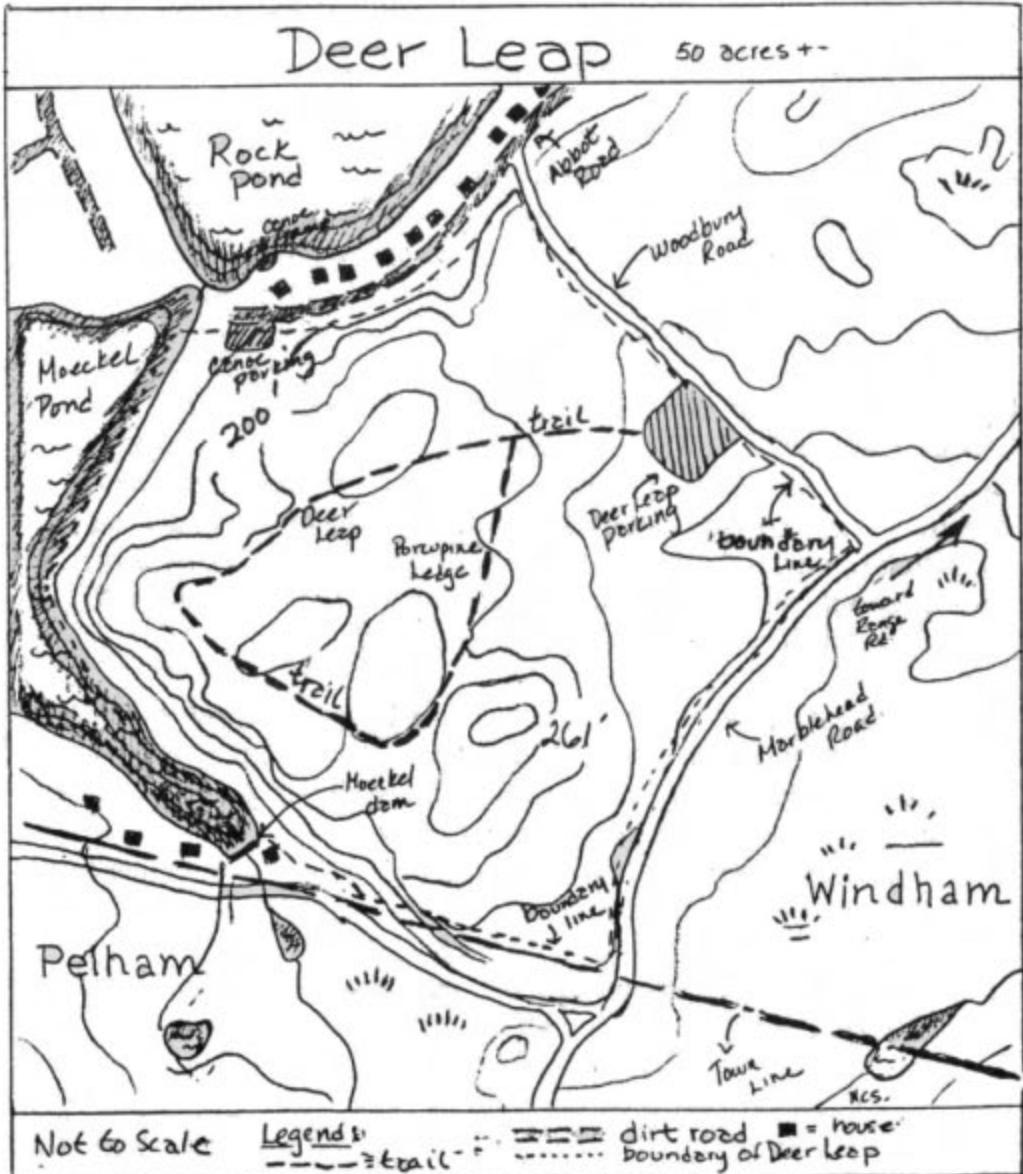
Eventually, the sheep fields reverted back to a forested area following the westward movement by New England farmers (approximately 1810) or the Industrial Revolution (early 1900s), which brought local farmers to the cities and the mills. The Hurricane of 1938 destroyed many trees in New England, the remains of several large, broken trees can still be seen on the hilltop in the Gage Lands.

A team of University of New Hampshire students designed the trail system for the Gage Lands in 1997. The proposed trails are marked with blue or red flagging tape. The trail was placed near stone walls for aesthetic qualities and away from vernal pools to minimize disturbance. The trails do pass near wetlands, however, and provide an open area to view birds as well as spectacular views in the autumn. Trail blazing and clearing will be performed by Boy Scouts from Windham for their Eagle Scout projects.

When walking the easy to moderate trails in the Gage Lands, you will find an abundance of oak trees, mixed deciduous trees, and a white pine understory. The Gage Lands are the perfect habitat for local wildlife, especially deer because of the abundant food supply. Many vernal pools exist in the area, filling each spring to provide an excellent habitat for amphibians as well as a water source for wildlife.

Gage Lands can be accessed by walking or parking along Bear Hill Road or London Bridge Road.

DEER LEAP NATURAL AREA
H5



Deer Leap is a 54-acre natural area purchased by Windham in October 1989 with assistance through the state's LCIP Program. This successful acquisition to Windham's conservation land was the end result of over two years of work by the Conservation Commission and its then leader and Chairman Nancy Johnson. The Deer Leap name is derived from the natural rock outcropping (cliffs) rising some 60 feet above Moeckel's Pond (previously called Simpson Pond) in the southeast part of town. Deer Leap, managed by the Windham Conservation Commission, can be visited by the public by taking Marblehead Road, south off of Range Road, then a right turn onto Woodbury Road (a gravel road). The Deer Leap parking lot is on the left side after a short distance.

A hiking trail, Deer Leap Trail, extends from the parking lot to the Deer Leap Cliffs. A side trail, Porcupine Ledge Trail, leads off the main trail to the left, a short way from the parking lot. The Porcupine Ledge Trail loops over uplands, past a large boulder, and down through rock ledges (from where it got its name), and also arrives at the Deer Leap Cliffs. Many old stone walls remaining from historical pastures and farms can be seen along the trails in this natural area.

There is a canoe access to Rock Pond in the Deer Leap Natural Area. It may be reached by traveling down Woodbury Road (past the parking lot) to Abbott Road. Take a left on Abbott, continuing to the end. Be courteous to neighbors in this pondside residential area. The canoe access (for Rock Pond only) is on the right and a small parking area is on the left of Abbott Road. Another walking trail from this canoe launch area leads up to the Deer Leap Cliffs.

The Deer Leap trail system provides easy walking for folks of all ages, from small children to senior citizens. There is an abundance of wildlife native to this natural area, which is posted no hunting. You may spot deer, foxes, raccoons, rabbits, porcupines, or even moose. Native birds are also plentiful - including songbirds, owls, woodpeckers, hawks, and cranes and herons at the ponds.

Native plants and flowers (in season) can also be observed, such as mountain laurel, lady's slippers, mayflowers, and pond lilies. An interesting and extensive display of several varieties of lichen exist on the sides of the ledges of the porcupine trail and at the cliffs. The trees consist of several common species of native hardwood, with some white pine, spruce, hemlock, and other evergreens. If you are looking to get outdoors, back to nature, and take a comfortable walk in the fresh air - visit the Deer Leap Natural Area.

FOSTER'S POND NATURAL AREA

C3

The Foster's Pond Natural Area was acquired for conservation purposes in 1985, and enlarged in 1996 by the acquisition of approximately 19 1/2 acres through a land exchange with an abutter. This parcel, now totaling approximately 190 acres, is located in the northwest corner of town off of Nashua Road, abutting the Nashua Road Recreation Complex and a former railroad bed, a part of the Rockingham Recreational Trail maintained by the NH Department of Transportation. Foster's Pond Natural Area contains two ponds, that are connected by Mill Brook, which drains to Beaver Brook.

The Conservation Commission has developed an extensive trail system for the public's use which originates at the parking area at Nashua Road. The trails are for pedestrian use and provide access around Foster's Pond and through the natural area. A portion of the Pond Trail located on the southeast side of the pond is on private land that is currently leased to the men's softball league. The Nancy Johnson Trail, named after a past Conservation Commission Chairwoman who was instrumental in the creation of this natural area, heads in a northerly direction from the trailhead at the railroad bed, crosses an intermittent stream and wetland before crossing Mill Brook. The trail continues to follow Mill Brook through a stand of white pine, then heads east connecting the Pond Link Trail to Foster's Pond. The Esker Loop Trail branches off from the Nancy Johnson Trail and heads west through mixed hardwoods with views of the smaller pond. The trail then loops and heads east through a stand of mature hemlock, following the top of an esker (a long narrow ridge of gravel deposited by the outwash of a receding glacier) before connecting to the Pond Link Trail.

The Foster's Pond trail system provides easy walking and several options to the hiker, from a quick jaunt to Scout's Point overlooking Foster's Pond, to more extensive walks. Wildlife is abundant and it is possible to see beaver, raccoon, porcupine, fox, and white-tail deer, all native to the area, or a transient moose that may be passing through. Birds are plentiful and include native songbird species, owls, woodpeckers, hawks, ducks, Canadian geese, and blue heron. A variety of frogs, snakes, butterflies, and dragonflies can also be seen here. Foster's Pond offers good fishing for bluegill, pickerel, and smallmouth bass.

Foster's Pond Natural Area is being maintained as a town natural resource providing wildlife habitat, ground water protection, and passive recreational opportunities. Hunting and motorized vehicles are prohibited. Plenty of parking is available in the unpaved parking lot off of Nashua Road, next to the recreation complex.

LEGEND

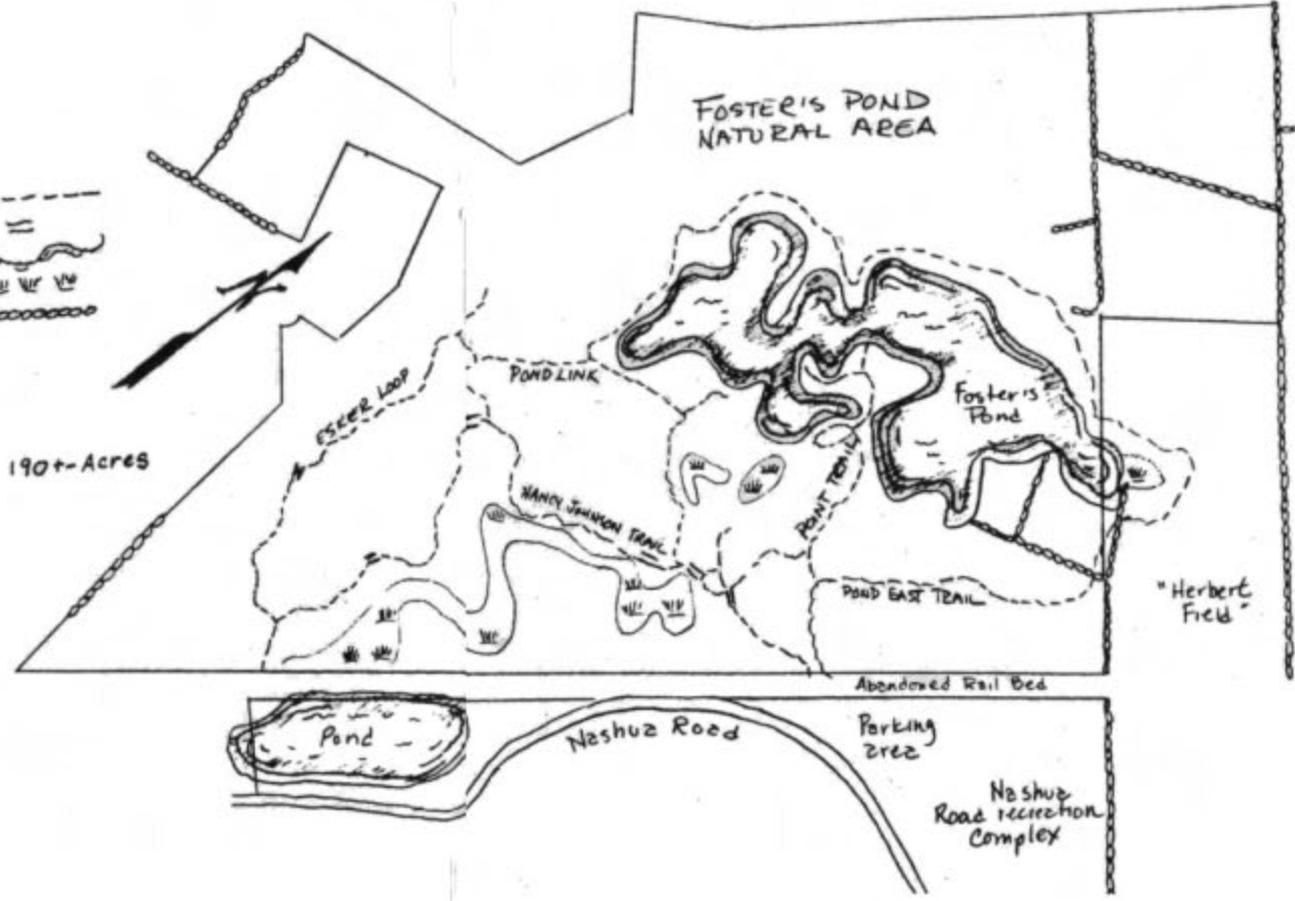
- PATH
- BRIDGE
- EDGE OF WATER
- SWAMP WETLANDS
- Stone Wall



Scale - 0 500'

190+ Acres

FOSTER'S POND NATURAL AREA



"Herbert Field"

Abandoned Rail Bed

Parking Area

Nashua Road Recreation Complex

Nashua Road

Pond

BAYBERRY CONSERVATION AREA

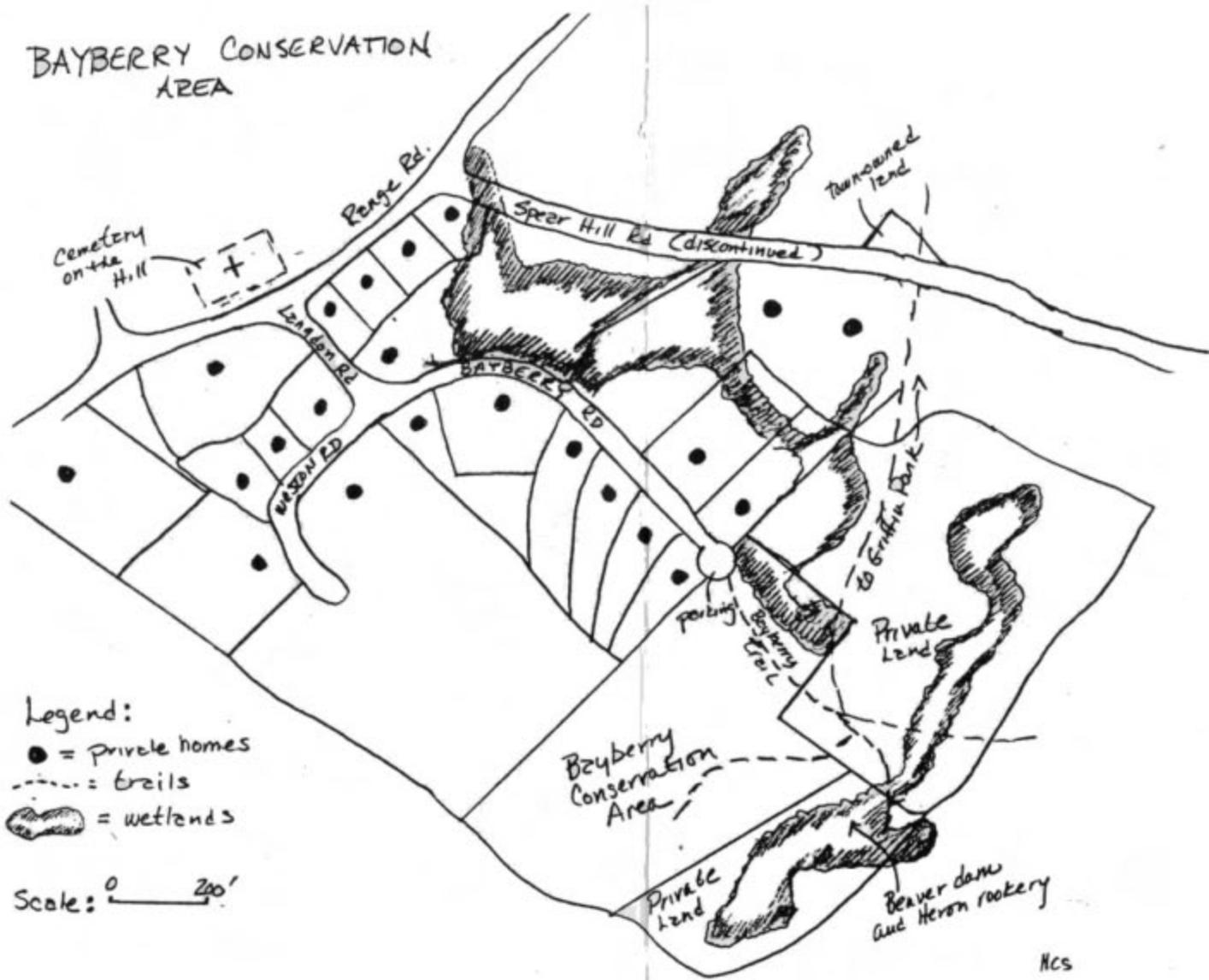
F6

The 17-acre Bayberry Conservation Area was transferred to the stewardship of the Conservation Commission by vote of the 1998 Town Meeting. The designation of this property for conservation by the town was an important first step in protecting the abutting, 1,000-plus acres of undeveloped Southeast Lands, which were identified by Windham's Master Plan in 1985 as an area to be preserved by conservation for the future.

Bayberry Conservation Area, and the adjacent Southeast Lands, provide a contiguous wildlife habitat corridor where moose and deer are frequently spotted. Songbirds and owls can be heard while walking in the woods here. A picturesque beaver pond and heron rookery can be seen to the southeast from the Bayberry Trail on adjacent private land. Two distinct beaver lodges can also be seen from the trail. Unique native plants and flowers, such as columbines, mountain laurel, jack-in-the-pulpit, lady slippers, ferns, as well as rare native Dogwood trees are also found along the trails. These easy-to-moderate trails are ideal for walking, birdwatching, and educational nature hikes, for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages to enjoy.

Access to the Bayberry Conservation Area is by the Bayberry Trail, which starts at the Bayberry Road cul-de-sac and connects with trails through privately owned land. As always, get permission before crossing private property. Parking is available on the road at the cul-de-sac.

BAYBERRY CONSERVATION AREA



Legend:

- = private homes
- - - = trails
-  = wetlands

Scale: 0 — 200'

NCS

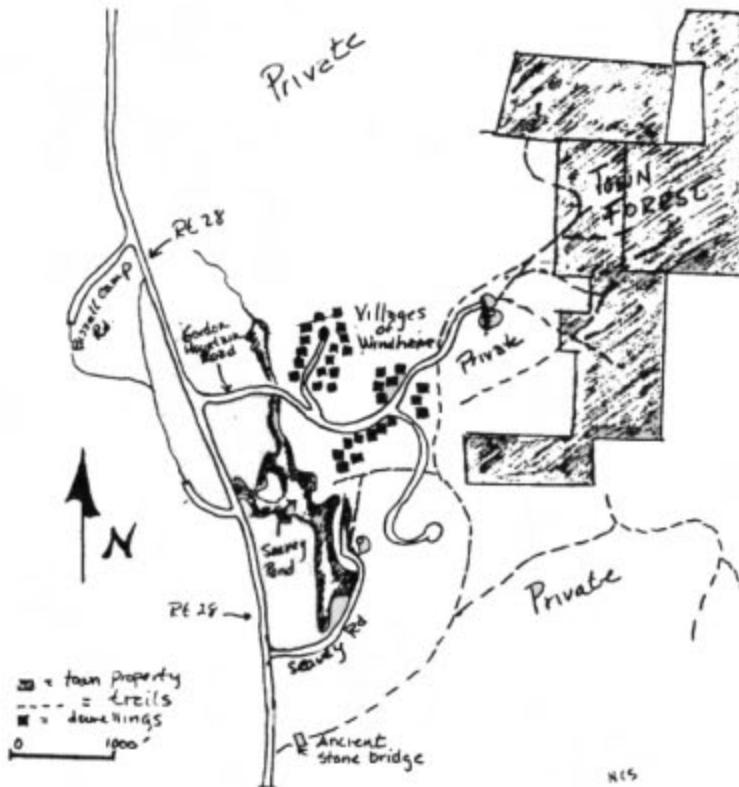
**ANDREW TOWN FOREST
E1**



The Andrew Town Forest was generously donated to Windham in 1997 by Mrs. Dolly Andrew, a long-time Windham resident. This 16.5-acre parcel is located in West Windham at the junction of Mammoth Road and NH Route 111. This pristine forested woodland is adjacent to Beaver Brook, which flows along the parcel's north and west boundaries.

The Andrew Town Forest is forested with a mixture of pines, hemlock, and hardwoods providing excellent habitat for wildlife. Per Mrs. Andrew's request, this land is to be managed by the Conservation Commission as a forest and wildlife refuge. The Conservation Commission does not maintain trails on this land, but visitors are welcome.

**WINDHAM TOWN FOREST
A8**



The Windham Town Forest, situated in the northeast corner of Windham, is approximately 99 acres in size. The town forest can be accessed by a designated public right-of-way off of Route 28 through the Villages of Windham condominiums, or by Seavey Road. No trails systems are maintained at this time. Many of the existing trails begin on private land and eventually lead to the town forest. Minimal parking is available at the cul-de-sac of Gordon Mountain Road.

**WILLIAM V. VERRETTE CONSERVATION LAND - CANOBIE LAKE
CANOE LAUNCH E7**

The William V. Verrette Conservation Land, also known as Verrette's Landing, is an area made up of two small parcels that can be used by Windham residents for canoe access to Canobie Lake. In the summer of 1996 Mr. Cassidy approached the commission to discuss his donation of two unbuildable lots on Canobie Lake at West Shore Road. His only request was that the land be donated in the name of William V. Verrette, his father-in-law. The commission dedicated this land as the William V. Verrette Conservation Land on April 20, 1997. Parking is available on West Shore Road.

TRAILS, TRAILS, TRAILS!

The Rockingham Recreational Trail and other railroad bed trails, many woods roads, and new or future pedestrian easements make up the existing trails network through Windham, often joining with conservation trails. Organized efforts are underway by the Trails Subcommittee, Planning Board, the Town Planner, and the Conservation Commission to work toward developing a trail system throughout town. This fulfills a vision stated in Windham's Master Plan and the 1995 Community Stewardship Program.

ROCKINGHAM RECREATIONAL TRAIL (OLD RAILROAD BED)

The Rockingham Recreational Trail is an old railroad bed currently under New Hampshire state jurisdiction that is popular for year-round outdoor activities, such as walking, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. The trail is quite extensive, crossing through the northwest part of town, from Derry through Windham, and into Pelham. Residents have heard of snowmobilers arriving in Windham from as far as upstate New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts. Other former railroad bed trails include the Derry Railbed, which crosses through the northeast part of town, continuing as the Manchester-Lawrence Railroad Bed.

WOODS ROADS

One of Windham's unique features is the wooded, unpaved roads once used by horse and buggy. Classified as "discontinued roads," some of these woods roads make up a series of trails networks that can be used for walking, running, bicycling, cross-country skiing, and just plain outdoor enjoyment. Where these interconnecting discontinued roads abut town-owned land, they are available as a right-of-way for all townspeople to enjoy. Where private lands abut these discontinued roads, abutting land-owners have a right-of-way. Remember to ask permission if you are passing through private land. The list of discontinued roads in Windham include the following:

- Johnny Hill Road
- London Bridge Road *
- Bridle Bridge Road
- Butterfield Rock Road
- Simpson Road
- Haskell Road
- Pine Hill Road *
- County Road *
- Parker Road
- Spear Hill Road *
- Morrison Road
- Governor Dinsmore Road *
- Bissel Camp Road *
- Witch Hazel Road *
- Dark Entry Road
- Hopkins Road *

* Denotes that the town (public) has right to pass over these roads. All others are owned by the abutters.

PEDESTRIAN EASEMENTS ACQUIRED SINCE 1997

Through cooperative efforts of the town and local developers, a series of pedestrian easements have been obtained as part of new subdivisions. Work is still needed in establishing these easement trails that currently only exist on paper. This will be an ongoing effort and any volunteer assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Candlewood

The Candlewood pedestrian easement will allow foot traffic to go from Candlewood Road to Simpson Road in the southeastern part of town. This will link these two neighborhoods with a wooded walking path. Parking can be found either on Candlewood Road or the cul-de-sac on Simpson Road.

Golden Brook Trail

The Golden Brook Trail easement will allow foot and bicycle travel from Lowell Road to the new extension of the Bear Hill subdivision. It will allow pedestrians access to the Gage Lands across a 50-foot right-of-way. Future development in this region may allow for easier access to the extensive trail network on Gage Lands and onto the discontinued London Bridge Road. Parking for this trail will be on Bear Hill Road.

Haskell Road

The Haskell Road trail easement will allow pedestrian travel over a part of the discontinued Haskell Road between Hidden Valley Road and the new Glenwood Road in northwest Windham. Parking would be on Glenwood Road.

Mitchell Pond and Bahan Trail

The newest additions to our trail network are two conservation easements that were obtained in the first phase of development at the Castle Reach subdivision.

The Bahan Trail (named after one of the town's earliest residents) will run from the west side of Searles Road to Mockingbird Hill Road over an existing woods road. The second easement (unnamed) will run from the east side of Searles Road down to Mitchell Pond. A trail is planned from Mitchell Pond to a road that is yet to be established in future phases of this large subdivision. Parking will be either on Searles Road or Mockingbird Hill Road.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DISCOVERY TRAIL

G4

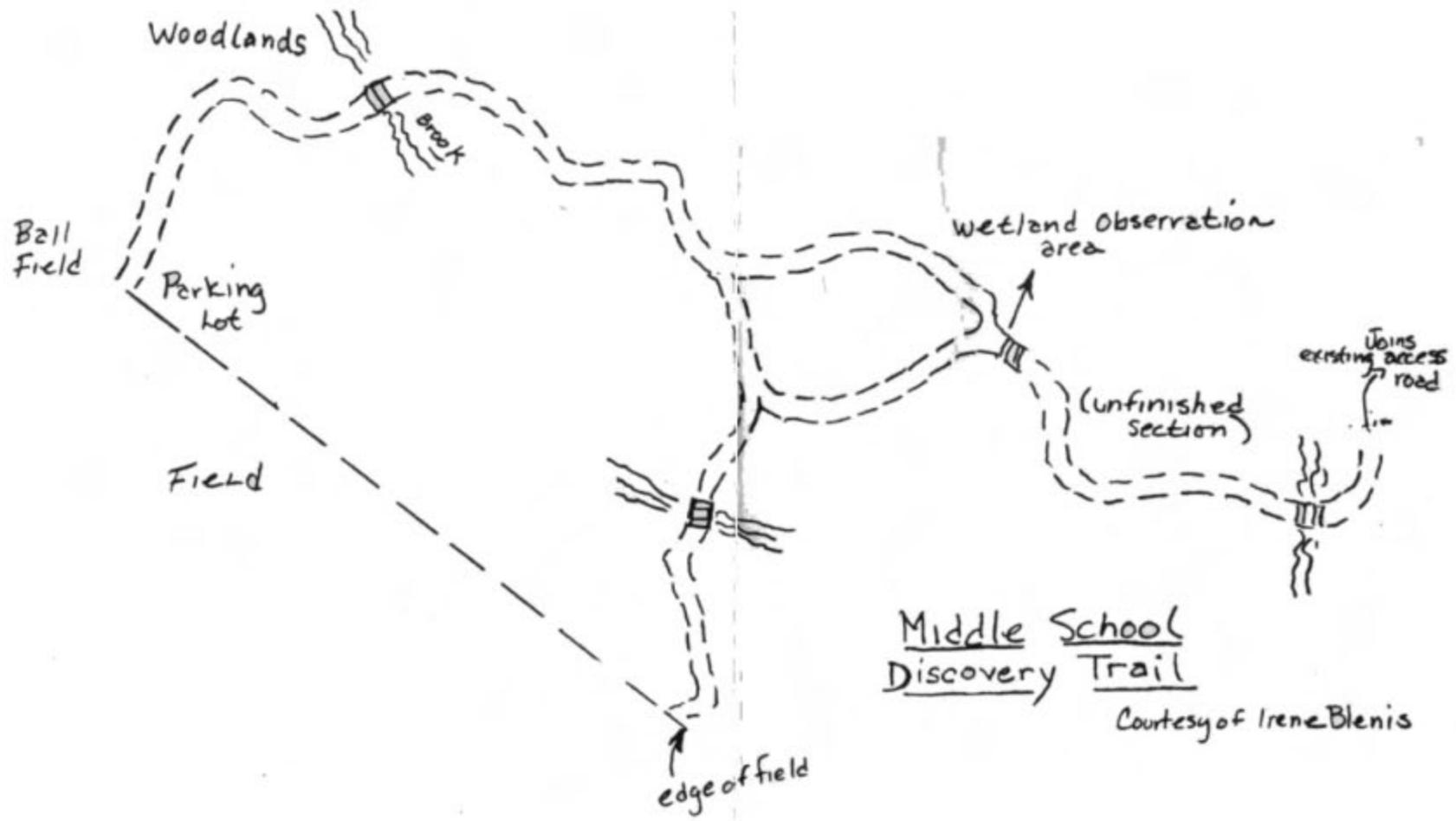
The Discovery Trail is a recreational, nature trail that was created at the Middle School for the children's enjoyment and learning and as a walking trail for the community. Mrs. Irene Blenis, a Windham teacher, was the driving force behind making this trail a reality. It all began with a flyer from the UNH Cooperative Extension Program that crossed her desk. With assistance from Mr. Phil Auger, the trails were marked and created, unveiling this beautiful natural area. From there it blossomed with many groups, such as the Boy Scouts, helping out. Brownie Troops also helped by cleaning and clearing the paths for trails.

The whole trail system has evolved as an outdoor classroom, designed to highlight the unique features in this natural area surrounding the school. There are three themes to the Discovery Trail: the woodlands, the wetlands, and the fieldlands. After leaving the ball field, walkers can explore the woodlands trail, crossing a wooden bridge over a brook and winding through the trees on a pine needle path. The bridge was created by a local Boy Scout for his Eagle Project. Next, the trail moves into the wetlands loop where from the wetland observation area students can observe wildlife and birds in their natural habitat. For class projects, students have collected water samples from the water's edge and brought it back to the classroom to study under a microscope. The third area of the Discovery Trail is the fieldlands walk. The trail leaves the woods and wetlands after crossing a second bridge, then opening into a wildflower meadow. Students walk along the edge of this field bordering the woods on their return trip back to the classroom. This open field is a wonderful habitat for meadow birds and butterflies.

Although the complete Discovery Trail network remains unfinished, it is certainly off to a great start. The trails are a peaceful oasis for students and community members to visit.

Boy Scouts are currently working on an outdoor amphitheater in the woodlands. So far the amphitheater clearing has been made; stands will be completed later.

The trail begins at the woods adjacent to the Middle School soccer and baseball fields. Students from Golden Brook School also visit the Discovery Trail. They access the trail by crossing the field hockey field, taking a path through the woods, and then parallel to the soccer field. Parking can be found at either school; both are located on Lowell Road.



Middle School
Discovery Trail

Courtesy of Irene Blenis

The Landry Family Conservation Easement was established in June 1999 when the Conservation Commission purchased the "development rights" to 72 acres of woodland located off Lowell Road behind the Landry family residence. The easement includes an old ski hill, which is of historic sentiment to many townspeople who learned to ski on that slope. The dedicated woodlands with extensive trails are a treat for hikers with their "towering red oaks and mighty white pines."

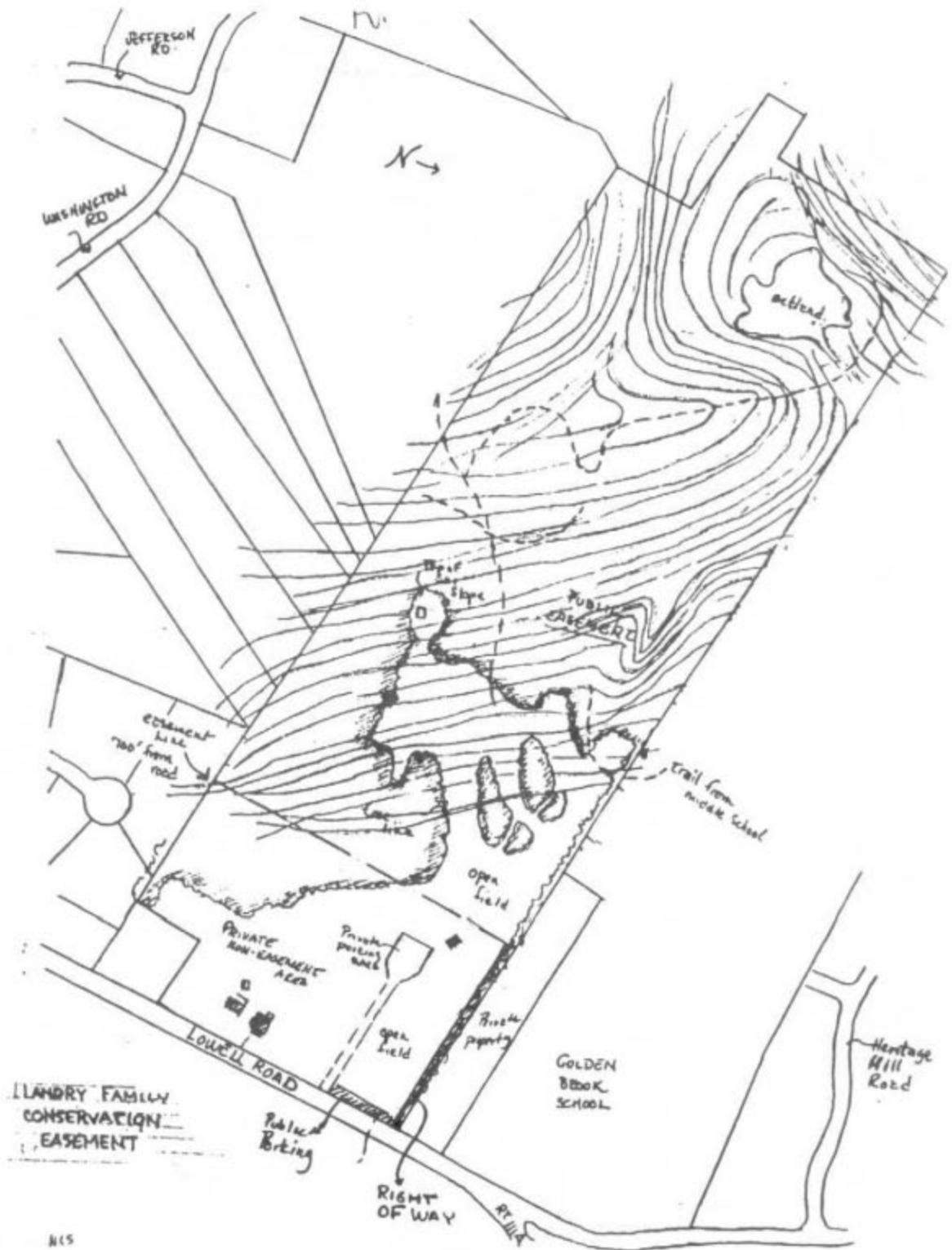
While this land is still owned by the Landry's, a grant deed provides for the land to be preserved as open space in perpetuity. Through this generous agreement, the family allows public enjoyment of this lovely land while protecting it for wildlife such as moose, fox, birds, and more. It preserves part of an important wildlife corridor connecting to the Gage Lands and the town of Pelham open space and conservation areas.

The abutting Middle School Discovery Trail and Boy Scout-built outdoor amphitheater can be reached from the conservation easement. [See description on page 14 and Discovery Trail Nature Guide.] Connecting trails ultimately lead to the Gage Lands Conservation Area.

The conservation easement is accessed by the 12-foot right-of-way, a path mowed next to the farm field, which is situated at the northern property border. The path takes you beyond the old ski chalet to where the easement begins, 700 feet from the road. The private Landry homestead, including barn, pond, and old ski chalet (where hot chocolate was sold), has frontage along Lowell Road. The old ski hill is 614 feet high at its peak. The old towrope and poles remain on the hill. Use of many trails in the back portion of the easement for hiking and motorcycle riding will continue. Parking is available along Lowell Road.

Access can also be made through the Middle School property with parking at the school parking lot.

Landry Family Conservation Easement (F4)





Goodyera pubescens
Rattlesnake-plantain
"A native orchid found about Windham"

**Windham Conservation Commission
4 North Lowell Road
Windham, NH 03087**