

DEBT CANCELLATION CONSERVATION CONTRACT

Review Team Report

The review team has considered the property that is owned by Samantha Burns of North New Portland, Maine and has concluded that approximately 41.47 acres are acceptable for the Debt Cancellation Conservation Contract.

The Review Team consisted of the following members:

Janice Ramirez – FSA

Nick Pairitz - NRCS

Jeremy Markuson – NRCS

Joe Dembeck – Somerset County SWCD

Samantha Burns – Farmer

The review team met on June 2, 2020 at the property and performed a thorough site inspection. Prior to the site visit members of the review team reviewed aerial imagery, maps, and soil information. The location of the contract acres is more thoroughly described on Page 4.

The proposed area contains valuable wetlands, uplands, and habitat that is suitable for conservation. The area also overlies an aquifer recharge zone, with the majority being >50 gallons per minute (gpm) and two municipal wells are located adjacent to the northwestern corner of this parcel.

The forested habitat is in early to mid-successional regeneration following a more recent timber harvest. It is comprised of dense, young regrowth of conifers and deciduous tree species. Older trees are very limited in much of the forested area. Conifer tree species include eastern white pine, red pine, northern white cedar, balsam fir, tamarack, and common juniper. Deciduous tree species include quaking aspen, big tooth aspen, red maple, sugar maple, striped maple, grey birch, white birch, speckled alder, American beech, northern red oak, white ash, pin cherry, and black cherry. The mixed wood forest provides suitable habitat for many neotropical migratory birds of Federal Trust responsibility, as well as the federally listed (threatened) Canada lynx. Canada lynx has also been observed within close proximity to the property. As the forests mature the forested habitat will continue to provide habitat for neotropical migratory birds and Canada lynx. An unnamed stream and associated wetland are located in the northwest corner of the property. This stream flows into Gilman Stream approximately 1500 feet upstream of the Route 146 Bridge. At location **A** marked in Figure 1, approximately 12+ young of year (YOY) wild brook trout were observed. Substrate in this section of stream is suitable for brook trout spawning and juvenile rearing habitat is present. The presence of YOY brook trout is an indicator that a population of adult fish reside in the unnamed stream and/or Gilman Stream. Additionally, at location **A** past beaver activity (not active at this time) has created a wetland opening of approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre that contains an open canopy, standing snags, fallen woody debris, diverse assemblage of native wetland plant species, all with the unnamed stream flowing

through it. Within the open wetland are dead or dying trees with loose bark, crevices, and cavities. These dead and dying trees are important roosting sites for bats and migratory birds. Bats may use these natural roosts for establishing a maternity colony that consist of reproductive females and their young. The property also provides floral resources for pollinators. Spring ephemeral flowering plants within the forested habitat and wetland are important for early emerging solitary bees and bumble bees. Mid and late blooming flowers were also observed. The project area occurs within the geographic range of several declining bumble bees including the yellow banded bumble bee.

Location **B** marked on Figure 1, is an area of approximately 3 acres where a previous owner removed the topsoil and tree stumps after a timber harvest. The exact reason for this creating this disturbance is unknown, but likely is a result of exploration for gravel deposits. After this disturbance, the surface substrate is now composed of exposed gravel with some sand. Regeneration has been slow, comprised mostly of grey birch and some red pine and eastern white pine, with lots of unvegetated areas. This type of environment provides ideal nesting habitat for common nighthawk, a species that has been in decline in Maine over the last 20 years. This area of exposed gravel with dispersed shrub/sapling growth in conjunction with adjacent field and riparian habitats provide suitable breeding, nesting, and feeding habitat for nighthawks. Additionally, this area of habitat provides suitable nesting and overwintering habitat for a variety of native insects including many bee and wasp species.

Shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.) was the only significant non-native terrestrial plant species observed. It was found in low abundance mostly along the main trail through the forested area and in greatest abundance it what appears to be an old house or barn foundation.

Summary:

In the confines of the conservation easement agreement, over a 50 year period this property will continue to provide habitat for migratory bird species (exact species composition will change as tree/shrub species age), woody debris and snag/cavity trees will become more abundant over time which will be a benefit to all fauna (insects, herptiles, birds, mammals). The functions of the wetland, riparian, and stream habitats will be protected which will benefit the brook trout population found in the stream.

Recommendations by the Review Team:

- 1) Prior to placing this parcel under easement, determine and mark boundary lines.
- 2) After the easement starts, the landowner will maintain boundary line markings.

- 3) The landowner will be able to maintain the existing access trails in passable conditions.

- 4) The landowner maintains the ability to treat (chemical/mechanical practices) invasive plant species, Shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), currently occurring as well as any new species presence that might occur over the period of the agreement.

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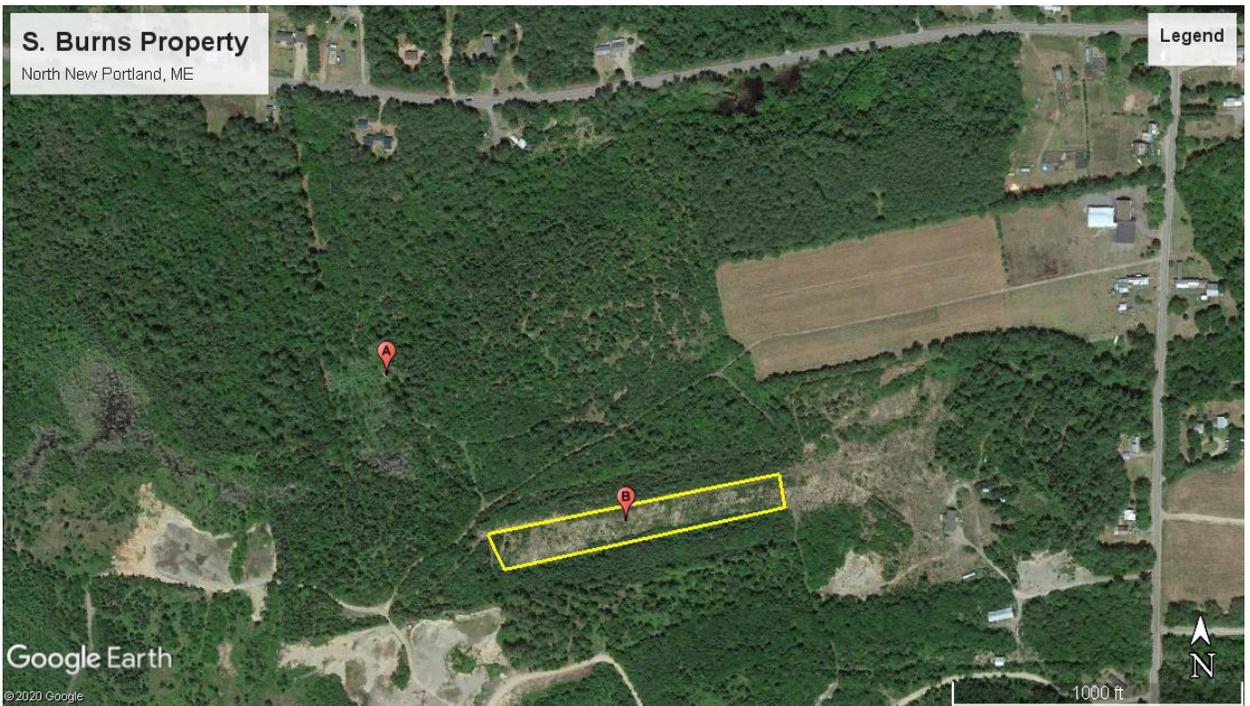


Figure 1. Locations on property referred to within the Review Team Report.

