



PASSUMPSIC VALLEY LAND TRUST

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PVLT Awarded Grant to Complete E. Burke Dam Removal

A recent grant from the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund has advanced PVLT's East Burke Dam removal initiative to its next phase.

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, which administers the Fund, announced the conditional award of \$317,000 to PVLT so that it could complete the dam removal

and related site restoration. The Fund's purpose is to promote and support river

restoration in the upper reaches of the **(continued on page 2)**



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Connecticut River watershed as mitigation for the adverse environmental impacts of the federally licensed Moore, Comerford and McIndoes hydroelectric projects.

The East Burke dam, located in East Burke Village, was built in 1931. PVLТ acquired the deteriorating dam and a small amount of adjoining land in 2000 from Northern Star Burke Mountain Ski Area. The ski area had acquired it as a potential location for a snowmaking water withdrawal, but had come view it as a significant liability. PVLТ saw the acquisition of the land as an opportunity to guarantee public access for fishing, paddling and swimming at a key location, and as a first step towards a river restoration initiative for the East Branch. Removal of the dam would return the river to its original unobstructed, free-flowing condition, improve fish habitat and water quality, expand a whitewater paddling stretch, and eliminate a public safety hazard.

The benefits of dam removal are now quite well understood. The natural character of the East Branch is visible along VT Route 114 from Lyndon to East Haven. The river provides fast-water, rocky-bottomed habitat

essential for trout, salmon and the aquatic insects they eat. In summer the water generally is cool and the riffles and rapids keep it well-aerated. The East Burke dam has slowed, widened and flattened out roughly a mile of river upstream of the village. Fish and other aquatic organisms are unable to move upstream past the dam to reach habitat critical for their reproduction and survival.

Sediment carried into the impoundment settles leaving a sandy, silty flat area that trout and salmon avoid. In addition, the broader, more open water surface captures extra sunlight. At times the water temperatures rise to above the limit that native trout and salmon can tolerate. In addition, the water in the pond is unable to hold as much dissolved oxygen.

The dam also effects recreation. Although people do paddle canoes and kayaks in the East Burke impoundment, the dam impedes downstream paddling, forces a portage, and poses a serious safety hazard for unsuspecting paddlers. Dams like the one in East Burke offer no flood protection whatsoever. Instead, they aggravate flooding (as occurred in East Burke in the Great Flood of 1927) and pose a risk of sudden failure with

potentially devastating consequences downstream.

Dam removal cannot proceed without the issuance of two major permits. One is a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, and the other is a State Dam Statute Permit. The federal permitting process assures, among other things, consideration of the historic and archeological values associated with the dam, which PVLТ has already determined meets the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places. The State permit involves determining whether dam removal will serve the public, along with the interests of the dam owner. The public and other interested parties are afforded opportunities to participate in a meaningful way in the permitting processes. PVLТ is planning engineering and archeology studies required by the permitting authorities.

Lenny Gerardi, PVLТ's president predicts that permit applications will be filed before the end of this year. "If we were to receive our permits we could consider preparing for a dam removal sometime in 2007," Gerardi said. Although the recently awarded grant in no way assures the removal of the dam, it eliminates funding as an obstacle.

Black flies? Mud? Some People Volunteer for the Pleasure!

If you have noticed more activity on PVLT parcels it may be because volunteers are working to prepare this year's monitoring reports.

Once a year PVLT must monitor each of its parcels in order to ensure that the special qualities which have made the land worthy of preservation are not being threatened. The volunteer monitors are currently in the process of walking each property and observing the conditions there.

The monitors include:

Jon Fitch, Sheri Fitch, Linda Metzke, Elaine Razzano, Daisy McCoy, Bruce Berryman, Joan Harlow, Laurel Stanley, Buck Beliles, Meri Simon and others.

In early winter these PVLT members signed on to help us monitor all of our properties. While many of these volunteers have completed their work, others have been hampered by the unusual winter. Areas that are normally easy to visit on snowshoes were difficult this year because of the lack of snow. Others, like the aptly named Mud Pond, won't be pleasant for a visit until some of the seasonal moisture has disappeared.

To make sure the monitoring is consistent from year to year, PVLT provided each monitor with a check-list to use while surveying the property. While some changes might be obvious, other changes are not. The form

allows PVLT to have a long-term record of any subtle and incremental changes that might take place. In addition, feedback from our volunteers will help guide us as we revise the monitoring form this summer.

Volunteers selected properties that fit their sense of adventure and met their time restraints. Depending on the size and remoteness of the property the activity can from 30 minutes to a couple of hours.

With the advent of new initiatives, the number of PVLT properties is growing and additional monitors will be needed. If you are interested in serving as a monitor, watch future newsletters for details.

Undeveloped Passumpsic River Floodplain Protected

PVLT has recently protected 4.1 acres of undeveloped floodplain that includes about 1,200 feet of river frontage along the East Branch of the Passumpsic River just south of Burrington Bridge Road. The easement on the land was completed in January.

"This was an important project because it entailed decommissioning an old logging road that ran directly next to the River," said Tara Hamilton, who coordinated the project. The land also contains significant wetlands.

Stanley and Sylvia Langmaid, and Sylvia's brother, Donald Burrington conveyed the easement to PVLT in exchange for grant funds secured by the Caledonia County Natural Resource Conservation District. The funds will pay to improve and stabilize a logging road on the Langmaid land, away from the River. This new road will allow the Langmaid family to access timber on their land without having to use an old river road.

The easement allows the Langmaids to use a

different, existing logging road on the parcel for logging purposes, but prohibits them from doing any kind of development on the property. There is to be no cutting, harvesting, or removal of any vegetation, timber, or trees within the Easement Area and the natural watercourses or the river channel, wetlands, or other water bodies cannot be manipulated in any way. There is to be no operation of motorized vehicles within the Easement Area.

The easement is a part
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of PVLТ's Passumpsic River Conservation Project, which is designed to protect the river's health by allowing the natural shoreline to regenerate through conservation easements or the purchase of particular

properties. The project is supported by a grant from the Upper Connecticut River Management and Enhancement Fund. The Fund was created as part of the settlement agreement between parties involved in the federal

process to award a new operating license for three hydroelectric dams on the Connecticut River between Littleton, NH and Ryegate, VT.

Help contribute to the future of the Passumpsic Valley

The Passumpsic Valley can be protected best by those who know it best. The land trust is your chance to protect the Passumpsic River watershed. Your membership fees go directly to preservation and recreation projects. Make a commitment to the future of the Passumpsic Valley

Sponsor	\$250	Family	\$25
Associate	\$100	Individual	\$10
Supporting	\$50	Business	\$100

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