

REPORT OF THE PLAINFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION DECEMBER 2010

Plainfield Cider Orchard, Black Hill Road

The following information has been reprinted (in part) from the Upper Valley Land Trust website www.UVLT.org.

The Plainfield Cider Orchard has been protected through a conservation easement purchased from landowners Steve Wood and J. Peter Williamson in a bargain sale, with support from the [New Hampshire Land & Community Heritage Investment Program \(LCHIP\)](#), the Plainfield Conservation Commission and other members of the community. The easement is held by Upper Valley Land Trust. The Plainfield Cider Orchard property contributes 447 acres to an unfragmented 3,440-acre forest block in the northern part of Plainfield. Land already conserved in this block is Morgan Hill, Hawkride Farm and Mud Pond. This property provides habitat and important wildlife corridors for many species, including the moose, black bear, whippoorwill, hognose snake, and silver-haired bat. More than 200 acres of the Plainfield Cider Orchard have been identified by the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan as a forest community type that is of conservation concern in the state.

In addition to protecting important wildlife habitat, the project protects a productive apple orchard that serves the nationally-recognized [Farnum Hill Ciders](#). Steve Wood and Peter Williamson purchased this property in 1998 as partners in the Plainfield Cider Orchards, LLC. Since then, they have planted more than 3,000 apple trees, many of which are rare and heirloom varieties specific to the production of the high-quality traditional ciders made by Farnum Hill Ciders.

While the public benefits from the scenic views, wildlife habitat and a productive apple orchard, this conservation easement also ensures that the property will always be available for public recreational enjoyment. The community has historically enjoyed recreating on the Plainfield Cider Orchard property, especially along the discontinued Black Hill Road. Once a primary route between the Connecticut River and Lebanon to Meriden village, it was thrown up by the town of Plainfield in the mid-1900s. The easement allows for low-impact, non-motorized recreation such as hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing along this historic route, as well as in other parts of the property. Mr. Wood also welcomes hunters, but requests that they receive prior permission, ensuring the safety of owners, workers and visitors, particularly in areas near the orchard and the trails.

Walker Farm Easement, Sanborn Road

The conserved property known as the Walker Farm will have a house built on the 2-acre, reserved house site in the forest just above the open field. The Town of Plainfield monitors this conserved land. The family that now owns the 104 acres continues to welcome the public's use of the trail up to French's Ledges as well as the more general uses allowed by the easement. The Conservation Commission assisted the new owners of the property by requesting an amendment to the Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) easement which allowed the original driveway location to be altered. The new location benefits the owners and minimizes the environmental impact on the conserved field and forest land. After a brief exchange with the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning (another conservation partner), the driveway amendment was adopted.

Southworth Wetland Violations, Penniman Road

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has placed a stop-work order regarding the excavation of the wetlands on Penniman Road. Suggestions by the Conservation Commission were ignored and the NH DES has taken over the monitoring of this property.

Corbin Park Perambulation

Representatives from the Select Boards and Conservation Commissions of Plainfield and Grantham must periodically walk the boundary line between the two towns. During this walk within Corbin Park this year, the town officials validated the existence of the boundaries.

Home Hill Trail, Route 12A

The Conservation Commission has worked with the landowner of this trail and trailhead to create a workable parking site and self-explanatory signage for the public to responsibly enjoy this beautiful trail.

Commission Membership

The Conservation Commission has enjoyed the service and expertise of many of Plainfield's citizens. This year several of the long-term membership chose to retire. Our town appreciates the multi-year service of Muffy Gibson and Jeff Marsh. Jeff, though retired, has graciously agreed to assist the commission when forest and logging issues are discussed. Another long-time commission member has stepped down from the chairmanship of the commission—David Grobe has agreed to remain as a “non-chairman” member of the commission.

New members have joined the commission. Much appreciation for beginning your work in this important area of town government: Anne Donaghy, George Sandmann and David Taylor. Plainfield's beautiful fields and forest benefit from the continuing dedication of Judy Hallam and Judy Ptak. The town benefits from this wonderful team.

Comission Website

With the help of Plainfield resident, Mike Sutherland, the Conservation Commission is in the process of building and expanding its website. The commission's goal is to provide easy access to information about hiking trail access, invasive plant control, regulations and permitting, conservation easement value and process, etc. Take a look at the site on www.plainfieldnh.org

Respectfully Submitted,

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Conservation Commission
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