



# Alford Springs Forest Legacy Tract, Massachusetts

July 2002

Nearly 2 miles of the scenic Taconic ridgeline along the Massachusetts/New York border has been protected from development forever with the help of the USDA Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program. Protection of the 632-acre property in Alford, Massachusetts, preserves the scenic values of the ridgeline and contributes to the protection of wildlife habitat, working forests, and the higher elevations of the Scribner and Alford Brook watersheds.

The Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) purchased the Alford Springs tract from landowner Reed Rubin in June 2002. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement then purchased a conservation easement on the tract on July 25, 2002, with funding from the Forest Legacy Program. "This is a key parcel for Alford and the Taconic Range," said Tad Ames, president of BNRC. "This parcel commands almost 2 miles of the beautiful Taconic ridgeline overlooking the Alford Valley. A string of trophy homes up there would have been an abomination."

The Forest Legacy Program contributed \$945,000 to the easement purchase; the \$5,000 difference represents a bargain sale to the State by the BNRC. "Selling the conservation restriction achieved two things," Ames explained. "It gave a fail-safe guarantee that the land will be protected, and, by helping us recoup most of our investment, it gives us the chance to reinvest these funds in another project."

Ames added, "Tremendous thanks and credit for making this work must go to our partners at the USDA Forest Service and Massachusetts Division of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement, as well as to some exceptionally generous philanthropists."

To meet the Federal cost-share requirements of the Forest Legacy Program, conservation easements on two nearby properties in the Taconic Range Forest Legacy Area were donated to the BNRC. The first consists of 205 acres of managed forest land in Williamstown, adjacent to the Taconic State Forest, valued at \$215,000. The second easement, on a 110-acre property in nearby Richmond located on the popular Taconic Skyline Trail, was donated to the BNRC and the Richmond Land Trust. The easement, valued at \$110,000, provides for public access to the trail for hiking.

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Tad Ames, President  
Berkshire Natural Resources Council

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The protection of the Alford Springs tract adds to conservation efforts in the region both in Massachusetts and neighboring New York State, where the recent protection of the 950-acre Harvey Mountain State Forest just over the state line to the north offered added incentive to protect the Alford Springs property.

The Forest Legacy Program protects important forests from conversion to nonforest uses. These forests provide essential wildlife habitat, protect water quality, offer outstanding recreation opportunities, afford outstanding scenic views, are home to historic sites, and/or provide the opportunity to continue traditional forest uses. A Federal-State partnership allows landowners to keep their land private while ensuring it remains forest forever through the use of conservation easements.



The Alford Springs Forest Legacy property, located on the Taconic Ridge in western Massachusetts, encompasses about 80 percent of the ridgeline pictured. Photo by Tad Ames