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## Meinelt Addition Land Protection Campaign for Connectivity

<b>Application Date</b>	5/31/2024		
<b>Applying Organization</b>	Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests	<b>Grant Type</b>	Member Directed
<b>Requested Amount</b>	\$25,000.00	<b>Project Name</b>	Meinelt Addition Land Protection Campaign for Connectivity
<b>Contact Name</b>	Meredith Reed O'Donnell	<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	NH
<b>Contact Title</b>	Foundation Relations Manager	<b>Project State/Province</b>	NH
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	mreed@forestsociety.org	<b>Project Multiple Locations</b>	
<b>Notes</b>		<b>Status</b>	Submitted
		<b>Created By</b>	Meredith Reed O'Donnell, 5/31/2024, 4:17 PM

### Organization Details

<b>Organization Name</b>	Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests	<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$6,108,603.00
<b>Applying Contact</b>	Meredith Reed O'Donnell	<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	501c3 Organization
<b>Staff Size</b>	44	<b>Main Phone</b>	603-224-9945
<b>Total Membership</b>	10,000	<b>Website Address</b>	<a href="https://www.forestsociety.org/">https://www.forestsociety.org/</a>
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	No	<b>Address</b>	54 Portsmouth Street Concord, New Hampshire 03301 United States
<b>C-Suite Staff</b>			

### Proposal Questions

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| <p><b>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</b></p> <p>The Society for the Protection of NH Forests (Forest Society) is a nationally accredited nonprofit land conservation organization, founded in 1901 to protect NH's most important landscapes and promote the careful use of its renewable natural resources. Today, with 10,000 member households, we and care for more than 195 properties (63,207 acres) and has interests and monitoring</p> | <p><b>2. Final Success</b></p> <p>The successful conservation of the 375-acre Meinelt Addition in Alton, NH, will help protect water quality, wildlife habitat and migration routes, mitigate climate change, support local and statewide economies, and ensure free public access to an immediate recreational landscape totaling nearly 4,500 acres of contiguous or near-contiguous conservation land and hundreds of miles</p> |
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responsibilities on more than 800 conservation easements (133,340 acres). Forest Society programs include land protection, forestry, education/ outreach, stewardship, and policy. We have helped protect nearly one million acres, including Franconia Notch, Mount Monadnock, Mount Sunapee, and Crawford Notch; led the campaign for Current Use assessment, a tax incentive that has kept nearly half of NH's forests and farms open for productive conservation purposes; and spearheaded legislation that created the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, which has protected more than 200,000 acres.

of hiking trails, connecting the Belknap Mountains to the 800,000-acre White Mountain National Forest.

### 3. Location Details

Protecting landscape-scale tracts in the Northeast often requires piecing together smaller parcels over time. The 375-acre Meinelt Addition is located on the southern border of the Forest Society's 680-acre Evelyn H. and Albert D. Morse, Sr. Preserve. Once conserved, Meinelt will expand Morse to 1,065 acres, enlarging the connected conservation land to 1,630 acres that also includes the Alton Town Forest, Adison Cate Preserve, and Alton Bay State Forest. It is imperative the Forest Society protect this property now: the landowner does not have any heirs, and sale on the open market could lead to new ownership that denies public access and compromises the natural attributes so important to climate resiliency and biodiversity. With area housing stock low, such an outcome is not unrealistic.

Based on The Nature Conservancy's Resilient Land Mapping Tool, Meinelt is considered a "resilient landscape" for resiliency and local connectedness and landscape diversity, due to its proximity to conservation land and variety of land types and elevations (forest, talus slopes/cliff, open water, shrub/forested wetland, brook). The Lakes Region Conservation Plan ranks Meinelt as a "high priority" focus area for land protection, especially as relates to surface and drinking water resources for Alton. Nine acres of an eleven-acre beaver pond drain into Frohock Brook, which originates on Meinelt and flows into Sunset Lake. A portion of Meinelt is located within the Winnepesaukee watershed, but is mostly situated within the Merrimack River watershed, one of the most threatened watersheds in the nation for potential conversion of forested landscapes into impermeable surfaces. A protected, forested Meinelt will continue its vital work of protecting the quality of the water flowing into these watersheds.

Meinelt is an active wildlife corridor from the Belknap Range of Pine Mtn. to

### 4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

The Forest Society has long been active in land protection efforts in NH's Lakes Region, which encompasses roughly 41 towns and 224 lakes and ponds, including Lake Winnepesaukee, Squam Lake, and Newfound Lake. Altogether, this region holds more than 50 percent of all surface water in the state, hundreds of miles of trails, and some of the most popular hiking destinations in New England. To date, the Forest Society has protected more than 38,000 acres in the Lakes through fee ownership, restricted deed, or conservation easement.

Over the years, the Forest Society has partnered with other agencies and conservation organizations in the region to complete numerous purchases of fee and conservation easement interests. Mt. Major (Alton) serves as one such example. In 2014, the Forest Society, Lakes Region Conservation Trust, and Belknap Range Conservation Coalition successfully worked together to protect four key parcels on and surrounding the mountain, for a total of 980 acres. The Forest Society manages 200 of these acres, and is making visitor and trail improvements, including trail restoration designed to prevent runoff that would impact nearby Lake Winnepesaukee.

Today, our land protection efforts in this region are guided by the Lakes Region Conservation Plan (LRCP), a collaboration between the Forest Society, Lakes Region Conservation Trust, Squam Lakes Conservation Society, Newfound Lake Region Association, and NH Fish and Game. First published in 2011, the LRCP was updated in 2017 to reflect new climate science data provided by The Nature Conservancy, in addition to current NH Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan rankings and NH Department of Environmental Services drinking water protection areas. Individual ranking of 25 natural resource data layers were utilized to develop co-occurrence mapping that identifies where resources of

Rocky Mtn. and includes significant habitat types such as the beaver pond, a heron rookery, and southwesterly facing cliff and rock ledges above talus slope, a preferred denning site for porcupine and bobcat. Natural community types characterized by the NH Heritage Bureau as S-3, vulnerable statewide, include red oak-pine rocky ridge along the ridgeline and dry Appalachian oak forest on terraces to the southwest. According to the 2020 NH Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan, 122 acres is considered "Best Habitat in State," 55 acres "Best Habitat in Bioregion," and the remaining "Supporting Landscape."

conservation concern overlap; in turn, this mapping is used to prioritize land protection projects.

Goal: the goal of the Meinelt Addition land protection project is to further expand climate resilient landscapes that support biodiversity, water resources, and access to outdoor recreation in a changing climate, in the Lakes Region of NH.

Objective: we will achieve this goal by successfully purchasing the 375-acre Meinelt Addition in Alton, NH.

Activities and Strategy: the Meinelt Addition project timeline includes completing these activities:

- secure preliminary appraisal (winter 2024)
- conduct board of trustees vote to purchase the property (spring 2024)
- conduct preliminary title research (spring 2025)
- sign purchase and sales agreement (late spring/summer 2024)
- conduct environmental review (summer 2025)
- secure funds, or commitment of funds, sufficient to cover the purchase price of all project costs (fall 2025): fundraising will include grant proposals to state and private foundations; letter to local tax payers; and appeal in our quarterly magazine, FOREST NOTES, and our website, [www.forestsociety.com](http://www.forestsociety.com)
- close on the Meinelt Addition (fall 2025)

Recreation and Economy: According to Dean Runyon Associates ([travelstats.com](http://travelstats.com)), in 2023, an estimated \$766.8 million was spent in the Lakes Region across retail sales; food service; local transportation and gas; arts, entertainment, and recreation; accommodations; and food stores, with the summer season yielding the highest dollar amounts. Much of this spending is attributable to outdoor recreation, notably water-related activities and hiking. Less than two hours from Manchester, Nashua, and Boston, each year the Lakes Region attracts millions of day trippers, summer-camp attendees, and second-home, seasonal residents. And while Lake Winnepesaukee—worth \$17 billion for the taxes and tourism-related revenue it generates, according to a 2021 study published by the Policy Shop at Dartmouth College—is the big draw, places like Mt. Major attract upwards of 80,000 visitors annually from all over the world, with thousands more exploring connected forests and peaks in the Belknap Range and up through the White Mountain National Forest. At least forty trails in the Belknap Range alone are open to the public. Many of these trails cross private property, however,

and access is at the discretion of the landowner. By protecting Meinelt, the Forest Society will guarantee public access, in perpetuity, to a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

Meinelt, specifically, is located adjacent to a snowmobile trail on the western side of the property. Recreationists typically enter the property by foot via an established forestry access point, utilizing the logging road and forest for hunting, snowshoeing, and other activities. Once conserved, this parcel will become part of a connected landscape of 1,630 acres. Only one parcel separates Meinelt from nearly 1,000 acres of conservation land on and surrounding Mt. Major to the east; conservation land to the west includes the 3,044-acre Hidden Valley conservation easement in Gilmanton.

#### 5. Key Decision Makers

Based on the Forest Society's work in the region, and in particular on the protection of the Morse Preserve (2008), Freese Addition to the Morse Preserve (2022), and Addison Cate Preserve (2022), the current owner of the Meinelt parcel reached out to the Forest Society this year to pursue a conservation outcome for the property. The Forest Society is fortunate to be working in partnership the Alton Conservation Commission, Belknap Range Conservation Coalition, Alton selectboard, and Alton Water Works, which all support the conservation of the Meinelt Addition. Twenty-three percent of this property falls within a wellhead protection area for Alton Water Works and serves approximately 700 households with drinking water and supplies more than fifty hydrants. According to the Alton Master Plan (2022), the town recognizes that "clean water, recreation opportunities, and scenic resources are the foundation of the town's economic base."

#### 6. Elevate Voices

This particular project does not directly elevate the voices of historically underrepresented groups or engage grassroots citizen action; however, a successful outcome will benefit millions of year-round and seasonal residents and vacationers, day-trippers, and summer campers, who travel from towns and cities in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and beyond to take advantage of access to nature-based opportunities in the Lakes Region. Indeed, electronic trailside contributions made by visitors to stewardship projects at Mt. Major, a short distance from Meinelt, indicate a diverse constituency, including travelers from more urban and suburban centers south of the Lakes. Additionally, Meinelt contributes to the quality of water and general health within the Merrimack and Winnepesaukee watersheds by acting as a natural filter for the water and air that sustain millions of people.

Over the course of the Forest Society's 123-year history, the organization has been involved in many grassroots efforts. In fact, we were founded in 1901 by a handful of concerned citizens critical of clear-cutting in the White Mountains and resulting in fires and pollution. Eventually, lobbying efforts led to the Weeks Act legislation (1911), establishing the 800,000-acre White Mountain National Forest and the national forest system in the East. More recently, the Forest Society and partners defeated Northern Pass after a decade-long battle to block the construction of 1,500 high-voltage transmission line towers along a 192-mile route from Quebec to Massachusetts, crossing through the White Mountain National Forest, Forest Society conservation properties, and additional conservation lands. And in 2022, the Forest Society

partnered with the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire to commemorate James Due, a once enslaved African who gained his freedom and lived with his family on what is today a 366-acre Forest Society conservation property in Hancock, NH.

**7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

Roughly 200,000 acres are conserved in the Lakes Region. By working to conserve the Meinelt Addition, the Forest Society hopes to direct more public attention to the importance of conserving, and connecting, land that contributes to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and water quality while also supporting the economy and protecting access to outdoor recreation opportunities in the greater Lakes Region. A successful outcome to this project will expand the boundaries of existing conservation land that supports important wildlife habitat and natural resources by 375 acres and encourage other nearby landowners to consider a conservation outcome for their property.

**8. Evaluate Your Progress**

The Forest Society will evaluate our progress on this project by completing all necessary due diligence tasks and raising the funds needed to purchase the 375-acre Meinelt Addition. We will evaluate the success of this project by expanding the Morse Preserve by 375 acres. By filling in another strategic piece of the land conservation puzzle directly connected to the existing Morse property, the Forest Society is laying the groundwork for three potential land protection projects, totaling 1,666 acres, directly to the south of Meinelt that would further expand the growing corridor of connected, conserved land.

**9. TCA Funding Plan**

The Forest Society will direct funding from The Conservation Alliance toward the purchase price of the Meinelt Addition.

**10. JEDI Efforts and Impact**

Currently, key staff members are participating in two collaboratives, the Land Trust Alliance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Peer Program for Land Trusts in Northern New England and First Light, a Maine-based lands collective working with the Wabanaki. Each program encourages organizations to take a critical look at their culture, operations, and services; how current ways of doing business impact staff, board members, volunteers, and the greater community; and consider changes to ensure equity across all constituency groups. In recent years, staff has participated in DEIJ training with Jermaine Moore of The Mars Hill Group; collaborated with the NH Black Heritage Trail; developed new guidance signs with QR language translation code; worked with Earl Hunter of Black Folks Camp Too (Brevard, NC); recruited trail stewardship leaders who identify with underrepresented communities to lead affinity groups; and continued our work with a local ESL teacher and her students.

**11. Confidential Items**

n/a

**Other Relevant Application Details**

Please note: the Forest Society's forester's report estimates the Meinelt Addition at 375 acres. Previous, non-Forest Society reports, indicate +/- 385 acres. A final acreage will be determined with the final survey. For this proposal, we list the property at 375 acres.