BETHEL VOTERS APPROVE TOWN'S PURCHASE OF LAND FOR CONSERVATION

Strategic, Bargain Buy Will Create Landscape Connectivity

BETHEL, CONNECTICUT (Jan 17) – Tuesday night, Bethel citizens voted overwhelmingly (approximately 150-1) in favor of the town's plan to purchase of 72 acres of land for conservation. The land is a key piece in a larger vision of conservation in Fairfield County, and the town will purchase it at a bargain price: $13,200 per acre, when the town has recently paid $21,800 and $34000 per acre for other properties. The Franc family, the current landowners, offered the sale to ensure the land will be conserved.

The Franc property adjoins the 76 acre Bruno Preserve owned by the Newtown Forest Association and several smaller parcels owned by the Bethel Land Trust. The purchase of the property will result in 168 acres of contiguous open space.

Purchases like this one create greater connectivity across town boundaries. Strategic conservation is an essential component of the Wildlands and Woodlands vision to conserve 70% of New England in forest by 2060. The Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership sent a letter to the town of Bethel in support of the project because it represented an opportunity to increase cross boundary connections between Newtown and Bethel.

For more information on the town meeting, please read The Connecticut Post coverage of the story.

For more information on the value the Franc property will add to Bethel and its neighbors, please read John O'Neil's letter to the editor at BethelPatch.com.

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Highstead *is a nonprofit organization that works to conserve the forested landscape of New England through science, sound stewardship, and collaboration with regional partners. Since its formation in 1982 by Mr. and Mrs. James Dudley, Highstead has developed as a sanctuary for the study and appreciation of woodland plants and habitats. In 2005, the Highstead Board made a decision to build on Highstead's success by initiating a new effort to engage in conservation of woodlands and natural landscapes at local, regional and national scales through a leadership role in the Wildlands and Woodlands Initiative. Highstead is also a member of the* ***Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership (FCRCP)****, which supported and encouraged Bethel's purchase of the Franc property.*