

For Immediate Release

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UNIVERSAL ACCESS TRAIL IN ACTON NEARS COMPLETION
Three Rivers Land Trust Raising Final Funds for Route to the Summit of Goat Hill

ACTON - Three Rivers Land Trust and the Town of Acton are collaborating to bring an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) trail to the top of Goat Hill in Acton. The trail has been open to foot traffic for the past year, but now grant programs and generous individual donors are helping to put the universal access goal within sight.

Local businesses, individual donors, and major grant funders are coming together to support this trail project. Once complete, the trail will enable many people with mobility issues to access the summit of Goat Hill, which features towering pines, a picnic area, and 360-degree views of nearby lakes and Mt. Washington. While the Covid-19 pandemic presents difficulties, Three Rivers Land Trust is continuing to pursue this significant and unique project that will help people of all abilities get outdoors to exercise and experience nature.

Why is an ADA trail important? One Acton resident who uses a wheelchair has this to say:

“To live a full life when faced with significant, physical limitations you must focus on what abilities you have, not what is lost. Being able to add to the “Can Do” list empowers someone like me to get up and fight another day. For Three Rivers Land Trust to recognize the missed opportunities to enjoy the outdoors for those of us who are disabled, is commendable. The willingness to take on the construction of an ADA accessible trail is life-changing.”

Construction of the original Goat Hill Trail began in 2018. A public parking area just north of Romac Orchards on H Road allowed public access in 2019. The initial trail route was cleared mainly by volunteers, including students from the MapleStone School in Acton, and a crew from the Maine Conservation Corps. The final phase of trail construction at Goat Hill involves transforming the existing trail into an ADA-compliant route by creating gentle slopes and resting areas, and adding a firm stone-dust surface that will support wheelchair access. This part of the project will be completed by the Maine-based trail construction company Kennebec Trails.

At the summit, Three Rivers plans to install accessible picnic tables and pathways to major viewpoints. The work is scheduled to begin in August 2020, and the completed ADA-route may be available as early as September. If you or someone you know would like to get involved, or be among the first to test out the new trail route, please contact Executive Director Cheri Brunault at cheri@3rlt.org or (207) 358-9695.

Three Rivers Land Trust continues to fundraise the remaining \$17,000 needed to complete the project. A generous donor has offered a matching challenge of \$2,000, and donations can be made through the website or by sending a check.

Three Rivers would like to thank the state programs and private foundations that have already awarded funds to the project, including a \$20,800 Land and Water Conservation Fund matching grant to the Town of Acton (the land trust is raising the match), a \$13,000 Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, \$10,000 from the Dana and Christopher Reeve Foundation, a \$5,000 award from the Onion Foundation, and \$3,000 from the Ed Meadows Conservation Fund. The community support for this project has also been very strong – Town of Acton residents and many private donors contributed to the original purchase and conservation of Goat Hill, and many area residents have donated toward the trail's construction. Three Rivers Land Trust sincerely thanks the many individual donors that have contributed, and those that are now stepping up to help raise the final funds.

To donate, get involved, or stay informed about the project, please visit the land trust's Facebook page, or access their website at www.3rlt.org.

The Three Rivers Land Trust is a membership-supported organization dedicated to building stronger, healthier communities through the protection of wild and working landscapes in Acton, Alfred, Lebanon, Shapleigh and Sanford/Springvale. Named for the Little Ossipee, Salmon Falls, and Mousam Rivers, Three Rivers Land Trust holds conservation easements to protect farms, forests, and wetlands, and maintains preserves which provide recreation and hunting access.

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Attached Photos:

1. Three Rivers board member George Main and son at the summit of Goat Hill
2. Goat Hill Trail under early construction in 2019
3. Board member Carl Davis and Executive Director Cheri Brunault assessing the grade at Goat Hill Trail in 2019.

Photo Credit: Three Rivers Land Trust