Robert Frost Trailhead Acquisition

Stella and Carroll Strysko Conservation Area

The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust presents, for acquisition by the Town of Leverett, a 9-acre parcel of land owned by Stella Strysko for the assessed value of $4,900 plus any fees and taxes, for a total not to exceed $5,500. Such acquisition will protect the natural habitat and the Robert Frost Trail where it crosses Route 63 near Cranberry Pond. This upland forested parcel is located off Route 63 at the Leverett-Sunderland Town Line between Jackson Hill Road and North Leverett Road. (Please see map on reverse).

As a condition of acquisition, the land will be named the Stella and Carroll Strysko Conservation Area.

Purchase of this land will:

- Protect trailhead access and a portion of the Robert Frost Trail – part of the Amherst Literary Trail network.
- Conserve land for potential town recreation use; i.e. hiking, nature study.
- Help protect more of the Cranberry Pond and Mount Toby area from industrial or residential development, and provide habitat and recreation connectivity between Mt. Toby and Mass Wildlife land on Stoddard Hill.
- Extend open space wildlife habitat from Mass Wildlife owned lands (Stoddard Hill) for wild turkey, deer, and other species.

Key Land Features: The parcel falls along the western slope of Stoddard Hill and comprises a range of habitats and forest cover types. There is evidence of woodpeckers, deer, coyote, and songbirds, and the area has potential to host other species, such as black bear. Also, seasonal streams and vernal pools imply amphibian presence. The forest cover contains areas of understory mountain laurel, stands of oak and maple and patches of hemlock.

The Robert Frost Trail: The popular Robert Frost Trail stretches 40 miles from the Holyoke Range in the South to the Wendell State Forest in the north. A section of the trail crosses Route 63 from Cranberry Pond and enters this parcel and snakes up through this and a neighboring parcel toward Stoddard Hill.

Hikers will be able to proceed north from Amethyst Brook to the summits of Mt. Orient and Mt. Boreas, and head through the Eastman Brook Conservation Area, eventually to climb Mt. Toby before descending to Reservation Road in Sunderland where it reconnects to the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail.
Robert Frost Trailhead Acquisition

**Wildlife Habitat Supported:** This parcel will become part of a protected region that will sustain a wide range of animal habitat such as Marbled Salamander, Wood Turtle, Timber Rattlesnake, Wild Turkey, Great Horned Owl, Red bat, Gray Fox, Black Bear, Pileated Woodpecker, Fisher, Bobcat, White-tailed Deer, and Moose.

**Land Features:** The land sits on a craggy slope covered with a mix of red oak, black oak, sugar maple, red maple, and some patches of hemlock. The understory is made up mostly of maple and oak saplings, with some eastern white pine, blueberry and mountain laurel. There are seasonal streams fed by groundwater that also supports vernal pools and a brook that runs from a spring on Stoddard Hill.

**Recreational Potential:** The land offers potential views of the valley and Holyoke Range and is nestled among other undeveloped parcels of unknown ownership. The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust proposes acquisition of this land as a first step toward offering greater protection for the enjoyment of town residents and visitors.

---

Topographical Map of the Strysko property and surrounding area.

---

Prepared by: Govan Baird    Daniel Comerford    David Rines    Ryan Robitaille    Patrick Tracey

College of Natural Resources and the Environment
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, April 2006: