



PRESS RELEASE
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Contact:

Terry Turner, The Trust for Public Land, 207-772-7424 ext. 4, 207-210-1653 (c),

Terry.Turner@tpl.org

Janice Parente, The Surfrider Foundation, nje@surfrider.org

Tim Glidden, Land for Maine's Future, tim.glidden@maine.gov

Permanent Public Access to Higgins Beach Secured

Separate property conserved for future greenway along the Nonesuch River

SCARBOROUGH, MAINE, April 1, 2010: The only public parking lot for popular Higgins Beach in Scarborough has been permanently protected, the Town and The Trust for Public Land announced today. Higgins Beach is popular with surfers, striper fishers, and beachgoers.

The owners of the 1.55-acre property wanted to protect it to support access to the beach, and Town of Scarborough residents agreed, voting in November 2009 to approve a \$1 million bond toward the purchase of the parking lot and a separate 10.3-acre property along the Nonesuch River. Surfrider Foundation, an early advocate for maintaining the parking lot, asked the Maine office of The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national conservation organization, to help secure the properties. Having also attracted the support of the Land for Maine's Future Program, TPL negotiated agreements with the landowners, purchased the properties, and has conveyed both to the Town of Scarborough.

“Maine has 3,500 miles of coastline but little access, so every chance to connect to Maine’s shores is worth the effort. Higgins Beach is a remarkable place to experience, and Scarborough residents and the Land for Maine’s Future Program stepped up to keep access a priority,” said Wolfe Tone, TPL’s Maine state director.

“The ability to access Higgins Beach has always been limited by the lack of parking for the public. The Town of Scarborough is now able to guarantee access for future generations with the purchase of the Ocean Avenue property from the heirs of James and Pauline Vasile,” said Thomas Hall, Manager, Town of Scarborough.

“My father, James Vasile, was a first generation immigrant from Sicily who grew up poor in Portland. My dad worked hard his whole life selling pizzas and buckets of spaghetti to earn enough money to buy some land at Higgins Beach. He believed that everyone should have the ability to enjoy the ocean and he hoped that someday the lots he and his family acquired would go that purpose. That dream is now realized,” said Mike Vasile, Scarborough, Maine.

“Today marks an incredible milestone for beach access preservation in the state of Maine. Town ownership of the Higgins Beach parking lot assures all beach users easy and friendly access to this very precious beach forever,” said Janice Parente, Surfrider Foundation. “We commend the hard work of all of our partners to make this happen including The Trust for Public Land, the Land for Maine’s Future, and the Town of Scarborough. We also commend the commitment of the Vasile family, the previous owner, in honoring their father and mother by selling to the Town and not to a developer whereby public access to this precious beach would have been severely impacted.”

Although the combined value of the two properties was appraised at \$1.44 million, the Vasile family agreed to donate \$170,000 to the aggregate purchase price. The funding for the \$1.27 million price included \$632,145 from the Land for Maine’s Future program, \$632,145 from the voter-approved Town of Scarborough bond, and \$7,270 from private fundraising conducted by TPL and Surfrider Foundation.

“This purchase is possible due to a collaborative effort, involving the leveraging of local, state, non-profit and private funding sources. In particular, because of the support of the voters of the Town, the Vasile Heirs, The Trust for Public Land, the Land for Maine’s Future Program, and the Surfrider Foundation, the public will have a town owned and managed parking resource to ensure the enjoyment of the treasure that is Higgins Beach,” added Hall.

“As it is home to one of the most alluring surf breaks in New England, surfers both locally and from away can continue to park here and feel like they are part of a community that values their lifestyle. In this time of economic difficulties the Town of Scarborough has demonstrated a commitment to preserving access to one of our most treasured resources and we are extremely appreciative,” added Parente. “The associated fundraising appeal was an overwhelming success. We thank the over 200 donors for their unyielding vision of this lot being successfully preserved and for going above and beyond to help make this purchase a reality.”

Higgins Beach is a highly regarded striper fishing location. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has designated the Spurwink River as an important fishery and wetland habitat. NCFishandGame.com describes the Striper fishing in the Spurwink as “legendary.” *Striper Hot Spots, 2nd Edition* rates Higgins Beach and the mouth of the Spurwink among the top 100 surfcasting locations between Machias and Cape May, N.J.

“A public parking lot at Higgins Beach is as important as the water to the fisherman. Parking at Higgins Beach has always been a problem and without it there is no access to fishing at Higgins and the mouth of the Spurwink River,” said Dana Eastman, The Tackle Shop in Portland, Maine.

The second transaction completed today adds 10.3 acres of land along Mussey Road to a proposed greenway along the Nonesuch River. The land offers options for linking through to an

existing Scarborough trail network. The Mussey Road property buffers critical wildlife habitat and helps secure the greater Scarborough Marsh Focus Area. Undeveloped land in the midst of the Maine Mall area is difficult to find and protect, because of their value for development.

“Along with the purchase of the Higgins Beach property, the Town of Scarborough will acquire approximately 10 acres along the Nonesuch River. The Mussey Road purchase will help protect the Nonesuch watershed, which is an area of intense commercial development,” added Hall.

The Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. TPL has conserved nearly 3 million acres of land, and in Maine, TPL has protected more than 115,000 acres with projects ranging from city parks and pathways to coastal habitat and working farms and forests. TPL depends on the support of individuals, corporations, and foundations. Visit TPL online: tpl.org/maine.

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit, grassroots environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education. Our local chapter, Surfrider Northern New England, is made up of 140 active members dispersed throughout the state of Maine. Current local campaigns are focused on water quality, beach access, and preservation. Please join us and become a steward of our beloved coastline. surfrider.org/nne

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