



## Why Special Places Matter

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The Francestown Land Trust (FLT) and Francestown Conservation Commission (FCC) are collaborating on another year of monthly pieces in *The Francestown News*. Last year we celebrated our flora and fauna and many special places in town. We were gratified by all the positive feedback we received on this “Celebrating Special Places” series. In 2024, we are changing our focus a little by looking at why protecting these special places matters so much. This month the first piece in our new series is about our rivers and streams.

The transformative effects of nature can be powerful. Protecting our natural areas can contribute to helping children, as well as adults, spend more time outdoors. We are rich in natural resources and the opportunities to enjoy them: a quiet walk on a forest trail or more strenuous mountain biking or hiking, fishing or swimming in a local pond or stream, bird watching, boating, hunting, or simply taking a moment to sit and listen. Protecting our land, water, and wildlife also protects our own physical and mental health. It is fair to say that if we take care of the trees, water, and our other natural resources, they will take care of us.

Francestown has deep agricultural roots. Where sheep and dairy cattle once grazed, today one sees beef cattle and other livestock, small orchards, and flourishing vegetable gardens, often with arresting mountain views as the backdrop. These farmlands protect our potential to grow local food, reduce our carbon footprint, and support the local economy.

Fields, forests and water are essential for a wide variety of flora and fauna. Land that is protected will help to ensure that the wildlife in Francestown will have the diverse habitat type and unfragmented corridors needed to continue to flourish. The good news is that we are identifying and protecting these important habitats, and so far we have avoided too much land fragmentation.

The land in our town is characterized by rolling hills and river valleys and a mixture of forests and fields. Our four great ponds and our rivers, streams, and wetlands are another integral part of our landscape. When we think about the many benefits our natural resources provide, clean water is at or near the top the list. We want to help ensure a clean water supply for generations to come. Each of us can have a powerful influence on water quality protection and the more we know the better.

For a deeper dive, check out the town’s Natural Resources Inventory which is on the FCC’s section of the town’s website, and the Water Resources chapter of Francestown’s Master Plan, which is on the Planning Board section. The town’s website address is [www.francestownnh.org](http://www.francestownnh.org). FLT’s website is another treasure trove of good information.

Conserving and enjoying our special places is part of a long-term plan to protect our community’s rural character and quality of life. Please join FLT and FCC this year in exploring “Why Special Places Matter.”