Because of their natural resource values, the Sweet Trail twists and turns through lands protected, owned and managed by the town of Durham, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG), the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) and private landowners. The lands were protected by the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership (GBRPP), with TNC serving as the lead acquisition agent. Funding for land conservation was provided by NOAA, the North Atlantic Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), municipalities and private sources. Since 1994, the Partnership has protected more than 5,000 acres of ecologically significant habitat around Great Bay.

Designed by the members of the GBRPP, the Sweet Trail showcases some of the natural communities and diverse habitats protected through this effort. Prior to building the trail, the Partnership completed a study to determine the best location for the trail to ensure visitors have a minimal impact on the protected natural resources.

A Sweet Trail to a Great Bay...

Four miles long from Longmarsh Road in Durham to the Great Bay Estuary in Newmarket, the Sweet Trail leads hikers by a remarkable array of upland forests, freshwater wetlands and tidal salt marsh. In 1973, shipping and oil magnate Aristotle Onassis planned to build the world’s largest oil refinery on these lands here on Durham Point, with a pipeline stretching all the way out to the Isles of Shoals. Had those plans materialized, they would have forever changed the nature of Great Bay and New Hampshire’s coast. In 1974, however, the plans were defeated by well-organized local residents who understood these lands’ value for nature, recreation, and beauty.

A Conservation Partnership

Widely recognized as an estuarine ecosystem of local, regional, and national significance, New Hampshire’s Great Bay has been a focus of planning and management since the 1940s. Formed by the outflow of five rivers, the Great Bay Estuary and its watershed encompass 9 percent of the state’s land area. Sitting at the confluence of approximately 930 square miles of major watersheds in Maine and New Hampshire, it brings a tidal flush of salt water from the Atlantic Ocean, located nearly five miles east. The inland location of Great Bay makes it unique in ecosystem and wildlife, providing rich aquatic habitat that supports more than 150 rare plant and animal species, and 55 exemplary natural communities.

Sweet Inspiration

This trail is named in appreciation of Cyrus and Barbara Sweet for the inspiration to connect people and nature, the leadership to join the land to the sea, the support to link conservation lands together with this trail; and the vision of hope for the next generation that they too may enjoy the beauty of Great Bay.

Finding Your Way

Because the Sweet Trail crosses property of varying ownership, you will encounter different trail markers along the way. The Sweet Trail is marked with white tin squares containing a blue arrow and the logo of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. Major trail junctions are marked with signs indicating distance and direction.

DIRECTIONS

From downtown Durham, take route 108 south for approximately 1.5 miles. Turn left onto Longmarsh Road towards the Town of Durham’s Longmarsh Preserve. The trailhead is located 2 miles down the road with parking on the left side just before the gate. Parking for the “easy” portion of the trail is located approximately 2 miles down Dame Road (off route 108 in Durham) on the right at the NH Fish & Game’s Great Bay Wildlife Management Area: Crommet Creek. Parking at the end of the trail is located at The Nature Conservancy’s Lubberland Creek Preserve in Newmarket. From Durham, travel route 108 south for 3.7 miles and turn left onto Bay Road. The parking lot is located 1.6 miles on the left, just past the Conservancy’s Great Bay Office.

Enjoy The Sweet Trail Responsibly

Please, for the protection of this area and its inhabitants and for everyone’s enjoyment:

- Pedestrian use only.
- No motorized vehicles including ATV’s and dirt bikes.
- Keep all dogs on a leash: respect wildlife and others using the trails.
- No camping or campfires.
- Carry in/carry out trash (leave trail cleaner than found).
- No removal or destruction of plants, wildlife, minerals or cultural items.
- Remain on trail to minimize ecological impacts.
- Respect private property ownership rights of lands adjacent to the trail.

With Gratitude...

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership is deeply grateful to the many supporters and volunteers who have generously contributed to the protection of lands around Great Bay and the creation of the trail system. Funding for the trail and brochure was provided by the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, Trails Bureau, the Robin Colson Memorial Foundation, and the Baldwin Foundation.

For more information on compatible human use on these protected lands, including hunting and fishing rules, please visit the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership at www.greatbaypartnership.org or contact The Nature Conservancy’s Great Bay Office at 603.659.2678, x 12.

The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership

Partners in Protecting New Hampshire’s Great Bay Habitats:

- Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU)
- Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR)
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- New Hampshire Audubon (NHA)
- New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG)
- Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF)
- Southeast Land Trust (SELT)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- The Trust for Public Land (TPL)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (UFWNS)
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Southeast Land Trust
- The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Southeast Land Trust
- The Trust for Public Land
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For a complete list of Principal, Associate & Community Partners, visit website.

Brochure produced by The Nature Conservancy on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.
The Sweet Trail

A Four Mile Trail From Longmarsh Road to Great Bay

Note: this is NOT a loop trail.

Legend

Parking

Longmarsh Preserve

Parking Area of Durham

Great Bay WMA at
Crommet Creek Parking, N.H.

Easy" Portion of

Road

Lamprey

Lubberland Creek

Peeking through the boughs of a

pine tree, look for a harrier or a hen harrier hovering in

the sky. These birds of prey hunt for

small rodents and voles in the

regional habitats of the Sweet Trail.

Eastern Kingbird

Belted Kingfisher

Great Blue Heron

Canada Goose

Canada Goose

Common Merganser

Clay-colored Sparrow

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Eastern Bluebird

Note: the beaver activity in the area including the
dam across the stream, large beaver lodge, felled
trees, and trees with chewed bases. Further
along the trail, look for an active beaver slide
across the trail used by the beavers to quickly
travel between the two ponds. Visitors often
see belted kingfishers, Eastern kingbirds, wood
duck, black duck, ring-necked ducks, com-
mons, hooded mergansers, mallards, and Canada
goose. Fall foliage along the trail is spectacular
and is a popular destination for the many
colors reflected in the open water of the
beaver ponds. This bridge is an important private
property protected with a conservation easement held
by the N.H. Fish and Game Department. Please be
respectful of the landowner and stay on the trail
throughout this section.

Along The Trail...

From the chirping sounds of spring peepers to the fall flowering

witch-hazel, the Sweet Trail offers interesting sights and sounds that
can be enjoyed in any season. The many habitats occurring in the
Crommet Creek Watershed offer excellent opportunities for wildlife
viewing. Bring your binoculars and stop to enjoy the scenery at
these suggested Wildlife Viewpoints.

Standing in the shade of towering white
trees, oaks, and hemlock trees, look

across Toby Marsh, a large pond

maintained by beavers at the headwaters of Crommet Creek.

Note the giant beaver lodge on the opposite

pond shore. This is land is owned and managed

by the Town of Durham as conservation land.

The pond is carpeted by yellow and white water

lilies in the summer. Scanning with binocu-

lars from this point may reveal mallard ducks,

wood ducks, painted turtles, or otters playing

in the water. In spring and summer, the white

pine skeletons protruding from this long

narrow flooded area are filled with the noisy activity

of nesting great blue herons and occasionally

an osprey pair. Watch for osprey flying overhead

with a fish in its talons.

Vernal pools are seasonal pools that fill

with snow melt and rain in spring and
completely dry up throughout the hot summer
months. Vernal pools are essential habitat for

the completion of the life cycle of many spe-
cies of insects, reptiles, and amphibians found

in our forests. Many species have evolved to take

advantage of these fish-free seasonal pools for

matting and breeding. Several species such as

wood frogs, spotted salamanders, and fairy

shrimp are completely dependent on vernal

pools to complete their life cycles. The first

heavy rain in the spring triggers these species to

migrate to these pools to mate, and their eggs

race to develop before the pool dries in the fall.

In spring, look for the opaque greenish-white

gelatinous egg masses of the spotted salaman-
ders or the communal fist-sized clusters of wood
frog egg masses attached to vegetation in sunny

areas of the pond.

Peeking through the boughs of a

hemlock tree, watch for turtles sunning

themselves on floating logs and on the banks of

this beaver maintained pond. Many species

turtles live in the Crommet Creek watershed.

Several, including the spotted turtle, are listed as

care by the N.H. Fish and Game Department.

Blanding’s Turtles are listed as Endangered in

N.H. Female Blanding’s turtles travel consider-
able distances between sandy nesting sites and

open water where they feed. Sadly, road

crossing dangers have increased their mortality,

along with development and fragmentation of

their habitat. Blanding’s Turtles can be identified

by their helmet shaped and bright yellow

throat.

This bridge crosses Lubberland Creek,

the same creek that flows through the

large field into Great Bay visible at the

south end of the Sweet Trail. From this bridge

you can see two large beaver-impounded water

bodies ringed with wetland grasses and sedges.

This area is historically significant as a

professional beaver pond managed by

"the beaver population is maintained at a level

to provide food for animals including

ducks, black ducks, ring-necked ducks, com-

ders, hooded mergansers, mallards, and Canada
goose. Fall foliage along the trail is spectacular

and is a popular destination for the many
colors reflected in the open water of the

beaver ponds. This bridge is an important private

property protected with a conservation easement held

by the N.H. Fish and Game Department. Please be

respectful of the landowner and stay on the trail

throughout this section.

Listen for the loud, throaty croaking

of the Great Blue Heron as you approach

this wetland viewpoint. Somewhat camouflaged

in the tops of the large, dead, white pine

snags in the beaver pond are a dozen Great Blue Heron

nests. Check each nest carefully, as the heron

nests in this rookery have been known to be taken

over by Great Horned Owls or Osprey.

The trail terminates at the Great Bay – an

estuary of incredible ecological, cultural,
historical, commercial, and recreational

importance. Granite benches placed at the trail end

are an excellent place to reflect on the history of

this estuary and enjoy the sweeping view of the

salt marsh, tidal flats, and open water of Great

Bay. At low tide, watch for wading birds feeding

on the flats. At high tide watch for rafts of

waterfowl sheltering behind the small islands at

the mouth of Lubberland Creek. The benches

and the trail are dedicated to Cy and Bobbie

Sweet for their unwavering support for the

protection of the many resources of Great Bay.

A short spur trail will take you to an

overlook at The Nature Conservancy’s

Great Bay Office. The overlook has a high-power

spying scope and offers excellent views of a

40-acre grassland, 30-acre salt marsh, and

the tidal flats and open water on Great Bay. The

large field is managed for grassland birds and

is a fantastic place to watch for and listen to

bobolinks displaying in May and June. Northern

Harriers can also be seen swooping low over

the fields and salt marsh in the fall and winter

search in small rodents.

Clips courtesy FGIT except “spotted turtle” © Scott A. Young