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Winchester Land Trust eyes 60 acres to expand open space

Wooded parcel would protect drinking water

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WINSTED — Winchester Land Trust is looking to acquire and preserve another 60 acres of wooded property on Old Waterbury Turnpike.

Trust President Jennifer Perga told the Board of Selectmen on Tuesday night the land abuts about 200 acres the trust already

owns, so in part the land purchase would expand open space but also help protect drinking water. That's because the 60 acres also abuts more than 1,000 acres of town water department land.

"So it's kind of in an ideal spot," Perga said, noting Old Waterbury Road is "a beautiful place to walk."

The property, owned by wildlife biologist David Rosgen, would filter rain and snow melt before it reached Rugg Brook Reservoir. The Rosgen property stores carbon in trees that haven't been harvested in more than 50 years.

Perga and trust member

Louise Van Alstyne came before the selectmen Tuesday night to solicit support for a grant application to help cover the cost of the land purchase. The selectmen unanimously voted to give that support.

Perga said the trust will apply for an Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant through the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. She hopes it will cover 60% to 75% of the \$120,000 purchase price. The trust also will pursue a federal conservation grant but would still have to raise funds to cover the \$30,000 to \$40,000 difference.

"It will take us at least two years to make the purchase," Perga said. "The grant is due at the end of the month."

She said the Rosgens are "naturalists and they have kept data on all of the birds and other wildlife and trees, so it gives us a lot of information that we think DEEP is going to look favorably on in the application."

Preservation of the Rosgen property is consistent with the town's plan of conservation and development. There are several rare, state-listed species of animals on or near the property — a bird, three species of bat and a mussel.