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## *Five Parties Cooperate to Conserve Ragged Mountain Land*

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The Maine Water Company has completed the purchase of 167 acres on Ragged Mountain, part of its ongoing effort to own and manage the watershed of the public water supply for its six-town Mirror Lake water system serving the towns of Camden, Rockport, Rockland, Thomaston, Owls Head and Warren. This is the result of a strong cooperative effort between the water company, former owners of the land, two land trusts, and the Camden Snow Bowl.

Coastal Mountains Land Trust led the process by working with John and Rhonda Hart to conserve 203 acres of land they have owned on Ragged Mountain since 1989. Their discussions were driven by the Land Trust's nine-year campaign to conserve 3,500 acres of land on Ragged Mountain and Bald Mountain. The Harts' property, centered on the western side of Ragged Mountain, reaches from its base to the summit ridgeline. It features diverse wildlife habitats, bold cliffs and ledges, spectacular views extending to the White Mountains, and part of the Mirror Lake watershed. And, it will become a key link for fulfilling the Land Trust's vision for the Round the Mountain Trail, an outdoor recreation opportunity for hikers, cross-country skiers, and mountain bikers.

The Harts' land will be the largest single acquisition for the Bald and Ragged Mountains Campaign to date, bringing land conserved on the mountains to 49% of the Land Trust's goal.

As Galen Todd, President of the Coastal Mountains Land Trust Board of Directors, said, "Conservation of the Hart property will have direct, positive environmental and economic impact, helping to preserve our quality of place and greatly enhancing recreational opportunities for all of us to enjoy."

The Land Trust agreed to purchase 203 acres of the Harts' land as four separate, abutting parcels over two years, with the first two parcels purchased by August, 2011. The Land Trust and Aqua Maine (recently acquired by Connecticut Water Service, Inc. and renamed The Maine Water Company) began working on a way for the water company to participate in the Hart transactions. The water company, as part of their management of the Mirror Lake watershed, already owned 700 acres on the north and south sides of the Hart's property.

As a result of this new layer of cooperation, the Land Trust is selling the Hart parcels to the water company with each parcel placed under a perpetual conservation easement held by the Land Trust. The conservation easement will achieve all of the original conservation goals the Land Trust had for acquiring the Hart parcels, and furthers the water company's objective to protect the quality of its water sources. Three of the former Hart parcels are now owned by The Maine Water Company and are permanently protected by the conservation easement held by Coastal Mountains Land Trust. The fourth parcel will be purchased from the Harts in late 2012.

"We are pleased that we could participate in these transactions, supporting the goals of the Harts and the Land Trust, while at the same time purchasing additional watershed of our critical water sources," stated Judy Wallingford, President of The Maine Water Company. "This partnership is consistent with our goals of long term protection of these pristine water supplies and preservation of the natural beauty and character of this land for the communities to enjoy."

"We believe the future for our Ragged Mountain property is in good hands," said John and Rhonda Hart. "The addition of The Maine Water Company to this partnership is such a huge benefit to all that love this land."

Conservation of the Hart property is also a key step toward securing permanent public access to multipurpose recreational trails on Ragged Mountain. At its ridgeline, the property hosts the highest section of the Georges Highland Path, a hiking trail established and managed by the Georges River Land Trust. Both land trusts--Georges River and Coastal Mountains--have worked cooperatively for several years on public access trails on both Ragged and Bald Mountains. The conservation easement that Coastal Mountains Land Trust will hold on the former Hart property will ensure that the Georges Highland Path will forever traverse the upper elevations of the property.

Even though it is located on the east side of Ragged Mountain, the Camden Snow Bowl will eventually benefit from the Round the Mountain Trail that will cross the former Hart property. This vision for a ten-mile trail that circumnavigates Ragged Mountain is a key element in the Snow Bowl's plans to enhance its four-season outdoor recreation offerings. The Snow Bowl and Coastal Mountains Land Trust have already cooperated to build and open the first sections of the Round the Mountain Trail, 3.3 miles that begin at the Snow Bowl. As the Land Trust adds new conservation acquisitions through its campaign, the Round the Mountain Trail will be extended and ultimately fulfill this ambitious vision.

"Much as I appreciate simplicity," said Scott Dickerson, Executive Director of Coastal Mountains Land Trust, "there are times when complexity compounds value. Each of the partners in this process brought complementary attributes to this project, and the results demonstrate the productivity of cooperation."

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The Maine Water Company is a regulated public utility committed to providing high quality water and world-class service to families and communities, while being good stewards of the environment. It owns or manages public water systems serving over 16,000 customers throughout Maine in twenty communities. For more information about the company, visit [www.mainewater.com](http://www.mainewater.com).

Coastal Mountains Land Trust permanently conserves land to benefit the natural and human communities of western Penobscot Bay. In its 26th year, the 9,061 acres of land it has conserved host 25 miles of trails and protect biological diversity, water resources, productive farms and forests, and scenic landscapes essential to our quality of place. To learn more about the Land Trust and the Bald and Ragged Mountains Campaign, visit [www.coastalmountains.org](http://www.coastalmountains.org) or call (207) 236-7091.