

© Jerry Monkman, www.ecophotography.com

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.

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 the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (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.



The trail was built primarily by local volunteers with assistance from the Appalachian Mountain Club. Additionally, year-round volunteers help manage and monitor the trail.

Trailbuilders included:

- TNC, NHFG, GBNERR, SPNHF staff and volunteers from each organization
- Local town residents and municipal employees
- Youth volunteers including, local NH high school students and New York City inner city youth groups



A group of dedicated local volunteers hang tin squares along the Sweet Trail.
©Joanne Glode/TNC

Sweet Inspiration

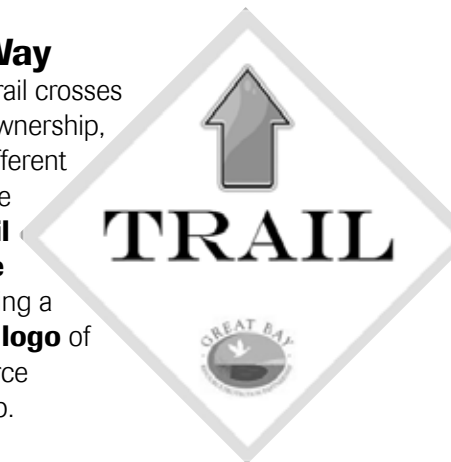
This trail is named in appreciation of Cyrus and Barbara Sweet for the inspiration to connect people and nature; the leadership to join the land to the sea; the support to link conservation lands together with this trail; and the vision of hope for the next generation that they too may enjoy the beauty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



Cy and Bobbie Sweet explore the trail dedicated in their honor. ©Eric Aldrich/TNC

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.



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)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

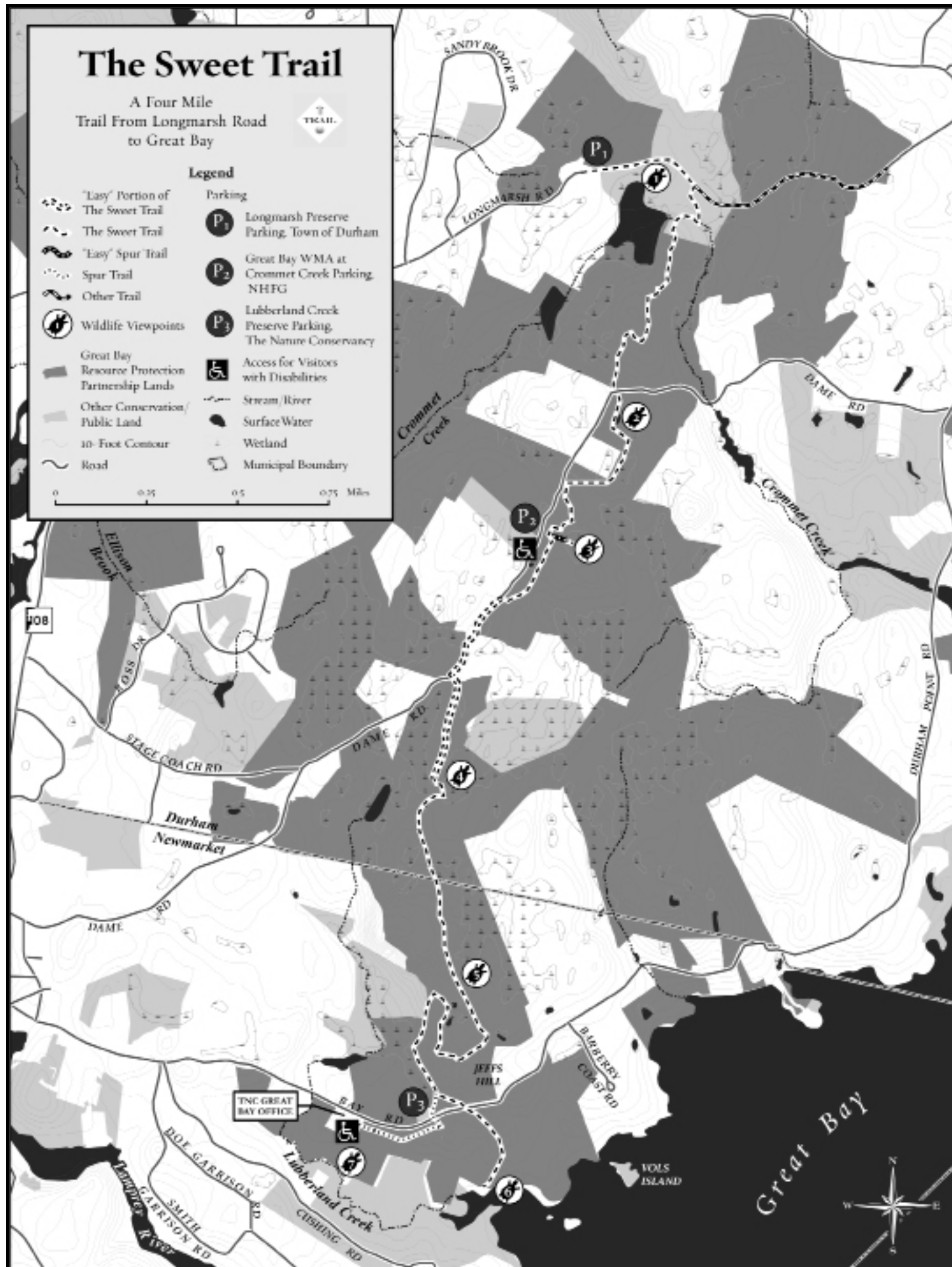
For a complete list of Principal, Associate & Community Partners, see website.

The Sweet Trail

A Four Mile Trail From Longmarsh Road to Great Bay

Legend

- | | |
|---|---|
| "Easy" Portion of The Sweet Trail | Parking |
| The Sweet Trail | Longmarsh Preserve Parking, Town of Durham |
| "Easy" Spur Trail | Great Bay WMA at Crommet Creek Parking, NHFG |
| Spur Trail | Lubberland Creek Preserve Parking, The Nature Conservancy |
| Other Trail | Access for Visitors with Disabilities |
| Wildlife Viewpoints | Stream/River |
| Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership Lands | Surface Water |
| Other Conservation/Public Land | Wetland |
| 10-Foot Contour | Municipal Boundary |
| Road | |



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 pines, oaks, and hemlock trees, look across Colby Marsh, a large pond maintained by beavers at the headwaters of Crommet Creek. Note the giant beaver lodge on the opposite pond shore. This 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 binoculars 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-since 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.



Wood Duck



Osprey



Spotted Salamander



Wood Frog



Spotted Turtle



Blanding's Turtle



Beaver

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 species of insects, reptiles, and amphibians found in our forests. Many species have evolved to take advantage of these fish-free seasonal pools for mating 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 salamander 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 of turtles live in the Crommet Creek watershed. Several, including the spotted turtle, are listed as rare by the NH Fish and Game Department. Blanding's Turtles are listed as Endangered in NH. Female Blanding's turtles travel considerable 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 shell and bright yellow throat.

This bridge crosses Lubberland Creek, the same creek that flows through the large salt marsh 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. 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, watch 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, cormorants, hooded mergansers, mallards, and Canada geese. Fall foliage along the trail is spectacular and is accentuated on calm days when the colors are reflected in the open water of the beaver ponds. This bridge is on private property protected with a conservation easement held by the NH Fish and Game Department. Please be respectful of the landowner and stay on the trail throughout this section.



Belted Kingfisher



Eastern Kingbird



Great Blue Heron

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.



Canada Goose

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.



Egret

A short spur trail will take you to an overlook at The Nature Conservancy's Great Bay Office. The overlook has a high-power spotting 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 in search of small rodents.



Bobolink



Eastern Bluebird