



Laurel Ridge  
Winsted, CT



## **Highland Lake Watershed Association**

OUR MISSION is to encourage the restoration and conservation of the natural resources of the Highland Lake Watershed as well as to protect and conserve fish and wildlife, forest and other plant life, water sources and soils. We promote the understanding among citizens of the Town of Winchester of the need for such restoration and conservation to provide a legacy for the future.

## **Winchester Land Trust**

The Winchester Land Trust serves as steward of the town's rural character and open spaces, striving to foster the preservation of Winchester's unique lands and natural resources forever. The trust informs and educates the community to promote the benefits of land conservation for balanced growth.



## Leaving a Legacy

We have the once in a generation opportunity to take action to protect and preserve Highland Lake FOREVER.

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The Winchester Land Trust (WLT), in partnership with the Highland Lake Watershed Association (HLWA), is applying to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for an Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) Grant to help us protect and preserve 508 acres of land between Route 800 and East Wakefield Blvd. WLT will be the owners of Laurel Ridge.





If the maximum amount of State and Federal funding is obtained, we will purchase the property and preserve this large scenic block of ridgeline and forest in perpetuity.



Laurel Ridge is a critical part of the Highland Lake and Still River watersheds.

Maintaining it as Open Space will help ensure that Highland Lake stays healthy and clean for the enjoyment of Winsted citizens, as well as the many out-of-town people who travel to fish, swim, and waterski on Highland Lake.

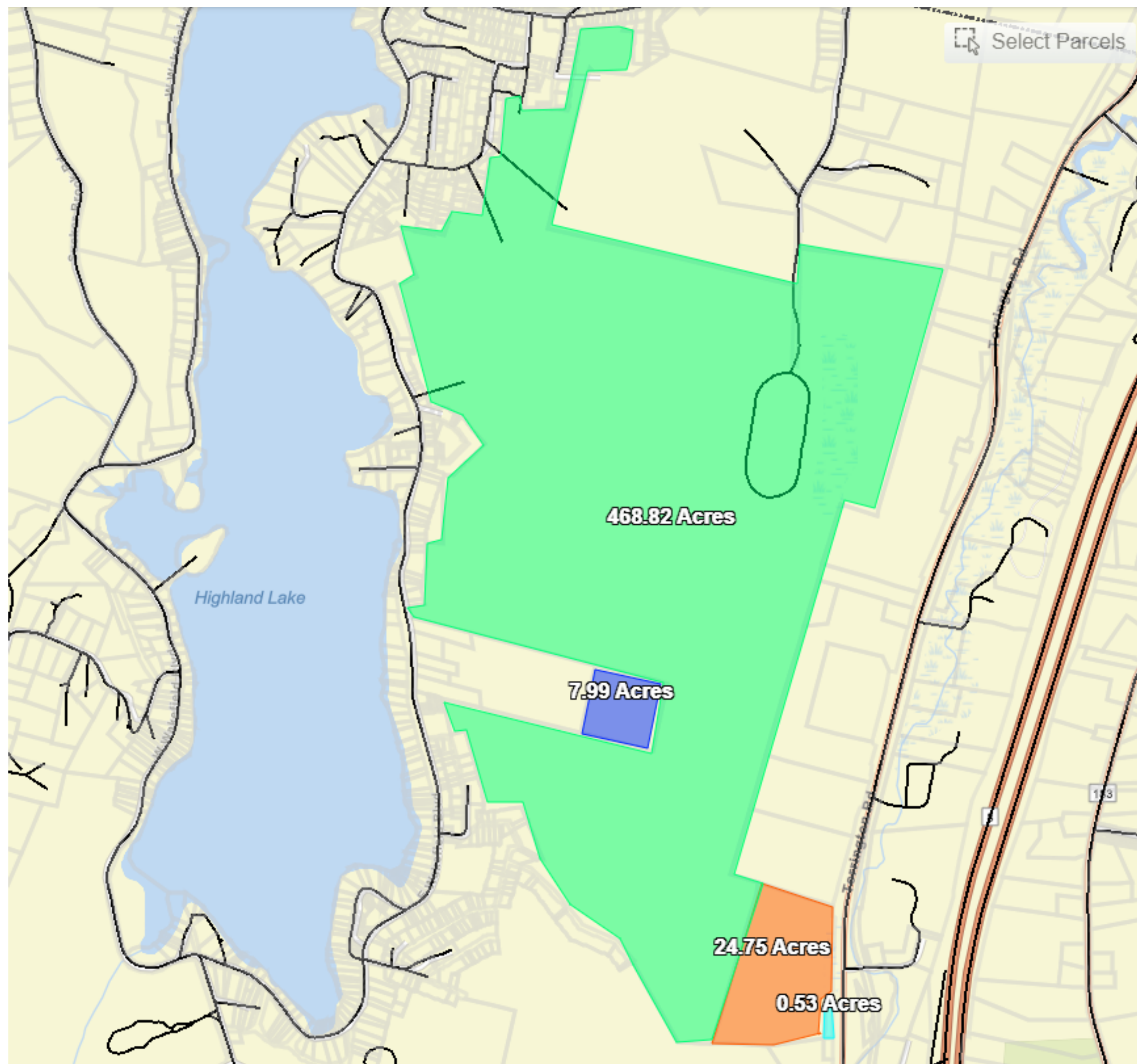


Good water quality maintains high property values of homes around the lake, which contribute roughly 1/3 of the town's grand list.



The Still River is labeled as “impaired” by DEEP.  
Keeping land forested in the Still River’s watershed  
reduces polluted runoff and enables the  
ecosystem to recover.







# Facts about Laurel Ridge

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- 508 acres with frontage on Route 800 and East Wakefield Blvd.
- Seven intermittent streams flowing directly into Highland Lake.
- Protects the health of Highland Lake and the Still River with dense trees working to naturally filter water and runoff.







- Supports an amazing variety of wildlife and plants. The State's Natural Diversity Database documents two rare, State-listed species of plants on the property, one of which is the New England sedge which lives in seepage swamps. The Eastern Pond Mussel in nearby Highland Lake is another Species of Special Concern.

- The clean waters of Highland Lake serve as a vital stopover for species such as Mergansers (seen in the hundreds), Gadwalls, Shovelers and Ruddy ducks. In the summer, Belted Kingfisher, Bald Eagles and Osprey are observed.

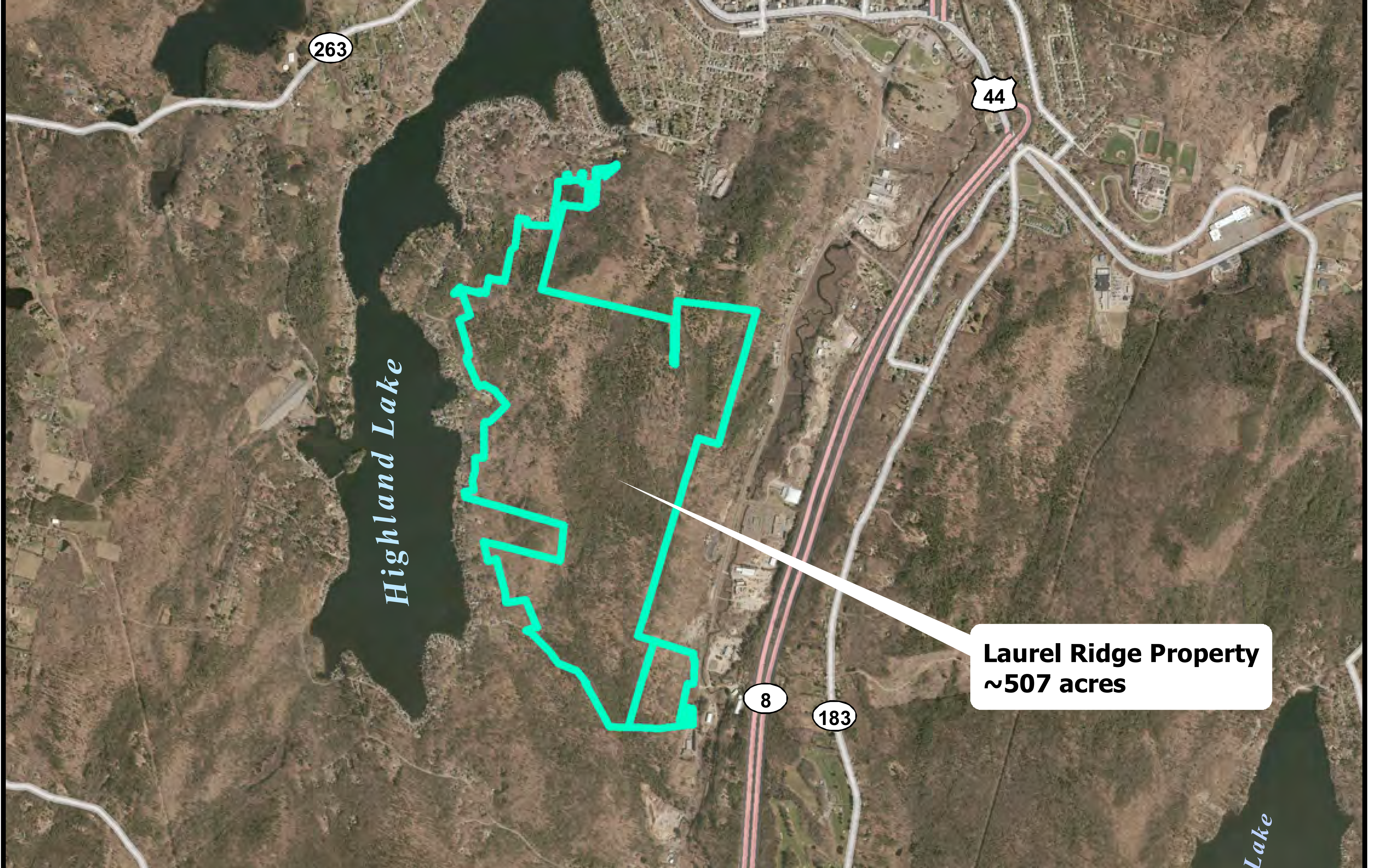


- Storied Winsted history – Laurel Ridge was home to the Carey Racetrack on Pratt Hill, the outline of which is still visible.

- Important connectivity for a very large wilderness corridor. To the south, across large parcels of undeveloped 490 land, is the extensive Paugnut State Forest and Burr Pond State Park. To the west, Laurel Ridge connects to many parcels owned by WLT and HLWA including the 5 acre Stevens Preserve and 25 acre Cannavo Woods (connected via HLWA preserved parcels).



- Laurel Ridge is nearly all core forest. The understory is dominated by mountain laurel.
- WLT will create public hiking trails so people can enjoy the new preserve via hiking, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.



263

44

*Highland Lake*

8

183

**Laurel Ridge Property**  
**~507 acres**

*Lake*



- Consistent with Town Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The 2021 POCD states a primary goal of protecting the town's natural resources, in particular its water bodies and drinking water. The POCD emphasizes the importance of preserving more open space to protect Winchester's community character and quality of life. It places high value on connecting existing open spaces to form a system of greenways and on preserved open space that is available for the public to enjoy.

- Laurel Ridge provides Winsted residents and visitors a scenic ridgeline to be enjoyed from land (driving on Route 8) and water (Highland Lake).
- Winsted will become a premier day trip destination with many new hiking trails. By connecting to the Sue Grossman Greenway, visitors will have easy access to Laurel Ridge and many exciting trails.



- Significant carbon absorption by the multitude of trees.
- Laurel Ridge will contain phosphorus that would be released through soil disruption if developed. Phosphorus would contribute to weed, algae growth in Highland Lake and the Still River.
- Downstream waters in the Mad River, Still River and Farmington River will have an added layer of protection.

Laurel Ridge protects the economic contributions of Highland Lake to all Winsted residents.







Based on the Connecticut DEEP lake trophic categories, Highland Lake is defined as oligomesotrophic bordering on mesotrophic. Total phosphorus in the surface waters rarely exceeds 20ppb and the yearly average in surface waters rarely exceeds 15ppb. However, surface water TP concentrations in recent years (2016 to 2020) are, on average, ~2ppb higher than historical surface water concentrations. Total nitrogen in the surface waters has not exceeded 250ppb on record since 1979 and for the past seven years, the yearly average has remained near or below 200ppb. Water clarity in the lake typically remains better than 3 meters, with the yearly average falling between approximately 3 meters and 5 meters over the past 16 years. **These data suggest that the lake condition is relatively good overall.**



In the absence of efforts to reduce nutrient loads, the lake condition will inevitably worsen over time at a faster rate than would occur in a natural, undeveloped landscape.

**The Highland Lake community has the fortunate and increasingly rare opportunity to proactively protect the lake from accelerating decline by making improvements to the watershed.**

## Financial Details

Appraised Value: \$2.2 million

Sale price: \$2.2 million

Maximum amount we could receive from the State and Federal grants is 90% of the purchase price.

Additional expenses include: grant writer, Yellow Book appraisal, survey and more for an estimated cost of \$120,000.

\$340,000 will need to be raised through private donations and small grants.



How you can help:

Volunteer to clear trails.

Volunteer to be a Laurel Ridge Steward.

Consider a donation. Naming rights for trails, clearings and more will be available.

To learn more, contact [bethpapermaster@gmail.com](mailto:bethpapermaster@gmail.com)

Together we can protect  
Highland Lake  
and its watershed  
for generations!