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## **Friends of Haystack Seek to Preserve Iconic Summit**

PAWLET, Vermont – April 2012. With its distinctly-shaped summit and rare habitats, Haystack Mountain is a treasured landmark for residents of Pawlet and neighboring towns. Community leaders and residents have formed a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization called **Friends of Haystack** with the goal of conserving a 65.56 acre parcel of land that includes the summit.

Beyond its scenic beauty, Haystack is a wonderful recreational resource for the local community and vacationing visitors alike; however, public access has been restricted in the past. The Friends of Haystack will maintain the summit trail for the enjoyment of community hikers and visitors.

“The opportunity to preserve the top of Haystack forever is an exciting and rare opportunity for the residents of Pawlet and Wells and other fans of this amazing mountain. The mix of acres conserved by a big national group like the Nature Conservancy, the in-state Vermont Land Trust, and now our own local community group is an ideal way to build collaborations. With the summit finally conserved, permanent public access to the peak will be secured for coming generations. We think everyone will be excited to participate in this wonderful project,” says Susan Sargent, Friends of Haystack President.

Friends of Haystack has already entered into purchase agreement with the current owner of the parcel. The group looks to raise funds from local supporters to cover the cost of the acquisition and to create a stewardship endowment for its care.

The primary goals of this effort are to protect the region's scenic natural landscape, maintain perpetual public access for recreation, and preserve rare habitats for a number of rare species "The North Pawlet Hills are an exceptionally significant area of the state with some of the best examples of many of these dry oak and pine forest types that we know of," says Eric Sorenson, Community Ecologist for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. The land is home to bobcats and a known nesting location of the previously listed Peregrine Falcon.

Completing the purchase of the parcel will allow Friends of Haystack to preserve Haystack's unique summit – visible from numerous surrounding towns – for perpetuity.

"Protecting Haystack is one of the most obvious and worthwhile conservation projects in the area," says Alan Calfee, Friends of Haystack Project Coordinator, who operates a local forestry and land management business. "The mountain is such a prominent part of the local community's landscape. It is the northern gateway to Pawlet and the Mettowee Valley. Ensuring that it is never subdivided or used for a communications tower, while safeguarding public access, is critical."

With the purchase agreement in hand, Friends of Haystack has until December 31, 2012 to raise the required funds for the project and take ownership of the property. To become involved in the project, please visit [www.friendsofhaystack.org](http://www.friendsofhaystack.org). Donations may be made on the website or mailed to Friends of Haystack, PO Box 201, Pawlet, VT 05761.

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