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Danna Truslow, executive director of the Seacoast Land Trust, has been awarded the Gulf of Maine Council Visionary Award.  
Courtesy photo

## Putting her trust in protecting open space

By Emily Aronson

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PORTSMOUTH - To Danna Truslow, executive director of the Seacoast Land Trust, conserving open land is as much about protection as it is about vision.

"We have really been proactive in the last four years. We feel it was important since there was so much growth to try and stay ahead of the curve," Truslow said.

And for her advance conservation efforts, Truslow has been awarded the Gulf of Maine Council Visionary Award for 2003.

The council gives the award to two people or organizations in each state bordering the gulf that "illustrate a deep devotion to improving the health and future well-being of the vast and precious watershed."

Although Truslow has been working to map and develop conservation areas across the Seacoast since 1998, she said the award came as "a total surprise."

Sitting in the SLT's Portsmouth office, the Baltimore native and Rye resident said she grew up with a love of the outdoors.

"My dad was very conservation-minded so I think I got a lot of my conservation ethic from my father," said Truslow, whose father was an engineer and mother was a chemist.

"I grew up sensitive to the effect we can all have on our environment."

Arriving at the University of New Hampshire in the mid-1970s Truslow said she was going to be a history major but changed to geology after taking a university-required earth science course.

"I just sort of took to it," she said.

After obtaining additional education in hydrology, Truslow worked in California and New Hampshire on groundwater protection and cleanup efforts.

In 1998 she joined the board of a newly formed nonprofit organization called the Seacoast Land Trust and became its executive director in 2001.

Truslow said she understands the Seacoast's desirability makes it a spot for continued development, but hopes the SLT can steer that development in the right direction.

Truslow said group's focus on land protection always carries the knowledge the growth is going to happen. But the SLT works to guide that growth away from areas that need protection.

Most recently the SLT completed a resource mapping project in Greenland and the restoration

of the Great Bog in Portsmouth.

"You don't really get a sense of what your surroundings are like until you see it on a map. It's learning what's beyond the edge of the road or creek that's helpful," Truslow said.

Once the wildlife, vegetation, and water resources are mapped, towns can begin to prioritize which pieces of land should be protected.

Truslow said working with the city of Portsmouth to clean up the dense bog area was a great experience.

"It's just such a wonderful piece of land," she said. "We made the bog better for wildlife as well as human use."

Along with Sen. Judd Gregg and the Trust for Public Land, the SLT recently helped acquire a \$1.5 million federal grant to preserve 30 acres of saltmarsh area in Rye.

Truslow said most New Hampshire residents are aware of the need for conservation, and the SLT is available for anyone who is thinking of conserving a piece of property.

Truslow also said the SLT runs field trips to many of the Seacoast's preservation areas.

"If they can connect with the land, they'll have a better understanding of why conservation is so important."

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