

Discover the Landscape at Bluffside Farm

The ecological report for Bluffside Farm was completed by Allaire Diamond, VLT Conservation Ecologist.



Bluffside occupies a unique and ecologically significant location on Newport's Indian Point, where it is surrounded by Lake Memphremagog on two sides and residential neighborhoods on the other two. This land is featured in many historical accounts of the area and has historical significance for both Native American and European American settlers and travelers.

Geology and Soil

The bedrock under the entire farm is calcium-rich, metamorphic sandstone and limestone. Above this nutrient-rich bedrock are deep sandy deposits from the large Glacial Lake Memphremagog that covered this area during the most recent postglacial period, between 13,200 - 13,400 years ago. Organic matter left behind from Glacial Lake Memphremagog makes the soil on Bluffside farm particularly high in nutrients and affects which plant species grow here.

The Farm



The farm was owned and operated by the Scott family for over 100 years, between 1906 and 2015. Originally run as a dairy farm, the land was most recently used for producing hay and boarding horses. It is currently enrolled in the Vermont Current Use Program. All of the open farmland soils are of statewide significance. 49 acres are tillable (currently in hay and 1 acre of vegetables) and 15 acres are pasture.

The Forests



Within Bluffside's forests, one will find red oak, red pine, white pine, hemlock, and northern white cedar trees over a carpet of bracken fern and wintergreen. Interestingly, much of the forested land on the property resembles woodlands in southern New Hampshire and Massachusetts rather than northern Vermont. We are likely able to see this forest type due to the combination of sandy soils and the moderating "lake effect" climate at Bluffside.

The Beach

The beach is one of the farm's most ecologically interesting features. Just below steep forested slopes and dramatic bluffs along the southern boundary, the beach stretches for over 1000 feet along the lake. It is highly unusual to have a beach of this size in Vermont, outside of Lake Champlain.



Though most of the beach is sparsely vegetated, some of the plants that grow here include speckled alder, poison ivy, willows, cordgrass, ground-nut, yellow nutsedge, and jewelweed.

Just behind the narrow beach ridges sit two small shrub and forested wetlands that flood during times of high water. Here you can see silver maple, white pine, red maple, black ash, red oak, and black willow trees, with speckled alder, white meadowsweet, witch hazel, cattail, ground-nut, and scouring-rush in the understory.



The Cove

The eastern side of the property slopes down to a shallow cove known as Scott's Cove. It is separated from the main lake by what may have been an old beaver dam, and remnants of a bridge which used to connect the farm to Prouty Beach. The bridge historically served as the route to the former horse ferry. An alder swamp sits at the upper end of the cove, and additional small wetland pockets nestle in the adjacent forest. In these forest areas, plants such as sweetgale, bracken fern, northern white cedar, eastern hemlock, and red oak occur. Near the old beaver dam, patches of aquatic vegetation include the invasive giant grass *Phragmites* and the native water-willow.



Invasive Species

In addition to *Phragmites*, other nonnative invasive plants have found a foothold in the forests, wetlands and waters surrounding Bluffside Farm. Invasive terrestrial plants including barberry, bush honeysuckles, and reed canary grass are abundant in some parts of the forests and wetlands. In the summer of 2015, the invasive algae *Nitellopsis obtusa*, or starry stonewort, was found by a kayaker in the cove – this is the first documentation of this aquatic invasive species in Vermont. We also noted blue-green alga in the water along the sand beach. For more information on invasive species on the property check out the document “Wanted: Invasive Species” at www.vlt.org/bluffsidefarm/.

For more information about the Vermont Land Trust, please visit:

<https://www.vlt.org/>