

Sponsored by the Otisfield Conservation Committee, a site walk was held into the sensitive area of the Jugtown Plains on July 8. This conserved parcel of land of 3000 acres is located in portions of Naples, Otisfield and Casco. Owned by the Hancock Lumber Company, the conservation easement is held by the Maine Department of Conservation. This area was one of the early locations of settlement in our region. Today the houses are gone, even the cellar holes are hard to find, but a small population of Pitch Pine still exists in the sensitive area. Pitch Pine thrives in regions of poor fertility, it loves sand plains and can even exist on rock outcrops. The Jugtown plains is the most northerly location for a Pitch Pine population growing on a sand plain in the Northeast. This conifer species is more common to the south of us. Beside the Pitch Pine, Norway Pine (named after Norway, Maine !) and many sand loving herbaceous shrubs and plants continue to grow there.

The site walk was led by Nancy Sferra, of the Maine Nature Conservancy and David Rodrigues of the Maine Dept of Conservation. The purpose was to raise citizen awareness of the importance of conserving green space in rapidly developing

southwestern Maine, the need to maintain woodland in proximity to the Crooked River in order to preserve good water quality and the desire to perpetuate and care for the unusual Pitch Pine ecosystem.

Organizations represented were members and friends of the Otisfield Conservation Committee, The Naples Conservation Commission, Loon Echo Land Trust, Oxford County Soil and Water District, the Hancock Lumber Company, the Maine State Forestry Service, and other interested citizens.

The Hancock Lumber Company has some interesting plans for the future to assist in raising interest in the natural history of this unusual area.