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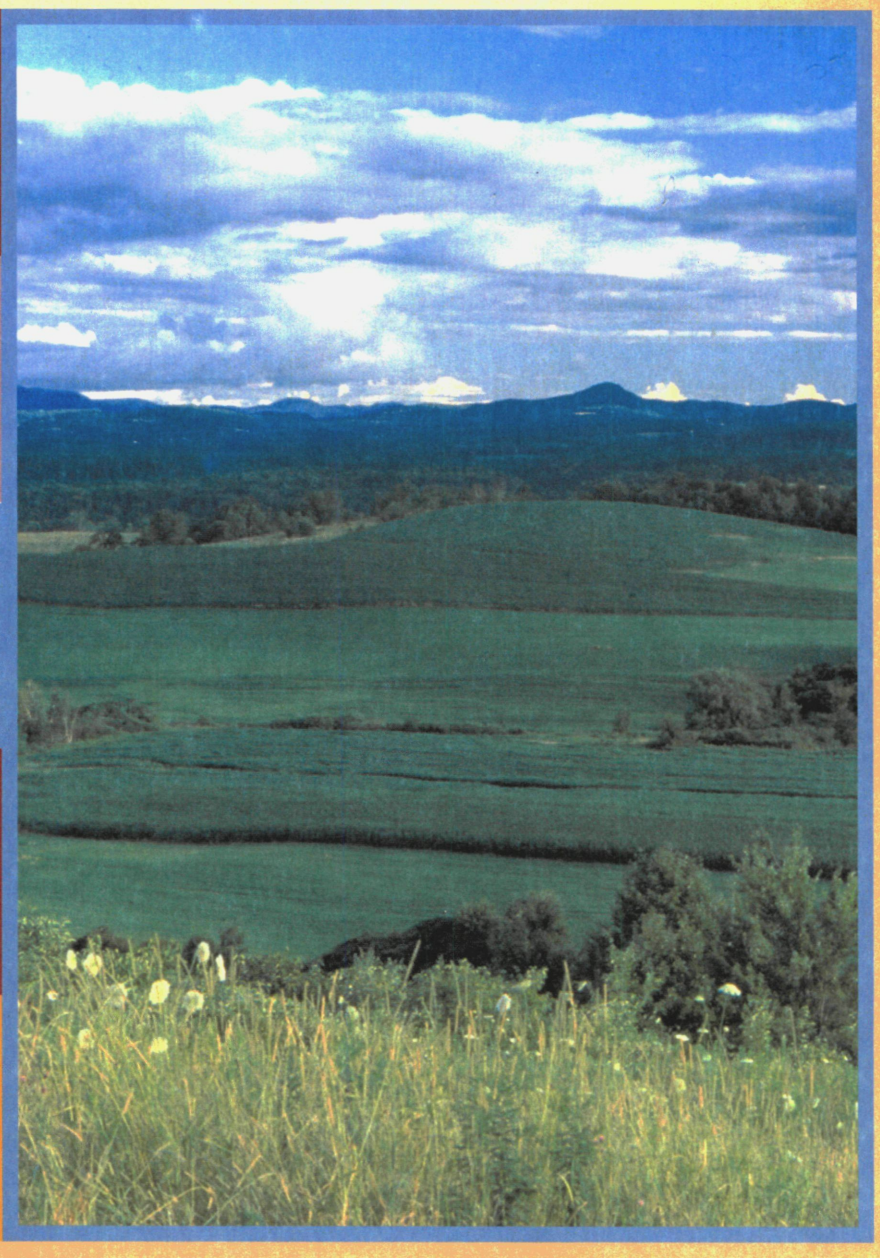
American Farmland Trust

Leadership Training on Farmland Conservation

in New England and New York



April 8 & 9, 2003

American Farmland Trust

LEADERSHIP TRAINING ON FARMLAND CONSERVATION IN NEW ENGLAND AND NEW YORK

RESOURCE NOTEBOOK

This resource notebook is a training and reference tool for participants in the *Leadership Training for Farmland Conservation in New England and New York.* It contains materials to help you provide information about and build support for efforts to promote agriculture and protect farmland.

The training workshop is specifically targeted to people who are taking leadership roles in addressing farmland conservation issues in their community. "Community" can either be a local geographic area (town, county) or a state or regional organization, association or agency. We hope that those of you who attend this workshop will use the training you receive to assist your community in developing solutions to keep land in agriculture, and to make it available and affordable for future generations.

American Farmland Trust is a private, nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the nation's strategic agricultural resources. Founded in 1980, AFT works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment. Its activities include public education, technical assistance, policy research and development, and direct land protection projects.

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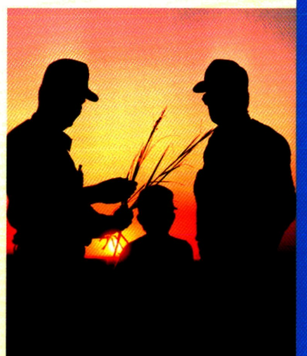
HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

To many people, the most compelling reasons for saving farmland are local and personal, and much of the political support for farmland protection is driven by grassroots community efforts. Sometimes the most important qualities are the hardest to quantify—such as local heritage and sense of place. Farm and ranch land maintain scenic, cultural and historic landscapes. Their managed open spaces provide beautiful views and opportunities for hunting and fishing, horseback riding, skiing, dirt-biking and other recreational activities. Farms and ranches create identifiable and unique community character and add to the quality of life. Perhaps it is for these reasons that the contingent valuation studies typically find that people are willing to pay to protect agricultural land from development.

Finally, farming is an integral part of our heritage and our identity as a people. American democracy is rooted in an agricultural past and founded on the principle that all people can own property and earn a living from the land. The ongoing relationship with the agricultural landscape connects Americans to history and to the natural world. Our land is our legacy, both as we look back to the past and as we consider what we have of value to pass on to future generations.



Public awareness of the multiple benefits of working lands has led to greater community appreciation of the importance of keeping land open for fiscal, economic and environmental reasons. As a result, people increasingly are challenging the perspective that new development is necessarily the most desirable use of agricultural land—especially in rural communities and communities undergoing transition from rural to suburban.

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American Farmland Trust works to stop the loss of productive farmland and promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment.

Notes

[1] "A County-Level Measure on Urban Influence," *Rural Development Perspectives*, Vol. 12, No.2, Feb. 1997.

[2] "How AFT Created Its 2002 Farming on the Edge Map," *Connection*, Vol. V, Issue 4, Fall 2002 (Northampton, Mass.: AFT).

[3] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *State of the Cities 2000*, Fourth Annual, June 2000, online at www.hud.gov/library/bookshelf18/pressrel/socrpt.pdf.

[4] Ralph E. Heimlich and William D. Anderson, *Development at the Urban Fringe and Beyond: Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Land*, Agricultural Economic Report No. 803 (Washington, D.C.: USDA ERS, 2001), 14.

[5] Kathryn Lipton, William Edmondson and Alden Manchester, *The Food and Fiber System: Contributing to U.S. and World Economies*, Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 742, July 1998 (Washington, D.C.: USDA ERS).

[6] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2001* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce), 535.

[7] United Nations Population Division, *The World at Six Billion*, 3.

[8] Heimlich and Anderson, ibid.

[9] Julia Freedgood, *Cost of Community Services Studies: Making the Case for Conservation* (Northampton, Mass.: AFT, 2002).

[10] Deb Brighton, *Community Choices: Thinking Through Land Conservation, Development, and Property Taxes in Massachusetts* (Boston, Mass.: The Trust for Public Land, 1999).

[11] *New Research on Population, Suburban Sprawl and Smart Growth*, online at www.sierraclub.org/sprawl.

[12] Real Estate Research Corporation, *The Costs of Sprawl: Environmental and Economic Costs of Alternative Development Patterns at the Urban Fringe* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974); Heimlich and Anderson, ibid.; Robert W. Burchell, *Impact Assessment of New Jersey Interim State Development and Redevelopment Plan, Report II* (Trenton: N.J.: Office of State Planning, 1992).

[13] R.J. Perkins, "Septic Tanks, Lot Size and Pollution of Water Table Aquifers," *Journal of Environmental Health* 46 (6), 1984.

[14] A.J. Gold et al, "Nitrate-Nitrogen Losses to Ground Water from Rural and Suburban Land Uses," *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*. March-April 1990; *Results of the Nationwide Urban Runoff Program, Volume 1 - Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1983).

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[16] Heimlich, ibid.; G. Macintosh, ed., *Preserving Communities and Corridors* (Washington, D.C.: Defenders of Wildlife, 1989); R.F. Noss and A.Y. Cooperrider. *Saving Nature's Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1994).

January 2003

Photos courtesy of USDA NRCS except where noted.

WHY SAVE FARMLAND?

Productive agricultural land is a finite and irreplaceable natural resource. Fertile soils take thousands of years to develop. Creating them takes a combination of climate, geology, biology and good luck. So far, no one has found a way to manufacture them.

America's agricultural land provides the nation—and world—with an unparalleled abundance of food and fiber products. The dominant role of U.S. agriculture in the global economy has been likened to OPEC's in the field of energy. The food and farming system is important to the balance of trade and the employment of nearly 23 million people. Across the country, farmland supports the economic base of many rural and suburban communities.

Agricultural land also supplies products with little market value, but enormous cultural and ecological importance. Some are more immediate, such as social heritage, scenic views, open space and community character. Long-range environmental benefits include wildlife habitat, clean air and water, flood control, ground-water recharge and carbon sequestration.

AMERICA'S AGRICULTURAL LAND IS AT RISK

Yet despite its importance to individual communities, the nation and the world, American farmland is at risk. It is imperiled by poorly planned development, especially in urban-influenced areas, and by the complex forces driving conversion. USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) developed "urban influence" codes to classify each of the nation's 3,141 counties and county equivalents into groups that describe the degree of urban influence.[1] AFT found that in 1997, farms in the 1,210 most urban-influenced counties produced 63 percent of dairy products and 86 percent of fruits and vegetables.[2]

Agricultural land is desirable for building because it tends to be flat, well drained and generally is more affordable to developers than to farmers and ranchers. Far more farmland is being converted than is necessary to provide housing for a growing population. Over the past 20 years, the acreage per person for new housing almost doubled.[3] Most of this land is outside of existing urban areas. Since 1994, lots of 10 to 22 acres accounted for 55 percent of the growth in housing area.[4] The NRI shows that the best agricultural soils are being developed fastest.

According to USDA's National Resources Inventory (NRI), from 1992 to 1997 more than 11 million acres of rural land were converted to developed use—and more than half of that conversion was agricultural land. In that period, an average of more than 1 million agricultural acres were developed each year. And the rate is increasing—up 51 percent from the rate reported in the previous decade.

The *Farmland Information Center* (FIC) is a clearinghouse for information about farmland protection and stewardship. The FIC is a public/private partnership between American Farmland Trust and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. www.farmlandinfo.org

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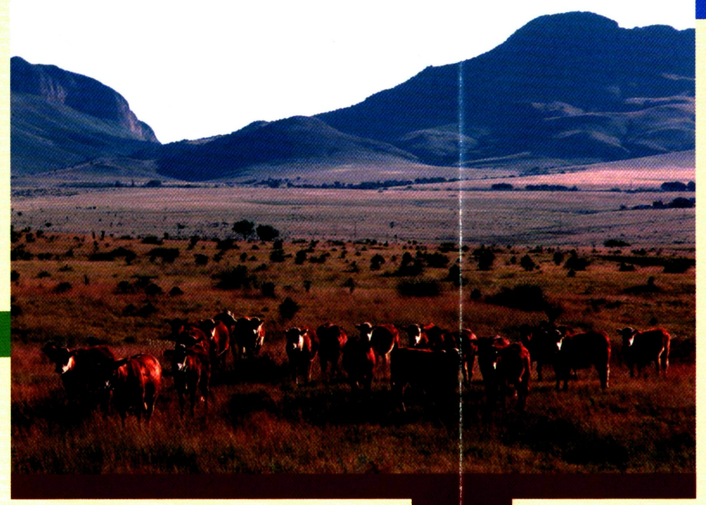
THE FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEM

The U.S. food and farming system contributes nearly $1 trillion to the national economy—or more than 13 percent of the gross domestic product—and employs 17 percent of the labor force.[5] With a rapidly increasing world population and expanding global markets, saving American farmland is a prudent investment in world food supply and economic opportunity.

Asian and Latin American countries are the most significant consumers of U.S. agricultural exports. Latin America, including Mexico, purchases an average of about $10.6 billion of U.S. agricultural exports each year. Asian countries purchase an average of $23.6 billion/year, with Japan alone accounting for about $10 billion/year.[6] Even as worldwide demand for a more diverse diet increases, many countries are paving their arable land to support rapidly expanding economies. Important customers today, they are expected to purchase more agricultural products in the future.

While domestic food shortages are unlikely in the short term, the U.S. Census predicts the population will grow by 42 percent in the next 50 years. Many developing nations already are concerned about food security. Of the 78 million people currently added to the world each year, 95 percent live in less developed regions.[7] The productivity and diversity of American agriculture can ensure food supplies and continuing preeminence in world markets. But this depends upon an investment strategy that preserves valuable assets, including agricultural land, to supply rapidly changing global demand.



FISCAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

Saving farmland is an investment in community infrastructure and economic development. It supports local government budgets and the ability to create wealth locally. In addition, distinctive agricultural landscapes are often magnets for tourism.

People vacation in the state of Vermont or Steamboat Springs, Colo., because they enjoy the scenery created by rural meadows and grazing livestock. In Lancaster, Pa., agriculture is still the leading industry, but with the Amish and Mennonites working in the fields, tourism is not far behind. Napa Valley, Calif., is another place known as a destination for "agro tourism." Tourists have become such a large part of most Napa Valley wineries that many vintners have hired hospitality staff. Both the valley and the wines have gained name recognition, and the economy is thriving.

Agriculture contributes to local economies directly through sales, job creation, support services and businesses, and also by supplying lucrative secondary markets such as food processing. Planning for agriculture and protecting farmland provide flexibility for growth and development, offering a hedge against fragmented suburban development while supporting a diversified economic base.

Development imposes direct costs to communities, as well as indirect costs associated with the loss of rural lands and open space.[8] Privately owned and managed agricultural land generates more in local tax revenues than it costs in services. Carefully examining local budgets in Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies shows that nationwide farm, forest and open lands more than pay for the municipal services they require, while taxes on residential uses consistently fail to cover costs.[9] (See COCS fact sheet.) Related studies measuring the effect of all types of development on municipal tax bills find that tax bills generally go up

Photo courtesy of Bob Grant, Cooperative Extension Service

as communities become more developed. Even those communities with the most taxable commercial and industrial properties have higher-than-average taxes.[10]

Local governments are discovering that they cannot afford to pay the price of unplanned development. Converting productive agricultural land to developed uses creates negative economic and environmental impacts. For example, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the population of Atlanta, Ga., grew at about the same rate as that of Portland, Ore. Due to its strong growth management law, Portland increased in size by only 2 percent while Atlanta doubled in size. To accommodate its sprawling growth, Atlanta raised property taxes 22 percent while Portland lowered property taxes by 29 percent. Vehicle miles traveled (and related impacts) increased 17 percent in Atlanta but only 2 percent in Portland.[11]

Photo courtesy USDA

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Well-managed agricultural land supplies important non-market goods and services. Farm and ranch lands provide food and cover for wildlife, help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds, and maintain air quality. They can absorb and filter wastewater and provide groundwater recharge. New energy crops even have the potential to replace fossil fuels.

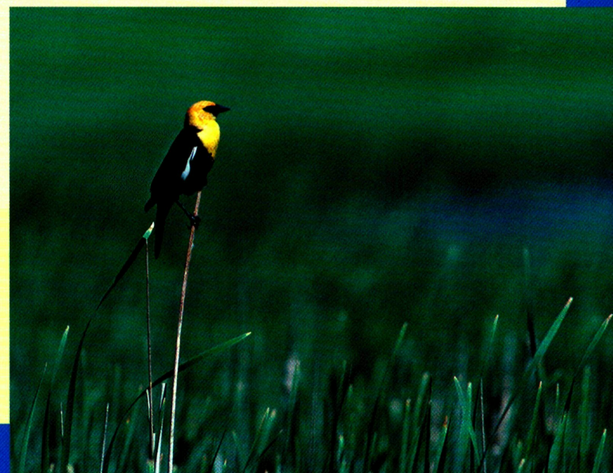
The federal government owns 402 million acres of forests, parks and wildlife refuges that provide substantial habitat for wildlife. Most of this land is located in 11 western states. States, municipalities and other non-federal units of government also own land. Yet public agencies alone cannot sustain wildlife populations. Well-managed, privately owned agricultural land is a critical resource for wildlife habitat.

With nearly 1 billion acres of land in farms, agriculture is America's dominant land use. So it is not surprising that farming has a significant ecological impact. Ever since the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, environmentalists have called attention to the negative impacts of industrial agricultural practices. However, converting farmland to development has detrimental long-term impacts on environmental quality.

Water pollution from urban development is well documented. Development increases pollution of rivers and streams, as well as the risk of flooding. Paved roads and roofs collect and pass storm water directly into drains instead of filtering it naturally through the soil.[12] Septic systems for low-density subdivisions can add untreated wastes to surface water and groundwater—potentially yielding higher nutrient loads than livestock operations.[13] Development often produces more sediment and heavy metal contamination than farming does and increases pollutants—such as road salt, oil leaks from automobiles and runoff from lawn chemicals—that lead to groundwater contamination.[14] It also decreases recharge of aquifers, lowers drinking-water quality and reduces biodiversity in streams.

Keeping land available for agriculture while improving farm management practices offers the greatest potential to produce or regain environmental and social benefits while minimizing negative impacts. From wetland management to on-farm composting for municipalities, farmers are finding ways to improve environmental quality.

Urban development is a significant cause of wetland loss.[15] Between 1992 and 1997, NRI showed that development was responsible for 49 percent of the total loss. Increased use of automobiles leads to traffic congestion and air pollution. Development fragments and often destroys wildlife habitat, and fragmentation is considered a principal threat to biodiversity.[16]



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR FARMLAND?

Each year you have to drive a little farther out to find it. Slowed by traffic, through tangled intersections, past rows of houses that seem to have sprouted from the field, finally, you can see the bountiful farmland. It wasn't always like this. But for the past two decades we've paved over our farmland for roads, houses and malls. Wasteful land use puts America's farmland at risk, especially our most fertile and productive—our most valuable—farmland.

We're needlessly wasting one of the world's most important resources. Less than one-fifth of U.S. land is high quality and we are losing this finest land to development at an accelerating rate. U.S. agricultural land provides the nation—and the world—with an unparalleled abundance of food. But farmland means much more than food. Well-managed farmland shelters wildlife, supplies scenic open space, and helps filter impurities from our air and water. These working lands keep our taxes down and maintain the legacy of our agricultural heritage. It makes no sense to develop our best land. Instead, we have a responsibility to protect this most valuable resource for future generations.

Findings:

- **Every single minute of every day, America loses two acres of farmland.**
  From 1992–1997 we converted to developed use more than 6 million acres of agricultural land—an area the size of Maryland.
- **We lost farm and ranch land 51 percent faster in the 90s than in the 80s.**
  The rate of loss for 1992–1997, 1.2 million acres per year, was 51 percent higher than from 1982–1992.
- **We're losing our best land—most fertile and productive—the fastest.**
  The rate of conversion of prime land was 30 percent faster, proportionally, than the rate for non-prime rural land from 1992–1997. This results in marginal land, which requires more resources like water, being put into production.
- **Our food is increasingly in the path of development.**
  86 percent of U.S. fruits and vegetables, and 63 percent of our dairy products, are produced in urban-influenced areas.
- **Wasteful land use is the problem, not growth itself.**
  From 1982–1997, U.S. population grew by 17 percent, while urbanized land grew by 47 percent. Over the past 20 years, the acreage per person for new housing almost doubled and since 1994, 10+ acre housing lots have accounted for 55 percent of the land developed.
- **Every state is losing some of its best farmland.**
  Texas leads the nation in high-quality acres lost, followed by Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina and Illinois. And for each of the top 20 states the problem is getting worse. (See chart inside.)

HELP PROTECT OUR BEST FARMLAND

To save our best farmland we must build upon the successful work of state and local farmland protection programs—like those in Vermont, Pennsylvania and California. These programs across the country have protected more than one million acres of farmland. **But much more must be done.** Here's what is needed:

1. INCREASE FUNDING FOR AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Currently, more than 5,000 farmers are awaiting funding to permanently protect their land. The federal Farmland Protection Program (FPP) must be fully funded and every state should develop or expand its own purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) program. In addition, we should expand federal and state tax incentives for land conservation.

2. EXPAND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS THAT SHARE THE COSTS WITH FARMERS FOR PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Farms and ranches produce a wide range of ecological goods and services, from wildlife habitat to water recharge to scenic open space. But there is no compensation for them. Conservation programs, like the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program and Conservation Security Program, help share the costs of "growing" these valuable benefits.

3. TARGET CONSERVATION FUNDS TO THE MOST VALUABLE, MOST THREATENED AREAS

FPP and other conservation programs should target their funds to the nation's most valuable, most threatened farmland, as identified by states and their conservation partners. To help identify those areas, we must continue improving systems to track and inventory farmland loss, environmental attributes and development threats.

4. SUPPORT EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND SMART GROWTH TO STEER DEVELOPMENT AWAY FROM OUR BEST FARMLAND

Communities need to adopt land use plans that designate specific farmland protection areas where development is discouraged. We also must eliminate subsidies that promote sprawl—and expand policies that promote smart growth.

5. GET INVOLVED AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We can't protect our farmland without **you**. Buy local farm products. Support your local farmers' market. Contact your elected officials, zoning board, planning commission—make sure they know you support local agriculture and want your farmland protected. Live near where you work, in an established community. If you own land, protect it with a conservation easement. Vote for officials who will support farmland conservation. For more information, visit American Farmland Trust's Web site at **www.farmland.org**.

The generous support of The New York Community Trust, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Philip Morris Companies Inc., USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the members of American Farmland Trust made the "Farming on the Edge" research possible.

American Farmland Trust works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment.
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For more information, or to see a map of your state's threatened farmland, go to **www.farmland.org**.

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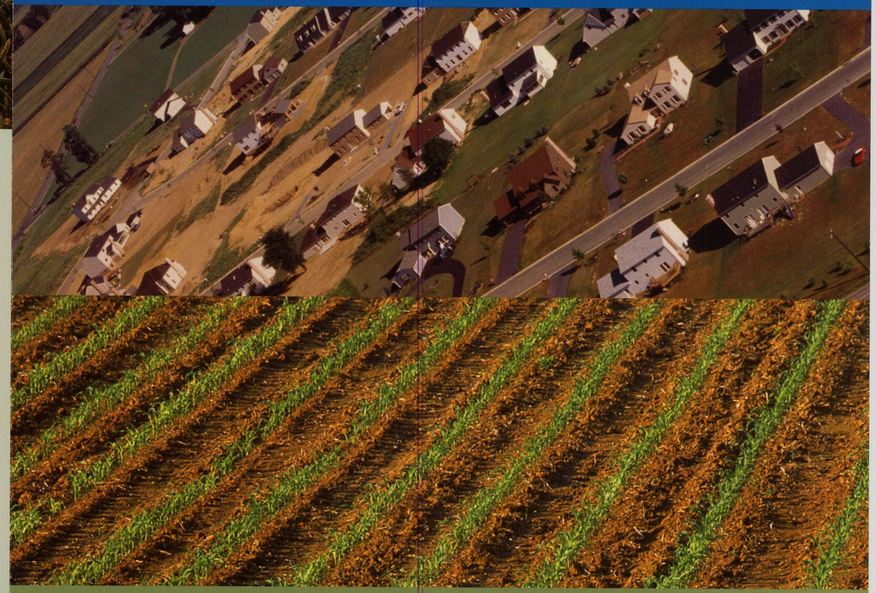
FARMING ON THE EDGE

SPRAWLING DEVELOPMENT THREATENS AMERICA'S BEST FARMLAND



AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST'S RESEARCH FINDS:

Loss of farmland to development is accelerating

Our highest quality farmland is threatened

Our food and open space are in the path of development

American Farmland Trust

The map of the U.S. to the right identifies our best—most fertile and productive—land threatened by development. The red areas represent the high-quality acres in the path of development, the green areas the high-quality acres less threatened. Every state in the nation lost some of its very best land to sprawling development. While this loss is regrettable, it is not inevitable. We know how to save our farmland; we simply must do more. Communities, states and now the federal government are working to protect this irreplaceable resource by:

- **Stopping the loss of our best farmland through effective planning and smart growth that directs development to less productive land;**
- **Permanently saving farms through publicly funded agricultural conservation easement programs;**
- **Supporting farming practices that enhance the environmental benefits of farmland; and**
- **Expanding efforts to increase the profitability of urban-edge farming.**

IN EVERY STATE WE ARE LOSING SPECIAL PLACES

Texas is the nation's number two agricultural state after California, with over $13.7 billion in sales. Texas is home to the fertile Rio Grande Valley, which produces grapefruit and vegetables, and the scenic and productive Blackland Prairie. Texas' vast ranchland, which also serves as important wildlife habitat, is threatened by fragmentation from development.

Georgia's agriculture is more than peaches and Vidalia onions. But Georgia's 40,000 farms, which lead the nation in production of peanuts, pecans and poultry, are threatened by the state's infamous urban sprawl and its interstates. The beautiful and productive coastal plain, land of farming, fishing and wildlife, can't compete with the movement toward the coast for second homes.

STATES LOSING THE MOST PRIME FARMLAND 1992-1997

State	Prime Acres Lost	Increase in Rate of Loss Over Previous 5 Years
TX	332,800	42%
OH	212,200	45%
GA	184,000	66%
NC	168,300	1%
IL	160,900	137%
PA	134,900	23%
IN	124,200	65%
TN	124,000	42%
MI	121,400	67%
AL	113,800	127%
VA	105,000	76%
WI	91,900	70%
NY	89,100	141%
SC	86,200	64%
CA	85,200	15%
MS	84,800	117%
LA	83,700	13%
KY	80,000	58%
AR	71,600	254%
MN	71,600	32%

Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory

Michigan's position between four Great Lakes helps make it the leading producer of dry beans, blueberries, tart cherries, cucumbers and many flowering plants. Yet low-density development across the state challenges Michigan's 46,000 farms. The Little Traverse Bay area has a unique agricultural microclimate, but its beauty creates a tug-of-war between farming and residential development.

Virginia's long agricultural history continues today. Agriculture is its top industry, with 41,000 farms covering 34 percent of the state. But all this is threatened by the ever-expanding urban areas of Washington, D.C. and Richmond. Even the farms of the bucolic Shenandoah Valley, rich in American history and in agricultural productivity, are vulnerable to the insatiable demand for land.

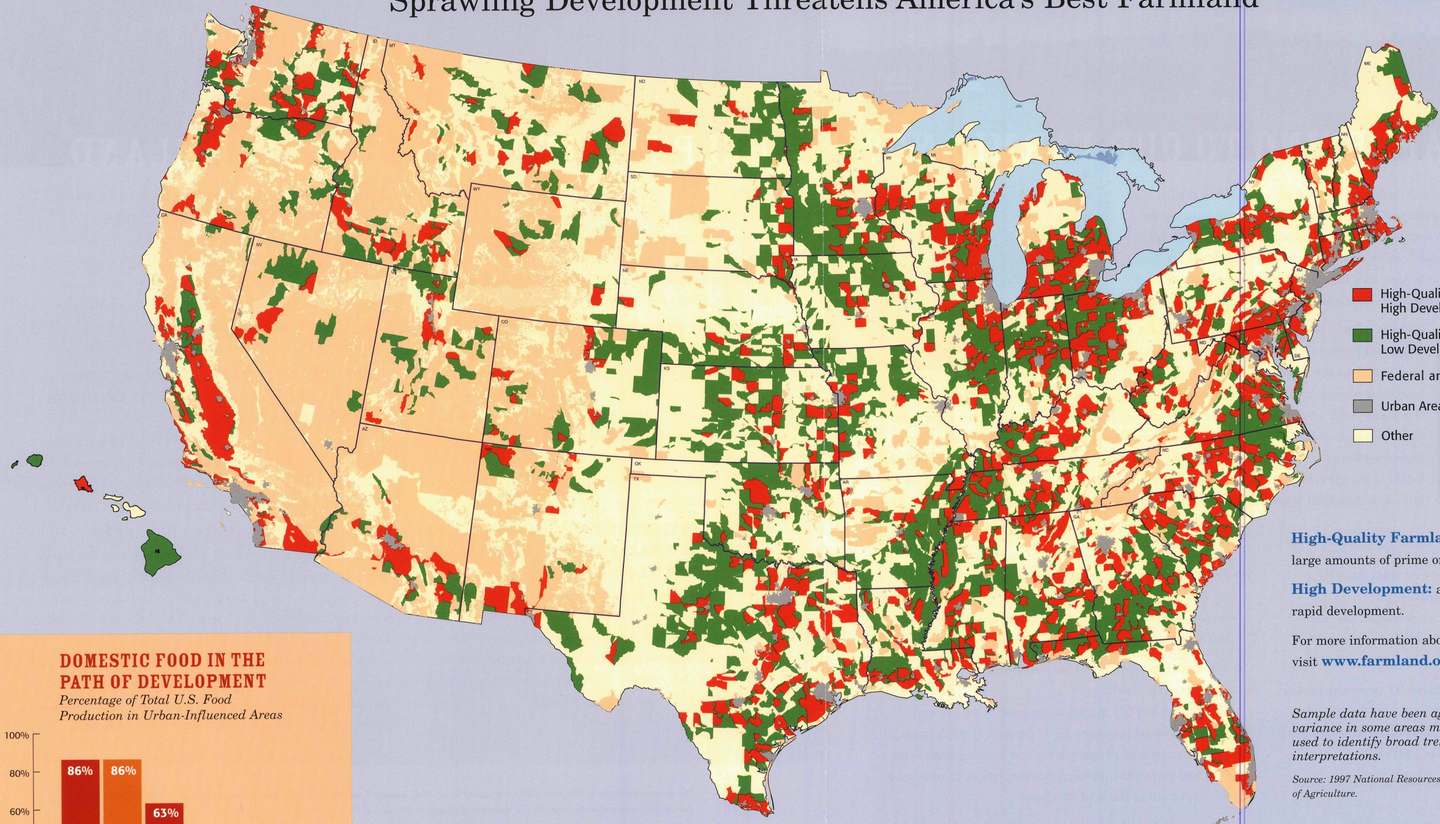
New York agriculture is integral to the state's economy and culture. New York is among the nation's leaders in producing milk, apples, grapes, sweet corn, cauliflower and cabbage. Sprawl or large-lot development threatens the Hudson River Valley, one of the most famous landscapes in America; western New York, agricultural engine of the state; and Long Island's North Fork, where farmland protection efforts launched 30 years ago still struggle to succeed.

Go to **www.farmland.org** to see your state's threatened farmland.

Source: 1997 U.S. Census of Agriculture and state published profile figures

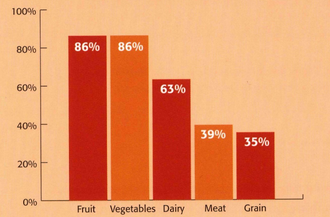
FARMING ON THE EDGE

Sprawling Development Threatens America's Best Farmland



DOMESTIC FOOD IN THE PATH OF DEVELOPMENT

Percentage of Total U.S. Food Production in Urban-Influenced Areas



Source: 1997 U.S. Census of Agriculture; USDA's Economic Research Service.

High-Quality Farmland: areas with relatively large amounts of prime or unique farmland.

High Development: areas with relatively rapid development.

For more information about *Farming On The Edge*, visit **www.farmland.org**.

Sample data have been aggregated; because statistical variance in some areas may be large, this map should be used to identify broad trends, not to make highly localized interpretations.

Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Transportation and Conservation *continued from page 3*

For more information:

Smart Growth America
www.smartgrowthamerica.com

National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse
www.enhancements.org

Red Hills Conservancy
www.ttrs.org

Blueprint 2000
www.talchamber.com

The Trust for Public Land
www.tpl.org

South Carolina Coastal Conservation League
www.scccl.org

recreation department to set up an adequate framework where this money can flow through and be used in the most effective way possible," says Slade Gleaton, director of TPL's Charleston office. "Even though it's not as much funding as we wanted it to be, it's a source of local funding for land conservation, and that's critical," he explains. "You have the opportunity to lead development—be proactive instead of reactive."

Keys to Success

In both Florida and South Carolina, proponents of the ballot measures relied on multi-pronged public education campaigns to convey their message. Among the tools they used: direct mail; signs on buses; newspaper, radio and television advertising; and presentations with key civic and community groups. Some additional features organizers believe are key to success:

- The actual ballot language. "It's always about the ballot language," says TPL's Baughman. "You have to assume that the ballot language is all the voter has to go on."
- Materials that address the particular interests of key audiences. "In some of the more rural areas, the green space issue is more important. In urban areas, mass transit is more important," says Graham of the Charleston initiative. In Leon County, the campaign produced some highly targeted direct mail pieces. For example, a flyer aimed at Republicans and Democrats over the age of 50 focused on how fiscal accountability was built into the proposal because the poll showed it was a key concern among these voters.
- Broad-based support. In both communities, diverse interests collaborated to support the initiative. In addition to bringing together environmental and business groups, support for the Leon County initiative crossed race, party and other demographic lines.

Reaching out to the African-American community was critical, says Baughman. The ballot measure will fund significant improvements in Tallahassee's south side, home to a significant percentage of the city's African-American population. "We knew the African-American vote could make or break the election." *B.H.*

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At the Junction of Transportation and Conservation

With traffic congestion clogging roads and sprawl replacing farmland and open space, some rapidly growing communities are pairing transportation and conservation in ballot initiatives. Yet, experiences in Florida and South Carolina suggest there's more to linking transportation and land conservation funding than packaging projects in a single referendum.

"Unless you have a plan that makes sense, even the most well-intentioned referendum combining transportation and conservation funding can produce negative results," says Ed Thompson Jr., American Farmland Trusts' (AFT) senior vice president for public policy.

With $720 million in county funds, Leon County, Florida, is embarking on a massive, 15-year effort to relieve traffic congestion, protect water quality and conserve land around the state capital, Tallahassee. The funding, provided through the extension of a one-cent local sales tax approved by voters, will begin in 2004. It will widen critical roads, but it will also pay for an array of open space, flood prevention and other improvements designed to keep Tallahassee an attractive place to live and work. Even though the bulk of the funding targets urban parts of Leon County, rural land protection advocates supported the measure because they believe it will help protect outlying rural areas by keeping development in the urban core.

In Charleston County, South Carolina, voters this November narrowly approved a half-cent local sales tax to fund a combination of transportation improvements and open space initiatives. The 25-year tax would generate $1.3 billion dollars: 65 percent for road construction, maintenance and drainage, 18 percent for mass transit and 17 percent

continued on page 2

How AFT Created Its 2002 Farming on the Edge Map

American Farmland Trust's 2002 "Farming on the Edge" map identifies places where concentrations of prime and/or unique farmland and critical food production regions coincide with rapid development. To understand recent trends, AFT combined and analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's revised 1997 National Resources Inventory (NRI), the 1997 Census of Agriculture and USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) studies.

The map conveys a sobering message about the irreplaceable loss of U.S. agricultural land. "We're seeing that high-quality farmland is threatened in every state," says AFT's Ann Sorensen, associate vice president for research. "The whole country is facing this challenge."

Final data from the 1997 NRI, which is the primary source for the map and contains important corrections from earlier releases, became available about a year ago, providing AFT with an opportunity to update its analysis of the relationship between actual land use changes and the nation's high-quality farmland.

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LANDWORKS

Connection

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In This Issue:

LANDWORKS
Serving the people who conserve the land

American Farmland Trust

LandWorks is a service of American Farmland Trust. Subscriptions are $125 per year and include quarterly issues of ***American Farmland*** magazine and *LandWorks* **Connection**, free research assistance, e-mail delivery of news briefs and action alerts, access to an exclusive Web site, reports and discounts on AFT publications and conferences.

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American Farmland Trust is a private, non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the nation's strategic agricultural resources. Founded in 1980, AFT works to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment.

Basic membership is $20 per year. For membership or general information about AFT, contact the National Office at 1200 18th Street, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC, 20036, (202) 331-7300, or connect to our Web page at www.farmland.org

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Transportation and Conservation *continued from page 1*

for parks and green space. As we go to press, the measure had passed by 600 votes after three recounts; but a lawsuit had been filed contesting the results.

A similar measure lost by less than 1 percent in 2000. The local conservation community, which supported the 2000 measure, finds fault with the 2002 initiative. "It's advocating infrastructure projects that will not relieve traffic congestion without any commitment to rural land protection," says Michelle Loy, land use program director of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League (SCCCL).

Historically, U.S. transportation spending patterns have had a significant impact on the development of open space. The federal government spends between $25 and $30 billion a year on transportation, most of which goes to state departments of transportation programs for highway construction.

Road construction is typically the first step in opening land to development, and improvements like widening roads and adding interchanges contribute to inefficient land use that threatens farmland across the country. By increasing access, highways also increase the price of land, adding another set of challenges for the farming community and farmland protection efforts.

"It's our contention that federal and state highway policies unnecessarily favor highway construction over other transportation priorities, making it that much harder for anyone to purchase farmland or to [protect it] through conservation easements," says Don Chen, executive director of Smart Growth America.

Congress is scheduled to reauthorize in 2003 the nation's primary transportation law, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Land protection and smart growth advocates are working to increase consideration of conservation needs in highway planning and to allocate more funding to mitigate the impact of road construction on farmland and open space. TEA-21 and its predecessor, ISTEA, included several provisions designed to address environmental impacts of transportation projects, including the Transportation Enhancements Program, which has provided more than $2.3 billion for pedestrian and bike paths, acquisition of scenic and historic easements and sites, and other projects.

"Road building has to occur in some cases. But it doesn't have to be unthoughtful," says Kathy Blaha, senior vice president of The Trust for Public Land (TPL), which released in November a study on the relationship between transportation policy and land conservation. Many communities "have struggled as highway-spawned subdivision and commercial development have outpaced the ability to prepare and direct growth," the report says. Far too often, funds and partnerships come too late, "after improved road access has escalated land prices and sprawl development has claimed some of the communities' most essential open spaces—limiting the impact of conservation."

Finding a Balance

In Leon County, nearly 60 percent of voters supported the ballot measure, despite an organized opposition with a catchy campaign slogan—"ax the tax." A poll conducted by TPL early in the campaign showed strong public support for protecting the "green" character of the greater Tallahassee community, which is known for its canopy roads.

"There was fear that we could lose that charm and natural character of our community," says Katherine Baughman, government affairs director for TPL's Southeast Region office. The poll showed that residents' top concern was traffic congestion associated with growth. Voters also were concerned about storm flooding, threats to drinking water supplies and better access to parks and natural areas.

The Leon ballot measure was based on a comprehensive plan and devotes significant resources to improving and expanding parks, greenspace and alternative transportation. The plan, Blueprint 2000, calls for multi-use corridors that incorporate pedestrian paths, bikeways and critical stormwater handling. "This measure was difficult for some traditional environmental groups to swallow, but we saw a package of measures that try to tackle growth problems in communities holistically," says Baughman.

Even though funding is directed primarily at urban areas, it is key to the long-term protection of the working landscape north of Tallahassee, says Kevin McGorty,

Massachusetts' Farmers Grow Their Own Future

Massachusetts vegetable growers have turned a potential marketing pickle into a red-hot opportunity. When Minnesota-based M.A. Gedney Co. announced in April that it was putting its Cains pickle factory in South Deerfield, Massachusetts, up for sale, the 16 farmers who supplied its 27 tons of cucumbers and five tons of peppers knew there was trouble for agriculture in the fertile Connecticut River Valley. Gedney said it would shut the factory down if it couldn't find a buyer within three months. By July, four of the farmers—together with an official at the factory—put together a deal to buy the plant and its brands of pickles, relishes, peppers and sauces.

"We're looking forward to growing for ourselves. ... It's the freshest idea we've had in agriculture in about 10 years."

—David Wojciechowski, co-owner, Harvest Farm

Beginning as Jewett Pickle Co. in the 1890s, the pickle factory remained a local, family operation until being bought by Cains in 1995. Five years later, Gedney purchased the business to tap into the food service market, including restaurants and schools.

Less than a year before announcing plans to sell the plant, Gedney unveiled a new line of spicy pickles and relishes and more than doubled nearby warehouse space. The factory, estimated to pump $10 million annually into the local economy, had even begun working with nearby growers in the mid-1990s to supply hot peppers and cherry peppers for the first time. Cains employed about 145 workers, their ranks swelling to 400 in summer.

This spring's announcement drew more than 65 potential buyers, and three solid offers were made—including the successful deal by which local farmers grew their own future. In July, the plant was purchased by a partnership called Oxford Foods LLC, consisting of Harvest Farm of Whately, Donald Patterson's farm in Sunderland, and Stephen Bruscoe's farm and the Teddy Smiaroski farm in Hatfield, along with former Cains CEO Jeffrey Morse.

Gary Gemme of Harvest Farm, at an Oxford Foods press conference.

Photo courtesy of The (Greenfield, Mass.) Recorder/Adam Orth

Because it was literally rooted in the land that produces product, partner Bernie Smiaroski says, this was the best option for saving the plant. "We have a history there and know what that plant needs," he says. "We've been with it for over 40 years."

In addition to working capital from First Pioneer Farm Credit and financing from Citizens Bank of Boston, the deal was aided by a loan and grant package from the state worth over $900,000. "It was definitely worth it, because of preserving jobs and preserving open space," says Smiaroski. One of the other bidders—a socially responsible investment firm that had planned to involve employees, farmers and the community in ownership—agreed to step aside to help the local Oxford Foods LLC partnership succeed.

Although Gedney retains Cains retail business—about one-third of the operation—the Massachusetts plant continues co-packing, industrial and food-service production under the Cains, Oxford, Deerfield, Sugarloaf and Max's brands, with customers from Maine to Florida and as far west as the Mississippi River, including Sysco Foods and Friendly Ice Cream Co.

"The impact of the business on the local economy cannot be understated," says Joshua Morse, marketing manager of Oxford Foods LLC. "Had the deal not gone through, hundreds of jobs would have been lost, and it would have been detrimental to the local economy and to local growers here."

Though most of its raw produce comes from its four partner farms—representing 2,300 acres—Oxford buys from other local growers as needed. "We have quality, thriving growers here," Morse says. The new partnership, with about 135 of its full-time workers still on the payroll, wants to continue supporting those growers as it expands business.

While the factory changed hands as this year's harvest ripened, he adds, "We haven't missed a beat. It's been a seamless effort. We're excited about it."

The growers themselves are just as enthused and pleased that their efforts could serve as an example for farmers elsewhere. "Perseverance pays off," says Smiaroski.

Harvest Farm co-owner David Wojciechowski adds, "Every time Cains changed hands, there would be some real anxiety and discomfort for growers. We're looking forward to growing for ourselves. ... It's the freshest idea we've had in agriculture in about 10 years." *R.D.*

From Greenbelt to Foodbelt *continued from page 5*

"By working with beginning farmers, land trusts have a chance to build relationships with folks who will be living on and protecting lands in the future."

—Steve Schwartz, California FarmLink

The Small Farms Initiative represents a significant change in the way the district works with farmers and ranchers, and district officials have tried to structure the program so that its tenant farmers are successful. "It's really been a learning process for us because it's something so new and so different from what we usually do," Brennan Hunter says. Important components include:

- Forming partnerships with nonprofit organizations that have expertise in supporting small farms, urban fringe agriculture and farm tenure issues;
- Establishing a deliberate selection process that enlists the community and uses evaluation criteria reflecting both the objectives of the program and site-specific considerations; and,
- Reaching out to non-farming neighbors to address their concerns and begin teaching them about how their food is grown.

From early on, the district enlisted the help of nonprofits and other public agencies with expertise in working with small-scale and beginning farmers, including California FarmLink, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Select Sonoma, and University of California Cooperative Extension. "These partnerships have been invaluable," says Brennan Hunter. "They gave us the opportunity to capitalize on their experience and expertise. It really helped us to have the perspective of the farmer."

California FarmLink, for example, played a pivotal role: publicizing the initiative to the agricultural community, drafting criteria and organizing a broad-based committee to evaluate applications. "We asked detailed questions about the farmer's experience, marketing plan, financial plan, production strategies. We wanted to make sure people who would be leasing these properties would be successful because it was a pilot project," says Executive Director Stephen Schwartz. "Because these properties are adjacent to residential areas, we wanted farmers who would look at that and see an opportunity, not a threat. Additionally, the criteria gave priority to farm operations that are compatible with farming on the urban fringe and to farmers with insecure land tenure."

The selection process culminated earlier this year when Wayne James of Tierra Vegetables and Ken Orchard of Orchard Farms, signed five-year, renewable leases. The leases reflect a variety of considerations, including the farmers' needs, neighbors' concerns, and previous district policies and commitments. Homes cannot be built on the properties, but the leases allow the farmers to build outbuildings such as storage sheds and farm stands. The leases also restrict the use of agrichemicals, hours of operation and use of raw manure.

Neither farmer used conventional agrichemicals or raw manure, says Brennan Hunter. "Both emphasized that they wanted to be good neighbors." Still, both Brennan Hunter and Schwartz say it would be preferable to offer land that already has agricultural improvements on it to give the farmer the option of living on the land.

The initiative has had other repercussions. Media coverage resulted in landowners approaching the district about helping them with lease options and about linking with a beginning farmer for a potential farm transition. Moreover, other California land protection organizations have shown interest in working with California FarmLink on similar projects.

"It's estimated that half of American farmers are farming leased land," Schwartz says. "Leasing may be a better strategy for beginning farmers to establish their operation."

Schwartz says that by helping the next generation of farmers secure land tenure, land protection organizations can provide a crucial bridge between the conservation community and the agricultural community. "The agricultural community is interested in productive farmland, not viewsheds. By working with beginning farmers, land trusts have a chance to build relationships with folks who will be living on and protecting lands in the future, which supports land trusts' long-term mission."

At the same time, projects such as the Sonoma Small Farms Initiative have great potential to build community support for land conservation. "In the long term, a key to whether community will value agricultural land and open space includes how much value the community is getting from that land," says Schwartz. "We believe the smaller-scale and organic farms can be more compatible with farming on the urban fringe. Having a diversified, beautiful farm can add to the nutrition of the community, the economy and the beauty of the area. And it helps that community cherish the land and want to protect it." *B.H.*

For more information:

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
www.sonoma-county.org

California FarmLink
www.californiafarmlink.org

Community Alliance with Family Farms
www.caff.org

National Farm Transition Network
www.extension.iastate.edu

LAY OF THE LAND

Percentage of farmers and ranchers who are 55 and older	**60.6%**
Percentage of civilian labor force 55 and older	**11.7%**
Ratio of farmers and ranchers 65 and older to those 25 and younger	**24 : 1**
Decline in number of farmers and ranchers younger than 35	**54%**

Source:
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) based on 1997 Census of Agriculture (USDA) and Current Population Survey of Bureau of Labor Statistics.

executive director of the Red Hills Conservancy, which strongly supported the bond issue. "We firmly believe that in order to save rural landscapes and prevent sprawl, land trusts and other conservation organizations need to be concerned about the urban environment and making sure it is an attractive place to live and work," he says. Blueprint 2000 is "a great example of a community's effort to make its urban environment more livable and therefore directly have the benefit of keeping the rural area in low-density development."

Lure of the Open Road?

In Charleston, South Carolina, this year's bond issue also grew out of a comprehensive planning process that seeks to respond to high development pressure, particularly in the county's coastal communities and Sea Islands, says county planner Dan Pennick. Between 1973 and 1984, the urban area grew more than 250 percent, according to a 2000 study into a proposed purchase of development rights (PDR) program. The study identified approximately 46,100 acres of strategic rural land in the county, which if protected would stabilize the county's rural landscape.

"We think there is no other way to protect our quality of life. We've got major congestion problems on our roadways. We've seen a great deal of growth, both in terms of population and development, so there's a great need to preserve the natural environment that exists in the area."

—Mary Graham, Charleston, South Carolina, Metro Chamber of Commerce

At the same time, polls suggested that it was possible to build greater voter appeal for both land conservation efforts and the county's burgeoning transportation needs by combining the issues. "Chambers are not normally big proponents of tax increases, but we think there is no other way to protect our quality of life," says Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce spokeswoman Mary Graham. "We've got major congestion problems on our roadways. We've seen a great deal of growth, both in terms of population and development, so there's a great need to preserve the natural environment that exists in the area."

As the 2002 referendum took shape, the county council increased emphasis on road projects and decreased allocations for land protection from about one-third to 17 percent of the projected $1.3 billion in revenue. It also shelved a plan to create a PDR program, which had been a recommendation of the planning effort behind the 2000 referendum. Funding for the county's mass transit agency, whose current revenue source expires at the end of December, remained in the referendum. "In certain segments of the population it will be the reason people go out and vote," Graham said shortly before the vote.

While the business community, particularly the hospitality industry, remained a strong supporter of the initiative, support in the environmental community withered. SCCCL opposed the measure, saying it lacks balance among the funding categories, accountability, direction, procedures for adequate public input and review, and a PDR program to permanently protect farmland. SCCCL recommended that the county council correct these deficiencies and present a new referendum to the voters in two years.

As an example of the problems with the measure, Loy points to council plans to extend a six-lane interstate highway onto John's Island, where resorts and new homes are popping up among historic farms. Road improvements will make John's Island "within 15 minutes of the airport and business district, but there are no funds earmarked to protect the farmland in that area," she says, predicting that if passed the bond will accelerate development of important farmland in that area.

While TPL still "supports the green space provisions," it withdrew its offer to contribute financially to the campaign. "If the sales tax passes, we will work with the county parks and

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Farming on the Edge Map *continued from page 1*

"We're seeing that high-quality farmland is threatened in every state. The whole country is facing this challenge."

—Ann Sorensen, American Farmland Trust

For more information:
American Farmland Trust
www.farmland.org

Data and Definitions
AFT used both NRI and Census of Agriculture data to determine the acreage of prime and/or unique farmland. Conducted by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the NRI is a nationwide inventory of non-federal lands that tracks land cover and land use. The Census of Agriculture is conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. It provides comprehensive data on agricultural production and operator characteristics.

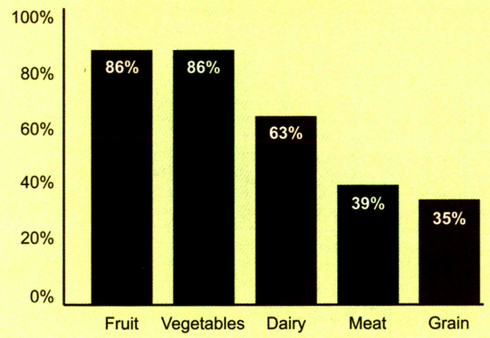
For the purposes of the 2002 Farming on the Edge map, AFT relied on the NRCS definition of prime farmland (land most suitable for producing feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops) and acres identified in the 1997 Census of Agriculture as those used to grow vegetables, grapes and horticultural crops, including fruits, nuts and berries. The latter was AFT's proxy for unique farmland—defined by NRCS as land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of high-value food and fiber crops. Unique farmland has a special combination of soil quality, location, growing season and moisture supply.

The mapping unit system underlying the map was developed by researchers Margaret Maizel and George Muehlbach for the USDA Soil Conservation Service in 1992. It is the accepted methodology for interpolating NRI's data into area maps. The technique incorporates intersections of counties, watershed boundaries and USDA-defined Major Land Resource Areas to create 33,000 mapping units. The average size of a mapping unit is 92 square miles. Typically, several mapping units are in each of the nation's 3,140 counties. The statistical variance in some of the mapping areas may be large, however, and the number of mapping units per county varies considerably.

AFT defined development as the change in NRI's urban and built-up land and rural transportation land occurring within each of the mapping units between 1992 and 1997. Two threshold tests identified places where concentrations of prime and/or unique farmland coincide with the most intense development: mapping units that in 1997 had greater than their statewide mapping unit average of prime and/or unique farmland, and mapping units that experienced a rate of development greater than their statewide mapping unit average, providing they had at least 1,000 acres developed between 1992 and 1997.

Mapping units with a greater amount of prime and/or unique farmland than their state average and a higher amount of development than the statewide average are shown in red. AFT categorizes those areas as threatened. The data do not allow researchers to conclude definitively that development in each red area is actually taking place on the high-quality farmland in that mapping unit. Areas shaded in green also exceeded the average amount of prime and/or unique farmland found in mapping units in that state, but they experienced a lower than average amount of development or had less than 1,000 acres of development. Major metropolitan areas are shaded gray, and federal lands are tan.

Domestic Food in the Path of Development
Percentage of Total U.S. Food Production in Urban-Influenced Areas.



Source: 1997 U.S. Census of Agriculture; USDA's Economic Research Service.

"The map is most useful at the state level," says AFT's GIS coordinator Mike Eley. Because it relies on information that is defined by statewide averages, it identifies patterns of land use change within each state. It should not be used to make localized interpretations or comparisons between states, Eley says. In many counties, the map confirms patterns of agricultural use and development that people perceive as they travel the countryside. But Eley warns that some agricultural localities where farm and ranch lands are being converted may not show up as red—or green—in the map.

"Many factors play a role in determining an area's inclusion in or exclusion from a red or green category," he explains. "These factors are a result of the point sampling technique used and the geographic calculations needed for spatial representation of point data across large areas." The size and shape of mapping units that result from intersecting three different geographic boundaries can influence an area's designation. Another key factor is how soil quality in a particular county compares to the statewide average. In order for an area to be identified as red it would first have had to be designated as an area with an above average amount of prime and/or unique land. "Not all of the land being farmed is classified as high-quality farmland using our methodology," Eley notes.

Domestic Food in the Path of Development
An added feature is a bar chart that shows food production in the path of development. The chart was created by calculating the percentage of the total market value of agricultural products by groups of commodities produced in urban-influenced counties. "It shows that much of the food we eat is grown in counties in and around urban areas," Sorensen observes. Eighty-six percent of the nation's fruit, 86 percent of the nation's vegetables and 63 percent of the nation's dairy products are produced in urban-influenced areas.

Primary data sources for the chart were the 1997 Census of Agriculture and the USDA ERS's Urban Influence Codes. AFT regrouped the nine ERS codes into two categories: "Urban Influenced" (ERS urban influence designations 1-5) and "Not Urban Influenced" (ERS designations 6-9). AFT used Census of Agriculture data to determine market value by food group.

States Losing the Most Prime Farmland 1992-1997
Finally, AFT ranks states that lost the greatest amount of prime land between 1992 and 1997 according to the 1997 NRI. The states with the most prime farmland lost to development during that period include Texas, Georgia, Michigan, Virginia and New York.

In many cases, Sorensen says, growth is not the problem so much as wasteful land use. Census information shows that between 1982 and 1997, U.S. population grew by 17 percent, while the NRI shows that urbanized land grew by 47 percent. "The rate at which population is growing is nowhere near the rate that we are developing land," she says. *B.H.*

From Greenbelt to Foodbelt

In a unique new initiative, Sonoma County, California, has begun converting public land into production agriculture by leasing acreage in community greenbelts for vegetable, fruit, herb and flower production.

The Sonoma Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District's Small Farms Initiative is designed to foster agricultural diversity, grow food on Sonoma's urban fringe and provide land tenure to farmers in a region where property values are so high that few can afford them.

This year the district signed five-year leases with two farmers on two parcels it owns in fee. The farmers, selected through a competitive evaluation process, grow vegetables organically or biodynamically and market them through community supported agriculture (CSA) arrangements and roadside stands.

If the pilot leases are successful, the district hopes to make available up to 150 additional acres of greenbelt land ringing the county's eight cities, says district planner Kathleen Brennan Hunter. The district is a public agency that protects agricultural land and open space, primarily by purchasing conservation easements and, occasionally, by purchasing land in fee. A quarter-cent sales tax provides about $15 million annually for Sonoma's land conservation program.

Photo courtesy of Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

For Ken Orchard, a Sonoma grower leasing county land, farmers' markets are a critical piece of his marketing strategy.

"It's an evolution in how we look at open space," says Brennan Hunter. Much of the county's greenbelt acreage was originally purchased as "community separators" to prevent development. But when the district updated and revised its acquisition plan in 2000, there was strong community interest in encouraging agricultural diversity and supporting small-scale growers by leasing land the district owns in fee to these farmers.

"These lands have good soils. In most cases they're adjacent to residential areas," Brennan Hunter says. Many direct marketing opportunities accompany the challenges from farming close to residential areas. "It's an interesting prospect for a farmer."

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American Farmland Trust

National Agricultural Statistics

Number of farms (US total) 1.9 million

Farm size	**Number of farms**	**% of US total**	**% of total farm acres**
1 - 99 acres	859,381	45	4
100 - 499 acres	700,708	37	17
500 - 999 acres	175,690	9	13
1,000 - 1,999 acres	101,468	5	15
More than 2,000 acres	74,612	4	51

Farm Sales	**Number of farms**	**% of US total**	**% of total farm acres**
Less than $10,000	962,966	51	2
$10,000 to $24,999	274,040	14	2
$25,000 to $49,999	170,705	9	3
$50,000 to $99,999	158,160	8	6
$100,000 or more	345,988	18	87

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of full-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent on the farm) 961,560
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of part-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent off the farm) 950,299
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Average age of farmers 54
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Median age of general labor force 37
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Total number of US jobs in 1998 160.2 million
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Percent of farm and farm-related jobs in 1997 15%
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Market value of agricultural products sold in 1997 $196.9 billion
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total land area of the United States (acres) 2.3 billion
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Land in farms (acres) 931.8 million
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Percent of total land area in farms 41%
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Agricultural land (i.e., crop, pasture, range and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program)
converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) 6.2 million
Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory

Forest land converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) 4.8 million
Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory

For technical assistance, call AFT's Farmland Information Center at (800) 370-4879.

Total land area (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	3.1 million
Land in farms (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	359,313
Percent of total land area in farms Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	12%
Forestland (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	1,758,600
Agricultural land converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (i.e., crop, pasture and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	8,100
Forestland converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	31,700

For technical assistance, call AFT's Farmland Information Center at (800) 370-4879.

American Farmland Trust

Maine Agricultural Statistics

Number of farms - Total	**5,810**		
Farm size	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm acres**
1 - 49 acres	1,717	29	3
50 - 179 acres	2,110	36	18
180 - 499 acres	1,441	25	35
500 - 999 acres	398	7	22
1,000 - 1,999 acres	113	2	12
2,000 acres or more	31	1	10
Farm sales	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm sales**
Less than $2,500	1,923	33	1
$2,500 to $9,999	1,494	26	2
$10,000 to $24,999	798	14	3
$25,000 to $49,999	438	7	3
$50,000 to $99,999	390	7	6
$100,000 to $499,999	626	11	31
$500,000 or more	141	2	54

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of full-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent on the farm) 2,872
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of part-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent off the farm) 2,938
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Average age of farmers 54.4
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total number of Maine jobs in 2000 795,485
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Percent of 1997 employment in farm and farm-related jobs	16.7%
Production	1.5%
Farm inputs	0.1%
Processing and marketing	3.0%
Wholesale and retail trade	10.7%

Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Market value of agricultural products sold in 1997	$438,673,000
Percent from crop production	48%
Percent from livestock production	52%

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total land area (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	19.8 million
Land in farms (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	1.2 million
Percent of total land area in farms Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	6%
Forestland (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	17,691,100
Agricultural land (crop, pasture and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	21,700
Forestland converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	86,800

For technical assistance, call AFT's Farmland Information Center at (800) 370-4879.

American Farmland Trust

Massachusetts Agricultural Statistics

Number of farms - Total **5,574**

Farm size	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm acres**
1 - 49 acres	3,119	56	10
50 - 179 acres	1,690	30	31
180 - 499 acres	614	11	33
500 - 999 acres	121	2	15
1,000 - 1,999 acres	26	1	9
2,000 acres or more	4	<1	2

Farm sales	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm sales**
Less than $2,500	1,616	29	<1
$2,500 to $9,999	1,371	25	2
$10,000 to $24,999	753	14	3
$25,000 to $49,999	507	9	4
$50,000 to $99,999	468	8	7
$100,000 to $499,999	687	12	31
$500,000 or more	172	3	53

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of full-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent on the farm) 2,927
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of part-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent off the farm) 2,647
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Average age of farmers 54.9
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total number of Massachusetts jobs in 2000 4,111,592
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Percent of 1997 employment in farm and farm-related jobs 12.3%
- **Production** 0.3%
- **Farm inputs** 0.0%
- **Processing and marketing** 1.2%
- **Wholesale and retail trade** 10.1%

Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Market value of agricultural products sold in 1997 $454,404,000
- **Percent from crop production** 79%
- **Percent from livestock production** 21%

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total land area (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	5.02 million
Land in farms (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	518,299
Percent of total land area in farms Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	10%
Forestland (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	2,743,700
Agricultural land converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (i.e., crop, pasture and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	27,200
Forestland converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	171,700

For technical assistance, call AFT's Farmland Information Center at (800) 370-4879.

New Hampshire Agricultural Statistics

Number of farms - Total **2,937**

Farm size	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm acres**
1 - 49 acres	1,209	41	5
50 - 179 acres	1,005	34	24
180 - 499 acres	571	19	40
500 - 999 acres	120	4	19
1,000 - 1,999 acres	25	1	8
2,000 acres or more	7	<1	4

Farm sales	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm sales**
Less than $2,500	1,121	38	<1
$2,500 to $9,999	848	29	3
$10,000 to $24,999	363	12	4
$25,000 to $49,999	187	6	4
$50,000 to $99,999	143	5	7
$100,000 to $499,999	230	8	33
$500,000 or more	45	2	49

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of full-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent on the farm) 1,260
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of part-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent off the farm) 1,677
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Average age of farmers 54.3
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total number of New Hampshire jobs in 2000 786,709
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Percent of 1997 employment in farm and farm-related jobs 13.7%
- **Production** 0.7%
- **Farm inputs** 0.1%
- **Processing and marketing** 1.2%
- **Wholesale and retail trade** 10.9%

Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Market value of agricultural products sold in 1997 $149,467,000
- **Percent from crop production** 49%
- **Percent from livestock production** 51%

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total land area (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	5.7 million
Land in farms (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	415,031
Percent of total land area in farms Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	7%
Forestland (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	3,932,300
Agricultural land converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (i.e., crop, pasture and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	7,300
Forestland converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	54,300

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New York Agricultural Statistics

Number of farms - Total **31,757**

Farm size	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm acres**
1 - 49 acres	7,725	24	2
50 - 179 acres	11,319	36	17
180 - 499 acres	9,327	29	38
500 - 999 acres	2,530	8	23
1000 - 1999 acres	688	2	13
2000 acres or more	168	1	7

Farm sales	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm sales**
Less than $2,500	7,707	24	<1
$2,500 to $9,999	6,908	22	1
$10,000 to $24,999	4,269	13	2
$25,000 to $49,999	2,673	8	3
$50,000 to $99,999	3,335	11	9
$100,000 to $499,999	5,883	19	42
$500,000 or more	982	3	43

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of full-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent on the farm) 18,426
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of part-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent off the farm) 13,331
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Average age of farmers 53.5
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total number of New York jobs in 2000 10,548,192
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Percent of 1997 employment in farm and farm related jobs 12.0%
- **Production** 0.6%
- **Farm inputs** 0.1%
- **Processing and marketing** 1.5%
- **Wholesale and retail trade** 9.3%

Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Market value of agricultural products sold in 1997 $2,834,512,000
- **Percent from crop production** 35%
- **Percent from livestock production** 65%

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total land area (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	30.2 million
Land in farms (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	7.2 million
Percent of total land area in farms Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	24%
Forestland (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	17,702,000
Agricultural land converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (i.e., crop, pasture, and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) (acres) Source:1997 National Resources Inventory	132,100
Forestland converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	177,200

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Rhode Island Agricultural Statistics

Number of farms - Total 735

Farm size	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm acres**
1 - 49 acres	438	60	13
50 - 179 acres	221	30	37
180 - 499 acres	61	8	30
500 - 999 acres	13	2	14
1,000 - 1,999 acres	1	<1	2
2,000 acres or more	1	<1	4

Farm sales	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm sales**
Less than $2,500	210	28	<1
$2,500 to $9,999	182	25	2
$10,000 to $24,999	109	15	4
$25,000 to $49,999	73	10	5
$50,000 to $99,999	64	9	10
$100,000 to $499,999	78	10	33
$500,000 or more	19	3	46

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of full-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent on the farm) 370
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of part-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent off the farm) 365
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Average age of farmers 54.1
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total number of Rhode Island jobs in 2000 583,996
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Percent of 1997 employment in farm and farm-related jobs 13.0%
- **Production** 0.2%
- **Farm inputs** 0.0%
- **Processing and marketing** 1.7%
- **Wholesale and retail trade** 10.3%

Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Market value of agricultural products sold in 1997 $48,200,000
- **Percent from crop production** 82%
- **Percent from livestock production** 18%

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total land area (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	668,793
Land in farms (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	55,256
Percent of total land area in farms Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	8%
Forestland (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	387,200
Agricultural land converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (i.e., crop, pasture and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	1,000
Forestland converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	2,300

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American Farmland Trust

Vermont Agricultural Statistics

Number of farms - Total **5,828**

Farm size	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm acres**
1 - 49 acres	1,457	25	2
50 - 179 acres	1,925	33	16
180 - 499 acres	1,862	32	44
500 - 999 acres	469	8	24
1,000 - 1,999 acres	100	2	10
2,000 acres or more	15	<1	4

Farm sales	**Number of farms**	**% of total**	**% of total farm sales**
Less than $2,500	1,504	26	<1
$2,500 to $9,999	1,359	23	2
$10,000 to $24,999	719	12	2
$25,000 to $49,999	344	6	3
$50,000 to $99,999	569	10	9
$100,000 to $499,999	1,190	20	51
$500,000 or more	143	3	33

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of full-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent on the farm) 3,300
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Number of part-time farmers (more than 50% of time spent off the farm) 2,528
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Average age of farmers 53.1
Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total number of Vermont jobs in 2000 405,680
Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Percent of 1997 employment in farm and farm-related jobs 16.5%
- **Production** 2.5%
- **Farm inputs** 0.2%
- **Processing and marketing** 1.6%
- **Wholesale and retail trade** 11.3%

Source: Economic Research Service Fact Sheet

Market value of agricultural products sold in 1997 $476,344,000
- **Percent from crop production** 13%
- **Percent from livestock production** 87%

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

Total land area (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	5.9 million
Land in farms (acres) Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	1.26 million
Percent of total land area in farms Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture	21%
Forestland (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	4,150,200
Agricultural land converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (i.e., crop, pasture and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program) (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	4,800
Forestland converted to developed land between 1992 and 1997 (acres) Source: 1997 National Resources Inventory	7,900

For technical assistance, call AFT's Farmland Information Center at (800) 370-4879.

American Farmland Trust

SOURCES OF DATA
NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC AND LAND USE DATA SOURCES

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Description
The Census of Agriculture is the only source of uniform, comprehensive data on United States agricultural production and operator characteristics. The census compiles data on:

- Land use and ownership;
- Crop and livestock production;
- Value of agricultural products sold;
- Value of agricultural assets;
- Operator expenses;
- Federal farm program participation and payments; and
- Operator characteristics such as age, days worked off farm, and principal occupation.

The census compiles information for each U.S. county and state, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The census is conducted every five years during years ending in "2" and "7". Report forms are mailed to approximately 3.2 million individuals, businesses and organizations that can be identified as associated with agriculture. Federal law requires recipients to complete the form.

Historically, the Census of Agriculture was conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. However, beginning in 1997, the Census of Agriculture was turned over to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Changes in reporting resulted in an apparent increase in the number of farms and acres of farmland in many counties and some states. NASS expanded the definition of agriculture in 1997 to classify Christmas tree and maple syrup production as agriculture instead of forestry. In addition, NASS counted entire farms enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In the past, whole farms enrolled in CRP were left out of the census. Finally, NASS collected and interpreted the data differently than the Bureau of the Census.

Availability
NASS compiles the census data into tables that are published in hard copy and electronically. The census can be found at many libraries and government offices, and is posted on the NASS Web site at: www.nass.usda.gov/census.

Limitations

- Land use data in the census cannot be used to determine agricultural land converted to other uses.
- The expanded definition of agriculture in 1997 makes it difficult to compare 1997 land use data with previous census data.

NATIONAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

Description

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is the most comprehensive natural resource database in the United States. It is a statistically valid survey of the nation's nonfederal lands that documents natural resource conditions and trends, including the conversion of agricultural land to developed uses. Important data elements include, but are not limited to:

- Land cover and land use (e.g., developed areas, water areas, cropland and forestland);
- Soil erosion;
- Selected conservation practices;
- Wildlife habitat; and
- Wetlands.

The NRI is conducted every five years by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in cooperation with Iowa State University's statistical laboratory. National resource inventories were performed in 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992 and 1997. Data elements were consistent for the last four inventories and provide information on trends over 15 years. NRI figures are statistically significant at the national and state level.

The NRI compiles data from 300,000 Primary Sample Units and about 800,000 sample points. For the 1997 NRI, NRCS staff primarily interpreted aerial photographs and used other remote sensing techniques to monitor natural resource conditions and trends. They supplemented this information with on-site visits and ancillary materials, such as field office records and NRCS soil surveys. Inventory data cover the 48 contiguous states, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and for 1997, the Pacific Basin and portions of Alaska.

Availability

NRCS compiles the data in graphs, maps and tables. Summaries and comprehensive reports on individual resource topics are available. The NRI is also posted on the NRCS Web site at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI.

Limitations

- NRI figures are estimates based on a statistically valid sample, not absolute values based on a census;
- Although county level figures may be available, the statistical reliability can be low at this level; and
- The NRI may under-report low-density residential development.

ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE (ERS) FACT SHEETS

Description

The USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) fact sheets contain frequently used agricultural statistics and socioeconomic data assembled into a concise format. Data are presented on:

- Population, employment and income (all sectors of the economy);
- Farm characteristics; and
- Farm financial indicators.

The ERS compiles data from the Census of Agriculture, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics and Economic Research Service to create the fact sheets and revises them frequently to include the most current data.

Availability

There are 50 individual "State" fact sheets and one for the "United States," which incorporates data from 50 states. The fact sheets are posted on an ERS Web site at: www.ers.usda.gov/StateFacts.

STATE POPULATION RANKINGS SUMMARY

Description

The State Population Rankings Summary is a report by state for the period 1995 to 2025 that shows:

- Population projections;
- Rate of change;
- State population rankings; and
- Migration gains and losses.

The U.S. Census Bureau has developed a methodology to make estimates of the current population by adding to or subtracting from the measured components of population change (births, deaths, immigration, emigration) that are included in each census.

The U.S. Census Bureau Population Division collects population data and posts this report and a series of other reports based on that data.

Availability

The individual state summary reports are available on a U.S. Census Bureau Web site at: www.census.gov/population/www/projections/9525rank.html.

REVISED 1997 NATIONAL RESOURCES INVENTORY: CHANGES IN LAND COVER/USE

ABSTRACT

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is the most comprehensive natural resource database in the United States. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conducts the NRI every five years. NRCS field staff collect data from 300,000 Primary Sample Units and about 800,000 sample points. Researchers at Iowa State University expand this information to develop a national picture of natural resource conditions and trends. In addition to providing information about soil erosion, wildlife habitat, wetlands and conservation practices, the NRI is the best source for agricultural land conversion data. The 1997 NRI originally was released on December 7, 1999. Revised 1997 data, dated December 2000, were released on January 9, 2001, and continue to show accelerated conversion of productive agricultural land to developed uses. This fact sheet provides general information about the NRI and a more detailed discussion of changes in land cover/use.

HIGHLIGHTS

Revised 1997 NRI data show that between 1992 and 1997, more than 11 million acres of land were converted to developed uses. Of this amount, more than 6 million acres were agricultural land (crop, pasture, range and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program). This translates to an average annual agricultural land conversion rate of roughly 1.2 million acres per year between 1992 and 1997—a 51 percent increase above the average annual rate reported for 1982 to 1992.

DESCRIPTION

The National Resources Inventory is a statistically valid survey of the nation's nonfederal lands. It documents natural resource conditions and trends, including the conversion of agricultural land to developed uses. Important data elements include, but are not limited to:

- Land cover and land use (e.g., developed areas, water areas, cropland and forest land);
- Soil erosion;
- Selected conservation practices;
- Wildlife habitat; and
- Wetlands.

The NRI is conducted every five years by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in cooperation with Iowa State University's statistical laboratory. National resource inventories were performed in 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992 and 1997. Data elements were consistent for the last four inventories and provide information on trends over 15 years. NRI figures are statistically significant at the national and state level. Data also may be statistically valid for some counties.

FUNCTIONS AND PURPOSE

The NRI was developed to fulfill NRCS' reporting requirements and to help measure the effectiveness of conservation practices and programs. Resource inventory activities were authorized by the federal Rural Development Act of 1972. The act directed the U.S. secretary of agriculture to create a land inventory and monitoring program and to report on the conditions and trends of soil, water and related resources at regular intervals not to exceed five years. The Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 and the Food Security Act of 1985 underlined the need for a periodic assessment of the nation's natural resources.

DATA COLLECTION

NRCS field staff collect data from 300,000 Primary Sample Units (PSUs) and about 800,000 sample points. PSUs are blocks of land that range in size from 40 to 640 acres. Sample points are specific locations within PSUs identified by map coordinates.

For the 1997 NRI, NRCS staff primarily interpreted aerial photographs and used other remote sensing techniques to monitor natural resource conditions and trends. They supplemented this information with on-site visits and ancillary materials, such as field office records and NRCS soil surveys. Data were compiled from July 1997 through October 1998.

Some data elements are collected for entire PSUs; others are collected only at sample points. Estimates for land converted to developed uses are based on changes observed over the entire PSU. NRCS field staff use a set of standard, detailed guidelines to make their determinations. For example, to qualify as "built-up," strip development must occur at a specified density—five structures per half mile along one side of the road or five structures per quarter mile along both sides of the road. For this reason, the NRI does not capture low-density development.

Researchers at Iowa State University expand data gathered from PSUs and sample points to develop a picture of natural resource conditions and trends. Information collected prior to 1997 was reviewed and adjusted during the most recent inventory to correct past reporting errors and update figures obtained from other sources. Additionally, in March 2000, NRCS discovered a programming error in the statistical software used to calculate estimates for the inventory. Revised data, dated December 2000, were released in January 2001. All figures, including those from earlier reporting periods, have changed. For these reasons, comparisons between two reporting periods *must* be based on the data released with the revised 1997 NRI.

USES

The NRI is the most comprehensive natural resource database in the United States. In addition to providing information about soil erosion, wildlife habitat, wetlands and selected conservation practices, the NRI is the best source for agricultural land conversion data. The NRI reports on *all* land use changes over a given time period. In particular, the NRI documents the amount of crop, CRP, range and pasture land converted to developed uses over a given time period.

Many individuals use the Census of Agriculture to try to understand agricultural land conversion. However, the census only captures *net* changes in "land in farms" and does not explain what happened to land taken out of production or where additional acres came from. Decreases in "land in farms" do not necessarily equal the amount of farmland developed. In addition, recent reporting changes, like the expansion of "land in farms" to include short woody crops and entire farms enrolled in the CRP, have inflated farmland figures in many regions and make it difficult to compare statistics over time. The census supplies a wealth of information about agricultural production and operator characteristics, but it does not provide a complete picture of land use trends.

LIMITATIONS

- NRI figures are estimates based on a statistically valid sample, not absolute values based on a census;
- Although county level figures may be available, users must be aware that statistical reliability can be low; and
- The NRI may under-report low-density residential development.

AVAILABILITY

The revised 1997 NRI, dated December 2000, was released on January 9, 2001. Press releases, information about data collection and statistical reliability, and national results are available at: http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/NRI/1997/. National statistics are presented in maps, other graphics, "Highlights of the 1997 NRI" and the "1997 NRI Summary Report." The summary report provides a good overview. It contains background information about the NRI and a series of figures and tables that portray selected national data. State data tables will be posted on NRCS state office Web pages and the official NRI Web site located at: http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/NRI/1997/state_info.html. The directory for NRCS state offices is located at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/NRCstate.html. Additional statistics not included in the summary tables can be obtained by contacting NRCS NRI specialists. NRI specialists are typically stationed in NRCS state headquarters.

HOW TO READ THE TABLES

Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the summary report depict changes in land cover/use for four different reporting periods. The numbers represent thousands of acres. Row headings refer to land cover/use at the beginning of the reporting period; column headings refer to the land cover/use at the end of the reporting period. Read the table horizontally to determine how a land use was distributed at the end of the reporting period. Read vertically to find out where land cover/use reported at the end of the reporting period came from. Instructions are provided at the bottom of each table.

For example, to determine how much agricultural land was developed between 1992 and 1997, read down the "Developed Land" column in Table 8 (Attachment A). The table shows that 2,902,100 acres of crop; 7,700 acres of CRP; 1,979,800 of pasture, and 1,283,200 acres of rangeland were converted to developed uses over five years.

To calculate the net change in land cover/use categories, subtract the total acres reported at the beginning of the reporting period (displayed in the last column of Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8) from the total acres reported at the end of the reporting period (displayed in the last row of Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8). For instance, between 1992 and 1997, developed land increased by 11,217,000 acres.

The state-level tables may break out data into additional land cover/use categories. Specifically, "Developed Land" may be reported in state tables as "Urban Built-Up" *and* "Rural Transportation;" "Cropland" may be expressed as "Cultivated Cropland" *and* "Non-Cultivated Cropland;" and "Water Areas and Federal Land" may be reported as "Small Water," "Census Water" and "Federal." These combinations are referenced in the glossary that accompanies the NRI summary report.

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED TERMS

Developed Land: A land cover/use category equal to the sum of urban built-up areas and rural transportation land.

Land Cover/Use: General categories used to present NRI data that account for all the surface area of the United States. Land cover is the vegetation or other kind of material that covers the land surface. Land use is the purpose of or human activity on the land.

Other Rural Land: A land cover/use category that includes farmsteads and ranch headquarters, other farm structures, field windbreaks, barren land and marshland.

Rural Transportation Land: A land cover/use category that includes highways, roads, railroads and associated rights-of way outside urban and built-up areas. This category includes private roads to farmsteads or ranch headquarters, logging roads and other private roads.

Urban Built-Up Areas: A land cover/use category that includes residential, industrial, commercial and institutional land, construction sites, public administrative sites, railroad yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, landfills, sewage treatment plants, dams and spillways, small parks within urban and built-up areas, and highways, railroads and other transportation facilities if they are surrounded by urban areas. Parcels less than 10 acres that are surrounded by urban built-up land also are included.

A complete glossary of terms is available at:
http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/NRI/1997/summary_report/original/glossary.html.

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ATTACHMENT A

Summary Report
1997 National Resources Inventory
Revised December 2000

Table 8—Changes in land cover/use between 1992 and 1997

Land cover/use in 1992	Land cover/use in 1997								
	Cropland	CRP land	Pastureland	Rangeland	Forest land	Other rural land	Developed land	Water areas & federal land	1992 total
	1,000 acres								
Cropland	362,606.3	2,062.6	9,210.5	1,555.5	1,937.1	1,722.2	2,902.1	318.9	382,315.2
CRP land	2,250.8	30,464.9	796.6	297.2	184.4	40.2	7.7	0.3	34,042.1
Pastureland	8,523.5	96.6	106,543.2	1,562.3	6,272.3	897.1	1,979.8	172.7	126,047.5
Rangeland	1,977.8	21.1	696.4	400,770.5	1,600.8	779.0	1,283.2	250.9	407,379.7
Forest land	759.9	22.9	1,887.7	1,170.0	395,273.0	950.2	4,771.1	372.2	405,207.0
Other rural land	707.7	27.9	753.5	474.0	1,447.4	46,744.4	448.5	22.4	50,625.8
Developed land	27.9	0.0	24.0	53.7	76.0	2.8	86,850.3	0.0	87,034.7
Water areas and federal land	144.0	0.0	80.0	94.0	164.2	5.6	9.0	450,980.9	451,477.7
1997 total	376,997.9	32,696.0	119,991.9	405,977.2	406,955.2	51,141.5	98,251.7	452,118.3	1,944,129.7

1992 land cover/use totals are listed in the right hand vertical column, titled "1992 total." 1997 land cover/use totals are listed in the bottom horizontal row, titled "1997 total." The number at the intersection of rows and columns with the same land cover/use designation represents acres that did not change from 1992 to 1997. Reading to the right or left of this number are the acres that were lost to another cover/use by 1997. Reading up or down from this number are the acres that were gained from another cover/use by 1997.

Conserving The Family Farm

A Guide to Conservation Easements for Farmers, other Agricultural Professionals, Landowners and Conservationists

by
Annette Lorraine

The NH Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture is an informal network of organizations and individuals dedicated to enhancing the social, economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture in New Hampshire. The Coalition brings together members of the farm community and the non-farming public with agricultural conservation and community development professionals to implement a shared vision:

Agriculture is a valued and vital part of New Hampshire's economy, environment and communities. A dynamic agriculture makes New Hampshire a better place to live, work and visit. The future of agriculture in New Hampshire depends on profitable farms that can nurture families and be passed on to future generations.

The Coalition recognizes that keeping good agricultural land available and affordable is essential if farming is to stay viable in New Hampshire. This guide provides information and educational resources about land conservation to specifically address the needs of working farm families.

It was written in the winter of 2002. Readers should be aware that laws and grant programs will change over time. The guide summarizes main ideas, and offers details only as examples, in order that readers might be aware of common issues and be able to locate resources providing up-to-date information.

The purpose of this guide is to help farm families identify *questions* to discuss with their agricultural, legal, financial and conservation advisors. All landowners considering a conservation easement on their farms should take advantage of professional expertise early in the process.

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The New Hampshire Coalition
for Sustaining Agriculture

UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Conserving The Family Farm

A Guide to Decision-Making for Farmers, other Agricultural Professionals, Landowners and Conservationists

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Introduction

What is a conservation easement?

A conservation easement is a legal agreement that permanently restricts most development on a parcel of land. The agreement is between a landowner and a certain type of entity such as a land trust, a private non-profit conservation organization that specializes in land conservation that holds the restrictions and has the legal right to enforce the agreement. People enter into conservation easements to forever protect and enhance conservation resources such as agricultural soils, active farms, tracts of woodlands, water quality, trails, scenic areas or wildlife habitat.

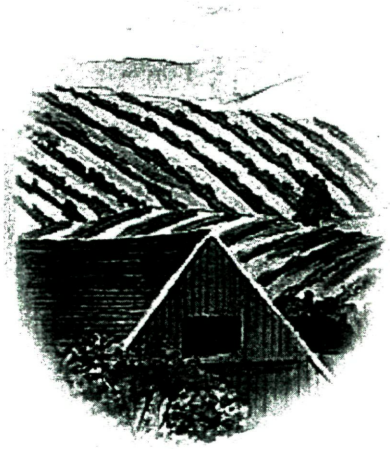
Conservation easements can provide for and encourage agricultural and forestry activities. Besides future development, conservation easements can restrict other activities that would be potentially harmful to the land's conservation resources, such as stripping topsoil or waste disposal. Conservation easements can provide financial advantages to landowners and be a tool to facilitate business, tax and estate planning. Conservation easements leave land under private ownership and management. The decision to enter into a conservation easement is always voluntary. More detailed descriptions of the legal requirements of conservation easements, the organizations that can hold them (referred to as "land trusts" here for simplicity), financial consequences, and sample easement provisions are described in more detail in this guide.

Why do landowners donate or sell conservation easements?

Farmers who enter into conservation easements have worked hard, invested and depended a great deal on their land, and have a strong desire to see sustainable management continue beyond their ownership. In witnessing the changes in the New Hampshire farm landscape over the last few decades, they are all too aware that, following subdivision, "asphalt is the last crop." [1] Farmers, who are good stewards of their land and want to see that stewardship continue, have two choices: either enter into a conservation easement, or roll the dice and place their hope in the good intentions of all their heirs and future buyers. Farmers who convey conservation easements exercise their property rights to leave a legacy, a legacy that ensures a more affordable, wholesome and beautiful asset for their heirs and successors as well as the entire community.

The decision to enter into a conservation easement is based on a combination of unique personal circumstances. But besides living their personal ethics, most farmers recognize other benefits:

- Landowners can be paid for placing a conservation easement on their land.



- Some landowners are able to donate an easement without being paid and then may be able to use a federal income tax deduction.
- Some landowners are partially paid, and may be able to use the amount of the discount they give as a federal income tax deduction. This is called a "bargain sale."
- Land can be an expensive asset, but it isn't always liquid. It can't easily be converted to cash without selling it outright. Payment for a conservation easement gives liquidity to the land, allowing the landowner to receive income for part of the value of the property, the development value, while continuing to own the land and see it continue in agricultural stewardship. Farmers have used conservation easement sale income to pay off debt, purchase additional land, diversify the farm operation, build a retirement fund, subsidize a sale so the land is affordable to the next generation, or provide an inheritance to children who don't want to continue to farm.
- Conservation easements may lower the value of the land, which can work to the advantage of some landowners for tax purposes. This could include reducing the size of the taxable estate, or their own or their heirs' taxable basis.
- Lowering the value of the land can also help when it's time for a landowner to sell, or a farm business to split assets. A lower value can help make the land more affordable for a business partner or a young farmer who could never afford to buy the land otherwise.
- In New Hampshire, a landowner of a permanently conserved parcel of land may apply to have the "current use" property tax assessment rate, without being enrolled in the state current use assessment program.
- Parcels of land that abut conserved land often have a higher value since the land will be guaranteed scenic views and fewer neighbors. Some farmers retain abutting land without a conservation easement, knowing it will increase in value with conserved land nearby.

The decision whether to sell a conservation easement or donate one is based on a combination of factors such as the landowner's need and the availability of funds. Landowners should consult with their tax advisors as well as a local land trust familiar with New Hampshire grant programs and fundraising to make this determination. The sources of funds used for paying farmers for conservation easements are scarce and competitive and the processes for a sale are often lengthy. Generally, if a farmer has such a strong income such that she or he can use a tax deduction in the full amount of the conservation easement (for more detail on tax benefits, see p. 7), then that landowner should consider donating a conservation easement. Often payments for conservation easements are combined with a partial donation by the landowner selling at a price less than fair market value. This "bargain sale" situation can be a win-win for a landowner who ends up netting the same profit by paying less federal income tax, as well as the land trust that doesn't have to raise funds for the entire value of the conservation easement.

Is a conservation easement appropriate for every farm?

Conservation easements aren't always the right tool for the job. They don't suit everyone, or fit all circumstances. Likewise, conservation easements aren't a cure for all New Hampshire's agricultural challenges, but conservation easements play an important role within the larger framework of social, market, political and environmental forces that shape agriculture in New Hampshire. On an individual basis, conservation easements may not be appropriate for farmers in the following situations:

- Some landowners may be uncomfortable with the idea of permanent restrictions on their land.
- When a farmer doesn't own 100% interest in his or her land, the other interest holders may object to entering into a conservation easement. These other interest holders might be co-owners or business partners, or even a past owner who might have kept a right to buy the property back with a "right of first refusal."
- When land is too highly mortgaged or the farm has substantial losses, a mortgage-holder may not accept a conservation easement that reduces the value of the land. It may make more financial sense to first fix the problems causing the losses, or even sell the land at its highest value.
- Sometimes the value of a conservation easement isn't high enough to meet the landowner's needs. (The value of a conservation easement is the difference in value between the land with and without restrictions as determined by an appraisal.)
- Sometimes there is stiff competition for conservation grant funding, thus not every project will be funded.
- If potential grant payments turn out to be too low so a donation or partial donation ("bargain sale") of a conservation easement is the only alternative, some landowners can't use the tax benefits associated with a tax deduction.
- Some landowners are unwilling to seek the help of professionals for legal, tax or estate planning advice.
- Sometimes grant programs intended to pay landowners for conservation easements have no funds.
- Some landowners are uncomfortable knowing a conservation organization like a land trust or governmental entity will make regular monitoring visits to their land.

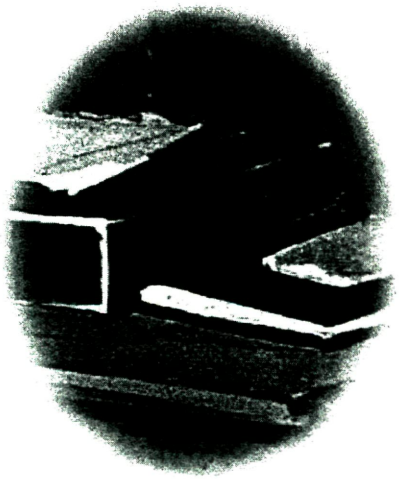
What do conservation easements mean to the larger community?

Undeveloped open space brings a quality of life to New Hampshire residents that is beyond value. Farms bring unique benefits to a community by providing expansive scenic views, corridors for wildlife, groundwater recharge areas, fresh local food

products, as well as opportunities for recreation and education. And there are tangible, measurable benefits as well. "Fiscal impact studies," or "cost of community services" studies in various New Hampshire communities consistently document the value to towns in hard dollars of retaining undeveloped agricultural and forested lands.[2] These studies show property taxes on farms, at the current use rate, not only pay for the farms themselves, but create a surplus to help pay for the losses created by residential service demands. Farms don't require the same extent of police, fire, road maintenance and educational services as residences. Farms are more similar to commercial and industrial uses in this regard.

Nevertheless, farmland is disappearing all across the country at an astounding rate, and New Hampshire is no different. Despite the benefits of farms, the market economy doesn't pay for the many indirect values that farms provide. While conservation easements can't solve the shortfalls of the market economy, they can offer a one-time influx of funds to a farm operation and ensure that farm's land will always be available for agricultural activities within a community.

How does a conservation easement affect a farm operation?



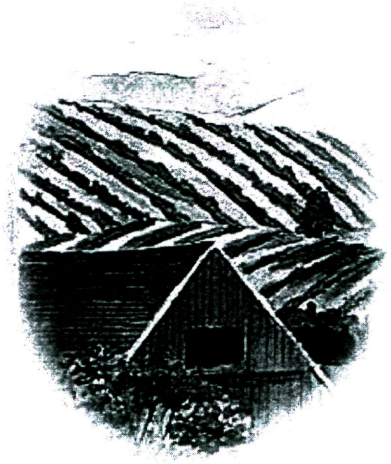
If the conservation easement was written to be farm-friendly, the farm operation can continue without much noticeable difference. The land trust staff will contact the landowner periodically and send a monitor out to walk the conserved land. Naturally it is preferable if the lines of communication between the farmer and the land trust stay open so neither make unintentioned errors. For example, if the farmer prefers the land trust monitor to wear disinfected rubber boots because of potential biohazard concerns, the farmer should feel free to make that known. Land trust staff do their best to be responsive to farmers' requests and concerns and to answer questions promptly about conservation easement terms.

Once a conservation easement is placed on farmland, the owners as well as any operators, managers or lessees need to be aware of the terms. Many conservation easements ask the landowner to give prior notice or obtain prior written approval from the land trust for certain activities that have high impacts on soil productivity, such as building new structures or changing water courses. They may also require the landowner to have a forestry plan or farm soil management plan in place. Since each conservation easement document is unique, the impacts on a farm operation are determined by its own conservation easement.

Financial Implications for Farm Businesses

Conservation easement transactions have an effect on a farmer's business, tax and estate planning. Farmland is often a farm family's most valuable asset. Conservation easements will alter that value. Although land trusts may pay a farmer, using that income will present its own challenges, especially when the farmer intends to foster long-term farm viability, continued family ownership, or an eventual transfer of the farm.

Conservation easements may affect a farm's business ability to borrow money in the future. Conservation easements will interrelate with estate planning techniques including wills, trusts, closely held businesses and corporations. Every farm family will find it essential to obtain advice personal to their situation from an objective tax professional and their banker when considering a conservation easement.



Valuation

The value of a conservation easement is determined by a professional appraisal. The appraiser first determines the value of the land as it is, as well its potentially highest and best use (the "before" value) and then assess what the value would be if the land were subject to a certain conservation easement (the "after" value). The difference between the two values equals the fair market value of the conservation easement or "development rights." The appraiser must be an objective professional qualified to appraise development rights according to standards set out by the Internal Revenue Code and regulations.

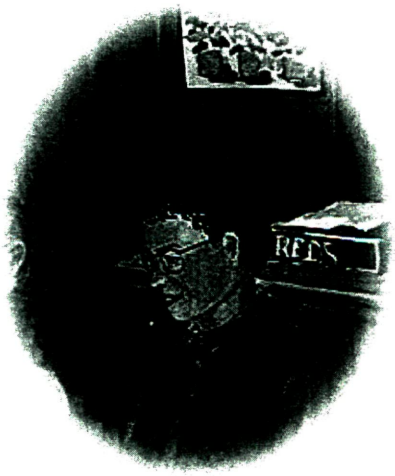
To adequately do the job, the appraiser needs to have in hand all the proposed details of the conservation easement transaction, namely, all the conservation easement terms, the specific parcels and configuration of land the conservation easement will cover, as well as any other related agreements such as an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (see p. 22). The appraiser must also appraise the land and development rights using comparables close to the date of the appraisal. The appraiser can't speculate hypothetically on what could happen in the future, or use any subdivision proposals other than what the current local zoning regulations would allow. This type of appraisal is more expensive than a typical fair-market-value appraisal, and takes time to schedule and complete. Land trusts will have lists of appraisers experienced in this type of appraisal, and can tell you whether there is funding to help cover the costs.

Payments to Landowners

When a landowner needs to sell a conservation easement, a land trust may try to find the funds to pay the fair market value of the easement. Most land trusts aren't endowed well enough to have those funds readily available, and so must accumulate the funds from grants, fundraising, or a combination of the two. Land trust staff are experienced in seeking and obtaining funds, so they evaluate land projects in terms of grants available at the moment as well as the fundraising potential of a project.

Making the decision to sell a conservation easement, and then actually doing it, can be a lengthy and complex process. In deciding whether it's a good option for everyone with an ownership interest, a farm family needs to decide how the income will be spent and seek independent professional advice as to the consequences to the: farm business, taxes, heirs, estate plan, or to the transfer of the farm. Simultaneously, a land trust can advise on available funding, the pros and cons of the available funding program's easement requirements, and the process. With successful completion of a conservation project the landowners will be paid. If planned well, they will be in a position to manage the resulting income for the benefit of their farm, rather than pay excess taxes.[3]

Donations



When landowners find themselves in a sound financial position and higher tax bracket, they may prefer receiving a significant tax deduction instead of income. In these cases, landowners who want to conserve their land can donate a conservation easement as a charitable gift. Assuming it meets the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code (see p. 12), they can claim a tax deduction in the amount of the appraised fair market value of their development rights. If, because of income limitations they can't claim the entire deduction in the tax year they sign the conservation easement, the IRS allows a "carry-over" of up to five additional years.

A landowner would reach this decision after consulting with a tax advisor, and a land trust can assist with the donation process. The process of donating a conservation easement is quicker and more streamlined than the process for being paid. It is still a legal real estate transaction and so may take several weeks or months to complete. Your local land trust can explain the process and timing. Landowners can help expedite the process by providing maps, previous title work, answering questions and making decisions about the optional terms within a conservation easement. With the closing, the landowner can claim a tax deduction for the tax year the conservation easement was signed. If, due to income limitations the entire tax deduction can't be used that year, the landowner can carry the remainder over until the next year, or for an additional five years. The tax deduction is claimed on a simple one-page IRS Form 8283 submitted with the landowner's tax return. The appraiser

signs the form to confirm the value and the land trust signs the form to confirm the gift of conservation easement was made.

It is worth noting that many landowners choose to donate conservation easements even when they can't use a tax deduction and can't be paid. While this isn't an option for most farmer-owned businesses, some landowners feel strongly enough about conserving their land that they do it with no financial incentive. Conservation easements can always be donated or bargain-sold by landowners through their will or trust. This allows landowners complete flexibility in their land management during their lifetime, but ensures their land will be conserved on their death. Landowners considering an easement through their will should talk with a legal professional as well as a prospective land trust so adequate arrangements can be made in the estate planning documents.

Bargain Sales

When a landowner decides to sell a conservation easement, but either can't be paid the full fair market value due to fundraising limitations, or doesn't need to be paid full fair market value, this presents a prime opportunity for a bargain sale. The "bargain" refers to the discount the landowner gives to the land trust purchasing the onservation easement. The landowner can claim the amount of the discount, the difference between fair market value as appraised and the amount the landowner is actually being paid, as a charitable contribution and use it as a tax deduction.

The process will run much the same as the process for payment for a conservation easement, but in the end, the landowner will both receive a payment as well as submit a form to the IRS for a tax deduction. A tax professional can run the numbers and advise how beneficial a bargain sale tax deduction will be. It may turn out the tax deduction can offset the tax bill resulting from the income the landowner is paid for the conservation easement, netting the landowner an after-tax profit essentially the same as if he or she had been paid full fair market value.

Tax Effects

Conservation easements affect income and land valuation, and affect a landowner's federal and property tax obligations. With the right planning, conservation easements can benefit landowners and their heirs with lower taxes. Because the tax consequences are so intertwined with business and estate planning, a farm family should seek professional assistance early in the process of considering a conservation easement.

Property Taxes

Conservation easement restrictions on land will lower its value which, in turn, may affect the land's property tax assessment. The

appraisal determines this new value of a conserved property (see p. 5). If a landowner shares the appraisal and signed conservation easement with the town, the town assessing officials may use this information to re-assess the land. Or, more commonly, landowners and town officials in New Hampshire rely on the state's current use property tax assessment rates. New Hampshire law allows a landowner of permanently conserved land to apply to have the "current use" assessment rate, without being enrolled in the state current use assessment program.[4] To apply, the landowner completes a one-page form called a "Conservation Restriction Assessment Application" or PA-60, and submits it to the town, which processes it like a current use application.

Income Taxes

Conservation easements can affect a landowner's federal income taxes in two ways. First, if a landowner is paid, that "gain" is a taxable income. Second, if a landowner donates or bargain-sells an easement, the landowner is entitled to a federal income tax deduction.

Prior to being paid for a conservation easement, a landowner will want to seek professional tax advice because there are ways to lower the potential tax bill. One option to offset income taxes is by a bargain sale that results in a tax deduction. Another option might be for the land trust to pay the landowner by installment payments – so the payment and resulting income is spread out over more than one tax year, allowing some landowners to remain in a lower tax bracket. Or, a tax professional might recommend a change in the way the farm business is owned, for instance, to a partnership or S-corporation. If a farm is looking at buying more land, the farm business may be able to combine that purchase with a sale of a conservation easement in the form of a "like-kind exchange" and avoid paying income tax altogether. These are just some examples for reducing income taxes, the savings from which will more than cover the cost of early professional advice.

Donations of conservation easements or bargain sales are considered "charitable gifts" by the tax code, which enable a landowner to claim a tax deduction. However, tax law places limitations on the maximum tax deduction a landowner may take in each tax year, based on the landowner's income. Generally, for a gift concerning land or conservation easements, the amount a landowner can deduct in one year is limited to 30% of his or her adjusted gross income. If the entire deduction can't be used in one year, the remaining deduction can be carried over for up to an additional five years after the year of the original gift. In some cases, landowners can elect to claim a deduction worth up to 50% of their adjusted gross income, but the tax code limits the amount of the tax deduction to the amount of the property's "basis" (usually the price originally paid for it, minus improvements). The 50% election isn't helpful when a property has gained in value over the years, but a taxpayer who recently purchased the land, or who is seriously ill or expecting a large immediate drop in income may find the 50% election helpful. Again, a tax professional can run the numbers and steer a landowner efficiently through the maze of tax regulations.

Estate Taxes

Conservation easements can be helpful in lowering the value of the land, therefore lowering the value of the property, part of the "estate" on which estate taxes are based. Federal estate taxes are the taxes heirs might have to pay based on the value of property owned by the person who died. Farmers who want to leave valuable land to their children need to do estate planning to lower or eliminate the need for their children to pay estate taxes. Otherwise, some farm families find children who inherit valuable land must sell off land to pay the estate tax.

At this writing, Congress has enacted a tax law that seeks to phase out the federal estate tax. In 2002, $1 million of an estate's value is exempt from estate tax. The exemption amount increases to $1.5 million in 2004-2005 until the entire estate tax is eliminated in 2010. However, the new tax law is set to expire after 2010. Unless Congress votes to continue it, the estate tax will be reinstated in 2011 with a $1 million exemption at the year 2000 tax rates (considered high compared to the previous ten years). So, although some farm families may think the value of their estates aren't high enough to have to worry about estate taxes, they still need to consider how fast land values can rise, combined with the good chance the tax law may change drastically by the time they die.

Conservation easements may help in another way with estate taxes, assuming estate taxes aren't phased out completely. Heirs who inherit permanently conserved land may receive an additional exclusion from the estate tax of up to $500,000 beyond the value of the conservation easement itself.[5]

Ancillary, or extra costs of easement transactions

There are costs related to conservation easement transactions. In donated conservation easements, these are often borne or partially borne by the landowner. Circumstances vary depending on an individual land trust's protocol. Sometimes certain costs must be covered by landowners in the interest of preserving their tax deduction and the land trust's non-profit status.

When paying for conservation easements on working farms, land trusts may try to cover most of the ancillary costs through grants or fundraising. The exception would be for professional business, tax or estate planning advice, which should be paid by the farmer in order to assure objective advice individualized to that farm's situation. When landowners do find themselves footing the bill for any costs related to conservation easements, they may be able to claim the amounts as "miscellaneous itemized deductions" on their tax return.

Here are some costs one could anticipate in a conservation easement transaction and the parties responsible for covering those costs.

- **Appraisal** - This expense is sometimes borne by the land trust and reimbursed through grant funding, assuming the grant applications are successful. Some land trusts are unable to afford this with a large volume of potential projects and ask the landowner

to pay for or split the cost. Sometimes a landowner commissions and pays for the appraisal in the interest of getting a dollar value early in the process in order to have more specific discussions with professional advisors and the land trust. Alternatively, the parties can approach the town conservation commission or other potential donors in the region and request a tax-deductible donation to the land trust to cover the cost. In donated transactions, the landowner should bear the cost of the appraisal if he or she is making the donation for a federal income tax deduction. Appraisals for development rights can run from a low of $1,800 to over $5,000 depending on the complexity of the situation. Since appraisals need to be done early in the process, it isn't always possible to get grant funds to cover them. Such a significant investment signals a strong commitment from both parties to seriously explore the possibility of the purchase and sale of a conservation easement.

- **Land Trust Operation** - These expenses to a land trust can include staff time negotiating and drafting the conservation easement, applying for grants, and facilitating what can be a lengthy process. It can also include the land trust's stewardship endowment, the account a land trust sets aside in reserve for future enforcement. A land trust usually tries to get the grants or fundraising used to pay for the conservation easement to also cover its transaction costs. With donated easements, payment policies will vary by land trust.

- **Title Searches, Surveys, Environmental Site Assessments** - The land trust will want to make sure title (the record of the chain of ownership) is clear, the boundaries to the property are clear, and there is no hazardous waste on the property. A land trust may try to get grants or fundraising used for the transaction to cover these costs. With a donated conservation easement, these procedures may be handled by a land trust in-house. In either case, a landowner should check with the local land trust to see if these items are required, and if so, who is expected to pay for them.

- **Clearing Title** - If the land trust's search of land records at the county registry of deeds shows a problem with the title to the farm, the landowner will need to fix the problem. For example, a farmer might pay off a mortgage but forget to have the mortgage release form recorded. The landowner would need to find the release, or if it was lost, approach the former mortgage holder for a new release and signature and have it recorded. Another example is when a property is transferred by a deed but the deed was written in the wrong way. A landowner may need to get a corrective deed written, signed and recorded. If there are outstanding liens on the property, or boundary disputes, or an on-going lawsuit involving the land, a landowner will need to make arrangements to solve those problems before a land trust can pay for or accept a conservation easement.

When Forever is a Long, Long Time:
8 Questions to Ask Before You Sell Your Development Rights

At one time or another, many Northeast farmers have contemplated the sale of development rights for their land. Perhaps they have even talked about this idea in a conversation with a neighbor over a cup of coffee, with family members over dinner, or with a financial adviser when mapping out the future.

But moving from "contemplating" the sale of development rights to actually "selling" them often means working through a long, complex process. Along the way, you will probably interact with state and county governments, private land trusts, attorneys, financial advisers and neighbors. And you'll learn all about legal concepts such as "conservation easement," "ag preservation," "restricted land" and "perpetuity."

In short, making the decision to sell — or not to sell — a farm's development rights is not easy.

While it is clear that farmers love their land as much as they dislike the spread of condominiums and mini-malls across their rural landscape, the debate over whether they should restrict the future use of their land is a lot less clear.

Bill Zweigbaum, a business consultant with First Pioneer Farm Credit in Claverack, N.Y., has worked with many ag business owners on development rights issues. Bill says, "The first and foremost reason why Rural America and agribusinesses sell development rights to their land is for the preservation of agriculture and the safekeeping of their scenic landscapes."

Zweigbaum adds that it is also about individual farmers making personal, business, financial and tax management decisions that are right for their family and their livelihood. After all, it is a permanent decision that determines how a family can use its land now * and how future generations will be able to use it decades ahead.

To help you through this complex issue, this article offers eight important questions that each landowner should ask before signing on the dotted line.

1. Who will make the decision?

Selling development rights is a permanent decision. That's why every decision maker in your business needs to be 100 percent sure that the decision to sell is the right one. Consensus is critical.

According to Tunis Sweetman, a dairy farmer in Warwick, N.Y. who sold his development rights in 1998, "This process is very time consuming and can last two years or more. So be sure to bring in all family members who will be involved in the decision early. That way, you'll have no surprises."

2. Why do you want to sell?

Bill Zweigbaum advises that a good rule of thumb to follow when contemplating any "business-changing" transaction is to keep your long-term goals in mind. "Be absolutely clear why you are selling your rights," he says. Here are some common reasons why landowners sell development rights:

- *Money.* Many landowners want an influx of cash to retire debt, diversify enterprises, purchase buildings and equipment or buy land to expand the farm operation or secure rented land.
- *Family.* Some family members want to farm and others don't. Rather than sell the farm for its full market value and split the proceeds, some families sell development rights to provide equity for off-farm members while allowing on-farm members to control the land and continue to farm.
- *Preservation.* Owners of agricultural land relinquish development rights to keep their land forever green. If this sounds like you, also consider how the restriction will encumber future generations and, if you think your children's children will feel the same as you do about the land.

- *Retirement.* Selling development rights can provide retirement income * with options. That is, your proceeds from the development rights sale may afford you the luxury of reducing the price of some land to your children and gifting the remainder to them. Or it may allow you to sell the land at an affordable price to a young farmer who could never afford to buy the land at its market value.
- *Increased value of unrestricted land.* Some farmers retain a parcel of their best land, knowing that selling the development rights on land that abuts this parcel will increase its market value.

3. Do you understand the easement?

A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement between you (the seller) and the buyer (e.g., a governmental agency or private trust) restricting the future use of the land. When you finally sign on the dotted line, you are agreeing to restrict the future use of your property and its natural resources (i.e., farmland, woodland, water, wetlands, and/or wildlife habitats) according to the terms of the agreement. You are also legally binding all future owners of the land to these same restrictions.

So take your time. Since an easement is a complicated, legal document, it's a good idea to hire an attorney to protect your interests. Be absolutely clear about what is spelled out in the contract, including what uses of your land will be permitted and what uses will be prohibited. Negotiate terms that are important to you.

4. Should you keep some of the farm unrestricted?

Determine if you want to restrict your entire property or keep some parcels unrestricted to leave yourself options for future use. George Malia, an appraiser with First Pioneer Farm Credit in Enfield, Conn. and Riverhead, N.Y. and the former director of Connecticut's farmland preservation program, says, "You may want to keep a 20-acre parcel unrestricted so future generations can build their homes on the land. Or you may want to subdivide the parcel as approved building lots for sale when property values are higher. Or you may want land to fall back on for sale in the tough times."

5. How much cash will you have after taxes?

Liz Bayne, senior tax specialist with Yankee Farm Credit in White River Junction, Vt., advises farmers to look beyond their land's gross restricted value. "Think instead about the cash amount you will actually put in your pocket after paying taxes, legal fees, etc.," she says.

For example, if your land has been in your family for generations, you could be hit with a capital gains bill for up to 20 percent of the gain. Plus you may have state capital gains taxes and legal expenses and your lender may seek partial payment of your real estate loan since your collateral value is now reduced.

Liz adds, "It's a smart idea to talk to your tax expert once you know the restricted value of your land. A tax expert will prepare an estimated tax return for you so you'll see the potential tax impact of the sale. The expert will also offer management ideas to help minimize the impact."

6. Are you operating profitably?

Loan officers absolutely shudder when they hear of landowners selling development rights to pay off mounting losses. Loan professionals don't like to see people trying to fix a problem at the expense of their most valuable asset.

Instead, landowners should first fix the problems causing their losses. If they can't, then selling the farm at its greatest value may make sense. This may be appropriate when the only other option available is to exhaust cash resources by paying off creditors. Such a move might leave the landowner vulnerable. Subsequent events might force the landowner to sell the land at a lower value some day in the future.

7. Can you manage this change comfortably?

Steve Weir, branch manager of First Pioneer's Riverhead, N.Y. office, says that agricultural landowners are expert real estate economists who know how to reap the best appreciation and value from their land.

"When selling development rights," he says, "a landowner should be equally comfortable managing a different asset."

For example, if converting the proceeds from the sale of development rights into cash, stocks or bonds, landowners will want to be as comfortable managing cash or investments as they are managing their real estate.

Steve advises customers to give as much of their time and energy to managing new ventures as they did managing their real estate. "This is important to maintaining overall returns," he adds.

8. Will your investment make more money than the appreciation of land?

Steve Weir also says that farmers should be confident that their new investments with the net proceeds from the sale will be equal to or greater than the appreciation of the rights without the deal. For example, if you use your proceeds from the sale to invest in the stock market, you want to be reasonably certain that your money will appreciate at least at the same rate as your development rights would have. "Spend time on this financial analysis," Steve advises. "It is the key to the sale of development rights."

Cost of Community Services Studies:

Making the Case for Conservation

BY JULIA FREEDGOOD

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SMART GROWTH
NETWORK

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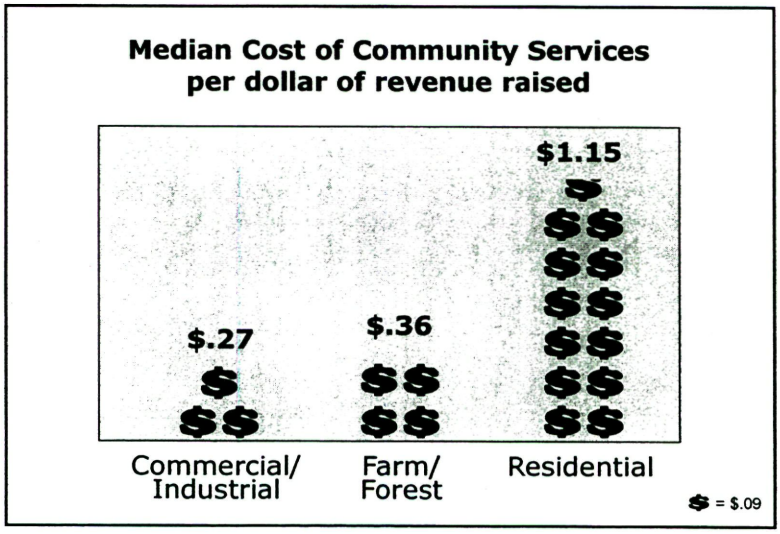
Executive Summary

83 COCS studies conducted in 19 states found that revenues from farm, ranch and forest landowners more than covered the public costs these lands incur.

Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies are a case study approach used to determine a community's public service costs versus revenues based on current land use. A subset of the much larger field of fiscal analysis, COCS studies have emerged as an inexpensive and reliable tool to measure the direct fiscal relationships between existing land uses. Their particular niche is to evaluate the overall contribution of agricultural and other open lands on equal ground with residential, commercial and industrial development.

As of January 2002, 83 COCS studies conducted in 19 states found that tax and other revenues collected from farm, ranch and forest landowners more than covered the public service costs these lands incur. Like traditional fiscal impact analyses, COCS studies show that on average, residential development generates significant tax revenue but requires costly public services that typically are subsidized by revenues from commercial and industrial land uses. The special contribution of COCS studies is that they show that farm, ranch and forest lands are important commercial land uses that help balance community budgets. Working lands are not just vacant land waiting around for development.



Introduction

Saving land saves money. While community residents demand expensive public services and infrastructure, privately owned working lands enhance community character and quality of life without requiring significant public expenditures. Their fiscal contributions typically are overlooked, but like other commercial and industrial land uses, farm, ranch and forest lands generate surplus revenues that help balance community budgets. This is an important lesson learned from 15 years of Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies. Understanding the balance of land uses and their fiscal relationships can help citizens and community leaders improve the dialogue about planning for future growth, economic development, agriculture and conservation.

© Historic Deerfield, Photo by Amanda Merullo

COCS studies measure the direct fiscal relationships between existing land uses.

COCS studies are a case study approach used to determine an individual community's public service costs versus revenues based on current land use. Their purpose is to uncover the fiscal contribution of working and open lands so they may be duly considered in the planning process. A recent and relatively narrow approach to fiscal analysis, COCS studies explore existing land use relationships. Their particular niche is to evaluate the overall contribution of agricultural and other open lands on equal ground with developed land uses.

Good planning involves outlining when, where and how residential, commercial and industrial development will occur. It also involves identifying land for recreation, agriculture, forest, flood control, wetlands, wildlife habitat or other conservation purposes. To make good decisions, local citizens and their leaders must know what they want to do and how much it will cost. COCS studies help inform

people of the relationship between how land is being used and the associated fiscal costs.

American Farmland Trust (AFT) became interested in growth-related issues in the 1980s because agricultural land is converted to development more commonly than any other type of land. According to USDA's National Resources Inventory (NRI), from 1992 to 1997 more than 11 million acres were converted to developed use—and more than half of that conversion was agricultural land.* Farmland is desirable for building because it tends to be flat, well drained and has few physical limitations for development. It also is more affordable to developers than to farmers and ranchers. Every year since 1992, more than 1 million agricultural acres were developed, and the rate is increasing—up 51 percent from the rate reported during 1982-1992. At the same time, 29 percent more agricultural land was developed than forest land, which was the second most frequently converted land use.[1]

Farmland is desirable for building because it tends to be flat, well drained and has few physical limitations for development.

In 1986, AFT conducted a fiscal impact analysis called *Density Related Public Costs*. The study's researchers wanted to measure the public service costs to agricultural land, which fiscal impact analysis does not address. When they discovered a study of Clarke County, Virginia, conducted by the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)[2] that examined the fiscal impacts of three basic land use categories including farmland/open space, AFT adapted the methodology for a brief analysis at the end of the report. AFT expanded on the approach in a subsequent study of Hebron, Connecticut, which was well received. During the next two years, AFT teamed up with Cornell Cooperative Extension to replicate the study in Dutchess County, New York, and the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture hired AFT to conduct three studies in the state's agricultural Pioneer Valley.

Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

* The NRI definition of agricultural land includes crop, pasture, range and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land.

Interested in applying the approach in other regions, AFT asked several agricultural economists and academic planners to review these studies to help strengthen the methodology. Since then, COCS has gained stature and national acceptance. In 1992, the Pioneer Valley study won regional and national merit awards from the Soil and Water Conservation Society, and in 1999 a study of five townships in Monmouth County, New Jersey, was awarded a local "Open Space Planning Award" from a county board of commissioners.

"If land is being consumed at a faster rate than population growth, then a metropolitan area can be characterized as 'sprawling'."

Brookings Institute

AFT originally used COCS studies to investigate three commonly held claims staff often encountered at community meetings:

1. Open lands—including working agricultural and forest lands—are an interim land use that should be developed to their "highest and best use";
2. Agricultural land gets an "unfair" tax break when it is assessed at its actual use value for farming or ranching instead of at its potential use value for development;
3. Residential development will lower property taxes by increasing the tax base.

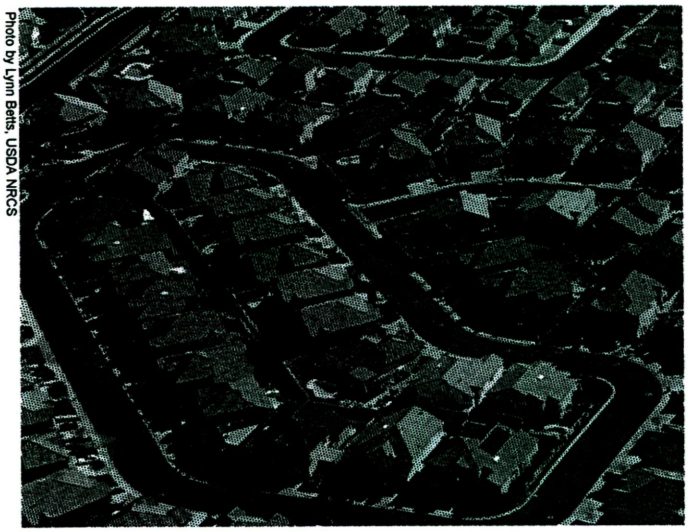


Photo by Lynn Betts, USDA NRCS

Today, people also use the studies to add substance to policy debates about growth and land conservation. COCS findings have been used to bring agriculture to the table in local planning decisions, to support farmland protection programs and to inform the smart growth debate by demonstrating the relative fiscal importance of privately owned working lands. This report examines COCS studies as a community-planning tool and as a way to assess the fiscal impacts of agricultural and other privately owned and managed open lands.

Growth and Conservation: Challenges for the New Millennium

Since World War II, American public policy has supported development patterns that have converted the working landscape to urban and suburban use with little accommodation for the social or environmental consequences. One result has been the unnecessary consumption of agricultural land. Others include scattered development, fragmented open space and dependency on automobiles.

This pattern commonly is described as urban sprawl, "dispersed development outside of compact urban and village centers along highways and in rural countryside."[3] The Brookings Institute characterizes sprawl in terms of land resources consumed to accommodate new urbanization. In its 2001 report, *Who Sprawls Most?*, sprawl is described in the following terms: "If land is being consumed at a faster rate than population growth, then a metropolitan area can be characterized as 'sprawling'." However, the report also points out that, "Sprawl is an elusive term. To paraphrase the United States Supreme Court's long-ago ruling on pornography, most people can't define sprawl—but they know it when they see it."[4] While the term may be elusive and lack an academic definition, characterizations of sprawl have common elements.[5] These include:

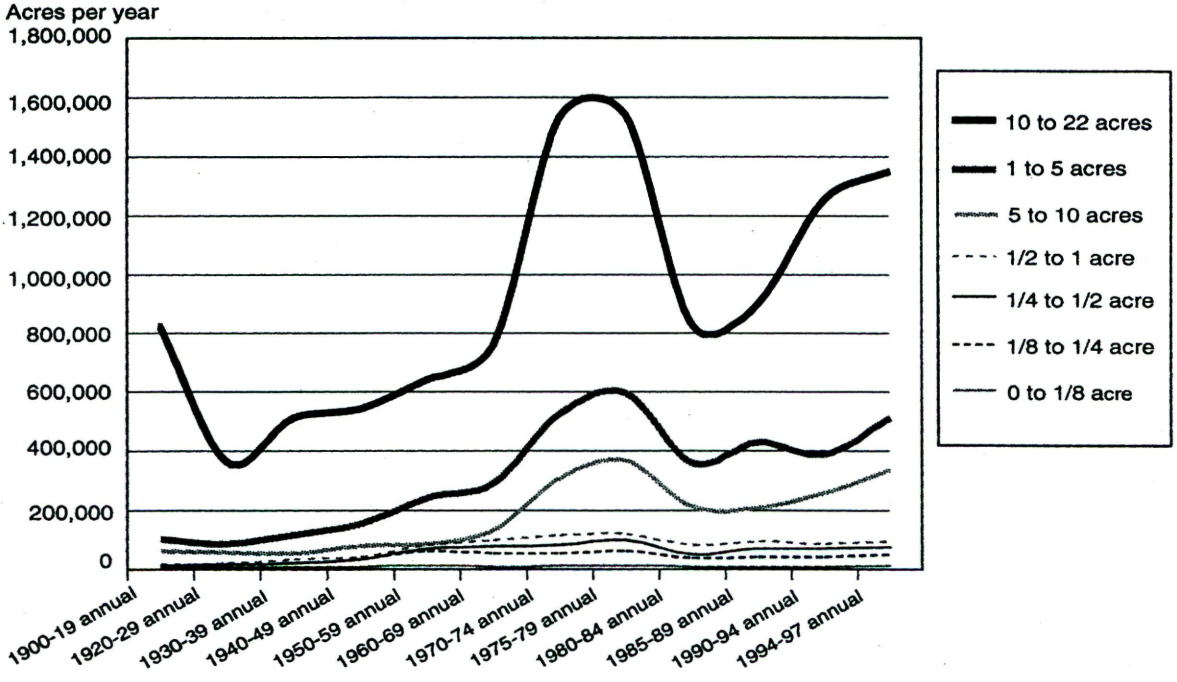
- Scattered, low-density development that uses a lot of land;
- Geographic separation of essential places, such as home, work and shopping; and
- Dependency on automobiles.[6]

Due to immigration and higher life expectancy, the U.S. population is growing at about 1 percent a year. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 1950 to 1990 the population increased from 150 to 250 million people and is expected to grow by another 150 million people in the next 50 years.[7] However, the conversion of agricultural land to sprawling development is not a response to the needs of a burgeoning population, but the result of economic prosperity, a weak farm economy and little or poor community planning—especially in rural areas.

The loss of agricultural land to sprawl is not a response to a burgeoning population, but to economic prosperity, a weak farm economy and little or poor community planning.

According to a 2000 report by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), land in the United States is being consumed at twice the rate of population growth.[8] The Economic Research Service's (ERS) 2001 *Development at the Urban Fringe and Beyond* documented that "most of the land being developed for housing is not urban, as defined by Census, but occurs beyond the urban fringe in largely rural areas."[9] Most of this is very large-lot housing development: lots of 10 or more acres accounted for 55 percent of the growth in housing since 1994. According to this report, since 1970 the growth of large-lot development can be tied to periods of prosperity and recession. Overall, most of the growth occurred in the largest lot size category (10-22 acres), but only 5 percent of the acreage used by houses between 1994 and 1997 was associated with existing farms. "Nearly 80 percent of the acreage used for recently constructed housing ... is land outside urban areas or in non-metropolitan areas. Almost

Annual additions to housing area, by lot size, 1900-97



Source: Heimlich and Anderson, ERS, 2001

all of this land (94 percent) is in lots of 1 acre or larger, with 57 percent on lots of 10 acres or larger."[10] A close look at the NRI shows that in the process, America's best agricultural land is being developed fastest.

Beyond this inadvertent squandering of some of the world's most important agricultural resources, people are paying the price for sprawling development patterns: increased property taxes, expensive infrastructure and budgetary shortfalls. Beyond the monetary costs, they lose open space and cherished landscapes, community heritage and character, wetlands, water quality, wildlife habitat and fresh food and other agricultural products that once were grown on local farms and ranches. Automobile use associated with sprawl exacts a societal toll on public health and safety and environmental quality.

Recently, local citizens and leaders at all levels of government have begun to make the connection between sprawl and its unintended social consequences. COCS studies have been an increasingly popular tool used to inform community debates about how and where to grow, and whether to invest public dollars to protect agricultural land and open space.

According to The Trust for Public Land, between 1998 and 2001, voters approved 529 referenda to fund nearly $20 billion of open space protection.[11] The National Governors Association's position on Better Land Use Policy, states "Public officials at the state and local levels are becoming increasingly aware of the impact that public expenditures can have on growth and the need for a more balanced approach to providing financial support for development."[12]

Agricultural land conservation can help mitigate the tensions by directing development away from high-quality agricultural soils and ecologically sensitive areas. Recognizing this potential, the U.S. Conference of Mayors took a stand on sprawl by adopting a resolution "Promoting the Preservation of Urban-Influenced Farmland" at its 69th Annual Conference, June 2001: "Whereas, The U.S. Conference of Mayors recognizes that protecting important urban-influenced farmland through the purchase of conservation easements is a valuable smart growth tool, which can assist in creating a comprehensive smart growth plan."[13]

Protecting important urban-influenced farmland through the purchase of conservation easements is a valuable smart growth tool.

U.S. Conference of Mayors Resolution, June 2001

COCS studies find working lands more than pay for the services they receive—and typically make a contribution similar to commercial and industrial lands.

Suffolk County, New York, funded the first purchase of development rights (PDR) program (also known as purchase of agricultural conservation easements) in 1977. Twenty-five years later, 19 states and more than 40 localities have enacted PDR programs to protect agricultural land. Between 1996 and 2002, state spending to purchase agricultural conservation easements more than doubled from $635 million to $1.4 billion, local spending reached $600 million, and USDA invested $53 million to match state and local spending. The recent farm bill, called the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, includes $597 million for farmland protection through 2007.

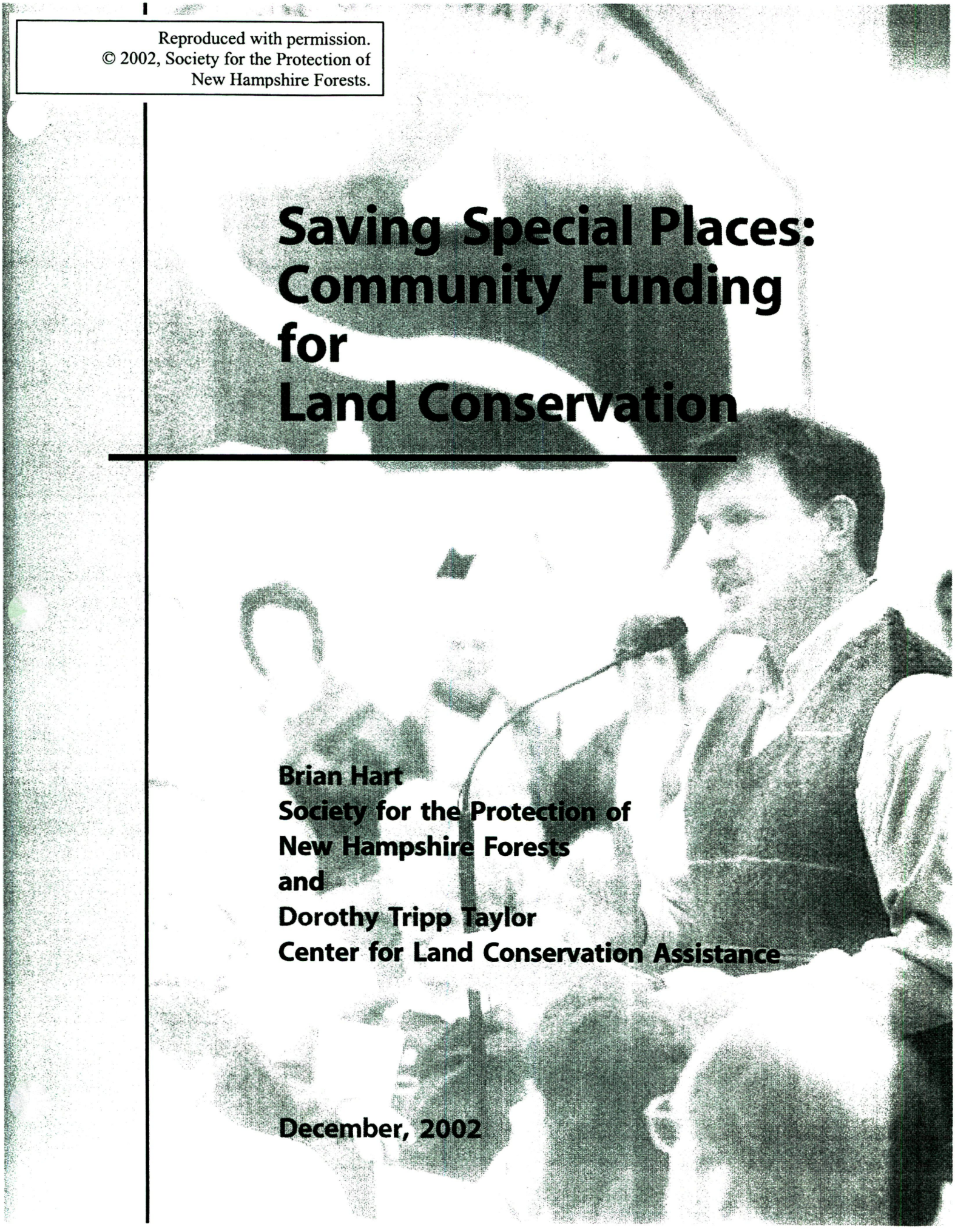
Since 1956, when the state of Maryland passed the first law of its kind, the most common tax incentive for agricultural land protection has been use assessment.* By the turn of the century, 49 states had programs that tax farm, forest and other designated lands at their actual, or "current use value," instead of their potential value at "highest and best use," and all 50 states had some kind of tax incentives to maintain the economic viability of agriculture and to protect agricultural land from unnecessary conversion to urban use. However, periodically these laws are challenged for giving agricultural landowners an unfair tax break. This is one of the main reasons AFT became interested in conducting COCS studies.

COCS Studies Help Inform the Debate

COCS studies can't take credit for the dramatic increase in state and local investment in land protection, or the public's willingness to pay for it through tax policies or PDR funding. But they do contribute to the knowledge base that supports these policy decisions. Like traditional fiscal impact analyses, COCS studies show that on average, existing residential development generates significant property tax revenue, but residents demand costly public services that must be subsidized by tax revenues from commercial and industrial land uses. The special contribution of COCS studies is the finding that working lands are also an important commercial land use that helps balance community budgets. They are more than just vacant land waiting around for development.

* Among other titles, use assessment laws also are known as differential use assessment, preferential assessment, current use assessment, current use valuation and farm use valuation.

Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation



Brian Hart
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
and
Dorothy Tripp Taylor
Center for Land Conservation Assistance

December, 2002

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

In New Hampshire communities, there is a groundswell of interest and activity in conserving land. New Hampshire currently has more than forty-five land trusts. There are conservation commissions in all but a handful of towns. Many of them are engaged in conserving their special natural lands. Over half of the towns in the state have conservation funds fueled by the Land Use Change Tax. There have been 62 applications for land conservation projects to the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program since its inception in 2000. New Hampshire voters are appropriating significant taxpayer funds to conserve undeveloped land. Twelve communities, mostly in the south central and southeastern tier of the state, including Amherst, Brookline, Newfields, and Stratham, approved bonds and appropriations totaling nearly $20.2 million in 2002 alone.

New Hampshire is losing 12,000 to 15,000 acres of open space a year to development. That is equivalent to building houses, roads and shopping areas in an area half the size of an average New Hampshire town. It is open space that gives our towns their traditional character and appearance. Unless towns protect open space strategically and intentionally, it will be consumed by development.

The goal of this guidebook is to help you, as a concerned citizen, elected official, or conservation commission member, achieve your town's land conservation goals by securing local funding for land conservation in your community.

Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation is a guidebook to help your conservation commission, board of selectmen, citizens group, or land trust to:

- develop economic, environmental, and community quality of life rationale for conservation funding in your town;
- evaluate your community's cost and benefits from land development versus the cost of land conservation;
- choose the appropriate available funding option for your town;
- organize and implement an effective grassroots campaign to build public and elected official support and pass your local initiative!

This guidebook provides case studies to explain each funding mechanism through the direct experience of local citizens. The case studies list lessons learned and the advantages and disadvantages, helping you evaluate what may or may not work in your town.

To jumpstart your local effort, the guidebook provides sample warrant articles, newsletters, media releases, and other materials from communities who have succeeded in securing local land conservation funding. At the end of the *Guidebook*, you will find an extensive list of resources that will help you each step of the way.

It is very important that your town consult with an attorney before finalizing warrant articles or any other legal documents discussed in this publication.

Land Use Planning. While this guidebook focuses on funding for land and easement acquisition, this is only one tool of many for conserving land. Indeed, land conservation should be one component of your community's overall land use strategy, which should include a master plan, an open space plan, and appropriate zoning to achieve the vision of the master plan.

Those acquiring land should target and conserve the most significant community lands, leaving remaining lands available for appropriate and planned development consistent with a community's master plan. Good local planning that provides for economic development, affordable housing, and other critical community needs will be complemented by the acquisition of land for open space, parks, aquifer protection, and other public benefits.

Stewardship. Good land conservation does not end with the acquisition of the property or an easement. When deciding to own land or an easement, a community must consider and plan for both the protection of critical natural resources and the associated long-term stewardship responsibilities. These responsibilities include monitoring and enforcing the provisions of an easement, evaluating the appropriate use of a property (recreation, timber harvesting, farming, etc), educating new owners of properties with easements, and managing the impact of public use of town-owned lands. The best time to secure fund-

© Henry Whittemore

Society for the Protection of NH Forests Conservation Easements Christine Lake, Stark

ing for these necessary stewardship responsibilities is at the time of acquisition — funding for stewardship should be an integral part of the acquisition funding plan.

This guidebook briefly touches on these important planning tools and the responsibilities of stewardship. To help you learn more, review the additional materials in the Where to Find Help section of this manual.

Here are some of the reasons taxpayers are committing millions of dollars, and voluntarily raising their property taxes for land conservation:

Concern about quality of life. According to the 2000 Census, New Hampshire has the fastest growth rate in the Northeast. Southern New Hampshire is absorbing most of the state's population growth and resulting residential development. In fact, projections indicate that 85% of the state's growth will occur on just 33% of the land area — mostly in Rockingham, Hillsborough, Merrimack, and Strafford counties.[1] This growth is undermining the high quality of life rooted in our natural and working environment and rural character. Not coincidentally, most of the communities that passed funding in the past two years are in these counties and are along major traffic corridors, including Interstate 93, Route 101, and Route 16 where new residential growth is most concentrated. Citizens in these areas recognize that growth will continue, and that the most direct and permanent way to ensure public open space for future generations is to acquire land or conservation easements.

Tax implications of residential growth. Many community leaders and citizens are also learning that on average, new residential development does not pay enough in property taxes to cover the cost of town and school services demanded by the new residents. Cost of community services studies completed in Stratham, Exeter, Dover, and other communities show that for every $1.00 received in property taxes from residences, a community incurs between $1.01 and $1.17 in costs for services. In contrast, for every $1.00 received in taxes from open space lands (forests, farms, etc.), a community pays between just $0.19 and $0.94 for the services required.[2] Keeping important land as open space, through zoning, conservation easements, or town acquisition, can help stabilize a community's property taxes.

Impact of matching public funds. The significant funds allocated in town meetings in 2001 and 2002 also demonstrate the impact of the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and other state and federal funding programs. Established by the state in June, 2000, LCHIP is designed to leverage community funding for land conservation and historic preservation projects. The program requires a 50% match from applicants for all LCHIP grants. Many of the appropriations passed in 2002 were to match current LCHIP awards or were passed in anticipation of applying for future LCHIP grants. In either case, LCHIP has raised the community and civic leaders' general awareness of open space protection and provided a strong incentive — matching grants — for communities to commit local funds for land protection.

Keys to success in passing tax increases for land protection:

1. The need for and benefits of land protection must be compelling
2. The tax increase must be affordable
3. The voters must trust that the funds appropriated will be spent as promised
4. A good campaign must be conducted and must explain the benefits to undecided voters.[3]

Steven Glazer
national expert on funding ballot initiatives

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1 *New Hampshire's Changing Landscape.* 1999. Dan Sundquist and Michael Stevens. Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and The New Hampshire Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

2 *1997 Cost of Community Services Study, Groton, New Hampshire.* 2001. Dorothy Tripp Taylor. New Hampshire Wildlife Federation.

3 Summarized from an interview in *LandVote 2001.* The Trust for Public Land and Land Trust Alliance.

Chapter II

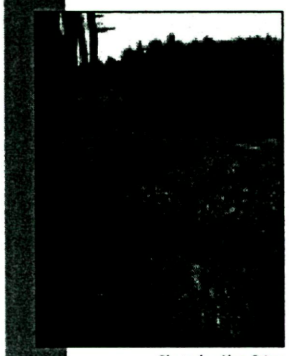

Photo by Alan Briere

Making the Case for Conservation Funding in Your Community

It is essential that you make a credible case for conservation funding in your community. Voters and tax payers are already concerned about local property taxes and funding for adequate education. Your community may be most interested in economic and tax arguments or may rely on the environmental and community benefits of conservation. Your town may even choose conservation because of recently completed growth and development projections. In most cases a combination of these arguments will be needed to build the coalition required for a successful vote. Different people have different reasons for supporting conservation: do as much as you can to make the case for their points of view.

This section summarizes the economic, community, environmental, and regional benefits of land conservation, providing you with an introduction to the possible rationale that you may choose for municipal land conservation funding.

Community Environmental Benefits

Open space is an integral element of New Hampshire communities. In the days when most people made their living working the land, the mix of the working landscape of fields and forests and waterways defined our communities and our livelihoods. Nowadays, this scenic landscape remaining from that heritage is still important to the people who live in and visit our state. Over 90% of New Hampshire residents feel that the state's scenic beauty and cultural heritage is important to them.[1] Open space in our communities protects our drinking water, provides recreational opportunities, preserves habitat for native plants and animals, supports sustainable forestry and timber harvesting so we provide our

Open space in our communities protects our drinking water, provides recreational opportunities, preserves habitat for native plants and animals, supports sustainable forestry and timber harvesting so we provide our share of the forest products we consume, and provides locally grown food for our tables.

[1] "Assessment of Outdoor Recreation in New Hampshire." 1997. Rob Roberston, Department of Resource Economics and Development, University of New Hampshire.

> Our culture and our place are images of each other and inseparable from each other, and so neither can be better than the other. In short, what we do to the land, we do to ourselves.[2]
>
> — Wendell Berry

share of the forest products we consume, and provides locally grown food for our tables. Open space also has an aesthetic and spiritual value. It somehow nourishes us by its beauty and reminds us that we are part of the entire web of life.

Water. Most businesses and nearly seventy percent of the homes in the state depend on public water supplies. Yet, only twelve percent of the land supplying public drinking water in the state is protected from development and possible contamination. In order to ensure adequate supplies of clean water for the future, we must take action today and tomorrow to protect the land around the sources of water that so much of our population depends upon. Back in the 1970s and '80s, our nation poured billions of dollars into cleaning up rivers that had been polluted by industrial development and careless waste disposal. Conserving open space in our communities now can help us avoid the need for that kind of reactive expenditure in the future.

Recreation and Health. People in New Hampshire are active in many forms of outdoor recreation that depend on the availability of open space, from hunting and fishing, to hiking, bicycling and enjoying scenery. The number one reason people participate in outdoor recreation is to enjoy and experience nature.[3] These activities contribute to the health and well-being of individuals and communities. With growing national problems such as obesity and related diseases, communities should try to encourage healthy lifestyles by making sure outdoor recreational opportunities continue to be available. There is also a growing interest in reducing pollution by enabling people to travel to jobs and shopping places on foot or by bicycle, providing another beneficial use of open space areas.

Habitat. New Hampshire is home to a dazzling array of 1900 species of plants and nearly 17,000 species of animals (16,300 of them are inspects and spiders!). living in nine different ecological regions.[4] While many species are common, 75% of our rare plants and animal habitat are not on conservation land and are vulnerable to development. These species struggle in large part because of changes caused by the impact of increasing numbers of humans on the land. Like the proverbial canary in the coal mine, many of these struggling species reflect changes that will ultimately be detrimental to humans too.

In 1997 the New Hampshire Comparative Risk Project found that five of the top ten environmental hazards facing people in New Hampshire are related to how we use our land and water.[5] If we want to protect our quality of life, sometimes called the New Hampshire Advantage, we need to find ways to accommodate the development we desire without adversely impacting the plants and animals with whom we share the land and waters that comprise our state.

Forests. New Hampshire's forests cover 84% of our landscape, placing us as the second most heavily forested state in the nation. (Maine is number one). Timber harvest from these working forests can provide the forest products that we consume in a sustainable, environmentally sound manner. Forest management and wood processing provide over 16,000 jobs and close to $4 million in

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2 "The Great Remembering." 2001. Peter Forbes. Trust for Public Land.

3 "Assessment of Outdoor Recreation New Hampshire" Op. cit.

4 "New Hampshire's Living Legacy; the Biodivesity of the Granite State." 1996, Jim Taylor, Thomas D. Lee and Laura Falk McCarthy. New Hampshire Fish and Game Department.

5 *Report of Ranked Environmental Risks in New Hampshire.* 1997. New Hampshire Comparative Risk Project.

direct and indirect annual income in the state.[6] Forest-based manufacturing is the third largest manufacturing industry in the state, generating payrolls of $209 million, with another $54 million in payroll coming from forest-based recreation.[7] It enables many landowners to afford to retain their undeveloped land. As forestland is divided into smaller and smaller tracts, it becomes less economical to manage. We have the opportunity, right now, to commit ourselves to continuing to grow and harvest enough wood to meet the equivalent of our demand for the many products that are made from wood and wood fiber. Communities need to be aware of the value of large blocks of productive forestland as they make land use decisions.

Farmland. Everybody needs to eat! Even in our "granite" state, we have some fine agricultural soils. Squeezed amongst our rock-ribbed hills, important farm soils make up 20 percent of the state. Three percent of the state is the very best agricultural soil called "prime" farmland. Some of our prime farm soil, particularly parts of the Connecticut River Valley, ranks among the best soil in the entire nation for agriculture. Easy access to chain grocery stores has accustomed us to availability of all kinds of products all year round. But what will we eat if oil prices increase to a point where it is no longer efficient to ship products to us from all around the world? We need to maintain currently productive farmland and the best potential farm soils to preserve the possibility of growing more food locally as a hedge against an uncertain future. Moreover, locally grown food is usually fresh, nutritious and delicious. Farmstands, farmers' markets and community supported agricultural operations are growing in popularity. People like to purchase local products when it is convenient to do so. Setting a goal of retaining the best remaining farmland for agriculture serves multiple goals. It will assure us of present and future food production capacity, provide important habitat for some species, keep our agricultural heritage alive, provide fresh local food products, and keep the open working fields that are such an important part of our day to day landscape.

Aesthetics. Open space is also important to us in ways that are harder to quantify but equally essential. Open space — our land and scenery — nurtures our eyes, our bodies, our minds and our souls. We are a country of grown-up adventurers, the descendents of Ethan Allan Crawford, and Henry David Thoreau. We crave "elbow room" and when we don't have it, we are increasingly prone to ailments like road rage and anxiety.

There are these reasons and many more. Future generations are relying upon us to conserve these special places and the beauty, bounty and peace that they provide.

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find resources of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.[8]

— Rachel Carson

Photo by Dorothy Tripp Taylor

[6] "The Economic Impact of Open Space in Hew Hampshire." 1999. Prepared for the Society for the Protection of NH Forests by Resource Systems Group. Available at www.spnhf.org

[7] "The Economic Importance of New Hampshire's Forests." March 2001. North East State Foresters Association.

[8] Quoted in "Seedlings" on p. 11 of *Iowa Natural Heritage* magazine, Summer 2002.

Photo by Alan Briere

Local and Regional Benefits of Open Space Plans

New Hampshire people take pride in "home rule," and in fact, most land use decisions are made on a local level. There is a growing awareness among the people of our state that the natural resources we enjoy and depend on do not stop at the political boundaries that define our towns. If your town draws its public water supply downstream from a major polluter, your costs to treat that water to make it potable will be higher than if you were drawing from a pristine source. If the town next to you has established a protected natural area right on the town boundary, they will probably be dismayed if your town decides to build an industrial park next door.

Master Plan. Most New Hampshire towns have a master plan. The master plan is the foundation for all of the planning documents and zoning ordinances that control land use decisions in your town. For information about creating or updating your master plan, consult the New Hampshire Office of State Planning (OSP) or the Regional Planning Commission for your area. OSP is updating planning tools that can be used to meet the growth needs of your community while minimizing undesirable sprawl.[9]

A community build-out analysis is also a valuable tool for examining the future of your town. It shows how much development can be expected to occur over time if the current zoning ordinances are retained and no additional land is conserved. A graphic presentation, showing how many new buildings would be allowed in what locations is especially powerful. Your regional planning commission can help your town conduct a build-out analysis as part of your master plan update.

Open space proponents have the opportunity to make sure the master plan includes a natural resource inventory and an open space or conservation plan. Both of these elements will provide opportunities for citizen involvement and building consensus for open space protection.

Legislation passed in 2002 modified the statute dealing with the content of the master plan so that it may include the following:

> A natural resources section which identifies and inventories any critical or sensitive areas or resources, not only those in the local community, but also those shared with abutting communities. This section provides a factual basis for any land development regulations that may be enacted to protect natural areas. A key component in preparing this section is to identify any conflicts between other elements of the master plan and natural resources, as well as conflicts with plans of abutting communities. The natural resources section of the master plan should include a local water resources management and protection plan as specified in RSA 4-C:22.

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[9] Smart Growth Toolkit (working title). 2003. New Hampshire Office of State Planning.

Natural Resource Inventory. Logically, a natural resource inventory is one of the foundations for an open space plan, as it provides a thorough description of the town's natural resources. Excellent information about how to conduct natural resource and wildlife inventories is found in *Natural Resource Inventories: A Guide for New Hampshire Communities and Conservation Groups*[10] and in *Identifying and Protecting New Hampshire's Significant Wildlife Habitat: A Guide for Towns and Conservation Groups.*[11] Both also contain excellent advice about community organizing for natural resource inventory and open space planning, as well as setting protection priorities and implementing protection.

A natural resource inventory provides the facts about what resources are found in your town. Using that information, local citizens can help create an open space or conservation plan. The plan will incorporate the information from the inventory and set priorities for land conservation based upon citizen input. The plan can be used as a guide to define which areas in the town to conserve. It may also include priorities and criteria for acquisition of properties. (Areas that are appropriate for needed development should be identified in other parts of the community's master plan.)

Open Space Plan. Creating or updating an open space plan is often an important first step for a community considering raising funds for open space. Working on the plan brings attention to the issue and establishes a credible process for choosing open space parcels to protect. Because the process identifies special areas to conserve, leaving others available for needed development, this process can protect open space proponents from charges of being against development.

When the open space or conservation plan is adopted as part of the town's Master Plan, its intent and goals can be incorporated into the planning guidelines and zoning regulations that control how land is used in the community. The Community Conservation Assistance Program of University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension has helped many communities with open space planning issues. The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests can provide mapping services to assist your town in supporting your conservation goals. See *Useful Information* section, page 153 of this guidebook.

Regional Context. The importance of regional considerations in local planning activities and decision-making is underscored by legislation passed in 2002. The vision section of the municipal master plan should "articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the master plan, not only for their locality but for the region and the whole state." [RSA 674:2 II (a)]

New Hampshire towns are fortunate to have regional connections through the nine regional planning commissions that serve our communities. Towns choose to participate with their regional planning commission by vote at town meeting. Participating towns pay dues to the regional planning commission and in return can receive a certain level of services from the planning commission. For more detailed projects, such as updating a master plan, your town may have to pay additional costs.

In 1998 and 1999, each regional planning commission (RPC) worked with its member towns to create a Regional Environmental Planning Program (REPP) that inventoried the resources that member towns were most interested in pro-

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[10] *Natural Resource Inventories: A Guide for New Hampshire Communities and Conservation Groups.* 2001. Amanda Lindley Stone. University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

[11] *Identifying and Protecting New Hampshire's Significant Wildlife Habitat: a Guide for Towns and Conservation Groups.* 2001. Kanter, John, Rebecca Suomala, Ellen Snyder. New Hampshire Fish and Game Department.

tecting. These REPPs were produced as written reports and maps that can be seen in regional planning commission offices or on the Department of Environmental Services website www.des.state.nh.us. At a minimum, your town should be aware of the land use priorities of each of the abutting towns.

Some regional planning commissions and regional land trusts host regular meetings of people from all of their towns, using them both as educational forums and as opportunities to share information about projects, priorities and issues. If your RPC is doing this, encourage someone from your town to participate. If your RPC is not yet doing this, encourage them to do so. The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions and the Center for Land Conservation Assistance can also act as clearinghouses to get planners and conservationists from neighboring towns together. Regional open space plans can be created when neighboring communities work together to conserve natural resources that cross municipal boundaries.

Finding a way to exchange information and ideas about land use decision and open space protection priorities with neighboring communities can produce better results for each town involved. Some potential funding sources prefer to assist with projects that extend the benefits of the project by engaging cooperative ventures among several towns.

Advantages

- A carefully prepared open space plan will make your campaign to raise public or private funds for open space conservation more successful.
- Involvement of many people in developing the plan and talking about protection priorities may encourage some to donate land or easements.
- An open space plan builds credibility and trust, assuring the community that funds set aside to preserve open space will be spent on important natural and recreational resources.

Disadvantages

- A core group of committed volunteers will need to spend quite a long time drafting an open space plan, and then communicating its contents to the planning board and other town residents.
- Some people may fear that open space protection will be imposed on landowners whether they wish to be involved or not.

Hints

- Make sure townspeople are aware of the development of the open space plan and have many real opportunities to assist in creating it, so the final plan is a good reflection of the values and desires of many townspeople, not just the open space committee.

Relevant State Laws

RSA 674:2 III (d), (f) and (h) allows the inclusion of sections in the town's Master Plan addressing natural resources, recreation and cultural and historic resources.

See Case Study: Open Space Plan — Hanover on next page.

Economic Benefits of Retaining Open Space

People in many New Hampshire communities assume that there is a lot of truth to the conventional wisdom that you can grow your way out of a tax problem by developing more land to help pay for municipal costs. The weakness of this view is that it overlooks the costs for municipal services needed for newly developed properties.

There are a lot of good reasons to conserve open space in your community. In many towns, there is a strong economic incentive, because municipal costs associated with open space are much lower than the costs associated with land for residential use. More and more New Hampshire communities are recognizing the economic benefits of open space conservation and are using these benefits as an argument in support of appropriations for conservation.

Statewide and local studies have consistently demonstrated the value of open space for our economy and for our property tax base. For instance, a study conducted for the Squam Lakes Association looked at all 234 incorporated townships in the state and found that, on average, the towns with the most open space have the lowest property tax bills.[12]

Cost of community services studies conducted in many parts of the state have found that the income from open space is always greater than the cost of services for the open space. The reverse is true of residential property — it almost never generates enough income to pay for the services it requires.

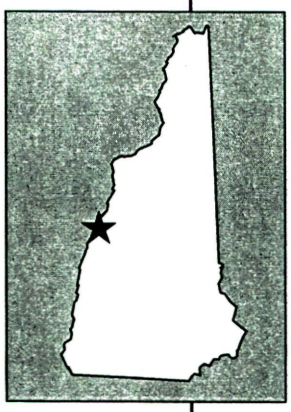
Open Space Supports Our State's Economy. Open space is big business in New Hampshire, where tourism and recreation, working forests, vacation homes and agriculture make important contributions both to our landscape and to our economy. Economic uses of open space in New Hampshire directly and indirectly contribute 25% of the gross state product and employ 16% of our workers. Thirty five percent of state and local taxes are generated by open space-related activities.[13]

Proponents of conserving open space need to use caution when communicating the economic impacts of development. Avoid positions and statements that might alienate important politically engaged constituencies. With our population growing at 12,000

[12] *Building a Healthy Squam Lakes Economy*. 1995. Ad Hoc Associates, Salisbury, VT for the Squam Lakes Association.

[13] *Economic Impact of Open Space in New Hampshire*. Op. cit.

Case Study: Open Space Plan — Hanover



Hanover completed a long-range open space plan in late 2000. A subcommittee of the Conservation Commission did much of the work to create the plan, which took a little over a year to complete, even with the assistance of a skilled professional planner from the town's staff. The plan was triggered by a vote of the town to consolidate several municipal funds into a single Conservation Fund for the purpose of open space protection. An open space plan was required prior to municipal acquisition of lands or easements with Conservation Fund moneys. The plan highlights the importance of open space to the quality of life of the residents of the community. It defines and describes several categories of open space that are of special interest to townspeople, then sets priorities for protection for each category. The plan is very clear that land protection projects will only take place with willing landowners, and that a whole range of land protection techniques will be used. You can learn more about Hanover's Open Space planning process and activities at www.hanovernh.org/town_openspace.html

Hanover Facts

Population (2000): 10,850

Acreage: 32,087

Acres Conserved: 6,188 (19%)

Acres in Current Use (1999): 19,908 (63%)

Valuation (2001): $823,348,800

Tax Rate (2001): $24.68

Form of Government: Board of Selectmen traditional Town Meeting

Figure 1. Results of New Hampshire Cost of Community Services Studies[14]

Community	Population	Land in open space	Municipal cost of services for residential land per $ of income	Municipal cost of services for commercial/ industrial land per $ of income	Municipal cost of services for open space land per $ of income
Brentwood	3,197	54%	$1.17	$0.24	$0.83
Groton	339	71%	$1.01	$0.12	$0.79
Sutton	1,479	72%	$1.01	$0.40	$0.21
Lyme	1,537	78%	$1.05	$0.28	$0.23
Fremont	2,700	64%	$1.04	$0.94	$0.36
Deerfield	3,200	52%	$1.15	$0.22	$0.35
Meredith	5,000	40%	$1.06	$0.48	$0.29
Alton	3,500	55%	$0.92	$0.54	$0.52
Stratham	5,200	35%	$1.15	$0.19	$0.40
Peterborough	5,600	55%	$1.08	$0.31	$0.54
Exeter	13,000	25%	$1.07	$0.40	$0.82
Dover	25,500	35%	$1.15	$0.63	$0.94

to 15,000 people a year, each town needs to find the most suitable places for affordable homes and businesses to support the growing population. Open space proponents who support appropriate, well-designed and strategically-located development have much more credibility than those who oppose development altogether.

Open space conservation can be presented as a part of a larger framework in community and regional master plans and capital improvement plans. Smart growth will plan for a variety of employment options and housing types, so both the young and old, wealthy and workers can live in your town.

Information about the economic benefit of open space conservation can be used to augment the ecological and community reasons to conserve open space and to counter arguments that conservation is bad for taxes. The bottom line here is that protecting open space means lower taxes in the long run. The techniques that follow will help you attach locally derived numbers to that claim.

Cost of Community Services Studies

Cost of community services studies are growing popular as an alternative way to look at the impacts of various land uses on municipal finances. These studies compare the income and expense for different land use types for a single year in a defined geographic area. They allow towns to understand how different land uses affect fiscal stability.

The methodology for conducting the studies was pioneered by the American Farmland Trust.[15] Communities conduct cost of community services studies for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, it is to support existing land protection programs or to develop new ones, to raise awareness of the benefits of protecting natural resources, or as part of a larger planning process. Nationally, studies have been done in over 70 localities in 18 states. The studies have been found

[14] From 1997 Cost of Community Services Study, Groton, NH, Op. cit. and and *Does Open Space Pay in Brentwood? Part 1: Housing Growth and Taxes. May 2002.* Brentwood Open Space Task Force.

[15] *Making the Case for Land Conservation: Fifteen Years of Cost of Community Services Studies.* 2002. American Farmland Study Trust. Also see www.farmland.org.

to be most useful in places that are undergoing land use transitions, especially where there is high pressure for development. Information gathered for the studies has been used to help shape land use policies and decisions in many communities.[16] A five-page American Farmland Trust fact sheet (http://www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/COCS_9-01.pdf) provides an overview of both the methodology and the results from all around the country. People in New Hampshire often wonder if our highly property tax dependent way of paying for government services affects the outcome of the study. Interestingly, the same pattern of costs to the community for the different land uses is found in locations that depend on the full range of taxation patterns.

In New Hampshire, such studies have been reported from 12 towns so far. Most towns doing these studies have looked at three land use types: residential land use, open space and commercial/industrial land. Figure 1 on the previous page is a summary of the results of all the New Hampshire studies completed to date.

Advantages

- A cost of community services study is a relatively easy way to produce some credible numbers that can be of real assistance to the town.
- The study can be done by townspeople, as it was in Brentwood and Sutton.

Disadvantages

- Cost of community services studies probably over-represent the positive impact of commercial and industrial land use, because the methodology has no way to include long term costs such as the impact of traffic increases on road maintenance or the need for new residences to provide housing for workers.

Hints

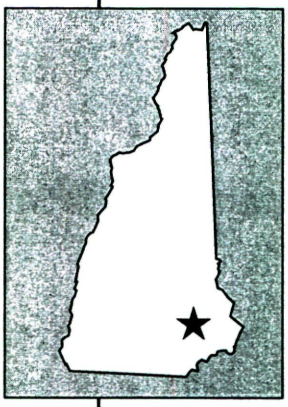
- Be sure to include the budget committee or others knowledgeable about the town finances in the project, as well as people with a variety of points of view, so your results will be viewed as fair and unbiased.
- Follow the American Farmland Trust methodology so your study will be comparable to others done in the state.
- There are a few experienced researchers around the state who are willing to provide a small amount of assistance for this work at no cost to the town.
- Most New Hampshire towns have hired someone to do the research and number crunching for these studies. This may cost some money, may save some time, and may ensure that the methodology is well applied, but may block some opportunities for meaningful local discussion of town finances. Some towns doing this have spent from $2000 to $5000; some have received matching grants from the Statewide Program of Action to Conserve our Environment to offset part of the costs.

See Case Study: Brentwood Cost of Community Services Study on next page.

Assembling hard, factual data about taxes and development is a good first step in addressing the strong emotions surrounding taxes, school costs, landowner rights and environmental protection, and pulling the community together around an open space preservation effort.

— Howard Cadwell, Brentwood Open Space Committee

[16] *Cost of Community Services Studies Survey.* 1999. American Farmland Trust and Southern New England Forestry Consortium. (Data from this unpublished report provided by American Farmland Trust.)



Brentwood Facts:

Population (2000):
3,197

Acreage:
10,863

Acres Conserved:
460 (4%)

Acres in Current Use (1999):
5,654 (52%)

Valuation (2001):
$183,062,651

Tax Rate (2001):
$30.64

Form of Government:
Board of Selectmen, traditonal Town Meeting

Case Study: Cost of Community Services — Brentwood

Rapid growth in Brentwood (the population more than doubled between 1970 and 2000) became a serious issue for the town, primarily because of the tax impact of school expansions. The Open Space Task Force that was formed after town meeting in 2002 felt that objective financial analysis of the impact of growth would be the first step in uniting town voters around an open space preservation strategy. They decided to conduct a cost of community services study.

Following a methodology pioneered by the American Farmland Trust, Howard Cadwell, Co-Chair of the Open Space Task Force and Paul Mergener, Chair of the town's Budget Committee worked through the entire town budget to allocate each income and expense item to one of three land use types. Their report found that, for just that one year, "residential property generates Town revenues that fall short of school and Town service costs by 17%, resulting in a tax deficit of $1.04 million."[17] It also showed that "Open lands generate Town revenues that exceed town services costs by 17%, resulting in a tax surplus of $6,517."[18]

Howard reports that the budget investigation and "number crunching" required about 8–10 hours of time and that the process was greatly benefited by the Budget Committee chairman's detailed knowledge of the community's finances. He found the dialog with the Budget Committee Chairman on how to allocate the income and expense items among land uses valuable in developing insight into the community impacts of residential and commercial development.

The Brentwood Open Space Task Force plans to share the information from the report with residents. The Open Space Task Force is exploring conservation options for the community and may propose funding for open space conservation at an upcoming town meeting.

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[17] "Does Open Space Pay in Brentwood?" Op. cit

[18] *Ibid.*

Cost Comparison of Conservation and Residential Development

Your community can do an analysis to compare the cost of residential development with the cost of a municipal bond to conserve the same land as open space. This analysis is highly individual to your town, and even to individual parcels within your town, because it depends on your community's own population, zoning ordinances, school and town spending levels, tax rate, and real estate values.

In a similar analysis conducted in Londonderry, it was determined that the cost of purchasing a conservation easement on an important 269 acre local orchard with a $1,500,000 bond would be $1,700,000 over the 20 year life of the bond. If the same property were sold and developed for residential use, the cost of the municipal services to the area would be $2,300,000. The bond would cost about

$0.22 per $100,000 per year on the tax bills for 20 years. Development would add $6.96 per $100,000 per year on tax bills for the same 20 years and continue after the bond was paid off.[19]

The basic strategy is to compare the cost of acquiring open space for conservation with what it would cost the town to provide services for the houses that could be built on the open space. The technique compares the cost of bonding, but you could perform a similar analysis for other funding approaches.

Much of the information you need is available fairly readily in most towns. You have a legal right to obtain this information. You can perform the analysis for a specific parcel or for land in general.

The most important element in doing this study is that the numbers you use can be explained and defended. Whenever there is a choice, overestimate the costs of conservation and underestimate the costs of development to avoid appearing to bias the results.

This technique shows the difference in cost between residential development and conservation of open space on an annual basis. It does not include costs for new schools and other municipal services that may be needed to accommodate the growing population of the hypothetical new residences. It also makes no adjustment for probable inflation in school or municipal costs, or prices for conservation land, over the life of the bond.

Initially, you need to determine how many acres of land you are considering conserving. If you are working with a specific parcel, this number is the acreage of the parcel. If you are looking more generally at the whole town, you may need to draw this information from a natural resource inventory, open space plan and perhaps community interest survey.

Determine the size and repayment period for the bond that might be needed for the town to purchase the land you want to protect. You will be able to compare the impact of more than one such scenario. Depending on the rate of development in your community, you may also want to make some reasonable assumptions about how quickly the land would be developed if it were not protected and how quickly you will be able to accomplish land protection projects.

Then you collect a series of statistics about your town, including tax rate, total property tax for municipal and school costs, number of housing units, average selling price of a new housing unit, average land costs, number of students, and acres used per housing unit.

Once you have all that information, you perform a series of calculations based on your parameters and statistics that eventually lead you to finding out how many housing units are likely to be built on the open space, what it will cost your town to provide schools and municipal services for the people living in those housing units and how much the housing units will pay in taxes.

If the taxes paid on the housing units are larger than the costs for school and municipal services, the residential development is paying for itself and the land conservation project needs to be proposed and supported for other reasons. If, as is more likely, the costs of the housing units are higher than the income from them, it may make economic sense to conserve the land. Then, you compare the expense of the proposed housing units with the expense of the proposed conservation project.

In the sample town on the worksheets for this technique, bonding to purchase the land for conservation is, on average, $33,150 cheaper for the town (and its taxpayers) each year of the life of the bond, compared to the probable costs for development on those acres. Annual savings continue after the life of

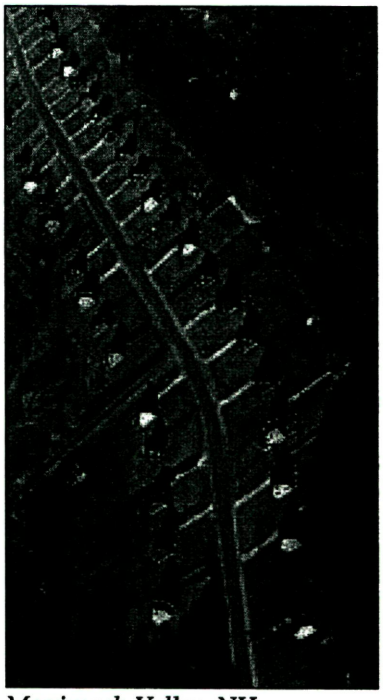

Photo by Sarah Thorne

Merrimack Valley, NH

[19] "Likely Tax Consequences of Conservation or Development of Mack Orchard, Londonderry, NH." 1996. Ad Hoc Associates, Salisbury, VT for Trust for Public Land.

the bond. In the sample case, there is an ongoing saving of $212,600 each year after the bond is paid off.

In presenting information from this kind of comparison to your town, you will probably want to use a simplified comparison, showing the conservation cost of a typical buildable parcel compared to the cost of the parcel if it is developed. You may also want to summarize the tax impact in terms of tax cost per thousand of assessed valuation, or the tax cost per average taxpayer, as these are familiar ways of looking at the tax impact of many kinds of proposals.

Voters in your town can decide which way they would rather spend their money.

A volunteer "number cruncher" who is comfortable handling and explaining somewhat complex figures is very valuable for this process. Contained in this guidebook are two tools to help you work through the needed assumptions, information collection and calculations:

- On the following pages, you will find a work sheet for economic impact analysis, with explanatory notes, numbers from a sample community, and space to insert figures for your town's project.
- In the *Useful Information* section of this guidebook are sample and blank worksheets for a more complex comparison of municipal costs of development with the cost of conservation over the duration of a bond. This uses the same numbers and methodology as the work sheet above, but calculates the specific costs and savings for each year of the life of the bond, which will be important for municipal budgeting.

Advantages:

- This technique provides a very detailed and compelling body of information to help your town understand that protecting open space may be a cost saving measure for the town.
- Because the information can be collected and calculations can be made locally, the numbers may seem more credible than some that were prepared out-of-town.

Disadvantages:

- It can be tedious to collect and work with all of these numbers.
- Townspeople can be frustrated and alienated if they disagree with the assumptions made by those collecting the data and performing the calculations.

Hints:

- Publicizing the results of this study should be done in conjunction with a comprehensive community education effort, explaining the many values of open space conservation and the need for growth to be directed to appropriate locations.

Contact Information: Similar studies have been done in North Hampton, Stratham, Newmarket, Hollis, and Londonderry. Contact information for those towns is found in the *Where to Find Help* section of this guidebook.

Figure 2. WORK SHEET FOR COMPARING COST OF DEVELOPMENT AND COST OF CONSERVATION

		Source of info	Sample town	Your town
A	How much land does your town want to conserve? Or, how large is the parcel you want to conserve?*	*Natural resources inventory and open space plan*	400 acres	
B	Estimated cost per acre of the parcel you want to conserve*	*real estate agents, conservation organization, town records*	$6,500	
C	Potential cost to conserve the amount of land you want*	*A x B*	$2,600,000	
D	Anticipated cost per acre to the town for purchasing land for conservation*	*B minus any reasonable expectations of grants and donations.*	$5,000	
E	Total likely cost to the town for conservation land — this is the size bond you might consider*	*D x A*	$2,000,000	
F	What bond repayment period are you considering?*	*See notes F & G*	15 years	
G	Payment schedule (amount of annual payments) for the size(s) and duration(s) of bond(s) you are considering, based on E and F above*	*NH Municipal Bond Bank*	year / payment 1 $225,745 2 $214,017 3 $208,617 4 $203,217 5 $197,817 6 $192,417 7 $186,680 8 $180,942 9 $175,205 10 $169,467 11 $158,730 12 $153,205 13 $147,680 14 $141,960 15 $136,045	
H	Total of bond principal and interest payment	*Sum of annual payments in G*	$2,691,744	
I	Total tax rate for municipal, local school, and state school expenses.*	*Town office, Tax assessor*	$29.50	
J	Total property tax collected by the town for the *municipal* budget — excluding portions that go to county and school	*Town office, Tax assessor*	$3,244,500	
K	Total property tax collected by the state and town for the schools that the students from the town attend*	*School Board, Financial Administrator, Town Office, Tax assessor*	$12,877,500	
L	Number households or taxpayers in town or school district	*NH Office of State Planning, town planner or tax assessor*	3500	
M	Number of students currently enrolled in kindergarten though high school	*School Department*	1875	
N	Cost per student	*K/M*	$6868	
O	Town Expense per Housing Unit*	*J/L*	$927	

Worksheet continued on next page

Figure 2. WORK SHEET FOR COMPARING COST OF DEVELOPMENT AND COST OF CONSERVATION — Continued

		Source of info	Sample town	Your town
P	Average selling price of new housing unit in your town*	*Real estate agents, town tax records*	$170,000	
Q	Number of students per housing unit in new residential areas*	*School board or neighborhood survey or M/L*	.75	
R	Minimum lot size required for the average new housing unit*	*Planning Board, town planner, zoning board*	1.5 acres	
S	Average number of acres consumed per new housing unit*	*R + (R x some %)*	2 acres	
T	Number of housing units that could be developed on the acres or site	*A/S*	200	
U	Number of new students	*Q x T*	150	
V	Additional annual school expense for new students.	*U x N*	$1,030,200	
W	Additional annual town expense from new housing units	*T x O*	$185,400	
X	Total additonal town and school cost.	*V + W*	$1,215,600	
Y	Tax Revenue from Housing Units	*I x (P/1000) x T*	$1,003,000	
Z	Net annual cost of development to your community*	*X – Y*	$212,600	
AA	Average annual cost of bond	*H/F*	$179,450	
BB	Average annual cost of development option compared to conservation option	*Z – AA*	$33,150	

***Notes**

B. Research recent sales prices of land comparable to the land you want to conserve. Use real figures for your own town or similar nearby towns.

C. If you are working on a specific parcel, use the the real number based on your negotiations with the landowner here.

D. Matching grants may be available to assist with property acquisition. In some towns, landowners donate property for conservation, or sell if for that purpose at a reduced price. If the town can protect the property with a conservation easement rather than outright purchase, the cost may be reduced even more, while keeping the property on the tax rolls. If this number turns out to be too high, you can scale back to the highest priority acres, and/or figure out ways to acquire the land at lower cost.

E. If you know this cost directly, based on grant applications or awards and other elements of negotiations on a specific parcel, use the real number here.

F. and G. You can compare the economic impact of several different bonding amounts and payment periods. Typical bond repayment periods are 5, 10, 15 or 20 years. Note that the bond payment decreases over time. Currently New Hampshire limits municipal bond repayments to periods of no more than twenty years.

I. Specifically exclude county tax rate, as this funding does not help cover your community's costs.

K. If being a donor or recipient town for the state part of the school tax is a hot issue in your town, you may want to build in further refinements at this point. At least be well-prepared to explain the number that you use here.

O. This formula excludes the income and cost to the town of commercial, industrial and open space properties. If you want to include those, you can use instead (J/L x total residential assessment)/total town assessment.

P. Make sure the average includes a reasonable mix of lot sizes and building types.

Q. If growth in your town is similar to existing patterns, calculate this figure as the number of students divided by the number of households or tax payers, or obtain and use the number that your school board uses. If the demographic makeup of your town seems to be changing, and if the School Board hasn't figured this number recently, you may want to conduct a door to door or household survey in one or more representative new neighborhoods to get the best possible information here. The number you use here has one of the most dramatic impacts on the whole calculation, so handle it with extreme care. Whatever figure you use, be sure to be able to explain and defend it with a clear rationale.

R. This is the zoning density, or minimum lot size, the number of acres that are required per housing unit in an area, or the minimum number of acres for a structure of a given type. It may be different for different parcels.

S. Because roads, steep slopes, wet areas and other un-buildable conditions take up space, and because of consumer preferences, the actual number of houses that will be built on a parcel will be fewer than the zoning appears to allow. For instance, in Brentwood, even though zoning allows one and two-acre lots, the average subdivision density is about 3.24 acres per house lot. If substantial changes to your town's zoning ordinances are underway, you should also consider comparing their impact to the current zoning.

Z. If Y is larger than Z, this proposed build scenario will pay enough in taxes to cover its costs. You should find other reasons for conserving the land.

BB. Tells how much your community saves or loses each year to or from the municipal budget by conserving the land. When the number is positive, the conservation option saves money. This is an annual figure for the life of the bond. Once the bond is paid off, your annual savings will be the number in line Z.

Photo by Alan Briere

Conserving More Land for Less Money: Understanding Conservation Easements

It is important to explain to the public, public officials and landowners that there is more than one way to conserve land. In some cases, conservation easements offer landowners and the town several advantages that you can use to build more public support. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization or agency. It provides permanent protection from land uses, such as subdivision or development, that could damage or destroy its scenic, recreational, ecological, and natural resource values. Each easement is crafted to fit the characteristics of the land, the needs of the landowner, and the goals of the conservation organization, agency, or town. All future landowners must abide by the terms of the easement.

Land under easement is still privately owned and managed. Typically, it is used for agriculture, forestry, wildlife, scenic views, non-commercial recreation and watershed protection. The landowner still pays taxes, typically at the Current Use rate.

A town can accept donations of easements or buy easements on private land. Many towns are pursuing conservation easements as a way to stretch their limited tax dollars. The recipient of the easement, typically the town through the conservation commission, or a land trust, is legally obligated to enforce the restrictions *in perpetuity*.[20]

Advantages

- Land conserved by easements remains on the property tax rolls, paying at the current use rates.
- It costs less to purchase a conservation easement than to purchase full ownership of the property.
- The land remains in private ownership, which is sometimes preferred in towns where there is considerable public ownership.
- The town does not have to actively manage the property (although it still must monitor it if the town holds the easement).
- Donation of an easement may have tax benefits to landowners.

[20] To learn more about land protection methods and their tax implications, see www.spnhf.org — land protection department, or contact your regional land trust or the national Land Trust Alliance at www.LTA.org.

Caring for Land You Protect

Whether you are proposing to acquire an easement or full ownership, you need to present to the public a plan for caring for the land as part of the fund raising campaign. Be prepared to explain how the town will maintain records, locate and maintain property boundaries and monitor the property in the case of easements, or manage the property in the case of land ownership. When you consider purchasing land, make sure your town considers the management costs and requirements that the property will demand. These costs may include litter removal, fencing, gates, parking lots for recreational users and visitors, mowing, signage, monitoring, and police patrols. Without a clear understanding of the obligations of land ownership, a town could come to resent the burdens of owning land, which might potentially undermine future conservation efforts.

By far the most important aspect of long-term conservation easement stewardship is establishing a good, working relationship with the landowner. The landowner is your most important partner for achieving the conservation goals for the property. The easement holder will also need to maintain accurate records of the baseline condition of the property and its conservation values, as well as monitoring updates. The easement holder will be responsible for assuring compliance with the easement terms. Ideally, violations can be resolved through discussion and negotiation with the landowner. As a last resort, the easement holder may have to undertake legal action to enforce the terms. For more information about easement stewardship, see *The Conservation Easement Stewardship Guide: Designing, Monitoring and Enforcing Easements.*[21]

The final responsibility is financial. Most land trusts strive to pay for easement or land stewardship costs through an endowment. Setting up a similar fund in a community is possible (see page 35), although, unlike non-profit organizations, towns have a source of funding to pay for the monitoring and management costs — taxes. Probably the best and most reliable way to pay for the ongoing costs is for the conservation commission to seek funding, as a component of the commission's annual operating budget, to cover the monitoring costs of holding easements. Land trusts in New Hampshire have found that their costs for monitoring and enforcing easements ranges from $1000 to $5000 per easement, depending in part on the complexity of the terms of the easement. Most are now requiring that funds be set aside for that purpose when the easement is taken. Further discussion of these costs can be found in several publications from the Land Trust Alliance.[22]

Is land that your town owns really protected?

Your town can acquire land for conservation in many ways: by purchasing with money you have voted to bond, by purchasing with money in a conservation fund, and by donation from generous landowners. Is land that you acquire in these ways *really* protected?

The short and simplified answer is no. The ownership of a property by a town, even for the stated conservation purpose, does not guarantee that it is per-

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[21] *The Conservation Easement Stewardship Guide: Designing, Monitoring and Enforcing Easements.* 1991. Brenda Lind. Land Trust Alliance. Isbn 0-943915-07-04

[22] "Determining the Stewardship Costs of Conservation Easements". 1997. Katherine Roser. Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts. *LTA 1997 Rally Workbook*, Land Trust Alliance and "Calculating the Costs" 2002. *Exchange*, The Journal of the Land Trust Alliance, Volume 21, Number 2, Spring 2002, page 10, and "Vermont Land Trust Reevaluates the Costs of Stewardship and How to Cover Them." Leslie Ratley-Beach in *Exchange*, The Journal of the Land Trust Alliance, Volume 21, Number 4, Fall 2002.

manently protected. While it would seem that conservation purposes stated at the time of acquisition would provide a measure of protection from development, they may not. Language in a warrant article is only binding on the future actions of the governing body (the Board of Selectmen). A future town meeting, faced with now unforeseeable conditions or demands, or simply changing their minds, could vote to sell a property or develop it for a new municipal complex.

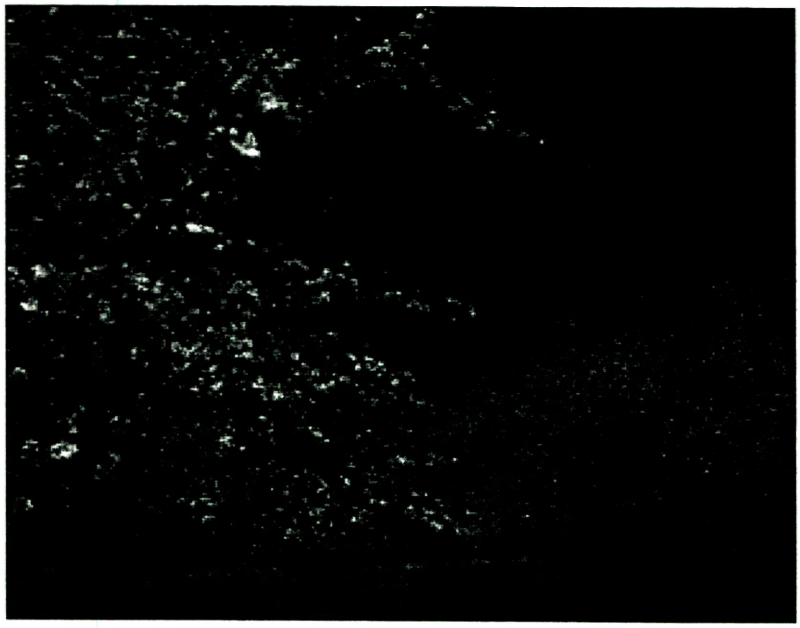


Photo by Alan Briere

This is because the votes of a past legislative body (town meeting or town council) cannot bind the votes of future legislative bodies. At any point in the future, whether the land is owned by the conservation commission, designated as a town forest, purchased for the express purpose of conservation, or donated[23] for conservation, a town meeting can vote to use the property for different and altogether contrary purposes. Towns are strongly urged to consult the town attorney before changing the use of land that was donated or designated for a particular purpose.

However, it is still important to clearly express the conservation purpose of the appropriation and acquisition to establish the intent for the voters. This can discourage future attempts to change the purpose.

Additional Layers of Protection

One way to add an extra layer of protection to town-owned land is for the town to grant a conservation easement on it. Conservation easements on town properties can be held by non-profit land trusts, county conservation districts, or by state and federal agencies. (The town's conservation commission cannot hold an easement on town property because the conservation commission is not a separate legal entity.) Many state and federal conservation grant programs require that towns or land trusts grant conservation easements to a third party on land that they acquire with public funds. Because an easement is legally enforceable by the recipient of the conservation easement, it helps to ensure the long-term protection of a property.

The town can place a conservation easement on a property at the time of acquisition or at a later time. Such an easement would clearly outline the allowable uses of the land, including any potential options for future development. Before a town donates or sells an easement, there should be a strong consensus among the townspeople and town leaders in support of conserving the land in question.

If the town wants to provide another layer of protection for a proposed town-held conservation easement, it can do this by designating a back-up holder for the easement in the easement deed. This is formally called an "executory inter-

[23] In the case of a donation of property, its future disposition depends on the terms of the donation. If the donation document or accompanying correspondence specifies that the property is for a conservation purpose, the town needs to honor those commitments.

Photo courtesy of Trust for NH Lands

Canterbury Shaker Village.

est." It is granted to a different conservation organization or agency. It gives that group the power to enforce the easement if the primary easement holder fails to do so. For example, a landowner granting an easement to a town or new land trust will often grant an executory interest to a more established land trust with a strong stewardship track record. This can be done in the same easement document.

A conservation easement on town-owned land would not necessarily prevent the town from selling that land. However, it would prevent the new landowner from developing it or using the property contrary to the goals of the easement.

Even a conservation easement layered on top of town ownership, however, cannot prevent the land from being taken occasionally for another public purpose through a legitimate eminent domain proceeding.

Stratham, Our Town Newsletters (Original version is 8½" x 11")

Each issue had text on one side with short notes and mailing information on the reverse. Only some of the back pages are shown here.

Stratham, Our Town

An Initiative to Save our Open Land

Issue 1, December 14, 2001 — Stratham Conservation Commission

Why?

Seacoast New Hampshire is booming. People attracted to our lovely rural town see that we live in an ideal setting: we enjoy the beauty of the ocean nearby; the easy access to Boston, Portland and Concord; the recreational opportunities offered by New Hampshire's mountain ranges and clear deep lakes. Stratham is an attractive place to call home. It is no wonder that people want to move here.

But the peaceful country flavor we all love is slipping away. Have you noticed how much busier the roads are? How many more incidents require police intervention? How much longer you wait in line at the grocery store? And have you seen fields on your street turned into asphalt, or old trees cut down? Stratham is changing. What do we want to do about it? We can watch it happen, or we can try to address it, now.

Studies show that residential development creates tremendous town costs that will eventually be reflected in our property taxes:

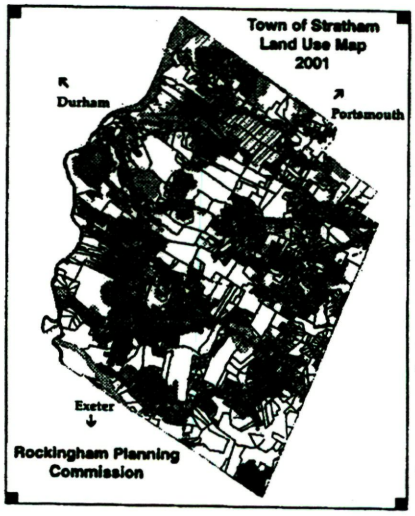
- a new elementary school
- new roads
- increased police protection
- a paid fire department
- a town water and sewer system

We can choose now to invest these tax dollars in the preservation of our open spaces, or wait until we have to invest them in town services.

Where?

Today there are about 1800 developable acres of open space in Stratham. If you squint at the Land Use Map below, you can see a white "S" shaped pattern of largely undeveloped land beginning below Stratham Hill Park, then traversing to the south of town to Parkman Brook, near Shaws.

Imagine trails leading into places in this "S" where one could explore without ever seeing a house; where wildlife could pass through on migration, demonstrating an ecosystem that is healthy and intact; and where families could hike, bike and picnic. Imagine places where farmers could lease fields to graze animals or grow crops for sale at local farmstands. We can still do this.



How?

Our 1996 Master Plan clearly revealed a town consensus to preserve and enhance open spaces in Stratham, for the beauty they bring to our daily lives.

We can do this by balancing the rate of residential growth. While growth is fundamental to our economy, we feel that Stratham needs to grow in a more prudent way.

One of the most simple and direct solutions is to purchase development rights from willing landowners on the open market. This way, landowners are able to benefit from the value of their land without having to move from it. Another solution is to place the land in conservation easement with a local land trust, in exchange for a tax deduction. Again, the landowners remain as stewards of their own land. Both matching funds and tax deductions are available from our state and federal governments.

Are these radical ideas? No. Nationwide last year, voters passed 174 bonds providing $7.5 billion for land conservation. In New Hampshire alone, the towns of Hollis, Chester, Kingston, Londonderry, Bow, Northfield and North Hampton have done so.

And When?

We propose that the residents vote at the March Town Meeting to fund a bond issue, details of which will be presented in the upcoming newsletters and public forums.

Here is what you can do to help.

For more information or to offer assistance, please contact Gordon Barker at 778-1039, Pat Elwell at 778-1659 or Anne Sloan at 778-9018.

Want to Know More?

Check out these organizations:

American Farmland Trust	413-586-9330	www.farmland.org	Farmland Conservation
American Planning Association	312-431-9100	www.planning.org/	Land Use Planning, Zoning
Citizens for NH Land and Community Heritage	603-230-9729	www.specialplaces.org	Support for NH Projects
Land Trust Alliance	202-638-4725	www.lta.org	Land Conservation
NH State Land Conservation Investment Program	603-271-2155	www.state.nh.us/osp/ospweb.htm.....	.....Monitoring Conservation Easements
NH Wildlife Federation	603-224-5953	www.nhwf.org	Dollars and Sense of Open Space
Seacoast Land Trust	603-433-0963	(no web site)	Conservation Easements
Trust for Public Land	802-223-1373	www.tpl.org	Land Protection

Open Space in Stratham: A New Initiative

Stratham, Our Town is the name of a new initiative of the Conservation Commission. A number of interested citizens, appointed to a Subcommittee by the Selectmen, are exploring the means available to protect some of our remaining open spaces in Stratham.

The *Our Town* initiative is a bond issue which will be presented to voters on the ballot in the March election. We're calling this project *"Our Town"* because it must belong to everyone. Read about it in this newsletter. Talk to your friends and neighbors. Think about it. Throughout the winter, we will mail you newsletters to explain in more detail what it is .....and why it's good for our town.

Resident
Stratham, NH 03885

Stratham Conservation Commission
Stratham, Our Town
Town Offices
Stratham, NH 03885

Bulk Rate
US Postage
PAID
Stratham, NH
Permit #1

Stratham, Our Town

An Initiative to Save our Open Land

Issue #2, January 9, 2002 Stratham Conservation Commission

What have other NH towns done to conserve open space?

Bow was one of the first towns in NH to explicitly buy land for protection. The townspeople have put a high value on open space and wildlife habitat, so they have bought conservation easements on more than 1800 acres. They also created a non-profit organization, Bow Open Spaces, to oversee the easements.

At town meetings last year, towns all across the state funded programs for open space protection totalling over 10.5 million dollars.

With a broad margin, ***Chester*** voted in a $3 million bond, payable over 10 years. Their Strategic Land Protection Commission is now prioritizing properties in terms of aesthetic value, farming potential, size of parcel, and view from roads.

Hollis overwhelmingly authorized a $2 million bond for conservation land, to be administered by a selectmen's commission. The bond complements the Conservation Fund, which is funded separately and managed by the Hollis Conservation Commission. Hollis calls a separate town meeting to approve each land purchase. Each request has passed overwhelmingly (in spite of occasional lack of clarity, since some properties become available in the 11th hour.) The town takes the first right of refusal for later sales.

It buys the development rights, but leaves the farming rights with the owners.

North Hampton passed a $4 million bond with 74% approval, for the purchase of conservation easements on "...as much buildable land as possible". They are targetting 850 acres, 25% of the remaining unprotected uplands. Before money is allocated for a project, a careful review takes place. The land protection subcommittee submits a recommendation to the Conservation Commission and a public hearing is held. If the citizens approve, the Commission then recommends the parcel to the Selectmen, who decide whether or not to purchase the land.

Stratham is next!

"We can do this in our town too. It's our first real chance to be pro-active. When you consider that every child's schooling costs the town at least $7,000, preserving our land is just like putting money in the bank."

- Lucy Cushman
Chairman,
Cooperative School Board

"Speaking from a planning point of view, I'm all in favor of this new initiative."

- Joe Derwiecki
former Chairman,
Stratham Planning Board

"I totally support this initiative. It gives landowners an option to realize a financial benefit while preserving their land in its natural state."

- Pete Wiggin
Chairman,
Heritage Commission
and 13th generation Stratham resident

The *Our Town* newsletters will all be available at the*www.WigginML.org/towngovt/conserve.htm*

Stratham, Our Town

An Initiative to Save our Open Land

Issue 3, January 23, 2002 Stratham Conservation Commission

The Arithmetic of Growth, Part 1

How big is Stratham?

Stratham covers 9728 acres, adding up to about 15 square miles.
There are approximately 2000 buildable acres remaining in town.

What is the "Stratham Our Town" initiative?

Our goal is to permanently protect more than 750 acres (roughly 1/3 of our remaining buildable land).
We are asking voters to approve a $5 million bond to be paid back over 15 years.

Why $5 million?

$5 million will give Stratham the flexibility to save significant parcels of open space.

How would this affect my property taxes and my property values?

The project will initially cost about $1 per $1000 on your tax bill, but this amount will be reduced as the bond is repaid. Studies show and realtors understand that protected open space enhances property values.

Will this initiative hurt our commercial tax base?

No. This initiative does not affect areas zoned for commercial activity.

Why is this good for Stratham?

- Our 1998 Master Plan proposes the protection of open space as a high priority for the town.
- This is an investment in the rural character of our community.
- Open space yields more in tax revenues than it costs in town services. For every dollar that comes in, only 40¢ goes out. But with residential property, for every dollar that comes in, $1.15 goes out.
- By protecting open space, we can help to ensure our water supply and protect the health of our streams. We can help sustain the habitat of many local plant and animal species.

Who will decide how the money is spent?

The Conservation Commission recommends that the Selectmen appoint a committee which will review criteria for land protection and hold public hearings for each parcel under consideration. The Selectmen will make the final decisions. Initially, the use of Bond Anticipation Notes (BAN) will help us to borrow only what we need, without obligating the town to the whole bond amount.

Why can't we allocate money for each property in our yearly town meetings?

Town meeting comes only once a year. Landowners cannot always delay the sale of their property in order to wait for town meeting. This bond will give Stratham the financial readiness to act quickly when a desirable parcel of land becomes available.

What does this mean for landowners?

This is a totally voluntary program. It simply gives willing landowners the tools and the opportunity to sell their development rights to the town at any time during the year. This can provide income to the property owners, allow them to retain ownership and permanently protect open space.

Stratham, Our Town

An Initiative to Save our Open Land

Issue 4, February 5, 2002 Stratham Conservation Commission

The Arithmetic of Growth, Part 2

In a money-saving effort to preserve Stratham's rural character and to protect some of its open space from development, the ***Stratham Our Town*** initiative is asking Stratham voters to approve a $5 million bond issue. The money will be used to permanently protect as many as 750 acres of buildable land. As a result, our town will curb water consumption, retard the growth of traffic congestion and preserve open space forever.

Below are two alternatives for a sample parcel of land, using current values:

A 100 acre parcel, appraised at $1.2 million, is currently developable into 40 house lots.

Cost to Stratham residents if this property is DEVELOPED:

When the subdivision of forty new homes is built, the additional tax burden to all residents will be $190,670 per year, *each year.* To arrive at this figure, we multiplied the cost of one new home (town, county and school taxes) by 40, rounding to the nearest dollar. (See Figure 1)

Yearly Costs for Forty Homes	
Town Tax (40 x $563.04)	$22,522
County Tax (40 x $408.00)	$16,320
School Tax (40 x $10,497.78)	$419,911
Total New Tax Liability	$458,753
Less Property Taxes (40 x $6702.08)	-$268,083
Total Annual Tax Deficit (every year, forever)	$190,670

Figure 1 (See data on back for detail)

- This single development will increase taxes by $190,670 per year, every year, forever.
- **Developing the land will result in a tax rate increase of 42¢ per thousand, forever.**
- It will increase traffic congestion on our roads.
- It will cause a loss of open space.

Cost to Stratham residents if this property is PROTECTED:

When the landowner is willing to sell, the Selectmen will hold a public hearing to discuss the merits of the property, appraisal value of the land, and purchase options. If purchase is approved, the cost will be $88,468 per year for 15 years. (See Figure 2)

Cost of Open Space Protection	
15 Year Bond Payment ($960,000 @ 5% for 15 years)	$ 92,489
Less Property Taxes	-$ 4,021
Open Space Cost	$ 88,468
Open Space Bottom Line	
Development Cost	$190,670
Less Open Space Alternative	-$ 88,468
Net Open Space Savings	$102,202
15 Year Savings	$1,532,985
30 Year Savings	$4,392,990

Figure 2 (See data on back for detail)

- This Open Space Alternative will increase taxes by only $88,468 per year for 15 years.
- **Protecting the land will result in a tax rate increase of 20¢ per thousand, for only 15 years.**
- After 15 years the bond will be paid off and the property will continue to generate $4,021 in Current Use tax revenue each year, every year, forever.

For more information or to take a closer look at our data, please call Kirk Trachy at 778-7212 or Roger Stephenson at 778-7970.

Calculations are based on this data:
- average cost of a new home = $400,000
- property taxes for the "developed" option are based upon 68% valuation
- average 4-bedroom home has 1.5 schoolchildren
- average yearly schooling cost per child is $6999.
- development rights of the parcel are valued at 80% of the total appraised value, $1.2 million
- open space landowner still pays Current Use property taxes.

Conservation Commission
Gordon Barker, Chair (778-1039); Pat Elwell (778-1659), Jerry Batchelder (772-5196), Brad Jones (772-6922), Bob Keating (772-4080), Jim Cushman (778-0847), Richard Grimes (778-9773), and Patricia Grahame (778-7308).

Subcommittee for the *Our Town* Initiative
Roger Stephenson (778-7970), Jennifer Kinsey (772-5435), Caroline Robinson (772-6646), Anne Sloan (778-9018), Kirk Trachy (778-7212).

Stratham Our Town is a cost-effective investment in the rural character of Stratham.

We need your help!

Save the date.

Arrange for a baby sitter now!
Stratham will vote on the bond at Town Hall on March 15 at 7:30 pm. It will be your only chance to cast your vote on this issue.

To volunteer your time and expertise, please call Anne Sloan at 778-9018.

Stratham, Our Town

An Initiative to Save our Open Land

Issue 5, February 20, 2002 Stratham Conservation Commission

The Water Issue

The greatest threat to public drinking water is caused by development activities on the land surface

In Stratham we get our water from wells, which recharge with rainwater. But all the buildings we construct, with their streets and driveways, prevent rain water from seeping into the ground to recharge our wells. Water that hits pavement cannot seep directly into the ground. It runs downhill, typically collecting in stormdrains that flow to a stream or a river, and then it continues out of town to a distant water body.

The health of our streams, ponds and groundwater depends upon the use of the surrounding lands

Since we do not have a town water system, Stratham residents all depend on the groundwater running beneath our own properties. Every summer, along with the threat of contamination, we face the threat of a major drought: it's affecting us *right now*. In addition to causing wells to dry up, the drought poses a major problem for fire fighters who rely on ponds for their water supply. "This is the driest spell since I came on with the Fire Department," says Fire Chief Robert Law, a Stratham native who has been Fire Chief for six years. "The newer ponds are dry as a bone. Everyone in town is worried about it."

Our surest means of protecting groundwater is through land protection.

Now is the time for Stratham to plan ahead and set aside land to help ensure safe and adequate water for the future

Land protection through purchase or conservation easement is the surest way to protect groundwater. A *conservation easement* is a legal agreement that permanently restricts development on a parcel of land. People *voluntarily* enter into conservation easements to protect and enhance the natural resources on their property.

To protect water resources in Stratham as a whole, we need to preserve our wetlands and their buffers, and protect large blocks of land. These are just two of the vital steps we can take now to invest in the preservation of our water supply.

Vote YES on Article 4 at Town Meeting March 15, 7:30 pm

New residents must register to vote at the Town Office before March 2nd. Call 772-4741 for details.

For more information on how this initiative can help protect our water supply, please call Gordon Barker at 778-1039, Pat Elwell at 778-1659, or Ann Sloan at 778-9018.

What do our civic leaders think of this initiative?

Jim Stuart, Chairman of the 1998 Master Plan Review Committee: *"Anything that preserves open space and removes an area from the residential market is in the public interest. The bond is a good idea."*

Marty Wool, Selectman: *"This is an idea whose time has come. We cannot afford not to do it."*

David Short, Selectman: *" This is an important tool for our town's ability to plan growth in the future."*

Lucy Cushman, Chairman of the Cooperative School Board: *"This is our first real chance to be pro-active. When you consider that every child's schooling costs the town at least $7,000, preserving our land is just like putting money in the bank."*

Joe Derwiecki, former Chairman, Planning Board: *"I'm all in favor of this land protection initiative."*

John Hutton, former Chairman, Planning Board: *"This is a wonderful, well designed tool to slow development. Our homes will be worth more and it will make our commercial area more attractive to businesses."*

Pete Wiggin, Chairman, Heritage Commission and 13th generation Stratham resident: *"I totally support this initiative. It gives landowners an option to realize a financial benefit while preserving their land in its natural state."*

Protecting Our Water

Join us
for more information
and to get involved:
Town Library: March 5th, 6:30-8pm
Memorial School: March 6th, 6:30-8pm

Resident
Stratham, NH 03885

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Stratham Conservation Commission
Stratham, Our Town
Town Offices
Stratham, NH 03885

ORDER FORM

Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation

NAME _____

SHIPPING ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP CODE** _____

EMAIL* _____ **DAYTIME PHONE*** _____

** This information will only be used to contact you should there be any problems with your order.*

Quantity	Description	Price	Subtotal
	Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation	$15.00 each	
	TOTAL		

PAYMENT METHOD (check one)

☐ **CREDIT CARD**

☐ **CHECK (Check #_____)**
Please make your check payable to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

CARD # _____
Expiration date

TYPE (circle one): VISA MASTERCARD

I authorize the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests to charge the above credit card [insert total from chart] _____ for the purchase of *Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation.*

SIGNED: _____ Print name: _____

If paying by credit card, please provide us with the billing address for the credit card if different from shipping name and address.

CREDIT CARD BILLING NAME _____

BILLING ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP CODE** _____

Mail this completed order form and payment to:
Saving Special Places Guidebook
54 Portsmouth Street
Concord, NH 03301

INTERNAL USE ONLY
Date Received: _____
Received by: _____
Amount received: _____

Saving Special Places:
Community Funding for Land Conservation

A guidebook from
the Center for Land Conservation Assistance and
the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

Spurred by increasing development pressure and the availability of private and state matching funds, New Hampshire communities passed more than $20 million in bonds and appropriations for land conservation during the 2002 town meeting season.

As the news of these successes spread, the incredulous question of "How did they do that?" crossed the minds of many civic and conservation leaders.

Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation provides the answer to this question and helps communities pass similar initiatives. The guidebook will help your conservation commission, board of selectman, citizens group, or land trust to:

- make economic, environmental, and community arguments for conservation funding in your town;
- evaluate your community's cost of development versus the cost of conservation;
- understand local funding options available to communities; and
- organize and implement an effective grassroots campaign to build public and elected official support and pass your local initiative!

The guidebook provides case studies to explain each funding mechanism through the direct experience of New Hampshire citizens. The case studies list lessons learned and the advantages and disadvantages, helping you evaluate what may or may not work in your town.

Finally, to jumpstart your local effort, the guidebook provides sample warrant articles, newsletters, media releases, and other materials from communities who succeeded in securing local land conservation funding.

The guidebook is over 150 pages long, including many useful examples, references and contacts.

Cost: Nominal charge of $15, including shipping and handling. Each municipal conservation commission and land trust in the state will receive one copy at no charge.

To order: Please use the order form on the reverse of this sheet. Your order will be shipped directly to you once the guidebook is completed.

For more information: Contact Dijit Taylor, Director, Center for Land Conservation Assistance at 603/ 717-7045.

Funding for this project is provided in part by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project.

Farmland and Open Space Protection
In Saratoga County

Submitted to:
American Farmland Trust

Submitted by:
Zogby International
John Zogby, President and CEO
Regina Bonacci, Vice President and Chief of Staff
John Bruce, Vice President and Systems Administrator
Rebecca Wittman, Vice President and Managing Editor

Patricia J. Malin, Senior Editor/Writer

September 23, 2002

I. Methodology and Sample Characteristics

Methodology

Zogby International conducted a survey of 301 registered voters chosen at random in Saratoga County. All calls were made from Zogby International headquarters in Utica, N.Y., from Monday, September 16 to Tuesday, September 17, 2002. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 5.8%. Slight weights were added to party, age and gender to more accurately reflect the voting population. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Saratoga County Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	301	100
West	114	38
Central	138	46
East	41	14
Not sure of region	9	3
Democrat	78	26
Republican	144	48
Other party	78	26
Own property in county	232	77
No property in county	69	23
18-29	45	15
30-49	92	31
50-64	80	27
65+	80	27
18-24	25	9
25-34	33	11
35-54	110	37
55-69	78	26
70+	50	17
Did not answer age	4	--
Less than high school	10	3
High school graduate	68	23
Some college	80	27
College graduate+	142	48
Did not answer education	1	--
Live in urban area	62	21
Live in suburban area	133	44
Live in rural area	99	31

Saratoga County Sample Characteristics (continued)	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Town of Ballston	39	13
Village of Ballston Spa	7	2
Town of Charlton	14	5
Town of Clifton Park	45	15
Town of Corinth	7	3
Village of Corinth	7	3
Town of Edinburg	4	1
Town of Galway	4	1
Village of Galway	1	0
Town of Greenfield	17	6
Town of Hadley	6	2
Town of Halfmoon	8	3
Town of Malta	8	3
City of Mechanicville	10	3
Town of Milton	16	5
Town of Moreau	10	3
Town of Northumberland	1	0
Town of Saratoga	10	3
City of Saratoga Springs	34	11
Village of Schuylerville	3	1
Village of South Glens Falls	6	2
Town of Stillwater	6	2
Village of Stillwater	2	1
Village of Victory	2	1
Town of Waterford	9	3
Village of Waterford	2	1
Town of Wilton	15	5
Not sure where lives	9	3
Less than $20,000	32	14
$20,001-$40,000	53	23
$40,001-$60,000	64	28
$60,001-$80,000	29	13
$80,001-$100,000	26	11
$100,001 or more	26	12
Did not answer income	71	--
Male	144	48
Female	157	52

*** Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.**

Saratoga Springs City Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	202	100
Democrat	53	26
Republican	97	48
Other party	53	26
Own property in city	145	72
No property in city	57	28
18-29	29	15
30-49	61	31
50-64	53	27
65+	53	27
18-24	14	7
25-34	25	13
35-54	75	38
55-69	47	24
70+	35	18
Did not answer age	6	--
Male	97	48
Female	105	52

*** Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.**

Quadrants (County survey):

West
Town of Ballston; Town of Charlton; Town/Village of Corinth; Town of Day; Town of Edinburg; Town/Village of Galway; Town of Greenfield; Town of Hadley; Town of Milton; Town of Providence

Central
Village of Ballston Spa; Town of Clifton Park; Town of Halfmoon; Town of Malta; City of Mechanicville; Village of Round Lake; City of Saratoga Springs; Town of Waterford; Village of Waterford; Town of Wilton

East
Town of Moreau; Town of Northumberland; Town of Saratoga; Village of Schuylerville; Town/Village of Stillwater; Village of South Glens Falls; Village of Victory

II. Narrative Analysis

3. Which one of the following do you think is the most important issue facing Saratoga County?

Education	30%
Loss of open space and farmland	21
Taxes	19
Health care	15
Crime	2
Other	7
Not sure	5

4. Do you agree or disagree that the loss of open space and farmland is an important issue in Saratoga County? **(Asked only of those who did not respond "loss of open space and farmland" to Q3).**

Agree	78%
Disagree	13
Not sure	9

5 – 11. I will read you a series of statements about Saratoga County. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

Table 1. Agreement With Statements (ranked by agree %)

	*Agree**	*Disagree**	*Not sure*
5. It is important to protect farms in Saratoga County for future generations of county residents	96	3	1
7. Having farms in Saratoga County make it a better place to live	95	5	0
9. It is important to have sources of locally grown fruits and vegetables in Saratoga County	94	6	--
8. Forests, farms and wetlands provide important environmental benefits for Saratoga County	93	5	2
10. If sprawling development is not better managed in Saratoga County, more farmland and open space will be lost	87	11	2
6. Farmland and open space help support Saratoga County's tourism industry	78	19	4
11. There is too much sprawling development in Saratoga County	72	23	5

(*Agree combines strongly and somewhat agree; disagree combines strongly and somewhat disagree.)

12 – 14. Now I will read you another set of statements. Please tell me if you favor or oppose each of the following, or it makes no difference to you.

Table 2. Favor/Oppose Ideas (ranked by favor %)

	Favor	*Oppose*	*No difference*	*Not sure*
13. Saratoga County should establish a program to permanently protect farmland and open space in the county.	79	11	8	2
12. Recreational trails should be expanded in Saratoga County.	67	9	22	2
14. Saratoga County should spend tax dollars to permanently protect farmland and open space in the county.	66	21	9	4

15. If Saratoga County were to develop a program to protect farmland and open space, how much would you be willing to spend per household per year to support this program?

$5	19%
$10	16
$15	3
$20	14
More than $20	16
No support	22
Not sure	11

16. Are you more likely to support or oppose a local official if they supported efforts to protect farmland and open space in Saratoga County, or it makes no difference?

Support	63%
Oppose	2
Makes no difference	33
Not sure	2

American Farmland Trust

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 10, 2002

CONTACT: Kirsten Ferguson
518-581-0078

Saratoga County Voters Support Farmland Conservation Efforts

Zogby poll shows local residents value farms and will pay to protect farmland

Saratoga Springs, N.Y., October 10—According to a new poll released today, local farms are important to Saratoga County residents, and residents are concerned about the loss of county farmland. The poll found that voters are also willing to pay to ensure that county farmland and open space is protected.

Zogby International, which conducted the telephone poll, surveyed 301 registered Saratoga County voters. The poll found that an overwhelming number of Saratoga County residents value farms for the locally grown food and environmental benefits they provide, with 95 percent of county voters saying that farms make Saratoga County a better place to live. Ninety-six percent of voters said that it is important to protect farms in Saratoga County for future generations of residents.

In addition, voters agreed that Saratoga County farms are threatened by sprawl, with 78 percent of voters saying that the loss of open space and farmland is an important issue in the county. Eighty-seven percent of voters made the connection that if sprawling development is not better managed, more of the county's farmland and open space will be lost.

The poll also uncovered strong support for local efforts to protect farmland and open space. Not only did 79 percent of county voters agree that Saratoga County should establish a program to permanently protect farmland and open space; 66 percent of county voters are willing to spend at least $5 a year per household to support a farmland and open space protection program.

Saratoga County was the second fastest growing county in the state between 1990 and 1998, according to the U.S. Census. Because of the county's population growth and increasing urban development, American Farmland Trust's national *Farming on the Edge* study has identified Saratoga County as part of the tenth most threatened farming region in the nation.

—more—

"Raising awareness about the importance of farmland protection has been one of our goals for several years now," said Charles Hanehan, chair of the Saratoga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. "I'm pleased to see that the message has gotten through to the public. I'm hoping the county board of supervisors will support the funding of local farmland protection as a way to leverage matching farmland protection funds from the state and federal government."

Although New York state and the federal government have established grant programs that pay landowners to permanently conserve their farmland, both programs fund only a portion of project costs—usually 50 to 75 percent—while local communities are expected to provide the rest. With a source of local farmland protection funding, Saratoga County would have an advantage when seeking to attract these highly competitive state and federal grants.

"A county like Dutchess in the lower Hudson Valley provides a good example of how a farmland conservation program might work in Saratoga County," said Jerry Cosgrove, Northeast regional director of American Farmland Trust. "Such a local matching fund would help attract more federal, state and private funds to this area. It could also be used to match town and local funds, such as those established by the town of Malta to protect local priority areas. Fortunately, we are very encouraged by discussions we have had with Saratoga County leaders about the importance of protecting farmland and their interest in creating a farmland protection fund."

"County matching grants would be a step in the right direction," agreed Wayne Arnold, president of the Saratoga County Farm Bureau. "In fact, the Saratoga County Farm Bureau has proposed a resolution stating that we support county funding of a program that would purchase the development rights to county farmland. From the results of this poll, it's great to see that farmland protection also has such widespread support from the public."

The poll was commissioned by American Farmland Trust. Telephone surveys were conducted from Zogby International headquarters in Utica, NY on September 16 and 17, 2002. The margin of error is +/- 5.8%. Survey participants were randomly chosen.

# # #

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Wayne County Ohio Survey Analysis

American Farmland Trust
&
The Trust For Public Land

Prepared By

John H. Wilson

American Viewpoint, Inc.

Key Points Summary

Vote Intentions and Core Analysis

- Currently 52% of the registered voters in Wayne County say that they would support this measure and this is clearly a positive sign.

- At the same time, voters are very fluid, with a majority of voters neither definitely supporting nor definitely opposing this measure. Voters are, therefore, highly persuadable at this time.

- Turn-out is very difficult to predict from this data, but it is clear that an effective get-out-the-vote effort will be even more critical in this campaign than in most.

- Once voters are informed of some of the aspects of the proposed measure and what it is meant to accomplish, support rises to 60%, while opposition remains about the same.

- Voters fall into roughly three categories: Core Supporters (49% of the voters), Core Opponents (23% of the voters) and the Battleground (28%) which will largely determine if this measure passes of fails.

- The key hesitations that Battleground voters have in supporting this measure are:

Don't want to increase my taxes / Can't afford it.	23%
Need more information / Need to find out more about it.	22%
Money won't be used properly / Money will be wasted	18%

- From this it appears that many can be convinced to support this measure.

Overall Political Environment

- Preserving open space and farm land tops the issue agenda in Wayne County and voters should be receptive to any initiative designed to address this problem.

- 42% of the voters in Wayne County feel that the county is growing and developing too fast, and this attitude correlates highly with support for this measure. Then too, even a majority of those who feel the county is growing at the right pace appear willing to support this measure.

- 85% feel that it is either Very of Somewhat important for Wayne County to have a program to protect agricultural land from development.

- Even when some of the details of the program are fleshed out and voters are informed that it would entail the use of public tax dollars, 65% approve of having a program of this nature.

Positive Messages & Themes

- The survey tested five positive messages and themes, all of which resonated with the voters and can play an important role in passing this measure. In addition it is clear that:

- Voters make the connection between preserving the rural lifestyle and agricultural economy and preserving farm and rural lands. They understand that it is not only important to farmers, but it is also important to them *personally*.

- Voters not only understand that this is an important undertaking, but that they must act *now*.

- "Slowing the rate of growth and development" is a positive issue, but is not nearly as important as other issues in this section.

- The question concerning the cost of the program expressed in terms of dollars per month is very positive. Not only do three out of four voters agree that it is a small price to pay, but almost a majority (47%) *strongly* agree.

Negative Messages & Themes

- The survey also tested three negative themes and messages. One appears to be weak, but the other two will need to be dealt with effectively.

- A majority of voters disagree that there are more important problems for the county to address.

- However, 55% of Battleground voters agree that "Taxes in Wayne County are already too high, if the county wants a program like this they should find some other way to pay for it." In fact, 34% of Battleground voters strongly agree with this statement.

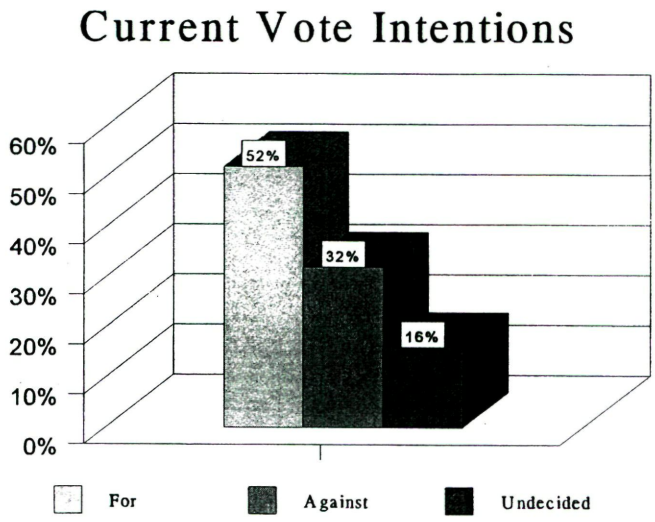
- Finally, when informed of the annual cost of the program, a majority said that it would not make a difference, but it appears that — as one might expect — the cost is a very important factor for a significant number of voters, including about one-third of the Battleground voters.

- The main point is that the campaign will need to emphasize the importance of the benefits of the program and the problem that the it addresses and to stress the cost in the most favorable terms, i.e. the cost per month.

Vote Intentions and Core Analysis

Current Vote Intentions

Currently 52% of the registered voters in Wayne County say that they would support a sales and use tax of one-quarter of one percent for the purpose of acquiring agricultural easements to protect agricultural lands, including farmland, woodlands and pasture.



Overall, this is a positive sign. Any uninformed vote intention over 50% is considered to be a positive sign — that is not to say that the measure would pass without an effective educational effort and campaign — but 52% is a good starting point.

Note too, that voter attitudes are very fluid on this measure. That is, 27% would *definitely* vote for the measure and 20% would *definitely* vote against it, but a majority of voters fall somewhere in between indicating that they would be persuadable one way or the other. Stated another way, in the absence of an effective campaign, those who support this measure can only count on about 25% of the voters to vote for it.

Conversely, opponents of this measure can also count on about 20% of the voters to vote against it. Keep in mind, too, that anti-tax voters are often more motivated to vote than those who favor a measure, so they tend to turn out in disproportionate numbers.

The extent to which this will be true in Wayne County is unclear. To begin with, support appears to be fairly consistent regardless of past voting behavior. That is, 52% of those who vote in all elections, 52% of those who vote in most elections and 51% of those who vote in half or less than half of the elections currently support this measure. On the other hand, seniors tend to vote with higher frequency than younger voters, and seniors are only supporting this measure by a 43% to 33% margin.

What appears to be happening here is this: Retired men are reporting below average past voting behavior (43% vote in all elections) while retired women report higher than average past voting behavior (55% vote in all elections) giving *all* retired voters about average past voting frequency. This, of course, is atypical and one has to wonder if this is, indeed, the case or not. At the same time, working women, who are among this measure's best supporters (60% For) report the lowest past voting frequency of all voters (just 41% vote in all elections). Once again, if this is indeed the case, this group would be a prime target for a get-out-the-vote effort. Working men report average past voting frequency, are weak supporters and should be a target of an informational campaign. Finally, Homemakers make up just 8% of the voters, but their reported past voting frequency is the highest in the study (61% vote in all elections) and they support this measure by a wide 71% to 23% margin. In short, turn-out is very difficult to predict in this case and an effective get-out-the-vote effort will be critical to this measure's success or failure.

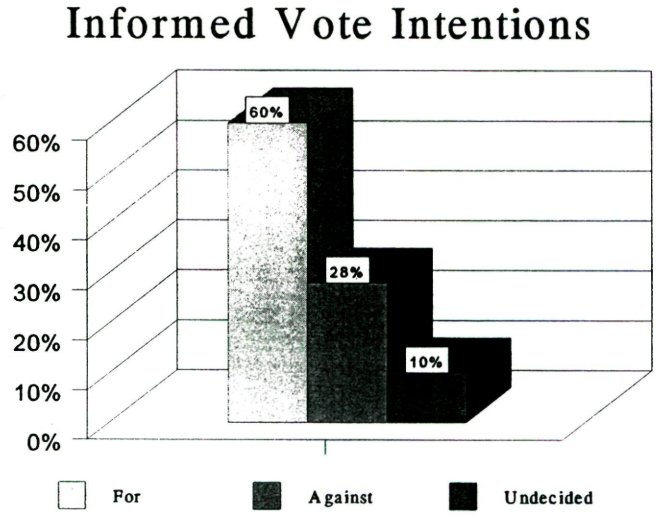
Turn-out Scenarios

	% Of Voters	Vote In All Elections	Voting For
Working Men	36%	48%	49%
Working Women	26%	41%	60%
Retired Men	11%	43%	34%
Retired Women	16%	55%	49%
Homemakers	8%	61%	71%

It is also worth noting that Republicans constitute 41% of the voters and only 49% support this measure. Among Democrats and Independents, who constitute 54% of the voters, support is fairly strong (Democrats 56% For / Independents 58% For).

Then too, support among those who are reliant on agriculture for their income (55% For) is only about the same as the support among those who are *not* reliant on agriculture (53% For). Because this measure is meant to help farmers, this raises a red flag of sorts. Why isn't support higher? Do those who rely on agriculture have problems with the program, with the tax increase or both? Is it possible that an agricultural group such as the Farm Bureau would come out in opposition to the measure? This could, of course, be disastrous. On the other hand, 24% of the voters report having some reliance on agriculture, so if this group could be energized in support of the measure, the effect could be very positive. In any event, this is an area that the campaign will want to explore in depth.

On a slightly different topic, when it comes to measures such as this, the burden of proof tends to be on those who would raise taxes. If anti-tax voters can raise a "reasonable doubt" about the effort to raise taxes they will often prevail. Stated another way, when in doubt, voters tend to vote "No". So the question becomes: how much opposition will this measure encounter? Will the anti-tax voters be organized and vocal? Will the local newspaper of significant groups within the community come out in opposition to the measure? The answers to these questions are, of course, unknown at this point and will only be answered as the campaign plays out. However, the message here is clear. The uninformed ballots tend to overstate eventual voter support, and this measure can only win with a well organized, effective educational campaign in support of the measure.



Informed Ballot Test

Once voters are informed of some of the aspects of the proposed measure and what it is meant to accomplish, support rises to 60%, while opposition remains about the same. Overall, 11% of the voters switched their vote intentions from Undecided or Opposed to For and 3% of the voters switched from For to Undecided or Opposed - resulting in the net gain of about 8%. Then too, *definite* support rises modestly from 27% to 33% and *definite* opposition declines slightly from 20% to 18%.

The Informed Vote Intentions are somewhat artificial in that they are predicated on *all* voters having *all* of the knowledge imparted in the questionnaire, including the positive messages and themes. However, the foregoing suggests that this measure could pass given an effective campaign and assuming that there is no organized opposition to plant seeds of doubt in the voters' minds.

Voters fall into three basic categories. First, there are those who were voting for the measure on both ballots. They have heard the cost of the program and the negative messages and are still supporting the measure, so it is safe to call them Core Supports. Second, there are those who were voting against the measure on both ballots. They have heard all of the reasons to support this measure, but still oppose it, so it is safe to call them the Core Opposition. Finally, there is a fairly large group in the middle who are not consistently for or against the measure.

at the right pace, only 43% support it. That is not to say that those who feel the county is growing at the right pace cannot be persuaded to vote for this measure — in fact 55% are supporting it on the Informed Ballot Test. It is clear, however, that these will be tougher votes to get and any campaign in support of this measure will need to make the case to these people.

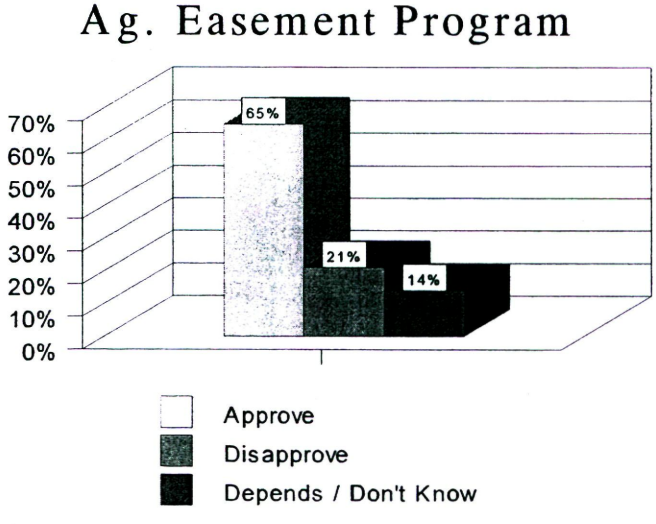
The Need For A Program

Just as it is apparent that many voters feel the county is growing too fast, it is also apparent that most voters would support a program to protect agricultural land from development. Overall, 85% feel that this is either Very Important (53%) or Somewhat Important (32%). This feeling is strong among most sub-groups, even including Republicans (52% Very Important). Note, however, that only 46% of those in Wooster and 44% of the working men feel that this is Very Important, so it will be somewhat harder to make the case for an agricultural easement program among these two sub-groups.

Overall, voter support for a program to address this problem is encouraging.

It is also encouraging that — when the details of the program are fleshed out, including the fact that it would be supported by *public tax dollars* — support remains high. When the following question was asked:

> *As you may know, an agricultural easement program uses public tax dollars to pay landowners who voluntarily agree to keep their farm land in permanent agricultural use rather than selling it for development. Generally speaking, would you approve or disapprove of an agricultural easement program in your community?*



65% of the voters approved of having such a program and 39% **Strongly** Approved.

This, once again, shows potential for a campaign in support of this measure, but it is only potential until voters are informed of the need for the program and how it would work. Keep in mind, that only 9% of all voters are Very Familiar with agricultural easements, while a majority are Not Too Familiar (32%) or Not At All Familiar (21%) with them.

Messages & Themes

Positive Messages & Themes

This survey tested five positive messages and themes, all of which resonated very well with voters. These arguments, in order of importance, were as follows:

Q. 10 - Preserving farm land also protects important wildlife habitat, scenic views and historic landscapes.

Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree Among Battleground	Strongly Agree Among Battleground
85%	61%	86%	**61%**

Q. 11b - The preservation of Wayne County's rural lifestyle and agricultural economy is dependent on preserving farm and rural lands.

Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree Among Battleground	Strongly Agree Among Battleground
80%	55%	85%	**53%**

Q. 9 - Because Wayne County has lost 34% of its farms in the past 30 years, it is clear that we must act now to preserve the county's remaining agricultural lands.

Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree Among Battleground	Strongly Agree Among Battleground
77%	54%	85%	**49%**

Q. 13 - $4 dollars a month is a very small price to pay to preserve farmlands in Wayne County.

Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree Among Battleground	Strongly Agree Among Battleground
75%	47%	70%	**39%**

Q. 11a - The preservation of Wayne County's rural lifestyle and agricultural economy is dependent on slowing the rate of growth and development.

Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree Among Battleground	Strongly Agree Among Battleground
72%	37%	64%	**24%**

Several things are clear from the above findings. First, the connection between preserving farm land and protecting wildlife habitat, scenic views and historic landscapes is an *extremely* important message for voters and cannot be overstated nor overdone in a campaign.

Second, voters also make the connection between preserving the rural lifestyle and agricultural economy and preserving farm and rural lands. They understand that it is not only important to farmers, but it is also important to them *personally*.

Third, Question 9 makes it clear that voters not only understand that this is an important undertaking, but that they must act *now*.

Fourth, Question 11a indicates that "slowing the rate of growth and development" is a positive issue, but is not nearly as important as other issues in this section.

Finally, the response to Question 13 (concerning the cost of the program expressed in terms of dollars per month) is very positive. Not only do three out of four voters agree that it is a small price to pay, but almost a majority (47%) *strongly* agree.

Having said that, it is also important to note the responses of Battleground voters. Among this group only *39%* strongly agree, which is good, but it is far smaller than the strongly agree response of Core Supporters (66% strongly agree). The point being, that Core Supporters are far less troubled by the cost of this program than are Battleground voters.

All in all, these are very strong messages for the campaign to take to the voters and they should play in instrumental role in the passage of this measure.

Negative Messages & Themes

The survey also tested three messages that were essentially negative in nature. The first does not appear to have much resonance with most voters. In fact, a majority of voters *disagree* that there are more important problems for the county to address and almost one-third *strongly* disagreed. Then too, only 13% of the Battleground voters strongly agreed with this statement. In many ways, this reflects the responses of voters to the question asking for the most important problem facing the county to which schools and law enforcement were given less often than growth and development concerns. In any event, this does not appear to be an overly damaging or convincing argument for the opposition.

Q. 12 - We would be better off spending our money on more important issues such as more schools, better law enforcement, and better county services and worry about preserving farmlands later.

Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree Among Battleground	Strongly Agree Among Battleground
35%	15%	32%	**13%**

The second argument is much stronger.

Q. 14 - Taxes in Wayne County are already too high, if the county wants a program like this they should find some other way to pay for it.

Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree Among Battleground	Strongly Agree Among Battleground
49%	29%	55%	**34%**

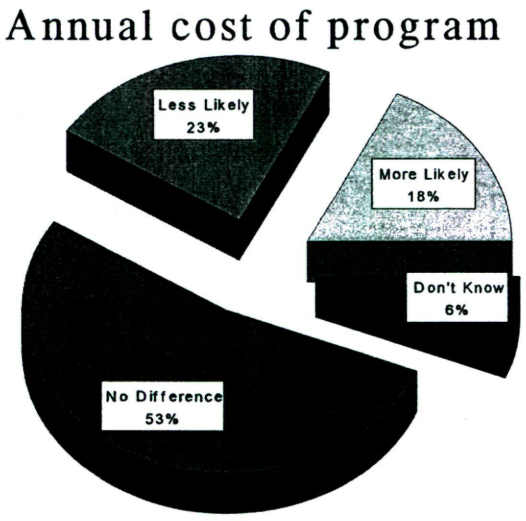
The strength of this argument is underscored by several findings. First, even among the Core Supporters 35% agree with this statement. Second, over one-third of the Battleground voters ***strongly*** agree with it. And, third, even among those who give preserving farm lands as the most important issue facing the county, 43% agree with this statement.

In a way, the response to this argument is predictable in so far as everyone wants a "free lunch". And the fact that only 29% strongly agree with it is an indication that this argument in and of itself is unlikely to defeat this issue. It is clear, however, that when voters ask if there isn't some way to pay for this program that would not increase taxes, the supporters of this measure had better have a very good answer.

Finally, voters were asked the following question:

Q. 4 - If you learned that passing this measure would cost the average household $44 per year in additional taxes, would you be more or less likely to vote for this measure, or wouldn't it make a difference?

The results are displayed below.



It is certainly encouraging that a majority of the voters said that the cost would not make a difference to them.

At the same time, it is clear that the cost will make a great deal of difference to some voters. This is particularly true of Core Opposition Voters, but it is also true, to a lesser extent, among Battleground voters. Among this group 35% said the cost would make them less likely to vote for the measure and, more importantly, 23% said that it would make them ***much*** less likely to support it.

In short, it comes as no surprise that the cost of the program is the greatest impediment to getting this measure passed. The vital point is that the campaign will need to emphasize the importance of the benefits of the program and the problem that it addresses and to stress the cost in the most favorable terms, i.e. the cost per month.

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Wayne County, Ohio Survey

The American Farmland Trust &
The Trust For Public Land

FINAL

June 28 - July 1, 2001

Hello, my name is_____, and I'm with AMERICAN VIEWPOINT, an independent market research firm located in Alexandria, Virginia. We are doing a survey on issues in Ohio, and I would like to have your opinions.

A. Are you or is any one in your household a reporter or active in any political campaigns this year?

Yes (TERMINATE)
No (CONTINUE)

B. Are you registered to vote in Wayne County at this address?

Yes (GO TO Q. 1)
No (GO TO Q. C)

C. Is there anyone in your household who is registered to vote in Wayne County (IF YES ASK: MAY I PLEASE SPEAK TO THAT PERSON?)

Yes (REPEAT INTRODUCTION)
No (THANK AND TERMINATE)