

Conservation Matters

A monthly column focused on conservation education, as the result of collaboration among several area conservation commissions and organizations. If your town's commission or conservation organization would like to contribute articles, please contact Jessica Tabolt Halm jess_tabolt@hotmail.com

Title: Conservation Trust Funds Provide Long-term Benefits for Towns

Written by: Janice Mulherin, Rumney Conservation Commission

It's that time of year again. In addition to enjoying the beautiful fall foliage, many towns in our area begin working on their budgets for town meeting. Our elected officials have the tough job of providing services for their town while balancing the desire to keep tax rates low. The Land Use Change Tax (LUCT) is one way for communities to provide long-term benefits with very little impact on local taxes.

As we learned in last month's Conservation Matters article, several of our local communities have voted to dedicate some or all of the penalty for removing land from Current Use to local conservation-related programs and services. These funds, while not a huge source of revenue for towns, when put into a Conservation Trust Fund can have long-term benefits for the community.

In the town of Rumney, the 2013 LUCT was \$6,900. If all of this went to reduce taxes, the benefit to each landowner would have been negligible. However, since 50% of that amount went into the Conservation Trust Fund, we were able to support a series of initiatives including the Lake Host program at Stinson Lake, sponsorship of a youth to attend the Barry Conservation Camp, and holding a workshop on Conservation Easements for area residents. In past years, the Conservation Commission has assisted landowners with the Stewardship fees on their conservation easements donated to a local land trust and provided the resources to purchase a parcel of land along the Baker River -the Jim Darling Natural Area, which provides habitat for wildlife, access to the Baker River and protection from development.

Other towns have also used these funds in exciting ways. Campton has used its Conservation Fund to purchase an 11-acre parcel located in a prominent location that it manages as a meadow. The parcel has field and forest trails, and abuts the Blair State Forest. It is known as Pattee Conservation Park, named for its former owner who many people in town knew, since he served as the road agent for much of the mid-1900s. They also use the Fund for routine maintenance such as mowing, for this and other town-owned and Conservation Commission managed properties.

The town of Alexandria has used conservation fund money for their Natural Resource Inventory. Alexandria has approved funding for the surveying of the newly designated town forest and also plans to use those funds for enhancements and maintenance of the property. Across the state, communities use

these funds for projects such as the construction and maintenance of trails, milfoil prevention, watershed and invasive species studies.

When LUCT revenues are reinvested in conservation, everyone benefits. What projects would you like to see funded in your community? Now is the time to speak with your Conservation Commission. If your town does not have a Conservation Trust, now is the time to consider establishing one. For more information on Current Use in your town, see <http://revenue.nh.gov/current-use/reports.htm>.



The Jim Darling Natural Area - Route 25 and the Baker River in Rumney