

Cornish Conservation Commission

Your neighbors working to protect and
preserve our community

Agenda

- ▶ Brief History of the CCC
 - ▶ Current Funds and their use
 - ▶ Recent Projects
 - ▶ Conservation Easement Primer
 - ▶ Your ideas: What can we do to help the Town of Cornish maintain its rural and scenic nature?
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Our mission Statement

- ▶ The Cornish Conservation Commission is dedicated to the protection of the Town of Cornish's rural character, natural environment, and working landscape by encouraging and supporting land conservation efforts, public education, and careful Town planning.
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History

- ▶ The citizens of Cornish have always valued their environment and to confirm this, at the 1971 Town Meeting, they voted to establish a Conservation Commission and set up the Conservation Fund. (RSA 36-A)

History

- ▶ Around 1977 the focus of the Commission shifted to education and developing trails and an outdoor lab near the elementary school. To this end the Commission wrote a CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) grant to hire workers to start trail work around the school. Sue Shofner (now Sue Fitch) was hired as coordinator with Fred Hier and Brian Devenger as assistants. They cut trails, researched class six roads and fire ponds and worked with students in the sciences.

History

- ▶ From this work interest grew in having the Davidson property (now CREA) become part of an outdoor lab and recreation area and led to a Land and Water Conservation grant that when approved allowed the Town to purchase the land. The 50% matching funds came from the Conservation Fund, The Cornish Fair and the Davidsons. Through a generous gift the Palmer Fund for outdoor education was established. With the land secured and a second major gift to spur the project on, a second grant for the development of the property was written and awarded. Fund raising for the 50% match was successful and by late 1989 CREA was ready for soccer and baseball. Initial trails and a bridge were also completed.

History

- ▶ In the late 1980s the Commission's energies shifted to protecting open space and during 1989 the Commission accepted the development rights to Virginia Colby's White Swan Farm, the first conservation easement in town. This has been followed by 26 additional easements for a current total of 3100+ acres that remain on the tax roles but are kept open.

History

- ▶ In 1998 the Commission was able to purchase, at a bargain price and using Conservation Funds, a 270-acre tract of hilly, wooded land in the southwest corner of the town from The Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF). A deed restriction was placed on the property to prevent development. This property is now referred to as “The Town Forest”.

Current Funds and Their Use

- ▶ A Conservation Fund was established as a result of the formation of the Conservation Commission at Town meeting in 1972. At that time the Town voted to deposit 100% of the revenue collected pursuant to RSA 79-A (the land use change tax) in a fund known as the Conservation Fund as authorized by RSA 79-A:25, II, to be administered by the Conservation Commission to help preserve the rural character of Cornish by encouraging the conservation of open land in accordance with RSA 36-A:5, III. At Town meeting in 2010 the Town voted to split future funds collected from the land use tax with 60% of such funds going into the Conservation Fund and 40% going into the Town's general fund.
- ▶ Current Balance: \$120,788

Current Funds and Their Use

- ▶ Palmer Fund: The Palmer fund is used for Environmental and Conservation education that benefit students, teachers and citizens in the Town of Cornish. If the principal balance of the fund goes below the original donation (\$10,000) the CCC will initiate a fund raising campaign to replenish the fund.
 - ▶ Current Balance: \$14,700
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Current Funds and Their Use

- ▶ CREA Fund: Funds must be used to improve or enhance the Cornish Recreational and Educational Area (CREA) located on Townhouse and South Parsonage Rds. The funds emanated from the original fund drive to purchase and develop CREA.
 - ▶ Current Balance: \$6,900
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Current Funds and Their Use

- ▶ “Bunny” Barker Fund. Funds may be used for out-of-ordinary expenses incurred while pursuing the work of the Commission. The funds emanated from an original donation from E. Leonard “Bunny” Barker with additional contributions from the Barker family.
 - ▶ Current Balance: \$2,468
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Recent Projects

- ▶ Natural Resources Inventory

Recent Projects

- ▶ Natural Resources Inventory
- ▶ By-Laws

Recent Projects

- ▶ Natural Resources Inventory
 - ▶ By-Laws
 - ▶ Tic Talk (Twice)
- 

Recent Projects

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 - ▶ By-Laws
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 - ▶ Bobcat and Beaver Talks
- 

Recent Projects

- ▶ Natural Resources Inventory
 - ▶ By-Laws
 - ▶ Tic Talk (Twice)
 - ▶ Bobcat and Beaver Talks
 - ▶ Scenic Road Designation
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Conservation Easement Primer

Easement Primer

- ▶ Definition: A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement by which a landowner restricts future use of their property.
 - ▶ Agreement is between the owners and a qualified conservation organization or the Town of Cornish
 - ▶ Assures property protected from future development regardless of ownership.
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Easement Primer

- ▶ Landowner retains ownership of the property
 - ▶ Landowner determines restrictions
 - ▶ Easements are enforced by the organization holding the easement
 - ▶ May or may not allow public access
 - ▶ Property tax: The same as property tax under “current use”
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Easement Primer

- ▶ How the value of the easement is calculated

Current Market Value of the Land
minus

Value of the Land with Easement
Restrictions

Difference is the value of the easement

Easement Primer

Value of the Easement may be

- ▶ Purchased by the Conservation Organization
(Conservation Fund)
 - ▶ Donated by the landowner (tax write-off)
 - ▶ Combination
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Easement Primer

How does the Conservation Commission decide to fund, or not, an easement?

- Determine whether there are any significant, special, or hidden costs of protecting and maintaining property in its current or conserved state that would outweigh the benefits of conserving it.
 - Property size
 - Agricultural Use and Value
 - Historic Importance
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Easement Primer

How does the Conservation Commission decide to fund, or not, an easement?

- Scenic Value
- Keystone Properties
 - Ecological Significance
- Public Benefit

Questions?

What would you like to see the Conservation Commission do for its next project(s)?