

APPENDIX 3-3 SUMMARY OF THE *OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES PLAN*

In its history, opportunities, and quality of life, Hanover, New Hampshire is a very special place. Shaped in the colonial New England pattern of a small town surrounded by farms and great expanses of forest, its landscape is varied and beautiful, and its natural resource base plentiful.

Hanover's traditional land uses are undergoing fundamental and permanent change. Farms are being replaced by residences which are springing up throughout the rural fields and woods. The long-established network of hiking and skiing opportunities, and the varied, linked habitats necessary for local wildlife are being gradually fragmented. Future development will place increasing stress on water supply and other resources.

In the year 2000, the Hanover Town Meeting voted to create a Conservation Fund for the protection of open space. The Conservation Commission developed criteria for its use in the Open Space Priorities Plan.

In years past, many public entities and private landowners have established open space protection on scattered pieces of land throughout the town. The *Open Space Priorities Plan* integrates those parcels, along with additional "open space action areas" that meet the plan's goals, into Hanover's first town-wide open space plan for the future. Evaluation criteria, ways to achieve the goals, and methods of funding are also part of the plan.

1. GOALS OF THE PLAN

- To promote the conservation, protection and sound management of the natural resource base;
- To protect and enhance the ecological integrity of the town's diverse natural communities and wildlife habitats;
- To sustain the scenic quality and visual character of the town;
- To maintain and expand landscape-based recreational and educational opportunities;
- To protect the town's historic sites and cultural landscapes;
- To protect in-town open spaces.

2. OPEN SPACE ACTION AREAS

Twelve action areas are identified in the plan. Some serve conservation and/or recreation needs in the rural parts of town. Others focus on the in-town region. Between the two, and linking them, are the forested hillsides that form a tree-covered backdrop to in-town development. Areas vary in size from a fraction of an acre to hundreds of acres with many landowners.

Acquisition or protection of land using Conservation Fund moneys can only be accomplished in conjunction with willing landowners.

The plan also encourages use of other techniques for protection of land for public purposes. Zoning changes and regulations, introduction of transfer of development rights,

establishment of conservation easements by individual landowners, and other methods are available to accomplish the end result – a system of lands that permanently protects the natural resources, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, traditional landscapes, and scenic treasures of Hanover.

3. HANOVER’S CONSERVATION FUND

The Conservation Fund is managed by the town’s Conservation Commission. It is designated for multiple purposes, including land purchase, establishment of easements, assistance to landowners, stewardship of easements for which the town is responsible, and enabling public use of specified lands. By means of Town Meeting vote, the fund is replenished annually by 50% of the land use change tax received in the preceding year as well as by revenue from timber sales from town-owned lands, and fines collected by the town for conservation and environmental violations.

4. LAND PROTECTION ASSISTANCE

To encourage and enable Hanover landowners to participate in creating a town-wide system of open space protection, a portion of the Conservation Fund is available each year to assist with the cost of donation, sale, or placement of a conservation easement on private lands which meet the plan’s criteria. Property surveys, title searches, legal counsel for preparation and/or review of easement deeds, stewardship fund fees, and appraisals may be eligible for support.

5. FOR MORE INFORMATION...

Copies of the *Open Space Priorities Plan* are available at the Planning and Zoning Office, at the town libraries, and on the town’s website: hanovernh.org. If you have questions or would like to pursue conservation options on your property, please contact Vicki Smith at vicki.smith@hanovernh.org, or 643-0742 (ext. 113).