

Candia Conservation News

Helping to Preserve Candia's Natural Resources



Legacy Farm

Photo: Judi Lindsey

A publication of the Candia Open Space Committee (COSC), a sub-committee of the Candia Conservation Commission (CCC)

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This edition of the Candia Conservation News focuses on the funding available to Candia for protecting its natural resources. The conservation fund is used to purchase property or its development rights for land conservation purposes. The forest maintenance fund is used for the maintenance of Candia's town forest properties.

CONSERVATION FUND

The conservation fund was established by the Town of Candia to ensure that money is available to purchase property or its development rights for land conservation purposes. The major source of revenue of the fund is the land use change tax, which is assessed on property when it is taken out of current use. The current use program is covered in greater detail below. Other sources of revenue for the fund include grant money, for which the CCC continues to apply, and monies allocated by Candia voters. The conservation fund is also qualified to accept bequests and tax deductible personal donations.

Sometimes an opportunity arises on short notice to work with landowners who need to sell their land or the development rights to it. At such times, we need a balance in the conservation fund sufficient to offer a viable financial alternative in the current real estate market. We feel a balance of about \$500K is sufficient to at least negotiate an interim agreement until we are able to raise more funds, if we need them. Our preference is for the town to purchase development rights, not the land itself.

Since we cannot predict what the land use change taxes will contribute to the conservation fund, the CCC periodically needs to ask Candia voters to supplement it.

In 2005, the Town of Candia was able to use money from the conservation fund to purchase an 82 acre parcel of land on Deerfield Road. It will be conserved for the enjoyment of all Candia residents. As a result of this purchase, the CCC asked voters at the March 2006 Town Meeting to replenish \$315K to the conservation fund bringing the total back up around \$500K. The request was approved. Since then we have received additional funds from the land use change tax. At press time, the conservation fund has a balance of a little over \$600K. However, half of this is encumbered in the Sanborn Farm project (see below). **Although there are a number of conservation projects in process, the CCC hopes to operate within the current balance of the conservation fund and has decided not to ask for money from Candia taxpayers at this time.**

CURRENT USE PROGRAM

In 1973, the New Hampshire legislature enacted the current use program for the purpose of preserving open space. It is a property tax strategy to help landowners keep their property undeveloped by allowing the land to be taxed based on its present use rather than its highest potential use. The program has allowed landowners to continue to own their land, which they otherwise might have been forced to sell because they could not afford the property taxes. If land is taken out of current use, a one-time 10% land use change tax is assessed based on current market value at the time the use changes to a non-qualifying use. The tax is paid to the town in which the land is located. Candia applies the land use change tax to the conservation fund, **thereby reducing the need to ask taxpayers for additional funding.**

While the current use program is an excellent program, it does not permanently protect land from development. The best tool we have to do this is the **conservation easement**. For further information about conservation easements, please contact the CCC or COSC or visit www.candiaconservationcommission.org.

FOREST MAINTENANCE FUND

The forest maintenance fund was established by Candia voters at the 2005 Town Meeting to fund the maintenance of our town forest properties. When timber is harvested on town-owned property as outlined in the forest management plan, the revenue generated from its sale is deposited into the forest maintenance fund. The monies are used for projects such as trail maintenance, pedestrian bridges and signage.

SANBORN FARM

In the summer of 2006, the CCC presented a proposal to the Board of Selectmen to protect 48 acres of the Sanborn Farm. The project is commensurate with the objectives of

the Candia Open Space Plan, Southern New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission's Regional Comprehensive Plan and NH State Smart Growth objectives because it conserves some of the few prime agricultural soils in town. The Board voted to take advantage of this important opportunity. A qualified appraisal was completed and a purchase price of \$595K for the development rights was established. A grant received through the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program will fund \$273,700 of the cost, leaving \$321,300 to be paid by the town over a five year period. The Rockingham County Conservation District will hold an agricultural easement on the Sanborn property, encouraging agricultural activities there in perpetuity.

Even though we will not spend the full amount all at once, the CCC has encumbered its financial obligation in the conservation fund, effectively reducing the amount with which we have to work. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, we are hoping to operate within our current available balance and have chosen not to ask voters for additional funds in 2007.

We are pleased the selectmen acted proactively to preserve some of Candia's precious prime agricultural acreage.



Sanborn Farm

Photo: Judi Lindsey

BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION

When planning for growth in Candia, there are many factors to consider, some of which include the education of our children, the safety of our residents, affordable housing, maintenance of town roads, etc. In addition, many Candia citizens are concerned with our ability to retain the small town, rural atmosphere and the sense of community that we value. If we do not exercise foresight in the decisions we make about where and how to allow development, we will not only lose much of what we value about our town, but will jeopardize the environment that helps to sustain our quality of life.

While other town boards focus on the quality and regulation of development in Candia, the conservation commission is concerned about our ability to retain some of our natural resources in the face of development. These are the resources we tend to take for granted and are often the first to be sacrificed when developing land. However, in many ways they provide the healthy environment that helps sustain us. With development pressures looming, we are at risk of losing these irreplaceable resources.

We know we need to encourage commercial and light industrial development. We also know that residential development doesn't pay for all the town services it uses. In addition, it has been repeatedly shown that protecting open space helps to keep taxes down because the revenue it generates helps to offset costs of town services to other areas of town. For more information, please see <http://extension.unh.edu/Pubs/ForPubs/nrgn1010.pdf>.

In addition, protecting land from residential development has many benefits for people, wildlife and our natural resources. When a parcel is developed into house lots, it is no longer available for the public to enjoy. Fishermen and hunters can no longer move freely and enjoy their outdoor sports. The land becomes off limits. Former forests and fields become backyards with swing sets, swimming pools and sheds.

By preserving contiguous parcels that connect with larger blocks of unfragmented land, we can protect habitat for large mammals such as deer and moose as well as smaller wildlife and many species of birds. Rivers, wetlands and streams remain clean so our water supply is safe. The air we breathe is cleansed. Hunters have a place to hunt. Fishermen have places to fish. Hikers, horseback riders and bird enthusiasts have pristine areas to explore. And the ecological diversity required to sustain all of this is protected.

The conservation commission strives to work together with other town boards to ensure that in addition to carefully planned development, there will always be woods to roam and fields to explore. For the sake of current and future generations, we strive to exercise the foresight now to preserve the health, biodiversity and beauty of our natural, rural environment.

NEWS FLASH!

The New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan is available! This federally mandated plan, completed by NH Fish and Game, identifies natural resources of statewide importance, many of which lie in our region. We are excited to have the plan available to help guide our conservation efforts. While we do not have sufficient space to elaborate on the plan in this newsletter edition, we encourage anyone with internet resources to check it out at www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/wildlife_plan.htm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The CCC and COSC have been methodically following the objectives in the Candia Open Space Plan and the Candia Master Plan, with town approval. We encourage Candia residents to join us at our monthly meetings to learn more and participate. The CCC meets on the third Tuesday of each month and the COSC meets on the third Monday of each month. Please visit our web site at www.candiaconservationcommission.org for details on meeting times and dates and for more information. We thank Candia residents for their continued support.

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