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New Web-Based Service Enables the N.H. Public to Identify Protected Lands in Their Community

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Homeowners in New Hampshire may assume that the forest next door or the field across the street will remain in place indefinitely. However, unless these are conservation lands, they could easily disappear with new development in the area.

Now, thanks to an innovative University of New Hampshire service, homeowners and others can find out if their backyard forest is protected by simply spending a few minutes on the Internet.

GRANIT, the state-wide geographic information systems (GIS) clearinghouse, holds information on over 1.3 million acres of conservation lands in New Hampshire. A new application called the "Conservation Lands Viewer" gives non-GIS savvy citizens the ability to view maps showing the location of land parcels forever protected from development, as well as access related data about their community.

"GRANIT democratizes access to GIS by providing a tool that allows users to interactively map information related to land conservation," says Fay Rubin, GRANIT manager at UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space. "The new Conservation Lands Viewer enables people to view and analyze GIS data, and will be valuable for those interested in inventorying protected parcels, in strategic land conservation planning, or even in gathering information for personal reasons."

Anyone with an interest in learning more about their

town, watershed or region can access the service by going to <http://www.granit.sr.unh.edu> and clicking on "create a map."

The journey starts with a map of the entire state showing areas of protected land. Zooming in on a particular region or town displays additional information, including the names of land parcels and exact street location.

Options include displaying parcels by protection type and learning more details about a particular parcel. Topographic maps and aerial photography are also available.

Another feature allows users to generate and print maps. Maps can be copied into user's documents, enabling state agencies, regional planning commissions and communities to easily generate reports of conservation lands.

The site will be expanded to include data on wildlife biodiversity, and an option for removing the conservation lands layer will be installed for those interested in just the base maps.

The Conservation Lands Viewer was developed by the GRANIT staff at UNH and Northern Geomatics in Hallowell, Maine, with funding from the Samuel P. Pardoe Foundation.

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