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Municipal Conservation Outreach and Technical Assistance

A Final Report to

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project

Submitted by

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Executive Summary

The New Hampshire Estuaries project awarded a grant of \$24,700 to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests in May of 2002 for municipal conservation outreach and technical assistance in the area of municipal funds for permanent land conservation.

SPNHF, working in close partnership with the Center for Land Conservation Assistance, conducted research into available mechanisms and funding sources for municipal conservation efforts. A publication summarizing the available options and providing information and case studies from a variety of New Hampshire towns was produced. *Saving Special Places – Community Funding for Land Conservation*, was distributed in December of 2002, just in time to assist towns seeking new municipal funding sources at the 2003 town meeting season.

SPNHF/CLCA also provided a series of educational workshops on the topic of municipal fund raising for permanent land conservation. Eight workshops were held in the New Hampshire estuaries area, and seven were presented to at statewide events. Over 400 people attended the workshops. SPNHF/CLCA also provided technical assistance to twenty-four of the communities in the estuaries area over the period of the grant. Elements of the project were publicized in a wide range of print media in both statewide and estuary-area outlets.

The education and outreach effort was quite successful. The number of towns applying land use change land monies to their conservation funds increased, as did the percent of the fund applied. The towns in the estuaries area that had the advantage of the new publication just as they were going into town meeting season with bond proposals in 2003 passed their bonds at a rate of 76% for a total of \$18,660,000 of new money available for conservation projects in those towns.

Past the term of the grant, additional towns will be voting on increasing the amount of money from the Land Use Change Tax going to their conservation funds in 2004. Eight more towns in the estuaries area are considering open space bond proposals for the 2004 town meeting season, for a possible total of \$19,600,000 in new funds for permanent land conservation.

The coming challenge for the New Hampshire land conservation community will be to encourage the towns with these new sources of money to invest it wisely. Properties need to be selected according to guidelines that reflect a mix of natural resource values and local interests. Projects need to be conducted in a professional manner to insure long-term viability and excellent stewardship.

- Introduction

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project awarded a grant of \$24,700 to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests in May of 2002 to “encourage communities to create and fund municipal conservation funds through the application of current use change tax penalties, municipal bonds, and other mechanisms.” SPNHF was to “develop tools” that would “assist communities in establishing funds and provide workshops to learn how to apply the tools,” providing direct assistance to 6 – 10 towns. The project was designed to help implement the NHEP Management Plan Action LND-28: “Encourage towns to dedicate current-use change tax penalties to conservation commissions for the purpose of natural resource acquisition, easements, restoration, and conservation land management.”

SPNHF assigned much of the project to the Center for Land Conservation Assistance, a then-new program hosted by SPNHF to provide capacity building for the growing numbers of land trusts working in New Hampshire, as well as assistance to municipalities that are unable to get the conservation assistance they wanted from a local or regional land trust and to conservation minded landowners.

The project involved both the creation of a publication about the many ways available for municipalities to set aside local funds for land conservation, educational workshops, and technical assistance to people from many communities in the NHEP service area.

- Project Goals and Objectives

The goals of this project were to encourage additional permanent land conservation in the communities in the New Hampshire estuaries area by demonstrating how to create funds and provide money for funds to be used for permanent municipal land conservation projects. The objectives were to compile and share information about how such funds had been created in other New Hampshire communities to inspire the estuaries area municipalities to explore and use the strategies that would be most effective in their own situation, and to provide support and assistance to them as they did so. The main strategies for accomplishing these goals and objectives were a publication, a series of outreach activities, and technical assistance to towns.

- Activities

The goals and objectives of the project were addressed by a combination of research and documentation, production and distribution of a municipal

conservation guidebook, workshops and technical assistance, and media outreach.

Research and Documentation

CLCA researched and documented the efforts of New Hampshire municipalities to dedicate land use change tax and other funding sources to conservation funds, especially within the coastal watershed communities. To determine what towns were doing, CLCA obtained information and input from the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, the five land trusts in the area (Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, Moose Mountains Regional Greenways, Rockingham Land Trust, Seacoast Land Trust and Strafford Rivers Conservancy), UNH Cooperative Extension and the two regional planning commissions working in the area, Rockingham Planning Commission and Strafford Regional Planning Commission. CLCA also had individual contact with people in many of the towns passing major appropriations for open space.

One of the most popular sources money for municipal conservation funds is the land use change tax, a penalty that is paid to the town when land is removed from the current use tax program and developed. The current use Tax Program is New Hampshire’s preferential tax program to encourage keeping areas of undeveloped land of 10 acres or more in its traditional uses. At the beginning of this project, 120 of the 234 communities in New Hampshire were allocating some portion of the land use change tax to the conservation fund, for a statewide average of 51%¹. Thirty of those towns were from the estuaries area, representing 71 percent of the estuaries area communities. Table 1 shows the seacoast area municipal land use change tax allocations for 2002.

Table 1 2002 New Hampshire Seacoast Area Municipal Land Use Change Tax Allocations		
Municipality	LUCT Allocation, 2002	Date Adopted
Brentwood	50%	2001
Candia	100%	1997 25%, \$1,000 cap; 2000 no cap; 2001 100%
Chester	100%	1997 with \$20,000 cap; cap removed 1999
Danville	100%	1997
Deerfield	100%	2001
Dover	100%	1999
Durham	100%	1990 50%, 2001 100%

¹ LUCT statistics are maintained and have been provided by the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, which municipalities “that have voted to allocate or all of the use change tax to the conservation fund AND have told NHACC they have done so.” It is thus possible that other towns are doing this and have not informed NHACC.

Table 1 2002 New Hampshire Seacoast Area Municipal Land Use Change Tax Allocations		
Municipality	LUCT Allocation, 2002	Date Adopted
East Kingston	50%	1998
Epping	50%, \$50,000 cap	1995 10%, \$10,000 cap; 2000 50%
Farmington	50% or \$10,000, whichever is less	2001
Fremont	50% over \$10,000	1999
Hampton	10%, \$10,000 cap	~1994
Hampton Falls	100%	1996 10%; 2001 100%
Kensington	25%	1989
Lee	50%	1989
Madbury	50%	1989
Middleton	100%	1996
New Durham	100%, \$5,000 annual cap	1998
Newfields	50%	1990
Newington	100%	2001
Newmarket	50%	1989
North Hampton	100%	1990
Northwood	10%	1990
Portsmouth	100%	1995
Raymond	100%	1989 25%; 2001 100%
Rochester	50%, \$10,000 annual cap	1999
Rye	50%, \$10,000 cap per property	1996
Sandown	25%	1997
Stratham	100%	2000
Wakefield	100%, \$25,000 cap	2000

Town meeting votes for large bonds for general open space acquisition are a new phenomenon in New Hampshire, having never been used prior to 2001. Of the 37 towns known to have passed major funding initiatives for land conservation statewide in 2001 and 2002, 15 (40%) were within the estuaries area: Candia, Chester, Deerfield, Dover, Exeter, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Kingston, Lee, Newfields, Newington, Newmarket, North Hampton, Rye and Stratham. These communities bonded or otherwise allocated \$8,433,000 in local funds for conservation in 2001 and \$11,515,000 in 2002. These figures were 54% and 57% of the major conservation funding initiatives for the entire state for 2001 and 2002 respectively. These successes include the state's first ever-general acquisition bond for open space of \$4,000,000 in North Hampton in 2001 and the largest open space bond passed in that time period, Stratham's \$5,000,000 bond in 2002. There were apparently no unsuccessful funding

initiatives in 2001. In 2002, funding initiatives passed at a nearly 82% success rate in the seacoast area. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

Town	Year	Purpose	Amount
Barrington	2001	Toward \$220,000 for Calef lot	\$75,000
Bookfield	2002	\$100,000 bond to support acquisition of 600+ acre property	failed
Brentwood		Bond for general open space acquisition	\$2,000,000
Candia	2002	Conservation Fund	\$50,000
Chester	2001	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$3,000,000
Dover	2001	Open Space Committee	\$700,000
Exeter	2001	Conservation Fund	\$100,000
Hampton	2002	Conservation commission fund	\$300,000
Hampton	2002	\$3,000,000 general acquisition bond	failed
Hampton Falls	2001	Conservation Fund	\$25,000
Kingston	2001		\$29,000
Kingston	2002	To acquire easement on 37.25 acres (from capital reserve fund)	\$140,000
Kingston	2002	To support acquisition of 115 acres (to be matched by \$150,000 from The Nature Conservancy)	\$50,000
Lee	2001	Conservation Fund	\$100,000
Newfields	2002	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$2,000,000
Newfields	2002	For conservation commission fund	\$25,000
Newington	2001	Conservation Fund	\$50,000
Newmarket	2001	Aquifer easement protection fund	\$54,000
Newmarket	2002	Bond for land conservation, recreation and other public purposes	\$2,000,000
North Hampton	2001	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$4,000,000
Rye	2001	Conservation Fund	\$300,000

Stratham	2002	Bond for general land conservation	\$5,000,000
TOTAL	2001		\$8,433,000
TOTAL	2002		\$11,565,000
SUM TOTAL			\$19,998,000

Municipal Conservation Guidebook (Manual, Handbook, Toolkit)

Central to this outreach and technical assistance project was the creation of *Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation*. This 150 page spiral bound guidebook (called a “tool kit” in the original proposal) presents a comprehensive view of the reasons for conserving land in New Hampshire communities, the available funding sources, and key strategies for engaging citizens in grassroots activism. It is enlivened by case studies from New Hampshire towns that have used each of the funding sources described. The authors were Brian Hart and Dorothy Tripp Taylor.

Hart was the Policy Specialist for SPNHF at the time. He was a seasoned and effective grassroots organizer and activist, having worked previously for both the Northern Forest Alliance and Citizens for New Hampshire Land and Community Investment Program. Simultaneous to writing the book he was also involved in a successful campaign to pass an open space bond in the community he lived in.

Taylor brought experience sharing information with New Hampshire communities about the economic benefit of keeping land in open space through presentations of a slide show, *The Dollars and Sense of Open Space* from 1997 through the time of the writing of the guidebook. She is also the author of *Open Space for New Hampshire: A Toolbook of Techniques for the New Millennium* (copyright New Hampshire Wildlife Federation, 2000), the first and only New Hampshire publication to bring together in one place the full range of educational, voluntary, regulatory and financial tools and strategies available to New Hampshire communities to retain land in open space.

Sarah Thorne, then Senior Director for Research at SPNHF, edited *Saving Special Places*.

Saving Special Places – Community Funding for Land Conservation contains an acknowledgment of the financial support provided by NHEP. It also includes a description of NHEP as one of the professional contacts in the Where to Find Help chapter.

Saving Special Places begins with an overview of why it is important to conserve land in New Hampshire communities. This section also presents tools for conducting economic analyses of the impact of open space on town budgets. There is a brand new worksheet showing how to compare the cost of development with the cost of conservation for a specific real or hypothetical

parcel for an individual town. This section also describes conservation easements as a tool for permanent land conservation, and the stewardship responsibilities that must be accepted and met by any group undertaking permanent land conservation.

Subsequent chapters describe Local Funding Methods and Grassroots Organizing strategies. Two final chapters serve as appendices, listing people, organizations and publications that can provide further assistance, and other useful information.

The chapter about Local Funding Methods starts with a basic civics lesson of how decisions are made in communities with the several different types of local government that are common in New Hampshire: Board of Selectmen with either traditional town meeting or “official ballot referendum forms of meeting” (also called SB2 towns, after the senate bill that authorized this variation of the traditional form of town meeting), and Town and City Council with variations. Readers are reminded of the importance of being fully familiar with the form of government used in their own towns and of meeting the related statutory deadlines. The various ways communities can authorize purchase of land or property and the different ways to hold funds for conservation are explained.

The most important part of this publication appears in this chapter, the list of seven sources of municipal money for conservation. For each source, the text provides a description, a list of advantages and disadvantages, a case study of a town that has used the technique successfully, and frequently both the actual wording of the warrant article and hints about use of the technique. For each case study, in this chapter and throughout the publication, there is a brief description of the subject community, including location, population, acreage, acres conserved and in Current Use, valuation, tax rate and form of governance, to help readers understand what sort of community is being presented.

At the end of the Local Funding Methods chapter is a description and contact information for a variety of then-available sources of non-municipal matching funds that towns may be able to request to assist with local land conservation projects, again with a case study for each source, describing how this source was actually used in a New Hampshire community.

The chapter on Grassroots Organizing covers both how to initiate a discussion of land conservation in a community, and how to organize and accomplish a campaign to accomplish a specific goal, such as passage of an article at town meeting for funding a land conservation project. Because there are many other materials available in the general market about grass roots organizing strategies and techniques, this chapter just provides a sketched outline of some useful strategies, but again is illustrated with case studies illustrating how certain strategies have been used effectively in New Hampshire communities raising local funds for permanent land conservation.

A highlight of the Where to Find Help chapter is a list of personal contacts from the communities in the case studies. These are people from those towns who are willing to accept questions from readers about the land conservation efforts in their own towns.

The final chapter of Useful Information contains compiled facts and figures about land conservation in New Hampshire at the time the publication was created. It also includes samples of publicity materials that have been used in towns that have succeeded in getting positive votes for many of the local funding methods described in the earlier chapters.

To ensure broad distribution of the new publication, a complimentary copy was sent to each conservation commission and land trust in the state in December of 2002.² For the 24 towns that do not have conservation commissions, the copy was sent to the planning board or Board of Selectmen. (None of those communities are within the estuaries area.) A copy of the cover memo that accompanied these publications is included in the Appendix. Complimentary copies were also sent to the many people who shared their community's or group's experience with the authors for inclusion in the case studies. Between October 2002 and December of 2003, an additional 103 copies were sold either by mail or at various training events. A copy of the order form and a typical cover memo for mail-ordered copies are found in the appendix. The cover memos are used to encourage contact between those engaging in conservation efforts in towns and CLCA, and to inform people about other related events.

The entire publication is posted in a downloadable format on the SPNHF website, <http://www.spnhf.org/explor/library/Research/savingplaces.pdf>

Workshops and Technical Assistance

The contract called for presentations of the research and results at 6 local workshops and number of statewide events, and for technical assistance to be provided to 6 to 10 towns, as well as a follow-up workshop.

Table 3 shows the location, dates and attendance at training workshops presented as part of this project:

Table 3 Training Workshop Schedule and Attendance		
Seacoast Area Workshops	Date	Number in audience
NHEP Roundtable (2 workshops)	September 26, 2002	30
Greenland (Dollars and Sense of	January 23, 2003	10

² Funding to support printing and distribution of the publication outside of the estuaries area was provided by a different source.

Open Space)		
Durham	February 3, 2003	15
Greenland (Saving Special Places)	February 19, 2003	6
Barrington	March 4, 2003	25
NHEP Conference	October 21, 2003	50
Lee	December 30, 2003	11
Statewide Workshops		
NHACC Annual Meeting (2 workshops)	November 2, 2002	45
Farm and Forest Expo	February 7, 2003	30
Saving Special Places statewide land conservation conference	April 12, 2003	27
UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Fish and Game Advanced Land Conservation In-service training	August 7, 2003	30
NH Municipal Association workshop	September 16, 2003	100
NHACC Annual Meeting	November 1, 2003	30
Total		409

In addition to workshops, CLCA provided technical assistance in the form of advice, consultation, information and support to people from the following towns: Barrington, Brentwood, Chester, Danville, Deerfield, Dover, Durham, East Kingston, Exeter, Farmington, Greenland, Hampton, Kingston, Lee, New Castle, New Durham, Newfields, Newington, North Hampton, Northwood, Rochester, Rye, Sandown and Stratham. These 24 communities represent 57 percent of all the communities within the New Hampshire estuaries area.

Five growing land trusts provide conservation partners for the communities in New Hampshire's seacoast area: Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, Moose Mountains Regional Greenways, Rockingham Land Trust, Seacoast Land Trust and Strafford Rivers Conservancy. CLCA has provided technical assistance of various sorts to all of them, including strategic planning, skills training for board members, work with land protection committees, and an upper level workshop on technical elements of creating and enforcing conservation easements.

A workshop to follow-up on the value of the publication and assistance to communities was held on July 15, 2003 from 7 to 9 pm in Newmarket. Conservation commission chairs for each of the 42 estuaries area towns were invited. People who attended came from eleven different towns and eleven different conservation groups. The intent was the find out what worked and what didn't work for municipal fund raising strategies.

Some of the highlights of what townspeople said worked were: start early; include many different interest groups; understand the how voting works in your

town; get help from existing resources groups (land trusts, funding sources, UNH Cooperative Extension); emphasize both value of open space and the message that land conservation is cost effective. Things that didn't work or needed to be done better were: be sure to understand and correctly follow necessary time frames and formats for voting; avoid conflict with other bonds on same warrant, expect to spend a lot of time if applying for matching grants. The meeting notice, showing the planned agenda, and a summary of the discussions held at the meeting are found in the appendix.

People at the meeting were much more eager to talk about how to spend the bond money than in recapping the events that lead to their successful passage. An open space activist from one of the communities that passed a bond in 2003, Brentwood, has given at least two public presentations about how his town overcame some difficult socio-political dynamics to successfully pass a bond for open space.

Another form of support was letters sent by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests to their members in each of the communities voting for bonds or major appropriations, providing the exact wording of the article and the time and place for voting on it. Copies of the letters are included in the Appendix. These letters were sent to a total of 408 SPNHF members in 9 towns voting on major funding issues in the estuaries area.

Subsequent to the 2003 town meeting season, and to further assist efforts of towns seeking to pass open space bonds, SPNHF and CLCA have compiled and are distributing a list of all the towns that are known to have passed major funds for land conservation, and have also created a list of the exact wording of 2003 warrant articles for open space bonds from 16 towns. (Wording for many of the 2001 and 2002 articles is included in the case studies in *Saving Special Places*.) Where the vote count is known, that is also shown. These two information sheets can be seen in the Appendix. The former is a useful inspiration to towns that prefer to be part of a trend. The latter is proving to be quite useful to towns that are proposing binds for 2004.

Media Outreach

A press release announcing the new publication was distributed on December 16, 2002. The publication was also announced in the Fall 2002 issue of the New Hampshire Conservation Commission News, and in the Winter 2002/2003 issue of the SPNHF's quarterly magazine, *Forest Notes*. An article in the Spring 2003 *Forest Notes* focused extensively on the *Saving Special Places* publication. An article in the Summer 2003 issue of *Forest Notes* highlights the specific work CLCA does with land trusts in the seacoast area. The SPNHF Annual Report, in the Fall 2003 issue of *Forest Notes*, emphasized the importance of the helping towns pass open space bonds by listing that first in the list of organizational accomplishments for the year. The *Saving Special Places* publication was

important enough to be mentioned separately in the same list of the year's outstanding accomplishments. (See Appendix)

Many of the local workshops were publicized in the towns where they were scheduled. (See local publicity materials in appendix.) Local votes in support of conservation in many of the towns were reported in local newspapers. See Appendix for examples. Articles in the Winter 2003/2004 issue of *Forest Notes* described the successes that the town of Chester has had accomplishing land conservation projects with the funds from its open space bond and the growth of the Rockingham Land Trust. (See Appendix.)

The bond votes that were supported and encouraged by *Saving Special Places* and the SPNHF/CLCA training and technical assistance received quite a lot of statewide coverage as part of the discussion of legislative funding for the state's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program. Articles of this sort are also included in the appendix.

- **Results and Discussion**

The education and outreach effort was quite successful – a remarkable case of the right tool being provided at just the right time!

During the term of the grant, seacoast area towns allocating some or all of their land use change tax to conservation went from 30 to 31, (74 percent of the towns in the estuaries area) with another town increasing the percent of Land Use Change Tax to the Conservation Fund from 10% to 50%. Statewide, 130 towns (nearly 56% of them) report using this source of money for their conservation fund. Clearly the seacoast area towns are still ahead of the statewide trend. Table 4 shows the land use change tax allocations of seacoast area communities in 2003.

Table 4 2003 New Hampshire Seacoast Area Municipal Land Use Change Tax Allocations		
Municipality	LUCT Allocation, 2003	Date Adopted
Brentwood	50%	2001
Candia	100%	1997 25%, \$1,000 cap; 2000 no cap; 2001 100%
Chester	100%	1997 with \$20,000 cap; cap removed 1999
Danville	100%	1997
Deerfield	100%	2001
Dover	100%	1999
Durham	100%	1990 50%, 2001

Table 4 2003 New Hampshire Seacoast Area Municipal Land Use Change Tax Allocations		
Municipality	LUCT Allocation, 2003	Date Adopted
		100%
East Kingston	50%	1998
Epping	50%, \$50,000 cap	1995 10%, \$10,000 cap; 2000 50%
Farmington	50% or \$10,000, whichever is less	2001
Fremont	50% over \$10,000	1999
Hampton	10%, \$10,000 cap	~1994
Hampton Falls	100%	1996 10%; 2001 100%
Kensington	25%	1989
Lee	50%	1989
Madbury	50%	1989
Middleton	100%	1996
New Durham	100%, \$5,000 annual cap	1998
Newfields	50%	1990
Newington	100%	2001
Newmarket	50%	1989
North Hampton	100%	1990
Northwood	10%	1990 10%; 2003 50%
Portsmouth	100%	1995
Raymond	100%	1989 25%; 2001 100%
Rochester	50%, \$10,000 annual cap	1999
Rye	50%, \$10,000 cap per property	1996
Sandown	50%	25% 1997; 50% 2002
Strafford	100%	2003
Stratham	100%	2000
Wakefield	100%, \$25,000 cap	2000

The towns in the estuaries area that had the advantage of the new publication just as they were going into town meeting season with bond proposals in 2003 passed their bonds at an 76% success rate for a total of \$18,660,000 of new money available for conservation projects in those towns. This represents 52% of the major funding for conservation voted statewide for the year. One of the towns where a general acquisition bond for open space did not pass missed the required 2/3 vote by only one vote! The other town that failed to pass a bond proposal did so on a technicality – they apparently had the needed super majority of votes, but failed to use written ballots, which are required for bond votes. Table 5 summarizes the results of these town meeting votes.

Table 5 2003 New Hampshire Seacoast Area Municipal Funding for Land Conservation			
Town	Year	Purpose	Amount
Barrington	2003	\$1,000,000 general open space bond	failed
Brentwood	2003	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$2,000,000
Dover	2003	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$1,000,000
Durham	2003	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$2,500,000
East Kingston	2003	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$4,000,000
Exeter	2003	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$3,000,000
Greenland	2003	Land conservation capital reserve fund	\$25,000
Greenland	2003	\$4,000,000 general open space bond	failed
Hampton	2003	\$4,000,000 general open space bond	failed
Kingston	2003		\$365,000
Lee	2003	For land acquisition trust fund	\$100,000
Mont Vernon	2002	For conservation commission land acquisition fund	\$45,000
New Castle	2003	\$500,000 bond for general open space acquisition determined to be invalid because format of vote was improper	failed
Newington	2003	Bond to purchase conservation easement on Frink Farm	\$500,000
New London	2003	Capital Reserve Fund	\$75,000
Rye	2003	Bond for general open space acquisition	\$5,000,000
Rye	2003	Land conservation acquisition fund	\$50,000
TOTAL	2003		\$18,660,000

Local funds for conservation took on a special importance in New Hampshire in 2003, when the state legislature slashed funding from the popular and effective state Land and Community Heritage Investment Program from a needed \$12,000,000 a year to a mere \$1,500,000 for the 2004 – 2005 biennium.

Past the time of the grant, interest in these topics continues to be high. At least two more area towns (Sandown and New Durham) will be voting on increasing the amount of money from the Land Use Change Tax going to their conservation funds at 2004 town meetings. Of the 21 towns thought to be considering bonds or local major funding initiatives for 2004, 8 (38%) are in the estuaries area. If they all passed, the seacoast bonds could total up to \$19,600,000, or 43% of the possible statewide bonds total of \$44,475,000.

Town	Amount	Purpose
Barrington	\$1,100,000	General acquisition open space bond
Candia	\$3,000,000	General acquisition open space bond
Deerfield	\$2,500,000	General acquisition open space bond
Fremont	\$2,000,000	General acquisition open space bond
Hampton	\$3,000,000	For TPL Hurd Farm project
Hampton Falls	\$2,500,000	General acquisition open space bond
Lee	\$5,000,000	General acquisition open space bond
New Castle	\$500,000	Redoing improperly voted bond from 2003
Total	\$19,600,000	

There continues to be a strong ongoing demand for information about how to raise local money for land conservation. CLCA is scheduled for local presentations in the following seacoast area communities in January, February and March of 2004: Hampton Falls, Sandown, Lee, and New Durham. As well, there was a presentation about how to pass a local bond at the Farm and Forest Expo in February 2004, and a workshop about "What to Do Once You Have Passed an Open Space Bond" is scheduled for the April 2004 Land Conservation Conference.

- **Conclusions**

Land conservation is a growing priority for communities in the New Hampshire seacoast area. People in this area are responding to rapid increases in population and related conversion of treasured open space into residential and commercial use by seeking to learn more about how to conserve some of the open space that remains in their community. *Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation* and related workshops and technical assistance met and continues to meet a felt need in many communities. The success of bond votes for substantial funds for open space conservation speaks for itself. People are so eager to see open space conserved to preserve the character of their communities that they are voting to accept long-term public indebtedness to accomplish the goal. This guidebook will continue to help towns that wish to

explore, understand and implement strategies to allocate local funds for land conservation for the foreseeable future.

SPNHF/CLCA greatly appreciate the support provided by NHEP funding that allowed them to create this useful tool, conduct training events, and provide technical assistance.

- Recommendations (for future work or management strategies)

Ongoing support needs to be provided for municipal efforts to set aside open space. This can and should take many forms, including further workshops and technical assistance from CLCA, in cooperation with the good community support also provided by UNH Cooperative Extension's Community Conservation Assistance Program, the Natural Resource Outreach Coalition, the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, the Great Bay Partnership, the Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commissions, the five area land trusts and many other groups.

There is also a need to compile and maintain records of what towns are doing with their local open space money. It will be instructive for those who follow to know how many acres are being conserved with this new funding source. It would also be useful to have an orderly record of a contact person in each of the communities, someone who could respond to questions and help organize and promote possible further conservation education outreach efforts

It will also be important to ensure that municipal open space conservation efforts follow the best practices for securing and maintaining open space. One way to move in this direction is to encourage closer connections between municipalities (who increasingly have funds for land conservation) and the available land trusts, which generally have expertise in good conservation transactions and stewardship. In addition, there may be a need to create new tools to help communities get started in the correct way as they focus on spending town money for land conservation. This assistance might include compiling existing written materials, developing new written materials, web-based information resources, or presentations and other technical assistance to towns working to conserve land with the money they have voted for.

Training opportunities for municipal conservation volunteers continue to be important. Some of the current venues for this are the NHACC Annual Meeting, the annual spring land conservation conference, New Hampshire Municipal Association training events, and workshops specific to certain geographic areas or areas of expertise. Further training for municipal attorneys in conservation issues, especially conservation easements, is also needed.

Towns need to be encouraged to understand the value of professional assistance to conduct effective land protection. Towns need to understand that it is penny wise and pound foolish to refuse to spend money on land trust fees of for consultants and specialized attorney to create and review conservation easement deeds.

Outreach to real estate professionals in the seacoast area would also be useful, to help them better understand conservation options available to conservation minded landowners, and the financial benefits of that to the landowner.

Continuing identification of important natural resources, through natural resources inventories and GIS mapping will help communities focus their resources on the best available lands. Ongoing outreach to landowners will also be important, so owners of important parcels have time to learn about their options and consider the financial, social and environmental value of conserving their land.

Appendix

Cover memo to recipients of complimentary copies of *Saving Special Places*

Saving Special Places order form

Typical cover memo for mail-ordered copies of *Saving Special Places*

Follow-up Workshop

Meeting Notice

Summary of meeting

SPNHF member letters to Barrington, Brentwood, Durham, East Kingston, Exeter, Greenland, Hampton, Frink Farm, Newington, Rye

Summary of 2001 –2003 municipal funds for open space

Warrant article language for open space bonds from 2003 town meetings

Press release about *Saving Special Places*

Conservation Commission News notice of *Saving Special Places*

Winter 2002.2003 *Forest Notes* article, "What's Happening at the Center for Land Conservation Assistance?"

Spring 2003 *Forest Notes* article, "A Tool for Those Who Love Land"

Summer 2003 *Forest Notes* article, "Conservation Work Targets the Seacoast"

Autumn 2003 *Forest Notes* excerpt from annual report, "On the Road to New Hampshire Everlasting "

Local publicity for workshops in Barrington, Durham, Greenland

Local media coverage of local land conservation votes

Seacoast on line newsletter, 1/28/03 Goal: Preserving Brentwood

Foster's Daily Democrat 2/24/03 Seacoast communities buying land to protect their turf

Exeter Newsletter, 2/11/03 Open Space bond moves to Town Meeting

Foster's Daily Democrat 3/12/03 Durham OKs \$2.5 million for Land Conservation

Exeter Newsletter 3/14/03 East Kingston voters approve open space bond

Portsmouth Herald 5/13/03 New Castle to decide on conservation land purchase

Winter 2003/2004 Forest Notes, "Communities put sense into conservation dollars" and "Land trust keeping pace with Rockingham County"

Statewide media coverage of open space bonding and Land and Community Heritage Investment Program

The Union Leader, March 20 2003, "104 NH communities show support for LCHIP"

Fosters Daily Democrat, March 20 2003, "More towns putting aside money for land preservation"

Concord Monitor, March 20 2003, "Towns embrace land conservation plans but state lawmakers may trim funding"

Sunday Monitor, April 13 2003, "Towns' LCHIP support loud and clear"

Concord Monitor, May 2 2003, "Spending to Save"

Please contact the New Hampshire Estuaries
Project for a copy of the appendix to

**Municipal Conservation
Outreach
and
Technical Assistance**

Call (603) 433-7187

Or

Email request to Dave.Kellam@nh.gov