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# Stratham, Our Town

## *An Initiative to Save our Open Land*

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Issue #2, January 9, 2002

Stratham Conservation Commission

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### *What have other NH towns done to conserve open space?*

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*Bow* was one of the first towns in NH to explicitly buy land for protection. The townspeople have put a high value on open space and wildlife habitat, so they have bought conservation easements on more than 1800 acres. They also created a non-profit organization, Bow Open Spaces, to oversee the easements.

At town meetings last year, towns all across the state funded programs for open space protection totalling over 10.5 million dollars.

With a broad margin, *Chester* voted in a \$3 million bond, payable over 10 years. Their Strategic Land Protection Commission is now prioritizing properties in terms of aesthetic value, farming potential, size of parcel, and view from roads.

*Hollis* overwhelmingly authorized a \$2 million bond for conservation land, to be administered by a selectmen's commission. The bond complements the Conservation Fund, which is funded separately and managed by the Hollis

Conservation Commission. Hollis calls a separate town meeting to approve each land purchase. Each request has passed overwhelmingly (in spite of occasional lack of clarity, since some properties become available in the 11th hour.) The town takes the first right of refusal for later sales.



It buys the development rights, but leaves the farming rights with the owners.

*North Hampton* passed a \$4 million bond with 74% approval, for the purchase of conservation easements on "...as much buildable land as possible". They are targetting 850 acres, 25% of the remaining unprotected uplands. Before money is allocated for a project, a careful review takes place.

The land protection subcommittee submits a recommendation to the Conservation Commission and a public hearing is held. If the citizens approve, the Commission then recommends the parcel to the Selectmen, who decide whether or not to purchase the land.

### *Stratham is next!*

"We can do this in our town too. It's our first real chance to be pro-active. When you consider that every child's schooling costs the town at least \$7,000, preserving our land is just like putting money in the bank."

- Lucy Cushman  
Chairman,  
Cooperative School Board

"Speaking from a planning point of view, I'm all in favor of this new initiative."

- Joe Derwiecki  
former Chairman,  
Stratham Planning Board

"I totally support this initiative. It gives landowners an option to realize a financial benefit while preserving their land in its natural state."

- Pete Wiggan  
Chairman,  
Heritage Commission  
and 13th generation Stratham resident

Stratham Conservation Commission  
*Stratham, Our Town*  
Town Offices  
Stratham, NH 03885

Bulk Rate  
US Postage  
PAID  
Stratham, NH  
Permit #1

Resident  
Stratham, NH 03885



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“For too many years, many communities blindly accepted the loss of prime farmland, forests, ranch lands and wildlife habitats as the only way that they could be economically vibrant. But over the past decade, hundreds of cities and counties have stepped forward to shape their future with a great deal more foresight and insight, and to protect the best of their open lands.”

Will Rogers, President, Trust for Public Land  
(LTA website, [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org))

## *What have other NH towns done to conserve open space?*

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Here is what you can do to help: Volunteer! (Call Ann Sloan at 778-9018.)  
Donate to our newsletter fund! (Details forthcoming in the next newsletter.)  
For more information, please call Pat Elwell at 778-1659, or Gordon Barker at 778-1039.

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“Americans continue to support public land conservation to a dramatic extent,” said Will Rogers, President of TPL. “As in recent years, voters across the country are eager to protect the unique landscapes of their communities, and they are willing to pay for it.”

“People vote for land protection for one very good reason – open space is a vital part of their everyday lives, and they see it going away,” said Land Trust Alliance President Jean Hocker. “The large number of successful ballot measures shows that voters want to use their hard earned tax dollars to save these open lands.”

More and more communities nation-wide are deciding that open space is an investment worth funding. On Nov. 6 of 2001, with an average passage rate of 73%, voters in 14 states approved state and local ballot measures that generated \$905 million in funding for parks and open space, according to the Trust for Public Land.

All told, nearly 1.3 million individuals cast votes in favor of increased open space funding. Referenda were passed in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington.

*...in the community...*