

Lyme Conservation Fund

What is the Conservation Fund?

The Conservation Fund is a reserve fund used primarily for land conservation, purchasing land or conservation easements to insure that land parcels stay undeveloped. Money in the fund carries over from year to year. The Fund is under the control of the Conservation Commission, and proposed expenditures for land protection can only take place following a public hearing. For many projects money from other sources (grants and donations) are used for partially funding.

Where does the money in the Conservation Fund come from?

New Hampshire has a “current use” taxation program. Land used for agriculture or forestry can be enrolled in the program, and then is taxed on its current use, not on its potential highest and most valuable use. This program enables forest and farm properties to be taxed at a low level providing tax relief for farmers and those owning timber tracts.

If land enrolled in the current use program is developed, a Land Use Change Tax is assessed. This tax is 10% of its appraised value as development land. For many years Lyme voters have chosen to put these tax proceeds into the Conservation Fund. That way money which comes about from land whose use is changed from open space to development can be partially mitigated by the purchase of other open land or conservation easements.

Over 40% of New Hampshire communities put 100% of their Land Use Change Tax proceeds into their Conservation Funds (some with caps)..

What is the balance in the fund?

The money in the fund varies depending on Land Use Change Tax proceeds and projects recently completed. The current un-designated fund balance is approximately \$200,000. Income from the Land Use Change Tax, over many years, has averaged about \$20,000 per year. Over the past 5 years the annual income has ranged from \$89 to \$13,485, and has averaged about \$9,000.

What are some of the major projects funded by the Conservation Fund?

Most recently it has funded the expenses associated with conserving the wetland mitigation property needed to obtain permitting for the ball field restoration. Previous projects include the addition of 70 acres to the Town Forest, purchase of a lot on the shore of Trout Pond to fully protect that remote pond, the addition of 106 acres in the western part of Town Forest, purchase of a wetland on Post Pond, purchase of the Hewes Brook Cartop Boat Launch, conserving much of the land along East Thetford Road, conserving open land north of the village, along North Thetford Road and along the shore of Pout Pond, purchase of the 300+ acre Trout Pond Forest, etc. For many of these projects the Conservation Fund was a partner with private donors or grant funders. Conservation Fund expenditures on these projects totals about \$258,000, partners have contributed in excess of \$600,000, and with the help of its partners the Conservation Fund has been involved in conserving over 1,000 acres.

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