



Natural Area Conservation Proposal Process

Introduction

New Hampshire RSA Chapter 79-A states:

It is hereby declared to be in the public interest to encourage the preservation of open space, thus providing a healthful and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation of the state's citizens, maintaining the character of the state's landscape, and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural and wildlife resources.

The Fremont Open Space Committee exists for the purpose of carrying out these goals as well as those delineated in the Fremont Master Plan. In that document the Planning Board encourages the establishment of conservation areas and the protection of open space and natural resources including but not limited to ponds, wetlands, woodlands, prime agricultural land, and unique and fragile areas. In order to accomplish these goals a transparent and repeatable process needs to be put into place so that the town's interests as well as the interests of Fremont's citizens are protected. This process is outlined below.

Step 1 – Proposal Initiation

Proposals for land conservation can come from various sources. Land owners can approach The Fremont Open Space Committee directly or they can speak with any other official town group such as the Board of Selectmen or the Planning Board where they will be directed to contact the Fremont Open Space Committee. Additionally, other conservation-minded groups such as Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) can work with land owners and bring proposals to the committee.

Step 2 – The Predefined Criteria

The Fremont Open Space Advisory and the Fremont Conservation Commission have worked together to devise criteria that is used to rate the importance of tracts of land. This criterion has been reviewed by professionals from SPNHF and the Rockingham County Conservation District in order to assure the validity of the document. As properties become available, the following attributes are analyzed and scored:

- **Watershed protection including wetland value and drinking water protection.**
- **Aesthetic, cultural or historic value**
- **Agricultural preservation**
- **Open space buffers that link to existing conservation land, town forest or other town owned land**
- **Wildlife value-including known locations of populations of species of interest, wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors and greenways**
- **Outdoor recreation areas**

If a particular piece of land scores above 50 on using these criteria, and if the proposed parcel fits into the overall plan to preserve the largest block of un-fragmented land, or if a parcel of land is determined to be of special value as determined by the town-wide survey completed by the Fremont open Space Committee in 2005, it is presented to the Conservation Commission for review.



Step 3 - The Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is responsible for reviewing the proposal and if they feel that the proposal is viable, they arrange for a formal appraisal of the proposed piece of property so that a dollar amount can be attributed to the proposal. The Conservation Commission is responsible for utilizing its funds to pay for all or a portion of the cost associated with a professional third-party appraisal.

Step 4 – The Board of Selectmen

The entire proposal and the costs associated with the proposal are presented to the Board of Selectmen for review. The board conducts a formal public hearing in order to provide town residents with a venue for voicing opinions and gathering information about the proposal. At the end of this process the Board of Selectmen decide whether final approval for the project will be granted.

Step 5 – Land Trust Funding Options

Funding options are constantly being explored by the Fremont Open Space Committee and the Fremont Conservation Commission. These sources stem from many public and private groups and are usually available to towns as “matching fund” grants. In short what this means is that each dollar provided by the grantor must be matched dollar for dollar by the town. If the proper funding for the project is achieved then the easement is approved.

Natural Area Conservation Process Flow Chart

