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## Conservation Easement Outreach Project, Wenninger

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*Ad-hoc Conservation Bond Subcommittee of the Town of Stratham*

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# **Conservation Easement Outreach Project**

**A Final Report to**

**The New Hampshire Estuaries Project**

**Submitted by**

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for the**

**Ad-hoc Conservation Bond Subcommittee  
of the Town of Stratham  
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**December 18, 2004**

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## Executive Summary

Stratham voters approved a 5 million dollar conservation bond issue in 2002 to preserve open space through easement or outright purchase. The Ad-hoc Conservation Bond Subcommittee to the Conservation Commission is helping achieve Stratham's open space goals and is continuing to reach out to landowners that have undeveloped land that may be suitable for Stratham's open space initiative. It was an opportune time for the subcommittee to provide updated outreach materials when a grant by the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition (NROC) Implementation Grant Program became available. The grant, managed by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project, provided funding to produce and mail an updated full color tri-fold brochure to each resident household that provided information on the open space initiative and achievements after approximately 2 1/2 years of work. It also provided funding to update workbooks provided to landowners that are interested in conservation easements.

## Introduction

Stratham voters approved a 5 million dollar conservation bond issue in 2002. Since then, the town continues to preserve open space through easement or outright purchase. Preserved land helps maintain Stratham's rural character, agricultural heritage, water quality and farming viability. After the 2002 vote, the Board of Selectmen appointed the Ad-hoc Conservation Bond Subcommittee to the Conservation Commission to help achieve Stratham's open space goals.

The subcommittee has reached out and is continuing to reach out to landowners that have undeveloped land that may be suitable for Stratham's open space initiative. The subcommittee used letters to reach out to landowners with larger parcels of undeveloped land and maintained communication with residents through tri-fold monochrome brochures and newspaper articles. Landowners with interest in conservation easements are given workbooks that describe easements and the protection process.

It was an opportune time for the subcommittee to provide updated outreach materials when a grant by the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition (NROC) Implementation Grant Program became available. The grant, managed by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project, provided funding for Stratham to produce and mail an updated full color tri-fold

brochure to each resident household. The brochure provided information on the open space initiative and achievements after approximately two years of work. It also provided funding to update workbooks provided to landowners that are interested in conservation easements.

## **Project Goals and Objectives**

The project goals were to: 1) update and produce *Stratham Open Space Initiative- Land as a Legacy* full color tri-fold brochure and send to each resident household and 2) to prepare 25 updated workbooks for landowners interested in a conservation easements.

## **Methods**

The new tri-fold brochure was written and developed by the Ad-hoc Conservation Bond Subcommittee, the Conservation Commission, Selectmen and the Town Administrator. It was based on the earlier version and significantly revised to reflect the current state of Stratham's open space initiative. Once the basic brochure was developed, the selected printer provided typesetting and layout. After revisions, the brochure was finalized and printed. The printer also printed envelopes for mailing the brochure.

The workbook that Stratham had been using to provide conservation easement details to interested landowners was updated by the subcommittee. The subcommittee obtained published booklets, copied existing and updated text and assembled the workbooks in three-ring binders.

## **Results**

The printed full-color tri-fold brochure discusses Stratham's open space initiative, includes results to date and highlights easements of selected properties with color photographs.

It was originally planned to print 2000 copies of the tri-fold brochure, *Stratham Open Space Initiative-Land as Legacy*. This number would be adequate to mail to landowners with large undeveloped parcels and have brochures available to hand out.

As the project progressed, it was determined that it would be beneficial to mail out a pamphlet to each resident household. This would provide an efficient way to update all residents on the progress of the program. It would also remind landowners with undeveloped land that the program is quite active and that Stratham still has significant funding available to work with them to purchase easements.

The added cost to print 3400 copies, approximately 3300 needed to send to each household, instead of the original 2000 was small. A significant portion of the printing

cost involved the setup and typesetting. Some of that cost involved revisions created during the review process.

The printer was also requested to print 3300 envelopes. A selectman, the Town Administrator, the Conservation Commission and the open space subcommittee attended a Conservation Commission meeting and inserted the 3300 or so pamphlets into the printed envelopes in approximately 1 and ½ hours. The pamphlets were then mailed at the bulk rate.

A supply of workbooks was needed to replace those given to each landowner expressing interest in a conservation easement during the beginning of the initiative. Several copies were originally produced at the start of the program, but the supply was exhausted and individual copies were made as needed. The workbook also needed to be updated. Under the grant, 25 copies were planned and have been completed. The workbook has been updated with an additional publication, *Conserving Your Land- Options for New Hampshire Landowners* and three revised papers on easements and estate tax considerations.

## **Conclusions**

This project was an efficient way to reach all the town's residents to explain the open space initiative and the accomplishments of the program to date. The grant provided the incentive to reach out again to landowners that may desire to protect their undeveloped land with a conservation easement. The revised workbooks will be very helpful in helping them understand the various aspects of conservation easements.

The subcommittee appreciated the opportunity to produce and distribute full color brochures and updated workbooks for its open space initiative. The subcommittee would like to thank New Hampshire Estuaries Project and Dave Kellam for his assistance.