UNH Center Releases List of Top 10 Issues Facing Rapidly Growing Communities in New Hampshire

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DURHAM, N.H. - The University of New Hampshire Center for Integrative Regional Problem Solving (CIRPS), which facilitates ecologically based approaches for securing quality of life and addressing land use challenges, has released its list of the top 10 issues facing rapidly growing communities in New Hampshire.

The list, culled from the input and expertise of stakeholders throughout the state - including citizens, conservation commissioners and other municipal decision-makers, scientists, conservationists and economists - will lay the foundation for the center's future work and give guidance to communities dealing with growth issues.

The top 10 list, developed in collaboration with UNH Cooperative Extension, includes the following key priorities:

- Determining economic impacts of land use choices, including cost/access to services, taxation and financing education;
- Preserving New England character, including sense of community;
- Exploring growth management strategies and model ordinances for natural resource protection - what works, what doesn't;
- Conserving the best open space through nonregulatory options;
- Sustaining economic base without losing quality of life;
- Creating housing that is affordable and includes developer incentives;
- Creating adequate transportation services and systems;
- Ensuring surface and groundwater protection;
- Encouraging collaboration within communities and with the region, and;
- Participating in expedient leadership training of community decision-makers.

Debby Hinman, of the Acworth Conservation Commission, says the CIRPS top ten list comes at the ideal time. “Our master plan update survey has just been tabulated and this reflects our findings quite accurately. We are a small town of 850 folks but have seen more growth in the last 10 years than had been expected.”

CIRPS spent last year engaged with citizens and decision-makers throughout the state so that “it could get as much input as possible to develop this list of priorities and pursue other related goals,” says CIRPS Director Amy Seif. “We feel confident that it reflects the most important issues facing rapidly growing communities.”
The top 10 list she says, will most immediately help CIRPS develop its Web-based resource clearinghouse -- a goal that developed out if its 2003 “Voices of Communities Experiencing Rapid Change Symposium.” The purpose of the clearinghouse is to provide people access to the resources that directly assist with these issues. For example, resources will include scientific papers, and links to agencies and programs.

For more information on the CIRPS top 10 list, including organizations involved in its development, visit: [http://www.unh.edu/cirps/toptenlist.html](http://www.unh.edu/cirps/toptenlist.html). For more information, contact Amy Seif at 603-862-4650.