



FRIENDS OF TROUT POND

NEWSLETTER

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Trout Pond: A Forest for Freedom



In a money-saving effort to preserve Freedom's rural character and to protect some of its open space from development, the Freedom Board of Selectmen, the Freedom Conservation Commission, the Friends of Trout Pond, the Green Mountain Conservation Group and the Trust for Public Land are asking Freedom voters to approve a \$100,000 conservation warrant article. The money will be used to permanently protect 2,653.5 acres. As a result, **for just \$0.24 per \$1,000** assessed valuation, Freedom will protect the aquifer and our drinking water, retard growth of traffic congestion, enhance the corridor of lands for wildlife, and preserve open space.

Freedom is joining 29 other towns in New Hampshire who are considering or proposing initiatives totaling \$23,614,000 in 2005 to save open space, as reported by Dijit Taylor (Center for Land Conservation Assistance) in her chat with folks at Freedom's Town Hall last Saturday. She reports that New Hampshire is the fastest growing state in New England over the past four decades. This is translating into the consumption of 15,000 acres per year to house and service more permanent residents (expected to grow another 20% over the next twenty years).

What might this mean to Freedom? Dijit Taylor sites a study by the Squam Lakes Association that looked at tax bills on median value homes. The study included 234 towns in the state, and found that on average, taxes are higher in towns with: 1.) more taxable property; 2.) more residents; and 3.) more commercial and industrial development. It also found that taxes were lower in towns

with 1.) more open space; 2.) higher proportion of vacation homes (however, keep in mind that vacation/second homes can have a negative economic impact when they are converted to year round residences).

What about the income generated from development of residential properties? Dijit Taylor points to a study completed by 13 New Hampshire communities who examined the cost for community services as compared to tax income. Dividing the properties into three land use types; "open space," "residential" and "combined commercial/industrial", the study showed that 1.) open space pays more in taxes than the cost of the services it requires; 2.) in 12 of the 13 towns, residential properties require more in services than they provide in tax income.

All studies aside, the Friends of Trout Pond have been working with professionals to determine what the numbers look like for Freedom. While the results are still being verified, please keep in mind that within 20 years the Town Forest is expected to generate productive forest revenues. Twenty years is not that far away. With the protection of this open space for town forest, its comforting to know Freedom will have provided itself with some financial protection for the anticipated 20% growth over that same period of time.

The Friends of Trout Pond are expecting to publish their findings on the GMCG website as soon as they are completed. Be sure to check it out.

PS. Did you know that over 137 (58.5%) New Hampshire towns have voted to allocate some or all of the use change tax to the conservation fund?



"The establishment of the Trout Pond Town Forest is key in order to maintain the rural character of Freedom for future generations. The Trout Pond property will provide a wide array of benefits to the community such as open space, recreational opportunities, biological diversity, wildlife habitat, water quality, educational opportunities and economic return from sustainable forest management."

Barry Keith, Forester and Former Selectman, Freedom.

