

## **HCC Land Conservation Fund and Future Plans**

This document details the activity of the HCC over the years 1998 - 2009, and how monies received from the Land Use Change Tax, donations, grants and other forms of funding were utilized to benefit the taxpayers of Hollis. Additionally, the HCC's plans for the next decade are outlined at the end of the document.

The Hollis Conservation Commission, or "HCC", was created by Town Vote in 1965. Since that time, the HCC has utilized various methods of funding the protection and conservation of a number of properties in Hollis. At the 1997 Annual Town Meeting, Townspeople voted to authorize the allocation of 40% of the "Land Use Change Tax" received to the HCC, with a cap of \$30,000 annually. At the 1999 Town Meeting, a warrant article was approved to change the allocation to 50%, with no cap. The remaining Land Use Change Tax monies received become part of the Town's General Fund. Land Use Change Tax monies are received from property owners when their property disqualifies, or becomes ineligible, for the Current Use program. The Land Use Change Tax is not a property tax, and is not raised by general taxation.

### **Summary of HCC Conservation Land Protected, 1998-2009**

Acres of land protected by Conservation Easement Deeds:	265
Acres of land protected by HCC purchase/private donation:	173
Total Acreage Protected:	438
<b>Average cost/acre for the HCC to protect these lands:</b>	<b>\$3250</b>

### **How did the HCC protect these lands?**

The Land Use Change Tax revenues received by the HCC went to good use. Properties purchased by the HCC, in whole or in partnership with other Town Boards and Committees, protect water resources, wetlands, agricultural soils, areas that contain endangered plant and animal species, as well as open spaces from future development. Private land donations were also received by the HCC over these years, which helped protect additional spaces and allowed the HCC to further their efforts towards land conservation.

Conservation Easements are another vehicle utilized by the HCC to protect additional lands, where the property owner may not want to sell the land, but wishes to permanently protect their property from further development. A conservation easement binds the current owner, and any future owner, to certain requirements. The final easement document is recorded at the Registry of Deeds to ensure that the easement remains in place.

While the HCC cannot "give" money away, an "Executory Interest" in a property can be, and is, a suitable alternative when additional funds are needed by other like-minded conservation organizations to help them purchase lands for protection within the boundaries of the Town of Hollis. While the HCC does not "own" the property in these cases, by law, the Town must show that the public interest has been served and value has been received for any monies expended towards the purchase of properties. By purchasing an interest in the property, this satisfies the legal requirements, gives the HCC some rights in how the property is managed and protected, and allows additional lands to be protected that otherwise might not be, at a lesser cost to Hollis taxpayers.

## Conservation Land Purchases, 1998-2009

- 1998: *Henry Hildreth Conservation Area, Federal Hill Road*  
The HCC purchased 64.2 acres for \$225,000 from the Henry Hildreth Trust; \$57,000 of the purchase price came from local donors. The final cost to the HCC was \$168,000, or \$2617 per acre.
- Monson Village, Federal Hill Road*  
An interest was purchased on the Hollis portion of Monson Village owned by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forest for a cost of \$12,500 to aid in preserving 115.30 acres.
- 1999 & 2000 *Worcester Properties, Rocky Pond Road*  
Multiple transactions to protect this land consisted of purchases of 31 acres, 16 acres, and the 1.58 acre “Neck” between the properties, for a total of 48.58 acres. In addition, local residents donated funds towards the purchase, and 4 local property owners donated Conservation Easements on their lands, which preserved an additional 33 acres of valuable forest and wetlands. The final cost to the HCC was \$140,000 to protect 81.58 acres, at a cost of \$1716 per acre.
- 2002: *Millicent Gardner Memorial Conservation Easement, South Merrimack Road*  
A Conservation Easement was purchased on this property, consisting of 125.72 acres. This easement protects valuable water and wildlife resources, and is contiguous with other protected lands. A NH Department of Environmental Services grant was awarded toward the purchase of this property, thereby reducing the actual cost of this purchase to \$318,000, or a cost of \$2529 per acre.
- 2004: *Wright Lot, off South Merrimack Road*  
The HCC purchased 36.3 acres from the Albert Wright Revocable Trust, located near the “Woodmont East” properties. The purchase price was \$250,000, at a cost of \$6887 per acre.
- 2005: *Gelazauskas Preserve, Nartoff Road*  
The HCC contributed \$200,000 toward the purchase of this 116 acre woodland parcel which was voted into the Hollis Town Forest at the 2006 Town Meeting. This purchase was made possible through the work of the Hollis Land Protection Study Committee. This contribution reduced the Town’s bonded debt for this parcel from \$1.4M to \$1.2M.
- 2006: *Albert LaForest Heirs, off South Merrimack Road*  
This valuable donation from the LaForest Family consists of three separate parcels for a total of 3 acres. The three parcels are located in the Pennichuck Brook aquifer, and help conserve and protect this water resource at no cost to the HCC.
- 2007: *Richard Walker Family, Pine Hill Road*  
The Walker Family generously donated the development rights and an agricultural preservation easement on 29.70 acres of their holdings at no cost to the HCC.
- 2008: *Harriet Hills Family, Pine Hill Road*  
The Land Protection Study Committee negotiated the purchase of the development rights and an agricultural preservation easement on this property, which consists of 40.05 acres of farmland. Due to the generosity of the Hills Family and the work of the Land Protection

2008 cont: Study Committee, the HCC paid only \$50,000 (plus legal costs) needed for this bargain sale, which protected this property at the cost of \$1250 per acre.

*Doris R. Siergewicz Family Conservation Lot, South Merrimack Road*

Mrs. Siergewicz and her family generously donated this 21.08 acre parcel to the HCC at no cost. The property makes up part of the Pennichuck Brook aquifer, and enabled the HCC to protect more of this precious water resource.

2009: *Tom Bayrd Conservaton Easement, Federal Hill Road*

The HCC purchased an interest in the Conservation Easement on 30.01 acres of the property, located near the Milford-Hollis Town Line. Nichols-Smith Land Trust is the Conservation Easement Holder, while the HCC owns an Executory Interest in the property. A Federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program Grant paid half of the purchase price of \$475,000, reducing the cost to the HCC to \$237,500, plus legal costs, or \$8000 per acre.

*Please note that the listed purchase prices do not include legal or other associated costs involved in the property purchase.*

### **Conservation Land Stewardship and Management, 1998-2009**

In addition to property purchases, the HCC also works with other Town Boards and Committees to help preserve their properties. Some methods utilized towards this purpose include management and stewardship of the properties, identifying valuable resources through Environmental Assessments and Surveys, monitoring of properties, and public education on conserving and maintaining our natural resources.

1999 Funding was provided for an Environmental Assessment of the Worcester Mill Pond. This property was a gift to the Town by the Harry H. Bell Heirs, and is currently managed by the Heritage Commission.

2001 Funding was provided for an Environmental Assessment and Survey of the Annabelle Johnson Preserve on Federal Hill Road. This property was a gift to the Town by her children, and is currently managed by the Heritage Commission.

2003 & 2004 Stewardship of the 46 acre parcel on Nevins Road was assigned to the HCC. This property was purchased via the Land Protection Study Committee from Margaret "Honi" Glover in 2003, on behalf of the Town. Stewardship of this property includes conducting the annual property monitoring, which is a grant requirement of the NH Department of Environmental Services.

2005 The HCC hired Chris Kane, a Conservation Biologist, to conduct annual monitoring on several HCC managed conservation properties. This monitoring fulfills Grant requirements used for the purchase of these properties, which include the Millicent Gardner Memorial Forest Conservation Easement, the Pearl Rideout property near the Nashua River, the Margaret Glover property on Nevins Road, and the Hollis-Brookline High School Conservation Easement.

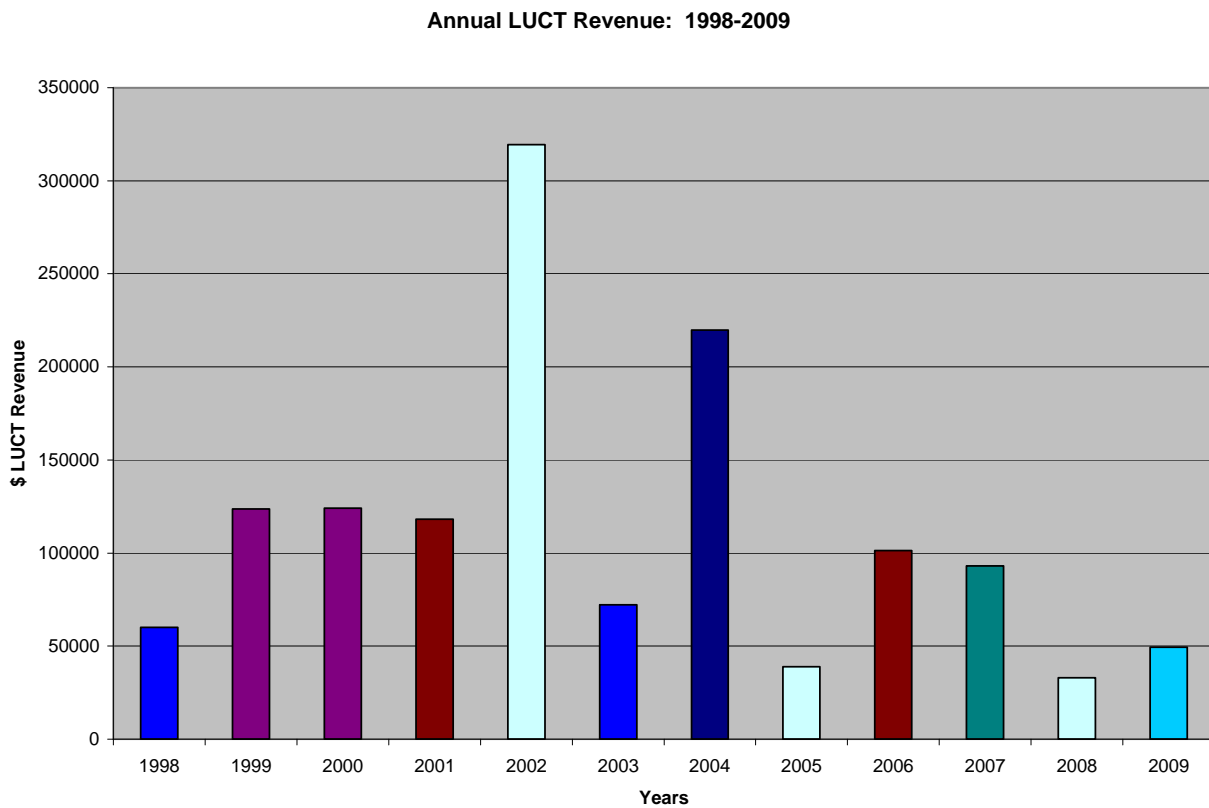
1998-2009 The Annual Spring Roadside Clean-up continues to be a well-attended event, sponsored and run by the HCC. By holding this event, the HCC brings awareness of the importance of proper trash disposal, recycling, and the impact indiscriminate discarding of waste has on the environment. In 2010, the "Annual" clean-up became a "Bi-annual" event, and will be held in the spring and fall each year.

The HCC continues to present, sponsor, co-sponsor, or hold, in conjunction with other Conservation minded organizations, lectures, seminars and workshops on the importance of Land Conservation and Protection. The HCC works closely with like-minded organizations towards the common goal of preserving our natural resources. These organizations include the Nichols-Smith Conservation Land Trust, Beaver Brook Association and the Nashua River Watershed Association, as well as the Hollis Land Protection Study Committee, the Hollis Trails Committee, the Hollis Heritage Commission and the Hollis Planning Board, in addition to other Town and Community based organizations.

## Funding

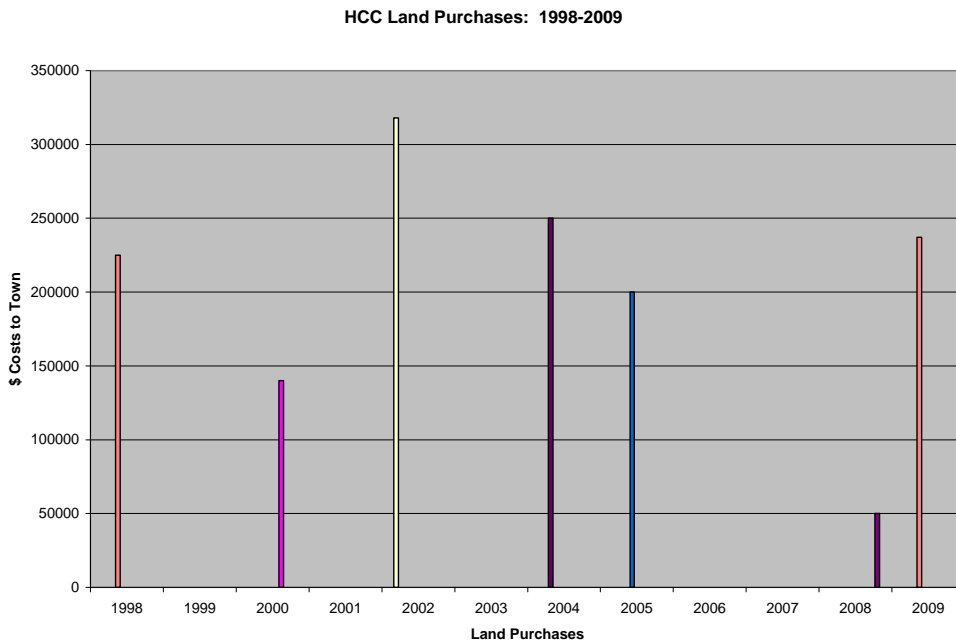
### HCC Income from Land Use Change Tax (LUCT): 1998-2009

Chart 1 shows the income the HCC received each year from the LUCT.



## HCC Costs for Conservation Land Purchases, 1998-2009

Chart 2 shows the cost of HCC land purchases from 1998 through 2009.



### Property Tax Impact on a Hollis Home assessed at \$350,000

As previously discussed in this document, the HCC receives the majority of its funding from the 50% allocation of the Land Use Change Tax. The example shown below is based on the tax impact to a property assessed at \$350,000.

In the Year **2002**, when the LUCT paid to the HCC was \$319,336, the tax impact on a property assessed at \$350,000 would have been **\$238.00**.

In the Year **2008**, when the LUCT paid to the HCC was \$32,945, the tax impact on a property assessed at \$350,000 would have been **\$10.50**.

The **average annual tax impact** to the same property would have been **\$38.50** over the years 2002 through 2009.

## HCC Goals for the Next Decade

Over the next decade the HCC will focus on the following:

- Protecting the Town's water resources through land acquisition and stewardship.  
*The HCC feels that this is a primary focus, as every community needs to ensure that its residents have an ample and safe water supply. Recent donations from the Siergiewicz and LaForest families have assisted towards protection of the Pennichuck Brook aquifer. The HCC continues to actively pursue the protection of these valuable water resources.*
- Completing stewardship and management plans for conservation properties.  
*The HCC is in the process of creating long-term management plans to ensure the continued preservation of these properties. With the creation and implementation of these plans, proper management and preservation of HCC properties will allow them to be used to their best advantage while continuing to protect them for future generations.*
- Reviewing site and subdivision development plans to ensure conservation values are protected.  
*Working with the Planning and Zoning Boards, the HCC has been able to ensure that sensitive wetlands and wildlife habitats are protected prior to and during development. These sites are identified during the initial planning phases, and can be protected by easements or other vehicles, and identified by the placement of wetland buffer or other signage. This has become a valuable method of protecting sensitive areas at a minimal cost to the Town, and will continue to be utilized.*
- Promote public awareness of conservation and preservation issues through outreach and education, including public education on the benefits of protecting lands with high conservation values.  
*A prime example of promoting conservation and preservation issues is through public education. The HCC continues to work with other like minded organizations, such as the Beaver Brook Association and the Nashua River Watershed Association, to promote public awareness on a variety of issues, including best management practices for forestry and agriculture to ensure the preservation of prime, state and locally important farm soils.*
- Working in cooperation with other conservation organizations to protect natural resources.  
*In addition to public education, the HCC works with other organizations to protect natural resources. This cooperative effort allows for protection of valuable resources where it might not be otherwise possible, via purchases, easements or other similar vehicles. The HCC anticipates and strives for the continuation of this type of interaction to the benefit of Hollis and adjoining communities.*
- Establishing greenway connections between contiguous conservation lands to promote public access and maintain wildlife corridors.  
*This remains one of a number of driving factors in the HCC's decision to purchase/accept land for conservation purposes. Scientific and biological studies have shown that human development greatly disturbs natural communities that provide wildlife habitats for plants and animals alike. Endangered species such as the Blanding's Turtle, the New England Cottontail, and the Marbled Salamander are known to exist in Hollis. Establishing greenway connections between conservation lands allows these natural communities to thrive and remain a part of Hollis' valuable ecosystem. Additionally, contiguous parcels allow for greater public access in areas where appropriate, via trail systems or other access. Keeping these properties undeveloped and available for passive recreation activities, such as walking, hiking and nature observation, benefits the public while keeping the land protected.*
- Raising public awareness of conservation source funding, and pursuing Federal and State grant opportunities for financial assistance in the protection and preservation of high priority conservation lands.  
*Grants help offset the costs of land protection and preservation, and the HCC recognizes the value of this funding. Whenever applicable and available, the HCC pursues these opportunities to preserve and protect valuable resources at a lower cost to the taxpayers.*