

Raymond Conservation Commission

July Town Newsletter Article

Economic Benefits of Land Conservation

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Land conservation provides many benefits, but one you may not realize is lower taxes. Yes, New Hampshire towns with more conservation land have **lower taxes** per \$1,000 valuation on average than towns with less conservation land.¹ This finding may surprise you, but there are several causes behind it.

First, conserved land provides economic benefits² such as:

- Natural goods and services (e.g. air pollution removal, water quality, carbon sequestration, and wildlife habitat),
- Forestry, agriculture, and fishing,
- Tourism and outdoor recreation,
- Economic development: attracting and retaining residents and businesses through scenic beauty and high quality of life,
- Fiscal health (see below), and
- Human health improvement through physical activity and emotional wellness.

In addition, although open space and conserved land generate less tax revenue per acre than other land uses, they require far less spending on community services (infrastructure, schools, fire, police, etc.). Studies of eleven New Hampshire communities compiled by the American Farmland Trust found that open spaces and working farms and forests require on average only \$0.56 in services for every \$1 paid in taxes, while residential lands require an average of \$1.12 in services, a net loss to the community.³

Clearly not all land can or should be conserved. Development provides the homes, work, goods, and services we need to survive and enjoy life. But Raymond is wise to recognize the importance of balancing growth and conservation in a way that maintains fiscal health.

¹The Trust for Public Land. "Managing Growth: The Impact of Conservation and Development on Property Taxes in New Hampshire"

https://peterboroughopenspace.org/ewExternalFiles/nh_managing_growth_report.pdf

²The Trust for Public Land. "New Hampshire's Return on Investment in Land Conservation" (June 2014)

<https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/nh-state-roi-report.pdf>

³American Farmland Trust. "Cost of Community Services Studies" (September 2016)

<https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/cost-of-community-services-studies/>