

CANDIA LAND CONSERVATION AND WELL SURVEY PROJECT

A Final Report to
The New Hampshire Estuaries Project

Submitted by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Project Goals and Objectives	4
Methods	
Assign Project Leader and Establish Project Team	4
Education and Outreach – Land Conservation	5
Well Survey	5
Results and Discussion	6
Recommendations (or future work)	7
Appendices	
Appendix A	
Open Space Committee Brochure	
Appendix B	
Newsletters	
Appendix C	
Candia Well Survey	

Candia Land Conservation Outreach Program and Community Well Survey
Summary of Activities
September 30, 2005
NH Estuaries Project Grant

Executive Summary

Candia's concern over local development, its rapid growth and encroaching sprawl, and the resulting negative impacts on the natural environment led them to consider taking more serious steps towards environmental protection. This resulted in a two-pronged initiative: a land conservation program, and a survey to collect baseline data about their groundwater resources. With many of the lands overlying identified aquifers not permanently protected, conservation of these lands is critical for preserving the integrity of Candia's current and future water supplies.

The Candia Open Space Committee was a direct outgrowth of the NROC program. With NROC staff assistance, the group formulated its structure and goals, and established its relationship with the Candia Conservation Commission. During the NROC process, the group developed a public outreach strategy to build support for land protection, and to reach landowners interested in conserving their land.

As part of their land conservation efforts, the Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission wrote a warrant article for the 2005 Town meeting for \$200,000 to replenish their conservation fund. To build support for this initiative, the group developed a brochure describing the Open Space Committee and their goals, and four newsletters. The warrant article was passed successfully. The intent is that the Conservation Commission will come back to town meeting every year, report on its activities/spending, and request replenishment of the funds spent.

To reach out to landowners, the Open Space Committee and other town boards hosted the *Dollars and Sense of Saving Special Places* presentation, and held three informal "coffee evening" workshops at private homes for interested landowners.

The Candia-NROC group's concern about drinking water resources (both quality and quantity) led to the development and implementation of a well survey to collect baseline data about Candia's ground water resources. The survey, which was sent to 1500 households, yielded an 18% response.

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Introduction

The Town of Candia, located on the western edge of Rockingham County, has witnessed increased growth in the last several years, like other towns to its east and south. With the planned expansion of I-93 in the next several years, estimates from state and local authorities and from private groups have shown that Candia can expect an increase of 40% in its population (currently around 4,000 people) in the next 15 years. As population growth and development increase, water resources and open space will be dramatically impacted.

Candia established its Open Space Committee in 2003, shortly after the start of the NROC program. This group involves representatives from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and interested residents. The Town's concern over local development, its rapid growth and encroaching sprawl, and the resulting negative impacts on the natural environment led them to consider taking more serious steps towards environmental protection. This resulted in a two-pronged initiative: a program to educate Candia residents about the value of maintaining open spaces and reach out to landowners interested in conserving their land; and a survey to collect baseline data about their groundwater resources, and increase public awareness of the vulnerability of this resource to unplanned development. With many of the lands overlying identified aquifers not permanently protected, conservation of these lands will be critical for preserving the integrity of Candia's current and future water supplies.

Project Goal and Objectives

Project Goals

- To collect information about Candia's current water usage, and plan for future water needs, and
- To preserve Candia's water resources and open spaces by educating landowners about the benefits of, and mechanisms for, permanently protecting their land.

Project Objectives

Well Survey:

- Develop and implement a well survey to establish baseline data regarding current water usage in various parts of town.

Open Space Protection:

- Develop outreach strategies to increase residents and municipal decision makers' understanding of open space issues, and build support for land conservation and associated funding.

Methods

1. Assign Project Leader and Establish Project Team:

Peter Bond (later replaced by Bob Berendsen) and Betsy Kruse (Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee) served as project liaisons. The Open Space Committee members included Judi Lindsey as chairperson, Joe Miele, Debbie Levesque, Betsy Kruse, Joe Collette and Bob Berendsen.

2. Developing the Well Survey

At the same time that Candia was beginning work on the well survey, the Nottingham-NROC group was also planning a similar survey, and it made good sense for the two communities to pool resources and develop the survey together. Members of the Candia-NROC group attended the NROC educational workshop, *Ground Water Protection Strategies*, held jointly with the Nottingham-NROC group, to address priority issues of ground water supply in both communities. The Candia group worked with NROC staff and Nottingham-NROC participants through several joint meetings to develop a survey of well owners in each community.

3. Planning Land Conservation Education and Outreach

In October 2003, Candia formed its Open Space Committee (COSC). The committee began work on developing an outreach program focused on the value of natural resources protection through land conservation. To help focus their efforts, eight members of the COSC and Conservation Commission attended the NROC training session on *Developing an Effective Public Outreach and Education Campaign*. This workshop helped the COSC develop appropriate messages for their target audiences. Their strategies included educational workshops geared to three audiences: the general public, land owners, and municipal officials; a series of four newsletters; and development of a brochure describing the COSC and their mission to protect open space. The Open Space Committee met regularly throughout the duration of the project to plan and implement their strategy to build strong public support for land conservation.

Results and Discussion

OBJECTIVE 1: Develop and implement a well survey to establish baseline data regarding current water usage in various parts of town.

The Candia-NROC participants attended the educational workshop session, *Ground Water Protection Strategies*, organized by NROC staff and held jointly with the Nottingham-NROC group. The workshop provided scientific information to help both communities address priority issues of ground water supply. Presenters included representatives from the NH Geological Survey, and the NH Coastal Program.

Following this program, the group worked with NROC staff and Nottingham-NROC participants to develop a survey of well owners in each community. The purpose of the survey was to determine water supply and quality issues that may exist, and to educate residents about ground water issues. The survey was sent to 1,500 households in Candia.

275 surveys were returned, an 18% response rate. Volunteers developed a computer program to input the survey responses, and entered the data.

OBJECTIVE 2: To develop outreach strategies to increase residents' and municipal decision makers' understanding of open space issues, and build support for land conservation and associated funding.

The facilitated training session *Developing an Effective Education and Outreach Campaign* by NROC staff members from UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Dept of Environmental Services helped the Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission focus the messages for different target audiences (the voting public, landowners and municipal board members). Using the results of the training session, the group developed and implemented an education and outreach program for land conservation in Candia.

The group sponsored the following workshops:

- Hosted three neighborhood Coffee Evening workshops on *Land Conservation Options* for landowners interested in learning more about conserving their land. The informal workshop sessions were presented by NROC staff.
- Hosted and attended the community-wide workshop: *The Dollars and Sense of Saving Special Places*, presented by the Forest Society's Center for Land Conservation Assistance.
- Hosted and attended the NROC workshop *Land Conservation Nuts and Bolts*, presented by NROC staff, for the Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, members of other municipal boards and interested residents. The workshop participants also included some representatives from the Chester and East Kingston NROC programs

The Candia Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission put together a warrant article, to be voted on at the 2005 Town meeting, for \$200,000 to replenish their conservation fund. The vote was passed successfully. The intent is that the Conservation Commission will come back to town meeting every year, report on its activities/spending, and request replenishment of the funds spent.

To build support for the warrant article, the following publicity materials were developed:

- An Open Space Committee brochure for Candia residents, describing committee activities and purpose, and the value of protecting open space. Around 600 copies of the brochure were produced.
- Four newsletters to publicize the importance of open space protection.
 - Candia Open Space Committee Observes First Anniversary – Reports on Activities
 - Protecting land from development: The Conservation Warrant Article
 - Protecting Open Space, Conservation Warrant Article No. 32: Questions and Answers
 - Questions and answers regarding use of town-owned land under Conservation Commission management, prioritizing properties for protection, and a calendar of events.

Recommendations (for future work or management strategies)

- Incorporate the results of the well survey into town documents, such as the Master Plan (Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Board)
- Continue to work proactively on open space protection in Candia (Open Space Committee, in conjunction with the Conservation Commission).
- Communicate with landowners about voluntary land conservation options (Open Space Committee)
- Continue to educate and inform the public about the importance of open space protection (Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission).

