

Extension's Community Updates

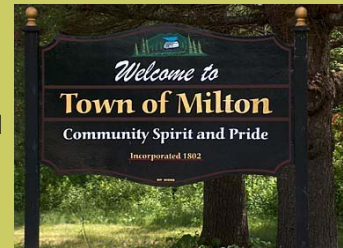
*Your Connection to Community
Outreach in New Hampshire!*

September 2007

Welcome to UNH Cooperative Extension's *Community Updates* e-newsletter, your source for news about the work of New Hampshire communities to protect natural resources, build vital economies, and foster civic engagement. Here, you will learn about tools, resources and research that can benefit your community. We plan to issue *Community Updates* three times per year. If you do not want to receive the newsletter, please click the *SafeUnsubscribe* button at the end of the newsletter.

Milton Rocks with NROC!

Eighty six people packed the cafeteria at the Milton High School on the evening of June 6, 2007. Milton residents and town officials had gathered for the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition's (NROC) kickoff event for its program of community assistance in Milton.



"This is 20% more people than we get at town meeting", enthused Tom Gray, Milton Select Board member. That evening's presentation - *Planning for Growth in Milton* - set the stage for an intensive program of follow up assistance to help the town develop strategies to protect its natural resources and preserve the it's rural character.

"Forty six Milton residents have continued to participate in the NROC-assisted monthly follow up meetings to identify natural resources protection goals and priorities and develop work plans to implement their goals", says NROC Coordinator, Amanda Stone.

"At the first follow up meeting, Milton participants identified three priority areas to work on: Water Resources Protection, Better Planning and Ordinances for Natural Resources Protection, and Environmentally Sound Economic Development. This resulted in the formation of three action groups, one to tackle each topic. NROC staff with appropriate expertise were assigned to facilitate and assist each group with developing action-based strategies and projects to implement their goals".

The Milton-NROC action groups are continuing to meet monthly through December, 2007 to work on projects with NROC staff assistance.

The NROC program is a community-driven process that gets the public involved and creates a pool of enthusiastic volunteers to implement natural resources protection goals. NROC has staff from nine organizations that have teamed up to assist communities in New Hampshire's coastal watershed with natural resource-based planning. For more information about NROC, e-mail amanda.stone@unh.edu or visit NROC's web page at <http://extension.unh.edu/CommDev/NROC/CANROC.cfm>

Nearly a Quarter of Landaff Residents Attend Community Profile!

On September 29-30, 2006, the town of Landaff convened 20% of its population to talk about where the community has been, where it is now, and where they'd like it to be in the future. The process started when a steering committee of local residents from this town of 400 decided to conduct the Community Profile as a way to get citizens involved in their community, as well as provide the Planning Board with information from citizens that would help in the writing of the town's Master Plan. (To see Landaff's Community Profile report, go to: <http://extension.unh.edu/CommDev/CACPAP.htm>)

After sitting down to a homemade pot-pie dinner, participants assessed the communities strengths, challenges, vision and key issues facing the community. Key issues that the community identified before adjourning on Friday evening included:

- Preserving Rural Character and the Natural Environment
- Citizen Engagement, Volunteerism and Communication
- Municipal Infrastructure and Services.

The citizens came back together that following Saturday morning to share what each of the small groups had talked about the previous night, after which they broke up into small action groups to develop projects and activities to address the key issues identified above. The top three projects were then voted on by the large group. The projects resulting from the Community Profile were:

- Examine the Blue School (elementary) in town to expand safety
- Plan for the future of their fire station regarding sewer infrastructure,
- Create a town newsletter to let citizens communicate with each other (with at least 5 issues published to date), as well as develop a website and bulletin board to be located in town,
- Host a monthly "land" talks in town to look at land conservation, conducting a natural resources inventory and educating citizens about land issues in town.

To date, the community has accomplished many of its goals and has utilized the technical assistance of Cooperative Extension staff, such as Amanda Stone and Nory Parr, to implement some of those projects. Facilitation and recording for the event was provided by local citizens, Extension staff, and two UNH students in the Community Service and Learning Program (CSL). To learn more about the CSL program, go to: <http://www.thompsonscool.unh.edu/CoLead/introduction.html>

For more information about conducting a Community Profile in your community, please contact Michele Gagne, Training and Planning Coordinator with UNH Cooperative Extension, at 603-862-5046 or via e-mail at michele.gagne@unh.edu.

Cool Tools

Wildlife Action Plan:

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department worked with partners in the conservation community, such as Cooperative Extension, to create the state's first *Wildlife Action Plan*. The plan, mandated and funded by the federal government through the State Wildlife Grants program, provides New Hampshire decision-makers with important tools for restoring and maintaining critical habitats and populations of the state's species of conservation and management concern. It is a pro-active effort to define and implement a strategy to keep species off of rare species lists, all while saving taxpayers millions of dollars.



Community Capacity Assessment:

The web-based community capacity assessment survey helps civic leaders from New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont communities measure their capacity for maintaining the following attributes:

- Cultural and Historic Heritage
- Health and Well Being
- Economic Opportunity
- Sustainable Environment
- Community Services and Infrastructure
- Social Networks and Civic Engagement

To access the web-based Community Capacity Assessment, go to: <http://cecf1.unh.edu/ccas/index.cfm>

Research in Brief: Resident-Owned Communities

Between 1984 and 2006, the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund - referred to as 'The Loan Fund' - has helped residents from 82 manufactured (mobile) home parks to purchase the land on which their homes are situated. Each of these cooperatively-owned parks, known as resident-owned communities (ROC's), formed a self-governing corporation to manage their park. Through this model of resident ownership, residents have gained financial and managerial control of their park and their lives.



While number of studies examine the social and economic benefits of home ownership (Haurin, Deitz, & Weinburg 2003), few studies examine the social and economic benefits of cooperative home ownership. Therefore, this evaluation examines four specific advantages that ROC's are believed to have compared to investor-owned communities (investor-owned communities, or IOC's, are manufactured housing parks where residents rent the land on which their home is situated). Based on preliminary data collected by 'The Loan Fund' (Bradley, 2002), these advantages are:

- * Better access to mortgage financing
- * More opportunity to build equity
- * Enhanced sense of ownership and control
- * Greater stability in housing costs

The research findings suggest that resident ownership of manufactured housing parks does all of this and more. To find out more about this UNH study conducted Dr. Sally Ward, Dr. Kelly Giraud, and Charlie French, go to the following link on the NH Community Loan Fund's website:

<http://www.nhclf.org/programs/housing/mhpp/carseyreport.pdf>

Spotlight on....



Harmony Anderson, Community Volunteer from Strafford, New Hampshire

Harmony Anderson is an active community volunteer in Strafford, NH where she is a Conservation Commissioner, a library volunteer and a member of the Managed Growth Group. Her Volunteer work also takes her beyond Strafford's boundaries, where she serves as Chair of Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, a local land trust. Harmony also participates in UNH Cooperative Extension's Coverts Program, which trains volunteers for wildlife habitat conservation. She's one of many who participated in activities resulting from involvement in the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition (NROC) in Strafford of which UNH Coop Extension is a partner (to learn more about NROC, go to the following link: <http://extension.unh.edu/CommDev/NROC/CANROC.cfm>)

NROC is an interagency group that assists communities with natural resource planning and protection. We talked with Harmony to find out what she's learned from her community work and what suggestions she has for other New Hampshire community volunteers.

Harmony, you're involved in several groups in Strafford. What activities have these groups been involved in recently?

One very recent example is from last Friday where we were out counting small whorled pogonias (*an endangered plant - ed.*) in the town forest. We hired a forester to write a management plan for the property but we won't implement it until we know where all the endangered plants are. Another activity is that our Conservation Commission Chair wrote a grant to get the Natural Resource Outreach Coalition to come to Strafford. Personally, I've been more and more involved in conservation easements in town in partnership with Bear-Paw Regional Greenways.

The Managed Growth Group that we formed with NROC's help is now an arm of the Planning Board. We study the Master Plan and look at which goals are met and which are not, and decide what to do about the latter. With the help of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (*another NROC partner - ed.*) and example from other towns, we identified changes to our zoning ordinance that would better protect natural resources, rural character and farm land and we've been successful in promoting their passage at town meeting.

The Land Protection Group is now an arm of the Conservation Commission. The Land Protection Group initiated an active outreach project to reach owners of large parcels in town to inform them of land conservation options. We did a mailing to them and followed up with phone calls. We made a special effort to communicate owners of farmland, a priority for us.

Why did you get involved as a community volunteer?

I have an urge to be doing things. I feel blessed to be living where I do and therefore protecting its beauty and biodiversity is so important. This and spending time with my grandchildren are what I enjoy best. Thinking globally and acting locally makes sense to me, especially when the place you live in is under threat (*from rapid growth - ed.*) I was a science teacher and working with the natural world is a fitting way to spend my energy.

How did the Natural Resource Outreach Coalition help Strafford?

One of the most significant thing NROC did was enable us to create pro-active groups that support the work of Conservation Commission and Planning Board. In addition to the Land Protection and Managed Growth Groups, a Water Resource Group also emerged and they expanded water quality monitoring on Bow Lake to include tributaries to the lake. These groups continued after the NROC program was completed.

NROC brought a lot of townspeople to the work we're doing. They also acted in many other ways to support our work, such as providing guidance for publicity of the Dealing With Growth presentation that kicked off the NROC program. The presentation itself was specific to Strafford and this engaged people very much. By helping us brainstorm in an organized way, the NROC staff helped us identify three priorities for action and helped us better focus our efforts. NROC's Community Implementation Grant helped us greatly - with the costs of publicity, sending letters to residents and hiring a land protection specialist to coordinate land conservation projects.

Individual NROC staff played different roles. Cynthia Copeland, from Strafford Regional Planning Commission, showed us examples of what could be done with planning and zoning. Amanda Stone, NROC's coordinator, guided us through a process to apply for funding NROC offers towns it works with. Other NROC staff acted as consultants to our groups. They provided practical, solid support and helped us decide of a plan to achieve our goals. I can't speak highly enough about NROC.

What are the most satisfying results of your activity?

Helping to pass a warrant article to allocate 100% of the land use change tax to the town's Conservation Fund is one. We did this before NROC's involvement with the town. I'm also pleased by

the wider awareness of conservation work resulting from our outreach. The passage of three zoning changes was rewarding. They will better protect natural resources in Strafford (e.g. scenic ridgelines).

It's also satisfying to work with other town groups and seeing more people involved in town projects as a result of our own efforts and NROC's help. Of course, it's been very satisfying to have recently completed three land conservation projects in town.

What do you think are the best ways to get people involved and keep them involved?

Initially, we used advance publicity about the NROC *Dealing With Growth* program, focusing on developing an action plan, not just discussing issues. We also asked town residents to contribute to the presentation with photographs and information. People get involved when they see a real threat in their own neighborhoods. NROC came to Strafford at such a time. People also respond to the promise that there is something they can do. Good professional help and resources attract and keep volunteers involved. A little money helps grease the skids, too. People remain involved when they have a sense that what they do makes a difference. Getting results makes one feel it's worth it.

What legacy would you like to leave in Strafford, Harmony?

My own property won't be developed because I recently protected it with a conservation easement. Twelve hundred feet of road frontage will remain in a natural state. I would love my property to be a part of a greenway connecting to the Blue Hills conservation lands. I also would like to know that something I did helped protect Strafford's natural resources.

What do you think are keys to successful community projects?

An important one is having different points of view at the table. The Managed Growth Group is like this. Another is having a vision that there are real actions to be taken to achieve a result. It's also important to know where to get good professional advice when you need it.

Do you have any advice to give other towns interested in the things that Strafford has done?

If you can, get the Natural Resources Outreach Coalition to come to your town, get them. If you feel your town is under threat, invite NROC.

Cooperative Extension Events Link

<http://ceftp.unh.edu/shell/webevent.pl>

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