

Land Conservation Priorities for the Sunapee Conservation Commission

January 2010

This document serves as a guide for evaluating potential conservation projects undertaken by the Sunapee Conservation Commission. Land conservation projects may be judged according to the natural resources that would be protected by such a project and the existing or potential uses of that land that would provide a benefit to the public.

The priorities listed below were developed from the Sunapee Natural Resources Inventory and the criteria of the Internal Revenue Service for determining whether a land donation for conservation purposes may be eligible for a tax deduction. In 2009, the Sunapee Conservation Commission and Planning Board completed a priority-ranking exercise to determine which of these resources, environmental characteristics, and land uses are most important to protect within the Town of Sunapee.

There were eight criteria included in the prioritization exercise:

Water Quality, Wildlife Habitat, Working Land (i.e. Agriculture or Forestry), Recreation and Education, Unfragmented Open Space, Scenic Resources, Historic Resources, and Local or Regional Significance (i.e. sites or resources with special importance or value.)

The results of the prioritization exercise showed that the protection of water quality is of greatest importance to the Town of Sunapee. This was the only priority that was identified uniformly as more important than the others. The criterion of sites or resources with local or regional significance ranked very low, and so it was not included in the list of priorities. The remaining six criteria were also considered important by most surveys, but were not ranked consistently higher or lower than the others.

Therefore, the Sunapee Conservation Commission should **strongly** seek to engage in conservation land projects that help to protect water quality.

And, the Sunapee Conservation Commission should seek to engage in conservation land projects that:

- Protect wildlife habitat
- Protect lands used for agriculture and forestry
- Protect lands that offer opportunities for recreation and education
- Protect unfragmented open space
- Protect scenic resources
- Protect historic resources.

All of these characteristics should be taken into account when considering a conservation land project, as well as the extent to which a public benefit would be realized through such a project.