

Open Space

It Saves Money

It Protects the Environment

It Enhances our Quality of Life



What is Open Space?

- Open Space is defined as undeveloped land.
- Agricultural land (in use or idle)
- Forest land (with timber harvesting or not)
- Streams
- Lakes
- Rivers
- Wetlands
- 50 out of 55 Alfred residents surveyed support the concept of open space.



How Can We Preserve Open Space?

- Open space can be preserved through conservation easements or through purchase of development rights.
- A conservation easement keeps land in its natural state.
- Each conservation easement is tailored to the specific property that it protects.



How Does it Work?

- Private landowners can donate a conservation easement for a federal, state and local tax breaks.
- An organization like a land trust or a town can purchase a property or the development rights of a property.
- A private organization or a public agency agrees to enforce the easement, which often means not allowing subdivision or development.



Farming, Timber Harvesting, Recreation

- Most conservation easements allow land to be used for agricultural, logging purposes and passive recreation.
- The landowner still manages the property.
- Agricultural and timber operations lend economic stability to communities by contributing more than they demand in tax related services.



How Does Open Space Benefit Communities?

- According to the Trust for Public Land, communities with a higher percentage of protected land have lower taxes.
- According to the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission, poorly planned development can increase the tax burden on residents.
- Protection of natural amenities, such as lakes and recreational land, provide low cost benefits to retain and attract members of the community.



An Example In Maine

- In Bowdoinham, residents chose to purchase development rights on a 307 acre dairy farm when research indicated that the costs of supporting the development would not be met by the anticipated property revenues.



Natural Benefits of Open Space

- Unfragmented land encourages a wide diversity of species.
- In Southern Maine we have the highest biodiversity (number of species) of any region in Maine.
- Keeping habitat intact allows trees to reduce runoff which decreases pollutants that reach streams and waterways.
- A total of 300 trees can counterbalance the amount of pollution one person produces in a lifetime.



Ticks and Lyme Disease

- The more fragmented land you have, the more invasive plants you have.
- More forest edge leads to more dense shrub communities, including invasive plants.
- Invasive plants create a protective environment for ticks and the rodents that carry Lyme disease.



Our Region

- An ecosystem is a combination of biological features (plants and animals), physical features (rocks, soil and water) and people, existing in balance.
- The Waterboro/ Shapleigh Barrens is considered the best example of a Pitch Pine-Scrub Oak ecosystem in the world. It is one of the rarest forests in the world.
- The Kennebunk Plains is considered the best example of a Sand Flats ecosystem in the world.



What Can We Do?

- Create an Open Space Plan for Alfred.
- Participate in educational seminars.
- Consider the impacts of your land use.
- Consider the future of your land.
- Create greenways and corridors between parcels of land.
- Keep land in its natural state.
- Think long term; preserve the environment for our wildlife and future generations.