

Local Conservation Fund

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF A LOCAL CONSERVATION FUND?

To provide a local funding source for acquiring and protecting important lands, open spaces and water supply protection areas through the purchase of land in fee simple, conservation restrictions or easements.

WHY DO WE NEED A LOCAL CONSERVATION FUND?

A local Conservation Fund provides communities with the funding needed to permanently protect important watershed and aquifer recharge lands. Local zoning and other regulations provide a level of protection, but the best way to permanently protect these lands is through the purchase of fee simple interests, conservation restrictions or easements. Often, if state and federal grants are available, they take long periods of time to secure. Communities need a local funding source to be able to move quickly to protect threatened lands.

Did you know a Local Conservation Fund can:

- » • accept private gifts, such as bequests in wills, which require only the Selectboard or Mayor's approval;
- » • include funds earmarked by Town Meeting or City Council for a specific project;
- » fulfill a psychological function by reminding communities to make annual contributions to conservation projects.

HOW DOES A LOCAL CONSERVATION FUND WORK?

A Conservation Fund is a dedicated account established by a municipality to ensure that the Conservation Commission will have cash that can be spent for any purpose stated in MGL Chapter 40, section 8C (The Conservation Commission Act) without further authorization. These purposes include protection of watershed resources. A Conservation Fund can be created by a vote of Town Meeting or City Council. Funds can be used for purchase of land, capital improvements to such land, and expenses directly related to land purchases, such as title searches and legal expenses. Money must be



specifically appropriated or transferred to the Conservation Fund by a majority vote of Town Meeting or City Council. Money voted to the Fund remains there until expended or until transferred out by a Town Meeting or City Council vote. No further authorization is needed to spend money from the Fund, even for the purchase of land.

HOW DOES A LOCAL CONSERVATION FUND PROTECT WATER SUPPLIES?

A local Conservation Fund could be used to purchase lands or easements or conservation restrictions in water supply areas, including Zone 1 or Zone 2 Aquifer Recharge Areas, and watershed areas for surface water reservoirs.

HOW AND WHERE IS A LOCAL CONSERVATION FUND WORKING?

CASE STUDY: TOWN OF HADLEY

Hadley, Massachusetts has had a Local Conservation Fund established for a number of years. This fund receives an annual Town Meeting appropriation, and has also received contributions from the town's Transfer of Development Rights bylaw, and mitigation funds from development project along the Route 9 Corridor. Hadley has used \$338,000 from its Local Conservation Fund to match \$3,483,000 in state Agricultural Preservation Restriction funds, in order to preserve 239 acres of land in nine parcels for farmland preservation purposes. The net result is that Hadley has been able to use its Local Conservation Fund to leverage approximately ten times that amount of funds in state funding. This means Hadley has been able to protect a sizable amount of land with only modest local funding.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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