



STATEWIDE PROGRAM OF ACTION TO CONSERVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

S.P.A.C.E. NEWSLETTER

SUMMER, 2002

Current Use Practices in New Hampshire

A Report on the 2001 UNH Survey of Current Use Landowners

The University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted a survey of current use landowners for the Statewide Program of Action to Conserve Our Environment (S.P.A.C.E.). The purpose of the survey was to assess the present status of the current use program, as well as the potential impact of regulatory, administrative and land management practices on enrollment and maintenance of lands in current use. The survey

questionnaire included questions about land in current use and current use assessment practices, as well as future land use plans and the land use change tax structure. Questions were also asked to generate a demographic profile of current use landowners. This survey replicates portions of a similar survey conducted by the UNH Survey Center in 1993.

A random sample of 460 owners of Current Use land in New Hampshire was interviewed by telephone between July 12 and 21, 2001. The margin of sampling error for a survey of this size is +/- 4.7%.

Enrolled Acreage

Survey respondents owned current use parcels ranging in size from 4 acres* to 113,000 acres, compared to 10 acres to 180,000 acres in 1993. The median acreage for plots enrolled in current use in this survey is 45 acres, up from 40 acres in 1993. Consistent with the 1993 survey, the majority of landowners interviewed own current parcels between 11 acres and 30 acres in size (35%).

On average, lands have been in current use for 20 years, with just over one-half (51%) of landowners reporting land in Current Use between 20 and 30 years. (Current use began in 1973.) Two-thirds (68%) of landowners enrolled their land in Current Use on their own, 18% purchased land already in Current Use, and another 12% inherited enrolled land. Over one-half (56%) of 2001 respondents own land classified as forest. Current Use is less commonly categorized as farmland (14%), unproductive (27%) or a combination of land types (28%).

(continued on page 2)



25% of Current Use Landowners say they own family or legacy land.

**For some types of land, such as wetlands and farm land producing greater than \$2,500 a year in income, it is possible to enroll parcels smaller than 10 acres in current use. For most landowners, however, a minimum of ten acres is required for participation in the program.*

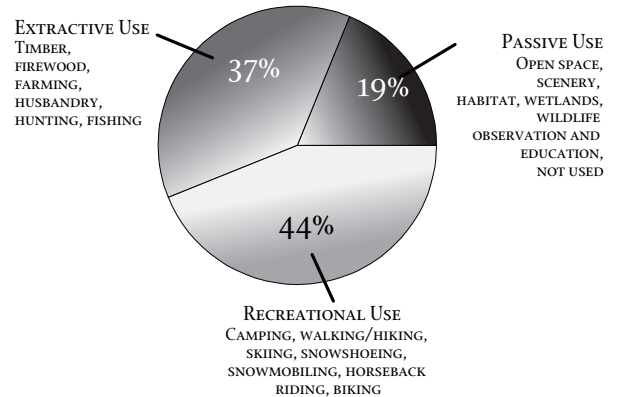
Current Use Practices (continued from page 1)

Recreational Use

Landowners see their land as a resource to the community, with recreational use as the perceived #1 public benefit showing a 19% increase since 1993.

2001		1993	
1. Recreation	55%	1. Habitat/biodiversity	58%
2. Aesthetic	47%	2. Aesthetic	50%
3. Habitat/biodiversity	40%	3. Prevent development	43%
4. Prevent development	26%	4. Recreation	36%
5. Other	17%	5. Other	11%
6. Timber	10%	6. Timber	10%
7. Reduce municipal burden	9%	7. Reduce municipal burden	6%
8. Protect watershed	8%	8. Protect watershed	0%

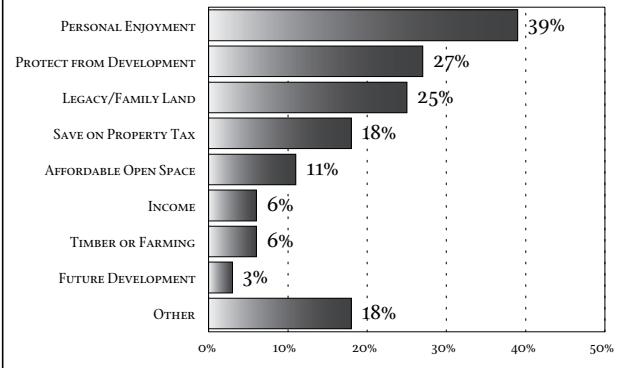
HOW CURRENT USE LAND IS USED



Reasons for Owning Current Use Land

Survey respondents were asked the question “What are your reasons for owning your current use land?” 39% of respondents say they own their land for personal enjoyment, 27% wish to protect their land from development, and 25% said it is family or legacy land. 18% responded to save on property tax, 6% own their Current Use land for income while another 6% specified they own their land for farming or timbering. 3% said their land is for future development. (Because this question was a multiple response question the percentages sum to more than 100%.)

REASONS FOR OWNING CURRENT USE LAND — 2001
(PERCENTAGES SUM TO MORE THAN 100%)



Ownership

82% of 2001 respondents own current use land as an individual or family, while 12% own their land in trust, 2% have a corporate ownership, 1% a business partnership and 2% a combination of these types of ownership.

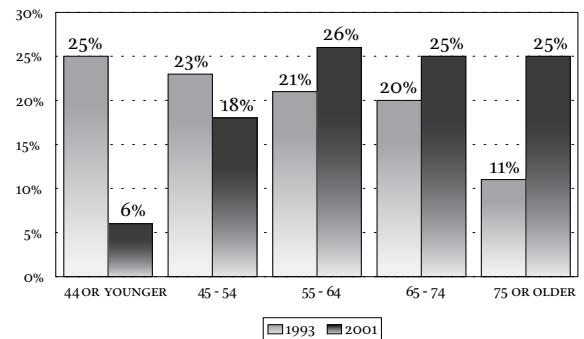
About Current Use Landowners

One of the most interesting facts to come out of this survey is the average age of current use landowners today is 66 years old. SPACE’s figures indicate that there are approximately 27,000 current use landowners. Applying these figures to the entire state, this means that roughly 13,500 current use landowners are 66 years old or older, and if they each own a 45 acre parcel, that accounts for over 600,000 acres of New Hampshire land.

Why is this important? Because it tells us that in the next 10-15 years a lot of land will be transferred to younger generations. That will change the pattern of land use in New Hampshire, based on the values, activities and priorities of the new owners.

It also means a lot of land is owned by an age group most likely to have a fixed income. Although their current use land is unlikely to stress their financial condition, other factors such as health issues or ad valorem taxation can put great pressure on a limited income. When this happens, no matter how important the current use land is to the landowner, it can force landowners to make the hard decision to sell.

AGE OF RESPONDENTS



Knowing who owns current use land is important to SPACE so we can accurately represent and advocate for current use landowners. Also, we can identify issues that are important to current use landowners and consider researching them further.

Forestland with Documented Stewardship

Of 2001 survey respondents, 19% (80 landowners) owned forestland enrolled under the Documented Stewardship category. Landowners with more than 50 acres were most likely to have land enrolled in this category.

In another question, 96 landowners (60% of the 161 responding to this question) said they had a written forest management plan signed by a licensed forester. Since this is one way to qualify for the reduced assessment ranges the Documented Stewardship category offers, it is surprising that not all landowners with management plans have opted to take advantage of this feature.

Most landowners (69%) support reduced assessments for landowners who *voluntarily* meet forest practice standards, but opposition to *mandatory* forest practice standards has increased; from 32% in 1993 to 44% in 2001 opposing the requirement. The opposition for requiring agricultural practice standards was even stronger—51% opposed in 2001, compared to only 38% in 1993.



Familiarity with Current Use Assessment

64% of current use landowners say they are at least “somewhat familiar” with land assessment values as set by the Current Use Board, and 62% of them feel the assessment values are “about right”. Present-day landowners are more aware of Current Use assessments than their 1993 counterparts—only 50% said they were familiar with the current use assessments. We hope landowners increased awareness is because they’ve been reading our newsletter!

Recreational Discount

59% of landowners say the 20% reduction is an effective incentive for landowners to keep their land unposted, while 36% say it is not an incentive and 5% are not sure.

Current Use Land Generating Income

In 2001, more landowners are generating income with their land, with 128 landowners (27%) in 2001, compared to 1993 with only 60 landowners (15%) reporting income. Income was generated in a variety of means, with 65% reporting income from timber, 19% farm products, 6% Christmas trees, 6% leasing land, and 17% from other means.

Most of the 128 landowners reporting income from their land are not exactly getting rich on their land’s income, with 74% earning less than \$10,000 a year, and 32% of them earning less than \$1000 annually. One change from 1993 is 11% of landowners reporting their current use land is generating an annual income of \$75,000 and greater. Although we didn’t ask in the survey, it is likely that the parcels earning significant amounts of money are engaged in full time agriculture or forest management.

Disappearing Farmland

1993

123 owners with land in Farmland
(of 403 answering this question)

2001

62 owners with land in Farmland
(of 436 answering this question)

In 2001 Farmland owners were asked if the land was actively used for crop or pasture. It was an even split; 50% of Farmland owners use the land for pasture and crops, while the other 50% mow the fields just to keep the land open.

A Change in Use...

When asked if they have any plans to sell any or all of their current use land, 88% said they have no plans to sell. Of those who do plan on selling, retirement was the most common reason given. Advancing age and inability to care for the land to the owners satisfaction were also given as reasons.

When asked if they have any plans to develop their current use property, 95% of landowners said they have no plans for development.



The Bottom Line...

“If the current use program were eliminated today, could you afford to keep the land if it were taxed at normal rates?” **51% of landowners said no—they could not afford to own their current use land. Another 4% said they could only keep a portion of their land. And 16% said yes, but it would be a burden. Less than a quarter of respondents (22%) said they could afford to keep their land if taxed at normal rates. Another 7% were not sure.** Clearly, the loss of current use would cause the sale, and likely the permanent loss, of a great deal of New Hampshire’s open space. Current Use allows landowners to own and manage open space land, providing benefits for themselves, the public, wildlife and a healthy environment!

Copies of *Current Use Practices in New Hampshire 2001* are available at no charge on our website at www.nhspace.org. Paper copies are available for \$10.00/\$5.00 to SPACE donors by sending a check to SPACE, 54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301-5400. Please make checks payable to SPACE.

How Much Land is Actually Posted?

Anecdotally, SPACE has heard that much more current use land is posted now, particularly against hunting and most frequently in southern tier locations.

However, the survey results are inconclusive to either prove or disprove this assertion. In 1993, 79% of landowners said they did not post any of their current

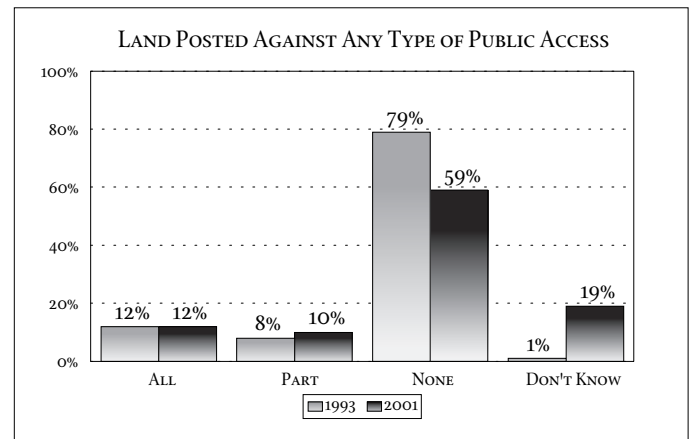


use land—in 2001, only 59% report they do not post their land.*

But who is posting, and against what activities? Only 12% of landowners report posting all their land in 1993 and in 2001. Also, there was only a 2% increase in those landowners who post part of their land, from 8% in 1993 to 10% in 2001. However, landowners who don't know whether their land is posted or not went from 1% to 19%! Survey data shows that the older the landowner and the more acreage they own the more likely they were to answer "Don't Know".

Other information from this survey may explain why the increase in "Don't Know" answers. Possible reasons are people who live away from their land, people who have purchased or inherited their land, and owners unable to walk their land—remember the "up, down, wet and bony" quality of our state!

Also examined were the kinds of public access controlled by *landowners who post**, and most types of posting saw a reduction since 1993! Posting against hunting/firearms was 74% in 1993 and 71% in 2001. "Hunting by Permission" was posted by 65% of respondents in 1993 and only 54% in 2001. Surprisingly, posting against ATV's dropped from 51% in 1993 to 46% in 2001. Posting against snowmobiles was also lower, from 41% in 1993 to 34% in 2001. Even posting against fishing dropped, from 21% in 1993 to 15% in 2001. The only increased area of posting was "No Trespassing" from 46% in 1993 to 53% in 2001. Again, these are percentages for those landowners who elect to post their land, not all current use landowners.



*1993 48 landowners (12% of 403 responding) posted all their land.
 2001 55 landowners (12% of 459 responding) posted all their land.
 1993 32 landowners (8% of 403 responding) posted some of their land.
 2001 46 landowners (10% of 459 responding) posted some of their land.
 1993 4 landowners (1% of 403 responding) didn't know if their land was posted.
 2001 87 landowners (19% of 459 responding) didn't know if their land was posted.

CLAIMING THE LAND: An Exhibit at the Museum of New Hampshire History

Who has the right to farm, fish and boat on the land, streams and lakes in New Hampshire? Should drinking water be a public resource that is controlled by the state? How much of our land should be saved for wilderness and how much should be allocated for commercial uses? A new exhibition at the Museum of New Hampshire History offers a compelling look at New Hampshire's land use through time and encourages us to consider carefully what kind of world we will leave to future generations.

Claiming the Land: Our Past, Our Future, Our Choice looks at the changing patterns of development since the first settlers spread out over the land, as well as other historical and current issues ranging from lake access to the impact of tourism. This innovative program is a joint effort of the New Hampshire Historical Society and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. It features an exhibition on view at the Museum of New Hampshire History in Concord, plus school programs, leadership training and interactive

community forums intended to heighten awareness of thoughtful land use policies and practices.

On view through March 28, 2004, *Claiming the Land: Our Past, Our Future, Our Choice* will encourage people to look at the consequences of their stewardship of land and water resources. Historical issues, such as the need for waterpower in the 19th century, will illustrate how choices made in the past continue to affect our lives today. The exhibition will highlight current land use issues and will help visitors connect these issues with the future landscape of their own communities.

The Museum of New Hampshire History is located at 6 Eagle Square in downtown Concord. Museum admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$2.50 for children with a family maximum of \$15. For more information call 603-228-6688, or visit their website at www.nhhistory.org

Anonymous Survey on Motorized Wheeled Vehicle Use on Private Land

The Legislature enacted HB 717 in 2001, creating a legislative study committee for reviewing state policy on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and trail bikes on public and private lands.

The Committee issued an interim report this past fall, primarily focusing on public lands. This summer the Committee will continue to review state policy regarding ATVs on private lands.

SPACE agreed to include this survey to help identify the issues and concerns of landowners on this important issue. SPACE takes no position on ATV policy. The survey information will be used by the Legislative Study Committee to shape recommendations for the 2003 legislative session. **Your comments and responses will be kept anonymous, and will be available to the Committee only in tabulated format.**

1. In total, how many acres of land enrolled in current use do you own in whole or in part?

- Less than 10 acres
- 10-49 acres
- 50-99 acres
- 100-249 acres
- 250-499 acres
- 500-1000 acres
- Greater than 1000 acres

2. Please list all the municipalities in which you own land enrolled in current use: _____

3. Do you own an ATV? Circle one: **YES** **NO**

3a. If **YES**, please circle how many of the following you own. If **NO**, go to question 4:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|----|
| (1) 3 or 4-wheeled all-terrain vehicle | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5+ |
| (2) Trail bike/Motorcross | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5+ |

3b. Please choose only **ONE** of the following that indicates your **PRIMARY** reason for using the all-terrain vehicle:

- (1) Recreational, pleasure riding
- (2) Support for hunting/fishing
- (3) Work (forestry, farming, maple sugaring, cordwood cutting, etc.)

3c. Do you register your ATV with the state? **YES** **NO**

4. Do you allow ATVs or trail bikes to ride on your land? Circle one: **YES** **NO**

5. Do you allow other motorized recreational uses, such as snowmobiles or 4wd trucks? Circle one: **YES** **NO**

6. Have you ever been contacted for permission to ride an ATV, trail bike, or 4WD truck on your land? Circle one: **YES** **NO**

7. Is your property posted against motorized wheeled trespass? Circle one: **YES** **NO**

8. During the past year, have you observed any unauthorized ATV or 4wd truck use or evidence on your land? Circle one: **YES** **NO**

If **NO**, go to Question 9. If **YES**, please answer the following questions:

8a. On your property, unauthorized use is primarily from: (check **ONE** of the following)

- 3 or 4 wheeled all-terrain vehicle
- 4wd truck use
- Trail bike/motorcross

8b. Check the type of unauthorized use found on your property. Please check all that apply.

- (1) Creation of unauthorized trails across, through, or within property
- (2) Use of class VI roads
- (3) Use of logging roads and/or skid trails
- (4) Use of snowmobile trails after winter conditions cease to exist
- (5) Use of existing utility Right-of-Way
- (6) Use of abandoned and/or working rail road beds
- (7) Other (please describe) _____

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Landowner Survey on ATV Use
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8c. Check any problems you have observed resulting from unauthorized use of your property from motorized wheeled vehicles. *Please check all that apply:*

- (1) Damage to stream and pond banks
- (2) Damage to fields, pastures, and seeded crops
- (3) Fires
- (4) Excessive noise
- (5) Damage to gates and fences
- (6) Damage to signs
- (7) Damage to regeneration of forest stand
- (8) Litter
- (9) Unauthorized camping
- (10) Erosion and/or rutting of existing roads, trails, skid trails, etc.
- (11) Sedimentation and siltation of streams, ponds, and wetlands
- (12) Damage to wildlife habitat
- (13) Harassment or evidence of harassment of wildlife
- (14) Other (*please describe*) _____

8d. Please estimate how much money, if any, you have spent in the past year to address any problems resulting from unauthorized motorized wheeled vehicle use of your property:

- \$0
- Between \$1 and \$499
- Between \$500 and \$999
- Between \$1,000 and \$1,499
- Between \$1,500 and \$1,999
- Between \$2,000 and \$2,499
- Between \$2,500 and \$3,000
- More than \$3,000

9. How effective do you believe existing state laws are in deterring unauthorized use of ATVs on private lands?

Please choose a number on the scale below, with 1 being 'Not Effective At All' and 10 being 'Highly Effective.'

Not Effective At All			Somewhat Effective				Highly Effective		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

10. Have you sought law enforcement support or action for unauthorized ATV use of your land? *Please circle all that apply:*

Municipal	YES	NO
County	YES	NO
State	YES	NO
Federal	YES	NO

10a. If **YES** to any of the above, were you satisfied with the response and results? *Circle ONE for each attribute.*

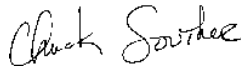
Timeliness	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Effectiveness at preventing further unauthorized use	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Compensation for damage	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied

11. Please add any additional comments on a separate piece of paper. Thank you.

*Please cut the page where indicated, enclose additional sheet (if needed), fold in thirds so the mailing address is on outside, tape shut, stamp and mail. **To ensure that your response is included in the survey results, please mail by September 1, 2002.***

Many Thanks to S.P.A.C.E. Donors!

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Tax Incentive Proposal to Save NH Barns Now Law

A tax incentive designed to encourage investment in historic barns and discourage demolitions was signed into law. The "Barn Bill" becomes effective in the 2003 tax year. This new program recognizes that many of our state's old barns are not maintained because of the adverse impact of property taxes.

Rep David Babson, HB 522's prime sponsor, said "Agricultural structures are part of New Hampshire's heritage and are vanishing at a rapid rate. This new law will help preserve them and help insure that our children and grandchildren can experience their beauty, their history, and their use."

"People have an image of New Hampshire which includes underdeveloped countryside, white churches and rustic barns. As our state develops, that image is changing," Sen. Ned Gordon said of the bill. "We need to take reasonable measures

now to preserve our cultural heritage and to make sure that barns continue to define the character of New Hampshire."

The new law authorizes towns to grant property tax relief to barn owners who show the public benefit of preserving their barns while agreeing to maintain their structures through a ten-year renewable easement. Barn owners choose to accept an easement, and the Board of Selectmen or City Council determine the tax relief within a range of a 25% to 75% reduction of the full assessed value of the building. The assessment will not increase as a result of maintenance or repair work.

Rep. Babson thanks the tireless efforts of Carl Schmidt of Orford for the bill's passage.

For more information about the Barn Bill, contact the NH Preservation Alliance at 224-2281 or admin@nhpreservation.org

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