

Conserving Land and Water is a Good Investment

Trust for Public Land New report shows 11-to-1 return on dollars spent on conservation

The Nature Conservancy

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<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/newhampshire/newsroom/conserving-land-and-water-is-a-good-investment.xml>

Today The Trust for Public Land unveiled the findings of a new report entitled *New Hampshire's Return on Investment in Land Conservation*. The report quantitatively demonstrates that state investment in land conservation has measurable economic value. Conserved lands provide natural goods and services such as water quality protection, wildlife habitat and air pollution removal - all important to New Hampshire's strong economy and jobs.

According to the report, every \$1 invested in land conservation by New Hampshire returns \$11 in natural goods and services. The full Report is available at www.tpl.org/nh-roi-report

The Trust for Public Land's Director of Conservation Economics, Jessica Sargent said, "We have conducted over a dozen studies across the country, and while each program is different, New Hampshire's land conservation programs are a great investment. In fact, New Hampshire is tied with Maine for the highest return on investment we have ever measured."

Land and water conservation in New Hampshire helps to support thousands of jobs ranging from foresters to workers at small businesses that rely on outdoor recreation and tourism.

New Hampshire's investment in land conservation supports a major component of the economy - the recreation industry. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, each year recreation generates 49,000 jobs and \$4.2 billion in consumer spending in the state. In addition, agriculture, forestry, commercial fishing and related processing activities are responsible for \$2.5 billion in output and 18,500 jobs in New Hampshire.

"The findings of our report show that conservation is important from a dollars and cents perspective in New Hampshire. Investments in land and water conservation are critical to supporting local jobs and a strong economy and leveraging local, federal and private investments in natural areas and working lands," said Rodger Krussman, The Trust for Public Land's New Hampshire state director.

According to Shannon Rogers, technical reviewer of the Report and Assistant Professor and Ecological Economist in the Center for the Environment at Plymouth State University, "Studies like The Trust for Public Land's help to shine a light on the 'hidden' value our natural environment provides through goods and services we might take for granted otherwise. It also helps us identify and prioritize conservation efforts."

"Land protection insures that our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the community character, natural beauty, biodiversity and working landscapes that constitute our state's heritage and that we enjoy today. What good news that these benefits also have measurable value to our economy and quality of life!" reports Dijit Taylor, Executive Director the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program.

Legislation establishing a committee of lawmakers to study the status of land conservation in New Hampshire was recently passed by state legislators and is on its way to the Governor's desk. The study committee will conduct a baseline survey of the state's current portfolio of conservation lands, so decision makers and the public can understand what we have now, where it is, why it was protected and how it is managed. It will also analyze how well the state's lands are safeguarding natural resources including drinking water supplies, food and forest products, fish and game habitat, biodiversity and recreational opportunities. Members will survey how conservation is currently funded in New Hampshire, and analyze the return on public investments to date. Finally, the committee will make recommendations about how to best protect the most critical natural resources across the state. An analysis of the state's natural assets has not been conducted by lawmakers for nearly 15 years.

"This study underscores the importance of continued and meaningful state investment in land conservation to New Hampshire's economy and quality of life," said Jim O'Brien, director of external affairs for the Nature Conservancy. "Unfortunately In the recent past, state funding for programs like LCHIP has been inconsistent at best. This report clearly shows that New Hampshire receives a tremendous return on its investment in land conservation and in programs like LCHIP. Our hope is that legislators, state agencies, organizations and communities across the state use the findings of this report to continue supporting meaningful state investments in New Hampshire's environmental and economic future."

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The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Nearly ten million people live within a ten-minute walk of a Trust for Public Land garden, park or natural area, and millions more visit these sites every year. Visit The Trust for Public Land at www.tpl.org