

Folks:

I've been reading the recent lengthy run of posts regarding Fiscal Impact Studies. Let me say that birth control and NAFTA were not a component of the original work though I may consider adding them to the rewrite of *Does Open Space Pay?* Seriously let me toss in my two cents on the issue since I (Phil Auger) have been quoted so much in this for the *Does Open Space Pay* publication and my community conservation work. Yes there are major weaknesses in the Cost of Community Services Study model. All of us who have done these and speak regularly to groups about them readily point that out. Their simplicity is one. For example all residential construction is lumped into one average. Consequently, seasonal homes, elderly housing and certain high density housing types that may discourage children occupancy are clumped into the year round residential mix. Another weakness is that the COCS model tends to make commercial/industrial land uses look great when in fact growth in these sectors in a given community may encourage year round residential construction. There are other weaknesses in the COCS model as there are strengths. I'm sure that could be said of all of the fiscal impact methodologies. Instead of getting hung up on these issues I hope that we all go away with a few simple facts on the issue.

- Though not a big tax generator, open space lands are a fiscal positive in most if not all NH communities.
- There are certain limits of growth beyond which all communities (and regions) begin to lose key natural resources (potable water being the first) and of course community character.
- Many New Hampshire communities are at that point and, based on OSP population projections for the next 25 years, things are only going to get worse.
- If you happen to live in a community that is faced with these issues and your master plan reflects a community desire to retain these features than it is time to consider making a significant public investment in conserving some parts of what is left. Unfortunately while our communities have begun to realize this and have stepped up to the plate by allocating nearly \$100 million in the last three years to conservation, our state leadership doesn't get it.

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