

HOME IMPROVEMENT HOME IMPROVEMENT

Conservation Restriction: A Personal Story

*Submitted by Shirley Smith
Mendon*

There are many people in our small, rural towns who own land. This land can range from small parcels to large tracts of hundreds of acres. Most regard their land as a valuable financial asset-and that is a good thing because there is no question that we need land for housing and commercial development. There are some, however, who have a strong attachment to their land. There are some who cringe at the very thought of chain saws ripping through their woodlands, bulldozers stripping their pastures, and buildings replacing cherished vistas.

That's how it was for me. My land holds so many memories, memories that are precious and wonderful: horseback riding on the trails, cook outs in the Pine Grove, the children diving and swimming in a Mill River water hole, and nature study walks that involved lessons in leaf and wild flower identification. Then there is the wild life: the thrill of coming upon a herd of grazing deer, the parades of wild turkeys, the unforgettable sight of otters frolicking in the river, the glimpses of foxes, coyotes, fisher cats, and even a bear.

A few years ago, I learned there was a way to preserve this land forever and ever. There was a way to ensure that it would never be developed and could remain unchanged in perpetuity. It enabled me to designate

the uses I wanted for the land, like the maintenance of trails and pasture fences, a vegetable garden, a burn pile for brush, and the harvesting of firewood for my own needs. It was called a Conservation Restriction. I had heard of this for town owned property but never realized that it was available for individual residents. There are numerous conservation organizations that offer this service but I chose Metacomet Land Trust, primarily because it is local and came highly recommended.

The costs involved were for an engineer's plan based on the assessor's map and I made a donation of \$100 an acre to partially offset the Trust's future operating costs. It was certainly a very small price to pay for the comfort and deep sense of satisfaction that comes from knowing this protection was in place.

The Metacomet Board of Directors volunteered a considerable amount of their time and energy to provide guidance and numerous services. They came out three times to do GIS surveys and mark boundaries. They took care of all correspondence and worked with the state to complete paperwork. They even went to the registry to record the Conservation Restriction and paid the filing fees. And their involvement does not end there. Board members will come out and check my land once a year to ensure that my wishes are being fulfilled. Should it turn out that they are not,

there is a procedure for enforcement.

If you are one of those people who has a similar emotional attachment to their land, if you wish you could preserve that land forever, do contact one of the organizations that can make that wish become a reality.

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