



# Hanover Conservation Council

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October 22, 2009

Dear Council Members and Supporters:

There is an important community discussion taking place that may impact one of the largest, undeveloped and ecologically significant tracts remaining in Hanover – the watershed land surrounding the Hanover Water Works Company. At recent public meetings, the community has expressed keen interest in this land, its protection, and in potential public use. The Council has long advocated for the protection of this land, with consideration of passive public use.

We support the vision in the Hanover Master Plan and Open Space Priorities Plan for greater protection of the Water Company lands. The 1400 acres of watershed land feed the surrounding drinking water reservoirs. Based on size and location, the land supports well-managed forests, prime wildlife habitat, and excellent agricultural soils. It offers crucial connectivity between Lords Hill, Oak Hill and the Appalachian Trail.

***The Hanover Conservation Council is concerned that there is not adequate long-term protection of the essential watershed lands against future development.***

- There are no federal level regulations that protect the land
- There are limited state-level statutes which, at most, provide protection up to 250 from the reservoir shorelines.
- The local zoning is not permanent and is not the most restrictive. The “forestry and recreation” zoning allows seasonal dwellings and only needs a town vote to be reversed into a zoning category which could lead to the development of the land.

Therefore, while we consider the proposed 50/50 ownership structure of the new land holding company an improvement over the current structure, we believe more needs to be done to achieve long-term conservation of this land and water resource for our town.

We wanted to let you know that ***following the town vote to consider municipalization of the Water Company, the Council will continue to actively work to bring together community representatives in hopes of beginning to facilitate a long range plan for the future conservation of this land.*** Our goals will be to increase our collective knowledge and understanding, and to encourage community dialogue about future conservation options and public uses. The findings will be open for public discussion and will help guide sound decision-making for the future of the watershed lands.

We urge you to join us in advocating for the long-term permanent protection of this critically important land.

Sincerely,

Betsy McGean  
President

Gail McPeck  
Lands Committee Chair