

2 November 2007

To: Durham Conservation Commission Members
From: Julian Smith
Subject: History of Langmaid Farm property

In connection with one of the modest proposals I will make at our November 8th DCC meeting, I am enclosing a copy of the 1977 "Environmental Assessment" prepared by John Hatch as chair of the DCC. Please make note of his various references to old fields and to the location of those fields in the sketch map at the end of his report.

In chronological order below are references to Langmaid Farm and the surrounding area found in Conservation Commission reports in annual Durham Town Reports:

1966: in its very first report following its establishment in 1965, the DCC reported "negotiations underway that may result in the transfer to the Conservation Commission of two pieces of property suitable as open spaces or for other conservation purposes." Although these two properties are not identified, one is probably identified in the next item:

1968: "High on the list of priorities in the Conservation Plan is the Horsehide Creek-Crommet Creek Natural Corridor. Mr. Edward B. Kitfield generously has offered to the town some land bordering the creek valley adjacent to town property near the dump."

1969: "discussions with land owners, surveying of property lines, and negotiation for possible conservation easements along Crommet Creek [and] Horsehide Creek."

1970: "We are currently trying to acquire two tracts of land on Durham Point."

1971: "Scenic easements are currently being prepared in conjunction with property owned by Edward Kitfield along Horsehide Brook; the possibility of easements is being discussed with several other land owners."

1972: "The establishment of communications with owners of property along Crommet Creek with the aim of discussing easements that will insure the future protection of this waterway."

1973: the DCC reported "taking steps to retain the Crommet Creek-Horsehide Brook corridor as a natural area. Contact has been made with owners of property abutting Crommet Creek."

1974: "Following discussions and meetings, a proposed easement was drafted for all the land along Crommet Creek. To date, no commitments have been made."

1976: "Much of the last year was devoted to negotiating a purchase of a forested area abutting the Colby Marsh and extending the Town's holdings in this key conservation area of the Crommet Creek Corridor."

1977: "The negotiations to acquire 44 acres of the old Langmaid Farm on Longmarsh Road consumed much of our time and energy during the past year. This tract of land is a veritable microcosm of rural New Hampshire with its wild fields, mixed forest growth, and bold granite outcrops." (Note: this is the first time the property is referred to as Langmaid Farm.)

1978: "The purchase and acquisition of the Langmaid Farm was finally completed in the Spring of 1978 with the receipt of federal matching funds. The 44 acres of this tract firmly establishes the central core of the Conservation Corridor envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan of 1969. Attempts to acquire further land in the corridor accounted for much of the Commission's time and effort." (Note: a new member of the DCC this year was Stephen Roberts.)

1979: "Plans have been made for maintaining the field on the 44 acre Langmaid property which we purchased last year as open space. . . . it is anticipated that it will be subjected to controlled burning during the coming spring."

1980: "Walking trails were laid out and cleared on the Langmaid property, purchased by the Commission two years ago. The field was subjected to a controlled burn to keep down weed species according to plan." In the next paragraph, we learn of the purchase of "a ten-acre strip connecting the Langmaid property with the Town Dump."

1981-2006: over the last quarter-century, the annual Conservation Commission reports have made few references to Langmaid Farm--and none to the issue of maintaining the field. Instead, Langmaid Farm seems to have faded into the surrounding parcels acquired by the town. Nor has there been any

reference to connecting the Langmaid Farm trail system to the Transfer Station formerly known as the Town Dump.

Those are the two issues I wish to discuss at our November 8th meeting: reclaiming part of the old field shown on John Hatch's sketch map and establishing a trail from Langmaid Farm to the Transfer Station.

To help you understand the area I would like to discuss, I have also included a current tax map and a xerox of part of a 1942 aerial photograph of Langmaid Farm. The light colored boot-shaped area in the center of the photo is a (then) recently-mowed area near the house and barn just north of Longmarsh Road.