

Residents group to protect river area from development

By DON MICHAK
Journal Inquirer Staff Writer

About 30 residents from Enfield, East Windsor, Somers and Ellington decided Monday to incorporate a private, non-profit organization to protect land in the Scantic River watershed area from development, an East Windsor official said today.

The land trust may try to raise money by conducting fund-raising drives, obtaining low-interest loans or by purchasing land and selling it after adding a restriction to the deed.

George Grant, the chairman of East Windsor's Historical Properties Study Committee, said the four-town group voted to create a land trust during an informational meeting at Melrose School in East Windsor.

Grant, who called the meeting, added he expects to incorporate the organization on Thursday, along with Enfield dairy farmer Jack Collins, Ellington Conservation Commission member Ernest Boothroyd

and Somers resident William A. Reynolds, a member of the Scantic River Water Association.

The land trust will be devoted to "the preservation of land for the good of the community" and will act to protect land from "unreasonable" development, according to Grant, who had invited most local selectmen, mayors, planners and other officials to the session.

But Grant said most of the those at Monday's meeting were "ordinary people," including local farmers, property owners and environmentalists concerned about rapidly encroaching development in predominantly rural and agricultural areas in the four towns.

Grant said that the decision to incorporate their own organization followed a question-and-answer session with representatives of the Middletown-based Middlesex Land Trust and the Suffield Land Conservancy, who described those organization's goals and methods.

"A lot of the questions at the meeting had to do with what we can do to compete with developers at the price of land these days," Grant added. "But from the discussion it was clear that while that certainly makes things difficult, it doesn't close out our options."

Grant said the land trust may try to raise money to purchase property or development rights by conducting fund-raising drives, obtaining low-interest loans from organizations like the American Farmland Trust and the Connecticut River Watershed Council, or by purchasing land and selling it after adding a restriction to the deed.

"We can also ask for gifts, and if all else fails, purchase a piece of land and develop a small portion of it so we can preserve the rest," Grant added.

Four-Town Land Trust Goal Is Saving Acres

'A Trust Can Make a Difference'

By DIANE WEAVER DUNNE

Approximately 30 residents of Enfield, Somers, Ellington and East Windsor met last week to organize a non-profit land trust. George Grant, a native of the Melrose section of East Windsor, called the meeting to "preserve land in the area."

"Within the next generation," Mr. Grant predicted, "the remaining open land will pass through the hands of the developers," Mr. Grant said.

Mr. Grant invited two conservationists to the meeting to answer questions about establishing a local land trust.

Robert Stewart, vice-president of the Suffield Land Conservancy, told residents about the effort to preserve land in Suffield. "We started out with 15 people in someone's basement," he said, noting that the land conservancy has preserved 89 acres and acquired a \$10,000 treasury since 1980.

Mr. Stewart said the Suffield Land Conservancy borrowed money, interest-free from the Connecticut River Watershed Association to acquire 44 acres on West Suffield Mountain. The group repaid the loan within two years through several fund-raising efforts.

"YOU ARE HERE because you love the land," he said. "We saved 89 acres from development," he said. "I agree wholeheartedly that it's the way to go."

Andy Zepp of the National Conservancy who is also president of a six-town land trust in Middlesex County, told the residents that 90 land trusts in Connecticut have preserved 16,000 acres to date. "It's very feasible," he said.

"A trust can make a difference," Mr. Zepp continued. "In 40 years, you may drive past one farm, one stream area or

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AREAWIDE

Fledgling land trust seeks new members

The Four Town Land Trust, a group formed during the summer to help preserve undeveloped areas of Enfield, East Windsor, Somers and Ellington, will hold its first membership meeting tonight at 7:30 at the Scitico Grange Hall in Enfield.

The trust seeks to protect plants and animals by acquiring land or development rights on farms and in wooded areas in the four towns. The grange hall is south of the intersection of routes 190 and 191.

Anyone interested in joining the group who cannot attend tonight's meeting may write to the trust at 190 Melrose Road, Melrose 06040.