The Raymond Community Forest Project Concept Proposal
to the Raymond Board of Selectmen
Presented by Raymond Conservation Commission and Loon Echo Land Trust
August 14, 2012

Location:
The Raymond Community Forest Concept Project Proposal includes 347 +/- acres of forestland in North Raymond located on Conesca Road. On the northerly side of Conesca Road is the Pismire Mountain lot (Map 15, Lot 91, Tree Growth), with 125 +/- acres of mixed forestland that quickly gains elevation until it reaches the cliffs at the southerly side of the Pismire Mountain. On the southerly side of Conesca Road is the Crescent Woods lot (Map 15, Lot 7, Tree Growth) with 222 +/- acres of wooded terrain that gently slopes towards Crescent Lake. The Crescent Woods is bisected by Hancock Road with Rosewood Drive defining its southerly boundary.

Background:
The forestland has been owned by Hancock Land Company (HLC) since the 1940's and they are currently marketing the property for sale. In 2006/2007 the Raymond Conservation Commission (RCC) created the Open Space Plan. During this time RCC met with HLC to encourage conservation options and held a site walk with approximately 30 residents who expressed a great interest in having the property conserved. In 2007 HLC received Planning Board approval for the Rosewoods Heights 13 lot subdivision with 56 acres of open space that contains significant wildlife habitat associated with Bartlett Brook and its adjacent wetland. A full development proposal with over 70 lots was created for the remaining property, but was not acted upon due to the downturn in the economy.

Conservation Values:
The RCC Open Space Plan rates the property as having good wildlife habitat and the Pismire Mountain is designated as a "special place." Additional desirable conservation values include recreation, scenic viewing and water quality protection. This is one of four properties on the RCC's "wish list." LELT, the Trust for Public Land and the seven-town regional community's Lake Region Greenprint Plan rates the property has having priority acres for plant and animal habitat, working forests and providing recreation.

There is a motorized trail that leads from the east of the Pismire lot to the top of the cliff area. There is also a grown in, rough hiking trail leading from the base of the mountain to the top of the cliffs. Future hiking and walking trails are desired if the property is to be protected.

The property's proximity to Crescent Lake, and the desire to protect the lake's water quality is a large consideration of the Community Forest proposal. The lake drains into Panther Pond and Sebago Lake, the public drinking water source for the greater Portland community.

In summary, the community forest opportunities include providing:

- Extensive trail network offering easy to difficult terrain for pedestrian (and possibly snow machine) access;
- Exceptional view access from the top of Pismire Mountain;

- Protection of a substantial portion of the view shed of Pismire Mountain from many areas in Raymond including Crescent Lake;
- Long-term/permanent watershed protection for the quality of Crescent Lake and waters downstream;

Community Forest Proposal:
RCC and Loon Echo Land Trust (LELT) met on May 29, 2012 to discuss the potential for creating a Raymond Community Forest. RCC feels that the town ownership model is not highly desirable, as the town outsources its parks maintenance and may not want to own forestland. RCC believes that the town would be supportive of LELT owning the land for permanent conservation and public recreation and managing it in partnership with the town on behalf of the community. Currently LELT pays Tree Growth or Open Space property taxes on the lands it owns. Taxes are typically paid from an established endowment, and future timber harvests are necessary to fulfill an endowment that can support taxes and on-going maintenance, and if appropriate, other community projects or programs.

Currently LELT is appraising the property to learn if HLC will sell the land for the fair market value and if it is financially feasible to raise the funds needed for such a purchase. Earlier meetings between HLC and LELT were productive, and such an agreement boils down to the price that can be offered.

If the project is viable, Loon Echo Land Trust and the Town of Raymond will review and approve the project details in advance including working together to:

- Secure funds though grant writing, donation drives and town meeting appropriation;
- Hold public meetings to articulate the public benefits and to develop land protection and management goals;
- Developing and maintaining trails or other public amenities;
- Organizing or encouraging community and educational activities on the property.

View over Crescent Woods from Pismire Mountain