

Landowner Agreement

Gray Open Space Committee

1. **We Thank You** - We acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of landowners to the public's stated goal of maintaining and even increasing the amount of open space available to the public. Landowners have made an investment in land ownership; they pay taxes; and contribute to the community through providing open space often enjoyed by many. We will take every opportunity to publicly acknowledge these contributions to the community.
2. **We Respect Your Wishes** - We recognize that what is important to landowners can vary greatly. Some value privacy, some value recreational activities, some value capital appreciation through timber values or land valuations. We respect these values. We vow to not treat all landowners the same, but to work with each individually to ensure proposed public uses are consistent with their wishes.
3. **We Will Support You** - We recognize the rights of private property owners to determine what, if any, public access to allow on their land. We will never assume consent, encourage, allow, or defend the public's use of private land without the landowner's express permission. Where necessary or prudent – and if in accordance with the landowners wishes – we will document and publicize all such granted permissions. Likewise, where significant or repeated public intrusion onto private property is incongruent with the landowner's wishes, we will ~~serve notice to the public encouraging compliance~~ encourage the public to comply with the landowner's requests. We will appoint and support a town official to act as a liaison to landowners, and to help landowners who have provided public access to their land.
4. **We Make No Assumptions** - We acknowledge that many private landowners may not wish to grant permanent ~~irrevocable~~ easements to allow public access to their property. In such instances, we will ~~endeavor to develop temporary arrangements that are consistent with the landowner's~~ work with landowners to create arrangements that respect their wishes. We will not assume a grant of public use is perpetual. We will regularly – at least annually – communicate with landowners to ensure their wishes are being met with respect to the public's use of their private land.
5. **We Change With You** - We understand that the wishes of a landowner may change over time. Moreover, we recognize and accept the reality that when land ownership changes, the values of the new landowner may not be consistent with the previous owner. We will work with new landowners to ensure any previously agreed to public uses of private

land are consistent with the wishes of the new owner. When necessary, we will publicize any changes to ensure the public is always aware of the landowner's wishes.

6. **We Endeavor to Compensate** - Where significant, ongoing access to private property is desired (for example, for a permanent public hiking trail), we will attempt to obtain an easement to document the landowner's provision of access to the public. While we readily acknowledge that funding is extremely limited, we will nonetheless endeavor to compensate landowners for the significant contributions they make to the community when they allow public access to their private land. Where public sentiment and funding allow, such compensation may come in the form of direct payment, reduced taxes or some other form.

7. **We Inform The Public** - We will work with landowners to ensure the public is fully aware of the allowed uses on their land. We recognize that situations may arise (perhaps, a timber harvest operation) whereby previously granted access may need to be temporarily or permanently suspended. We respect those situations. For parcels where significant public access has been granted, we will maintain a town-sponsored website which will clearly identify what access is allowed and what activities are prohibited. In addition, we will [work with landowners to](#) further inform the public of changes in access, or convey other landowner issues via public announcements in local media, significant signage at all access points, etc.

8. **We Will Support You** - If necessary, we will work with law enforcement to ensure the private property rights of landowners are protected. We will vehemently defend the rights of landowners to help reinforce their rights as described herein, thereby encouraging other and future landowners to allow public access on their private property knowing they have the full support of the community helping to protect their rights.