

Looking Toward the Future

North Stonington, Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development 2003

Adopted October 24th 2003

Amended April 17, 2009

*Prepared for the Planning and Zoning Commission by a Steering Committee of Resident
Volunteers*

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1.0 OVERVIEW

North Stonington is a town with a strong sense of community. Many of the town's founding families still live here, giving us a living connection with our history and traditions. Our sense of place comes from



our farms, our village and countryside of great natural beauty. From the Grange, to the PTO, to the Volunteer Fire Company, North Stonington is, above all, a town where people pitch in to help make life a little better for each other. North Stonington is fortunate to have developed in a way that has preserved its traditions, its culture and its natural resources. Any plans for North Stonington must ensure that this precious legacy will be passed on to future generations.

The past decade brought significant changes to the region. The federal recognition of tribes, tribal claims, and land issues have become major issues for the first time. With the two largest casinos in the world opening nearby and the downsizing of the military, tourism has replaced the defense industry as the major impact on the local economy. The expansion of Pfizer in the area has affected residential development and provided employment opportunities.

Added to these major changes is the potential impact from a build-out of the town. North Stonington's current zoning regulations allow 8,000 new homes or approximately 20,000 new people. This makes planning for North Stonington's future all the more critical. The town has large tracts of land still in their natural state, potential for growth within its commercial zones, and current low population. These factors make it an excellent candidate to plan for orderly future growth that will maintain the rural atmosphere and encourage commercial development that enhances town goals.

The 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development is the result of a collective effort by a volunteer Steering Committee consisting of a diverse group of North Stonington citizens appointed by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Steering Committee was advised by a professional planner and utilized professional consultants to perform studies in their areas of expertise. From a planning fair to a town

survey the planning process began and ended with input from residents. The major areas of focus that came up during this process stem from North Stonington's desire to remain a rural town, while attracting commercial businesses that enhance the town's tax base or provide residents with services they value.

The resulting recommendations are:

- Encourage commercial growth and reduce sprawl by restructuring the eastern Industrial Zone to allow a traditional New England village neighborhood with a mix of residential and commercial uses. This would provide the residential density needed to attract supportive commercial development, while reducing potential density in more sensitive parts of town.
- Revitalize existing commercial areas by updating uses and developing and upgrading design standards.
- Create new development patterns that protect environmentally sensitive areas and scenic views by allowing Conservation Subdivisions.
- Support agricultural businesses with expanded uses and incentives.
- Maintain economic diversity by providing a wider range of housing choices.
- Preserve the landscape, water supply and ecosystem, and provide recreational opportunities by creating a meaningful network of environmentally sensitive areas that tie into regional conservation efforts.

The vision in this plan is ambitious; it will take time and effort to bring into being. Timely implementation of the Plan of Conservation and Development by the Planning and Zoning Commission is essential. It is critical that residents continue to contribute to shaping regulations and planning the town's future. Time devoted to planning will ensure that zoning regulations reflect the vision of residents, making this Plan a living document.

2.0 2009 PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATE

2.1 2009 PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATE OVERVIEW

Following its adoption, the State of Connecticut requires that the Planning and Zoning Commission “regularly review and maintain” its Plan of Conservation and Development. Since the adoption of the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development, there has been no comprehensive update or revision to the document. The Planning and Zoning Commission have decided to conduct a partial review of the POCD in conjunction with the adoption of the Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands. A more comprehensive review will take place when the 2010 Census Data becomes available.

The 2009 review and update will summarize the vision inherent in the 2003 POCD and will then focus on the accomplishments of goals and actions stated in the 2003 POCD, as well as the outstanding planning issues that still need to be addressed. The goals and objectives portion of the plan has been reorganized in an attempt to better highlight crucial conservation and development goals and ongoing planning issues that continue to face the town. The background data, although outdated in parts, will be updated after the release of the 2010 Census Data becomes available.

It is the intent of this section to provide the citizens of North Stonington with an update on our progress on addressing numerous planning issues in light of significant changes in the economy, the adoption of new Ordinances and Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, and the publication of several key plans and reports by various Town Committees and Commissions. While the citizens and town officials will have some opportunity to review conservation and development goals during this partial review and update, it is understood that a far more comprehensive review of the town’s conservation and development goals will take place in the near future with full public participation in the planning process.

What follows is a 2009 statement of the Plan’s vision and a brief overview of significant changes that have taken place since the adoption of the 2003 plan in terms of new regulations and ordinances adopted, the changes in the economic climate, realization of conservation and planning objectives, new commissions formed, new studies conducted and new documents published. The actions or recommendations that have been completed since the adoption of the 2003 Plan are indicated as such within the body of the document. Issues that still require further planning and discussion are indicated as “Bucket List” items or simply remain unmarked in the text indicating that there is still work to be done. Also included below is a copy of the “Bucket List” that was generated during the year long Planning and

Zoning Moratorium. The unrealized goals from the 2003 Plan will be added as items to this existing “Bucket List” as part of an effort to re-familiarize ourselves with the goals and objectives, still deemed relevant today, that the townspeople thought worthy of inclusion in the 2003 Plan.

2.2 “LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE”: 2009 VISION STATEMENT



North Stonington’s commitment to being a rural community is clear from the way the town has developed – with abundant open space, working farms, and homes on large lots. Planning for preservation of rural attributes is evident in the town’s recent acquisition of significant open space, its support for agriculture, its formation of a Conservation Commission, and the completion of the Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands. Of equal importance to the town is

holistic planning for development, and the recognition that properly managed development and conservation are interdependent goals, both necessary to sustain a future as a rural community.

The area of North Stonington’s future development has always been clear and undisputed. The I-95 interchange has a total of 1,400 acres with only six property ownerships; an unparalleled opportunity for a comprehensive plan. Rather than being developed in individual zones, this area should be planned as a cohesive environment; a place to work, live and participate in social and cultural interchange. The future commercial, industrial, residential, educational and/or recreational development in this area will vary with the existing diverse land characteristics in topography, water courses, woodland and farmland. They must, however, correlate into an authentic environment.

A town must grow as an extension of its own tradition, with its own vision for the future. The vision should be arrived at through consensus of the town commissions and with the approval of town residents. It should be expressed through a planning process to which developers must adhere. By and large developers welcome planning specifics to minimize the speculative aspect of the approval process.

Considering its geographic location between Boston and New York, the availability of intermodal transportation (rail, maritime, air, and Interstate access), its proximity to major scientific resources and its

ecology, from a 2009 perspective, one potential development generator for the I-95/Rte. 2 area may be research and light industry for clean energy and biodiversity.

Having a clear visionary plan for economic development would make property owners more cooperative, technology more accessible, research more intense and venture capital more willing to support promising concepts. Planned, concentrated, economically paced development will not only bring social, cultural and economic benefit to North Stonington, but will provide an opportunity to fulfill its conservation goals.

The plan of development is not confined to the I-95/Rte.2 area; it encompasses the town. North Stonington property owners should be able to consult with town commissions as to the economic viability of their property prior to costly professional studies or sale due to economic pressure. Information should be provided as to advantages of Transfer of Development Rights (T.D.R.), affordable housing, conservation or visual easements, wetland and woodland protection – all to enhance property value and to prevent subdivision sprawl.

The conservation goal of preserving the town’s rural character will not be achieved by preservation of scattered open space, historic architecture, stone walls or conservation subdivisions. Farming retains rural



character. Without working farms, the town’s rural character will disappear. A business plan should therefore be developed to sustain and stimulate farming activity.

North Stonington residents through their 200 year tradition have been careful custodians of their irreplaceable assets of fertile soil, abundant water, protective wetlands and important woodlands. Today’s emphasis on such assets has made North

Stonington an enviable example of good planning. With foresight and vision and town can continue to demonstrate how conservation and development can be mutually supportive and continue to create a home for living in harmony with nature.

2.3 CONSERVATION COMMISSION

On September 8th 2003 ordinances were passed at a Special Town Meeting to create “The North Stonington Conservation Commission” and “The North Stonington Inland Wetlands and Watercourses

Commission”. This action changed the previous “North Stonington Inlands Wetlands Agency” into two commissions. This important step responded to the recommendation of the *2003 Plan of Conservation and Development* and established a group to complete and implement the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* (PCRL).

Effective November 6th 2003, the new Conservation Commission was formed having the powers and duties enumerated in Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 97, Section 7-131a with a focus on the “development, conservation, supervision and regulation of natural resources, including water resources, within its territorial limits.”

The critical first step in completing the PCRL was to inventory, research, and index the town’s open space, conservation easements, land trust and recreation properties, as well as other land uses and natural and cultural resources. The creation of useful maps to reflect this information was a priority, to enable the Conservation Commission to recommend plans and programs for the proper use and development of such areas.

The Conservation Commission used its research to complete its draft of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* which was submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission in January 2008. The PCRL includes recommendations for uses of land areas in North Stonington, identifies and maps “Focus Areas” (areas with a concentration of significant resources and features) and recommends properties which are priority acquisitions for conservation and recreation purposes.

In 2008, the Conservation Commission aided in organizing the North Stonington Clean Energy Fair to provide information about clean energy alternatives for homes, small businesses and the town. The Commission also was active in the acquisition of the Hewitt property which gave the town ownership of its water supply, and large open spaces with rich soils, active farm lands, hiking trails, historic structures, fishing pond and streams.

The Conservation Commission is currently completing its work on solving title problems for parcels of open space and conservation lands discovered during its inventory work. It is also developing a Shunock River watershed plan and mapping trails, cemeteries, historic sites, and places of interest. The Commission continues to research opportunities for ongoing conservation, such as possible acquisition of Bell Cedar Swamp biodiversity lands, expansion of the Assekonk Wildlife Management area, and expansion of the town recreation area and land for future municipal use.

2.4 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS (PCRL)

The Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands (PCRL) was initiated by the Planning and Zoning Commission's Plan of Conservation and Development Steering Committee in 2001. Completion of the PCRL was mandated in the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), with the task assigned to the newly formed Conservation Commission. By updating the information compiled over the years by the Town with current information gathered through their own research efforts, the Conservation Commission published a report dated January 31, 2008 and submitted it to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review, revision, and inclusion in the POCD as Appendix B. Ultimately, the recommendations contained in this plan need to be implemented by various town boards and commissions and the town's legislative body.

The Plan outlines five major goals as derived from the Conservation Commission's findings with respect to preserving the existing positive attributes and the need to carefully plan future development so as to protect the town's valuable resources. These goals are to:

- 1. Maintain rural character**
- 2. Permanently protect water quality and quantity**
- 3. Protect the town's natural and historic resources**
- 4. Provide areas for active and passive recreation**
- 5. Improve town regulatory procedures and prioritize land acquisition**

In addition to these goals and objectives, the Plan identifies certain land areas of special importance and recommends that they be acquired in order to meet conservation and/or recreation goals, with the understanding that future land use decisions and the identification of additional resources will necessarily influence future acquisition recommendations.

2.5 CONSERVATION SUBDIVISIONS AND FAMILY COMPOUNDS

Regulations for Conservation Subdivisions and Family Compounds were adopted in 2005 but repealed in 2006 and 2007 as the Commission felt they were flawed, and that their repeal would be in the best interest of the town. The Commission intends to review and re-write these regulations for possible future adoption. Generally speaking, the intent behind the regulations was to give greater flexibility in terms of dimensional, frontage, access, lot size etc., as well as the ability to develop certain uses that were not otherwise permitted, such as a vacation retreat or smaller lot sizes for residential units in exchange for the permanent protection of a certain percentage of open space. The main stipulations for granting this

flexibility were that there would be a significant community benefit resulting from the additional open space that would be preserved in perpetuity; that there would be an appropriate visual buffer or separation to adjacent existing residential development; and that the open space would not result in small or fragmented open space parcels that did not provide community benefits.

2.6 AGRICULTURE

Preserving our existing farms and encouraging new farming activities remain strong goals of the town. North Stonington's farms are central to the community's rural image and overall value. The following accomplishments relate to the town's dedication to achieving the goals set forth in Plan of Conservation and Development.

In December of 2007, under the leadership of one of the town's dairy farmers, North Stonington passed a Right-to-Farm Ordinance. Another Ordinance passed in June of 2007 provides tax exemptions for farm machinery and farm buildings.

The Town has initiated efforts to create a current inventory of each farm in town. The inventory will include a detailed profile of the farm that will include, but not be limited to, the type of farm, its size, the number years in operation, the amount of acreage dedicated to agricultural use and any acreage protected in perpetuity as farmland, any "ag-tivities" offered, and just as importantly, future plans, and problems encountered.

The Town of North Stonington has created maps that show the soils of statewide importance and areas of



prime farmland. Additional mapping based on the Tax Assessor's database shows the parcels currently taxed as farmland, forestry or both. Future maps created will contain additional data layers such as detailed land use of each parcel designated as Farm or Forest, as well as the areas of prime local importance based on the current land use, quality of soils, threat of development, and proximity to other farmland or natural resources.

Current Zoning Regulations do allow for Agricultural Uses and Facilities, Seasonal Roadside Stands (all permitted by right), and Specialized Agricultural Facilities (permitted by special permit) in all three of the Residential Zoning Districts as well as the Industrial Districts. In the upcoming months, the Planning and Zoning Commission will be exploring the suggestion of creating a separate section in the Zoning Regulations dedicated solely to Agriculture. Included in these Regulations will be an updated definition of Agriculture, new regulations concerning Animals and Fowl, Best Management Practices for the disposal and spreading of Manure, and regulations concerning Equine Stables and Equine Enterprises. More complex regulations concerning Conservation Subdivisions and the Transfer of Development Rights will also be explored.

In August 2007 the townspeople voted to make North Stonington's first purchase of open space land. The Hewitt Property is 104.1 acres which include extensive fields with rich farm soils, woods, wetlands, streams and the Shunock River running through it. The 1750 Hewitt homestead is an early farmhouse which will be preserved in perpetuity. The property will be used for parks and recreation.

In January of 2009, the Town formed an Agricultural Steering Committee to help its officials move forward on agricultural issues. In February 2009, resulting from the effort of this newly formed committee, the Town was approved for a Technical Assistance grant awarded by the American Farmland Trust and Connecticut Conference of Municipalities to help the Town plan for agriculture.

2.7 WATER SUPPLY PLAN

In February 2009, the Town of North Stonington Water Supply Plan was adopted. The Plan gives an overview of the existing water systems that service the town followed by a review of the water utility structure and assets; water system performance; and historic data on population and water use. The Plan examines existing land use and future service areas and concludes with an analysis of the town's future needs and potential alternative supply sources.

2.8 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Several goals and objectives of the 2003 Plan pertain to housing and its impact on preserving the rural character, as well as the need to provide more of a range of housing choices. To help address these goals and objectives, the North Stonington Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (NSAHAC) was formed in 2008. They were tasked with determining strategies that would raise the town's affordable housing stock while preserving its rural character.

After conducting extensive research on existing regulations and practice, and performing a needs assessment, the NSAHAC published a report entitled *North Stonington Affordable Housing 2008*. Within the report, the committee presented ways to comply with the existing regulations without adopting the current practice of building urban-style apartment complexes. The various methods ranged from the conversion of existing housing stock through temporary deed restrictions, to mandatory inclusion of 20% qualified affordable housing in all future development; both residential and mixed-use.

The Committee presented the Report to the Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission individually. Questions raised resulted in a joint meeting in February of 2009, with legal review and approval of the proposed strategies.

Implementation of these strategies will require coordinated effort in the formulation of ordinances and their oversight. The goal of assisting seniors, young families, and others with lower or fixed incomes must be accomplished without burdening the taxpayers with additional bureaucracy and expenses.

2.9 NEW ZONING DISTRICTS

Between 2005 and 2008, four (4) new Zoning Districts were created and one (1) new Overlay District. The **Commercial Development Zone** was created in February, 2005 to encourage high quality retail, commercial office, hotel, and light industrial development in the area surrounding the interchange of I-95 with Routes 2, 184, and 49 at Exit 92. The intent of the new regulation was to promote land uses that were compatible with the environmental conditions of the area, particularly the Shunock River.

As a result of the work done during the 2007-2008 Moratorium, the commercial areas around Holly Green and Green Onion were separated into two distinct commercial zones: **Commercial 1** by Holly Green and **Commercial 2** just past the village. The lack of sight lines and the desirability of drive-thrus at the Green Onion zone, and, conversely, the good sight lines, campus-style setting and potential for mixed use with residential at Holly Green provided the basis for this change.

The old zoning map reflected the prior designation of two (2) Highway Commercial Zones, one at exit 93 and one at the Rotary (Mystic Pizza quadrant). While exit 93 remains **Highway Commercial**, the area at the rotary has been rezoned to “**Village Commercial**” with uses that are more appropriate to this zone’s proximity to the more densely populated areas of the town.

The **New England Village Special Design District** was adopted in 2007 and was not changed during the recent updates to the Zoning Regulations. The intent of the new regulation was to allow for greater flexibility in design standards in order to achieve important design objectives as described within the text of the regulation. The Commission stated in the regulations that the purpose of this special district was to extend greater opportunities for traditional community living, and to encourage a more efficient use of land, reduce traffic congestion and facilitate social interaction. The provisions of the regulation attempt to harmonize with the overall town goal of preserving the rural, historic, and agricultural character of the town.

2.10 2007 - 2008 PLANNING AND ZONING MORATORIUM

In December of 2007 the Planning and Zoning Commission entered into a year long moratorium to completely overhaul and rewrite the Zoning and Subdivision regulations. Town officials, staff, and the development community found the old regulations to be awkward and confusing in terms of structure and format. There was unclear and contradictory language that in some instances included standards that couldn't be met. Some of the review procedures and definitions were unclear and there was distinct lack of cross-references within sections. Due to the volume of applications being received, the Commission felt it would be prudent to enter into the moratorium lest critical mistakes be made that could negatively affect the conservation and development goals of the town.

The original moratorium was proposed to last nine months, but was extended to twelve months when it became clear that the Commission needed more time to allow for a more adequate review of the final draft, and to give ample time for public hearings and public comment.

The new Zoning and Subdivision regulations came into effect on December 15, 2008. Through the use of Special Permits, the Commission was able to limit the number of specific regulations thus affording both the applicant and the Commission increased flexibility. Some of the other major changes to the Zoning Regulations are highlighted by section in a new Appendix D.

2.11 BUCKET LIST

During the 12 month moratorium, the Commission discussed a number of regulatory issues/items. However, due to the complex nature of these issues, the Commission was unable to fully address each one and decided that it would be best to address them after the end of the moratorium in order to afford the Commission adequate time to fully evaluate these important issues and to seek further public input through the use of P&Z meetings, workshops, and/or public hearings.

The resulting “Bucket List” items below will help shape the new goals and actions of the POCD during the upcoming comprehensive re-write. Although the Commission has categorized and prioritized these issues, they are not listed in any particular order below. Workshops and meetings will be held on these issues to allow for extensive public input prior to initiating any changes to the Zoning or Subdivision Regulations. In some instances, sub-committees will be formed to better facilitate the planning process with respect to some of the more complex issues.

A. EXISTING BUCKET LIST RESULTING FROM MORATORIUM

1. AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

- A. Creating separate section in Zoning Regulations for Agriculture
- B. Equine Stable Regulations
- C. Equine Enterprise Regulations

2. CONSERVATION ISSUES

- A. Conservation Subdivision Regulations
- B. Transfer of Development Rights
- C. Vacation Retreat/Family Compound Regulations

3. HOUSING

- A. Affordable Housing Regulations
- B. Mixed-Use (Village Concept) Regulations
- C. Senior Housing Regulations
- D. Multi-family Regulations

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- A. Parking Minimums
- B. Recreational Campground Regulations

- C. Possible Self/Mini Storage Regulations

5. OTHER PLANNING ISSUES

- A. Traditional Neighborhood Developments
- B. Aesthetic Review Criteria (Pattern Book)
- C. New Zone at Lantern Hill Industrial Zone
- D. Transportation
- E. Regionalization

6. MISC. ITEMS/ADMINISTRATIVE

- A. Fee Schedule/Ordinance (**Pending Approval in May 2009**)
- B. Zoning Map Classification/Clean-up
- C. Regulations for Land Uses w/ Definition Only
- D. Comprehensive Index for the Zoning Regulations

B. ITEMS TO BE ADDED TO THE BUCKET LIST:

1. Mapping

Create maps that identify:

- Existing farms and prime agricultural lands and prime areas of local importance
- Areas appropriate for mixed-use village development
- Historic and scenic views
- Areas of unfragmented forests, wildlife corridors, unique and sensitive habitats, rare species, and geological formations
- Trails, paths and walkways that provide recreational opportunities

2. **New Build-out Analysis based on new regulations and existing preserved land.**

3. **Goals and Actions from 2003 Plan**

Most of the goals and objectives of the 2003 Plan still apply to North Stonington today. Many of the recommended actions are, by their nature, ongoing and will continue to be addressed in the coming years. Although much has been accomplished over the past six years, many actions have not been implemented. These outstanding actions will be re-evaluated and, if still appropriate, will be incorporated into the comprehensive re-write of POCD.

4. **Possible Comprehensive/Master Plans**

- Create master plans that identify the possibilities for development in the I-95, Exit 92 and Exit 93 areas.
- Create master plan for possible new Zone at Lantern Hill Industrial Zone.



“WHAT WE HAVE”

3.0 CURRENT CONDITIONS¹

North Stonington, a rural town of approximately 56 square miles and 5,000 residents, is located in southeastern Connecticut, next to Rhode Island. Named for the stony character of the countryside, North Stonington was incorporated in 1807. In the 1800s farms, mills, tanneries, iron works, and cottage weaving contributed to a prosperous and renowned mercantile center. The "Village" area of North Stonington, located just off Route 2, remains a fine example of the early settlement pattern, with its houses and civic buildings clustered densely around a millstream.



North Stonington Village in 1907 – These same buildings now house Hescock Law Office, the Historical Society, the Village Hardware Store, and the Watermark.

3.1 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND LAND USE

North Stonington is generally rural, with undulating low wooded hills and shallow stream valleys. North Stonington boasts of having more cemeteries and more miles of stone walls than any other town in Connecticut. They are evidence of an agricultural heritage that continues today. A system of narrow

¹ A comprehensive re-write of the 2003 POCD will take place when the 2010 Census Data become available. Please note that the “current conditions” referred to in this section (and throughout the Plan) are reflective the years leading up to the adoption of the 2003 Plan. Therefore, some of the data is outdated but will not all be revised during this 2009 review and update.

scenic roads that once connected distant villages now contains housing, as some farmland has converted to residential subdivision. Residential is the largest use in town, and makes up the majority of the town's tax-base. Businesses are located along Routes 2 and 184, and within North Stonington's historic Village. North Stonington contains seven zoning districts². Land uses are either "permitted by right" or require a site plan review and/or a Special Permit. The Zoning Enforcement Officer alone may grant Zoning Permits for residential uses that are allowed "as-of-right."

There are constraints to development in North Stonington because of regulated wetlands, shallow-to-bedrock soils, rock outcrops, severe slopes, and flood plains. Areas most favorable to development are found in the southeastern part of town. Good agricultural soils occur throughout town, but are primarily concentrated in the south central and southeastern sections. These soils are attractive for development as well as agriculture because they are generally level, require little site development work, and allow water to percolate well.

3.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

North Stonington's population grew just 2.2% from 1990 to 2000, as compared to the explosive growth of the 1950s and 1960s. Based on the 2000 Census, the town's population is primarily white, with the majority of its residents between 25 and 54 years old. The median age is 39.6 years. There are 1,883 households with the average size being 2.71 persons. Of North Stonington's housing units, 89% are owner occupied and 11% are renter occupied. In 2000, 21% of households contained at least one individual 65 years old or older.

Demographic projections indicate that North Stonington will continue to grow, albeit slowly. The State is projecting a 3% growth rate between 2000 and 2010, and an 8.6% growth rate between 2000 and 2020. The increase in the numbers of elderly and the trend to smaller and more diverse households will probably occur at a rate similar to that for the rest of the region, state, and country.

3.3 HOUSING

Residential use in North Stonington is predominantly single family, although there are duplex residences, multi-family "conversions," and seasonal communities bordering the town's six lakes. One-third of the town's population lives in the high-density Kingswood-Meadow Wood and Cedar Ridge subdivisions,

² There are now 10 Zoning Districts in North Stonington. See Section 2: *2009 Plan Update and Review* for details.

and the Village area. With the exception of one mobile home park, there are no multiple dwelling units or elderly housing communities in town.

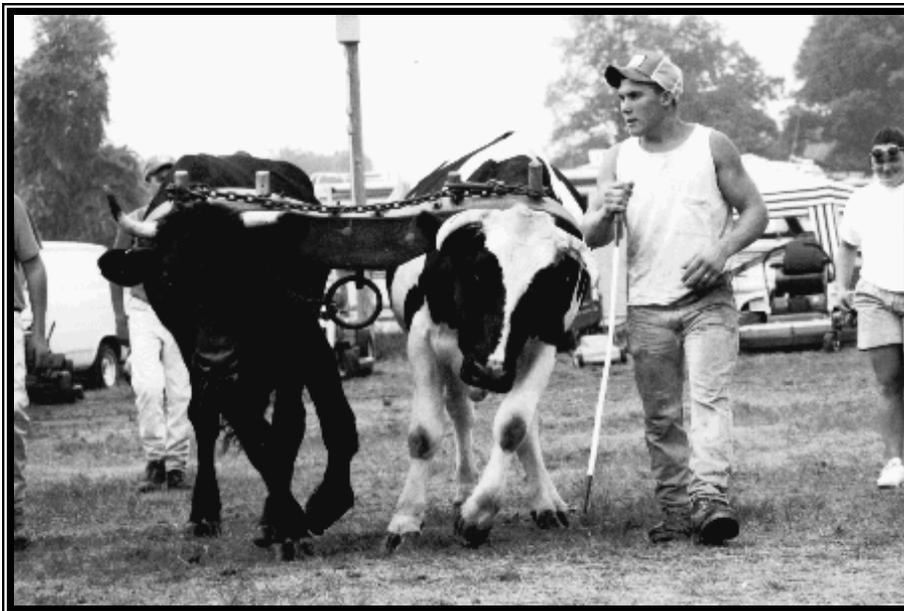
Between 1990 and 2000, North Stonington grew by 142 dwellings, an increase of 11.1% during a period of time when the population grew only by 2.2%. This is reflective of New England's sprawl problem, considered the worst in the country - interestingly not caused by a related population increase, according to the American Planning Association. The median value and the average value of sales have continued to increase. Both exceeded \$200,000 in 2002.



In a major study released in 2002, the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments reported that the region faces an acute housing shortage, particularly with respect to rental units, and recommends the creation of such units in the region. In the same report the Council recognized that North Stonington is not well suited for this purpose.

3.4 AGRICULTURAL USE

Just over fifteen percent of North Stonington is composed of prime farmland soils. Throughout the town, high-quality farmland is in great demand by the many dairy and horse farms. Most of this acreage still exists as cropland, pasture, and hay fields.



North Stonington currently has seven working dairy farms, averaging 428 acres each, for a total of 3,000 acres, making it

the second highest of all Connecticut towns for milk production. Purchases of additional land by farmers

attest to the viability of their farms. Other traditional farming continues, with turkey, sheep, and corn production.

In the last decade ‘Specialty’ farming has become a factor in North Stonington, with Christmas trees,



honey, ostriches, llamas, and flowers being raised. Many horse farms and a winery also operate in town. The potential for commercial greenhouse enterprises has been identified.

As noted in a report entitled Economic Development in North Stonington, Connecticut (prepared by Abeles, Phillips, Preiss & Shapiro, Inc. January 15, 2002), "North Stonington's farms are central to the

community's rural image and therefore to its residential property values." The number and viability of agricultural operations notwithstanding, loss of agricultural land is a significant concern in North Stonington. Three farms have closed operation in the last ten years. Agricultural land is at risk because of its attractiveness to development.

Only 300 acres of farmland are permanently protected. Five of the town's farm properties (four farms in the Clarks Falls area and one farm in the northwest corner of town) are protected under the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program. This is a "purchase-of-development-rights" program administered by the State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture. The establishment of a Transfer of Development Rights program and a Purchase of Development Rights program were recommended in the 1990 Plan of Development, but have not yet been pursued by the town.

3.5 HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Because of its early settlement pattern, North Stonington contains many potential archaeological sites, older buildings, and approximately 126 burial sites. In 1999, the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted cemetery preservation zoning regulations to aid in the protection of burial grounds, graveyards, and cemeteries.

Historic preservation has been an important part of the community, with particular focus on the Village area, which is also the center of the town's civic life. North Stonington Village is listed on the National Register of Historic Places - an inventory of buildings, structures, districts, sites, and objects that merit

preservation because of their significance in American culture. Although registration does not prevent an owner from demolishing or altering a property, designation does assist preservation efforts in other ways. These include ensuring the assessment of impact from federally sponsored projects, providing eligibility



for federal tax credits, and, when available, federal grants-in-aid. The North Stonington Historical Society has suggested expanding the current National Register of Historic Places district.

A “Village Preservation Overlay Area” ensures that any new construction fronting on streets within the Village is consistent with the historic character of the Village. Permitted uses are limited

to those listed under the R40 High-Density Residential District, but existing non-residential uses may be changed to other non-residential uses if they are considered by the Commission to be compatible with the historic neighborhood.

3.6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Although the town is primarily a residential community, it also contains commercial, office, and manufacturing establishments, and a growing number of tourism-related businesses. Route 2, the principal arterial road through town, is North Stonington's primary commercial corridor. This corridor shapes the town’s image for both residents and visitors alike. Equally important is the town’s rural character. As stated in the report Economic Development in North Stonington, “North Stonington’s rural landscape, natural resources and historic character are central to its economic value.” Both the housing market and the tourist sector are driven by these attributes.

Economic development in North Stonington benefits from the following:

- The town is located midway between New York City and Boston, with two interchanges on the region’s primary interstate highway, I-95.
- The town has ample amounts of undeveloped land in the vicinity of these two highway interchanges with large parcels in single ownership.
- The town is in a region that is undergoing a boom, due to the growth of regional tourism and the build-out of other parts of the Boston-New York corridor.

The town's largest shopping center, Holly Green, was constructed in 1990 as a Planned Business



Development. This complex of New England-style buildings is home to the North Stonington Post Office, the Senior Center, professional offices, restaurants, retail establishments and the only bank in town. Holly Green is located on Route 2 near the Village, but lacks a convenient

pedestrian connection to it. Another smaller shopping area, located on Route 2 at the eastern end of Main Street, is more easily accessed from the Village but is not conducive to internal pedestrian traffic. Several office buildings and light manufacturing companies are located near the intersection of Routes 2 and 184 known as the "Rotary." These complexes are arranged in a campus-like setting.

Because of the numbers of tourists and commuters, some merchants have sought to take advantage of the Route 2 traffic. Raspberry Junction is one example that benefits by offering gift items well suited to area visitors as well as local residents. Raspberry Junction is located on the southern side of Route 2, which allows it to capture sales by Foxwoods patrons and workers as they head home. National and regional chain establishments like Bess Eaton Donuts and Dunkin' Donuts do well with locals and travelers alike. The donut shops are located on the northern side of the road, which allows them to capture sales by workers and patrons heading toward Foxwoods.

Instances of once thriving businesses, which have failed in recent years, can be seen on Route 2 and at Exit 93. Much of the difficulty experienced by the town has been in determining what type of businesses to attract to Route 2 that will benefit the town and succeed. Several of the town's other commercial establishments such as McDonalds and the Tinaco Truck Plaza are located close to the intersection of Routes 216, 184, and I-95 at Exit 93. These are businesses that cater to I-95 travelers, hence the "Highway-Commercial" designation of the district.

3.7 CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LAND

As of this writing, approximately 1,900 acres of land are in some form of permanent open space protection status, either under ownership of the town or a conservation organization. Local land conservation organizations active in town affairs include the North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance and

Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. The Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, a national non-profit conservation organization, recently opened an office in North Stonington and is available to assist in the town's conservation planning.



Active recreation areas include the Rocky Hollow Recreation Area, the Fairgrounds and the schools. Wildlife management areas and Pachaug State Forest provide passive recreation opportunities for the public, with the Narragansett trail crossing through town.

3.8 TOWN GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

The Town of North Stonington operates under a Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting form of government. All town board and commission meetings are open to the public. Most town facilities are located in or near the Village.

Resident State Troopers provide police protection with offices located in the Old Town Hall. Three troopers work day and evening shifts. Personnel from the Montville Barracks are called in on an as-needed basis to provide around-the-clock coverage.



The North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company, founded in 1945, operates one station in the Village and provides fire protection for the entire town. It responds to accidents that occur on I-95, receiving and

contributing mutual aid to neighboring communities on an as-needed basis.

The North Stonington Ambulance Association provides emergency response throughout town. A core paid crew provides services 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The association is supplemented by volunteers who work ambulance shifts on the first crew, work as first responders, and can form a second ambulance crew when needed.

The Town Garage is located on Wyassup Road. The Public Works department is responsible for maintaining the road system and for general maintenance of town facilities and public areas.

The Transfer Station located on Wintechog Hill Road provides solid waste disposal. Its Swap Shed, built as an Eagle Scout project, provides a “re-use” opportunity for residents. North Stonington’s recycling program, begun before recycling was mandated, has reduced input into the landfill by an impressive 65 percent.

The North Stonington Senior Center is located in the Holly Green complex. The building has a kitchen and large multipurpose room used by seniors during the day and for town functions in the evening. The center has approximately 150 members and provides activities for 40 to 50 on a regular basis, including Wednesday luncheons.

The Recreation Commission directs recreation services. The North Stonington Recreation Area is located on Rocky Hollow Road within walking distance of the schools. Facilities include lighted tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field, and a soccer field. There is a playground and a “Rec Shack” with rest rooms. A very popular and well-organized Little League program uses both the Recreation Area field and a baseball field located on property owned by the Grange.

Wheeler Library is owned by a private trust and is located near the schools, encouraging its use by students. Since 1990, the library has undergone renovations, which include the installation of an elevator, a meeting room, and new computer terminals. The library is actively supported by a volunteer group, Friends of Wheeler Library.

3.9 SCHOOLS

There are three public schools: North Stonington Elementary School, Wheeler Middle School, and Wheeler High School. They are located close to the Village in a campus setting. The campus is bisected

by Route 2 with an underground pedestrian tunnel connecting the two sides. The North Stonington Christian Academy, a private school, is also located in town. As of 2001, 862 students were enrolled in North Stonington's three public schools. This represented a 6.5% drop in enrollment over the past five years. The Board of Education's projection for 2005 is for 355 elementary school students (K-5), 191 middle school students, and 237 high school students. Eighteen students will be enrolled in pre-K or other programs.

Improvements to the school facilities since 1990 include a major renovation of school buildings, construction of a combined gymnasium and auditorium, and construction of a new athletic field. The Permanent School Planning and Building Committee and Board of Education are currently conducting a Needs Analysis to determine future requirements.

3.10 WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

North Stonington is blessed with plentiful water resources, both surface and ground. Protecting the quality of ground water is one of the highest priorities for the Town of North Stonington, as it is with the State of Connecticut. The monitoring, management, and distribution of this resource involves private entities, local, state, and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations. In some instances, the supply and management of the system crosses town and state boundaries.

The vast majority of residential and commercial development is served by private wells. Public drinking water supply services in town are limited. Both the Town of Westerly Water Department and the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority, which provide limited service in North Stonington, possess the capability to expand into and serve development along the Route 2 corridor. There is no public drinking water from a surface supply.

In March 2002, after due application to the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, the town was declared an exclusive service provider of water systems. Working closely with the Department of Environmental Protection, the town is currently preparing North Stonington's Exclusive Service Area Water Plan. The intent is to identify properties with existing or potential public water supply, ensure quality testing of the supply, and identify potential threats to the supply³.

Five rivers and associated watersheds located partially or entirely within North Stonington have been identified to have the potential for potable water supply. Of particular note is North Stonington's

³ Water Supply Plan completed in 2006 and adopted in 2009

distinction as being located in a watershed federally recognized as important. In 1988, the Pawcatuck groundwater hydrologic system in Connecticut and Rhode Island received federal designation as a Sole Source Aquifer. In 1990, the town revised its zoning regulations to impose restrictions on land use activities that could threaten its aquifers. The Aquifer Protection regulations apply to approximately 38 % of the town's land area.

3.11 SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

Sewer avoidance remains a goal of the town. Currently, no municipal sewer infrastructure exists and there is no inter-municipal agreement with any abutting municipality or entity. Disposal of sanitary wastes is by private septic system on all but a very few properties. Two properties near the border with the Town of Stonington tie into Stonington's wastewater treatment facility under private agreements. Discussions have taken place between the Towns of Stonington and North Stonington regarding a municipal sewer service agreement. To date there has been no such agreement.

The North Stonington Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) has established a sewer service district in the southern part of town. WPCA is exploring the feasibility of other sanitary waste disposal options for future commercial development. Recent technological advances have created sewage disposal options for developers. Package treatment plants like the one at the Hilltop Inn and Bellissimo Grande Hotel on Route 2 provide an alternative for development.

3.12 TRANSPORTATION

According to the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, transportation and congestion are major issues for the entire southeastern Connecticut region. Interstate 95 and the four state highways that traverse North Stonington provide connections to and between other towns in the region. I-95, the primary East Coast limited-access highway, has two interchanges (Exits 92 and 93) in North Stonington. Route 2, a State highway that bisects the town from east to west, is a principal access route to Rhode Island beaches, and is the state-advertised route from I-95 to Foxwoods Resort and Casino. This results in a six-mile trip through North Stonington along its main thoroughfare. Exit 93, almost at the Rhode Island border, provides access to Routes 216 and 184, and to commercial establishments located at this end of the town. Route 184 from Exit 93 is also used as a "short cut" to Foxwoods.

Since 1992, Foxwoods has had a significant impact on traffic in the region. It contributes to an average of 19,000 vehicles per day on Route 2 in North Stonington. Route 2 has clearly borne the brunt of the

increased traffic, but there is also a noticeable increase in volumes on local roads as people seek alternative routes.

Route 2 is constructed to arterial standards between Norwich and Cossaduck Hill Road (Route 201) in



North Stonington. Access to Route 2 from abutting properties is of continuing concern. North Stonington has studied using access management to minimize traffic impedance on Route 2. Some of the study's recommendations have been implemented, resulting in improved traffic flow and safety.

South of the Stonington-North Stonington town line, Route 2 has been widened to four lanes. North Stonington residents point to this as the type of roadway "improvement" they do not want in their town. Future development could heighten the desire of the Connecticut Department of Transportation to realign and widen its roads. Residents of the town are acutely aware of the impacts this would have on their quality of life. The town is resolved to do what it can to keep Route 2 a two-lane road.

3.13 JUSTIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE

The Plan of Conservation and Development is the document that guides a community's decision making, stating policies, goals, and standards for the physical and economic development and preservation of its natural resources. The State of Connecticut requires that each of its municipalities review and update its Plan every ten years. North Stonington's 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development (the "Plan") replaces the 1990 Plan of Development that was amended in 1994 and 1996.

Data and information supporting this section are presented in the appendices of the Plan and in documents identified in its bibliography. Consistency of the Plan with the State of Connecticut's Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut 1998-2003 and the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments' Regional Conservation and Policy Guide for Southeastern Connecticut are also addressed as required by the statute.

A critical step for any Plan of Conservation and Development is translating the development concepts in the plan into zoning. After review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and a public hearing, regulatory amendments to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Map will be written to reflect the vision contained in this plan.



Note: For more detailed information on the topics discussed in this section, please see Background Material (Appendix A)

WHAT WE WANT AND HOW TO GET THERE"

4.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES⁴

This plan was crafted by the people of North Stonington. Using the results of an intensive three day planning fair, knowledge gained from numerous professionals and workshops, input from town committees, and a town wide survey, a steering committee of resident volunteers wrote the following section. From the beginning of the planning process it was clear what was important to the people of North Stonington. The primary issues that were on everyone's mind were preserving the rural character of the town and lessening the burden of residential property taxes.

It has become clear to us that having desirable economic development and preserving the historic and natural resources that residents value so highly, are complementary goals. North Stonington today is in a strong position to be able to plan ahead for 'smart growth'. With thoughtful planning and the use of many of the tools described in this section, we can attract sustainable economic development, while carefully considering its impact on our quality of life.

On the following pages, five primary issues are outlined; goals and objectives identified; and a series of associated action steps are presented. We believe that it is through the implementation of this plan that North Stonington will be able to maintain it's identity as a rural town, with the community character we all desire, and still attract business and residential development appropriate to our town.



Windborne Farm



A/Z Corporation

⁴Please note that this section of the 2003 POCD has been reorganized in the 2009 update in an attempt to better highlight crucial conservation and development goals as well as ongoing planning issues that continue to face the town. The actual goals and objectives however, have remained the same.

4.1 EFFECTS OF FUTURE GROWTH ON NORTH STONINGTON'S RURAL CHARACTER

Throughout the current planning process North Stonington residents consistently expressed a strong desire to preserve the town's "rural character". Rural character is broadly defined to encompass

farmsteads, farmlands and forests, the rural road system with its roadside trees and stone walls, the traditional Village, historic homes, other early buildings, cemeteries and archaeological sites, and the many scenic views that exist throughout town.

Seventy-eight percent of respondents to the planning survey 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that North Stonington should do more to attract new agricultural businesses such as vineyards, nurseries, greenhouses and specialty farms.

The Town of North Stonington has invaluable agricultural and natural resources that will be the key to greater self sufficiency in our changing economy. Identifying and protecting these resources are paramount to the town.

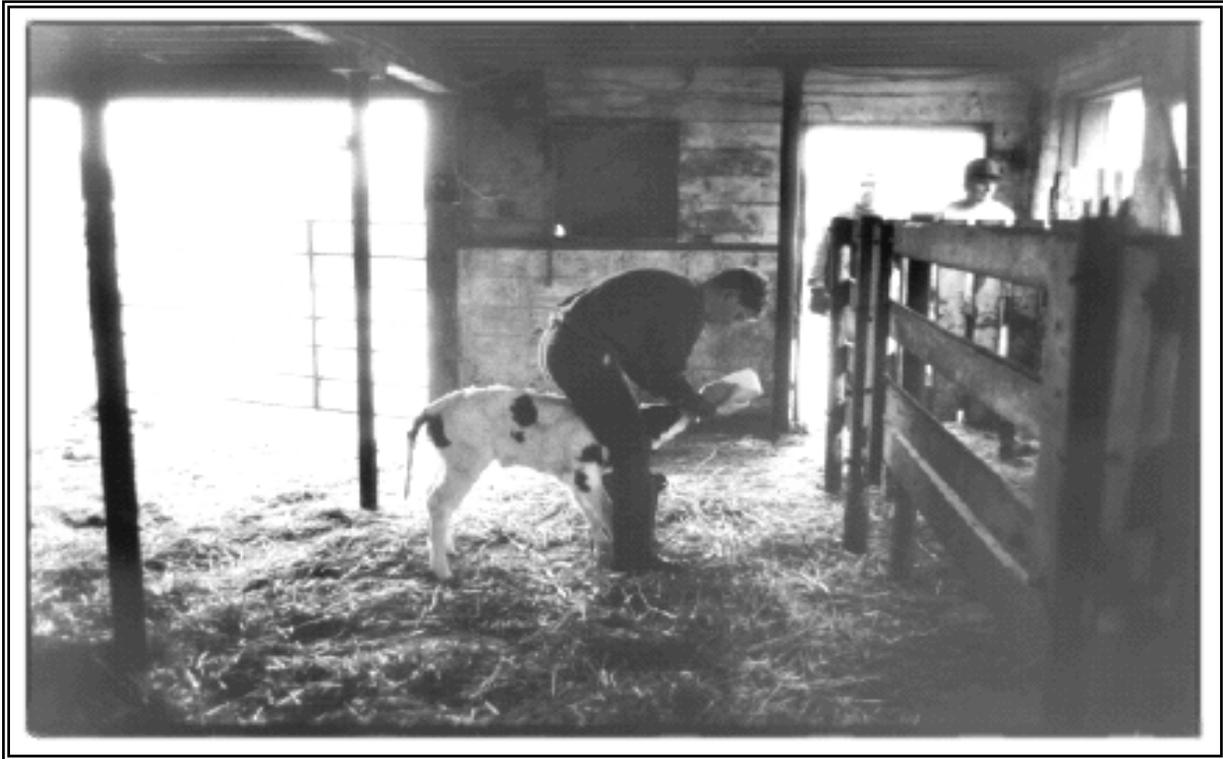
North Stonington retains its traditional small village, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Our historic resources contribute to the town's rural charm, and together with the miles of narrow, tree lined, scenic roads, give North Stonington a true sense of place.



GOAL: MAKE THE PRESERVATION OF NORTH STONINGTON'S RURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITIES AND NATURAL FEATURES A TOP PRIORITY.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

According to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, “Connecticut is losing 9,000 acres of farmland every year! The state’s most fertile land is being converted to other uses at one of the fastest rates in the country.” In North Stonington it is recognized that prime agricultural soils are attractive to developers as easy sites to build on. The continuing loss of traditional farming and the encroachment of new development on the landscape have generated concerns about increased traffic, environmental degradation (noise, diminished air and water quality), and light pollution of the night sky.



The various town agencies (the Selectmen, and the Planning and Zoning and Economic Development Commissions) have a responsibility to enact policy that would identify any zoning changes needed to allow a variety of alternative agricultural operations that are consistent with the town’s character. This policy may include new zoning regulations on farms and farm-related businesses to help keep farming economically viable (e.g. bed and breakfast and farm vacation lodgings, equestrian activities, roadside farm stands, and small-scale food processing).

Objective:

1. Emphasize the preservation of existing farms and encourage the development of new farming activity. **(Identify on a map)**
2. Preserve prime agricultural lands of local and state importance. **(Identify on a map)**

Actions:

1. Draft new regulations for accessory farm uses that include clear and measurable performance standards so that they do not disturb neighbors or the tranquility of the countryside or damage the environment.
2. Consider allowing farmers to pursue “value-added” activities and other non-farm related small businesses on their farms that do not detract from the rural quality and that enhance the landowner’s ability to make a living on the land, such as baking and catering or farm worker housing.
3. Enact a town farm policy that includes funding ongoing research and marketing aimed at identifying agricultural trends and attracting new agricultural business to town.

HISTORIC CHARACTER

Objectives:

1. Pursue expanding the area encompassed in this historic district; this would offer further protections for Route 2, where it is part of the historic Village.
2. Retain the historic character and charm of the Village, while allowing more flexibility of uses with strict design controls.

Actions:

1. Support and encourage the North Stonington Historical Society to pursue expanding the area included on the National Register.
2. Review the Zoning of the Village area. In the current Village Preservation Overlay Area non-residential uses can be permitted if they had a historic basis. The compilation of an actual list of historic uses would be a useful tool for the Planning and Zoning and Economic Development Commissions, so that such uses could be further encouraged. In addition, changes should be evaluated which would allow a more varied mix of uses that are in scale with the Village to encourage continued preservation and restoration of buildings and to maintain the Village’s vitality.
3. Explore the opportunity to establish a ‘Village District’ pursuant to Connecticut General Statute 8-2j for both the existing Village and any other areas in town that might be considered appropriate for mixed-use village development. The legislation is designed to **give Planning and Zoning more control over design standards in areas with distinctive character** (the criteria for Village Districting is discussed further in Appendix A.) This statute could enable the town to better control the appearance and design of buildings, (including alterations of existing buildings).
(Identify on a map)

ROADWAYS

Residents of North Stonington describe town roads as winding two lane roads framed by trees, farm fields



and stone walls. 78% of respondents to the 2002 planning survey indicated that they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the town should have ordinances that protect stone walls, roadside trees, and country roads; 69% supported regulations that require new town roads to look like country roads. In addition concerns about increased traffic and speeding were voiced throughout public participation in the planning process.

Objectives:

1. Improve the appearance and safety along the Route 2 and 184 corridors as they are key entry points to North Stonington, and their look define the town’s image for both residents and visitors. (This approach is discussed further under *Growth and Development* and *Municipal Infrastructure, Services and Government*.)
2. Future road design should focus on reducing speeding (traffic calming) to avoid accidents; this is needed in both the Village and the countryside.

Actions:

1. Create a plan to preserve the rural character of Town roads.
2. Increase the protection of roadside trees and stone walls.
3. Make improvements to the current Scenic Road Ordinance to promote further designation of local scenic roads. Publish guidelines that explain what can and cannot be done with a scenic road.
4. Draft road design regulations that reflect sensitivity to the environment, including limiting impervious surfaces based upon Best Management Practices for storm water management and reducing development impacts on habitat.
5. Consider prohibiting commercial buses on most town roads and limit truck traffic to local deliveries.
6. Draft road regulations for new subdivisions that reflect the same character as existing town roads. **(Partially Done)**
7. Identify historic and scenic viewsapes (perhaps in partnership with one or more of the local non-profit organizations) so that information is readily available to the various town agencies as they consider policies and regulation changes. **(Identify on a map)**

GOAL:
**NORTH STONINGTON SHOULD STRIVE TO MAINTAIN AN ECONOMICALLY
DIVERSE POPULATION.**

4.2 ENSURING A VARIETY OF HOUSING CHOICES FOR THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

Throughout its history as a working-class farm town, North Stonington residents of various income groups have lived, worked and played side by side. This has contributed to the strong sense of community that is so valuable to the Town. At the Planning Fair residents reaffirmed their commitment to embrace diversity.

Planning survey results showed 68% of respondents wanting a wider range of housing choices for senior citizens. As the largest segment of the population - the 'baby boomer' generation - moves towards retirement, this need will increase. 'Down-sized' units can be economically attractive to a town because they require few town services, while providing housing for young workers and senior citizens.



In 2001 38% of homes sold in North Stonington went for under \$150,000, with the median price of all sales at \$163,500. Figures from 2002 show the median price of a home rising to over \$200,000. The market trend is currently towards large, high-income family homes. As housing costs change, it is important to ensure that there continue to be housing opportunities for the entire community.

Objectives:

1. Provide housing opportunities that are in keeping with the Town's character, dispersed throughout Town. **(Bucket List)**
2. Provide housing attractive to senior citizens and others, in areas that are convenient to transportation and services. **(Bucket List)**

Actions:

1. Require a percentage of smaller, lower priced units in all residential subdivisions above a certain size. The Conservation Subdivisions discussed in *Growth and Development* provide an opportunity for this type of housing. [\(Bucket List\)](#)
2. Allow accessory apartments in homes, with appropriate controls to protect the quality and character of neighborhoods. [\(New Zoning Regulations Sections 1502-1506 Adopted 12/15/2008\)](#)
3. Relax zoning restrictions on agricultural businesses to allow on-site housing for farm family members and a limited number of farm laborers. [\(Bucket List\)](#)
4. Allow Holly Green to include small residential units as part of a Mixed-use Village. [\(Bucket List\)](#)
5. Create housing opportunities in a high density, pedestrian-oriented, Mixed-Use Village in the eastern Industrial Zone. [\(Bucket List\)](#)

4.3 PLANNING FOR SMART GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Currently, growth in North Stonington is directed toward residential development with limited areas set aside for commercial development. During the planning process, it became clear that North Stonington residents want the town to remain primarily residential. At the same time, residents expressed the desire for commercial development that would be aimed at reducing dependence on the residential tax base and that would provide products and services that met their needs. These desires were generally expressed in the context that all new development should occur in the existing commercial zones and in a manner that would preserve the town's rural attributes.

It will become increasingly important to be proactive in terms of planning for the development of some of the town's larger tracts of land. Attracting and facilitating suitable development of the undeveloped land near the I-95 interchanges as well as undeveloped parcels near the Rotary will be one of the greatest challenges to face the townspeople and the various boards and commissions.

Three strategies for managing growth in ways that maintain rural character are to reduce potential build-out density of development, to use 'smart growth' techniques to minimize the impact of new development, and to redistribute development density from sensitive areas to areas where the environment and infrastructure can support it. All three of these strategies should be employed to achieve growth in a manner that protects the qualities that make North Stonington the place that it is. While adopting new approaches may introduce unknown risks, it is important to remember that maintaining the status quo (i.e. current zoning regulations) carries the known risk of the town's current build-out scenario.

Three approaches to study are:

1. Creating a zone in which there is a great variety of allowed uses, with detailed performance standards and design guidelines. This option is relatively easy to implement but creates uncertainty on the part of both the townspeople and prospective developers.
2. Creating a zone with a detailed “specific plan” that enumerates the uses allowed, shows street systems, specifies building types and possible locations, provides design standards, etc. The Town’s zoning regulations would give developers who agree to build according to this plan an expedited review and approval process. This requires a substantial up-front investment by the Town to devise a plan, but removes much of the uncertainty in the previous option. This option is well suited to application of the recent Village District legislation (Connecticut General Statute 8-2j).
3. Creating an overlay that allows and depends upon developer creativity to propose a specific plan such as that described in the second option. The proposed plan would have to meet detailed performance standards and must include a development impact analysis. The Planned Development District which is part of the 1996 Amendment to the 1990 Plan of Development is an example of this type of approach. Enhancements to Planned Development District regulations might include the addition of a conceptual plan of the Mixed-use Village, as well as general design guidelines.

While seeking to reduce the impact of residential build-out, it is important to strike a balance between the interests of the community and those of private property owners. Regulations should be designed to maximize the incentives for landowners to choose the plan of action most beneficial to the Town, as well as to themselves. Thus, options need to be created that facilitate preservation while providing for economic opportunity.

Without this or some other creative approach, much of what residents now enjoy may be lost forever. With innovative thinking, growth can occur in a manner that protects the rural character and environment of the town while attracting supportive non-residential development. Although each type of development is unique and comes with its own planning issues and objectives, the following goal applies to future residential, commercial, and mixed residential and commercial development in town.

GOAL:

GROWTH SHOULD FOCUS ON RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT COUPLED WITH SUPPORTIVE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT THAT MAINTAINS THE TOWN'S RURAL ATTRIBUTES.

RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

A common refrain is “Let’s keep North Stonington the way it is.” The question then becomes “Are the regulations in place to protect the qualities of North Stonington that residents value?” The town is currently zoned primarily (81%) for two-acre residential development, although some areas are zoned for smaller lots (14 %). **A build-out of the town under current zoning indicates that more than 8,000 new homes could be built, increasing the population five-fold.** This would have an enormous impact on North Stonington, suburbanizing vast areas of the town, including areas that are the most prized for their environmental and scenic characteristics.

In addition, because of its impact on educational costs, residential development in general is the primary contributor to high property taxes. **A build-out, without an accompanying increase in high-value, low-impact business development, would push the taxes on residential properties to ever-higher levels.** Clearly, this is not what most residents view as their goal for the future. It is imperative then that zoning regulations be modified so as to encourage growth that maintains as much as possible of “the way it is,” and perhaps makes it better.

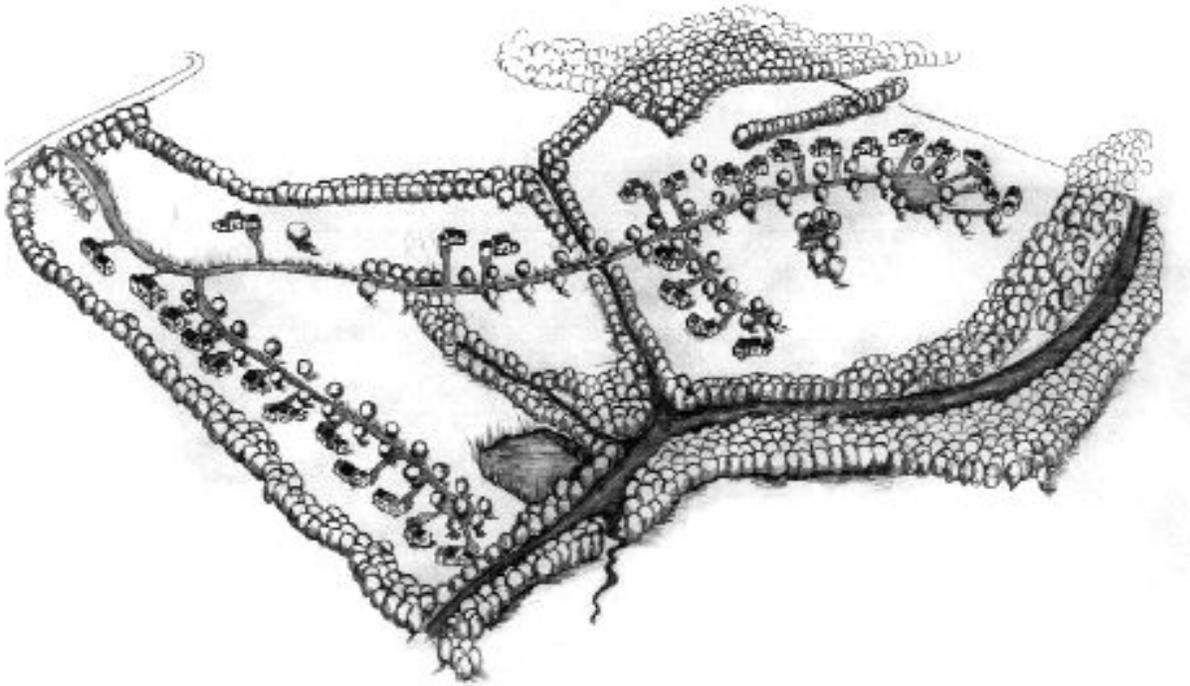
One method to minimize the impact of residential development within low-density zones would be to require new subdivisions over a certain size to be developed as Conservation Subdivisions. Such development is designed to allow the same number of new houses, while requiring that a significant portion of the parcel be set aside as undivided open space. Homes are placed on smaller parcels in a neighborhood setting with the surrounding open areas permanently protected by conservation easements. The goal would be to protect meaningful pieces of land such as natural forests, meadows, wetlands, and farmland, and the scenic views they engender.

Figure 1 shows the kind of layout current North Stonington subdivision regulations require – a suburban sprawl development pattern (from NEMO Project Fact Sheet #9), and Figure 2 shows what is possible in the same development using a Conservation Subdivision.

FIGURE 1. Traditional Subdivision Development



FIGURE 2. Conservation Subdivision



With this approach, significant natural areas are protected. Every house looks out over permanently protected land. The addition of walking paths through the open areas gives each homeowner access to much larger areas than they would have in the traditional approach.

Conservation Subdivisions differ from what has traditionally been called Cluster Zoning in that the approach emphasizes protecting important natural resource areas and does not depend on incentives, such as increased overall density, for the developer.

Conservation Subdivisions would be developed in conjunction with a completed *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*, helping to avoid the fragmentation of natural areas and allowing the maintenance of open land. Large parcels developed in this way tend to provide building lots that are more valuable and marketable while lowering the costs of infrastructure maintenance for the town.

Objectives:

1. Reduce residential build-out potential/ Reduce overall density of residential development.
2. Encourage residential growth that avoids suburban sprawl and high taxes.

3. Support and promote Agriculture. (**Agricultural Steering Committee formed 1/2009 – Technical Assistance Grant Awarded**)

Actions:

1. Use town funds to acquire key areas for preservation and/or recreation. (**Acquired Hewitt Property 2008**)
2. Encourage landowners to donate land to the town for recreation or to a land trust for preservation.
3. Require conservation or recreation set-asides, or payment in lieu of open space, in new residential developments. (**DONE**)
4. Allow ‘Residential Compound Zoning’ on large parcels, where one principal home can be combined with two or three additional buildings for family, caretakers, or farming purposes. All of the buildings would be permitted on the same driveway in exchange for permanently protecting the remainder of the property as open space. (**Adopted Regulation 510 in 2005 – but was repealed in 2007**)
5. Allow environmentally oriented non-residential uses, such as non-traditional agricultural businesses and outdoor recreation camps, with appropriate protections for the environment and surrounding neighborhoods.
6. Increase the buildable square proportionally with the minimum lot size of the zone. (**DONE**)
7. Classify steep slopes, shallow-to-bedrock soils, and other areas with development limitations as unbuildable land. (**DONE**)

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial development should complement the primary goal of growing as a residential community

while preserving the town’s historic rural character. It should reduce reliance on residential properties to support town services, provide residents with desirable employment opportunities, and/or provide the types of retail offerings that residents desire. The focus should be on revitalizing the existing commercial zones by utilizing smart growth techniques and design standards.



Jonathan Edwards Winery is part of Connecticut’s Wine Trail.

In the 2002 planning survey, 87% of respondents supported the idea that the “Town should **more actively seek** high-

value, low-impact business development that will provide significant tax revenue while requiring few town services.” 78% of survey respondents agreed that commercial development should “primarily serve residents.” **Development should be encouraged that strengthens existing uses that already meet the goals described above and that generates new synergistic uses consistent with them.**

Much has been said about the growing tourist industry in the region. However, only 20% of planning survey respondents supported the idea that “the town should encourage new businesses that will primarily serve tourists”. Nevertheless, there are currently small businesses in town that serve both townspeople and people passing through. Businesses such as these can be consistent with our values, provide jobs for residents, and share tax burdens necessary to support town services.

Commercial development efforts should focus on revitalizing existing zones and supporting existing businesses. North Stonington’s current commercial zones are well located to provide the infrastructure and highway access necessary for successful commercial development.

Objectives:

1. Plan for Smart Growth
2. Encourage commercial development that supports residential growth and needs.
3. Allow development only in already existing commercial zones. Update uses in these zones to reflect town goals and market forces. **(Some updates were done with Zoning Reg. re-write)**
4. Create standards that reflect high expectations with respect to the quality of commercial development. **(Bucket List)**

Actions:

1. Allow the commercial zone at the Holly Green area to become a true Mixed-Use Village area, with an interconnected street system and a mixture of uses including retail, individual residences, small apartments, and senior citizen housing (see checklist on page 39.) **(Bucket List)**
2. Allow commercial development on Route 2 only in the Holly Green area, the area around the Rotary, and at Exit 92. This Plan does not recommend new commercial zones on Route 2.
3. Create a more flexible zoning strategy for the areas currently zoned Industrial and Office/Research, to enable a mix of uses that is more responsive to market forces. **(PARTLY DONE)**
4. Encourage high value development near Exit 93 of I-95, where it may eventually replace lower value uses in that location. The 1985 *Environmental Review Team Report* relating to the area should be used as a guide.
5. Encourage renovation and use of existing buildings.

6. Replace Highway Commercial zoning with Commercial. **(Not Done- Changed HC to VC in one area)**
7. Revise the Industrial Zone at Lantern Hill to reflect actual uses and reclamation efforts. This zone should be distinguished from the eastern Industrial Zone. **(Bucket List)**
8. Establish design standards for all commercial development, retail and non-retail. Building design, landscape, parking, and signage should reflect the New England village aesthetic and scale. There should be a special emphasis on design standards in the area between the Route 184 Rotary and Exit 92, as it represents the primary entryway into the town.
9. Encourage high-value, low-impact development that minimizes traffic impacts on Route 2.
10. Revise Office/Research and Industrial Zone regulations to reflect the findings of the *1995 Environmental Review Team Report* on the area. As noted in the *1990 Plan of Development* “Zoning regulations should be revised to implement recommendations for maximum percentage of development on a lot, amount of disturbed land, storm water controls, and other factors relating to improvement in protection of water quality, appearance of the development, and traffic safety.” **(Some updates were done with Zoning Reg. re-write)**
11. Encourage improvements to Exit 93 by ConnDOT. This area should be thought of as an important entrance to both the Town of North Stonington and the State of Connecticut.
12. Require hotels to have an entrance through a central lobby and rooms accessible only through interior hallways. Provide standards for arrangement of buildings and parking on the lot.
13. Add storm water regulations for all zones. **(DONE)**

MIXED COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

While there are several potential methods for encouraging commercial development while reducing sprawl, the two possible methods presented below are allowing high-density residential development in a Mixed-Use Village near I-95, and developing and utilizing a Transfer of Development Rights program.

Allowing high-density residential development in a Mixed-Use Village near I-95 would be conducive to supportive commercial uses, which could result in an attractive village setting and scale. The area should be developed as a pedestrian oriented “town center” with interconnected streets, mass transit service, and good access to I-95. Included in this district could be uses that meet the goals of reducing dependence on the residential tax base, along with providing employment opportunities and businesses that serve residents. Among the uses allowable might be office/research, light industrial, and retail, along with diverse types of housing. **(Master Plan)**

A Mixed-Use Village is not a minor undertaking and certainly would require a major commitment on the part of the town. The chances of success are greater, however, if the community “buys into” it through a cooperative planning process involving extensive public participation. There are several ways a mixed-use village could be created, all of which should involve flexibility of use and stringent design requirements. Additional study will be necessary to determine what method is best suited to meet the goals of the *Plan of Conservation and Development*. It is essential that the Planning and Zoning Commission guide this process and that suitable consultants be hired to identify the attributes and pitfalls of each approach.

The following checklist should be considered mandatory for allowing any mixed-use residential and commercial development in North Stonington:

- The development must be sensitive to the landscape and reflect the traditional New England village aesthetic.
- The development must provide a variety of housing opportunities, including units for lower or moderate-income residents.
- Higher residential density than the existing/underlying zone must only be allowed with the concurrent reduction of comparable residential density in another part of town.
- The development must be pedestrian oriented with plans that allow for present or future mass transit opportunities.
- The site must be able to support higher density from an environmental standpoint.

A Transfer of Development Rights program is an important tool with which North Stonington could maintain its rural areas while encouraging economic development in areas more suitable to high-density growth. Much of the town’s most scenic, environmentally sensitive, and farmable land is in residential zones. Some preservation of these areas is desirable. Conversely, the eastern Industrial Zone and the Holly Green Commercial Zone, for example, are underutilized and would benefit from high-density development, such as the mixed-use village described above. **(TDR on Bucket List – Possible sending and receiving zones should be identified on a map – as a future plan or possibility)**

TDR advantages include:

- Encouraging resident-friendly commercial development by concentrating residential growth in high-density mixed-use areas
- Moving residential growth to areas with suitable infrastructure capability
- Creating dedicated open space adjacent to residences in targeted locations
- Protecting key scenic and environmentally sensitive areas from sprawl
- Protecting large areas without using public funding for acquisition or maintenance of conservation lands

TDR requires:

- The identification of sending zones (areas of particular need for preservation, either for environmental purposes or to maintain rural character)
- The identification of receiving zones (areas where increased residential density can be supported with infrastructure and will be compatible with town character)
- The creation of a development rights market (setting the value of development rights)
- The recording of conservation easements (by the town and conservation commission.)

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a program that encourages landowners in sensitive environmental areas to sell their development rights at fair market value to developers in areas more suited to intensive growth. The developer would then have the right to build at a higher density than otherwise allowed in his zone. The exchange rate would have been predetermined by the town as part of the TDR program.

Objectives:

1. Protect scenic areas, environmentally sensitive areas, and farmable lands.
2. Appropriately locate higher density residential development that would attract supportive commercial development.
3. Encourage development that is sensitive to the landscape and reflects the traditional New England village aesthetic.

Actions:

1. Redistribute density from sensitive areas to a Mixed-Use Village in the I-95, Exit 92 area.
2. With the help of professional consultants, develop and utilize a Transfer of Development Rights program to encourage economic development in areas more suitable to high-density growth.

4.4 PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN LAND, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

North Stonington's landscape, with its abundant fields, rolling hills, and numerous brooks and ponds, remains largely unspoiled today. For many years the town has had a great deal of interest and activity in the preservation of open land and the protection of the environment. The North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance, the Avalonia Land Conservancy, and, most recently, the Nature Conservancy have contributed to preservation efforts. Nevertheless, there are currently only 1,900 of the town's approximately 36,000 acres that are permanently protected from development. The State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has significant holdings in North Stonington (3,808 acres), but these are only temporarily protected lands.



Results of the Community Planning Fair in May 2001 and the town-wide survey of 2002 showed strong support for land conservation and environmental protection. Clearly most residents recognize that maintaining open land enhances the quality of life and is beneficial to the town's overall tax position, since such property makes little or no demand on town services. However, prior to this current planning

process, there was no coordinated plan for how to define, evaluate, prioritize, and protect open space and environmental resources.

The Conway School of Landscape Design was retained by the Steering Committee to begin work on an open space plan. The Draft *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* that was produced includes the start of a natural resource inventory and many preliminary maps and references. When completed, The *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* will provide a coherent framework and essential background information to support future planning decisions⁵. It will allow the Town to apply for grant money, not otherwise available.

⁵ Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands was completed in 2007 and adopted in 2009.

An important step is to complete the recreation portion of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* with broad public participation. Town-owned land should be evaluated for recreational use and/or conservation. It may then be necessary to develop a multi-year capital budget for implementation of the recreation component of the plan; it may be possible to solicit grant funding and private contributions.

PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS

Establish a group of community volunteers to complete *The Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* in greater detail. (DONE)

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the final draft of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*:

- Add/connect to existing conserved parcels as identified by the *Natural Resource Inventory Map*.
- Create a Water Protection Mission Statement that clearly states the desire on the part of the town to protect its water resources from polluted runoff.
- Support the Nature Conservancy's Pawcatuck Borderlands Project.
- Create a Land Acquisition Fund (Section 7-131r of Connecticut General Statutes) and investigate the use of impact fees to fund open space protection. (DONE)
- Coordinate land acquisition/stewardship with land trusts, the Town, and the State. (ONGOING)

Recognizing the importance of these tasks, the Town should consider creating a Conservation Commission to focus on execution of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*. This could evolve out of the volunteer committee that completes the Plan. (DONE)

GOAL:

THE TOWN'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITIES MUST BE PRESERVED AND PROTECTED.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The continued health of North Stonington's natural resources such as fertile soils, forests, ground water sources, wildlife and unique land forms are essential to serve both the priority of maintaining the rural character and high quality of life, and attracting high quality development to facilitate economic growth. The town's valuable natural resources must be considered when making future land use decisions, and development should be planned to minimize any potential adverse impacts.

Objectives:

1. Define, evaluate, prioritize, and protect open space and environmental resources.
2. Create a complete and accurate database of all the town's natural resources. (MAP)
3. Preserve Farmland (MAP)

Actions:

1. Create a Natural Resource Inventory Map based upon guides and techniques furnished by Non-point Education for Municipal Officers (NEMO) to serve as a guide for determining areas of conservation and development. Notable trees and wetlands should be included.
2. Conduct a more intensive study of the Town's biodiversity. Investigate organizing a biodiversity event.
3. Ensure that all maps are complete and accurate, using the Geographic Information System (GIS.)
4. Protect large, unfragmented forests, notable trees, and corridors for wildlife. **(MAP)**
5. Encourage other land uses in town that require large areas of open land (e.g. sustainable forestry, hunting and fishing clubs, summer camps).
6. Identify and protect unique and sensitive habitat, rare species, vernal pools (including surrounding uplands), and geological formations. **(MAP)**
7. Protect lakes, watercourses, and ground water. **(2009 Water Supply Plan Adopted, and Drinking Water Quality Management Plan adopted in 2008)**
8. Protect unique and significant natural features and view sheds such as Lantern Hill, Shunock Watershed, Chester Main and Wintechog Hill. **(MAP)**
9. Protect steep slopes from development. **(DONE)**
10. Establish and protect corridors/connections between protected open lands.
11. Maintain buffer areas.

PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION

Residents have expressed the need for safe pedestrian and bicycle pathways along busier roads in town and along much of Route 2. They have expressed the need to connect Holly Green to the Village, the Rocky Hollow Recreation Center to the schools, and Kingswood-Meadow Wood to the schools and Village. Pedestrian walkways can provide a safe and convenient means of getting from place to place, while enhancing local businesses.

Town committees and local organizations have voiced the need for additional areas to accommodate organized sports. The desire to consider establishing a Community Center that might include either an indoor/outdoor pool or a swimming beach has also been noted.

Objective:

1. Expand and enhance active and passive outdoor recreational opportunities.

Actions:

1. Establish a system of trails, paths, and walkways that provide recreational opportunities and connect developed areas with each other and with the countryside. **(MAP)**
2. Investigate the possibility of using the abandoned trolley right-of-way as a hike/bike path.-
3. Promote establishment of a town-wide trail system linking local trails to the Connecticut Blue trail. **(MAP)**
4. Promote establishment of riding trails, in recognition of the significant number of horses in town.
5. Encourage developers to reserve land shown as part of a trail or path alignment for possible public use.
6. Consider establishing a Community Center that might include either an indoor/outdoor pool or a swimming beach.

4.5 FUTURE PLANNING FOR THE EXPANSION OF MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND GOVERNMENT



Controlling the costs associated with providing municipal services is often a challenge for small rural towns whose greater percentages of residential development are reflected in higher tax rates. The cost of expanding municipal services and essential infrastructure becomes an unwelcome burden to the already burdened taxpayer.

North Stonington's present infrastructure can serve the town well; the Selectmen have stated they don't see any need for major expansion in the next ten years. The Selectmen and other town committees have raised the following objectives and actions as they relate to the location and expansion of municipal buildings, emergency services, recreation facilities and roadways;

current and future water and sewer infrastructure demands; future energy demands; and the improved

function of our various Boards and Commissions. They need to be reviewed individually before being adopted. While keeping municipal facilities in present locations is the 10-year goal of this plan, this does not mean that we should neglect planning for more-distant-future municipal land needs. Mixed-use village planning, for example, would seem to provide an obvious opportunity for long-term municipal facilities planning.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Currently most of North Stonington's government offices are conveniently located in the Village. The schools are in a unified campus and the main recreation area is close by. Town buildings should continue to be centrally located, and should strive to stay in their existing buildings.

Reflective of New England's tendency towards sprawling development, many homes have been built in North Stonington during the last ten years, while the population has not increased dramatically. With the school population expected to decline in the coming years, the town's escalating education cost comes from unfunded mandates by the State of Connecticut.

Demands on the town's emergency, fire, ambulance, and police services increase with regional development and increased traffic on the roads. The town should periodically re-evaluate the effectiveness of emergency medical services and the volunteer fire department and should consider creating a Public Safety Commission. Volunteerism should be promoted. Information about what is involved in joining the different companies and how to go about doing it needs to be easily accessible. The town should periodically re-evaluate the cost-effectiveness of participating in the Resident State Trooper program.

Objectives:

1. The town's infrastructure policies should complement rural character and protect natural resources.
2. Strive to keep facilities in existing buildings.
3. Keep town buildings centrally located.

Actions:

1. Renovate and expand the Town Hall facilities at their present location.
2. Expand the firehouse at its present location to accommodate upgraded equipment, and consider housing the fire emergency and ambulance services under one roof.
3. Construct and open a bulky waste staging area at the Transfer Station.

4. Pave and possibly expand the town garage storage and operating area.
5. Periodically re-evaluate protection services.
6. Actively promote volunteerism.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Recreation is an important part of life in North Stonington. Many families have different members of the family engaged in organized activities at the same time. The close proximity of the schools and the Rocky Hollow Recreation Area has been a huge advantage to residents.

There is a perceived need for additional playing facilities for the Little League and other active recreations. The town should assist in finding and securing facilities. Recreation needs should be carefully planned with a view to coordinating and centralizing various facilities. This issue is discussed further in the *Natural Resources, Open Lands, and the Environment* section and will be an important part of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*.

Objective:

1. Keep recreation facilities centralized. Plan for future needs.

Actions:

1. Upgrade and expand the Rocky Hollow Recreation Area, as usage warrants, and connect it to the school campus via a pedestrian walkway. (**Assekong Bridge opened in 2007**)
2. Complete Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands (**DONE – See Appendix B**)

WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2002 the town of North Stonington was declared to be an exclusive service provider of water. The town should study the long-term water needs of the town, and the region as a whole, and plan for the best way of protecting and exploiting its water resource. Protection issues should include pollution and security risks. In addition to preparing a town Water Plan in accordance with Connecticut Health Department guidelines and requirements, town water planners should consider protecting water resources and recharge areas in the context of the *Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands*.

With modern technology, sewers are not needed for certain types of development, as is witnessed by the package sewage treatment system at The Hilltop Inn on Route 2. Septic systems should continue to be

the method of treatment for most residential use. The Town should concentrate on developing a policy regarding decentralized treatment plants and should consider other options which may become available in the future.

Objectives:

1. Maintain Exclusive Service Provider status.
2. Protect the aquifer.
3. Explore new options for wastewater treatment.

Actions:

1. Create a Water Plan. **(DONE)**
2. Establish a policy allowing private and town-owned and operated "decentralized" sewage treatment plants.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The State of Connecticut realizes the importance of an energy policy and mandates that towns plan for the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy, energy conservation, and energy efficient patterns of development.



North Stonington's brooks once powered a thriving mill industry.

Objectives:

1. Promote energy efficient patterns of development.
2. Plan for the use of renewable sources of energy. **(New Regulations adopted in 2008 to allow small and large-scale wind facilities in North Stonington)**

Actions:

1. Create an Energy Conservation Plan.

2. The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider incentives for developers who use passive solar energy techniques, as defined in subsection (b) of section 8-25 of the General Statutes, in planning a residential subdivision development.
3. Municipal facilities should have an energy conservation plan which includes a requirement that new municipal buildings have a site design that maximizes solar energy potential. The town should consider getting their electricity from a renewable energy supplier when available. **(ONGOING)**
4. The town should consider an ordinance protecting the right to use solar energy.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Roads are an important part of a town's identity. Road standards should reflect this. Route 2 is the most traveled road in North Stonington and serves as the main entrance to the town from both east and west. Despite heavy traffic, it is still a scenic two-lane country road, canopied by old-growth trees. Widening Route 2 to four lanes would have a disastrous effect on the town.

Objectives:

1. Maintain, protect, and build roads to be in harmony with the countryside.
2. **Do everything possible to keep Route 2 from being widened to four lanes; protect and improve its scenic qualities** (In Fall, 2004 the Connecticut Department of Transportation issued a "Final Environmental Impact Statement" on a proposal to widen Route 2 starting at the Exit 92 interchange in Stonington and passing through the full length of Route 2 in North Stonington (6.8 miles) to the Ledyard line. The Selectmen held a Town Meeting on January 8th, 2005 at which residents voted by a 10 to 1 majority to "oppose the recommended ConnDOT Route 2 proposed improvements as identified in the final environmental evaluation").

Actions:

1. Update town road construction standards to allow new roads that are rural in appearance.
2. Modify road standards to provide flexibility for site-specific environmental needs such as amphibian crossings, minimal destruction of habitat, and optimum storm-water management.
3. Have the tree warden participate in the Tree Warden Workshop sponsored by the Connecticut Urban Forestry Council.
4. Maintain the Rotary and restore its traditional flowering trees and plants.
5. The town should implement access management for Route 2 as recommended in the *1998 Wilbur Smith Route 2 Corridor Study*. **(Begun)**

REGULATIONS, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS

As North Stonington grows, governing it becomes more complex. The town should consider restructuring overburdened boards and commissions, in order to better handle expanded responsibilities.

Zoning requirements should reflect actual practices, and should make the job of the Zoning Enforcement Officer, the Building Inspector and other town officials easier.

Objective:

1. Give boards and commissions access to professional guidance and resources so they can better serve North Stonington.

Actions:

1. Provide additional funding to the Economic Development Commission, for professional consultation, staff assistance, marketing, etc. **(DONE)**
2. Establish a Conservation Commission separate from the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. The first task of this commission would be to implement the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*. **(DONE)**
3. Periodically upgrade and modernize zoning and building procedures in a way that reflects the needs of the Town.

The town should consider adopting the following regulations and procedures:

- Adopt "Plot Plan" specifications for residential dwellings. **(DONE)**
- Require an "As-Built Plan" following construction. **(DONE)**
- Update Site Plan specifications (1700). **(DONE)**
- Provide definitions in Appendix A of the *Zoning Regulations* for all uses listed in the Table of Uses. **(DONE)**
- Update regulations to current Connecticut General Statutes requirements. **(DONE)**
- Require AutoCAD-compatible CD-ROM of boundary surveys and assessor's maps in Subdivisions. **(DONE)**
- Give the Planning and Zoning Commission the option of requiring that developers pay for the cost of consultants, monitoring, and inspection during construction. **(New Fee ordinance drafted 2009. Pending adoption May 2009)**

5.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION⁶

Completing the *Plan of Conservation and Development* is an important first step in shaping the future of North Stonington. However the real value of the Plan is in its implementation. The process of creating the *Plan of Conservation and Development* has been a positive forum for residents, allowing them to be



heard on town issues. Continued citizen support and involvement will ensure that the Plan is carried out.

There are many ways to inform the public, and to encourage them to participate. The town should use all the means available to it to reach out to residents. One such way, as recommended by the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association, is to conduct an annual review of the *Plan of Conservation and Development*. This will keep the town

focused on its goals and at the same time will satisfy the statutory requirement of updating the Plan every ten years. Conducting an annual review will also keep citizens involved, and provide a forum for addressing new conservation and development goals. The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider setting aside an annual ‘planning month’ for this purpose. Enacting this Plan requires regulation changes and further study of important issues. It will take a real commitment from the Planning and Zoning Commission to get the job done.

GOAL:
**THE PUBLIC SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN TOWN PLANNING
AND THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS TO ENSURE THAT TOWN
GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIVE TO ITS CITIZENS.**

⁶ Please note that this section of the 2003 POCD has been reorganized in the 2009 update. The actual goals and objectives however, have remained the same.

Objectives:

1. Encourage the use of existing avenues of communication to keep residents involved and informed.
2. Move forward promptly with changes to land use regulations and other measures.

Actions:

1. Review the *Plan of Conservation and Development* annually.
2. Require the Annual Report to include a progress report on the implementation of the *Plan of Conservation and Development*.
3. Appoint resident committees to complete planning process and help with implementation.
4. Use local organization newsletters and flyers to pass along town information.
5. Upgrade the town's web site to include municipal documents, plans, and schedules. **(DONE)**
6. Encourage utilities to provide the town with high speed Internet connection. **(DONE)**
7. Publish all town legal notices and advertisements in the same newspaper. **(DONE)**
8. Encourage the participation of young citizens in town government through school presentations and awareness programs.
9. Conduct quarterly Planning and Zoning meetings specifically to address planning functions and progress in implementing the Plan.
10. Appoint a committee to complete the *Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands*. **(DONE)**
11. Appoint a committee to study flexible mixed-use village zoning for the I-95, Exit 92 area.
12. Review and prioritize possible changes to the zoning and subdivision regulations and ordinances listed in the Plan, and establish a schedule for their revision. **(DONE)**

6.0 PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES AND ORDINANCES

6.1 PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES AND ORDINANCES TO PROTECT THE RURAL AND HISTORIC CHARACTER OF NORTH STONINGTON.

New Zoning Regulations

1. Update uses in the Village, allowing historical uses **(MAKE THIS AN ACTION)**
2. Add 'Village Districting' per Connecticut General Statutes to North Stonington Village and other appropriate areas **(MAKE THIS AN ACTION)**
3. Regulate fence design and placement **(DONE)**
4. Add Driveway and curb cut standards **(DONE)**
5. Require temporary event permits **(MAKE THIS AN ACTION)**
6. Implement Route 2 driveway access management **("Implementation" isn't a regulation)**
7. Regulate drive-through establishments **(DONE)**
8. Allow specialized agricultural buildings **(DONE)**

Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Update earth excavation and mining approval guidelines (1525) **(DONE)**
2. Update home occupation approval guidelines (1533) **(DONE)**
3. Update outdoor lighting fixtures (1548) **(DONE)**
4. Add building and parking standards to hotel/motel regulations (1535) **(DONE)**

New Subdivision Regulations

1. Require subdivision lot lines follow natural boundaries and stone walls, and that stone walls be preserved. **(Stonewall preservation language in place)**

New Ordinances

1. Regulate special events **(MAKE THIS AN ACTION)**
2. Control noise pollution **(DONE)**
3. Control outdoor illumination **(DONE)**
4. Regulate abandoned structures regarding unsafe conditions **(BUILDING DEPT OR TROOPERS)**

Existing Ordinances

1. Change road standards to protect stonewalls and roadside trees and to ensure that new roads look like country roads **(MAKE THIS AN ACTION)**

6.2 PROPOSED REGULATIONS AND ORDINANCES DESIGNED TO PROVIDE AND PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN LANDS, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

New Zoning Regulations

1. Add Conservation Subdivision zoning (Completion of an open space plan is a prerequisite to this regulation) **(Bucket List)**
2. Consider restrictions on construction on steep slopes and shallow-to-bedrock soils **(DONE)**

Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Add storm water management (to include the sub-watershed) **(DONE)**
2. Update uses and hazardous substances requiring control in the Aquifer Protection Overlay Area **(1104) (DONE)**
3. Add landscape criteria to prohibit non-native, invasive plants **(1800) (DONE)**

New Subdivision Regulations

1. Require either open space set asides or a fee in lieu of open space **(DONE)**

Existing Subdivision Regulations

1. Add subdivision road standards or cite new ordinance **(Section 6.2) (DONE Table 6-1 Section 7.2, 7.3)**

New Ordinances

1. Establish a fund for the acquisition of land for conservation and recreation. **(DONE)**

6.3 PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES AND ORDINANCES DESIGNED TO MANAGE GROWTH

New Zoning Regulations

1. Provide standards for congregate care facilities in appropriate areas (**Bucket List**)
2. Establish a Mixed-use Village Overlay or Zone and create regulations for it (**MAKE THIS AN ACTION**)
3. Change Highway Commercial to Commercial (**SOME CHANGES MADE- NEEDS FURTHER DISCUSSION**)

Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Update all signage to be consistent with the town's rural character (2000) (**DONE**)
2. Allow Bed & Breakfasts in unconnected buildings (1511) (**DONE**)
3. Update the western Industrial Zone (**Bucket List**)

Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Review appropriateness of the way uses are allowed ("Permitted by Right" (P) or "Special Permit" (S)) with respect to the zone's definition and objectives
2. Review appropriateness of zone's or overlay's **title** and **definition** with respect to its objectives
3. Review appropriateness of zone's or overlay's **delineation** (size, shape, and location) with respect to its definition and objectives
4. Review appropriateness of zone's **uses** or the overlay's **provisions** with respect to its definition and objectives

(ALL ZONING REGS WERE REVIEWED AND UPDATED)

6.4 PROPOSED REGULATIONS TO IMPROVE MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND GOVERNMENT

New Zoning Regulations

1. Require "Plot Plan" for residential dwellings **(DONE)**
2. Define "Plot Plan" specifications **(DONE)**
3. Require "As-built Plan" following construction **(DONE)**
4. Require monetary fines for violations **(DONE)**

Update Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Update Site Plan specifications **(1700) (DONE)**
2. Provide definitions in Appendix A for all uses listed in the Table of Uses **(DONE)**
3. Perform general housekeeping and updating to current Connecticut General Statute requirements **(DONE)**

New Subdivision Regulations

1. Specify off-site road improvement requirements **(7.2.3B)(DONE)**

Existing Subdivision Regulations

1. Update Subdivision Plan specifications **(Section 5) (DONE)**
2. Update to current Connecticut General Statute requirements **(DONE)**

Existing Ordinances

1. Create separate 'Conservation' and 'Inland Wetlands and Watercourses' Commissions **(DONE)**

Appendix B

**PLAN
FOR
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS**

DRAFT

April 17, 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands (PCRL) was initiated by the Planning and Zoning Commission's Plan of Conservation and Development Steering Committee in 2001. Completion of the PCRL was mandated in the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development (PCD), with the task assigned to the newly formed Conservation Commission. Accordingly, the Conservation Commission began inventorying, indexing, and researching land use and natural and cultural resources. Over the years the town has developed a considerable library of land use and resource studies, findings, and recommendations that have relevance today. This material was updated with current information by the Conservation Commission and provided the foundation for its recommendations. Major sources are referenced.

The Conservation Commission divided the town into fourteen "focus areas" in order to aid research and recommendations, and more importantly, to gain a town-wide vision of the town's assets. Each focus area has a significant concentration of characteristics that warrant the town's careful consideration for the future of that area.

The Conservation Commission's research and recommendations - in the form of a report dated January 31, 2008 - were turned over to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review, revision, and inclusion in the PCD. Ultimately, the recommendations contained in this plan need to be implemented by various town boards and commissions and the town's legislative body.

FINDINGS

- The needs and desires expressed by the community to retain and protect rural living and natural resources have remained largely unchanged through the years. Development pressures increase the necessity to plan carefully and act with renewed vigor to assure the continuance of the quality of life in town and to protect natural resources of significant local and regional importance, while working to mitigate the tax burden.
- Areas of the town most prone to increased development and density are generally located where valuable surface and underground water resources occur. The need to protect these waters substantially heightens the need for sound planning and enforcement.
- High quality economic development can be achieved in harmony with the conservation and recreation goals of the community - through careful planning, regulation, and enforcement.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain rural character

- Protect historic features and scenic vistas.
- Encourage farming.
- Maintain and enhance areas that define and shape community character.
- Minimize streets, roads, and paved areas that deface the landscape and increase the potential for pollution.
- Encourage high quality development and uses in existing areas, with minimum adverse impact on natural and cultural resources and the rural character of the town.

2. Permanently protect water quality and quantity

- Keep a low density of development within the upper and middle reaches of the Shunock, Wyassup, and Green Fall watersheds.
- Monitor surface and stratified drift aquifer water quantity and quality with an ongoing and effective program in order to find and take corrective action before large-scale damage occurs.
- Strictly regulate and enforce the protective intent of the aquifer protection overlay area and wetlands buffer zone regulations.
- Prevent overdevelopment that might impact water quality from point or non-point pollution sources, or lessen stream flow or water levels in wildlife habitats.

3. Protect the town's natural and historic resources

- Preserve rich agricultural soils.
- Only allow high-density residential development, including affordable and senior housing, in areas where such development is specifically planned and designated to minimize adverse impact to the town's natural resources.
- Protect the habitat of important and threatened species.
- **Protect and preserve dark night skies.**
- Ensure that commercial and industrial development protects and compliments the town's natural resources and recreation plans.
- Avoid traffic congestion and overdevelopment that will adversely impact air and water quality, and the historic and rural character of the town.

4. Provide areas for active and passive recreation

- Establish and identify trails and pathways for public use and access to recreation areas.
- Make trail maps available to the public.
- Where appropriate, encourage open space be open to the public for passive recreational use.
- Establish public parks to maximize public enjoyment of natural and historic resources.
- Establish active recreation areas in a location, in size, and a number adequate for the needs of the town.

5. Improve town regulatory procedures and prioritize land acquisition

- Develop an acquisition priorities list determined by importance.
- Designate the town agency/agencies responsible for each action step.
- Develop, implement, and update acquisition methods and programs.

- Develop and implement programs and procedures for ongoing tracking of protected and potential conservation lands.
- Develop and implement programs for maintenance and management of conservation and recreation land, including inspection and enforcement.
- Educate residents on the benefits of open space donation and sale of development rights.

LAND ACQUISITION

Lands must be acquired when opportunity arises. Recommendations are made for the purpose of informing all concerned that the subject property is considered to be of special importance for meeting conservation and/or recreation goals. This list must necessarily grow and evolve as land use decisions are made, and further resources are identified.

Initial Acquisition Recommendations

- Acquire key conservation and recreation lands in the ‘Shunock River and Valley’ and ‘North Stonington Village’ focus areas. If these lands are not acquired now, the town may soon lose its ability to do so.
- Expand the Rocky Hollow Recreation/Safety Complex. There is a desirable state owned 15 acre parcel on the west side of Rocky Hollow Road suitable for recreation and an additional 85 acres of state-owned land on the east side of Rocky Hollow Road adjacent to the eight acres that was acquired from the state for a town safety complex. The additional lands would provide the town with a centralized location with enough acreage to meet the town’s recreation and municipal facilities needs for years to come.
- Help the state acquire land on the northwest end of Assekong Swamp as a means of acquiring the state’s Rocky Hollow lands in trade. The state would achieve considerable added protection to the Assekong Wildlife Area, substantially increase both the area available for hunting and the protection to Assekong Brook, Swamp, and wetlands.
- Acquire Park Pond and available adjacent lands for a public park, nature preserve, and state historical heritage site within the Village National Register District. This is a unique conservation opportunity for the town. It is considered a high priority because of the urgent need for management, preservation, and conservation at the site.
- Acquire available conservation land in the Spaulding Pond - Bell Cedar Swamp focus area in order to protect: the rich biodiversity and many species of special concern; the special habitat that includes Bell Cedar Swamp and Spaulding Pond; and the several brooks, wetlands, and adjacent farmlands. This site will need special conservation and preservation efforts because its viability depends on good water quality and quantity, and adequate conservation management.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

North Stonington is a small town rich with natural resources and cultural history. The town retains a great sense of place, exhibited in the diversity of its flora and fauna, its working farms, and the many historic buildings, structures and cemeteries throughout town. Rural living is important to every resident, from the farmer who works land that has been in his family for generations, to the ex-urbanite who is embraced by the green landscape every time he steps out of his new house. It is available to the weekend fisherman pulling trout out of the river, the gardener with her hands in the soil, the hiker trekking through the woods, the star gazer viewing the nighttime sky, and the horseman enjoying the shade of a tree-lined road.

This dedication to preserving a rural way of life has left North Stonington with an abundance of natural resources not available to more developed towns. With Connecticut's food supply for a major crisis reported as not lasting more than a day and a half, and New London County cited as having one of the poorest levels of food security in the state, the town is positioned to be a regional food and water resource of major importance. Large commercial development in abutting towns and potential large developments within the town raise the importance of good planning and implementation, both to preserve the quality of life residents hold dear and to provide regional sustainability and security.

During the development of the town's 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development (PCD) the town contracted the Conway School of Landscape Design to develop a draft Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands (PCRL). The 2003 PCD recommended that a Conservation Commission be established and tasked with finishing the PCRL. The Conservation Commission was established in November 2003. In January 2008 they delivered a report on the PCRL to the Planning and Zoning Commission, for final revision and review.

The primary purpose of the PCRL is to provide the town with a clear set of objectives and priorities for conservation and recreation. Good conservation is not merely a matter of acquiring and preserving land. It must also come from well thought out public policies in virtually every aspect of government, and conscientious decision-making by private citizens.

2.0 GENERAL GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 MAINTAIN RURAL CHARACTER

1. Support both traditional and specialty farming (whether large or small scale), raising of crops, and animal husbandry. Consider establishing an Agricultural Commission. The town should be proactive in helping to obtain available grants, subsidies, tax relief, sale of development rights, and other helpful programs to maintain these activities. The town needs to invest in its rural future if it is to remain rural.
2. Keep traffic and other detrimental effects of development away from working farms.
3. Allow active farms to sell their crops retail and to have low profile signage along roads as needed.
4. Encourage the (re)establishment of small farms and the lease of small farm acreage by larger farms. (A state program could be created that mirrors the state forest program: instead of harvesting trees, the state could lease small farmland holdings for active farming. Towns wishing to participate could designate eligible lands. This program could help the state to achieve its open space goals while helping the town to provide economic development from farming and maintain its rural character.)
5. Support the Grange and Fair whenever possible. The North Stonington Agricultural Fair and the Grange support agricultural activities that are positive economic and recreational contributions to the town.
6. Expand Tax Abatement Opportunities. Adopt an open space ordinance under the provision of PA490 that extends tax relief to specifically designated lands important to the town's conservation and agricultural goals not already covered by PA490 or the former 10 Mill Law of 1913 (and revised in 1963).
7. Support rural-sensitive safety improvements to the existing Route 2. Oppose conversion to a four-lane highway. A four-lane Route 2 would adversely impact natural resources and town conservation efforts.
8. Encourage rural road design. Site design should fit landforms. Roads should not excessively disturb the land. Prohibit excessive width, excessive impervious coverage, and excessive excavation.
9. Encourage expansion of the Village Protection Overlay District and the North Stonington Village National Register of Historic Places district to include and buffer historic features associated with the village.
10. Promote businesses that contribute to the rural character of the town.

2.2 PERMANENTLY PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

1. Allow no increase in the size of the existing commercial and industrial zones. Carefully regulate both site specific and overall build-out density of development within the present residential zones to prevent overuse or pollution of water and other natural resources. Buffer potential public water supply well-heads.
2. Develop and implement a program for monitoring pollution to surface and underground waters, and for maintaining an adequate quantity of water needed to protect species' habitat, conservation areas, and recreation resources of the town.
3. Remap the aquifer protection area to best describe its actual boundaries.
4. Avoid sewers in all residential zones. Sewers in residential areas will lead to increased density destroying rural character and leading to pollution of surface and underground waters from increased non-point source pollution, and leakage and other failures of the sewer infrastructure and systems.

2.3 PROTECT THE TOWN'S NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

1. Discourage development on rich farmland soil. Site high-density zones and intensive uses elsewhere. Consider adopting Conservation Subdivision regulations.
2. Protect the habitat of threatened and important species. Species such as the Cardinal Flower, Canadian Warbler, and River Otter are indicative of a large biodiversity, however all these species require extensive habitats. Their preservation requires a combination of conservation land, environmentally sensitive development, and good land management practices from private citizens.
3. Protect and preserve dark night skies as one of the town's many natural, scenic, scientific and cultural resources. Zoning regulations should ensure the preservation of North Stonington's dark night skies through the reduction of light pollution for public and natural benefit, with thoughtful regard for security and visibility.
4. Designate the Shunock River and Valley and North Stonington Village focus areas as a corridor that is a central amenity of the community. This will help to focus town, state, and federal protection and conservation efforts.
5. Recognize the Green Falls River basin as an important resource.
6. Encourage properly managed lands in private ownership that are in harmony with the conservation and development goals of the town. Consider zoning incentives for large lot subdivision with significant acreage in preservation. Provide opportunities for private conservation such as sale or transfer of development rights.
7. Consider incentives for private conservation and environmentally sensitive site design.

8. Establish a state park or wildlife preserve at Lantern Hill and Lantern Hill Pond. This is a unique geologic feature and conservation opportunity that the tribe, town, and state should work on together.
9. Support energy conservation plans consistent with the rural character of the town.

2.4 PROVIDE APPROPRIATE AREAS FOR ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATION

1. Encourage multiple-use of conservation and recreation lands where additional uses do not interfere with the primary conservation or recreation purpose. Passive recreation is often compatible with conservation. Farming and conservation can be compatible. Active recreation and school uses are often compatible. The use of school facilities, subject to suitable policies and procedures, would be beneficial to residents.
2. Discourage having tracts of land recommended for recreation use being closed to the public by restrictions. Conversely, conservation lands open to the public should have appropriate protective restrictions.
3. Enlarge the Rocky Hollow recreation area by acquiring additional land from the state for an expanded and centralized town recreation facility. Town-owned open space with little or no conservation or recreational value could be offered to the state in trade.
4. Develop a significant network of trails and pathways that will provide the public with safe active and passive recreational opportunities, and provide connectivity to conservation and recreation lands. The town has an abundance of trails, pathways, pentways, ancient roads, unimproved roads, and rights of way that should be mapped to show public ownership, permitted public use, and public use by right. Trails and pathways for bicycle, hiking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, and alternative sport use should be developed as a major endeavor of the town. Trails can provide many recreational opportunities. When considering land for open space, trails should not automatically be passed over in favor of large tracts of land.
5. Develop pocket parks where land areas are identified that have exceptional opportunity for one or more uses for public recreation, preservation of natural, cultural, and historic features, and education. These may be town or state owned and managed in a way that will actively contribute to the quality of life in the town.
6. Seek input from residents and stakeholders to ensure parks and recreation areas serve the needs of the surrounding residents: ensure that areas will be used and that activities planned are in harmony with the existing neighborhood.

2.5 IMPROVE REGULATORY PROCEDURES AND PRIORITIZE LAND ACQUISITION AND USES

1. Make sure the duties and authority of the various boards and commissions dealing with conservation and recreation are clear and that they are given the financial and legal power to carry out their respective missions.

2. Provide a professional expert grants writer to secure grants to help implement the recommendations of this plan.
3. Focus conservation efforts and resources on parcels that have been specifically recommended for conservation, recreation, protection of natural and cultural resources and features, protection and development of water resources and water supply management, open space, farming or farm land conservation, or other similar reasons.
4. Develop policies and procedures that will ensure accuracy and completeness of the town records. Track and document all additions, deletions or status changes to open space and recreation lands.
5. Keep open space and land use maps up to date. In order to intelligently plan for conservation and recreation, maps should be continually updated in conjunction with the town's Geographic Information System (GIS) Coordinator. GIS maps can be cropped, enlarged, combined, and layered providing an invaluable tool for detail study, research, and presentation purposes.
6. Carefully consider conservation easements held by the town, especially scattered small parcels, where enforcement will be difficult and potentially costly, and the public is excluded from use. While conservation easements can be a useful conservation tool between private citizens and willing land trusts, they are a tool the town should use with discretion. Land trusts are set up to manage property as the town has limited resources for this purpose.
7. Recognize that acquisition and management can sometimes be best achieved through partnerships with other governmental or private agencies. The town should be prepared to enter into such partnerships when appropriate.

3.0 BACKGROUND

The majority of land in North Stonington is as yet undeveloped. Open fields, mixed deciduous woodlands, wetlands, and swamps constitute the majority of the land area of the town. The majority of soils are stony with generally good drainage. The topography and geology have supported agriculture, milling, and limited mining activities.

The town is fortunate to have undeveloped areas of significant size that can substantially expand existing protected areas or help to provide a connective corridor for wildlife or recreation. The goal of the State of Connecticut is to preserve 21% of the land in the state as open space by the year 2023. This statewide goal can bring state help and financial support to a town that is proactive in acquiring conservation lands.

3.1 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Water

North Stonington has abundant water bodies including large lakes, and an extensive network of ponds, streams, and wetlands. These water bodies provide significant quantity and quality of wildlife habitat. The town's primary drinking water source is a major stratified drift aquifer. The health and ecological functions of the town's water bodies are a most critical aspect of the town's physical, economic, and cultural wellbeing.

The Pawcatuck River is the largest river in North Stonington, forming the town's southeast border with Rhode Island. It receives, directly or indirectly, approximately two-thirds of the town's water drainage.

Wetlands are spread through every region of the town and affect all major land use plans. Laws are enacted to protect wetland areas because their ecological function is critical to all life. Wetlands provide overflow areas during flooding, water retention areas during times of heavy precipitation, and water reserves during times of drought.

North Stonington has six lakes and ponds with state owned boat launches on five of them. Water flow through the lakes is minimal. Residential development is attracted to the lakes making them especially vulnerable to ecological damage from the effects of overdevelopment within their basins.

There are eight water sub-basins mostly or partly within the town boundaries with another four barely entering. The Shunock and Wyassup sub-basins are the largest and encompass more than 60% of the town's land area. The interconnectedness of the sub-basins underscores the need for protection by all towns that share water resources in the region.

Several municipalities in Southeastern Connecticut, including North Stonington, recently participated in a comprehensive, stake-holder involved, planning process that culminated in the production of a Drinking Water Quality Management Plan. The participants recognized the need for a coordinated effort among the water supplier, the watershed communities, and the end users, to develop a common understanding of the valuable water resources the region possesses and to implement strategies to effectively manage and protect them in order to achieve long-term preservation of safe and sustainable public drinking water supplies.

Major stratified drift aquifers are located under 35% of the towns total land area. Nearly three-quarters of the town's residential population is served by private on-site wells. The Pawcatuck groundwater hydrologic system is a federally designated sole source aquifer due to its vital importance in supplying drinking water to the town and region for both present and future residential and economic development needs. It encompasses the Shunock, Wyassup, Pawcatuck, Ashaway and Green Falls sub regional drainage basins.

The region experienced drought conditions in the 1960's. Consequently the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) conducted extensive research and testing of several of the most important stratified drift aquifers in southeastern Connecticut to determine their capacity to produce drinking water for regional and local supply. The Pawcatuck/ Shunock aquifer was determined by the USGS to be a very important drinking water resource. It is currently being used by public water supply companies and municipalities to supply drinking water to parts of Rhode Island and Connecticut. The aquifer is of major importance to the town's and region's water supply needs and plans for economic growth. The State of Connecticut legislature has given North Stonington the right to distribute water from this aquifer.

The North Stonington Water Pollution Control Authority outlined a water quality test program in a plan approved by the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. It was adopted by the town through the year 2020.

Several potentially high yield public water supplies have been identified by the USGS. The town of North Stonington has been given authority by the state legislature to be the distributor of drinking water to new service areas of the town. Both the Regional Planning Commission of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments and the Governor's Commission for the Economic Diversification of Southeastern Connecticut have stressed the importance of these water supplies for the future of the region.

Wildlife and Vegetation

The town's topography and low human population promotes wildlife habitat. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection monitors and records species diversity and the location of sensitive ecological communities within the town. Natural Diversity Database sites are areas of habitat that the state feels should receive special attention. Thirty-five biodiversity locations are identified in the town with several significant concentrations. Both aquatic and surface vegetation in those sensitive areas, as well sensitive fauna, should be adequately protected. Invasive aquatic wetland and upland species are gaining a foothold and the need for their management has been identified.

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection inventories and manages the forest and wildlife resources at the Pachaug State Forest and the Assekong Wildlife Management Area. The Fisheries Division is especially interested in North Stonington's coldwater fish population in the Shunock River, a state-designated and managed wild trout stream.

Approximately 70% of the town is forested. Forest cover not only provides forest resources and habitat, it has also been directly connected to water quality. State forest and wildlife management areas in North Stonington provide the majority of protected vegetative cover within the town. Lands now classified as forest land for tax relief purposes provide some temporarily protected forest cover, although timber can be harvested.

Many land areas have several conservation and recreation attributes such as where forest cover is combined with biodiversity sites, significant water and cultural features, and significant habitat for fish and wildlife. Conservation areas can also provide intangible amenities to residents, such as peace and quiet, dark night skies, and privacy.

Historic Sites

Historic sites and resources provide a major contribution to the rural character of the town and are attractive to high quality economic development. Historic sites are generally in close proximity to streams, lakes, and ponds. Many ponds and lakes themselves were reservoirs for the mills and other works that helped determine North Stonington's cultural heritage and the historic fabric of the community its residents now enjoy.

Historic and cultural features such as the more than 123 cemeteries, (said to be more than in any other town in the country), mill sites, stone walls, and old school houses are scattered throughout the town. The town's Cemetery Committee uses an 'adopt a cemetery' program to outsource upkeep of the cemeteries, many of which are ancient. The Old Plains Cemetery contains many rare examples of early stonecutter's art, which require special preservation efforts, and has some of the earliest marked stones in town. Homes of historic importance exist throughout town, and the village of North Stonington, formerly known as "Milltown" is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The town has many public trails and pathways that were created throughout its milling, woodland harvesting, and farming history. These connective and access features can provide future generations with many recreational opportunities where they can enjoy the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the town.

Farms

Probably the most defining rural characteristic of North Stonington is its surviving farms and the vestiges of past agricultural activity, such as stonewalls, that continue to define the landscape. Prime agricultural farmland covers 15.4% of the town. **(See Figure 1 "Soils Map" and Figure 2 "Parcels with land classifications of farm or forest")** Conservation of farmland and the promotion of agriculture are top priorities. Loss of this resource occurs piecemeal - without much notice and little or no chance for reversal if strong steps for conservation are not taken.

While dairy farming has declined over the years, specialty farming and boarding horses have increased. An alarming trend is the amount of land being encumbered by homeowners associations with deed restrictions against owning livestock, in contradiction to the rural objectives of the town.

North Stonington Connecticut



SOILS MAP

Map Description

This Map displays Assessor Parcels and Soils as Identified by the Connecticut DEP. The Soils are from the New London County Soils shapefile available on the Connecticut DEP Website, Dated 2007, clipped with the town boundary.

Parcel Lines To
10/1/2008

Legend

 Parcel Lines

DEP Soils

 All areas are prime farmland

 Farmland of statewide importance

Map Date: 4/9/2009

Notes

THIS MAP IS PREPARED FOR THE INVENTORY OF REAL PROPERTY FOUND WITHIN THESE JURISDICTIONS AND IS COMPILED FROM RECORDED DEEDS, PLATS, AND OTHER PUBLIC RECORDS AND DATA. USERS OF THE MAP ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT THE AFOREMENTIONED PUBLIC PRIMARY INFORMATION SOURCES SHOULD BE CONSULTED FOR VERIFICATION OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS MAP. THE TOWNS AND THE MAPPING COMPANIES ASSUME NO LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS MAP. HORIZONTAL DATUM BASED ON THE CONNECTICUT STATE PLANE COORDINATE SYSTEM, NAD83

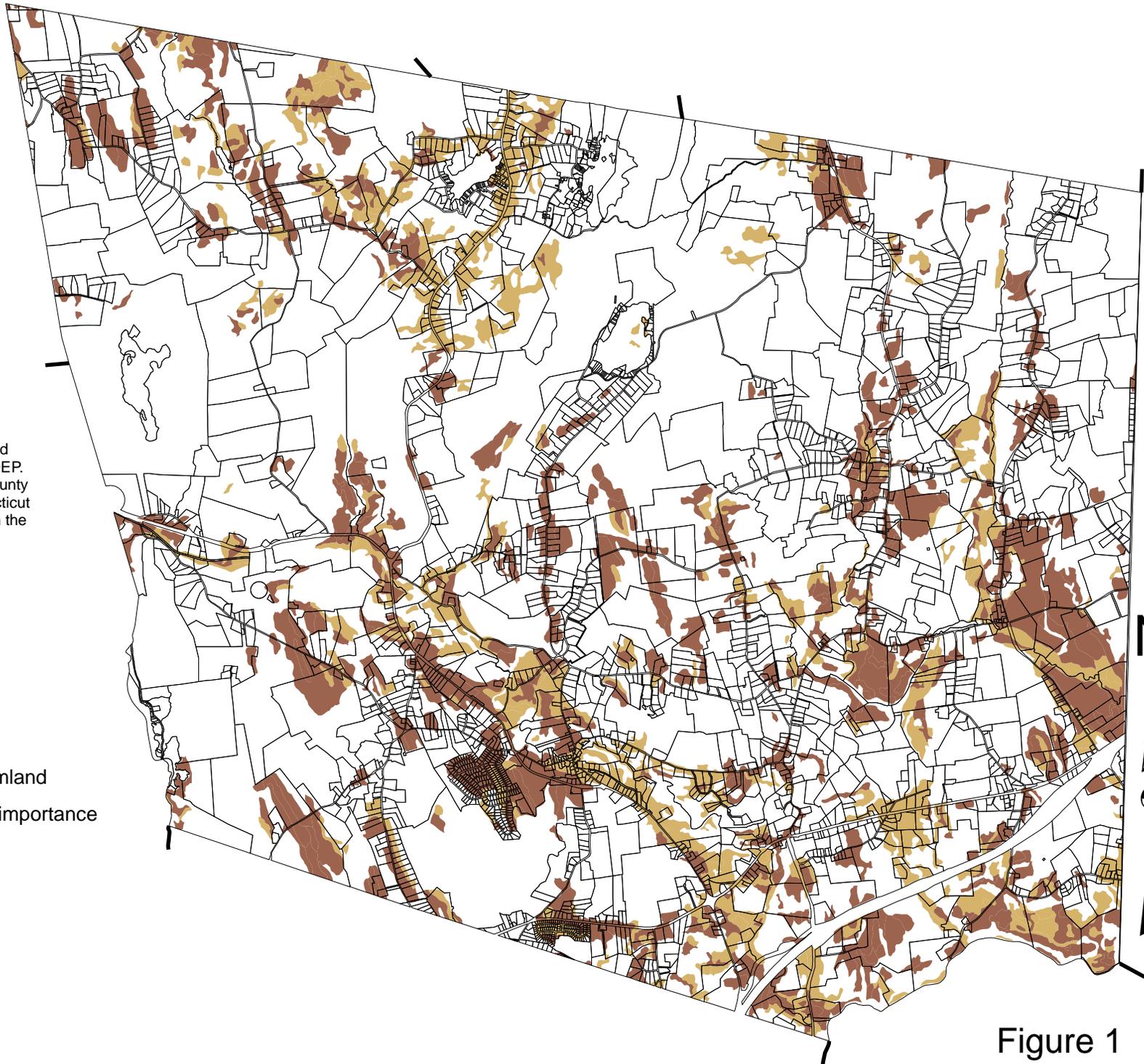


Figure 1

North Stonington Connecticut



PARCELS WITH LAND CLASSIFICATIONS OF FARM OR FOREST

This map was produced with data extracted from the Assessor's database on 12-18-2008.

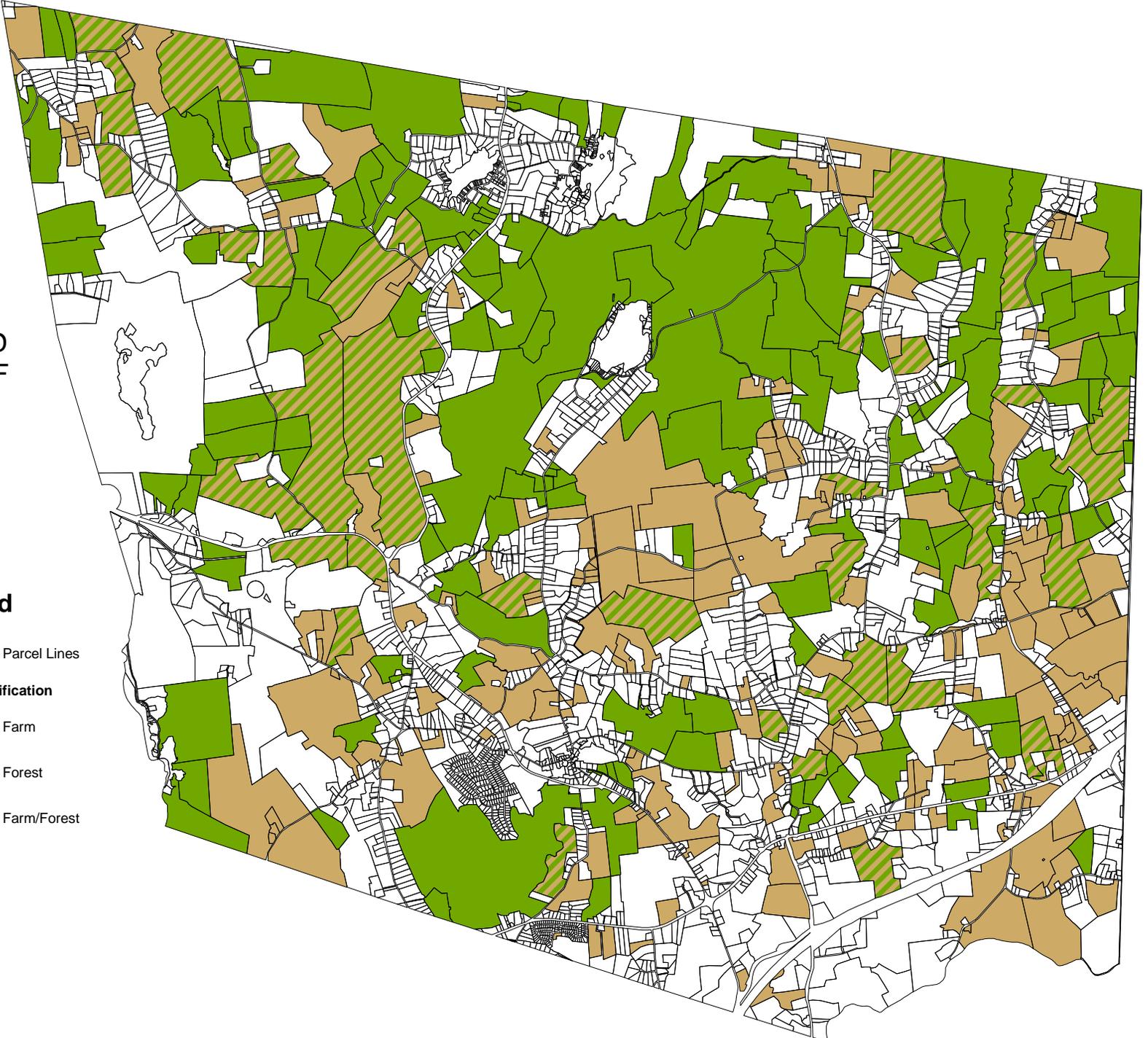
Parcel Lines To 10/1/2008

The Assessment Categories Searched For Are The Following:

Forest	Farm
6010	7100
6020	7110
6100	7120
9620	7130
	7131
	7132
	7133
	7140
	7150
	7160
	7170
	7180
	7190

Legend

	Parcel Lines
Land Classification	
	Farm
	Forest
	Farm/Forest



Map Date: 4/9/2009

Notes

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Figure 2

Dark Night Skies

As cities and towns all across the nation begin to recognize the beauty and realize the importance of a dark night sky, more and more regulations are being written to ensure their protection as an important resource. Visitors and residents North Stonington are fortunate to still be able enjoy this valuable resource that has been an integral part of human civilization since its beginning.

Light pollution created by improper lighting fixtures which direct light up into the sky instead of down toward the ground, creates a hazy blanket of light in the atmosphere which interferes with star-gazing as this artificial brightness causes the night sky to fade. Light pollution not only reduces visibility at night, it wastes energy, and disturbs wildlife that may depend on the natural cycle of darkness and light to survive.

Lighting that is energy efficient and night sky friendly may ultimately provide greater safety and security as all the light is cast downward over a designated area rather than some being scattered in other directions. The scientific, environmental, cultural and aesthetic aspects of preserving the night skies all must be taken into consideration as this is a resource that affects us in many ways, some of which are not yet fully understood.

3.2 OUTDOOR RECREATION

Passive recreational activities are non-motorized and do not significantly alter the natural aspects of the landscape. Passive recreation opportunities on public or private lands are abundant and a major economic resource of the town, improving the overall quality of life for residents. Conservation lands are generally used for passive recreation, unless sensitive resources preclude any public use. The extensive trail system in Pachaug State Forest and other nature preserves in town are in constant use by the public.

Active recreation opportunities involve a more intense use of the land that may somewhat alter the landscape but should not destroy its value. Conflicts frequently arise when an inappropriate location is chosen for active recreation. The need for additional public active recreational lands is recognized.

3.3 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Pachaug State Forest (approximately 3,082 acres) and the Assekonk Wildlife Management Area (634 acres) are managed by the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Various clubs and organizations manage large tracts of land generally serving as open

space and used for passive recreation, hunting, fishing, camping, or sporting activities, and generally open to the public by membership, fee, or permission. As custodians of these land areas, the owners generally manage the flora, fauna, and water resources.

Various land trusts own and manage conservation lands. These lands are generally open to the public for passive recreational use and enjoyment of nature. Private owners usually manage their land in harmony with good conservation practices. The town also holds tracts of land where conservation and recreation are encouraged.

The Purchasing of Development rights (PDR) is an effective means of preventing the loss of prime agricultural lands and preventing the fragmentation of open space. PDR programs are voluntary, public-private partnerships that help realize the permanent protection of lands that in many ways define the community. Under the Connecticut Farmland Protection Program, five of North Stonington's farms have sold their development rights to the state, resulting in the preservation of 381 acres of farmland. These parcels are managed privately by the owners.

3.4 GREENWAYS

Greenways are corridors that provide connectivity for wildlife and human benefit. They are often critical to species survival. They protect water resources and watersheds, thus ensuring good water quality and quantity now and in the future. Greenways can be defined by their functions and the areas they link. They may be natural - used only by wildlife, or have trails and roads for public access and recreational enjoyment of natural and historic resources. Historic trails and ancient pathways are a non-intrusive way of linking different areas.

State owned Pachaug State Forest and Assekonk Wildlife Management Area, town-owned lands, land trust and other non-profit organizations, provide a nucleus of open space that could be interconnected through a network of greenways and/or wildlife corridors.

4.0 MAPPING

Good mapping is vital to understanding where natural and cultural resources occur on the ground. Mapping is a fluid process that must be continually updated as resources are identified, and land uses change. The town's Geographic Information System enables the creation of maps with information that can be compared and contrasted for planning purposes. Attached is a series of maps on existing land uses (See **Figure 3 "Conservation Commission Land Use Map"**), natural and historic features, and conservation areas (See **Figure 4 "Conservation Commission Planning Resource Map"**).

In order to recommend logical areas for future conservation, recreation, and greenways, the Conservation Commission is creating maps with "focus areas". A focus area is a section of a map that shows where significant concentrations of natural, recreational, and/or historic resources and features occur that are important to the town, where conservation and or recreation goals can be unified for planning and implementation purposes. Identifying resources requires extensive research and community outreach.

The Conservation Commission has begun to research fourteen preliminary focus areas, each defined by common attributes. General features, such Clark's Falls with its farmland, and the Shunock River and Valley with its water resources, will be mapped with a layer of specific features - farmland soils, historic buildings, wildlife habitats and the like. As new features are identified they can be added to the focus area.

4.1 PRELIMINARY FOCUS AREAS

(Roman numerals correspond to the attached map – See **Figure 5 "Conservation Commission Focus Areas"**)

I. Northwest Farms

Defining Features: Farms - High Acres, Flood Reed, Banker, Bison Brook and others.

Recreation: YMCA camp, Westbrook Fishing Club.

Other Features of Note: Prentice Mountain, Barnes Hill. Limestone mine, lime kiln, stucco cellar, grave of North Stonington gravestone carver.

II. Central Lakes

Defining Features: Lakes and wildlife - Wyassup, Billings, and Blue Lake, and the numerous Natural Resource Diversity areas where species of concern and endangered species are found.

Recreation: water sports, fishing, Camp Wightman church camp, and State boat launches, Pachaug State Forest

Other Features of Note: Bears Den (possible prospect hole for magnetic iron), Potholes on Ricktown Mountain, Ashwillet.

III. Northeast

Defining Features: Scenic areas - Palmer farm, First Baptist Church, Pendleton Hill, Legendwood Road.

Recreation: Groton Sportsmen's Club.

Other Features of Note: Puckhuninkonnuck Rock, site of first Baptist church, ancient stone bridges, colonial milestones.

IV. Green Falls River Corridor

Defining Feature: Green Falls River

Other Features of Note: large farms and farmland areas including Palmer and Bill farms, historic villages, grist mill, mill ponds, mill seats of Laurel Glen and Clarks Falls, important drinking water aquifers.

V. Central Agricultural

Defining Feature: Working farms - Stewart Hill, Miner's, Jonathan Edwards's winery and vineyards, Cool Breeze, Pickwick.

Other Features of Note: Horse Gravestone, mill seats.

VI. Lake of Isles

Defining Features: Lakes and Hills - Swantown Hill, Barnes Hill, Lake of Isles.

Recreation: Golf courses, boat launch.

Other Features of Note: Gold Mine, Bentley Place well and milk cellar, false lime kiln.

VII. Lantern Hill

Defining Features: Hills - Lantern and Long Hill, Wintechog Hill.

Recreation: Lantern Hill hiking trail, boat launches, rock climbing.

Other Features of Note: Biodiversity areas, geology, high cliffs, silica mine, mill seats, Lantern Hill Pond, Long Pond, Bush Pond, Silex Pond, Lantern Hill railroad bed, silica transfer station, Old Stone Church ruins, Indian cemeteries, Indian Trading Post, Pequot Indian reservation, Brown, Miner, Denison farms.

VIII. North Stonington Village

Defining Features: Historic Village -18th, 19th structures, mill ponds, reservoirs, canals, dams, mill seats, artifacts, Old Plains Cemetery, historic register district

Recreation: Village Green, town recreation and picnic area, bicentennial trail

Other Features of Note: public water supply well head, Park Pond and cold springs fen wetlands, biodiversity, aquifer

IX. Assekonk

Defining Feature: Biodiversity - Assekonk Wildlife Management Area, White cedar groves. Assekonk Pond, Swamp, and Brook

Recreation: Hunting and nature study.

Other Features of Note: Assekonk dam and reservoir pond, town recreation area, historic parade grounds.

X. Shunock River and Valley

Defining Features: Central river corridor - aquifer, wetlands, biodiversity sites, potential high-yield water resources important to the region, aquatic communities, beaver meadows, bogs, dams, and lodges, state designated and managed cold water stream.

Recreation: Canoeing, kayaking, nature study, hiking and horseback riding, conservation lands open to public for passive recreation.

Other Features of Note: Many mill seats, dams, reservoir ponds and canals, Richardson mill site, historic and geologic features, glacial esker.

XI. Spaulding Pond and Bell Cedar Swamp

Defining Features: Amazingly rich site of concentrated biodiversity, rare white cedar swamp

Other Features of Note: Reservoir ponds and dams, iron works site, bog iron ore in red brook, standing historic grist mill, Break Neck ledges, aquifer, large farmland fields.

XII. Southeast Agricultural

Defining Features: Large expanses of prime farm soils and with working farms, Beriah Lewis farm

Other Features of Note: Pawcatuck River and Green Falls River, sole-source stratified drift aquifer, potential high yield drinking water well head sites and Level B aquifers.

XIII. Southwest Agricultural

Defining Feature: Wychwood Farm with large poultry production and fields in cultivation.

XIV. Eastern Agricultural

Defining Feature: Large expanses of prime farm soils and farmlands with working farms, Palmer farm and others.

Recreation: Avalonia's Yannatos Preserve

Other Features of Note: Farm village of Clarks Falls, gristmill, Green Falls River, aquifer.



CONSERVATION COMMISSION LAND USE MAP FIGURE 3

This series of maps has been prepared to aid ongoing research into the current uses and possible future utilization of land areas of the town. They include historical and cultural features. These maps correlate to the index of all open and other land areas, publicly or privately owned. The index provides information for continuing research on the proper use of such areas.

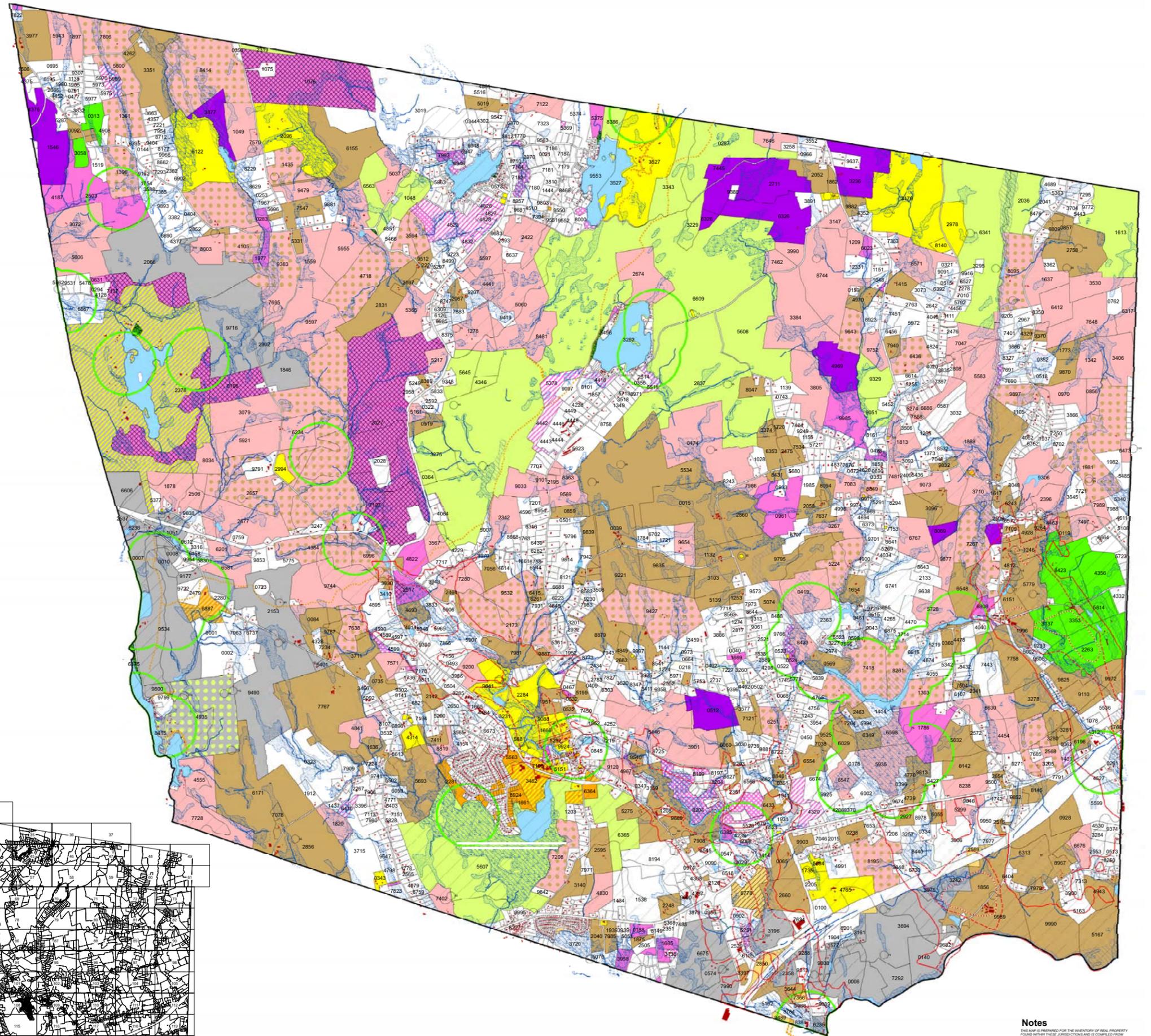
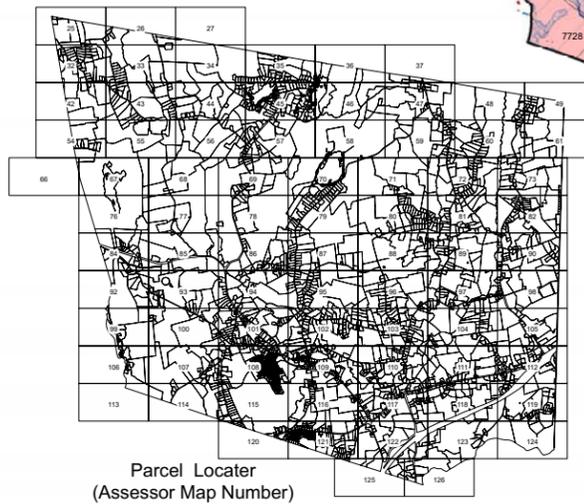
Legend

Features

- Parcel Boundary - If 4 Digit Lot Number Appears Lot >= 2 acres
- Streams
- DEP Water
- DEP Wetland Soils
- Wetland Grasses
- Swamps, Marshes, Wet Grasslands
- Assessor Structures 2002
- FEMA 100yr Flood Zone
- DEP Natural Diversity Database Area 06/2007
- Aquifer Protection Overlay
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - Aquifer boundary
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - Medium yield area boundary
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - High yield area boundary
- Trails
- Cemetery Location and Number

Parcel Category

- 1. Protected**
 - 1a Protected by conservation easement - Private
 - 1b Protected by dedicated open space fee title - Public
 - 1c1 Protection Pending - Full Parcel
 - 1c3 Protection Pending - Partial Parcel
 - 1d Protected Pauchaug & Assekong, Public
 - 1e Protected -Farm Development Rights held by CT, Private
- 3. Recreation**
 - 3a Recreation -Active Use - Town Owned/Leased, Public
 - 3b Recreation - Membership Clubs & Organizations
 - 3c Recreation - Mashantucket Golf Course, by fee or membership
 - 3d Recreation- DEP Boat Launches, Public
- 4. Tax Abated**
 - 4a Tax Abated by 100- 50 Yr. Program
 - 4b Tax Abated by PA 490- Forest Land 10 Year, Private
 - 4c Tax Abated by PA 490- Farm & Woods Land 10 Yr., Private
 - 4d Tax Abated -PA 490 Farm & Forest in Same Parcel 10 Yr., Private
- 5. Municipal, State DOT, and Public Utility**
 - 5a Municipal - Town Dev.
 - 5b Municipal - Town Undev.
 - 5c DOT Land/Easements
 - 5d Town of Westerly undeveloped land potential water supply
- 6. Unprotected**
 - 6a Unprotected - Mashantucket Tribe or Agent Owned, Private
 - 6b Unprotected - Reservation - State Owned, Private
 - 6c Uncategorized



Notes
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 UNDESIGNED TRAIL PARCELS ARE ASSIGNED TO HERE DONE SO BY DIRECTION OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION.

Revised 1-25-2008

North Stonington Connecticut



PLANNING RESOURCE MAP FIGURE 4

Legend

- Cemetery Location and Number
- Parcel Lines
- Zone Outline
- DEP Natural Biodiversity Database - 12/2007
- DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS SOLD
- Conservation Easements**
- Paperwork Completed
- Paperwork Pending
- USGS/SCWA Aquifer**
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - Aquifer boundary
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - Medium yield area boundary
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - High yield area boundary
- Assessor Water Features**
- Streams
- Rivers and Ponds
- DEP Soils**
- DEP Wetland Soils
- Parcels Flagged By Owner**
- AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY INC
- NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CT
- NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CT INC
- NORTH STONINGTON CITIZENS'
- OLDAHAVEN ASSOCIATES LLP
- NORTH STONINGTON AMBULANCE
- NO STONINGTON VOL FIRE CO INC
- TOWN OF NORTH STONINGTON
- STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Cemetery Location and Number
Per cemetery map and current field research

Parcel Lines
Current to 10/1/2007

Zone Outline
Per current Zoning Map. Zones R-60, R-40, O-R, I, H-C, CD, C

DEP Natural Biodiversity Database - 12/2007
Per DEP data available online at the DEP website

USGS/SCWA Aquifer
Per the 1970/1971 USGS SCWA maps.

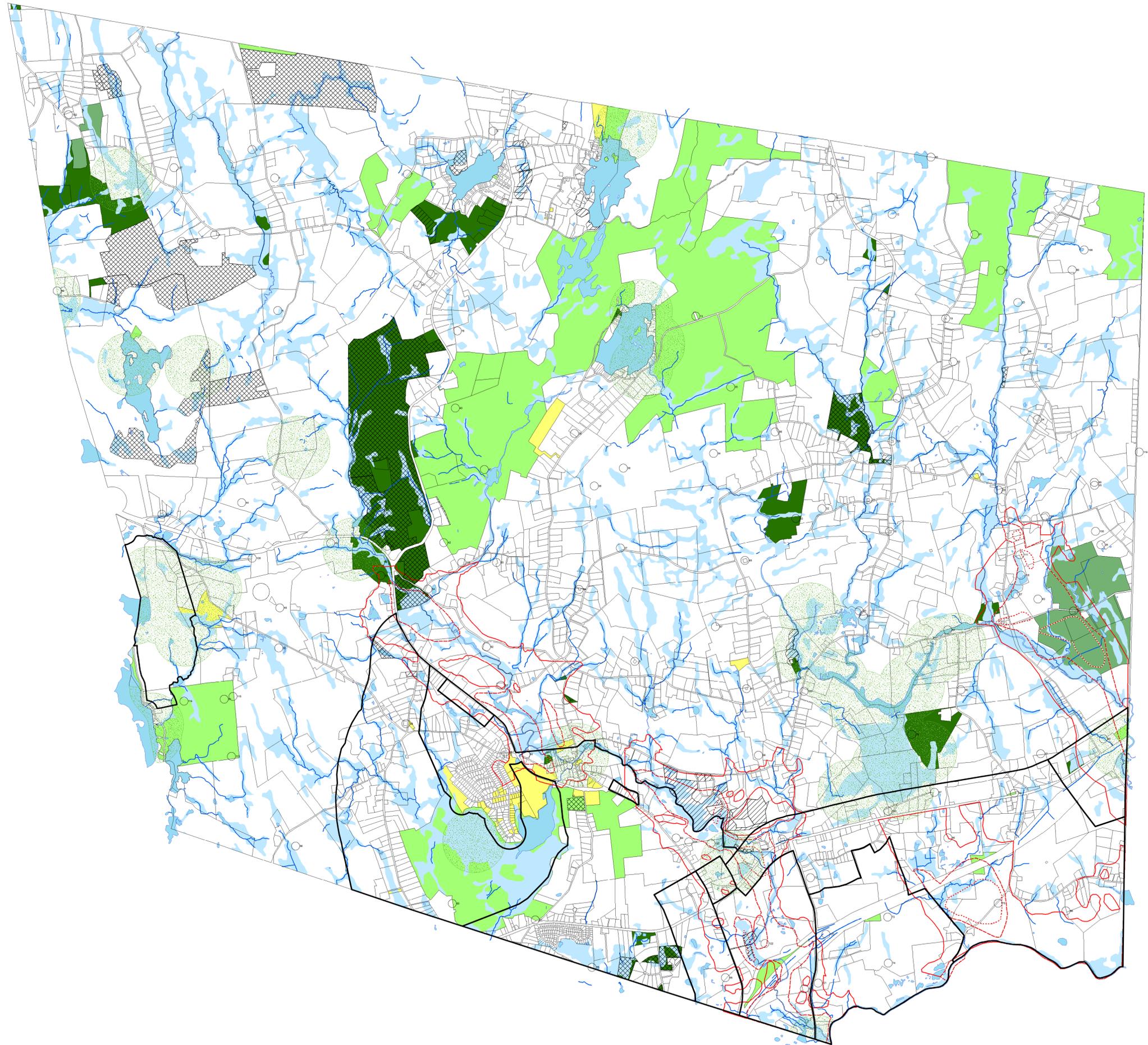
Assessor Water Features
Water features per the assessor's mapping.

DEP Soils - DEP Wetland Soils
Per the DEP Soils Shapefile available on the DEP website. Soils Highlighted are from category CTWET and are all soils Not Identified as "Water" or "Non-wetland soils".

Parcels Flagged By Owner
Per the owner information in the parcel shapefile dated 10/1/2007.

Notes

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
FOCUS AREAS
FIGURE 5**

This series of maps has been prepared to aid ongoing research into the current uses and possible future utilization of land areas of the town. They include historical and cultural features. These maps correlate to the index of all open and other land areas, publicly or privately owned. The index provides information for continuing research on the proper use of such areas.

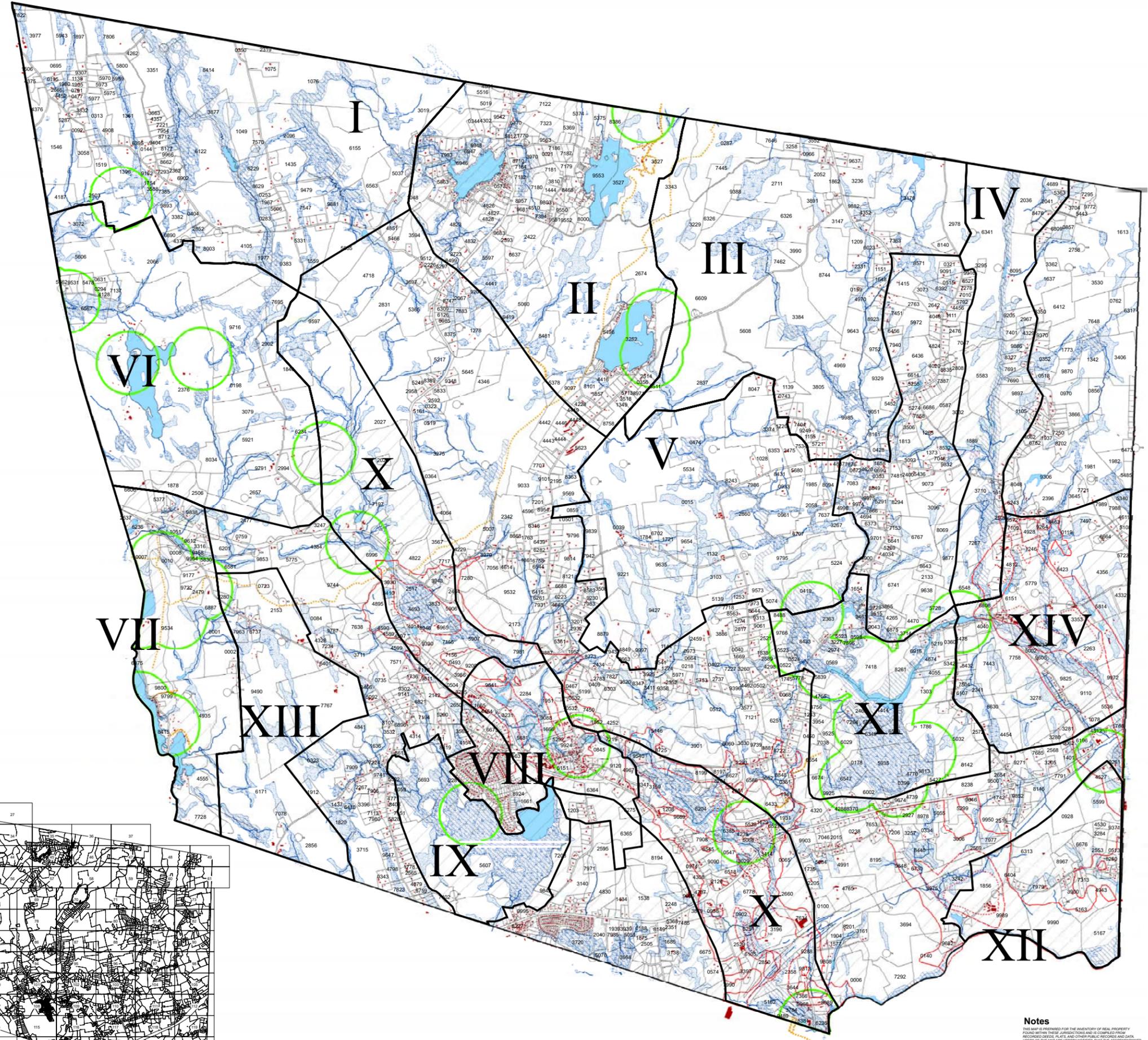
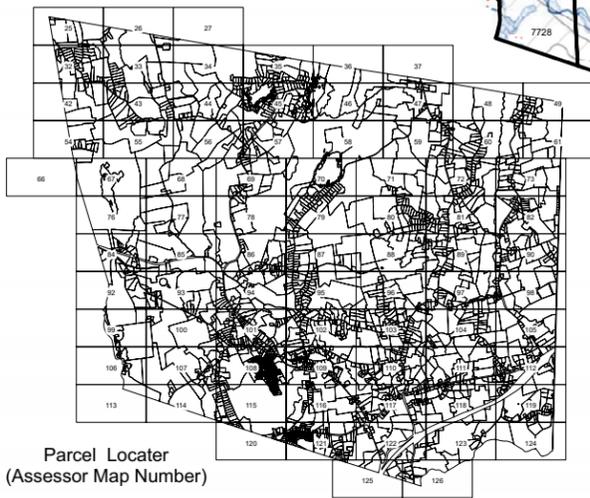
Legend

Focus Areas

- I. Northwest Viewscapes
- II. Central Lakes
- III. Northeast Viewscapes
- IV. Green Fall Corridor
- V. Central Agriculture
- VI. Lake of Isles
- VII. Lantern Hill
- VIII. North Stonington Village
- IX. Assekonk
- X. Shunock River and Valley
- XI. Spaulding Pond – Bell Cedar Swamp
- XII. Southeast Agriculture
- XIII. Southwest Agriculture
- XIV. Eastern Agriculture

Features

- Parcel Boundary - If 4 Digit Lot Number Appears Lot >= 2 acres
- Streams
- DEP Water
- DEP Wetland Soils
- Wetland Grasses
- Swamps, Marshes, Wet Grasslands
- Assessor Structures 2002
- FEMA 100yr Flood Zone
- DEP Natural Diversity Database Area 06/2007
- Aquifer Protection Overlay
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - Aquifer boundary
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - Medium yield area boundary
- USGS Aquifer 1970/1971 - High yield area boundary
- Trails
- Cemetery Location and Number



Notes
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Revised 1-25-2008

5.0 ACQUISITION RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations and mapping in this document are for the purpose of focusing the town's limited resources on the acquisition of land most appropriate to town goals, and are not meant in any way to discourage private land conservation efforts. Recommendations are made in two contexts: the first general in nature, and is town-wide providing long range goals for the town to work towards; and the second specific to particular parcels or resources whereby specific recommendations are offered to provide for immediate action as opportunities present themselves. No mathematical rating and ranking system can replace the accumulated wisdom and vision of the citizens of North Stonington.

Open space is protected to varying degrees by fee title to the land. Held by the town, state, and land trusts the land is dedicated in perpetuity to conservation and/or recreational uses by deeds and agreements filed in the land records of the town. Likewise, varying degrees of protection are provided by conservation agreements and the holding of development rights. (Although the degree of protection is considered high, changes can occur through extensive legislative action or judicial re-interpretation of terms.) Fee title offers one of the best ways to conserve large tracts of open space long term and provide substantial passive recreational opportunities. Requiring a certain percentage of land to be designated as open space in subdivisions is a tool for acquiring open space but may not provide useful land in every instance. Paying a fee in lieu of open space provides the town to acquire land it considers to be the best and of highest priority for conservation and recreational uses.

5.1 PROPOSED CONSERVATION LANDS

Bell Cedar Swamp qualifies as an important conservation protection site because of the rich biodiversity that has been identified. Acquisition by the state or land trust is recommended. Water quality and quantity are critical attributes of this area. Bell Cedar Swamp requires special attention and protection as it offers scarce natural diversity and a unique environment seldom available to the public to enjoy or study.

Park Pond qualifies as an important conservation site because of its unique cold-water aquatic habitats for threatened and state-designated important species. It could serve as a public park for nature study and passive recreation within the North Stonington Village National Historic Register District that would be in walking distance from the village center. Park Pond provides a

refuge for a variety of species during hot dry periods, during floods, and during cold winters. The site is also a treasure of the milling heritage of the town that could be restored and preserved. The mill site may qualify as a state heritage site, which could offer a level of protection.

5.2 PROPOSED WATER MANAGEMENT LANDS

Protection of the streams, wetlands, and headwater ponds and lakes that overlie and recharge aquifers is essential for protecting the quantity and quality of the town's drinking water over the long term. The drinking water resources in the Shunock, Green Fall, Wyassup, and Pawcatuck focus areas require maximum conservation of open lands and controlled development.

The Town of North Stonington should acquire fee title to those sites where public water supply wellheads could be developed or maintained. The state has given the town exclusive rights to distribute drinking water into new areas that would include important opportunities for commercial and industrial development. The availability of drinking water in the aquifer is large but limited. The town should not only acquire the recommended sites, it should also apply to the state for diversion permits to withdraw the drinking water from the aquifer that will serve the planned future needs of the town.

There is space within the approximately 8 acre, town owned parcel (# 6364) on Rocky Hollow Road, to house garage maintenance facilities with a separate access and adequate separation from the other town facilities. The town garage and maintenance department does not have enough land at its present site on Wyassup Road. It is located on the aquifer and is therefore inappropriate for a garage.

The land area known as the Hewitt Property (parcels #2284, 9641, and the former Dew Drop Inn restaurant) were acquired by the town in 2008. A committee has been formed to consider ways of using the property. A priority for use of this land should include protection for Shunock River water quality and quantity, and for the public water supply wellheads that supply Kingswood/Meadow Wood, the schools, and parts of the village. Recreation uses might include horseback riding activities. Uses that would support agriculture in town, such as a farmer's market or a teaching farm should be explored.

5.3 PROPOSED RECREATION LANDS

The town needs several parks that can provide outdoor public gathering places for residents to enjoy. Several possibilities exist including an expanded Rocky Hollow recreation area, the old parade grounds, and town owned lots in Kingswood/Meadow Wood.

The present town Rocky Hollow Recreation Area provides a nucleus for centralizing playing fields and expanding active recreation lands and facilities. An approximately 15-acre area (within Parcel #5607) for expanding facilities is adjacent to the approximately 9-acre area (also within parcel #5607) of state-owned land that is presently leased by the town for recreation. The site connects with the school recreational fields and facilities by way of a footbridge across Assekonk Pond. Acquisition from the state by the town of the 15-acre site is considered high priority. In exchange for the potentially beneficial 15 acre area (“B” on Map below), the town-owned 18 acre parcel (#2281)(“A” on Map below) at the edge of Assekonk Swamp that is of little use to the town but of value to the state, could be offered to the state. (See Figure 6)

The town should take the initiative to encourage the state as a top priority to acquire the 115-acre open parcel (# 5693) at the head of Assekonk swamp. The state would expand its wildlife management area by approximately 20% and add to the important protected Assekonk wetlands. The state would then be in a more favorable position to sell to, or swap with the town, giving the town the 85-acre parcel (#6365) - **Assekonk Swamp East**- for its long term municipal facilities expansion. This is considered a high priority acquisition and exchange opportunity because the parcel at the head of Assekonk Swamp could be lost to housing development at any time, and the town needs to develop a plan for its long-range municipal and recreational needs. (See Figure 6)

The old Parade Grounds owned by the town, at the edge of Meadow Wood, could provide fields for local events with access to trails around the Assekonk Wildlife area, and connect to town recreational facilities. (See Figure 6)

North Stonington Connecticut



ASSEKONK SWAMP LAND TRADE AND SUGGESTED STATE LAND PURCHASE BY NORTH STONINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Parcel Lines To
10/1/2008

Legend

- Structures - 2004
- Accessway
- Town Property
- State Assekonk Swamp Wildlife Mgt Area
- Property Suggested for State Purchase
- Property Suggested for Land Trade

Map Date: 4/9/2009

Notes

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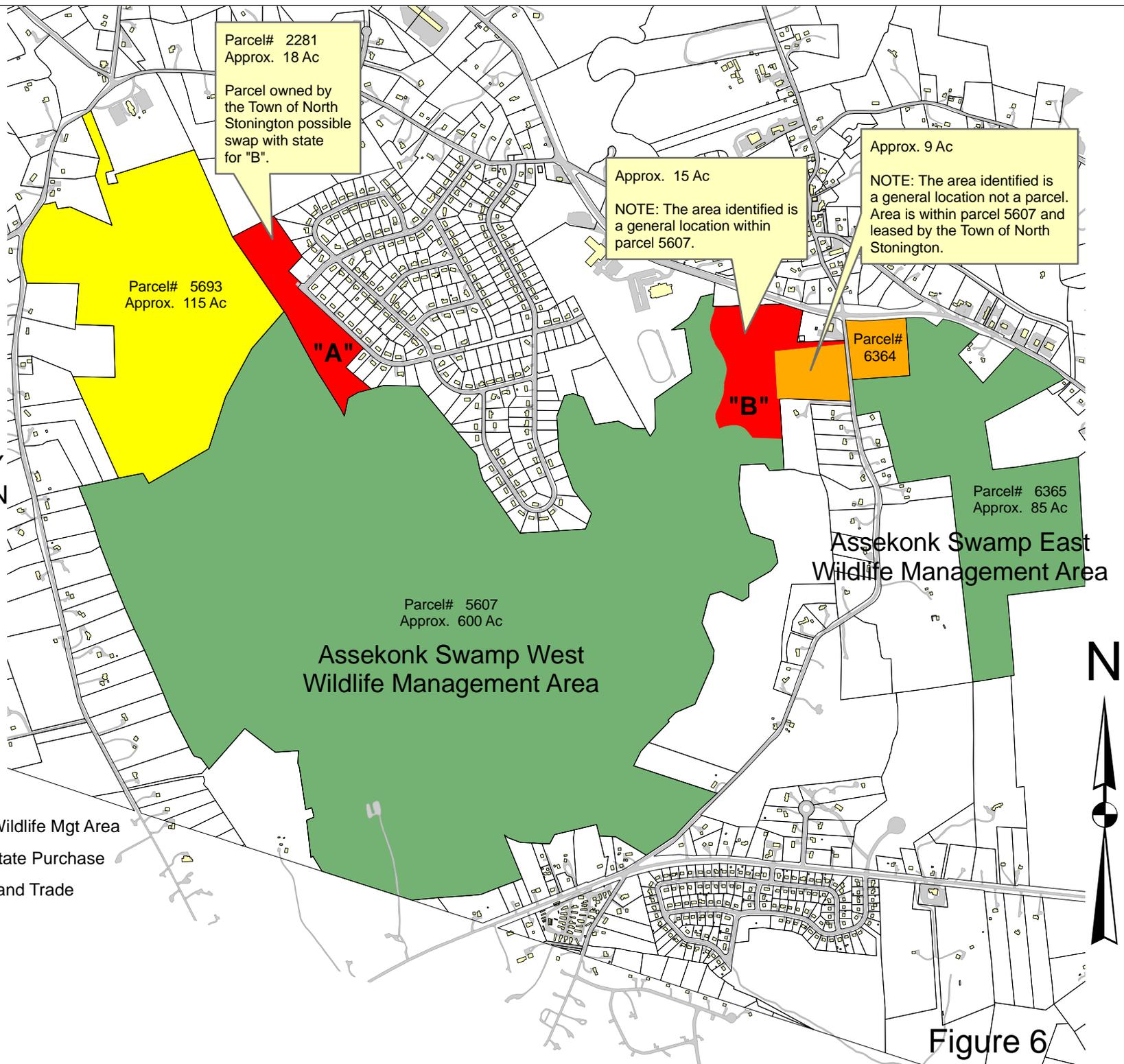


Figure 6

Pachaug State Forest and Assekunk Wildlife Management Area provide extensive opportunities for passive recreation. The state has a goal of expanding its ownership of open lands state wide. This provides North Stonington with the opportunity to add state-owned open space that is available to the public for state allowed active and passive recreational purposes. The town can recommend to the state land areas for state acquisition that would contribute to the town's plans.

Lantern Hill owned by the Mashantucket Tribal Nation provides an opportunity for a park should the tribe be willing to allow the land to be used for that purpose. The 1987 Regional Plan of Development slated Lantern Hill for a state park. Lantern Hill provides a wonderful opportunity for hiking, geologic and nature study, and spectacular views.

A town ice-skating pond should be re-established at the town owned pond next to the service station at Route 2 and Mystic Road where a town managed skating pond with shelter and warming pit was once enjoyed by many townspeople. The pond is shallow enough for safety and the nearby fire company could flood the ice to restore the surface as needed.

A cluster of undeveloped lots owned by the town near the high ground in the Kingswood subdivision could provide the residents in that area with a beautiful, well-shaded picnic ground and community gathering-place.

Passive recreation lands can be expanded through the state's, town's, or land trusts' acquisition of fee title tracts rather than through the acquisition of conservation easements on private land that would be closed to the public. Ecologically sensitive areas and species can be best protected under trust management. These tracts can provide connective corridors and trails for enhancing town-wide conservation and recreational opportunities.

6.0 MANAGEMENT

The following entities could hold and manage conservation lands: North Stonington's several active land trusts; the state; the town; and possibly even the Conservation Commission in the future, if designated to do so by appropriate authorities.

The land trusts active in town are the world wide The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the regional Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC), and the local North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance (NSCLA). Land trusts encourage interested landowners to donate or sell land, conservation easements, and/or development rights to them.

Effective management of the town's resources is largely dependent on the ability and willingness of the townspeople and elected officials to understand the value in what they have and to work diligently to realize their stated goals in this and in other plans. In other words, conservation takes a strong management commitment. Short sightedness on the part of citizens, elected officials and other stake holders will be costly in the long-term with respect to preserving the kind of environment we desire, our quality of life, and the economic viability of North Stonington.

7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Planning and Zoning Commission and Conservation Commission would like to thank Conservation Commissioners Richard Blogett and Bob Fleury, resident volunteer Nita Kincaid, Planning and Zoning Commission member Vilma Gregoropoulos and GIS Coordinator Marc Tate for their invaluable assistance with research and mapping.

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 36. North Stonington Land Use Library documents (See index list dated Sept. 1, 2002)
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 41. Contaminated Sediment Remediation Guidance for Hazardous Waste Sites, c.2004, U.S. EPA
-

8.0 GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

Conservation Restriction: a limitation, whether or not stated in the form of a restriction, easement, covenant or condition, in any deed, will or other instrument executed by or on behalf of the owner of the land described therein, including, but not limited to, the state or any political subdivision of the state, or in any order of taking such land whose purpose is to retain land or water areas predominately in their natural, scenic or open condition or in agricultural, farming, forest or open space use, in perpetuity.

Farm Land: any tract or tracts of land, including woodland and wasteland, constituting a farm unit. Ref: Sec. 12-107b(1) Connecticut General Statutes (CGS).

Forest Land: any tract or tracts of land aggregating twenty-five acres or more in area bearing tree growth that conforms to the forest stocking, distribution and condition standards established by the State Forester.... Ref. Sec. 12-107b(2) CGS.

Focus Area: an area with a concentration of significant natural, recreational, and or historic resources and features that are important to the town where conservation and or recreation goals can be unified for planning and implementation purposes.

Greenway: a conservation and or recreation corridor connecting open space parcels for people and wildlife.

PA 490: Since 1963, Public Act 490 provides for assessment of farm, forest, and open space land on the basis of its current use rather than market value. “Use value” is based on what the land is actually used for and not what it might potentially be worth on the market. Use value taxation is justified because the land requires little, if any, support from local government revenues (Source: NEMO Open Space Fact Sheet T6).

Open Space: any area of land, including forest land, land designated as wetland under section 22a030 and not excluding farm land, the preservation or restriction of the use of which would (A) maintain and enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources, (B) protect natural streams or water supply, (C) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes, (D) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open spaces, (E) enhance public recreation opportunities, (F) preserve historic sites, or (G) promote orderly urban or suburban development. Ref: Sec. 12-107b(3). CGS [*Please recognize that the definition for Open Space in a plan such as the PCRL - which identifies potential areas for consideration, must necessarily differ from the town’s Zoning Regulations where Open Space is narrowly defined as protected land. Each is correct within its different context.*]

Overlay Area: designated area or district, delineated by an overlay on the Zoning Map which is of such historical or environmental importance that it commands extraordinary measures for its protection from any activity or plan deemed detrimental to the underlying basis of its character (Reference: P&Z Regulations, definitions 1/09).

Parcel (Lot): an area or parcel of land, in the same ownership, designated and recorded in the land records of the Town by its owner as a separate lot (Reference: P&Z Regulations, definitions 1/09).

Passive recreation: Non-motorized recreational activities that leave the land essentially in its natural state.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): Voluntary, legal agreements that allow owners of land meeting certain criteria to sell the right to develop their property to a town or state government, or to a nonprofi organization. A conservation easement is then placed on the land and the agreement is recorded on the title to limit the future use of the land to agriculture or other open space uses (Source: EPA Smart Growth Policies Glossary).

Streambelts: The natural area along rivers, streams, wetland drainage creeks, and intermittent brooks.

Wetlands: land, including submerged land, as defined in Sect 2.1 (Conservation Commission) of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations of the Town of North Stonington, that are regulated pursuant to Section 22a-28 through 22a-35 inclusive of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended; which consist of any of the soil types designated as poorly drained, very poorly drained, alluvial and flood plain by the National Cooperative Soils Survey, as it may be amended from time to time, of the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Such areas may include filled, graded or excavated sites, which possess an aquatic (saturated) soil moisture regime as defined by the USDA Cooperative Soil Survey. Ref: P&Z reg. definitions.

Wildlife corridors: Natural pathways for wildlife movement within and between important habitats.