

# **PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS**



**DRAFT**  
**October 3, 2013**

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# 1. Introduction and Overview

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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 initial PCRL was mandated in the 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), 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.



Donald R. Henne Memorial Tract of North Stonington's Shunock River Preserve

In 2008, The PCRL was adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and included in the slightly revised 2009 POCD as Appendix B. In 2011, the town began its task of formally updating the 2003 POCD and 2009 revised POCD. The Conservation Commission was tasked with updating the PCRL with any current information or new

goals to provide a foundation for the conservation and recreation related goals, strategies and actions specifically addressed in the POCD. The recommendations contained in this plan and the POCD 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 as well as in areas of prime farmland. The need to protect these waters and rich farmland soils 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.



## 2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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### I. MAINTAIN RURAL CHARACTER

*Historic features and scenic vistas are areas that define and shape North Stonington's rural character and together with areas of abundant natural resources and farmland are worthy of continued protection and enhancement. The town should continue to encourage farming and promote agriculturally related economic development as well as encourage high quality development and uses ensuring minimum adverse impact on natural and cultural resources and the rural character of the town.*

1. Encourage the preservation of rich farmland soils by supporting both traditional and specialty farming (whether large or small scale), raising of crops, and animal husbandry. Consider establishing an Agricultural Commission to assist the town in proactively 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.



Farm on Ryder Rd.

2. Keep traffic and other detrimental effects of development away from working farms by establishing clear buffer zones between farms and new developments, and limit the areas for possible traffic-generating development through zoning regulation revisions.

3. Continue to allow active farms to sell their crops retail, engage in ag-tivities and agro-tourism and to have low profile signage along roads as needed. Support the potential added provision of farm worker housing.



NS Agricultural Fair

4. Encourage the (re)establishment of small farms and the leasing 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 PA 490 that extends tax relief to specifically designated lands important to the town's conservation and agricultural goals not already covered by PA 490 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.
8. Encourage rural road design. Prohibit excessive width, excessive impervious coverage, and excessive excavation.
9. Encourage expansion of the Village Protection Overlay Area and the North Stonington Village National Register of Historic Places district to include and buffer historic features associated with the village.
10. Promote good site design and businesses that contribute to the rural character of the town such as farm related businesses, green energy technology, and small-scale retail.



Pinewoods Road

## II. PERMANENTLY PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

*North Stonington has abundant water bodies including small 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. By keeping a low density of development within the upper and middle reaches of the Shunock, Wyassup, and Green Fall watersheds and establishing a program to monitor surface and stratified drift aquifer water quantity and quality the town can take corrective action before any potential large-scale damage occurs.*

1. Support limited increase in the size of the existing commercial and industrial zones.
2. Seek funding to 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 better describe its actual boundaries and to include the Green Falls Aquifer.
4. Continue to avoid sewers in all residential zones.

### III. PROTECT THE TOWN'S NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

*The town's topography and low human population promotes wildlife habitat. Both aquatic and surface vegetation in identified sensitive areas, as well sensitive fauna, should be adequately protected. 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 and resources contribute greatly 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 cultivate North Stonington's cultural heritage and weave the historic fabric of the community its residents now enjoy.*



Rattlesnake Plantain, Babcock Ridge

1. Provide concept plans and necessary infrastructure to entice development away from areas of rich farmland or other valuable natural resources and facilitating any potential high-density and/or intensive uses elsewhere.
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 through a combination of land conservation, 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 continue to 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 and Green Falls River and Valley, and the Wyassup Brook, corridor and their tributaries as areas of prime interest to the community as pure water resources and wildlife corridors.



Yannatos Preserve, Clarks Falls

5. Designate the North Stonington Village Focus Area as a central amenity to the entire community. This will help to focus town, state, and federal protection and conservation efforts.



Town Hall Complex - Village Center

6. Recognize the Green Falls River basin as an important resource from Voluntown to the Pawcatuck River for both the protection of pure water and as an important unspoiled wildlife corridor.
7. Recognize and maintain the 100 foot buffer zone to water resources (lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands) along the Green Falls, Shunock and Wyassup water ways and their tributaries as identified in Inland Wetlands and Watercourses regulations. The inland wetlands and watercourses of the State of Connecticut are an indispensable, irreplaceable and fragile natural resource.
8. 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. Such incentives may include: allowing building on slopes to save good farm land; allowing more than one (1) cut for land owners willing to give 15% to the Town's Land Acquisition Fund; and relaxing the frontage requirement for lots 10 acres or greater. Non-zoning incentives may include possible tax incentives. Provide opportunities for private conservation such as sale or transfer of development rights.

9. Consider incentives such as tax relief or relaxation of unusable land access requirements for private conservation and environmentally sensitive site design.

10. Work to 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.



Lantern Hill

11. Support energy conservation plans consistent with the rural character of the town.
12. Support the current Federal Efforts to designate the Wood-Pawcatuck Rivers and their tributaries as wild river status.



13. Consider a ten-acre rural single-family villa overlay zone near Lake of Isles Golf Course. This may encourage high end single family development on large lots taking advantage of tribal resort development, resources and infrastructure.

#### IV. PROVIDE APPROPRIATE AREAS FOR ACTIVE AND PASSIVE 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.*

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. Encourage that all tracts of land recommended for recreation be open to the public rather than encumbered by restrictions with the exception of reasonably appropriate protective restrictions.
3. Work toward the immediate enlargement of the Rocky Hollow Recreation Facility by acquiring additional land from the state for an expanded and centralized town recreation facility. Town-owned open space bordering the Assekonk Swamp West along Pinecrest Road with little or no conservation or recreational value could be offered to the state in trade.
4. Continue to develop a network of trails and pathways that will provide the public with safe active and passive recreational opportunities, and provide connectivity to conservation and



Arial View of Rocky Hollow Recreation Area and Assekonk Pond



recreation lands. The town has an abundance of trails, pathways, pentways, ancient roads, unimproved roads, and rights of way that are being 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 parks and other public recreational in areas identified as having 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.



Banker Farm, Northwest Corner Road

6. Seek input from residents and stakeholders via regular neighborhood meetings 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.
7. Consider the town-owned parcel on Putker Road as an east side recreation area.

## **V. IMPROVE REGULATORY PROCEDURES AND PRIORITIZE LAND ACQUISITION AND USES**

*It is vital to continue to create and implement programs and procedures for ongoing monitoring of protected and potential conservation lands. The public must be educated about the benefits of resource conservation and access to recreational lands and how certain parcels fit into the broader plan for natural resource and rural character preservation. 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 reserving the kind of environment we desire, our quality of life, and the economic viability of North Stonington.*

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

2. Encourage the town to provide a professional grant writer to secure funding necessary to implement the recommendations of this and other town plans.
3. Focus resources and conservation efforts on parcels that have been specifically recommended (and identified on the Future Conservation Lands Map) for conservation, recreation, protection of natural and cultural resources and features, protection and development of water resources and water supply management, open space, and/or farming and farm land conservation.

4. 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 research, planning and presentation purposes.



Ma & Pa Goose, Denison Hill Rd.

5. Carefully consider conservation easements (CEs) held by the town, especially scattered small parcels where the public is excluded from use. These types of CEs are potentially difficult and costly to enforce and maintain. While CEs 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.
6. 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.
7. With respect to new subdivisions, continue to seek fee-in-lieu of open space rather than accepting isolated parcels of little use to the town that are costly to monitor and maintain.
8. Support the restoration of \$20,000 for Open Space Acquisition as a line item in the budget.



### 3. Focus Areas

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In order to recommend logical areas for future conservation, recreation, and greenways, the Conservation Commission has created maps with “focus areas.” A focus area is a section of a map that identifies significant concentrations of natural, recreational, and/or historic resources and features deemed important to the town. Identifying resources required extensive research and community outreach.

The Conservation Commission has researched thirteen preliminary focus areas, each defined by common attributes. General features, such as Clark’s Falls with its farmland, and the Shunock River and Valley with its water resources, need to 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 areas.

**Roman numerals correspond to locations on the *Focus Areas Map* on page 12.**

#### **I. Northwest Corner**

**Defining Features:** Farms (High Acres, Flood Reed, Banker, Bison Brook and others)

**Recreation:** Westbrook Fishing Club.

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

#### **II. Central Lakes**

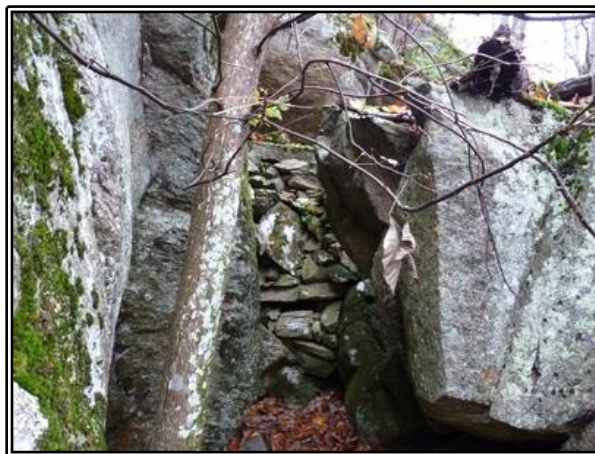
**Defining Features:** Lakes and wildlife: Wyassup, Billings, and Blue Lake; and the numerous Natural Resource Diversity Areas where species of concern and endangered species are found.

**Recreation:** Water sports; fishing; Camp Wightman (Church Camp); State boat launches; Pachaug State Forest with numerous hiking trails; Stillman Preserve open space; and town owned & State shared Billings Lake hiking, biking & equestrian trail.

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



High Acres Farm Bed & Breakfast



Rock Wall within Crevice, Camp Wightman

### III. Pendleton Hill

**Defining Features:** Scenic Areas: Palmer Farm; First Baptist Church; Pendleton Hill; and Ledgen Wood Road.

**Recreation:** Groton Sportsmen's Club; and hiking and equestrian trails.

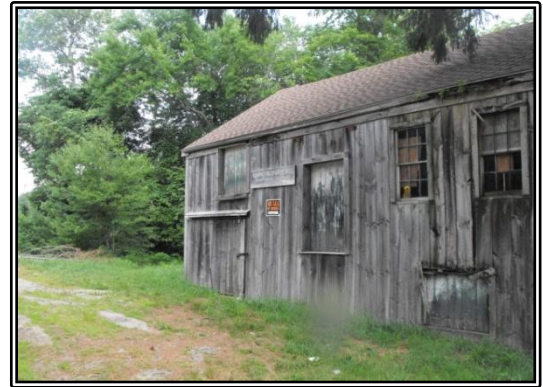
**Other Features of Note:** Puckhuninkonnuck Rock; site of first Baptist church; ancient stone bridges; and colonial milestones.

### IV. Green Falls River Corridor & Clarks Falls

**Defining Feature:** Green Falls River and Farm Village of Clark's Falls.

**Other Features of Note:** large expanses of prime farm soils with working farms including Palmer, Renehan and Bill farms; historic villages; grist mill; mill ponds; mill seats of Laurel Glen and Clarks Falls; and important drinking water aquifers. (Possibly add Macintosh and Comstock properties if available).

**Recreation:** Avalonia's Yannatos Preserve; and Green Falls River



Former Grist Mill, Clarks Falls

### V. Chester Main

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

**Recreation:** Hangman Hill Preserve hiking trail.

**Other Features of Note:** Horse Gravestone; and mill seats.



Lake of Isles Golf Course

### VI. Lake of Isles

**Defining Features:** Lakes and Hills: Swantown Hill; Barnes Hill; and Lake of Isles.

**Recreation:** Golf courses and boat launch.

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

### VII. Lantern Hill

**Defining Features:** Hills: Lantern Hill; Long Hill; and Wintechog Hill.

**Recreation:** Lantern Hill hiking trail; boat launches; and 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; Pequot Indian reservation; and the Brown, Miner, and Denison farms.

### VIII. North Stonington Village

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

**Recreation:** Village Green; town recreation and picnic area; Hewitt Farm, Bicentennial Trail; community gardens; and fishing and other passive recreation opportunities.

**Other Features of Note:** Public water supply well head; Park Pond and cold springs; wetlands; biodiversity; and underlying aquifer.

#### **IX. Assekonk**

**Defining Feature:** Biodiversity: Assekonk Wildlife Management Area; white cedar groves; and Assekonk Pond, Swamp, and Brook.

**Recreation:** Hunting; canoeing; and nature study.

**Other Features of Note:** Assekonk dam and reservoir pond; town recreation area; and Assekonk Borderlands trail through and around historic parade grounds.



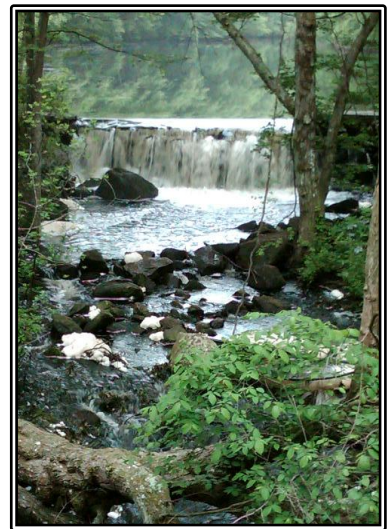
**Bell Cedar Swamp**

#### **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; and state designated and managed cold water stream.

**Recreation:** Canoeing; kayaking; nature study; hiking and horseback riding; and 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; and Level A aquifer



**Spaulding Pond on Green Falls River**

#### **XI. Spaulding Pond and Bell Cedar Swamp**

**Defining Features:** Amazingly rich site of concentrated biodiversity and 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; and large farmland fields.

#### **XII. Southeast Agricultural**

**Defining Features:** Large expanses of prime farm soils and with working farms including 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.





Conservation Commission

**FOCUS AREAS**

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.

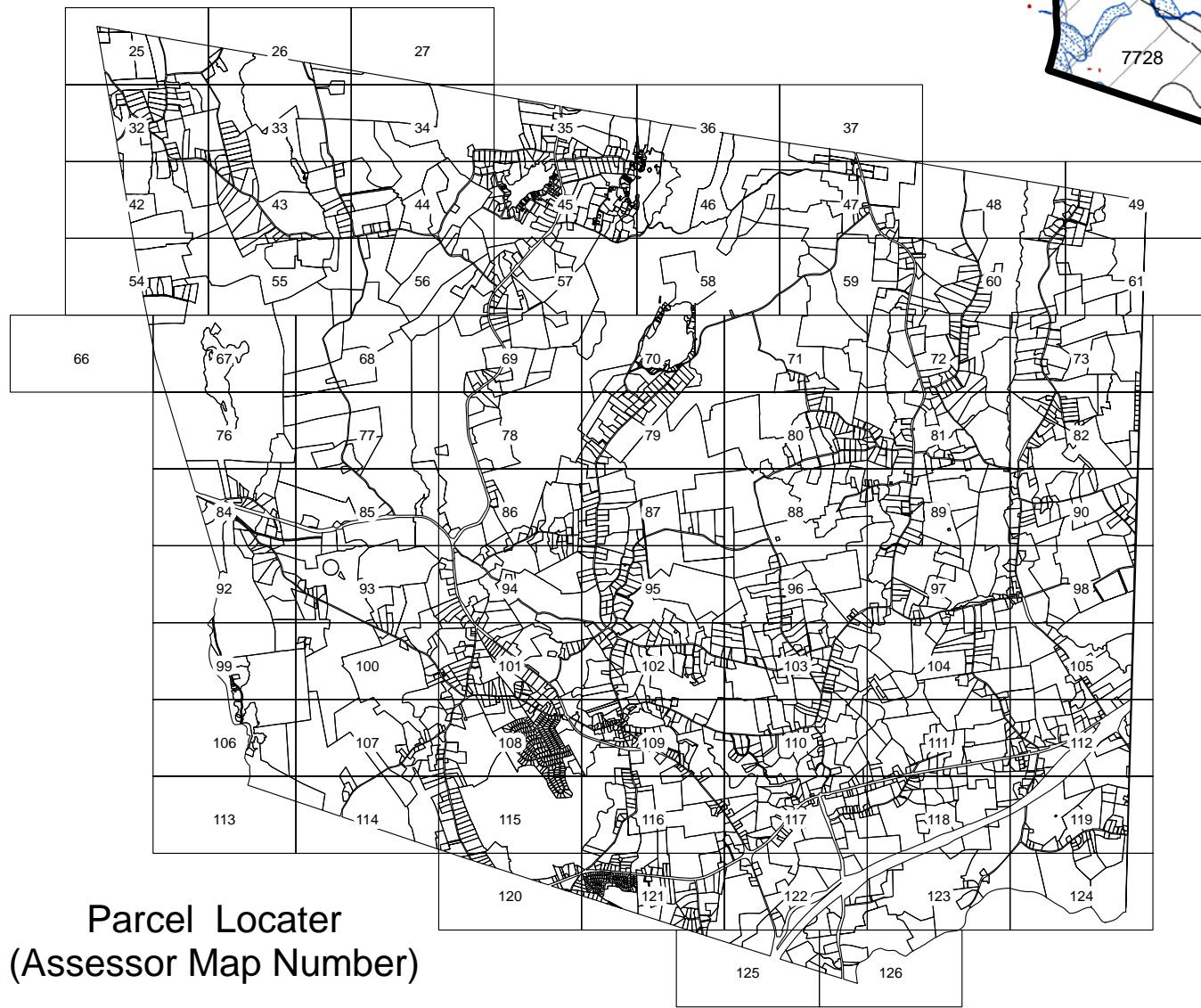
**Legend**

**Focus Areas**

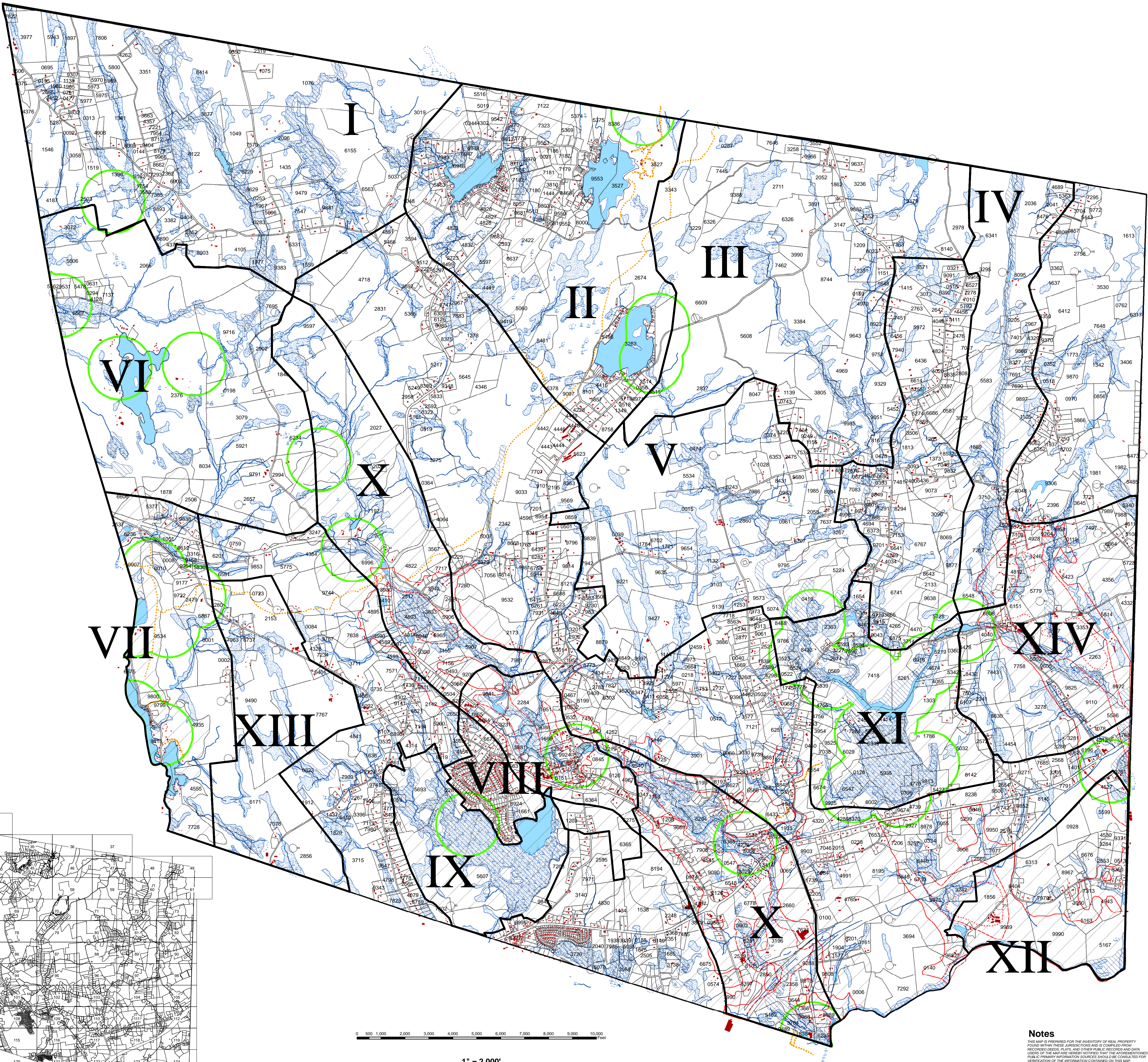
- I. Northwest Viewscapes
- II. Central Lakes
- III. Northeast Viewscapes
- IV. Green Fall Corridor
- V. Central Agriculture
- VI. Lake of Isles
- VII. Lantern Hill
- VIII. North Stonington Village
- IX. Assekonk
- X. Shunock River and Valley
- XI. Spaulding Pond – Bell Cedar Swamp
- XII. Southeast Agriculture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



Parcel Locator  
(Assessor Map Number)



0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 6,000 7,000 8,000 9,000 10,000 Feet

1" = 2,000'

**Notes**

THIS MAP IS PREPARED FOR THE INVENTORY OF REAL PROPERTY TOWN WITHIN THESE JURISDICTIONS AND IS COMPILED FROM RECORDED DEEDS, PLATS, AND OTHER PUBLIC RECORDS AND DATA. USERS OF THE MAP ARE ADVISED THAT THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND IS NOT TO BE USED FOR VERIFICATION OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS MAP. THE TOWN AND THE MAPING COMMUNITY ASSUME NO LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS MAP. HORIZONTAL DATUM BASED ON THE CONNECTICUT STATE PLANE COORDINATE SYSTEM NAD83.

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Revised 1-25-2008



## 4. Future Conservation and Recreation Lands

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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: general long range goals for the town, and recommendations to acquire specific parcels as opportunities present themselves. That said, however, no mathematical rating and ranking system can replace the accumulated wisdom and vision of the citizens of North Stonington.

### Conservation Lands

Open space and conservation land is protected in various ways. If ownership is held by the town, state, or by a land trust, the land is dedicated in perpetuity to conservation and/or recreational uses by deeds and agreements filed in the land records of the town. The degree of protection provided by conservation agreements and ownership of development rights is considered high, though changes can occur that lessen this protection through extensive legislative action or judicial re-interpretation of terms. Town or land trust ownership offers one of the best ways to conserve large tracts of open space over the long term while still providing substantial passive recreational opportunities. Requiring the designation of a certain percentage of land as open space in subdivisions is a tool for acquiring open space may not provide useful land in every instance. The option for developers to pay a fee in lieu of open space provides the town with funds to acquire land it considers to be of value for conservation and recreational uses.

The outright purchase of development rights (PDR) is an effective tool used to prevent the loss of prime agricultural lands and can help prevent 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



Parke Pond Dam



Cool Breeze Farm, Hangman Hill Road

Connecticut Farmland Protection Program, five of North Stonington's farms have sold their development rights to the state, resulting in the preservation of 465 acres of farmland. These parcels are managed privately by the owners.

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. A primary goal of the Conservation Commission is to better identify potential corridors and to educate the public as to their importance with respect to the larger conservation goals of the town.

### **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 long-term quality of the town's drinking water. To protect the potential drinking water resources in the Shunock, Green Falls, Wyassup, and Pawcatuck Rivers, a 100 foot buffer must be maintained to restrict development within the area.



**Hewitt Farm**



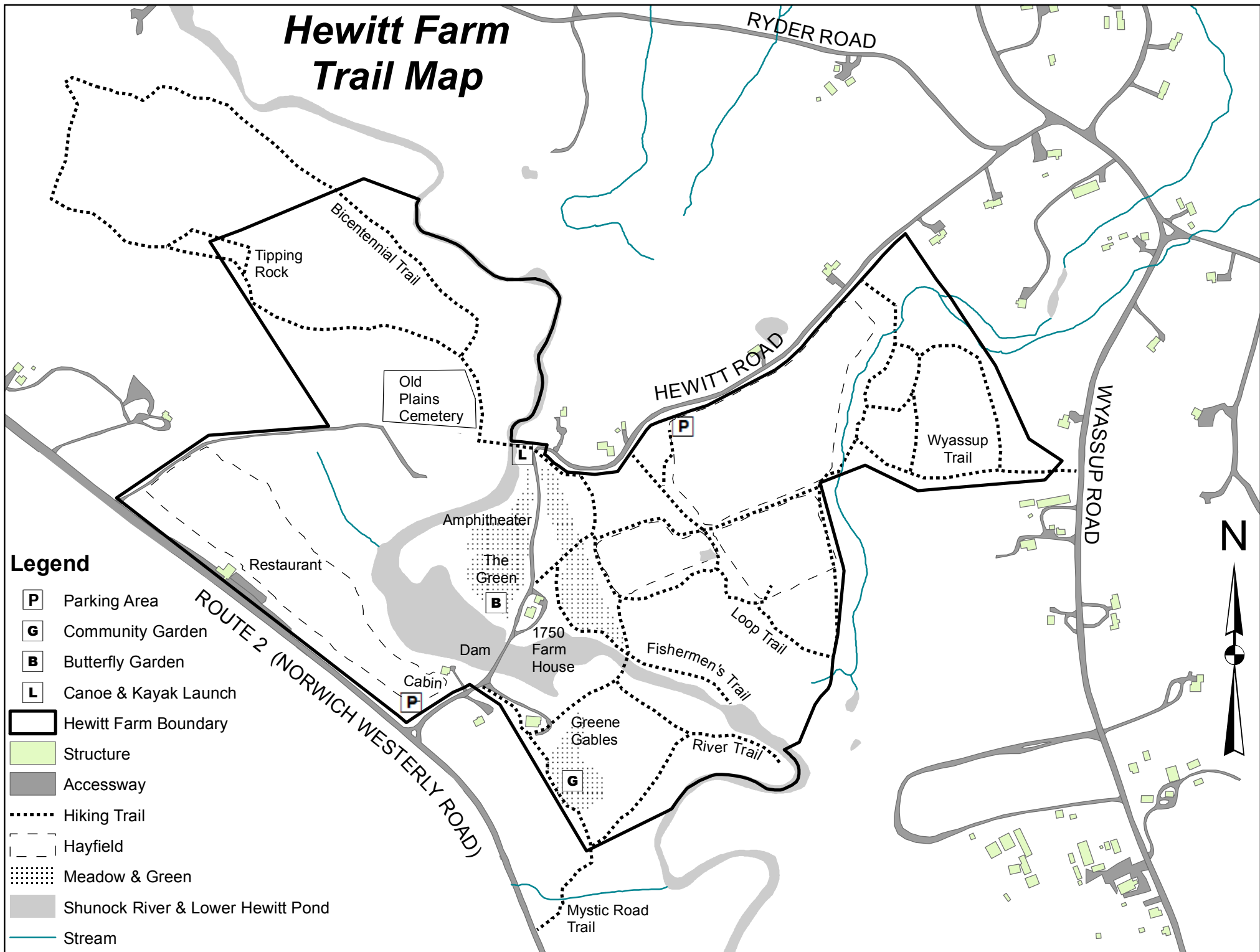
**1750 Hewitt Farm Homestead**

The town 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.

The land area known as the Hewitt Farm (parcels #2284, 9641, and the former Dew Drop Inn restaurant) were acquired by the town in 2008. A committee was formed to consider ways of using the property. A priority for use of this land includes protection of the 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 include hiking, boating, horseback riding activities, a farmer's market, community gardens and a possibly teaching farm.



# Hewitt Farm Trail Map



## **Recreation Lands**

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.

The Pachaug State Forest (approximately 3,082 acres) and the Assekunk Wildlife Management Area (634 acres) are existing areas managed by the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Various clubs and organizations also 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.

**The Old Parade Grounds** owned by the town, at the edge of Meadow Wood, has been renamed Assekunk Borderlands Preserve and holds a trail system for community enjoyment extending from Rocky Hollow Recreation Area, through the “borderlands” and with a short roadway walk, connects to the Hewitt farm Trail system across Route 2.

### **Proposed**

The present town Rocky Hollow Recreation Area provides a nucleus for centralizing playing fields and expanding active recreation lands and facilities. An approximate 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 Assekunk Pond. Town acquisition of the state owned 15-acre site is considered high priority. In exchange



**Fishing on Wyassup Lake**



**Billings Lake**

for the potentially beneficial 15 acre area (“B” on Map below), the town could offer its 17.72 acre parcel (#2281) (“A” on Map pg. 20) at the edge of Assekunk Swamp that is of little use to the town but of value to the state.

The town supports the state’s initiative to acquire the 111.26 acre open parcel (# 5693) at the head of **Assekunk Swamp**. The acquisition would expand the State’s wildlife management area by approximately 20% and add to the important protected Assekunk wetlands. The state would then be in a more favorable position to sell or swap the 95.29 acre parcel (#6365) - **Assekunk Swamp East** - with the town for its long term municipal facilities expansion. This is considered a high priority acquisition and exchange opportunity because the parcel at the head of Assekunk 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 Map on pg.20)



Bridge at Gallup Pond

#### **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 Pequot Tribal Nation provides a wonderful opportunity for hiking, geologic and nature study, and spectacular views.

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. Input from the homeowners in Kingswood/Meadow Wood would indicate desired use. If there is no interest for this purpose, the lots could be sold to a land Trust to add to the town’s open space fund, or to the state where they border the Assekunk Wildlife Management Area.

Passive recreation lands can be expanded through state, town, or land trust purchase of 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.





### Desired Areas for Future Preservation

The following parcels/areas are recommended for future acquisition as they fit into existing networks of State owned forests and wildlife management areas, town or privately owned and managed open space lands, and/or other land recognized for its valuable resources. Please refer to the Existing and Future Conservation and Recreation Lands Map on page 23.

| MAP ID | PARCEL #    | RATIONALE/ATTRIBUTES  |
|--------|-------------|---|
| 1      | 6122        | Both 1&2 are parcels located within corridor of existing preserved properties and would, combined with the open space to the north in Griswold, would add to the <i>Northwest Boundary Wildlife Corridor</i>  |
| 2      | 2096        |   |
| 3      | 3527        | 202.57 acre parcel is within state designated biodiversity area; crisscrossed by state and town trail system; and abuts state forest.   |
| 4      | 2674        | 85.21 acre parcel has 1,000 +/- undisturbed feet along N-E side of Wyassup Lake. Parcel is surrounded by Pachaug State Forest and contains beautiful rock ledges; fern & lady slipper gardens; vernal pools; Hetchel Swamp outlet; and is within state designated biodiversity area.                  |
| 5      | 9308        | 79.28 acres of park-like setting maintained by owners who wish to preserve the property. There are trails throughout and the parcels fit into the <i>Eastern Boundary Greenway/Wildlife Corridor</i> .  |
| 6      | 2396        | Borders #5. 1.84 acre parcel contains extensive wetlands and would form a direct link to preserved farmland to the south making it an extension of the <i>Eastern Boundary Greenway/Wildlife Corridor</i> .   |
| 7      | 7418        | 77.3 acres of fertile farmland bordering Spaulding Pond to the south. 2/3 of the parcel is within a biodiversity area.  |
| 8      | 0419        | Land locked 80.12 acre parcel within biodiversity area bounded on west by Wyassup Brook and on southwest by town owned conservation easement. Parcel characterized by hilly terrain with extensive wetlands.  |
| 9      | 4320 & 5387 | Both parcels were originally deeded to the town as part of a subdivision approval. Parcels 4320 contains 29.22 acre and has extremely steep ledge with wetlands along Rte. 184. Parcel 5387 has 2.52 acres and is mostly wetlands. Would link Bell Cedar Swamp preserve with other preserved acreage. |
| 10     | 5251        | 5.5 acres presently in litigation to be turned over to town as open space. Parcel is within state biodiversity area and borders Shunock River.  |
| 11     | 0547        | For #11 - # 17: Nearly 1/3 of all parcels contains biodiversity areas; border the Shunock River; and are within the aquifer protection overlay area.  |
| 12     | 5545        |   |
| 13     | 7908        |   |
| 14     | 9669        |   |
| 15     | 3159        |   |
| 16     | 8994 & 0341 |   |
| 17     | 4967        |   |

|           |             |   |
|-----------|-------------|---|
| <b>18</b> | <b>6365</b> | Assekonk Swamp East: Long sought 95.29 acre area for future town facilities: recreation, town buildings, and school site. Parcel abuts 8 acres of town-owned land where the new emergency complex is proposed.  |
| <b>19</b> | <b>5607</b> | Rocky Hollow Extension: A natural extension of the Rocky Hollow Recreation area. Possible construction of ball fields and trails and could be used for nature study. The parcel contains 550 acres of Assekonk Swamp owned by the state. The town should explore the possibility of trading 15 acres of this land for the town-owned Parcel #2281 (17.72ac.) along Ravenswood Road. |
| <b>20</b> | <b>5693</b> | Headlands of Assekonk Swamp. 111.26 acre parcel could be used as an extension of existing hunting area and is listed as a high priority on the state purchase list. Site contains a biodiversity site; is within the aquifer protection overlay area; and is considered a quality wildlife habitat.   |
| <b>21</b> | <b>6410</b> | 9.36 acres of open space set-aside as part of subdivision approval and is deeded to all 11 surrounding property owners. No taxes have been paid on the area and it could therefore be secured by foreclosure. There are extensive wetlands.   |
| <b>22</b> | <b>7981</b> | A major portion of the 35.75 acre parcel is used for growing corn. The western portion of the parcel has extensive wetlands which would protect the wildlife habitat adjacent to the Hewitt Farm.   |
| <b>23</b> | <b>9534</b> | The northern portion of this 243 acre parcel contains Lantern Hill. It is currently owned by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. The area contains rare geological features, an existing trail system, and biodiversity areas. The area was once recommended as a State Park and has a pond situated on property.  |



Bridge over Assekonk Swamp Spillway



North Stonington  
Connecticut



Future Conservation  
and  
Recreation Corridor

## Legend

- Cemetery Locations
- Parcel Lines
- CE 2010
- Desired Areas For Future Preservation
- Level A Aquifer Protection Area
- CRITICAL HABITAT DEP
- NATURAL DIVERSITY DEP
- Development Rights Sold
- Access Way
- Town Select Trails
- Structures - 2011

## Water Features

- Lakes and Ponds
- Streams
- Swamps
- 100' Water Buffer

## Select Owners

- AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY INC
- NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CT
- NORTH STONINGTON CITIZENS LAND
- STATE OF CONNECTICUT
- TOWN OF NORTH STONINGTON

NOTE: Desired Areas For Future  
Preservation Numbers relate to  
the chart on Page 19 of the  
Plan of Conservation and  
Development revised 2013

## Conservation Easement Index

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 01. Conservation Easement: Grindstone Preserve          | 35. Conservation Easement: Beehive                      |
| 02. Conservation Easement: Grindstone Preserve          | 38. Conservation Easement: Lakeview West                |
| 03. Conservation Easement: Grindstone Preserve          | 39. Conservation Easement: Lakeview West                |
| 04. Conservation Easement: Lakeview South               | 40. Conservation Easement: Shunock / Mains X            |
| 05. Conservation Easement: Farm Pond North              | 41. Open Space Easement: Antoon/A&Z                     |
| 06. Conservation Easement: Farm Pond North              | 42. Conservation Easement: Shunock / Mains X            |
| 07. Conservation Easement: Lake of Isles                | 43. Conservation Easement: Shunock / Mains X            |
| 08. Conservation Easement: Lake of Isles                | 44. Conservation Easement: Ragonesse Sub D              |
| 09. Conservation Easement: Lake of Isles                | 45. Conservation Easement: Gillis Sub D                 |
| 10. Conservation Easement: Shunock Estates Phase 2      | 46. Conservation Easement: Grindstone Preserve          |
| 11. Conservation Easement: Shunock Estates Phase 2      | 47. Conservation Easement: Lakeview North               |
| 12. Conservation Easement: Shunock Estates Phase 2      | 48. Conservation Easement: Ragonesse Sub D              |
| 13. Open Space Easement: Shunock Estates Phase 2        | 49. Conservation Easement: Lakeview South               |
| 14. Conservation Easement: Wyassup Brook Sub D          | 50. Conservation Easement: Milltown Meadows             |
| 15. Conservation Easement: Waco's Billing Sub D         | 51. Conservation Easement: Old Haven                    |
| 16. Conservation Easement: Milltown Meadows             | 52. Conservation Easement: Shunock / Mains X            |
| 17. Access Easement: Anderson Estates - Blue Lake       | 53. Conservation Easement: Lake of Isles                |
| 18. Conservation Easement: Anderson Estates - Blue Lake | 55. Conservation Easement: Farm Pond North              |
| 20. Conservation Easement: Noyes                        | 56. Access Easement                                     |
| 21. Conservation Easement: Wyassup Brook Sub D          | 57. Open Space Easement: Restricted By Plan             |
| 22. Conservation Easement: Sacco Sub d                  | 58. Conservation Easement: Old Haven                    |
| 23. Conservation Easement: Sacco Sub d                  | 59. Conservation Easement: Old Haven Beehive            |
| 24. Conservation Easement: Sacco Sub d                  | 60. Conservation Easement: Old Haven (Formerly) Beehive |
| 25. Conservation Easement: Milltown Meadows             | 61. Conservation Easement: Farm Pond North              |
| 26. Conservation Easement: Anna Farm                    | 62. Conservation Easement: Grindstone Preserve          |
| 27. Conservation Easement: Anna Farm                    | 63. Conservation Easement: Grindstone Preserve          |
| 28. Conservation Easement: Anna Farm                    | 64. Conservation Easement: Shunock Estates              |
| 29. Conservation Easement: Farm Pond No                 | 65. Town Recreation Area: Rac Anna                      |
| 30. Conservation Easement: Ashwillet Preserve           | 66. Conservation Easement: Lake of Isles                |
| 31. Conservation Easement: Lakeview West                | 67. Conservation Easement: Shunock Estates PH1          |
| 32. Conservation Easement: Lakeview West                | 68. Conservation Easement: Shunock Estates PH1          |
| 33. Conservation Easement: Lakeview West                |   |
| 34. Conservation Easement: Lakeview West                |   |

Notes

Notes

0 3,750 7,500 15,000 Feet





## 5. Summary

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This 10 year Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands (PCRL) is intended to provide a framework for the protection of our rural character, our water quality and quantity, and our natural and historic resources. These recommendations must address the future active and passive recreational opportunities through the protection and acquisition of identified land parcels throughout the 13 mapped focus areas. Our legislators and boards and commissions must



Button Road

be supportive, through active recognition and regulatory initiatives, if our character as a town is to be preserved.

It is not the intention to remove land from the tax rolls, but to protect more land through facilitating private acquisition and/or the sale of development rights; encouraging state incentives to farms; and by providing appropriate tax relief if we are to satisfy the needs and desires expressed by the community to protect rural living.



Fog at Wyassup Lake

If we are to stabilize our tax structure and provide the education and emergency services desired by our public as well as maintain the roads and bridges, the Town must facilitate high quality economic development by providing the infrastructure necessary to encourage commercial investment (business opportunities), while continuing to protect the aquifer and physical environment. Sound planning and enforcement is not only essential for steady desirable growth, but needed as well to maintain our rich rural heritage. Plans must be created to

entice development away from any environmentally sensitive areas such as aquifers, rivers and their tributaries, and the lakes and ponds, or at least provide for a protection zone for any development to help maintain the ecological health of the water and maintain the wildlife habitat which enriches our town. Maps, identifying endangered species, rich farm lands, aquifer

protection areas, historic sites and natural resources exist and should be utilized when planning for new residential and economic growth.

In addition to the larger conservation and development goals of the town, a need exists for active and passive recreational opportunities throughout town. The utilization of school grounds and Rocky Hollow Recreation Area for playing fields and organized sports programs, and the use of conservation protection areas for appropriate hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, camping and



Swantown Road

equestrian activities will have minimal environmental impact on the land and will satisfy this need. Open tracts of land recommended for recreation should be easily available for public use with only reasonable protective restrictions.

In order to add meaningful or useful conservation and recreation lands, regulatory procedures must include fee-in-lieu of open space rather than practice of accepting small checkerboard parcels of often undesired land which is difficult and costly to monitor and maintain as public

open space. These procedures and fees, accompanied by the restoration of a recommended \$20,000 yearly line item in the budget will restore a fund to acquire quality open space for our future recreation and conservation needs.

The protection of our environment is the most critical aspect of this report. Without the vigilant attention by us all to our open spaces, its beauty, its wildlife, and its majesty, the rural atmosphere and indeed our heritage is lost.



## 6. Acknowledgements

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### Conservation Commission Members

Bill Ricker

Bob Fleury

Richard Blodgett

Warren Speh

Mike Charnetski

Priscilla Lewis

### Planning Staff

Juliet Leeming, Town Planner

Marc Tate, GIS Coordinator

## 7. Glossary and Definitions

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**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 22a-30 of the Connecticut General Statutes 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 nonprofit 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.