

# **Protect and Connect: *A Conservation Plan for Washington, NH***

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**FINAL DRAFT**

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# **Protect and Connect; A Conservation Plan for Washington, NH**

## **Acknowledgements**

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# **Protect and Connect; A Conservation Plan for Washington, NH**

## **Prelude**

In 2005, the Town of Washington Planning Board in consultation and cooperation with the Town of Washington Conservation Commission identified the need for a Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory and Conservation Plan for the Town. Concerns about growth and the informed use of natural and cultural resources, both from the Boards and from the public, underscored the need for such a study. Funding was approved by the Washington Planning Board and the Washington Conservation Commission in February of 2006. The team of Chris Kane and Pete Ingraham was selected to carry out the project with assistance from the Conservation Commission. The Planning Board and other interested citizens also participated at various stages of the project.

The project consists of: a five-part Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory to identify and locate the significant natural and cultural resources in Town (primarily with the use of GIS data); a study built on these findings that identified areas that have constraints to future development; a build-out analysis to provide a perspective on potential future growth; a Co-Occurrence Analysis to identify areas of Town with multiple important resources; a study that weighed the relative potential or desirability for future development of all portions of the Town, a Greenways Model to identify future connections between existing conservation lands, and a Conservation Plan based on all previous studies. A GIS map accompanied each of these studies.

The recent Town Meeting votes for initiatives put forward by the Planning Board show that most people in Town are concerned about the future of Washington and are looking to find ways to better protect their resources and quality of life. Many people express the wish to maintain Washington as a rural community and to protect the many outdoor recreation choices that people value. Once adopted by the Washington Planning Board this document will become part of the Washington Master Plan.

## **I. Introduction**

Washington is blessed with abundant high-quality natural resources, as the Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory attests. The relatively un-fragmented and pristine condition of large portions of the Town makes many of these resources important on a state-wide level. Recreation is still widely available for people to enjoy these resources. As more people discover the qualities that make Washington such a desirable place, growth is inevitable. Planning for this growth and guiding it to areas where important natural resources would not be significantly impacted is one of the goals of the Conservation Plan.

Many options are available to the Town to conserve significant Town resources. These options include voluntary land protection (opportunistic and strategic), regulatory initiatives such as zoning and wetlands ordinances, outreach efforts to inform the citizens about how they can get involved in conservation, and voluntary initiatives to conserve specific resources such as lake water quality. Using a combination of approaches and tools, the natural resources, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, traditional landscapes and the rural character of Washington can be preserved for future generations to use and enjoy.

## **II. Background**

The Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory findings offer a new way to view the Town of Washington. While some findings were expected, others were surprising. Here are some of the highlights:

The entire Town was mapped as being significant on a state-wide or state-regional basis by the 2005 NH Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan;

Washington has a remarkable amount of contiguous open space and unfragmented forests. These areas are incredibly valuable for air and water quality, forestry, hiking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and other types of recreation. This is a wonderful opportunity for land protection.

High quality “high-yield” groundwater aquifers are very uncommon in Town;

Washington has a remarkable number of lakes and ponds. These water bodies enjoy a high level of water quality, and are free of aquatic invasive plants, to date;

Numerous undeveloped ponds and associated tributaries still exist in most parts of Town;

Several flood prone areas already have residences and other structures within the floodway areas;

None of the productive farmland in Town is protected from conversion to development;

Approximately half of the 2200 or so lots in Town are currently un-built;

The most pristine portion of the Ashuelot River flows through Washington;

Prime Agricultural Soils and Soils of State-wide Significance are very uncommon in Town.

There are 57 miles of established snowmobile trails in Town;

Washington does have documented wildlife species of concern.

### **III. Conservation Goals**

The Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory identified and highlighted areas in Washington where important resources exist. This step was necessary in order to inform future decisions regarding the protection, management and considerate use of these resources. To guide future community conservation decisions, to guide the implementation of this plan, and to set priorities, the Washington Conservation Commission and Planning Board have adopted the following Conservation Goals. These are not listed in order of priority.

- To sustain the quality of life and rural character of the Town
- To promote the conservation, protection and responsible management of the natural resources of the Town
- To protect the Town's water quality, wetlands and aquifers
- To protect and enhance the ecological integrity of the Town's diverse natural communities and wildlife habitats
- To protect the natural ability of the landscape to withstand flooding, thus reducing the risk to residential and recreational areas
- To protect and sustain small farms in the present and in the future
- To protect the productive capacity of forest land for its current and future benefits
- To maintain recreational opportunities through protection and connection
- To protect the Town's historic sites and rural landscapes

## **IV. Outside Studies That Pertain to Conservation in Washington**

The Conservation Plan is based on the recent Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory. Numerous other plans and studies that pertain to the Town of Washington's natural and cultural resources were also reviewed. Several major studies arrive at similar conclusions: the Town of Washington has remarkable natural resources which are considered a high priority for protection. A complete list of these sources can be found in the Appendix. The following summaries from several of these sources underscore and enhance the findings of the Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory, and offer perspectives on the resources of the Town.

### **Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan**

This Management Plan, produced in 2001 by the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee, has specific recommendations for the headwaters section of the river that starts in Washington at Butterfield Pond. This section is the only section designated by the Committee as being in a predominantly "natural" condition, the most pristine category measured. Protection of the intact forested riparian buffer will prevent sedimentation, nutrient enrichment and overheating during warm summer months. Prevention of soil erosion during commercial activities can be minimized by adherence to Best Management Practices. Monitoring of septic systems, especially on the shores of Ashuelot Pond is important given the density of structures and presence of over-used systems. Because of the sensitivity of rare species and natural communities in the Ashuelot corridor, the plan strongly urged adoption of a land conservation strategy, to preserve not only ecological resources but also recreational and tourism opportunities. In order to preserve the cultural and historic features such as old dam and mill sites, the plan recommends that the resources be more fully documented and, if appropriate, registered with a State or Federal historic preservation agency.

### **Management Plan for the Town of Washington Forest Lands**

This very thorough plan was commissioned by the Town of Washington and produced by Lionel Chute and Garrett Dubois in 1999. Most of the findings and recommendations relate specifically to forestry, although plant species, soils and other biological features are also addressed. The authors found a critical need for property surveys for most of the Town Forest properties. There were also recommendations for new trails in some locations. These properties are designated as "official Town Forests" according to RSA 31:110. This designation does not prevent their future use for purposes other than conservation, therefore they are treated as "public lands" as opposed to permanently protected conservation lands in this plan.

Farnsworth Hill Town Forest – "important land for conservation, this property has more than 2,000 feet of undeveloped river frontage along [the] Ashuelot River. The

Farnsworth Hill Lot also abuts the 657-acre Lempster Long Pond Town Forest to the north, creating a combined undeveloped area of 803 acres.”

New Road Town Forest – “...currently the smallest of the forested properties the Town owns. Located just south of Pillsbury State Park, however, this property is an important conservation “stepping stone” that may one day help to bridge two large forest blocks together.” The property currently has important recreational uses: “There is an established snowmobile trail that comes onto the property from the east on New Road. The trail leaves the road, turning sharply north, several hundred feet west of the eastern bound. The trail then continues north through the woods, presumably to Pillsbury State Park....[The Town should] Consider building a short hiking trail spur off of New Road on the west side of the property. This trail would be a loop on the north side of New Road that would allow residents to visit a small patch of ancient yellow birches discovered during the inventory.”

Barrett Pond Town Forest – comprised of three separate lots “these lands are important for the conservation of large tracts of open space, as they connect three other conservation lands to each other. To the west, in Marlow, is the 285 acre Orenda-Stickey Wicket Wildlife Sanctuary. To the east is the 25-acre Ashuelot Wildlife Sanctuary, belonging to the NH Audubon Society. To the south, in both Stoddard and Washington, is the 11,000-acre Andorra Forest. All told, a combined conservation area of 6,184 acres is being held together thanks to the Town of Washington’s Barrett Pond Property.”

Back Mountain Town Forest – “this 65 acre lot is the Town’s only forestland in the northeast part of Washington....this land is very remote, with no houses for several miles in all directions.....59 plant species were recorded for this property.....a number of plants were found growing that indicate richness and fertility. Species such as maidenhair fern, zig-zag goldenrod, red elderberry and purple-flowering raspberry were found together, clearly benefiting from their position at the base of the cliffs where nutrients would naturally collect. This was the only example of a mesic rich woods found on any Town property, and should be conserved as the plant community is relatively rare in this part of New Hampshire.”

Huntley Mountain Road Town Forest – “...its proximity to Ashuelot Pond as a large and undeveloped tract makes it an important conservation property...The most significant wetland feature on the Huntley Mountain Road property is the deepwater marsh on the southern corner. This wetland is pristine and remote, offering good habitat for ducks and other waterfowl.”

The management plan suggests a new trail to the summit of the hill.

Camp Morgan Town Forest – “The Camp Morgan property has thousands of feet of unspoiled shoreline surrounding the northern end of Millen Pond.” The property also has very important recreational resources: “Foot Trails: There is a hiking trail running south along the shore of Millen Pond from the Town Beach to the “Chapel” (a maintained opening in a cove on the shore formerly used by the YMCA). Along this trail can also be found a rope-swing, for plunging into the Pond. Other uses: This is an important



property for snowmobiling. Several snowmobile trails traverse the property, which may also be used by ATV's in the summer. A building near the woods road toward the center of the property is maintained by the Washington Snowriders as their Handwarming Hut.”

## **A Land Conservation Plan for the Ashuelot River Watershed**

The Town of Washington figures prominently in this comprehensive, state-of-the-art 2004 study that is the result of a partnership between the Nature Conservancy NH Chapter, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, The Monadnock Conservancy and the Southwest Region Planning Commission. The plan first identified conservation targets (significant resources), then proceeded to identify stresses to these targets as well as sources of stress, and finally developed strategies for conservation activities. The study identified the following set of threats to the persistence and health of the conservation targets: habitat destruction, habitat fragmentation, altered forest structure, altered hydrologic regime, toxins and other contaminants, altered species composition, nutrient loading, sedimentation and thermal alteration. Primary causes or sources of these threats include incompatible residential development; development and upgrade of roads and utilities; poor logging practices; presence and operation of dams; invasive species and forest pests; inadequate storm water management; atmospheric deposition (mercury, etc.) and incompatible recreation (ATV's etc.).

Thirteen areas in the watershed were identified as being of particular importance for plants, animals and ecosystems. One of these areas, the Ashuelot Headwaters area, is located in part in Washington. This stretch is the only one that is designated “natural” by the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program. The plan identified the following conservation targets, or significant resources, in this area: Major Tributary (Ashuelot Mainstem), Un-fragmented Forest Ecosystems (dominant forest types of spruce-fir and northern hardwoods), Important Wetland Communities and Complexes (numerous), and Significant Wildlife Habitat (extensive riparian zone and interior forest).

The plan found valuable connectivity opportunities between the Andorra Forest easement to the south, and Pillsbury State Park to the north. The area, which is a total of 5,940 acres in the Towns of Washington, Lempster, and Marlow, contains only 100 acres of legally restricted open space lands, and 831 acres of Town forests. Action to protect as much of this area as feasible is included in the recommendations.

## **Quabbin to Cardigan Conservation Collaborative**

The broad forested highlands stretching 100 miles from the Quabbin Reservoir Reserve in central Massachusetts to Mt. Cardigan in the southern White Mountains have recently been recognized for their regional importance as one of the largest remaining intact contiguous forests in Central New England. Washington lies in the very heart of this

area, which is the subject of a public/private initiative to protect a corridor of interconnected conservation lands along the Monadnock Highlands.

This area forms the division between the watersheds for the Connecticut River and the Merrimack River, making its streams and rivers important source water for both watersheds. According to the Collaborative report, recent trends in the region indicate an increased rate of conversion from forest to development as long-time timberland owners sell off their holdings. At the same time, land prices are increasing, tipping the balance economically toward the conversion and subdivision of working forest lands which have until recently not been considered at risk for development.

A consortium of 23 private organizations and public agencies has come together to study this area and to develop strategies for its protection. They identified a 3,100 square mile focus area, and developed a list of goals. These goals are to complete a region-wide natural resource mapping; identify and refine focus areas for targeted, proactive land conservation; accelerate proactive land protection in the focus area; identify and secure private funding sources; identify and secure additional federal, state and local conservation funding; and promote the initiative regional vision with key stakeholders and the public.

Several important and significant parcels have already been protected as a result of the Quabbin to Cardigan, or “Q2C” Collaborative, and the project is ongoing. Projects in the immediate Washington area have already been identified as targets for protection. This major land protection effort holds promise for Washington and the surrounding Towns as it works to protect the most significant remaining forested highlands in the region.

### **Wildlife Action Plan, NH Fish & Game Department**

In the most comprehensive and sophisticated study yet undertaken in New Hampshire for wildlife habitat mapping and conservation planning, the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department unveiled its Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) in late 2006. Recently updated, and subject to continuous refinement, it is an important tool for Towns and organizations to use in planning the conservation of high quality and/or imperiled wildlife habitat, rare plant habitat and exemplary natural communities and systems. Washington was mapped by the Plan as being extremely significant for wildlife habitat, much more significant than most other Towns in NH. Every portion of the Town was ranked as important in some category and some areas in multiple categories.

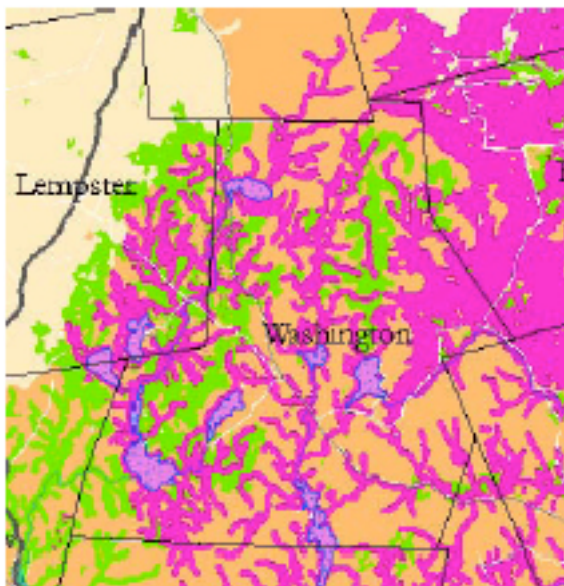
In the words of the Plan, “Information about habitat condition was analyzed to develop a statewide and regional ranking and to identify the highest condition habitat ..... The goal is to provide regional planners and conservation professionals a tool in identifying the most critical wildlife habitat locations.”

## WAP Highest Ranked Wildlife Habitat by Ecological Region Map

Washington is in the Sunapee Uplands Eco-regional Subsection as delineated by The Nature Conservancy for the purposes of ranking terrestrial habitats. Washington is in the Southern Uplands Watershed Group for purposes of ranking wetlands and floodplain forests. Salmon indicates Tier 3 Habitat: Supporting Landscapes that include top-ranking condition streams and lakes, large forest blocks or statewide significance, or specific animal, plant and natural community occurrences identified as critically imperiled. Beige indicates Wildlife Habitat not top-ranked. Blue / purple on water bodies indicates Highest Rank Habitat by Condition in New Hampshire.

As the map detail indicates, a very significant proportion of the Town is classified as Highest Rank either on a State or Ecological Region basis, primarily due to the high-condition tributaries in the upper portions of the Asuelot River watershed; the remainder of the Town is classified as Supporting Landscape. Of special note are the Tier 1 or Highest State ranking of all mapped lakes and ponds in the Town.

Figure 1. Detail from “Highest Ranked Wildlife Habitat by Ecological Region” map, NHF&G Wildlife Action Plan, 2007.



### Map Detail Key:

- Purple: Tier 1: Highest Rank Habitat by Condition in NH
- Green: Tier 2: Highest Rank Habitat by Condition in Biological Region
- Salmon: Supporting Landscapes
- Beige: Wildlife Habitat not top-ranked.

## **New Hampshire's Vanishing Forests**

This 2001 report of the NH Forest Land Base Study on the state of New Hampshire's forests was produced by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Here are some of the major findings: New Hampshire loses about 13,000 acres of forest annually to land conversion. Forest conversion is driven by population growth and the rising rate of land consumption per person. State-wide about 10% of the harvested area is being terminally harvested each year in preparation for development. Forest fragmentation is most advanced where population and recreational development are greatest. Declining parcel size impairs the profitability of forest management. Owners of larger parcels experience significant economies of scale when they harvest. Owners of larger parcels are more likely to employ foresters and have written management plans. Approximately one quarter of the (state-wide) forest land base is permanently protected, but productive soil areas are proportionately less protected.

Recommendations that relate to forest lands in Washington include developing a Town master plan for forestry; pursuing public acquisition programs to protect productive land for forestry; designating forest conservation zoning districts; requiring cluster development zoning to conserve strategic forestland.

## **V. Recommendations for Land Conservation**

### **Introduction**

Washington is certainly blessed with exemplary natural places. As noted, the NH Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan clearly states that Washington has extremely significant resources for wildlife habitat, much more significant than most other Towns in NH. In fact, every portion of the Town is ranked as important in some category. Washington also enjoys abundant water resources, productive forests and important farmland. Washington is fortunate to have the opportunity to protect its most important resources; most of the wild places remain intact. The Town of Washington should make it a priority to assist willing landowners to permanently protect these beautiful places.

The conservation goals set forth above require a variety of approaches. In the case of land conservation, resources are protected comprehensively at the parcel scale. Practicality dictates that protection of these lands be accomplished both strategically and opportunistically (e.g. when individual owners take the initiative) with the vision that, over time, corridors of linked conservation areas will be created.

Land conservation is a means of legally restricting some uses on the land, while specifically allowing other uses. Allowed uses generally include traditional uses of open space including forestry, agriculture and recreation. Restricted uses generally include residential, institutional or commercial development and construction, mining and removal of soil and minerals, and subdivision, among others. The particular method and terms are tailored to the parcel and project depending on what resources are being protected, and the wishes of the parties involved.

It's important to note that land conservation is a voluntary process of agreements between willing parties, and does not involve the forced taking of land or real interest.

### **Conservation Priority Areas**

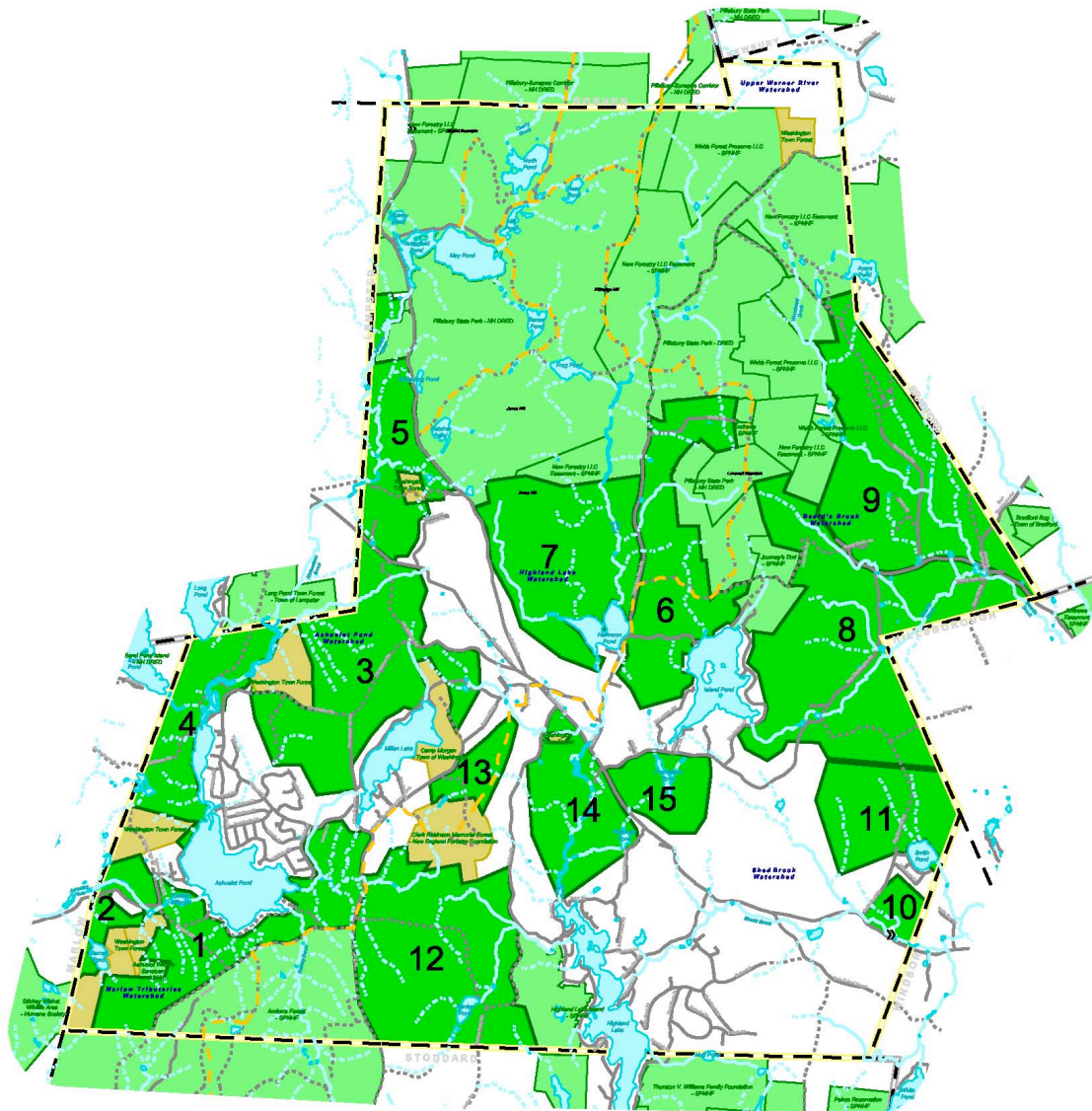
#### **Basis for Selection of Priority Conservation / Recreation Areas**

To fulfill the Conservation Goals for Washington, that are based on the Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory, five Conservation Focus Areas were selected as priority areas for land conservation. Within these five areas a total of 15 specific primarily undeveloped areas were identified as Conservation Priority Areas. These areas were selected as priorities because they contain the most significant natural resources in Washington that remain un-protected. The resources they contain are among the most significant in the Town, by virtue of being high quality, uncommon, at risk, critically important, or in pristine condition. Taken together they encompass much of what still makes Washington special and unique – rural landscapes, productive forest and farm

lands, wetlands and ponds, scenic vistas, pristine watersheds, trails and trout streams. See Figure 2 below, a map of the Conservation Priority Areas.

These Conservation Priority Areas were selected on the basis of mapping and local input. Field surveys could delineate more precisely the boundaries of these areas. In addition important resources that were not captured by the GIS data are likely to exist elsewhere in the Town, outside these Conservation Priority Areas. Therefore, additional priority areas may be identified at a later time based on information yet to be gathered.

**Figure 2. Map of Conservation Priority Areas**



**Conservation Priority Areas Key**

- 1. Starks Hill/Ashuelot Pond
- 2. Barrett Pond
- 3. Farnsworth Hill
- 4. Huntley Mountain
- 5. Codman Hill
- 6. Island Pond
- 7. Ames Hill/Halfmoon Pond
- 8. Beards Brook
- 9. Woodward Brook
- 10. Shedd Brook
- 11. Smith Pond
- 12. Barden Pond
- 13. Camp Morgan/Robinson Forest
- 14. Bog Brook/Highland Lake
- 15. Freezeland Pond

# 1. The Ashuelot River Headwaters Focus Area

From the headwaters at Butterfield Pond in Pillsbury State Park, the Ashuelot flows southwest into the Town of Lempster, then back across the line into Washington, and continues more-or-less southwesterly through Ashuelot Pond and Russell Mill Pond and into the Town of Marlow, ultimately arriving at the Connecticut River in Hinsdale.

Much of the upper-most stretch of the river, the so-called Ashuelot Headwaters area, is in Washington. This is the only stretch of the river that is classified as “Natural” by the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program – in recognition of its unspoiled, intact condition. All other stretches are classified as either “Rural” or “Community”. Portions of the river support populations of the Globally Rare Dwarf Wedge Mussel, and exemplary flood plain forest communities. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service identified the Ashuelot as important for the restoration of the fishery for anadromous fish species including river herring, salmon and shad. This stretch of the Ashuelot River and the streams that flow into it are of considerable importance to the ecological health of river not only in Washington, but also to the downstream communities that depend on it.

This area is recognized as being a priority for land conservation by the *Land Conservation Plan for the Ashuelot River Watershed* study, the *Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan*, the *Quabbin to Cardigan Conservation Collaborative Report*, Washington’s 2003 *Hazard Mitigation Plan* and the *NH Fish & Game Wildlife Action Plan*.

## **Starks Hill / Ashuelot Pond CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This completely undeveloped, forested area extends from the Stoddard / Washington Town line northeasterly across Russell Mill Pond Road to the south of Ashuelot Pond, and stretching east to King Street. Well drained and relatively steep in places, it includes flanks and the 1878-foot peak of Starks Hill. The area abuts a Society for the Protection of NH Forests conservation easement, the Audubon Society’s Ashuelot Wildlife Sanctuary, and Barrett Pond Town Forest.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – This area is especially important for the protection of the watersheds of Ashuelot Pond, Barrett Pond and the Ashuelot River. 20 undeveloped stream courses cross the area; these are sources to Barrett Pond, Russell Mill Pond and Ashuelot Pond. Several streams that flow directly northward into the Ashuelot River also originate from this area, and the Ashuelot River mainstem itself also passes through the western end of this area. Protection

of this important area would maintain the water quality of the river and the ponds that are supplied by it.

Flood Damage Prevention – 92 acres of flood-prone land associated with two source streams at the eastern end of Ashuelot Pond are contained in this Conservation Priority Area. Property damage and personal injury could be prevented by conserving this area, thus excluding development in this flood prone zone.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – Almost half of the area has Soils of Local Significance or Prime Agricultural Soils. The area is also especially productive for forestry, with about half of the area having Important Forest Soils, most notably Class IA that is highly suitable for northern hardwood production. Land conservation in this area would protect these productive and economically valuable soils from conversion, and reserve them for future productive use.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – The Wildlife Action Plan maps much of this area as significant for wildlife on a state-wide and ecological region. This un-fragmented forest area is very important for the large ranging wildlife species such as moose, black bear, otter and bobcat which depend on large contiguous forest blocks. Only two floodplain forest priority wildlife habitat areas were mapped in Washington by the WAP, and a portion of one of them occurs in this area. Conservation of this area would provide a critical protected link for the wildlife that depends on it for habitat, and protect this important and uncommon floodplain forest.

Wetlands - 34 acres of wetlands occur in this Conservation Area, primarily associated with the streams to the east and west of Ashuelot Pond. In particular, the wetlands to the east are in a flood prone area. Wetlands are valuable as wildlife habitat, but also for the storage of flood waters, buffering inputs of sediments. Protection of this wetland area would maintain water quality in Ashuelot Pond and limit damage due to flooding.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. Snowmobile trails follow Russell Mill Pond Road, a Class VI Town road, as well as the entire southeast boundary of this Conservation Priority Area via Jefts Road. Winter and additional summer recreation opportunities are made possible by the five snowmobile trails totaling about three miles in length in this area, and future trail relocation options would be preserved by land conservation in this area.

Historic and Cultural – The Site of the second location of Old #3 School is situated at the north end of this Conservation Priority Area. The fully restored and internationally significant first Seventh Day Adventist Church and Cemetery are located directly across the road from this area as well, on King Street. The



undeveloped, rural setting of these important historic sites would be preserved by land conservation in this area.

Scenic Assets – The rural road, Jefts Road, forms the southwest boundary of this area, and travels south into Stoddard. Undeveloped frontage on Marlow Road near Russell Mill Pond is also included in this Conservation Priority Area. Undeveloped shoreline of Ashuelot Pond would be protected for the scenic, water quality and ecological values it provides. The entire undeveloped shoreline of pristine Barrett Pond would also be protected by the conservation of this area.

Connections and Buffers – This area forms a critical open space link between two existing conservation areas and a Town forest; the 11,000 acre Andorra Forest easement held by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, the Audubon Society’s Ashuelot Wildlife Sanctuary, and Barrett Pond Town Forest. The collective conservation values of the Town Forest and the conservation lands in this area would be enhanced by land conservation in this area.

## **Barrett Pond CPA**

### **Description of Area**

The valley of the Ashuelot River is framed by hills to the south and north in this Conservation Priority Area. The area extends from the western boundary at the Marlow / Washington Town line, easterly to Marlow Road near Russell Mill Pond, and south to Barrett Pond.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – Over a half mile of the mainstem of the Ashuelot River passes through this Conservation Priority Area. This stretch of the river is 3<sup>rd</sup> Order. Two other streams also cross this area including a source tributary of the Ashuelot. The ecological integrity of this stretch of the Ashuelot River and its undeveloped upland buffer and associated wetlands would be maintained by focusing land conservation efforts in this sensitive area.

Flood Damage Prevention – Four acres of flood prone area occur along the Ashuelot River at the western edge of this Conservation Priority Area. Recent historic flood events in the general area underscore the real threat that streams and rivers can pose in areas prone to flooding. Land conservation here would be prudent to prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding development away from this area.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – About 1/3 of this Conservation Priority Area has Important Forest Soils, and/or Agricultural Soils of Local Significance. Once productive soil areas are converted to uses other than forestry and agriculture, their productive potential is essentially eliminated forever. Land

conservation in this area would protect the productive potential of these forest soils and the economic benefits they provide.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – Barrett Pond and another un-named wetland that the Ashuelot River flows through are Marsh & Shrub Wetland Priority Habitat areas mapped by NH Fish & Game in their Wildlife Action Plan. Blandings Turtle, American Woodcock and Sedge Wren are three of the species of conservation concern that are supported by this significant habitat. 36 acres of the Wetland Priority Habitat Floodplain Forest mapped in the *Wildlife Action Plan* also are located in this Conservation Priority Area in association with the Ashuelot River. The Jefferson Salamander, Wood Turtle and Cerulean Warbler are some of the species of conservation concern that are known to depend on the habitat that Floodplain Forests provide. Only two Floodplain Forest areas are mapped in Washington. Land conservation in this area would protect much of the important Flood Plain wildlife habitat area, and the unprotected remainder of the Barrett Pond Marsh habitat area.

#### Recreation-

Historic and Cultural – The site of the old #7 School and an old cemetery are located in this Conservation Priority Area in an undeveloped area near Marlow Road. These cultural legacies harken from a time when farms and mills were active and widespread, and transportation was slower. Land conservation would preserve these reminders of early Washington, and preserve the rural setting around them.

Scenic Assets – This area is the entrance to Washington from the southwest in Marlow. A half a mile of undeveloped road frontage on Old Marlow Road, much of it contiguous to the Ashuelot River would be protected by land conservation in this Conservation Priority Area.

Connections and Buffers – This Conservation Priority Area is strategically located between Barrett Pond Town Forest, Huntley Mountain Town Forest and the Orenda-Stickey Wicket I Wildlife Sanctuary in Marlow owned by the U.S. Humane Society. Land conservation in this area would contribute to the existing protections to natural resources represented by these conservation and public lands by enlarging this block of open space land.

## **Farnsworth Hill CPA**

### **Description of Area**

The Farnsworth Hill Conservation Priority Area extends from Old Marlow Road and Lempster Road close to Washington Village, to the Lempster Town line and highlands of Farnsworth Hill to the west, and to the north of Millen Lake to the

south. The peaks of three hills including Farnsworth rise northward from Millen Lake before descending toward Lempster Town Forest. Numerous farm fields along roads in this area lend a pastoral flavor to this quiet corner of Town.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

**Surface Water Quality** – This area is of very high importance for the protection of the water quality of Ashuelot River. Eight undeveloped stream reaches, including source streams for Ashuelot Pond and the Ashuelot River mainstem, originate or pass through here. Protection of this area would maintain the water quality of the river and of Ashuelot Pond that is supplied by it.

**Ground Water** – A portion of the wellhead protection area associated with the public drinking water supply at Washington Elementary School is included in this Conservation Area. The remainder of the protection area extends to Millen Pond, and the Camp Morgan Town Forest. Land conservation in this area would complete the protection of this important water supply by preventing contrary uses that could potentially degrade its quality for drinking water.

**Forestry and Agricultural Productivity** – About 1/3 of this area has Prime Agricultural Soils or Soils of Local Significance. 60 of these acres are actively used for productive agriculture. Almost the entire area also has Important Forest Soils, primarily type 1A, most suitable for northern hardwood production, but also type 1B, suitable for mixed softwoods and hardwoods. Land conservation in this area would protect the productive potential of these forest soils and the economic benefits they provide.

**Biodiversity / Wildlife** – The Wildlife Action Plan maps much of this area as significant for wildlife on a state-wide and ecological region. This un-fragmented forest area is very important for the large ranging wildlife species such as moose, otter and bobcat which depend on large contiguous forest blocks. A pristine example of the Upper Perennial Riparian Ecological System, associated with the stream drainages of the Ashuelot mainstem and associated wetlands, has also been documented in this area. This unusual natural system and the biodiversity it supports would be protected by land conservation in this area.

**Historic and Cultural** – The old Thusel Cemetery and the site of the Old #4 School are located in this conservation priority area. Remnants of old Washington, these historic sites and the natural context around them would be protected by conserving this area for future generations to appreciate.

**Rural Character** – Four farms are highly visible from the roads in this area. These uncommon and important surviving examples of Washington's agricultural past would be preserved by land conservation in this area.

Scenic Assets – This area has almost four miles of undeveloped frontage on both sides of three roads: Old Marlow Road, Farnsworth Hill Road and Old Burbank Road. The flanks of 1831 ft. high Farnsworth Hill is visible from the waters and south shore of Millen Lake. The natural forested quality of these features and the scenic enjoyment they offer would be preserved by land conservation in this area.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, swimming, boating fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. Nearly four miles of Snowmobile Trails cross this Conservation Priority Area. Winter and summer recreation opportunities as well as trail relocation options would be protected by the conservation of these trail corridors.

Connections and Buffers – This Conservation Priority Area is part of a large un-fragmented forest block that includes Farnsworth Hill Town Forest, Lempster Town Forest and the Camp Morgan Town property. The value of these public lands for conservation would be enhanced by land conservation in this large, un-fragmented area.

## **Huntley Mountain CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This virtually undeveloped corner of Washington, where it abuts the Towns of Marlow and Lempster, is in the heart of the Ashuelot headwaters. The entire eastern boundary of this conservation priority area is defined by frontage on both Ashuelot Pond and the Ashuelot River. The lower portions of the slopes that rise from the pond toward the top of Huntley Mountain and the Marlow/Washington Town line also contain very important high-yield aquifers. This area also abuts three Town Forests suggesting the possibility of enhanced protection through land conservation connections.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Ground Water – This CPA contains some of the most significant high-quality groundwater aquifers in the Town (about 50 acres), a resource that is very uncommon in Washington. It also contains a large proportion of land suitable for gravel wells for public drinking water supplies (about 20 acres). Land conservation in this area, along with the slopes above the aquifers would preserve this high-quality groundwater for potential future public drinking water supplies.

Surface Water Quality – Land conservation in this area would have direct benefits to the future water quality of both Ashuelot Pond and the Ashuelot River. 6,500 ft. of the River passes through this area on its way to Ashuelot Pond. There are also six undeveloped stream reaches, including direct source streams for the Ashuelot River and Ashuelot Pond. The slopes here are relatively steep – about

35% of the area has more than a 15% slope. Commercial or residential development would likely create soil disturbance in this relatively steep area; this could seriously degrade water quality. Virtually the entire length of the connecting stream between Sandy Pond and Ashuelot Pond also passes through this CPA.

**Forestry and Agricultural Productivity** – This CPA contains several areas of Important Forest Soils well suited to softwood and hardwood production, and a small area of Locally Important Agricultural Soils. Land conservation in this area would ensure that the productive capacity of these soils was maintained through the use of sustainable practices.

**Biodiversity and Wildlife** – The Wildlife Action Plan maps much of this area as significant for wildlife on a state-wide and ecological region. This un-fragmented forest area is very important for the large ranging wildlife species such as moose, otter, and bobcat, which depend on large contiguous forest blocks. Other species also benefit from the proximity of this area to wetlands and stream corridors. Land conservation in this vicinity would provide a critical protected link for the wildlife that depends on it for habitat. A pristine example of the Upper Perennial Riparian Ecological System, associated with the stream drainages of the Ashuelot mainstem, has also been documented in this area. This unusual natural system and the biodiversity it supports would be protected by land conservation in this area.

**Wetlands** – A diverse assemblage of wetland types is associated with the riparian zone around Ashuelot River in this area, including aquatic beds, deep emergent marshes, and forested swamps. Land conservation here would contribute to the value of these diverse wetlands by preserving the biodiversity that these wetlands represent.

**Flood Damage Prevention** – A 100 acre area near the Ashuelot River in this CPA is prone to flooding. Flood events in recent years underscore the threat that streams and rivers pose during periods of excessive precipitation. Land conservation would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding development away from this area.

**Scenic Assets** – This highly visible undeveloped ridge and flank of Huntley Mountain above the west shore of Ashuelot Pond is enjoyed by residents and visitors to the waters and shoreline of Ashuelot Pond. 2000 feet of the undeveloped western shoreline of Ashuelot Pond proper are also included in this Conservation Priority Area. Land conservation in this vicinity would preserve its value as a scenic resource enjoyed by all.

**Recreation** – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. The area also has two miles of undeveloped frontage on a Class VI Town road,

McKinnon Road, which extends from Washington into both Lempster and Marlow. This road may be appropriate for hiking, skiing and bicycling. Land conservation of this area would preserve this recreational opportunity for the residents of Washington and the general public.

Connections and Buffers – This Conservation Priority Area abuts Farnsworth Hill Town Forest, Huntley Mountain Town Forest and Long Pond Town Forest in Lempster. It also makes a connection between Huntley Mountain Town Forest and the shoreline of Ashuelot Pond. The collective conservation value of these public lands would be enhanced and increased by land protection in this large, un-fragmented area.

## **Codman Hill CPA**

### **Description of Area**

The wild highlands of the east side of this area on Rte. 31 provide a unique, rugged and undeveloped gateway to Washington from the north has character closer to the North Country, rather than to southern New Hampshire. Extending westward to the Lempster Town line and south to Lempster Mountain Road and Washington Heights Road, the headwaters of the Ashuelot River are virtually across the road from this area, at the source at the outlet to Butterfield Pond.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – Nearly 9,000 ft. of the undeveloped and unprotected headwater stretch of the Ashuelot River flow through this area. Land conservation here would maintain the natural condition of this pristine river headwaters and its riparian corridor by preventing impacts and intensity of use resulting from new development and road building.

Flood Damage Prevention – This area contains 72 acres of Flood Prone area associated with the Ashuelot River. Recent historic flood events in the general area underscore the real threat that streams and rivers can pose in areas prone to flooding. Land conservation in this area would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding development away from this area.

Forestry / Agricultural Productivity – Most of this area has Important Forest Soils, especially those well suited to the production of northern hardwoods. Once productive soil areas are converted to uses other than forestry and agriculture, their productive potential is essentially eliminated forever. Land conservation in this area would preserve these most productive soils for continued, economically viable forest production.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – The Wildlife Action Plan maps much of this area as significant for wildlife on a state-wide and ecological region. This un-fragmented forest area is very important for the large ranging wildlife species such as moose, otter, and bobcat, which depend on large contiguous forest blocks. Other species also benefit from the proximity of this area to wetlands and stream corridors. A rare example of old growth northern hardwood forest has been observed in this area as well. A pristine example of the Upper Perennial Riparian Ecological System, associated with the stream drainages of the Ashuelot mainstem, has also been documented in this area. This unusual natural system and the biodiversity it supports would be protected by land conservation in this area.

Wetlands – An extensive complex of wetland types frame the mainstem of the Ashuelot as it flow south through this area. Alluvial alder shrubland and emergent marsh wetland types occur here. Land conservation here would contribute to the value of these wetlands by preserving the biodiversity that these wetlands support.

Historic and Cultural – A unique geological curiosity known since the early days of Washington as Devil’s Chair, is located in this Conservation Priority Area. Near the Lempster Town line on the Class 5 road/trail Twin Bridges Road, is an unusual bridge with abutments that were constructed many years ago from rock, supporting two spans that connect in the middle on ledge. The bridge is located where the drainage between two broad wetlands is constricted, and offers sweeping views in both directions. These important cultural features could be protected by focusing land conservation in this area.

Rural Character – Twin Bridges Road is used by hikers, and offers views of large wetlands, old growth hardwood forest, and a variety of mature second growth forest with no indications of settlement. Such untouched remnants of pre-settlement and early settlement conditions are very uncommon today. These legacies could be protected by the use of land conservation.

Recreation –Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. Over a mile of active Snowmobile Trails pass through the core of this Conservation Priority Area. Land Conservation in this area would protect this remote winter recreation opportunity, and provide for alternative trail routes should this be necessary.

Scenic Assets – This area has over a mile of undeveloped frontage on NH Rte. 31, directly across the road is Pillsbury State Park. The peak of Farnsworth Hill is also located in this area close to Rte. 31. This unique, high country natural gateway to Washington could be preserved for its scenic beauty for present and future motorists by targeting land conservation here.

Connections and Buffers – This large un-fragmented forest block abuts New Road Town Forest, Pillsbury State Park, Farnsworth Hill Town Forest and the Camp Morgan Town property. By protecting land around and between these existing conservation and public lands, the wildlife and ecology of these areas will be enhanced.

## **2. Central Washington Focus Area**

### **Description of General Area**

Located at the heart of Washington and close to Washington Village, this area is characterized by lakes, hilly topography, extensive forests and secluded streams and wetlands. Remarkably undeveloped and natural, it is the southern extension of the rugged highlands that include Jones Hill, Kittredge Hill and Lovell Mountain in Pillsbury State Park to the north. Several hiking and snowmobile trails cross this area and provide access to Pillsbury and other conservation lands.

This area is recognized as being a priority for land conservation by the *Quabbin to Cardigan Conservation Collaborative Report*, and the *NH Fish & Game Wildlife Action Plan*.

### **Island Pond CPA**

#### **Description of Area**

This large Conservation Priority Area in the geographic center of the Town extends from the lower western flanks of Lovell Mountain in Pillsbury State Park west to Halfmoon Pond Road, and south to the western side of Island Pond. Characterized by relatively steep terrain, portions of the watersheds of Bog Brook, Island Pond and Halfmoon are included in this forested area.

#### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – Seven undeveloped stream reaches that directly supply Halfmoon Pond and Island Pond occur in this area. Land protection here would have direct benefits to the future water quality of both Island Pond and Halfmoon Pond, and would have secondary benefits to the water quality of Highland Lake.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – About half of this land area has the two most Important Forest Soils IA and IB that are highly suitable for northern hardwoods and for mixed hardwoods/softwoods. There are also some areas with Prime Agricultural Soils and Agricultural Soils of Local Significance. Considering the forest productivity of this area, land conservation is



recommended to keep the land economically viable for commercial forestry and agriculture.

**Biodiversity / Wildlife** – According to the NH Fish & Game Department's Wildlife Action Plan, Wildlife Habitat of Highest State-wide Condition Rank occurs in the area, as well as Supporting Habitat. This undeveloped, unfragmented wildlife corridor between the waters of Island Pond and Halfmoon Pond would also be protected by land conservation in this area.

**Wetlands** – Several peatlands occur in this Conservation Priority Area. Wetlands of this general type are uncommon in this part of the state, and are considered a Priority Habitat for Wildlife by the NH Fish & Game Department. Protection of these unusual wetlands and their surrounding upland habitat by the use of land conservation would protect the wildlife that is known in general to depend on them, including the Ringed Boghaunter Dragonfly and Palm Warbler.

**Historic and Cultural** – At the end of the maintained portion of Halfmoon Pond Road is the site of an old Town School. Land conservation would maintain the rural context of this historical feature, located at the edge of what is now in a remote and unsettled area.

**Recreation** – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. The Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail route crosses through the heart of this Conservation Priority Area, and also follows the boundary on Halfmoon Pond Road for a total of 1½ miles. A mile and a half of Snowmobile Trail corridor also crosses this area in two locations, making connections to Pillsbury State Park. Land conservation here would preserve these popular recreational assets, and could provide for alternative routes and new trails in the future.

**Scenic Assets** – Undeveloped shoreline of Island Pond and Halfmoon Pond would be protected by land conservation in this area. Such protection would provide scenic enjoyment not only of the residents of these ponds, but also of hiking and boating visitors to the area.

**Connections and Buffers** – Situated as it is with some five miles of boundaries on other existing conservation lands, land conservation in this area would make significant contributions to the enhancement of combined conservation area of Pillsbury State Park, the New Forestry LLC easement and Journey's End Reservation (SPNHF). Unfragmented open space between Island Pond and Halfmoon Pond would also be protected where none is currently protected.

## **Ames Hill / Halfmoon Pond CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This Conservation Priority Area is characterized by relatively steep terrain in the northwest, northeast and southwest, framing the unspoiled corridor of upper Bog Brook and its extensive wetlands, as it flows south into Halfmoon Pond. Bordered by Halfmoon Pond Road to the east, North Main Street to the west, and Pillsbury State Park to the north, its proximity to Washington Village suggests recreational connections through un-fragmented forest to Halfmoon Pond and beyond to Pillsbury State Park.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

**Surface Water Quality** – Three un-named, undeveloped stream reaches are included in this area, all sources to 75-acre Halfmoon Pond. This includes the entire length of the two largest source streams to the pond. A mile and a half of Bog Brook also is included in this area, the last remaining un-protected section above Halfmoon Pond. Land conservation in this Conservation Priority Area would protect these undeveloped riparian corridors that maintain the water quality of Halfmoon Pond, and secondarily the water quality of Highland Lake further downstream.

**Flood Damage Prevention** – A significant 72-acre area that is prone to flooding is located in the middle of this area in association with Bog Brook. Land conservation there would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding development away from this area. It would also maintain the stability of the immediate watershed for the flood mitigation services this would provide.

**Forestry and Agricultural Productivity** – More than half of this Conservation Priority Area has Important Forest Soils, including the largest single area in Washington of soil most suitable for the growing of White Pine and other softwoods. About 20% of the area also has Important Agricultural Soils, including Prime Agricultural Soil. Land conservation in the area would protect these economically valuable soils and their capacity for forestry and agricultural production.

**Biodiversity / Wildlife** – The majority of this Conservation Priority Area is mapped by the NH Fish & Game Department as Wildlife Habitat of Highest State-wide Condition Rank. Large, un-fragmented by any roads, and currently providing a habitat corridor between Pillsbury State Park and Halfmoon Pond, as well as along undeveloped Bog Brook and its wetlands, land conservation in this area should be a priority.

Wetlands – Over 70 acres of diverse wetlands occur this Conservation Priority Area. In particular this includes the largest example (30 acres) of the Peatland type in Washington, as well as a large complex of Marsh wetlands that for their combined size and condition are both considered Priority Habitat at risk in the NH Fish and Game Landowner Incentive Plan (LIP) Focus Area that includes Washington. Land conservation here would directly benefit these important, intact habitats and the wildlife that depend on them, and funding may be available from the LIP program for this effort.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, swimming, boating, hunting and snowmobiling.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of Snowmobile Trail corridor crosses through this Conservation Priority Area, and a section of the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway regional hiking trail follows the eastern boundary along Halfmoon Pond Road. Land conservation here would protect trail corridors and the recreational benefits they provide, as well as allow for appropriate alternative routes should they be needed in the future.

Scenic Assets – The peak of 2,140 foot Ames Hill is located in the northern part of this area. 8,000 ft. of continuous undeveloped shoreline of Halfmoon Pond in this area provides significant scenic, water quality and ecological benefits. Land conservation in this Conservation Priority Area would protect these high-quality resources for current and future residents and visitors.

Connections and Buffers – Entirely bounded on the north by nearly 2 miles of the boundary of Pillsbury State Park, land conservation in this area would enhance and enlarge the contiguous conservation area of Pillsbury State Park and the other conservation lands adjacent to it. It would also protect the existing undeveloped linkage between the Park and Halfmoon Pond.

### **3. East Washington Focus Area**

#### **Description of General Area**

Driving to East Washington from the south in Hillsborough, a motorist passes extensive open fields, and 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century farm houses and barns, finally arriving at the quiet crossroads village center with its old white churches, school and mill pond. A large working farm with cornfields dominates the western end of this valley, a unique agricultural landscape in an otherwise forested highland setting that stretches northward to the ridges to the north. This diverse area extends from the flanks of Lovell Mountain and Pillsbury State Park east to the Bradford Town line, south to the Hillsborough Town line and west to Island Pond.

This area is recognized as being a priority for land conservation by the *Quabbin to Cardigan Conservation Collaborative Report*, and the *NH Fish & Game Wildlife Action Plan*.

## **Beards Brook CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This Conservation Priority Area extends from East Washington village south to the Hillsborough Town line, and west to Lovell Mountain and Island Pond. Serving as the gateway to old East Washington village from center Washington, Bradford, and Hillsborough; it is a very special corner of Town.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

**Surface Water Quality** – Currently the watershed of both the south and north branches of Beards Brook are mostly unprotected by formal land conservation. This Conservation Priority Area contains virtually the entire length of both branches of Beards Brook, from their origins at Island Pond and on the southeast flank of Lovell Mountain, past the confluence with Woodward Brook at Mill Pond, and south to the Hillsborough Town line. As recent issues with pollution in Mill Pond underscore, water quality is an important resource that needs enhanced protection. Land conservation in these important watersheds would maintain the Quality of these streams and the water bodies associated with them.

**Ground Water** – 167 acres of high yield aquifer are located in this Conservation Priority Area, the majority of the largest single high-quality aquifer in Washington. This is also associated with 85 acres of Potentially Favorable Gravel Well Area. Between this area and the Woodward Brook Conservation Priority Area just to the north, there is more high yield aquifer than all the rest of the areas in Washington combined. A clean and reliable source of ground water is one of the most important natural resources a Town can have. With climate change a widely accepted fact, and the consequences unknown, prudence would dictate the protection of high quality drinking water supplies whenever possible. The best way to do this is with the comprehensive protection that land conservation provides.

**Flood Damage Prevention** – 66 acres of Flood-Prone area are located along the Beards Brook riparian corridor south and east of East Washington Road. Recent severe weather events have caused catastrophic floods in Towns immediately to the west of Washington, highlighting the potential that even small streams can have during historic floods. Land conservation here would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding further development away from this area.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – There are 72 acres of actively used farmland in this Conservation Priority Area, the largest concentration of active farming in the Town. The last remaining working dairy farm in town is found in this area. There are also Prime Agricultural Soils, Soils of Statewide Significance and Soils of Local Significance in this area. About half the area of this Conservation Priority Area has Important Forest Soils. Land conservation in the area would protect these economically valuable soils and their capacity for forestry and agricultural production.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – The majority of this Conservation Priority Area is mapped by the NH Fish & Game Department as Wildlife Habitat of Highest State-wide Condition Rank. Included in this mapped area is the largest example of the Large Grassland Priority Habitat type in Washington (214 acres). Numerous species that are in decline and / or of conservation concern including Northern Harrier, Horned Lark, Purple Marten, Northern Leopard Frog and Wood Turtle utilize larger grasslands such as the ones in East Washington. This Conservation Priority Area also has examples of Peatland and Marsh complex, two other Priority Habitat types mapped by the Wildlife Action Plan. Land conservation in the areas of these grasslands, wetlands and the surrounding landscape would maintain special wildlife habitat and biodiversity values.

Historic and Cultural – This part of Washington is particularly rich with cultural and historic features. An old school house, known as District #5 is located near East Washington Road. Near the outlet of Mill Pond, the stone foundation of Carr’s Mill still remains evident today as well as 3 more dam sites downstream and one upstream from the pond outlet. Land conservation in this area would preserve these sites of local historic value.

Rural Character –East Washington village, with its old churches, school, and residences, still appears much as it must have 100 years ago. As a gateway to the Town from the southeast in Hillsborough, land conservation would preserve the rural character of this village that has become a signature of the Town’s identity.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, swimming, hunting and snowmobiling. Over two miles of snowmobile trails cross this area, making connections to trails in Hillsborough and to conservation lands to the west. A growing horse population in East Washington utilizes the trail system along with hikers in the warmer season. In the center of East Washington village, Mill Pond has a public swimming beach. Land conservation in this part of Town would maintain the trail corridors and provide areas for potential relocation if necessary. It would also provide comprehensive protection of the drainages of Beards Brook and the water quality of the public beach at Mill Pond.

Scenic Assets – Picturesque East Washington village and its setting below the slopes of Lovell Mountain are exceptional scenic assets to the Town. Land

conservation here would maintain the scenic qualities and rural landscape context of this special area.

**Connections and Buffers** – This area abuts three existing conservation properties: the SPNHF Journey’s End Reservation, Pillsbury State Park and the New Forestry LLC Easement (SPNHF). There is currently a gap in the protection of the southeast flank of Lovell Mountain, at the headwaters of the north branch of Beards Brook. Land conservation in this area would consolidate the protection of Lovell Mountain, the most visible landform in Washington, as well as the headwaters of Beards Brook.

## **Woodward Brook CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This Conservation Area is bounded by the Bradford Town line to the east, by East Washington Road to the south, and by conservation lands and the base of the Lovell Mountain highlands to the west and north. A diverse array of landscapes is represented here, from the wild upper drainage of Woodward Brook to the pastoral setting of old East Washington village. This area and the nearby Beards Brook area are the first sights a visitor sees when entering the Town from the south in Hillsborough and the north from Bradford.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

**Surface Water Quality** – Six undeveloped stream reaches flow through this Conservation Priority Area, most notably Woodward Brook and its tributaries. Woodward Brook is a wild, high-quality stream that supports wild trout. Its headwaters are largely protected by conservation to the north. Woodward Brook also supplies water to Mill Pond with its public swimming area. Land conservation in this area would ensure that this major stream maintains its pristine quality.

**Ground Water** – This Conservation Priority Area contains 60 acres of High Yield Aquifer area and 27 acres of Potentially Favorable Gravel Well Area. The largest high-quality potential drinking water source in the Town is located in this area and the Beards Brook Conservation Priority Area. A clean and reliable source of ground water is one of the most important natural resources a Town can have. The best way to protect this critical resource for future use is with the comprehensive protection that land conservation provides.

**Flood Damage Prevention** – A total of 37 acres of Flood Prone area occur in two locations in this Conservation Priority Area, associated with the upper and lower portions of Woodward Brook. Land conservation here would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding development away from this area. It

would also maintain the stability of the immediate watershed for the flood mitigation services this would provide.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – 47 acres of agricultural land are actively used in this Conservation Priority Area. There are also one area of Prime Agricultural Soils, and others of Agricultural Soil of Statewide Significance and Local Significance. Nearly the entire area also has Important Forest Soils. Land conservation in the area would protect these economically valuable soils and their capacity for forestry and agricultural production.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – Included in this mapped area is a continuation of largest example of the Large Grassland Priority Habitat type in Washington (214 acres) which is primarily located in the nearby Beards Brook Conservation Priority Area. Numerous species that are in decline and / or of conservation concern including Northern Harrier, Horned Lark, Purple Marten, Northern Leopard Frog and Wood Turtle utilize larger grasslands such as these in East Washington. NH Fish & Game has mapped almost this entire area as Wildlife Habitat of Highest State-wide Condition Rank. When combined with the nearby Beards Brook Conservation Priority Area this is the most significant block of priority wildlife habitat in Washington, and most of it is currently un-protected. This area also abuts the Bradford Bog with its globally rare Inland Atlantic White Cedar Swamp natural community. Land conservation in this area would protect the natural hydrology and water quality of Bradford Bog, and protect the sensitive priority wildlife habitat areas from disturbance and alteration.

Historic and Cultural – The unusual geological feature Tipping Rock is located in the forest in this Conservation Priority Area north of the village of East Washington. This curiosity has been a popular destination since the early days of the Town. The old Methodist Church (1858) and old Calvinist Baptist Church (1878) still survive to this day on the north side of East Washington Village and contribute to the historic flavor of this part of Town. Land conservation would maintain the rural landscape context of the village and its historic structures, and could allow permanent public access to Tipping Rock.

Rural Character – East Washington Village is a stunning surviving example of an early American Town center, fully retaining the character of the rural life of old Washington as it must have been in generations past. Land conservation in this area would retain a piece of Washington's special rural quality by protecting the open space, rural context of the village.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, swimming, hunting and snowmobiling. Over 3 1/2 miles of Snowmobile Trails cross this Conservation Priority Area. Woodward Brook supports a population of wild Brook Trout. Development and forestry can impact stream quality by increasing sedimentation and raising water temperature by clearing of streamside vegetation, reducing its

suitability for trout. Land conservation in this area would protect the corridors of these trails, allow for relocation of the corridor if necessary or desirable, and maintain the quality trout fishing supported by the wild freestone stream Woodward Brook.

Connections and Buffers – This Conservation Area abuts several existing conservation lands: Pillsbury State Park, Journey’s End Reservation (SPNHF), the Webb easement (SPNHF), the New Forestry LLC easement (SPNHF), and the Bradford Bog conservation area (Town of Bradford). Enhancement and enlargement of the contiguous conservation area of these properties would increase their value for the conservation services that they provide. Land conservation targeted specifically in areas that would increase this existing conservation base is recommended.

## **4. Southeastern Washington Focus Area**

### **Description of General Area**

This sparsely settled corner of Town is Washington’s window to the world, as most travelers drive right by it on Rte. 31 from Hillsborough and Windsor to get here. This focus area has a wide variation in elevation, from the 1,635 ft. high Kingsbury Hill summit to the wide wetland valley framing Shedd Brook at 984 ft., one of the lowest points in Town.

This area is recognized as being a priority for land conservation by the *Quabbin to Cardigan Conservation Collaborative Report*, and the *NH Fish & Game Wildlife Action Plan*.

### **Shedd Brook CPA**

#### **Description of Area**

This relatively small Conservation Priority Area is the gateway to Washington from the southeast on Rte. 31. The broad vista of an extensive wetland to the north, and the forested peaks of Jones Hill and Kingsbury Hill to the north make this a special place, and a welcoming introduction to visitors to Washington. But this area has more than scenic value, as a significant aquifer underlies a biologically important wetland complex that Shedd Brook that flows through on its way to Hillsborough.

#### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – Over a mile of the undeveloped riparian corridor of the chief stream in southeast Washington Shedd Brook, and a major tributary are



included in this Conservation Priority Area. The context for these streams is a very large wetland complex. This area is bordered by two public roads, which already introduce impacts from sediments and road salt to this area. Land conservation in this riparian wetland area would maintain the quality of these streams.

Ground Water – 23 acres of a large High Yield Aquifer that extends into Windsor is included in this Conservation Priority Area. This is one of the three most important high-quality groundwater sources in the Town. As population growth continues in the Town and region, reliable sources of drinking water will become more important. The most effective way to protect this critical resource for future use is with the comprehensive protection that land conservation provides.

Flood Damage Prevention – This relatively broad, level area has 34 acres of Flood Prone area associated with Shedd Brook and its wetlands. These wetlands mitigate the impacts of floods as they store these waters and slow their passage downstream, reducing potential damage. Land conservation here would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding further development away from this area, keeping these wetlands and their forested buffers intact.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – This Conservation Priority Area is particularly important as wildlife habitat, containing three of the four Wildlife Action Plan Priority Habitat types that occur in Washington. It contains one of the largest occurrences of the Marsh and Shrub Wetland Priority Habitat type mapped by the Wildlife Action Plan in Town. American Woodcock, Blandings Turtle, Northern Harrier, Osprey and Sedge Wren are just a few of the species of conservation concern that are supported by this wetland suite. A large portion of the largest Floodplain Forest habitat also is included in this area. Cerulean Warbler, Silver-haired Bat and Northern Leopard Frog are some of the species of conservation concern known to depend on such uncommon habitat. Finally, the uncommon Peatland habitat type occurs as a part of the wetland complex here. Most of the wetland community types within this suite of wetlands are uncommon or rare State-wide. Wildlife habitat in general in this area was ranked by the Wildlife Action Plan as of Highest State-wide Condition Rank. Land conservation in this area would protect these sensitive priority wildlife habitat areas from disturbance and alteration.

Wetlands – A 44 acre complex of wetlands, among the most diverse complex assemblage in Washington is a major feature of this Conservation Priority Area. This large area not only provides scenic enjoyment and unusual wildlife habitat, but also control and processing of flood waters. Land conservation in this area would protect this important wetland area for the variety of public and biological benefits that it provides.

Rural Character – The first view of Washington from Rte. 31 leaving Windsor is the sweeping panorama of this wild landscape of wetlands and forested hills.

Remarkably natural and unspoiled to this day, it harkens back to the days when settlers first came to the place they later called Washington. Land conservation in this small, but important entrance to the Town would maintain this wild, natural character that is a trademark of the Town.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. A half mile of Snowmobile Trail corridor passes through this Conservation Priority Area, connecting with the Smith Pond area and north Hillsborough, and Stoddard to the south. Land conservation in the Shedd Brook Conservation Priority Area would maintain this winter and additional summer recreation opportunities.

## **Smith Pond CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This Conservation Priority Area is bounded by Smith Pond to the south, by the Windsor and Hillsborough Town lines to the east, and extends northward to include the peak of Kingsbury Hill. This quiet, un-populated corner of Town has only one road, Class VI Smith Road that passes through towards the north over the gap between Kingsbury and Jones Hills.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – The entire undeveloped length of both streams that are the sources to Smith Pond, and a portion of a major tributary to Shedd Brook are located in this Conservation Priority Area. The undeveloped east shoreline of Smith Pond is also included. Protection of this area by the use of land conservation would maintain the water quality of these streams, and of Smith Pond and Shedd Brook that are supplied by them.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – Most of this Conservation Priority Area has Important Forest Soils, most notably Class IA that is highly suitable for northern hardwood production. About 25% of the area also has Agricultural Soils of Local Significance. Highly productive agricultural soils are uncommon in Washington. Land conservation in this area would protect the productive potential of these forest and agricultural soils and the economic benefits they provide.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – NH Fish & Game has mapped almost this entire area as Wildlife Habitat of Highest State-wide Condition Rank. Its proximity to the Shedd Brook and Beards Brook Conservation Priority Areas suggest wildlife habitat corridors that should be protected from fragmentation and human disturbance. Land conservation in this area would support wildlife by the protection of habitat.

Historic and Cultural – The site of the old #10 school is located in this Conservation Priority Area along Smith Pond Road. The setting is a rural Road that currently also serves as a trail in an undeveloped part of Town. Preserving the historic, rural setting of this historic site and its surroundings would best be done by conserving the land in the vicinity.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, swimming, boating, hunting and snowmobiling. Nearly a mile of Snowmobile Trail corridor crosses this Conservation Priority Area. Smith Pond, the eastern shore of which is included in this area has cold water fishing and a public boat access. Land conservation here would maintain the quality of the pond for fishing, and allow for continued use and potential relocation of winter and summer recreational trails.

Scenic Assets – The peak of Kingsbury Hill is within this Conservation Priority Area. The undeveloped eastern shore of Smith Pond is also enjoyed by the residents and visitors to the pond. Land conservation would protect these special scenic qualities for future generations to enjoy.

Connections and Buffers – Initiating land conservation in this area would protect this undeveloped and otherwise unprotected southeast part of Town, and make connections with the Shedd Brook and Beards Brook proposed Conservation Priority Areas.

## **5. Highland Lake Focus Area**

### **Description of General Area**

The unifying theme for this Conservation Focus Area is the watershed of Highland Lake. This very long (6 miles, 712 acres) and narrow lake, very popular with seasonal residents, is primarily in the Town of Stoddard, but the northern ¼ of the lake and much of the watershed extends into Washington. Bog Brook, the northern major source for the lake forms the spine of this area, which is characterized by highlands that frame the eastern and western sides of the lake basin and its source brook. Much of the lake shore is densely populated, yet a short distance from the lake the setting is wild and roadless forest.

This area is recognized as being a priority for land conservation by the *Quabbin to Cardigan Conservation Collaborative Report*, and the *NH Fish & Game Wildlife Action Plan*.

## **Barden Pond CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This large, undeveloped area is an unprotected portion of a large forested block in the highlands that extend from the Stoddard Town line northward to the Clark Robinson Memorial Forest conservation area. Natural features of this area include the north slopes and summit of Healey Hill, and undeveloped Barden Pond and its surrounding natural landscape. It is bordered by the un-maintained Town roads King Street to the west and Barden Pond Road to the east. Wedged between the Andorra Forest easement and the Wild Pond easement to the west and east, its proximity to these existing conservation lands suggests the possibility of future conservation linkages.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

**Surface Water Quality** – The entire shoreline and watershed of Barden Pond is included in this Conservation Priority Area. Barden Pond is one of the last unprotected and undeveloped ponds in Washington. Ten undeveloped stream corridors occur in this area as well, including source streams for Barden Pond and tributaries to the east source stream to Ashuelot Pond to the northwest. Land conservation in this area would maintain the water quality of these streams, and of Barden Pond and Ashuelot Pond that are supplied by them.

**Flood Damage Prevention** – 58 acres of Flood Prone area associated with the east source stream to Ashuelot Pond are located in this Conservation Priority Area. Recent historic flood events in the general area underscore the real threat that even small streams can pose in flood prone areas. Land conservation here would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding development away from this area. It would also maintain the stability of the immediate watershed for the flood mitigation services this currently provides.

**Forestry and Agricultural Productivity** – About a third of this Conservation Priority Area has significant agricultural soils according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Almost the entire area also has Important Forest Soils, predominantly those in Class 1A, the highest productivity rating that is most suitable for the growth of northern hardwoods species (sugar maple, yellow birch and beech). Land conservation in this highly productive area would protect the productive capacity of the soils here for the economic and soil conservation benefits that they provide.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – Wildlife Habitat of Highest State-wide Condition Rank is mapped by the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department's Wildlife Action Plan in this Conservation Priority Area. The priority wetland habitat type Marsh and Shrub Wetland is also identified in the north portion of this area. American Woodcock, Blandings Turtle, Northern Harrier, Osprey and Sedge Wren are just a few of the species of conservation concern that are supported by this wetland suite. Land conservation in this area would support wildlife by the protection of significant and sensitive habitat.

Wetlands – Two areas of wetlands occur in this Conservation Priority Area. A necklace of open water, emergent and shrub wetlands extend southward from Barden Pond. Another complex of emergent, shrub and forested wetlands is located in the north of this area, in connection with the east source stream to Ashuelot Pond. This second large wetland area not only provides unusual wildlife habitat, but also control and processing of flood waters. Land conservation in this area would protect this important wetland area for the variety of public benefits that it provides.

Historic and Cultural – The original site of the Old #3 School is located on the un-maintained portion of King Street in this Conservation Priority Area. The school was subsequently moved to the north end of King Street. Land conservation in this area would protect this site, and maintain the natural setting for this historic remnant of an earlier time.

Rural Character – A Class VI road that is currently used as a trail passes through this Conservation Priority Area. The un-maintained Town roads Barden Pond Road and King Street form the east and west borders of the area respectively. With the exception of a short distance of frontage on Valley Road, the area is very rural and only accessible for recreational purposes. Land conservation here would maintain the open space character of this large and natural part of Town.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. Over four miles of Snowmobile Trail corridor pass through or next to this Conservation Priority Area. The Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway trail currently loops through the Clark Robinson Memorial Forest conservation area, and then back to Faxon Hill Road and south along King Street. This area, if protected by land conservation could provide an alternative natural setting for over a mile of the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway trail that currently follows roads in this part of Town.

Scenic Assets – Barden Pond is one of the last unprotected and undeveloped ponds in Washington. As such, its value for scenic enjoyment is great. Walking, skiing or snowmobiling to a wild pond in an undeveloped area is something that is becoming increasingly difficult to experience in this part of New Hampshire. The 2,067 foot summit of Healey Hill is also included in this area. Land conservation

in this wild area would preserve the experience of discovering a wild pond and hiking a wild peak for residents today and in the future.

Connections and Buffers – This Conservation Priority Area is strategically located between the Andorra Forest easement and the Wild Pond easement, both administered by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and Clark Robinson Memorial Forest conservation area, owned by the New England Forestry Foundation. The large forested open space block that this Conservation Area is a part of is virtually un-fragmented, making it very important for wide ranging and forest interior wildlife species. Land conservation here would greatly enhance and augment the benefits of the existing conservation lands by connecting and expanding them.

## **Camp Morgan / Robinson Forest CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This predominantly dry and relatively steep upland area makes a connection between the conservation / public lands Camp Morgan, Clark Robinson Memorial Forest, and Washington village. Highly productive for forestry and agriculture, it has scenic road frontage on Faxon Hill Road.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – Two undeveloped stream corridors cross this Conservation Priority Area. In the absence of regulations and ordinances that specifically protect stream corridors from the impacts associated with land conversion, development and intensive forestry, land conservation protects stream water quality and the biological values that it supports.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – The majority of this Conservation Priority Area has unusually productive and workable agricultural soils, including Prime Agricultural Soils, the highest rated soils in NH. The entire area also has the Important Forest Soil 1A, the highest productivity rating especially suitable for northern hardwood production. These highly significant, productive soils could be kept in economically viable production by focusing land conservation in this area.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – An example of the Peatland Priority Wildlife Habitat type occurs in this Conservation Priority Area. This wetland type is very uncommon in the Town, and is capable of providing habitat for such rare species as the Ringed Boghaunter dragonfly. Most of the wetland community types within this suite of wetlands are uncommon or rare State-wide. Land conservation in this area would protect this sensitive and uncommon wildlife habitat along with its upland buffer.

Recreation – Recreation uses in this area include hiking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, biking, fishing, swimming, boating, hunting and snowmobiling. Nearly a mile of the corridor of Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway regional hiking trail passes through this Conservation Priority Area, making connections with Washington Village and Clark Robinson Memorial Forest. The protection that land conservation can provide to this regional trail corridor would not only allow for its continued recreational use in a natural, off-road setting, but would provide options for relocation as necessary in the future.

Scenic Assets – The road frontage to the north is already protected as a part of the Camp Morgan Town property, but the frontage on the south side of the road is unprotected. The scenic enjoyment that currently benefits those passing by on Faxon Hill Road would be guaranteed by land conservation of this area.

Connections and Buffers – This Conservation Priority Area is geographically located to make the connection between the existing conservation lands Clark Robinson Memorial Forest (New England Forestry Foundation) and Camp Morgan Town Forest. Consolidation and expansion of conservation lands enhances their value for wildlife habitat and recreational uses by limiting edge effects and the introduction of invasive species, and other negative results of fragmentation and conversion. Land Conservation is strongly recommended in this area for the benefit of these conservation lands.

## **Bog Brook / Highland Lake CPA**

### **Description of Area**

This Conservation Priority Area is defined by Rte. 31 to the east and by Valley Road to the west, and contains the riparian corridor of lower Bog Brook and its surrounding wetlands. The northern end of this area extends to the heart of Washington Village, while the southern end almost reaches the northern end of Highland Lake. Motorists on Rte. 31 are tempted by long views across the wetlands connected with Bog Brook to an unspoiled and diverse upland backdrop.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – 1 ½ miles of the undeveloped riparian corridor of Bog Brook, a major source stream to Highland Lake flow through this Conservation Priority Area. Portions of seven undeveloped stream reaches in the watershed of Highland Lake also flow through this area. The entire shoreline of the undeveloped Philbrick Pond is included in this area as well. Highland Lake is a very important recreational resource, and protection of its water quality is of paramount importance. Land conservation in this area would maintain the water quality of both lower Bog Brook and Highland Lake.

Flood Damage Prevention – A very large 103-acre flood-prone area associated with Bog Brook occurs in this Conservation Priority Area. Recent historic flood events in the general area underscore the real threat that even small streams can pose in flood prone areas. Land conservation here would prevent property damage and personal injury by guiding development away from this area. It would also maintain the stability of the immediate watershed for flood mitigation.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – Important Forest Soils are present in the north and south portions of this Conservation Priority Area. Agricultural Soils of Local Significance are also abundant here. Land conservation in the area would protect these economically valuable soils and their capacity for forestry and agricultural production.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – This Conservation Priority Area is especially rich in significant wildlife habitat. It contains one of only four examples of the Large Grassland Priority Habitat type in Washington (21 acres). Numerous species that are in decline and / or of conservation concern including Northern Harrier, Horned Lark, Purple Marten, Northern Leopard Frog and Wood Turtle utilize larger grasslands such as these. This area also contains one of the largest occurrences of the Marsh and Shrub Wetland Priority Habitat type mapped by the Wildlife Action Plan in Town (87 acres). American Woodcock, Blandings Turtle, Northern Harrier, Osprey and Sedge Wren are just a few of the species of conservation concern that are supported by this suite of wetland types that is spread across the north portion of this area. Wildlife Habitat of Highest State-wide Condition Rank in association with Bog Brook and the surrounding wetlands is also mapped by the 2007 Wildlife Action Plan. Land conservation is an ideal tool for protection of this special wildlife habitat of state-wide importance.

Rural Character – 18 acres of farmland are still actively managed in this Conservation Priority Area along Valley Road. The area is otherwise essentially wild and roadless, with no established trails or development away from the bordering roads. This combination of open fields and dense woodlands makes this area quintessentially rural in character. Land conservation of this area would preserve some of the best of what still makes Washington unique and special.

Scenic Assets – Views across the extensive wetlands from the undeveloped road frontage west of Rte. 31, and extensive undeveloped public road frontage on Valley Road make this a highly visible area from two roads that lead to Washington Village from the south. Undeveloped road frontage so close to the village center maintains the unique natural setting of this hilltop village center, the highest in New Hampshire. Land conservation is well suited to the protection of this important scenic resource.



Connections and Buffers – The Old Meadow Town property which is predominantly land-locked wetlands is included in this Conservation Priority Area, serving as a foothold of conservation on the doorstep of Washington Village. Further land conservation in this area would build on this initial start, and enhance the values that it protects, including water quality, floodwater storage and wildlife habitat.

## **Freezeland Pond CPA**

### **Description of Area**

Freezeland Pond, an undeveloped waterbody tucked out of sight between Rte. 31 and East Washington Road is the focal point for this Conservation Priority Area. The pond is included in the watershed for Island Pond, a short distance to the north. The road frontage is as undeveloped and natural as the pond itself.

### **Benefits of Conservation**

Surface Water Quality – Freezeland Pond is a source for nearby Island Pond, and therefore impacts to the water quality in this Conservation Priority Area could affect the water quality of Island Pond. Maintaining the vegetated upland buffer around the pond and preventing erosion along its banks are of primary concern. Land conservation can provide comprehensive protection of this important resource and the public health and enjoyment it provides.

Forestry and Agricultural Productivity – The majority of this Conservation Priority Area has Important Forest Soils most suitable for the growth of mixed hardwoods and softwoods. An area of Soil of Local Significance is also located in this area. Land conservation in the area would protect these economically valuable soils and their capacity for continued forestry and agricultural production.

Biodiversity / Wildlife – Peatlands, and Marsh and Shrub Wetland Priority Habitat areas are mapped by the New Hampshire Fish & Game in this Conservation Priority Area. The entire shallow and marshy Freezeland Pond is considered significant wildlife habitat that is capable of supporting such species as Spotted Turtle, Palm Warbler, Least Bittern and Pied-billed Grebe, all species of conservation concern. Land conservation is an ideal tool for the protection of this important, intact wildlife habitat and the vital upland buffer that surrounds it.

Rural Character – The undeveloped, primitive, almost boreal quality of the frontage of the Conservation Priority Area on Rte. 31 and East Washington Roads belies the residential character around the shore and vicinity of Island Pond across the road to the north. This wild forested frontage is more reminiscent of northern New Hampshire than of the south part of the state with its population centers not

far away. In order to maintain the undomesticated character of this area and its contribution to preserving the rural feeling of the Town, land conservation is recommended in this area.

Connections and Buffers – This part of Town is relatively distant from existing conservation and public lands. It is however situated across Rte. 31 from the Bog Brook / Highland Lake Conservation Priority Area. Land conservation concentrating on these two areas together would make significant contributions to resource protection in this heart of the Town, and potentially make available new recreational possibilities.

## **Town-wide Land Conservation Priorities:**

The areas represented by the Conservation Priority Areas described above include most of the known significant natural resources, and many of the known cultural resources in Washington. In some cases including entire resources in one of these areas was not considered practical, whether because portions were in areas already developed, physical barriers were present, or for a variety of other reasons. In acknowledgement that these resources may have been omitted from the Conservation Priority Areas, a series of non-site-specific land conservation recommendations are presented here.

### **Protect and Connect**

Adding to existing conservation lands, as well as protecting large parcels, enhances the goals of this plan.

### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are important for the variety of functions that they serve, including flood water storage, wildlife habitat, surface water quality, scenic enjoyment and groundwater protection. Areas that contain wetlands, especially those of significant size should be conserved when possible. Land conservation should also include a natural upland buffer to maintain the integrity of the wetland and its role in the larger landscape.

### **Flood Prone Areas**

There are several areas in Town that were mapped by FEMA as being prone to flooding. Most, but not all of these areas were included in the Conservation Priority Areas. Recent historic flood events in 2005 and 2006 in the Washington area and beyond underscore the real threat to life and property that even small streams can pose in flood prone areas. Land conservation should be a priority in any flood prone area to prevent personal injury and property damage from localized flood waters.

### **Aquifers**

Washington is not well endowed with high-quality groundwater sources. However, in several parts of Town such High-Yield Aquifers do exist. The majority of these areas are included in the Conservation Priority Areas. Land conservation is an ideal and permanent method of protecting those aquifer areas that were not included, such as the Shedd Brook and Ashuelot Pond aquifers.

### **Wildlife Habitat**

Most if not all of the significant wildlife habitat in Washington modeled by the state Wildlife Action Plan was included in the Conservation Priority Areas. However, important wildlife habitat occurrences may be discovered outside of these areas which

may warrant some kind of conservation. Direct land protection efforts (easements or fee purchases) should endeavor to extend beyond the specific occurrence to ensure that well-connected and well-buffered areas are created to increase the chances of species viability. Other approaches like landowner incentives for habitat-oriented land management may be adequate in helping to connect and protect wildlife habitat.

### **Riparian Corridors**

Washington sits at the top of several significant major watersheds; notably the Ashuelot River watershed. Thus, many of the streams are low-order (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>); these low-order streams comprise the majority of the stream miles in any given watershed and therefore often have the largest effect on inputs to stream nutrients and sediment. The protection of riparian corridors can have significant watershed effects in terms of reducing sediment inputs, increasing in-stream coarse-woody debris (a benefit for aquatic species and nutrient-cycling), and decreased flood severity. Protective efforts can include direct protection through conservation instruments (easement or fee-purchase) or land management practices where natural landcover is maintained within riparian corridors.

### **Important views**

Any property which provides an important view for the townspeople will be considered important for protection.

### **Historic and Cultural Resources**

Any property which is important historically or culturally for the townspeople will be considered important for protection.

### **Active Agriculture**

Actively farmed land and Prime agricultural and other important agricultural soils are relatively rare in Town and should be protected.

### **Partnering With Other Organizations**

Many organizations have an interest in working in the Town of Washington, some of which are mentioned in the “Outside Studies” portion of this plan. It is important for the Town of Washington to support the protection efforts of these organizations.

### **Recreational Trails**

An impressive network of hiking, horseback riding, biking, skiing, snow shoeing and snowmobile trails crosses through Washington. Through hikers and day hikers on the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway, and snowmobilers on the Washington Snowriders trails utilize these trails heavily. These recreational experiences are impossible to quantify; yet they add substantially to the quality of life that makes Washington such a good place to

live and visit. In many cases these trail corridors cross existing public and conservation lands. Many others are included in the Conservation Priority Areas. Most trails are used by the permission of generous private landowners, with no permanent guarantee of continued use. Land conservation that is focused on the protection and even expansion of these trail corridors wherever they exist will have long-term benefits for recreation. Conservation easements can be paired with trail easements in order to permanently protect the land from development, while protecting the public's right to use the trail.

### **Forest Resources**

Large parcels appropriate for forestry should be considered important for land conservation. When old growth trees are discovered they should be considered very important areas for conservation.

### **Enhanced Protection of Town Forests**

Five Town-owned properties are Designated Town Forests, so designated by vote of the Town. The statute allowing for this designation specifically exempts certain Town property, including a Town Forest, from the selectmen's authority, and places the management of Town Forests in the hands of either a forestry committee or the conservation commission. Although not conservation land in the strict sense, the intent is that it be managed for its natural resources. Some municipalities in New Hampshire have pursued more comprehensive protection of these public lands by conveying conservation easements on the properties to qualified parties such as land trust. Under this scenario, the land continues to be owned by the Town and used for Town Forest purposes, but a second party is responsible for guaranteeing these uses in perpetuity. As time passes, boards change and unforeseen circumstances may arise that could potentially put the continued Town Forest designation and use at risk. The Town may want to explore the feasibility of placing further guarantees as to conservation use on these important public assets.

### **Pillsbury State Park**

A jewel of the State Park system, Pillsbury State Park offers a primitive outdoor recreational setting that is unique for a park in this part of the state. Other parks offer more amenities and developed facilities, but Pillsbury is the special exception that is a source of local pride for residents of Washington and surrounding Towns. In 1920 Albert Pillsbury donated the largest tract of land in what is now Pillsbury state Park "to be held in perpetuity as a public forest reservation, for any and all uses or purposes tending to the promotion of forestry." Pillsbury State Park comprises much of the watershed of the Ashuelot River headwaters and is very important for water quality protection. The Town of Washington is strongly in favor of keeping the essentially wild character of Pillsbury for future residents of Washington, and New Hampshire in general, to enjoy.

## Land Conservation Options

Conservation or open space land may be owned publicly or privately. These lands typically have no buildings or other complex man-made structures in current service. The lands may remain in their natural state to serve important environmental and/or aesthetic functions, or they may be used for agriculture, forestry and/or outdoor recreation. Either way, they ensure the continued functioning of the natural and recreational resources that are essential to sustaining Washington's quality of life. Open space lands may also have historic structures or may have supported former uses that are important elements of Washington's history. Protection of private lands in the public interest does not necessarily require public access to these lands. Indeed, public access might be incompatible with other open space uses such as wildlife habitat, fragile plant and animal communities, flood control, or water supply. Also, public access might be incompatible with an individual property owner's right to privacy.

### Methods

In the past land was conserved by the fee acquisition (outright purchase) of a property by a Town or governmental agency, often with restrictions in the deed as to the use of the property. Deed restrictions are still a useful option for the conveyance of property; it can serve to assure the donor that the property will only be used for conservation purposes in the future. The acquisition of properties can happen through gift, bargain sale or purchase. If the Town of Washington acquires land in this way it is *strongly* recommended that, if possible, restrictions be placed on the property in the initial transaction. This can be done by conservation easement (see below), deed restriction, or, if neither of these options are feasible, by a signed statement of intent from the donor (if applicable).

In the last 30 years or so, the conservation easement has emerged as another widely used tool for land conservation. Easements deeds convey certain rights, typically the right to develop the property for commercial, institutional or residential purposes, to a qualified entity such as a Town or not-for-profit land trust. The grantee (the entity to whom these development rights are transferred) agrees in the deed to guarantee that the restrictions are upheld in perpetuity. The landowner still owns the land and may use it for a variety of traditional uses, such as forestry, agriculture or recreation, and may sell or otherwise convey the land, with the restrictions remaining in effect. Conservation easements can be acquired by gift, bargain sale or purchase at full market value.

Donations of property interest by deed restrictions, conservation easements or bargain sales to a qualified entity such as a Town or land trust involve the donation of property value, and as such may be claimed as a charitable deduction for income tax purposes. The value of a deduction is determined by an appraisal that determines the difference between the value of the fair market value of a property and the value of the property after the donation. In order to meet Internal Revenue Service requirements such an appraisal must be purchased by the donating landowner; this is not a transaction expense that can be paid for by the Town.

Any real estate transfer incurs associated expenses. Legal expenses are often necessary and surveys are also often required in order to verify the location and extent of the property. Stewardship donations are commonly obtained to defray the costs that are anticipated to monitor the compliance with the restrictions, and to mount a legal defense in the unlikely event that there is a violation. Towns often contribute to such expenses in order to meet community goals for land conservation.

### **Organizations Available for Land Conservation in Washington**

There are several organizations or agencies that are qualified to hold interest in conservation land in the Town of Washington. State agencies such as the NH Fish & Game Department and the NH Department of Environmental Services are potential land conservation partners for the Town, however these dollars are often linked to the protection of very specific resources.

Three large private organizations that work on a state-wide basis could potentially partner with the Town on land conservation projects. These are the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, The New Hampshire Audubon Society and the New Hampshire Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. There are currently no regional or local land trusts that include Washington in their region of focus. These organizations, however, must take into consideration limited staff time, funding realities, and the tenets of their particular mission when considering new conservation projects.

Towns are qualified to hold interest in land for public conservation purposes, whether in fee or in easement. The Town of Washington has not yet pursued the option of holding conservation easements on private land. In many ways a Town is well suited to conserve land directly, as the conservation would have direct benefits to the residents of the Town, and local funding mechanisms can be created to support such efforts. Should the Town decide to pursue such an effort, consideration should be paid to the long-term stewardship responsibility that they would accept as easement holder. This sometimes requires finances to cover monitoring and enforcement actions. The Town can also hold executory (secondary) interest in an easement that is primarily held by another entity, thus retaining a conservation interest.

### **Land Conservation Funding Options: Programs and Sources**

While not all land conservation projects require funding, it is often necessary in order to meet the community's conservation goals. A variety of options are available to the Town to fund important conservation projects. Much of the groundwork has been laid for this, with the Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory and this Conservation Plan; both documents identify the most significant resources. This information can be used to strengthen an application for funds in what promises to be an increasingly competitive

funding environment. The following programs are potential sources of conservation dollars.

### **Forest Legacy Program**

Owners of forest land can apply to this program, with preference given to larger parcels. A 25% match is required; this can be met by the protection of other forest land in the area. The program is administered in New Hampshire by the Division of Forests and Lands in the Department of Resources and Economic Development, which forwards approved projects to the US Forest Service for review. This program has been a very important funding source for forested lands in the state and in the Town of Washington.

Contact: Susan Francher [sfrancher@dred.state.nh.us](mailto:sfrancher@dred.state.nh.us)  
or Bill Carpenter [bcarpenter@dred.state.nh.us](mailto:bcarpenter@dred.state.nh.us)  
603.271.2214

### **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)**

Privately-owned properties that have at least 10 acres of Important Agricultural Soils in active production are eligible for conservation under this program. Funding is in the form of matching funds provided to local governments or other qualified entities toward the purchase of conservation easements. Lands with historical and archeological resources are also eligible for funding under this program.

Contact: Steve Hundley – [steven.hundley@nh.usda.gov](mailto:steven.hundley@nh.usda.gov)  
603.868.7581 X110  
[www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/NH\\_FRPP\\_Documents.html](http://www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/NH_FRPP_Documents.html)

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

Parks, open spaces, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities are available for land conservation funding under this federal program. Funds are allocated to the states which fund up to 50% of the cost of a specific project. Funded projects must be perpetually available for public recreational access, and have facilities that support this recreational use.

Shari Colby – [scolby@dred.state.nh.us](mailto:scolby@dred.state.nh.us)  
603-271-3556  
[www.nhparks.state.nh.us/ParksPages/CommunityPrograms/ComProgLWCFhom.html](http://www.nhparks.state.nh.us/ParksPages/CommunityPrograms/ComProgLWCFhom.html)

### **Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)**

This State program has recently been re-funded and is a potential source of land conservation dollars for projects in Washington. Applications are accepted annually, and



are considered along with other applications from across the state. Competition is high for this program, and successful projects have numerous substantiated conservation values and a strong case made for their protection. Washington received a \$56,000 grant to repair the bell tower of the 1787 Washington Town Hall in Round 4 of this program.

Contact – Cheryl Carlson, office manager at [info@lchip.org](mailto:info@lchip.org)  
603.224.4113  
[www.lchip.org](http://www.lchip.org)

### **Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)**

Funding assistance is available for protection or study of NH Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan Priority Habitats or State Listed species or natural communities/systems on private property for the purchase of conservation easements in the Ashuelot River watershed focus area through the LIP program, administered by NH Fish & Game. These include Federal and State listed plants and animals, wildlife and habitats at risk as identified in the NH Wildlife Action Plan, and exemplary natural communities and natural community systems tracked by the Natural Heritage Bureau.

Contact:  
Rich Cook  
[www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/Landowner\\_LIP\\_program.htm](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/Landowner_LIP_program.htm)

### **Center for Land Conservation Assistance**

The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests established the Center for Land Conservation Assistance (CLCA) to provide technical assistance to land trusts and Towns relative to land conservation projects, planning, funding and stewardship. In 2002 CLCA published *Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Land Conservation* written by Brian Hart and Dorothy Tripp Taylor. This publication offers a comprehensive overview of funding options and approaches that New Hampshire municipalities have used to secure funding, as well as case studies and specific examples of successful campaigns.

Contact: [dtaylor@forestsociety.org](mailto:dtaylor@forestsociety.org)  
603.224.9945  
[www.forestsociety.org](http://www.forestsociety.org)

### **Local Funding Sources**

The establishment of a local funding source for acquisition of conservation interests including the use of easements, bargain sales, etc. would be desirable and probably necessary in order to achieve the conservation goals set forth above. Through the thoughtful expenditure of public moneys, particularly the Town's Conservation Fund, additional money from other sources can be leveraged. At present, Washington's Conservation Fund receives 100% of the Land Use Change Tax dollars, a good start for funding land conservation. Washington should keep this basic level of conservation

funding and augment these dollars with other sources. Mechanisms for obtaining local public funding are numerous. These funding sources include warrant article appropriations to the Conservation Fund, open space bonds, and capital reserve funds for conservation projects just to name a few. The 2002 publication "Saving Special Places: Community Funding for Conservation" has a wealth of information and actual case studies on this topic (see Appendix). This publication is available at [www.forestsociety.org/pdf/savingplaces.pdf](http://www.forestsociety.org/pdf/savingplaces.pdf), or from the Forest Society 603.224.9945.

## **VI. Recommendations for Regulatory Actions**

### **Introduction**

Important natural resources occur at a variety of scales and locations, and in many cases are not protected by land conservation alone. Residential areas have been established near important resources such as lakes, streams, aquifers and in productive soil areas for many years. Although conservation planning can have an influence on the future uses of important resources areas, it will never be capable of comprehensive protection by itself. Regulations have already been established by local, state and federal governments in order to protect certain natural resources in Washington. There is a role that new regulations can play in protecting specific resources in an efficient and fair manner.

### **Existing Town Regulations**

#### **Land Use Ordinance**

The Land Use Ordinance, amended 2007, addresses permitted uses, lot size and frontage requirements, setbacks, noise, structure height, parking space requirements, fuel tanks, wells, on-site waste disposal and driveways, etc. It also allows for a Cluster Development option that requires an open space set-aside and allows lot sizes down to 1 acre. Non-conforming structures and lots are also addressed.

#### **Subdivision Regulations**

The 1995 Subdivision Regulations for Washington, amended in 1997, address the various requirements for applying for a subdivision. This includes application requirements, physical requirements of lots and access, public amenities, site limitations, road standards, open space requirements, tree plantings, utilities and drainage, etc.

#### **Telecommunications Facilities Ordinance**

This 2002 ordinance addresses applicability and procedures, application requirements, design and construction standards, removal, and enforcement provisions relating to the siting, construction and use of telecommunications facilities.

## **Recommended New Regulations and Enforcement**

### **Conservation Subdivision Ordinance**

Develop and implement a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. This ordinance would identify important natural resources before permitting, and guide development to appropriate areas of the property. Numerous other municipalities in New Hampshire have already enacted such ordinances, and these could serve as models for such an ordinance in Washington.

### **Wetlands Zoning Overlay District**

Enact a Wetlands Zoning Overlay District ordinance to limit the use of areas that directly affect water resources. Wetlands are already protected by NH law, but the adjacent uplands are inextricably connected to them ecologically and hydrologically. An overlay district that acknowledges the values of wetland borders would keep these resources intact and maintain their quality.

### **Riparian/Wetland Buffer Ordinance**

Enact a Riparian/Wetland Buffer Ordinance to protect surface waters from impacts resulting from new development. A tiered zone approach keyed to the intensity of a particular proposed use would offer flexibility while protecting the vegetated buffer and limiting sediments and pollutants into surface waters from erosion and runoff.

### **FEMA Floodplain Use Standards**

Consider joining the FEMA Flood Insurance Program, and then ensure that the Town enforces the FEMA Floodplain Use Standards so that property owners who suffer flood losses will be eligible for federal flood insurance benefits. This includes standards for building construction, and the siting of fuel tanks and septic systems in 100 year flood zones.

### **Farm-Friendly Ordinances**

Introduce farm-friendly ordinances to encourage local family farming. Recently passed legislation allows municipalities to form Agricultural Commissions. The publication *Creating an Agricultural Commission in Your Home Town* is available at: <http://extension.unh.edu/Pubs/AgPubs/AgComm.pdf>. Such a commission would determine appropriate measures and implement farm-friendly ordinances. The publication *Preserving Rural Character through Agriculture: A Resource Kit for Planners* is also a useful reference.

## **Growth Management Ordinance**

Consider implementing a Growth Management Ordinance for next year. Such ordinances are voted on annually, giving the town the opportunity to try this often effective measure. Other towns have successfully limited the number of building permits approved per year. Such an ordinance can be written such that one person or company cannot capture all the permits.

## **Class A Trail Designation**

Designate important recreational trails in Washington as Class A trails per RSA 231-A. A Class A trail has a full public right-of-way subject to public trail use restrictions. It cannot be used by the public as a vehicular access for any new building or structure, or for the expansion, enlargement, or increased intensity of use of any existing building or structure. It may, however, be used by the owners of land abutting on such trail, or land served exclusively by such trail, to provide access for such non-development uses as agriculture and forestry, or for access to any building or structure existing prior to its designation as a trail. Class A trails are designated for an indefinite period of time, and as such offer a more permanent opportunity for public recreation.

## **Scenic Road Designation**

Designate especially scenic roads in Washington. RSA 231:157 allows for the designation by vote of the Town of a local scenic road on any road that is not Class I or II. Designation as a Scenic Road means that repair, maintenance, and reconstruction work to the roadway should not involve the cutting or removal of trees (defined as 15 inches in diameter or more) or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls without prior written consent of the planning board or board responsible for the local Scenic Roads program. This designation does not affect the rights of any abutting landowners on their property, and does not affect the eligibility of the Town to receive construction, maintenance or reconstruction aid. The NH Office of Energy and Planning administers this program.

## **Designation of Historic Districts**

To preserve the rural and historic character of Washington, designate Historic Districts. The districts would preserve the historic character of historic structures and environs by requiring adherence to appropriate standards of building design, renovation and landscaping. Such areas may include the central portions of East Washington Village and Washington Village. Historic District designation requires the formation of a Historic District Commission. A Heritage Commission should also be considered and could work to preserve cultural as well as historic sites.

## **Class VI Road Construction Moratorium**

Washington currently maintains a moratorium on construction of new structures accessed from Class VI Town roads. Continue this full moratorium accordance with RSA 674:41, and include it in Washington's Land Use Ordinance to avoid scattered and premature development.

## **Zoning**

Develop a zoning ordinance which directs development toward appropriate areas in order to avoid scattered and premature development. Consider zoning that establishes districts with varying lot size requirements. Also, in accordance with RSA 674:21 adopt Innovative Land Use Controls which may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Timing incentives.
- (b) Phased development.
- (c) Intensity and use incentive.
- (d) Transfer of density and development rights.
- (e) Planned unit development.
- (f) Cluster or Conservation/Open space development.
- (g) Impact zoning.
- (h) Performance standards.
- (i) Flexible and discretionary zoning.
- (j) Environmental characteristics zoning.
- (k) Inclusionary zoning.
- (l) Accessory dwelling unit standards.
- (m) Impact fees.
- (n) Village plan alternative subdivision.

## **Stormwater Management**

Update stormwater management requirements for new and existing building lots.

## **VII. Recommendations for Outreach and Education**

### **Introduction**

Education is the basis for sound judgment and informed action. Without enough information people may make choices and take actions that are unintentional, but detrimental to the environment. There is a role that the Town can play in providing information to the citizens that will support the conservation goals set forth above. The following list highlights just a few of the possibilities.

## **Landowner Outreach and Education**

Develop and implement plan for outreach to landowners. Letters to landowners in the Conservation Priority Areas will inform them of the importance of natural resources on their property. Offer to meet with landowners, invite them to education sessions and provide them with a list of educational resources. Many communities have been pleasantly surprised by the number of land and easement donations that result from a basic outreach and education program.

## **Importance of Wetlands**

Educate the public about the importance of wetlands for flood control and for improving water quality. With the memory of the 2005 and 2006 floods still fresh in people's minds, a program that makes the connection between wetlands and floodwater storage would be effective. This would also set the stage for whatever regulatory measures may be proposed regarding wetlands.

## **No Child Left Inside**

Studies are finding that children today spend much less time outdoors in a natural setting than a generation ago. This is true of both rural and urban areas. The result is a generation of children that are afraid to go outside, and who feel disconnected with the nature outside their doors. The Town should encourage the introduction of curriculums in the Washington Elementary School that promote a hands-on connection between children and the natural world in Washington. The Camp Morgan Town Forest, with its proximity to the school, provides the perfect outdoor classroom.

## **Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act**

The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act, recently revised, is intended to protect the shorelines of great ponds and larger streams. As of April 1, 2008 the Ashuelot River in its entirety will be covered by the CSPA. The Town should initiate a public education campaign, aimed particularly at waterfront owners, regarding the Shoreland Protection Act, the importance of septic system maintenance, best management practices for lawn maintenance and the importance of leaving natural vegetation along the shoreline.

## **Invasive Species Education**

The Town should develop educational programs to teach townspeople to identify and eradicate invasive species.

## **VIII. Recommendations for Voluntary Actions**

New Hampshire is especially proud of the concept of volunteerism. Doing the right thing for the right reason, and for no pay is a tradition here. Programs that rely on interested and active volunteers, and that achieve impressive results are numerous. By engaging interested and committed residents in the cause of conservation on their own land and beyond, unexpected goals can be achieved.

### **Conservation Easement Education Program**

Owners of conservation easement lands are great ambassadors; cultivate a knowledgeable group of these people to inform other landowners of this important conservation tool.

### **Tree Farms**

Tree Farms have helped to promote the wise, and informed productive use of private forest lands for many decades. It is in the interest of the Town to encourage the designation of new Tree Farms to promote exemplary forestry practices that conserve forest resources, and keep these forest lands in sustainable production. Information from the UNH Cooperative Extension can be found at:  
<http://extension.unh.edu/Forestry/TreeFarm.htm>

### **Promote Land Uses that Minimize Pollution**

The recent findings of the NH Department of Environmental Services Mill Pond Study indicate that there is work to do regarding the state of awareness that residents have about uses of their land and the potential for pollution. The Town should work with landowners and State & Federal agencies such as the NH Department of Environmental Services and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to explore ways to minimize pollution inputs to aquifer lands and surface waters.

### **Lake Volunteer Programs**

Lake water quality is of paramount importance not only to the ecological health of a water body, but also to the quality of life of residents who live near them, not to mention their property values. The Town should encourage local lake associations (Washington Lake Association, Highland Lake Association, Millen Pond Association, Lake Ashuelot Estates Association, and Ashuelot Pond Association) to participate in the Weedwatchers and Lake Host Programs as appropriate to each lake and pond to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive plant species. The Town should also encourage the lake associations to get involved with the Volunteer Lake Assessment Program to monitor the quality of their lake or pond.

### **Trails on Town Forests**

Town Forest properties hold potential for new recreational opportunities, and connections between existing trails. A group of conservation-minded volunteers could follow the recommendations of the Town Forest Management Plan and lay out and construct new trails on certain Town Forest properties.



## **IX. Definitions**

Anadromous- A fish that lives in salt water, but spawns in fresh water.

Aquatic bed- includes wetlands and deepwater habitats dominated by plants that grow principally on or below the surface of the water for most of the growing season in most years. Water regimes include subtidal, irregularly exposed, regularly flooded, permanently flooded, intermittently exposed, semipermanently flooded, and seasonally flooded.

Aquifer- A geological formation, such as fractured bedrock, sand or gravel that contains water and allows sufficient water to pass through it to be useful as a water supply.

Biodiversity- A component and measure of ecosystem health and function. It is the number and genetic richness of different individuals found within the population of a species, of populations found within a species range, of different species found within a natural community or ecosystem, and of different communities and ecosystems found within a region.

Conservation Easement- property right(s), usually the right to develop, held by someone other than the property owner.

CPA- Conservation Priority Area

Executory interest- secondary interest

Fee ownership- absolute ownership of real property

Land Trust- a nonprofit organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by undertaking or assisting in land or conservation easement acquisition, or by its stewardship of such land or easements.

Mesic- of, characterized by, or adapted to a moderately moist habitat.

Natural communities- Assemblages of species that re-occur under similar habitat conditions and environmental regimes.

Peatland- the result of organic matter build up in anaerobic environments. These landscapes are saturated for most or all of the year. Ponding and flooding are common and these soils vary in their ability to support trees.

Riparian- Relating to or living or located on the bank of a natural watercourse (as a river) or sometimes of a lake or a tidewater.

Sedimentation- The act or process of depositing sediment.

SPNHF- Society for the Protection of NH Forests

Wetland- an area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal conditions does support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

WAP- Wildlife Action Plan from NH Fish and Game Department

## **X. Recommendations for Further Study**

### **Professional Ordinance Review**

The Town should sponsor a comprehensive professional review of its Master Plan, ordinances and regulations as they relate to natural and cultural resources. The likely result of this process is that deficiencies in existing regulations will be revealed, and the need for new regulations will be identified. This should avoid confusion and will ensure consistency when processing applications and inquiries.

### **Prime wetlands study**

A number of New Hampshire communities have undergone the process of formally documenting the most significant wetlands in their Town and designating them as Prime Wetlands according to the requirements of RSA 482-A:15 and Chapter Env-Wt 700 of the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) administrative rules. Wetlands in a Town are evaluated for their relative functions and values by a wetland scientist or other qualified professional. Once adopted by public hearing vote, and accepted as complete by NHDES, such designation affords additional protections to these significant wetlands.

### **Natural Heritage Bureau Data Request**

The Town should formally request NH Natural Heritage Bureau data on rare species and natural communities and ecological systems for the entire Town for conservation planning purposes. Once this data response is received, it can be used according to an agreement with the Bureau that limits how and for how long this information can be used by the Town boards. Such data is not otherwise available, and it is important that the Town be able to take such rare biological resources into consideration while making decisions.

### **Conduct Specific Field Surveys to Verify WAP Priority Habitat Areas**

The Wildlife Action Plan recently released by NH Fish & Game used a modeling approach to predict the presence of priority wildlife habitat across the state. Using this information, field surveys should be conducted in these areas to determine habitat types and conditions, and whether there are any species of conservation concern present.

### **Conduct Field Surveys to Identify Areas of Ecological Significance**

The Town should conduct field-based inventories of the Town on a more comprehensive but targeted fashion to locate and document areas of ecological significance, and to guide protection of these resources. When old growth trees are encountered they should be documented and mapped. The field study process will provide more detailed information for conservation planning. A mussel survey of the lower Ashuelot River below Ashuelot

Pond to search for the globally rare Dwarf Wedge Mussel, known to occur further downstream, is an example of such a targeted field survey.

**GPS & document historic structures, etc.**

The exact location of many historic and cultural features in Washington is not currently documented. More accurate locations can be obtained by the use of portable Global Positioning System (GPS) units. A group of interested volunteers could use the maps produced in the Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory and other local information to locate these features in the field, and document them and their location. Such information would be useful for planning and outreach purposes.

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