

PLAN OF CONSERVATION & OPEN SPACE 2000-2010:

I. INTRODUCTION:

The Town of Killingly contains a variety of natural, cultural and historic resources that shape the overall character of the Town, region and the State as a whole. It is these resources that help to define the existing quality of life in Killingly. Culturally, natural resources are key to the historic and recreational development of Killingly. Ecologically, natural resources are important for sustaining viable agriculture, forest, wildlife and water resources (MacDonald, 1999). Responsible management of these resources is a challenging task, one that the Killingly Conservation Commission has chosen to tackle with the formation of this plan.

To aid in retaining the character that defines Killingly, local officials and residents need to be able to plan for future development to ensure that it occurs in a careful balance with the preservation of natural, cultural and historic resources that make Killingly the Town it is. The creation of this plan attempts to address local concerns by identifying and signifying the importance of the natural, cultural and historic resources of the Town. This plan also details the strategies that the Conservation Commission, in conjunction with other boards, commissions, local residents and officials of immediate and surrounding towns, will pursue to achieve the Commissions' overall goal and vision of resource management and protection.

II. WHY PLAN FOR NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE?

There are a number of regulatory programs currently in place that address specific resources (e.g., Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations, Aquifer Protection Zones), but it is the importance of the functional interaction between all of these resources that is often overlooked and misunderstood when planning land use development. More attention to natural systems and broad principles of environmental awareness and protection is needed at the local level during the development process. This plan seeks to promote the importance of these natural systems and help provide strategies that will protect these vital resources while still allowing development to occur in a responsible manner.

The 1990's have seen a tremendous growth in the local economy through the large number of business and industry that have chosen to locate in Killingly; due to its strategic location and situation in New England. This economic growth, coupled with the associated increased pressures of residential development, generate valid arguments for local residents who are concerned about the future direction in which the town is growing.

Smart land use planning and conservation promotes:

- Protection of the function and value of the natural environment – groundwater re-charge, filtering water of pollutants, preventing soil erosion, absorbing runoff and floodwaters and providing a home for a diverse array of terrestrial and aquatic life.
- Outdoor recreation and tourism;
- A high quality of life;
- Cost effective development;
- Valuable developments (properties near open space tend to be more valuable).

Conserving natural resources and protecting open space even helps to reduce municipal expenditures. This is due to the fact that undeveloped land is less expensive to maintain because of the fewer public services such as sewer, water, police, fire, and education that are required (Thomas, 1991). This plan is by no means an anti-development plan, but a plan that advocates smart development – well thought out plans that take environmental as well as economic factors into consideration.

III. PLAN OF CONSERVATION:

This will be a working document, outlining the key objectives and strategies that this Commission will pursue over the next ten years to help achieve their overall goal:

“To promote development, conservation, supervision and responsible management of all natural resources within the Town of Killingly. Furthermore, to provide the methodology for the implementation of protection and maintenance of these natural resources including developing aggressive strategies to find the funding to meet the goals stated in this document.”

As time progresses, new strategies will most likely develop that will help achieve many of the objectives included in this plan. Realizing this, the Commission will continue to research and pursue new and innovative strategies that will complement the goals, objectives and strategies of this plan.

IV. NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY: A LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY APPROACH TO OPEN SPACE PLANNING:

One of the first components of natural resource conservation is identification. Without knowing where our resources are and how they work (ecological structure and function), it becomes more difficult to adequately address negative impacts to these resources. A landscape ecology approach to planning directly relates the physical characteristics of the landscape (structure) to the natural ecology (function), identifying the relationship between the two and their joint importance in maintaining the overall health of the natural environment. Identifying and understanding the physical and natural processes that have shaped the current landscape is the first step in the protection of open spaces.

In 1999 the Killingly Conservation Commission, in conjunction with its staff and the Windham County Soil and Water Conservation District compiled a complete natural resources inventory of the town (Town of Killingly Natural Resources Map Set, WCSWCD). Compiling the entire inventory and analyzing the information has helped to identify areas that are of environmental importance in Killingly and areas where development would pose the least threat to the surrounding environment.

- **Maps available include: Future Land Use, and Priority Lands for Natural Resource and Open Space Conservation.**

COMMUNITY SURVEY: In 2000, a survey was completed by Killingly residents, and returned to the Killingly Conservation Commission for compilation of results. In an attempt to persuade more people to respond, the Commission accepted responses by various forms of communication including by telephone, fax, email, mail and hand delivery. Survey respondents agreed with the goals of the Commission. Respondents ranked the order of importance for the protection of natural resources as follows:

1. Lakes, Ponds, Rivers and Streams
2. Overall Water Quality
3. Groundwater
4. Forests
5. Wildlife
6. Wetlands
7. Recreation Fields/Parks
8. Scenic Areas/Vistas
9. Farmland

The unique or significant open space areas or other natural resources that respondents felt were important to preserve and protect from development included: Reservoirs (including but not limited to) Wauregan Reservoir, Chase Reservoir, Ross Marsh, Alexander's Lake, Cat Hollow, Old Killingly Pond, Mashentuck Mountain, Burlingame Farm, North Road, East Killingly Farm, Ross Pond and Old Furnace Park, and Quinebaug River Trail. Respondents stated they would support the creation of an Open Space Fund to be used for Town acquisition of land for the purposes of open space/natural resource preservation. Respondents feel it is important for Killingly to retain its rural character.

V. NATURAL RESOURCES TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE

Taking into consideration various forms of public input and research, the Killingly Conservation Commission identified five categories of resources that they feel are important to protect, manage and maintain:

- I. Hydrology (wetlands, watercourses, aquifers, watersheds)
- II. Forest and Wildlife
- III. Agricultural/Farmland Protection and Preservation
- IV. Active and Passive Recreational Open Space
- V. Aesthetic, Cultural, Historic Resources

The following pages outline the key objectives and strategies that the Commission will pursue to ultimately protect, preserve and manage natural resources and the existing town character that defines Killingly. With the proper coordination and assistance from local, regional, state and federal public and private entities, the Killingly Conservation Commission is committed to developing yearly action plans to implement the strategies outlined in this plan over the next ten years.

I. HYDROLOGIC RESOURCES **(WETLANDS, WATERCOURSES, AQUIFERS, FLOODPLAINS, and WATERSHEDS)**

The objectives:

1. To decrease negative impacts of development by maintaining natural drainage systems and existing hydrology:

The strategies include:

- (a) Promote protection of riparian buffers with Conservation Easements for wetland protection
 - (b) Reduce Non-Point Source Pollution – Promote the incorporation of design objectives and Best Management Practices into all Town regulations and project reviews to increase the protection of water quality (stormwater management via natural methods as opposed to piping and channeling: vegetative buffers and grass swales with the reduction of impervious surfaces)
 - (c) Review FEMA and FIRM updates to maintain reasonable protection for life and property through floodplain management (protection from development to avoid property damage)
 - (d) Promote sound engineering and environmental preservation practices for projects that could potentially impact wetlands
 - (e) Support regulation and enforcement of safe outdoor storage of any pollution-risk materials, equipment and/or vehicles
 - (f) Encourage citizen/volunteer monitoring programs (e.g., Thames River Basin Partnership Initiative – Streamwalks)
 - (g) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.
2. Protect Water Resources to promote healthy communities – (both natural and human) by improving water quality and maintaining water quantity – for example using the state map for ground and surface waters

The strategies include:

- (a) Identify via Natural Resource mapping (watersheds, wetlands and watercourses, aquifers)
- (b) Promote protection of riparian buffers with Conservation Easements for wetland protection
- (c) Support aquifer and well head protection through the State Aquifer Protection Area Land Use Regulations (DEP Regulation)
- (d) Identify and promote protection of existing and potential drinking water sources (Crystal Water Company; Water Supply Plan, October 1998)
- (e) Continue the wetland identification and evaluation inventory (e.g. Method for the Evaluation of Inland Wetlands in Connecticut; DEP Bulletin No. 9 and KCC Handbook, 31)
- (f) Consult Killingly Streambelt report
- (g) Support Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission regulation amendments. Continue to review and update all town regulations for the protection of water resources
- (h) Identify and seek funding through any available sources to aid in acquiring properties in all categories of the plan
- (i) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.

II. FOREST AND WILDLIFE

The objectives:

1. Protect natural open spaces and corridors to maintain adequate habitat for wildlife and sustain species diversity:

The strategies include:

- (a) Identify via Natural Resource mapping (State Endangered Species – National Diversity Database, Forestry, Soils, Open Space, Greenway Corridors)
- (b) Increase awareness of local forestry regulations under the Killingly Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations (section 4.5)
- (c) Research advantages and disadvantages of establishing a municipal land trust and take appropriate action
- (d) Encourage stronger co-ordination with land trusts, and other agencies with similar missions.
- (e) Establish a town-wide tree planting program
- (f) Implement a forest management plan for Town-owned properties and promote responsible forest management on private properties
- (g) Identify and seek funding through any available sources to aid in acquiring properties in all categories
- (h) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.

2. Minimize habitat fragmentation:

The strategies include:

- (a) Revise, update and pursue the Greenways Plan to help reduce habitat fragmentation
- (b) Revise subdivision regulations to include conservation (cluster) subdivision requirements, and Fee In Lieu of Open Space
- (c) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.

3. Protect critical habitats from the pressures and impacts of development:

The strategies include:

- (a) Promote riparian buffers, Conservation Easements for habitat protection – encourage donations rather than acquisition by town purchase.
- (b) Assist private landowners interested in voluntary protection measures
- (c) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.

III. AGRICULTURAL/FARMLAND PRESERVATION & PROTECTION

The objective:

1. Preserve productive agricultural soils and prime farmland to protect open space/rural identity, yield maximum benefits from the land and promote the local economy.

The strategies include:

- (a) Identify via Natural Resource mapping (Prime farmland soils, existing agriculture, potential agriculture, important agricultural lands – state map)
- (b) Promote agricultural uses on large parcels of land
- (c) Participate in and support forums as organized by existing organizations regarding farming issues
- (d) Promote the protection of naturally vegetated buffers on land adjacent to farmland (to decrease impacts to abutting properties)
- (e) Encourage State Purchase of Development rights of selected parcels that are Commission target properties
- (f) Promote farm cluster preservation (e.g. co-ordinate with assessor to encourage preservation of outbuildings rather than demolition)
- (g) Co-ordinate with Killingly VO-AG program for local education and awareness
- (h) Provide information about Dairy Farm Tax Abatement and other appropriate programs
- (i) To identify and seek funding through any available sources to aid in acquiring properties in all categories of the plan
- (j) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.

Reference Cultural Resources Plan.

IV. ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE:

The objective:

1. Provide adequate, safe, accessible and functional outdoor space for the development of active and passive recreational opportunities

The strategies include:

- (a) Identify, index and map current and proposed open space to provide a diversity for active and passive recreation
- (b) Prioritize and target key areas for acquisition and development based on population concentrations and municipal recreation needs
- (c) Re-establish Fee In Lieu of Open Space in Subdivision regulations
- (d) Maintain access to funds for Land Acquisition
- (e) Dedicate a percentage of the annual budget to an open space fund.
- (f) Revise, update and pursue the Greenways Plan to continue increasing multi-purpose recreational trail connectivity in the region
- (g) Promote outdoor recreational activities consistent with town-wide outdoor programs including swimming (with Department of Environmental Protection, Board of Recreation, Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commissions)
- (h) Increase and promote public awareness through education both locally and regionally of the benefits of and appreciation for open space, through activities such as sponsorship of events; regular awareness and promotion of specific areas; weekly or monthly events; driving or biking tours; audio tours; historic cemeteries, plant identifications; recognition and publicity of citizens and organizations for efforts in preservation and the wise development of natural resources, etc.
- (i) Identify and seek funding through any available sources to aid in acquiring properties in all categories of the plan.
- (j) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.

Reference Parks Master Plan and Recreation, section 8 of Plan of Conservation and Development.

V. AESTHETIC, CULTURAL, HISTORIC RESOURCES:

The objectives:

1. Retain overall Town character via the protection and promotion of key aesthetic, cultural and historic resources (protection from development pressures).

The strategies include:

- (a) Identify existing resources (historic districts and features, cultural features, aesthetic views and scenery) – through the Cultural Resources plan
 - (b) Continue acquisition of land through conservation easements
 - (c) Coordinate with other boards and commissions to identify and recommend roads for Scenic Road designation
 - (d) Continue street tree replacement program
 - (e) Identify viewsheds worthy of preservation (ridge-top protection, scenic vistas)
 - (f) Promote access for walking and biking throughout town, through creation of bike lanes and improved sidewalks
 - (g) Increase walkability of downtown area through coordination with Historic District Commission.
 - (h) Promote the preservation of stone walls throughout the town.
 - (i) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.
2. Promote linkages between town's cultural resources (agriculture and mill town) and natural resources to help preserve Killingly's overall character

The strategies include:

- (a) Review and submit referrals to Planning and Zoning Commissions on subdivision, site plan and special permit applications (review for historical and cultural significance and for preservation of open space)
- (b) Promote Commission-sponsored events that increase awareness and importance of these resources (walking weekend, bike tours, springtime festival, etc...)
- (c) Continue acquisition of Greenway corridors that provide alternative access to these areas from residential, recreational, commercial and industrial areas
- (d) Increase participation and awareness of Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor
- (e) Recognize citizens and groups who make concerted effort to achieve goals and objectives.

Reference Cultural Resources Plan

CONCLUSION:

Planning for future growth in Killingly will require more attention to the importance of natural systems and broad principles of environmental awareness and protection. Our natural resources are an essential part of life in Killingly. By taking the necessary steps to protect them, we can encourage and promote a higher quality of development that is sensitive to and compliments these resources.

Balancing growth and development is an important aspect that this plan seeks to achieve. This balance can be achieved by planning for open space while promoting new developments that are designed, located and managed to minimize the consumption of natural resources. New forms of development should respect the natural features of areas, utilize natural drainage patterns and keep disturbance to a minimum. The Killingly Plan of Conservation and Development also encourages and promotes the revitalization of existing developed and abandoned areas

The inclusion of this plan as part of the Killingly Plan of Conservation and Development is an important step in guiding future land use in Killingly. Identifying our resources and implementing a plan to preserve and protect their function is a key component of understanding Killingly's growth limitations.

Over the next ten years the Killingly Conservation Commission intends to work with immediate and surrounding town officials, commissions and residents to help promote and implement the objectives and strategies of this plan. By coupling the existing natural resources and the efforts of our community, we will promote and manage all natural resources and keep Killingly a great place to live.

Plan of Conservation and Open Space approved on November 14, 2001

Killingly Conservation Commission Members:

Ellen Smith Pratt, Chair

Mike Angell, Vice Chair

James Reck

Donna Bronwell

Kenneth Wojcik

Carol Auer,