

Town of Washington, New Hampshire

Master Plan 2015

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The Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) and Conservation Plan (CP) are an integral part of the Town's Master Plan. Much of the following information was excerpted from those documents, and we recommend that, if you are interested, you read both documents and consult the NRI maps to learn more about the natural resources in Washington and the Town's efforts to protect them.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION:

The area, now known as the Town of Washington, was settled in 1768. On December 9, 1776 it was incorporated as a town, taking the name of a soon-to-be-famous Revolutionary War general, George Washington. Washington is situated in the southeast corner of Sullivan County and covers approximately 30,712 +/- acres or 47.6 square miles. Elevations in Washington range from a low of 880 feet, in the lower Shedd Brook area on the Windsor town line, to a high of 2,473 feet at the summit of Lovewell Mountain. Steeper slopes, of up to 50%, cover about a quarter of the Town including much of Lovewell Mountain, the northern corners of the Town, Oak Hill and a line running northeast from Ames Hill to the Town line.

Washington includes two villages: The Town Center has an elevation of 1,507 feet, while East Washington is at 939 feet. The highest summit is Lovewell Mountain, at 2,473 feet, but several other peaks reach to about 2,000 feet. It is a rocky Town with many large boulders, outcrops and areas of ledge underlying stony loam. Maple, beech, birch, red oak, ash, red spruce, hemlock and scattered stands of white pine cover some 90% of the Town. The mix of forest, farms, fields, ponds and wetlands is much admired by both residents and visitors. As of the 2010 census Washington had 1,123 full-time residents.

The terrain in the Town and its relative remoteness from large population areas have contributed to the quiet, rural character it maintains today. In its history, natural resources and quality of life, Washington, NH, is unique. Its development pattern has been that of two traditional small town centers surrounded by farms, lakes and ponds, large areas of forest and undeveloped open space. Historically important for its forestry resources in such areas as "Cherry Valley" (a vast, former logging site that is now part of Pillsbury State Park), large unfragmented forest blocks still comprise much of the Town—highly valuable for wildlife, forestry and recreation. Washington's natural resource base is rich and varied, important both on a local and statewide level.

Water Resources:

Ponds/Lakes:

Washington has a fairly large number of lakes and ponds of various sizes, and several of these straddle the Town lines. Our ponds are impounded water bodies that rely on dams to control the water level. The maintenance of these dams is essential for keeping the water bodies as natural features, used by the public for recreation and enjoyment.

The most significant of these water bodies in terms of size are Ashuelot Pond (361 acres), Island Pond (192 acres), Millen Lake (156 acres), May Pond (158 acres), Halfmoon Pond (76 acres) and the Washington portion of Highland Lake (243 acres). A total of 13 Great Ponds

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occurs in Washington, such designation afforded to bodies of water that are generally maintained at an area of 10 acres or more. Certain land use restrictions apply to Great Ponds, including forestry laws and the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act. Public beaches are maintained at Mill Pond in East Washington and at the east end of Millen Lake at Camp Morgan.

Ten named ponds in Pillsbury State Park, most notably Butterfield/May Pond (a combined 158 acres) and North Pond (56 acres), are protected from development and major impacts by virtue of their ownership by the State of New Hampshire. With the exception of the Town-owned Camp Morgan at the eastern end of Millen Lake and a small frontage on the north shore of Island Pond, owned by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the shores of the other major water bodies in Washington are unprotected by conservation lands. Much of this frontage is already developed, but significant areas remain undeveloped today.

Dams:

According to the data, there are 19 active dams in the Town. An additional eight other sites are either remains of old dams or sites of removed dams. The 1872 stone dam at the outlet of Ashuelot Pond, one of the oldest in Town, is still functioning.

Streams:

Washington has approximately 74 miles of intermittent or seasonal streams and 44 miles of perennial streams, the vast majority of them unnamed. Many of the reaches of these streams are in undeveloped, relatively pristine condition. The most pristine portion of the entire Ashuelot River flows through Washington. While most of the stretches of streams in Washington are single tributaries to larger streams or water bodies, several are of a higher order.

Fourth Order Streams in Washington (*according to official DES list*):

1. Beards Brook at and below the junction with Woodward Brook in East Washington
2. Ashuelot River at and below the junction with Richardson Brook in Lempster and then flowing southwesterly back into Washington
3. Shedd Brook below the junction with an unnamed fourth order stream
4. Unnamed stream or river–outflow of Highland Lake (added to list in 2008)

Aquifers:

There are relatively few high-yield aquifer areas in Washington. The most significant in size is the 228-acre Washington portion of a large aquifer in East Washington that straddles the Hillsboro line. Another area on both sides of the north lobe of Ashuelot Pond is 114 acres in size and includes portions that have the highest yield rate in Town. The remaining major area occurs along the drainage basin of Shedd Brook; the Washington portion of this aquifer is 40 acres in size. Considering their local scarcity, aquifers as a resource should be a high priority for protection. Washington depends on ground water for residential wells, and the only existing public well in Town is the well on the Camp Morgan property, which supplies the Elementary School and Lodge. The water being supplied from wells generally comes from some of the precipitation landing within a watershed that seeps into the ground through a

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layer of permeable material. This water is commonly referred to as groundwater or aquifer recharge.

Flood Prone Areas:

There are several areas in Town that are mapped by FEMA as being prone to flooding. These areas occur generally in low areas along streams and water bodies. Recent historic flood events in Washington and the larger Ashuelot River watershed 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 help prevent personal injury and property damage from localized floodwaters, and building and development should be highly discouraged in these areas. Washington has participated in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) since 2008.

Wetlands:

Washington has an abundance of wetlands with their important functions and benefits. These functions include benefits to drinking water, as aquifer recharge areas, sediment capture and control and nutrient cycling to lock up excess nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus. Wetlands help minimize and prevent shoreline erosion by stabilizing the banks of lakes and streams and allow for storm and floodwater storage to buffer the effects of flooding during high-water events. They provide critical habitat during at least a part of the life cycle of many animal species and are hotspots of plant and animal biodiversity. They also provide more obvious contributions to the quality of life we enjoy in New Hampshire, including distant scenic views of wetlands and surrounding hills, as well as hunting and fishing opportunities.

The largest wetland areas in Washington are as follows:

1. Along Shedd Brook on the Windsor town line
2. In the area between Rte. 31 and Valley Road and crossing over Rte. 31 just south of Washington Village
3. A series of wetlands east of Ashuelot Pond
4. A series of wetlands north of Ashuelot Pond and near Farnsworth Hill Town Forest
5. A series of wetlands associated with Bog Brook and Halfmoon Pond
6. A wetland on the upper reaches of Woodward Brook west of Ayers Pond Road.

The wetland functions, as well as the human values to which they equate, are provided to our community at virtually no cost. Destruction or serious alteration of wetlands diminishes their effectiveness in supporting a healthy and safe community and high quality of life. Wetlands deserve to be protected as much as possible, whether by force of law or by means of land protection.

Watersheds:

Washington straddles the dividing line between the Connecticut River drainage and the Merrimack River drainage. The dividing line between these two regional watersheds follows a roughly north-south line that passes a short distance to the west of Washington Village. By virtue of its topographical location, Washington is truly connected hydrologically, not only

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with the rest of southern New Hampshire, but also with the states of Vermont, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Ashuelot River Head Waters:

As previously noted, the most pristine portion of the entire Ashuelot River flows through Washington. From its 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 into the Town of Marlow, ultimately arriving at the Connecticut River in Hinsdale. The Ashuelot is the major river of this region of the state.

Vernal Pools:

Vernal pools are little studied and often overlooked micro-environments that provide important habitat. Vernal pools exist everywhere but are most common in the river floodplain. They characteristically appear as the ground thaws, and snow melts, following the winter season, and they provide important breeding habitat for many invertebrate and vertebrate species, including spotted salamanders. Washington has many vernal pools, but they are not mapped. It is important that the upland areas around vernal pools are protected because these areas are used as habitat by the species that breed in the pools each spring. These areas are as vital to species survival as are the vernal pools themselves.

Threats to Water Resources:

In particular, the water quality of lakes in Washington should continue to be a major concern in Town planning and site development. Washington has a fairly large number of lakes and ponds of various sizes, with much development surrounding these water bodies. Maintaining the water quality and health of these water bodies becomes difficult with more building activity, resulting in more storm water runoff and non-point pollution.

- Non-point source pollution is caused by increased imperviousness near water bodies that prevents water from soaking into the ground, thereby increasing the amount of runoff and the rate at which runoff occurs. Pollutants, picked up by this storm water runoff, increase the amount of non-point source pollution entering nearby waterways. Storm water management plans for development are needed, and there are techniques that can be implemented by homeowners on an individual scale.
- Septic systems that are not properly maintained or replaced when needed are a threat to wells and water bodies.
- Forestry done in a careless manner can cause uncontrolled storm water runoff and sedimentation in surface waters. Best Management Practices should be utilized to ensure that forestry activities do not compromise surface water quality.
- The primary sources of groundwater contamination in New Hampshire are found to be fuel storage and transfer, improper management of hazardous waste, salt piles and salted roads.
- Destruction of wetlands means the loss of important wildlife habitat, diversity and storm water containment.

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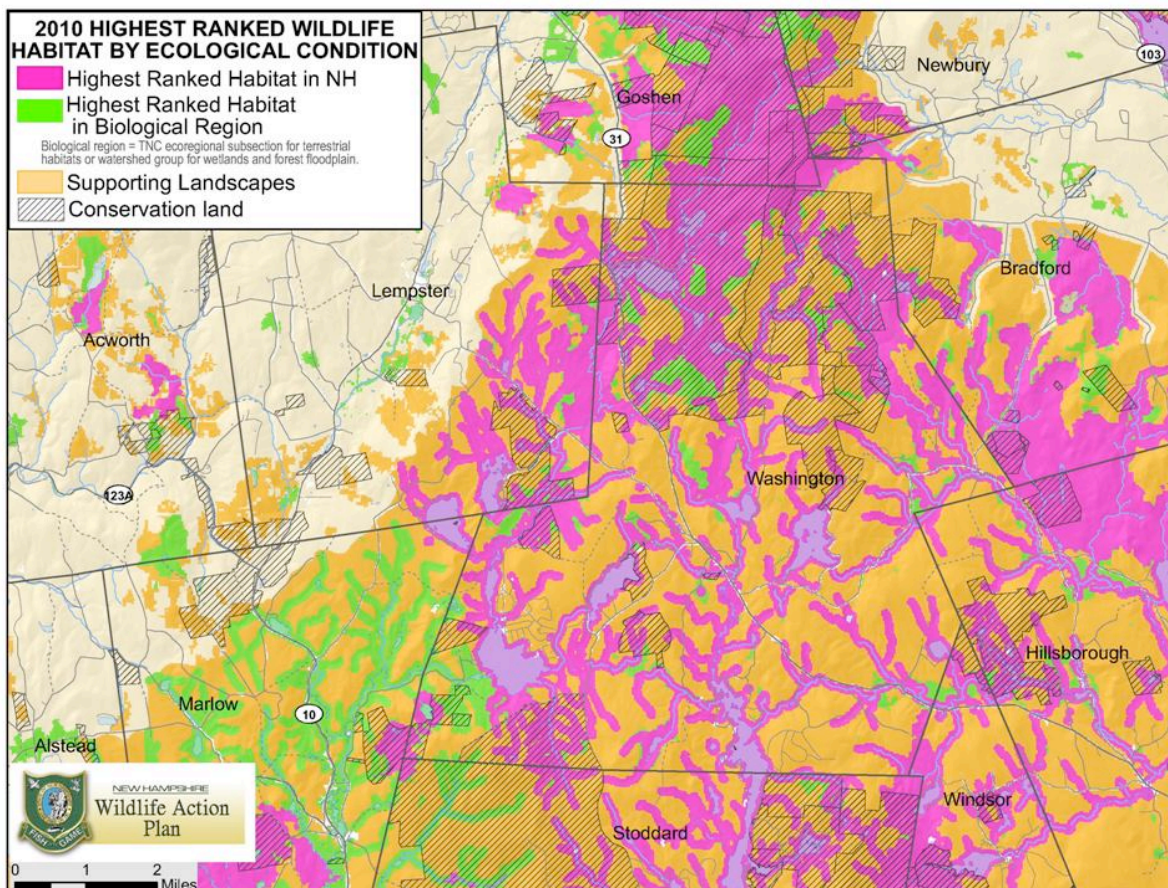
- Special concerns include the high level of mercury in three of Washington's ponds and the reported finding of Eurasian milfoil and other invasive vegetation in lakes in surrounding communities. We must be diligent in watching for invasive species. Volunteer groups such as the Weed Watchers, Lake Hosts and the VLAP (Volunteer Lake Assessment Program) water testers are a great first line of defense.

Wildlife Habitats

NH Wildlife Action Plan:

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, it is an important tool for towns in planning for the conservation of high quality and/or imperiled wildlife habitat, rare plant habitat and exemplary natural communities and systems.

A very significant portion 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 Ashuelot 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 major lakes and ponds in the Town.



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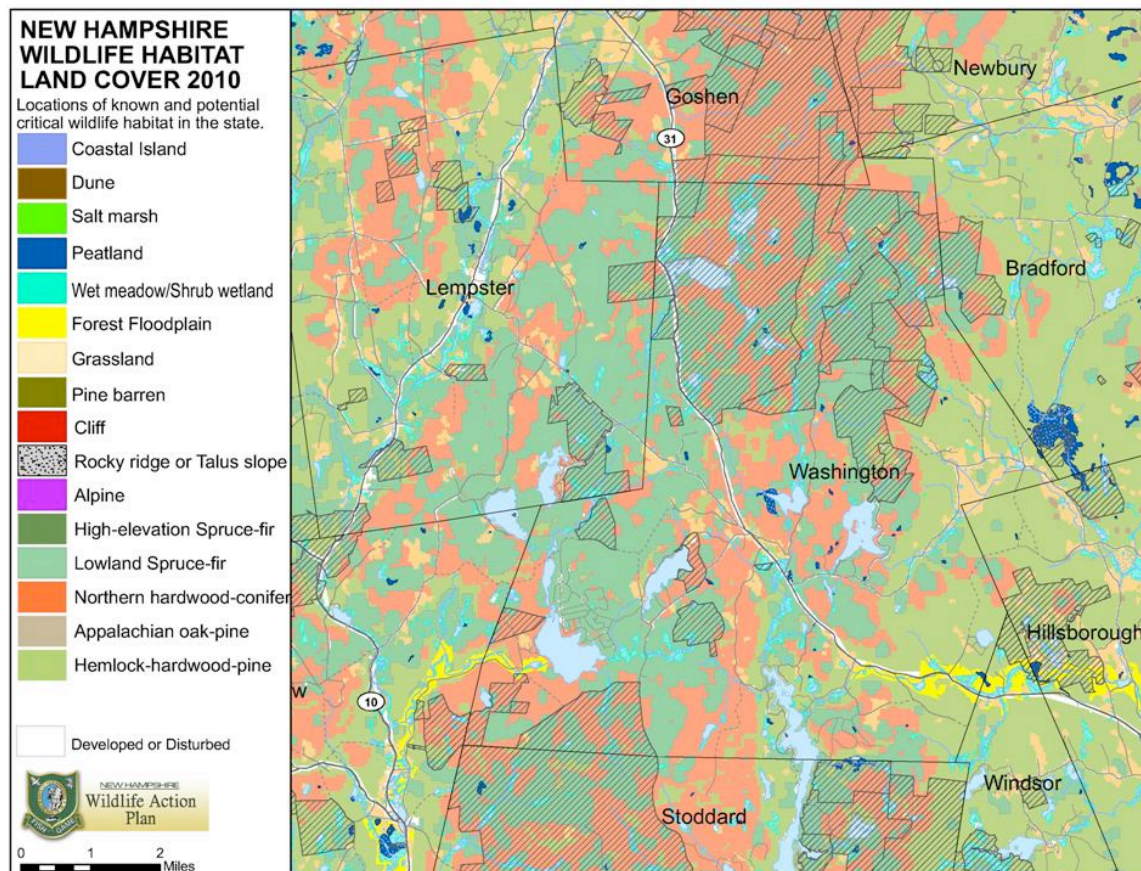
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Habitat Types:

Habitat for wildlife provides food, shelter, water and space for animal species to survive and thrive. Every species has unique habitat requirements and preferences. Virtually all portions of the landscape provide some form of wildlife habitat from time to time, yet some habitat areas are disproportionately important either to a particular species or to a diversity of species.

Washington has examples of four *Small Scale Priority Habitat Types*: Marsh Complex (Wet Meadow/Shrub Wetland), Peatland, Grassland (25+ acres) and Floodplain Forest. These habitats, while represented in Washington by relatively small areas, are considered by this study to be especially critical habitats for wildlife, as well as being, in many cases, relatively uncommon. Floodplain forests were identified by the WAP in two locations in Washington. The most extensive of these is associated with Shedd Brook, and another is located along the Ashuelot River downstream of Ashuelot Pond. The plan also identified four large grasslands in Town. The largest of these by far is an 80 acre grassland/field complex in East Washington on the Eccardt Farm. Others occur on Bailey Road, Lempster Mountain Road and Valley Road. The most significant is the 30-acre peatland on the west end of Halfmoon Pond. Other smaller areas are mapped in the general vicinity of Island Pond, near Shedd Brook and in association with Frog and Bacon Ponds.



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A small number of locations in Washington remain in active agricultural use. For the most part, they are sources of hay or feed corn or grazing areas for cattle, horses and sheep. The vast majority of Washington is forested, making open fields now a relatively rare phenomenon. Diversity of wildlife is enriched by the retention of active agriculture and the incidental habitat it provides. Wildlife species typically associated with active agriculture rely on open habitat and also benefit to some degree from the crops and byproducts of farming.

Soils:

Forest Soils: Some soils are especially suitable for the growth of forests, but the species of trees they excel at growing varies by soil type. Valuable and productive forest soils, Class IA and IB, best for growing hardwood, are well represented in Washington (nearly 20,000 acres). Soil type IC, optimal for the growth of conifers such as pine, however, is uncommon (163 acres).

Nearly all of the land is capable of growing repeated forest crops. This represents a significant economic potential. In addition to providing a permanent supply of fuel wood, lumber and other wood products, as well as forest industry jobs, the forests have several functions and associated benefits. These include:

- Soil stabilization, especially on hillsides. Deforestation diminishes the soil's ability to absorb and hold water and results in the erosion of slopes, sedimentation in streams and lakes and more frequent and severe flooding;
- Providing natural wildlife habitats;
- Offering areas for outdoor recreational opportunities such as hiking, skiing, hunting and camping;
- Acting as a screen or buffer of sights, sounds and the wind; and
- Providing natural beauty and scenic views for both residents and tourists, especially in the fall.

Agricultural Soils: 5,446 acres of all combined designations of Important Agricultural Soils are mapped by NRCS in Washington, representing 17.9% of the total area of the Town. These acres include all areas of prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance and farmland of local importance.

Physical characteristics of land that contribute positively to agricultural potential are the zero to low grade slope, moisture, good drainage, depth to bedrock and seasonal high groundwater table. Some land use techniques can increase the productivity of soils, such as crop rotation and applying compost before the growing season. Other techniques can be detrimental to productivity, and certainly land conversion from farming to residential uses would remove the soils from farming completely.

Farm sales in Washington include milk and ornamental horticulture (greenhouse and nursery products), hay and silage corn, fruit (including apples and berries), livestock, eggs and poultry, maple syrup, Christmas trees, sweet corn and other vegetables. Protection of local farmland

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has many benefits, including:

- Ensuring that land remains available for farming;
- Providing access to fresh local farm products, without significant transportation costs;
- Making productive use of floodplains;
- Keeping local money in the local economy;
- Providing open space and habitat for wildlife, including deer, turkey, bluebirds and woodcock;
- Providing scenic views while making productive use of the land and maintaining rural and cultural qualities of the land;
- Continuing the visual and land use tradition of the region's working landscape;
- Enhancing the region's economic development potential including agricultural tourism and rural enterprises.

Wet Soils: Hydric or saturated soils are mapped widely in Washington, normally in the same locations as the wetlands that they underlay.

Forest Resources:

In a town as rural as Washington with little in the way of commercial development, local sources of income are relatively limited. Keeping forestland in productive use provides an economically viable alternative to more intensive uses such as residential development. Forestland offers additional benefits as well, including preservation of rural character, wildlife habitat, stabilization of the soil, runoff retardation, water quality protection, recreational opportunities, hunting and fishing access, and scenic enjoyment among others. Forests help to naturally take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and release the oxygen we breathe. The trees capture and store most of the carbon in the process of terrestrial carbon capture and sequestration. Two-thirds of the taxable land (about 23,800 acres) is forest, capable of repeated crops of wood for industry, and provides a renewable source of fuel. State (5,000 acres) and Town (720 acres) forests continue to be managed in ways that are compatible with Town goals, but smaller tracts are vulnerable to growth pressures. A "forest block" is an area of forest that is not fragmented by roads or development. A 500-acre block is generally large enough to support significant wildlife, protect water quality and allow some economic forest management.

Threats to Forest Resources: The effects of climate change on the forests of New Hampshire remain uncertain at this time. Another concern to our forests are invasive species and their affect on the natural environment. Many invasive insects, fungi and bacteria have been introduced to our forests causing disease and killing various species of trees. In 2011, the State of NH implemented a ban on untreated, out-of-state firewood in New Hampshire to prevent the spread of invasive species to our forests. The State also implemented a quarantine of all hardwood firewood, ash wood products and all nursery stock for Merrimack County. The three insects of greatest concern today are hemlock woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle. The hemlock woolly adelgid and emerald ash borer are found in New Hampshire, but fortunately, only affect two genera: hemlock and ash. No big losses have occurred yet in New Hampshire, but hemlock woolly adelgid are being found throughout

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southern NH counties, and a recent discovery of emerald ash borer in the Concord and Weare areas is of great concern.

Conservation and Public Lands:

Conservation and Public Lands protect open space and traditional uses. 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 natural processes 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. The Town's largest landowner is the State. Pillsbury State Park, about 5,000 acres, is largely in Washington (4,455 acres), and the State also owns the 628-acre Max Israel tract, about half a mile east of the park, and the 478-acre Lovewell Mountain State Park. Other public lands include the commons in the two villages, the Town garage and transfer station, the roadways, the Town Forests and the 157-acre lakeshore recreation area known as Camp Morgan.

State Land in Washington	
Lovewell Mountain State Park	478 acres
Max Israel State Forest	628 acres
Pillsbury State Park	4,455 acres

Privately Owned Conservation Land in Washington	
Clark Robinson Memorial Forest (NEFF)	243 acres
Webb Forest Preserve (SPNHF)	231 acres
Andorra Forest (11,000 acres in Stoddard & Washington)	810 acres
Orenda-Stickey Wicket Wildlife Sanctuary	285 acres
Ashuelot Wildlife Sanctuary (Audubon)	25 acres
Journey's End (SPNHF)	207 acres
Andrews (SPNHF)	40 acres
Farnsworth Hill Forest Reservation (SPNHF)	313 acres
MacNeil Family Forest Reservation (SPNHF)	245 acres
New Forestry LLC (SPNHF)	207 acres
Eccardt Farm (SPNHF)	141 acres
Rasmussen Forest (SPNHF) Marlow & Washington	572 acres
Wild Pond Easement Stoddard & Washington	278 acres

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Town Forests:

Ten town-owned properties are designated Town Forests, although three are considered conservation lands, as they are not forested. All of these properties were 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 the Forestry Committee. The Forestry Committee is presently updating the comprehensive forestry plan written in 1999 for the Town Forest properties and will manage any logging activity planned in accordance with the updated forestry plan. To date our Town forests are not permanently protected but are considered a priority for protection by conservation easements in the future.

Town Forests	
Camp Morgan	157 acres
Farnsworth Hill	146 acres
Back Mountain	65 acres
Barrett Pond	191 acres
Huntley Mountain Road	106 acres
New Road (Twin Bridge)	55 acres
Old Meadow (wetlands complex)	18.4 acres
Gateway	1.7 acres
Valley Bog	.5 acres
Nuthatch Way	20 acres

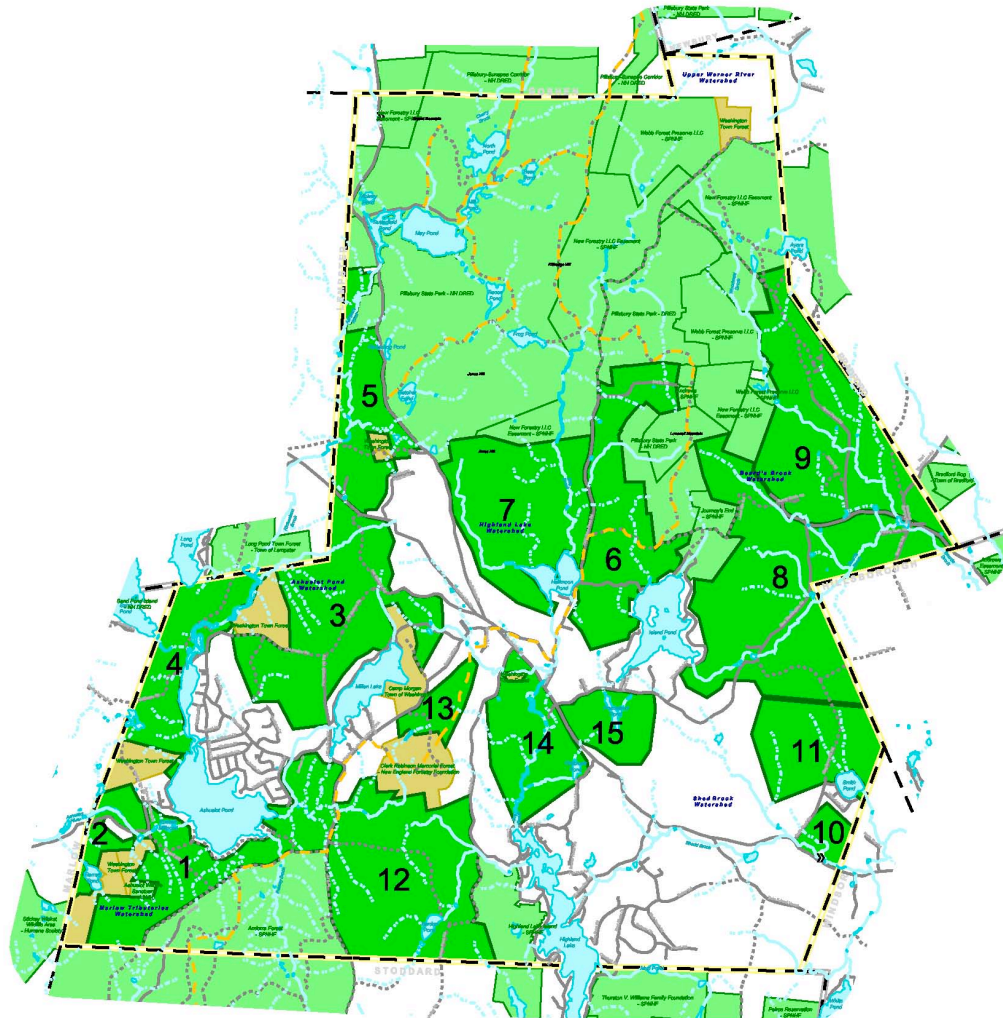
Land Use in Washington	Acres
Farm Land	465
Forest Land	10,927
Forest Land with Management	6,874
Unproductive Land	334
Wetland	611
Total Current Use	19,211
Total Current Use Parcels	452
Washington Conservation land:	
State	5,008
Municipal	759
Non-profit	668
Total acres	6,436
Total Town Acres	30,712

Conservation Priority Areas:

Five Conservation Focus Areas were selected as priority areas for land conservation in the Conservation Plan. Within these five areas, a total of 15 specific, primarily undeveloped, areas were identified as Conservation Priority Areas (CPA). These areas were selected as priorities because, based on the referenced studies, they contain the most significant natural resources in Washington that remain unprotected. 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.

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The fifteen CPAs are as follows:

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

Each CPA is documented with a description, and the benefits of conservation are discussed in the NRI and Conservation Plan documents. Additional priority areas may be identified at a later time, and these would be based on information yet to be gathered through fieldwork and other means.

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SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT:

The Master Plan Vision statement expresses that we should serve as active stewards of our rural surroundings, scenic vistas and recreation resources to preserve and expand protected open space and perpetuate the rural character our townspeople cherish. It encourages our responsibility to the natural environment in Washington and reminds us that we have a duty to protect all that makes Washington special.

The **2013 Community Survey** showed a high degree of appreciation and support for protection of natural resources as well as promotion of actions that educate, conserve and maintain these resources.

- **More land should be protected for:**

Preserving our lakes/ponds through natural woodland buffers	90% agree
Recreation, including hunting, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, etc.	86% agree
Agriculture	84% agree
Open space for wilderness and wildlife habitat	84% agree
Aesthetics, including scenic vistas	78% agree
Forestry	75% agree

- **The Town should:**

Encourage conservation easements be donated to land trusts	70% agree
Acquire full ownership of land by donation to the Town	66% agree

- **Efforts should be made to protect:**

Wildlife corridors	89% agree
Wetlands, surface waters and their buffers	88% agree
Scenic views and viewpoints	86% agree
Wetlands and surface water with stormwater management	83% agree
Hilltops and ridgelines	78% agree
Town forests from development (permanently)	77% agree
Steep slopes	75% agree

- **The Town should promote:**

Use of Pillsbury State Park and Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway	88% agree
Public access to trails	83% agree
Identification/mapping of invasive plants and eradication efforts	79% agree
Educational programs about environmental issues	69% agree
Creation of more trail systems for recreation	67% agree
Public access to lakes, rivers and ponds	67% agree

When asked, “**What is the ONE best thing about living/owning property in Washington?**”

249 people out of 289 who responded mentioned **the rural character, environment and community.**

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The Community Workshop:

The workshop did not have a specific Focus group for Natural Resources, and yet our natural resources were well represented in discussions and workshops. While not all of the comments directly relate to Natural Resources as their subject matter, they do relate in a tangible way.

When the large workshop group was asked what **Washington looks like today**, relative to our natural resources, the group mosaic mentioned that Washington is: rural, with outdoor recreation, a place of retreat, tranquil; valuing the environment; actively buying forest areas; forested, with clear air, water and wildlife; an integrated part of the Monadnock/Sunapee Greenway, a system of premier watersheds, inaccessible and a caring community.

When asked about **the future of Washington**, workshop attendees replied that they wanted: to preserve a pristine environment with dirt roads to walk and relax; to continue a strong conservation effort to protect trees and water; to make the Town buildings and community energy efficient; to have more recreation opportunities for adults and children; to retain our rural character; to instill pride in the entrances to Town (discourage junky yards) and to preserve, encourage, support and promote local farming.

The **Rural Character and Sense of Community** focus group generated ideas and action items corresponding to natural resources. The attendees were given the following definitions to work from: **Rural** means open land, and **Character** is the value placed on aspects of the rural environment. **Sense of Community** is an emotional connection, shared goals, sense of belonging and shared purposes.

The **Town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities**, as relating to Rural Character and a Sense of Community, were found to be the following:

STRENGTHS: Peace and quiet; air and water; small population = quieter; wildlife acceptance; responsibility for/ to one another—people care/ invested in community not just themselves; seasonal people respect their environment recognizing that it is a special place; great walking; ski-mobile trails; kayaking; protection of forests = healthy forests and logging industry helps maintain wildlife.

WEAKNESSES: Lack of initiative to start groups (hiking, crafts, kayaking); forestry regulations fail to provide post-cut environmental protections; high percentage of seasonal people do not have commitment to the well-being of Town.

OPPORTUNITIES: Retain/limit population density to maintain current rural character; "Buy Local;" people will gain personal initiative to have a good time; Pillsbury State Park should be made free to our residents.

Key issues pertaining to Natural Resources surfaced in several other workshop groups:

Historic Resources & Preservation: Maintain rural character and tranquility through zoning.

Land Use and Zoning: Protect land for future generations.

While not making the top five issues of the workshop, these were regarded as important ideas.

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People perhaps felt that while we need to protect our natural resources, the Town and Conservation Commission were actively paying attention to and working on these important issues.

GOALS and RECOMMENDATIONS:

Washington is certainly blessed with exemplary natural places and resources, including abundant surface water resources, productive forests and important farmland, high-value wildlife habitat and extensive recreational access. Washington is fortunate to still 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 engage the resources of the Town as well as an involved citizenry to protect these beautiful places permanently. The Conservation Commission is the Town's only board whose primary goal is to work with our citizens to provide for the protection and appreciation of the natural resources and environmental assets found in the Town of Washington. The Commission members work to guard our ecological systems by promoting responsible forest management, conservation, environmental education, use of renewable energy and biodiversity. They encourage scenic and historic preservation and understand that an enhanced community awareness of the natural treasures of Washington will inevitably lead to greater commitment to their careful stewardship and preservation for future generations.

GOAL A: Permanently protect open space, critical habitats and wildlife corridors, expand recreational opportunities, responsibly manage the natural resources and maintain the rural character of Washington by conservation easements and other means.

Recommendations:

1. Work with willing landowners to help them protect their property, identifying critical and important parcels using the Conservation Commission's protection criteria developed for this purpose.
2. Continue outreach to landowners and cultivate a working relationship with the Forest Society and other land trusts. Work with the Forestry Committee to expand the protection on our Town Forests by using conservation easements.
3. Use conservation funds strategically to leverage their use to better protect our natural resources, quality of life and the many outdoor recreation choices that people value.
4. Make the effort to protect and connect parcels that, in the larger view, do the greatest job of creating corridors of protected land.
5. Keep an eye out for development proposed in sensitive areas and seek ways to mitigate problems and protect the natural resources.

GOAL B: Work to maintain Washington as a vibrant, rural community.

Recommendations:

1. The Planning Board should partner with the Conservation Commission and other Town boards to use available information to make educated, informed decisions about land use in the Town.
2. Update the Land Use Ordinance to better protect the essential qualities that people value: clean air and water, natural and working forests, local agriculture, views, outdoor

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recreation, buffers of sensitive areas, wildlife corridors and habitats, biodiversity, open space, trails, etc.

3. Recognize threats and challenges to maintaining our natural resources, and actively work toward managing these through updating the Town ordinances and adopting innovative land use planning techniques.

GOAL C: Educate the public about our natural resources, water quality issues, wildlife habitats, farming, forestry, recreational opportunities, sustaining the rural character of Washington and the threats to these resources.

Recommendations:

1. The Conservation Commission should continue to work in the schools with the youth of Washington, conduct field trips and hikes, host adult and family educational programs on various important subjects.
2. The Conservation Commission should conduct more field surveys to identify areas of ecological significance, identify our prime wetlands and continue and expand the invasive species identification project, establish other similar projects in Town and involve the public in these projects.

Important natural resources occur at a variety of sites 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 resource areas, it will never be capable of comprehensive protection by itself. Local, state and federal governments have already established regulations in order to protect certain natural resources in Washington. There is a role that new regulations may be able to play in protecting specific resources in an efficient and fair manner.