



Environment and Natural Resources: Public Input 6/16/14

The following information is a synopsis of comments received from various outreach activities, including the Natural Resources break-out group from the Kick Off meeting; the Regional Priorities Survey; Student Interview Projects; and Town Commission Meeting Comments.

Strengths (advantages)

- Conservation Commissions within the Region
- Large number of involved private landowners
- Strong conservation ethic, organizations and conserved land and trail networks
- Productive soils, diverse array of forest types
- Aesthetic beauty and scenic landscapes including private property
- Largest draw to the Region is the mountains, outdoor recreation and clean, peaceful atmosphere
- Rural character, wildlife, seasons, hiking trails and reservoirs

Weaknesses (what to avoid or improve)

- Lack of appreciation for private landowners
- Need for child and adult education on environment, ecosystems and needs of wildlife
- Inexactness of information on climate change and future impacts, need to find opportunities in climate change adaptation
- Lack of hunters to control certain wildlife populations
- Lack of inventory of natural resources needing protection and management
- Lack of support for conservation commissions and districts
- Need for flooding planning on regional scale
- Need to empower landowners to conserve and be good land stewards, keeping land for the benefit of future generations
- Lack of public access to some natural resources, such as large lakes surrounded by private property (i.e. in Woodbury)

Opportunities

- Provide more stable support for conservation
- Coordinating housing and conservation
- Protect wetlands and preserve land for wildlife habitat and corridors, walking trails
- Local control of natural resources, for example shoreland zoning and floodplains
- Locate, identify, and control invasive plants and species

- Create an informed, problem solving, engaged citizenry with knowledge to independently and in partnership forge common sense, sustainable ways to steward all resources
- Reduce, limit or ban new development in floodplains and other areas that will contribute toward soil erosion and flooding
- Multi-municipality FEMA Community Rating System through the Regional Planning Commission
- Strengthening the Current Use program to incentivize working the land instead of letting it sit for future development, creating more benefits for sustainable use of the land, increasing penalties for removing land from the program for development

Threats (obstacles)

- Inability to make a living from the land or sustain economics of rural working landscape
- Conflicting uses for public lands, subdivision and fragmentation of productive forest and agricultural lands causing biodiversity loss
- Affects of farming and forestry practices on the environment, i.e. water bodies, erosion of soils, CO2 emissions, etc.
- Extraction of water for commercial purposes; protect subsurface water and aquifers from water removal and contamination (inc ban on fracking)
- Access to Berlin Pond, should designate it as a wildlife preserve and a “critical infrastructure” reservoir
- Development in river corridors/fluvial erosion hazard areas, flooding and storm water runoff
- Auto-oriented strip development, greenhouse gas contribution from cars and heating
- Rebuilding of homes, businesses, etc. in areas that have flooded recently
- Length of time it takes to accomplish conservation goals
- Impacts of climate change on natural resources and seasonal recreation/tourism