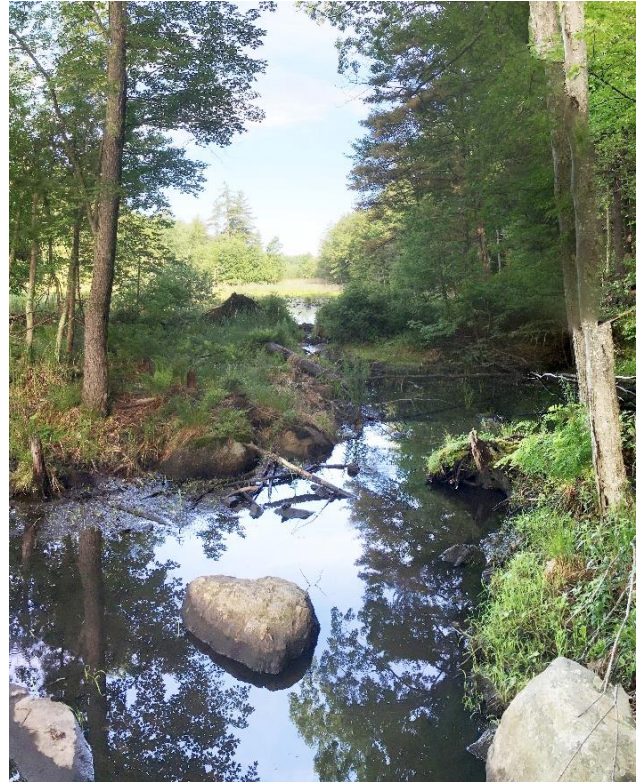


SECTION 1

Purpose of the Land Conservation Plan

“Conservation is an act of the heart and soul, an expression of values, and a commitment to the future”

From *Conserving Your Land – Options for New Hampshire Landowners*, published by the New Hampshire Center for Land Conservation Assistance, 2005



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1.1 – Background

In 2020, the Atkinson Conservation Commission secured funding to prepare a land conservation plan for the town. This plan will be used as a tool and guidance document for the Conservation Commission and land use boards, elected officials, and the public to advance goals such as

- land conservation and acquiring sources of funding
- education of property owners about conservation options
- public outreach and education about the values of the natural environment, ecosystems, and natural resources
- refinement of zoning and land development regulations to be conservation minded
- inform decisions about budgets, infrastructure investments, and capital improvements
- Master Planning and other long-range planning activities
- Review of development applications
- Support for external funding and grant applications

In recent years, Atkinson has experienced rapid growth due to its central location to major employment centers and the metropolitan Boston region. Land values have also increased dramatically, pitting development profits against the town's land conservation interests. In the last 10 years, a number of residential subdivisions have eliminated large parcels of high conservation value from the possibility of preservation. With only a handful of large parcels remaining, the Conservation Commission feels it is critical to prepare a strategic and prioritized Land Conservation Plan to focus the use of the town's relatively modest land conservation funds for maximum conservation benefit.

1.2 - Approach

The Land Conservation Plan is a science-based, consensus-driven approach to further protecting the town's dwindling open spaces and natural resources. The Plan includes an inventory of our existing natural resources, a prioritization of the environmental qualities we seek to protect, an analysis of which parts of town should be a priority for permanent protection, and an action plan with strategies to focus our effort and leverage our Conservation Fund to protect them.

The Plan will serve as a guide for future open space planning and investment in land protection by the town. The maps and other data developed during the planning process and contained in the plan identify where land protection is most beneficial and identify where and how to implement various modes of protection.

1.3 – Conservation Goals

The Plan will help the Conservation Commission and the town to focus on protecting high-value lands such as wildlife and plant habitat, upland buffers surrounding high-value wetlands, water quality, scenic vistas, and other important natural resources. In doing so, the town will sustain the ecosystem services provided by its natural resource base, and maintain the rural character envisioned in Atkinson’s Natural Resources Inventory and Master Plan. The Land Conservation Plan can assist the Conservation Commission in pursuing its primary objectives to conserve land and natural resources, advance dialog with property owners about the values of conservation, build strong relationships with town citizens to engage them and provide knowledge, and continue working with town staff and elected officials on shared conservation objectives.

1.4 – Plan Elements and Applicability

Results of this plan include the following detailed information and tools that can inform a wide range of users, including property owners interested in conserving land, municipal decision makers, and town boards and commissions in the course of their work and duties.

The Plan’s Executive Summary provides an overview of results and current conditions. Below is a brief guide to the primary Plan components to help focus what is of most interest and to get started!



A list of criteria to use when considering conserving a parcel of land



Maps to identify potential land conservation projects to protect resources of high ecological value



A guide to inform zoning and other regulatory protections



Information to encourage public involvement through outreach and education



Maps of high value natural resources and other areas of high conservation value



Science-based data to inform the town’s decision makers in acquiring or otherwise protecting land for conservation purposes