

Town of Atkinson
New Hampshire

NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY



Prepared for the Atkinson Conservation Commission
by the Rockingham Planning Commission
as part of the
I-93 Community Technical Assistance Program

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Only relevant pages have been scanned

though some strive to exceed 20 percent conserved lands in order to protect sensitive resources, particularly water supply watersheds and aquifers and agricultural lands.

Table 1. Summary of natural resources and acreage in Atkinson

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Acre</i>	<i>% town</i>
Agricultural Soils	3,502.8	48.0%
Rivers and Streams	20.5 linear miles	--
Lakes and Ponds	109	1.5
Floodplain- Flood Hazard Areas	297	4.1
Freshwater Wetlands	589.6	8.1
Designated Prime Wetlands	255	3.5
Stratified Drift Aquifer	473	6.5
Forested Lands	4,137	56.7
NH Wildlife Action Plan - High Quality Habitat and Supporting Landscapes	4,382.4	60.1
Conservation Lands	1,439	19.7
Unfragmented Blocks	3,017	41.4
Land	7,168	98.6
Water	128	1.7

8.0 Open Space and Land Conservation

What is Open Space?

For the purpose of this report, open space is defined as any lands that remain in a natural and undeveloped condition that contribute ecological, scenic or recreational value. The definition of open space may be expanded to include working lands (forests, agriculture, field corners, fence rows and abandoned pastures) and managed green space such as golf ranges, parks, and recreation areas. The terms 'natural environment' and 'natural resources' are used to broadly describe Atkinson's air, water, and land resources including, but not limited to, the town's scenery, air quality, aquifers, streams, soils, plants and animals. These features form an integrated natural network or "green infrastructure" in which the town's built environment and its key cultural and historic resources are embedded. The open space and green infrastructure provides the ecosystem services required to sustain a vibrant and healthy community.

8.1 Benefits of Open Space Preservation

Studies from across the nation have demonstrated that farmland open space preservation can provide more revenue to a community than is incurred in expenditures, resulting in a net fiscal benefit. In many instances, the costs associated with support of residential and commercial development often exceed the costs to support farmland and open space. Tax benefits are maximized when a conservation easement is placed on land already enrolled in current use.

Open space preservation serves multiple goals within a community and provides the following benefits:

- ✓ *Attracts investment by residents and businesses seeking high quality of life*
- ✓ *Revitalizes town and village centers*
- ✓ *Supports of resource based tourism economy*
- ✓ *Helps prevent flooding and flood related damage*
- ✓ *Protects farms and agricultural lands*
- ✓ *Promotes sustainable development patterns*
- ✓ *Protects environmental resources (water, aquifers, air, forests)*
- ✓ *Provides recreational and educational opportunities*

A study conducted by the Trust for Public Land (see below *Managing Growth: The Impact of Conservation and Development on Property Taxes in New Hampshire, 2005*) concluded that towns that have the most permanently protected land have slightly lower tax bills on average. It is unlikely that land conservation alone is responsible for these tax benefits. However, land conservation is a tool that shapes the landscape of a community by:

- ✓ helping maintain the rural character of a community,
- ✓ creating more centralized, dense development patterns,
- ✓ creating more efficient municipal service areas, and
- ✓ providing multiple environmental and aesthetic benefits.

Thus, the resulting landscape is a direct result and reflection of the community's support of open space preservation.

8.2 Conservation Lands

Conservation Lands

For the purpose of this document, conservation lands means lands that have a permanent easement or other legal restriction preventing them from being developed in the future. Most conservation lands are protected through fee-simple purchase by the town or other land protection organization/agency, or by voluntary placement of a conservation easement by the landowner.

Open space refers to lands have been permanently designated as undeveloped land as part of subdivision approval pursuant to the Atkinson Zoning Ordinance, Article VI Rural Cluster Residential Development. Open space may be privately or publically held and provide for public or private access.

Table 20. Summary of conserved lands and unfragmented blocks

Category	Acres	% town area
Conservation Lands*	1,325.4	18.2
Unfragmented Blocks (>50 acres)	3,017	41.4
Total Town Area (land and water)	7,296	---

*Conservation Lands include all parcels that have a conservation easement or other permanent form of protection (532.98 acres), and open space created by rural cluster subdivisions (792.41 acres), which include both publicly and privately held lands.

Land Use Change Tax (LUCT)

The Town of Atkinson currently allocates annually 100 percent of the total Land Use Change Tax collected (excluding interest). The Town has not compiled a summary of annual Land Use Change Tax contributions to the Conservation Fund.

Table 21. Land Use Change Tax (LUCT) history from 2000 to 2005

Year	LUCT Collected	Year	LUCT Collected
2000	68,280.00	2006	No data
2001	516,714.11	2007	No data
2002	296,025.89	2008	No data
2003	161,900	2009	21,900
2004	No data	2010	No data
2005	No data		

8.3 Goals for Land Protection

The Atkinson Conservation Commission identifies the following primary land protection goals:

- Update forest and land management plans regularly
- Encourage voluntary conservation through community education and outreach
- Encourage public participation in events on conservation lands and use of recreational opportunities/facilities
- Support policy of setting no financial or acreage cap on land preservation efforts
- Utilize Innovative Land Use Techniques to support land preservation
- Investigate use of transfer of development rights to support land preservation
- Establish a volunteer “warden” program to encourage stewardship of Town Forest lands

8.4 Land Preservation Strategies for Consideration

A variety of land preservation strategies should be implemented recognizing that acquisition alone will not achieve land preservation goals. Each strategy listed in the table below has specific benefits and associated costs (\$ expenditure) which should be evaluated on a case by case basis to guide the best use of public funds and resources and ensure the functions and values of a given parcel are adequately protected.

Table 22. Land protection strategies and their benefits

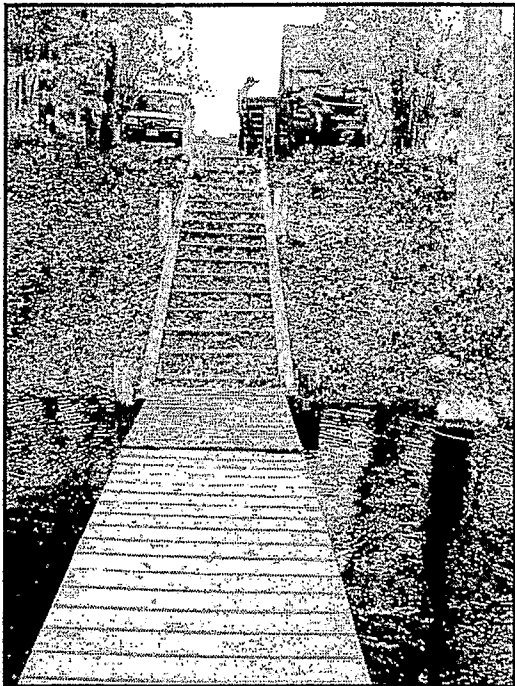
Protection Strategy	Benefit	\$ Expended
<i>Land Acquisition</i>	Purchase of land at fair market value or as a bargain sale where the difference between fair market value and sale price becomes a tax-deductible donation; Public access, leverage for securing funding	High
<i>Purchase of Easements/ Development Rights</i>	Growth management tool; retain development density and tax base if rights transferred to growth areas	High
<i>Regulatory Protection</i>	Preservation of public resources and their functions and values to the community; federal, state and local implementation	Low/No
<i>Land Use Regulations</i>	Adoption of an incentive based Conservation Subdivision ordinance can provide large tracts of open space lands as part of development approval	Low/No
<i>Voluntary Protection and Conservation Easements</i>	Voluntary conservation easements involving donation of development rights; Private stewardship and management; public access permitted in some cases	Low/No
<i>Land and Resource Management</i>	Fosters public participation and stewardship	Low/No
<i>Transfer of Development Rights</i>	Voluntary transfer of development rights from designated open space areas to designated growth areas that allow greater development density	Low/No

* *\$ Expended* refers to the use of municipal and/or public funds to implement a specific land protection strategy (i.e. use of Land Use Change Tax contributions, bonds, and other municipal funding sources).

8.5 *Access to Public Lands, Trails and Water*

The map on the following page is an excerpt from the Atkinson Conservation Trails brochure, which shows the location, access points and configuration of trails, and provides a general description of conserved lands and the natural features and resources found on them. Public trails are located at the following town owned conservation properties: Stickney Land, Marshall Land, Pope Road Land, Sawmill Swamp, Crown Hill-Noyes Rock, Carolyn Orr Conservation Land, and Sawyer Land.

Canoe and Kayak Launch at Island Pond



After five years without a public launch, and over 20 years since the first launch was opened, Atkinson has a canoe and kayak launch at Island Pond. The launch is on Stickney Road off Lake Shore Drive and has parking for up to ten cars.

Volunteer Stewardship

On their website, the Conservation Commission encourages residents and visitors to report the condition of the conservation properties, including items on the following list.

- *Overall Status of Trails, forest, vegetation and wildlife*
- *Type of Land (topography, vegetation or forest cover)*
- *Condition of Land (new or old growth (untouched, undeveloped), light or heavy use, signs of erosion)*
- *Access (trail head entrance, size and condition of parking area, trail marking system, trail condition)*
- *Human Use (dog walking, hiking, biking, ORHV, camping, picnicking, campfires)*

- *Plants (percent wooded and type (conifer, hardwood, softwood), percent grass and undergrowth (ground cover, mosses)*
- *Animals and Other Wildlife (insects (density and type), seen amphibians, mammals, reptiles, birds. Signs of wildlife: trails, scat, dens or burrows)*
- *Boundary Markers (present and condition, type)*
- *Approximate Acreage*
- *Points of Historical or Cultural Interest (old foundations, quarries, farmed areas, orchards, and known historical points. Special land formations: glacial boulder "erratics", ancient beaches, outcroppings)*
- *Environmental Changes (transition from pine to hardwood, wet to dry, unusual plants or animals)*
- *Special Features (anything that sets this area apart from other town lands)*

8.6 Recommendations

- OS1 Amend zoning ordinances (Article VI: Rural Cluster Residential Development), site development plan regulations, and subdivision regulations to provide additional incentives for increased protection of and provisions for access to open space lands.
- OS2 Organize an Open Space Committee to guide land protection efforts and use of town and other funding sources for protection of open space lands and resources, and other significant cultural and historic resources.
- OS2 Develop an Open Space Plan to help plan future land acquisition and protection efforts and to guide future funding through the Capital Improvement Plan, bonds and allocation of Land Use Change Tax collections.
- OS4 Consider securing a town bond and source other funding opportunities for purposes of land protection and acquisition.

Appendix B List of Conserved and Open Space Lands in Atkinson

Conserved lands have a permanent easement or other legal restriction preventing them from being developed in the future. Open space lands have been permanently designated as undeveloped land as part of subdivision approval (Zoning Ordinance, Article VI Rural Cluster Residential Development).

Conserved Lands			Open Space Lands		
	<i>Map/Lot</i>	<i>Acreage</i>		<i>Map/Lot</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
	2-53	10.200	Fieldstone Village	2-1	28.14
	3-108	13.980	Twin Oaks	6-76	14.82
	3-19	57.870	Eldon Way	7-139	12.84
	4-11-1	48.380	Little River	9-33	7.90
	4-50	24.355	Carriage Chase Estates	9-62-22	17.21
	4-46	4.200	Bryant Woods	10-7	170.23
	5-48	59.190		11-39	3.25
	12-2	29.570	Millstream Crossing	11-11	2.78
	12-8-1	11.670		11-54	5.88
	16-12-1	31.200		11-53	2.22
	16-19	1.700	Settlers Ridge	12-1	83.26
	18-109	7.700	Jesse Page Estates	13-22	26.55
	18-70	4.200	Jamison Ridge	13-29	36.76
	18-77	17.430	Centerview Hollow	13-96	47.94
	18-86	4.000	Wright Farm I and II	13-94	43.09
	18-78	45.740	Cogswell Farm	13-1-1	18.33
	18-65	7.000	Ashford Drive	17-29-7	11.30
	18-41	7.000	The Commons	17-86	67.84
	18-82	4.040	Dearborn Ridge	18-74	14.59
	18-83	3.850	Atkinson Woods	20-49	41.25
	18-84	2.780	Waterwheel Estates	21-1	40.88
	19-80	4.070		Total	697.07
	19-18	17.050			
	19-76	2.000			
	19-61	7.360			
	19-62	12.000			
	20-36	35.170			
	20-13-1	3.910			
	20-15-1	3.400			
	20-15	1.000			
	20-35	24.300			
	20-31	1.500			
	23-40	25.000			
	23-91	0.161			
	Total	532.976			