

TOWN OF ATKINSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
21 Academy Avenue
Atkinson, New Hampshire 03811

2020 Land Conservation Plan

Task Descriptions and Schedules
(Refer to the Plan Outline, attached)

Task #1: Write the first four sections of the plan, which are:

- Purpose of the Land Conservation Plan
- A Brief History of Land Conservation in Atkinson
- Reasons for Conserving Land (RPC writes)
- Methods for Conserving Land (RPC writes)

Information for these sections can be gathered from existing sources, as described in the attached Outline.

Timeframe: March - April, 2020

Measurable results - A written draft, which will be reviewed at the Conservation Commission's May, 2020 meeting, and which will be presented to the public in a Community Forum progress report.

Budget: RPC hours:17; volunteer hours (writing and review, and Community Forum preparation and presentation): 30.

Task #2: Research and write Section 5 – “Current State of Land Conservation in Atkinson”

This task will document the current state of conservation in Atkinson. Working with Avitar, the Town's tax map consultant, we will be creating (or updating) GIS layers showing the following:

- Town Forest lands
- Other Town-owned land

- Dedicated Open Space from cluster developments
- LWCF-funded land (distinguishing conservation and recreation areas)
- Current Use parcels (distinguishing which have public access allowed)
- Privately-owned land permanently protected by a conservation easement
- Prime Wetlands
- Conservation trails
- Lands allowing or restricting hunting

In addition to creating or updating our own map layers, this Task will also assemble all applicable maps from public sources, such as the Wildlife Action Plan, soils, endangered species, and well-head protection areas, and will use these in the prioritization process described in Task #4, below. A representative list of possible maps is contained in Appendix section 3.

An important benefit of the map layer work described above will be the transmission of this data to GRANIT.

Timeframe: May - July, 2020

Measurable results: a set of map layers depicting the above information, a short narrative explaining the content of each layer, and a compilation of other applicable maps (see Appendix section 3). These will be reviewed at the Conservation Commission's August, 2020 meeting.

Budget: RPC:14 hours; Avitar:24.5 hours; volunteer hours (gathering parcel information from tax records, writing the narratives, and reviewing the maps): 40.

Task #3: Write Section 6 - "Attributes That Make Land Worthy of Conservation"

There are two parts to this task, which will be performed by a Task Force of volunteer citizens. The first part will be to define, in narrative form, all the various attributes and conservation values that might be considered to be "selection criteria" when contemplating protecting a piece of land. Once this list is complete, the Task Force will prioritize the attributes' importance for Atkinson, and will define a numerical scoring system that can be applied to a piece of land. This is an iterative process aimed at getting broad consensus for what the Town "values" in its conservation lands. One activity to accomplish this might be to conduct a follow-up survey from the 2015 Master Plan to ascertain current opinions about land conservation. Another activity might be to hold a community "round table" discussion to learn what conservation values are

important to Atkinson's citizens. This task will be led by the Rockingham Planning Commission.

Timeframe: August - October, 2020

Measurable results: A narrative of attributes that make land worthy of protection, and a prioritized table of attributes, with descriptions of how to "score" each attribute. These will be reviewed at the Conservation Commission's November, 2020 meeting, and presented in a Community Forum progress report.

Budget: RPC: hours: 30; volunteer hours: 40

Task #4: Research and produce Section 7 - "Conservation Priorities for the Town of Atkinson"

Led by the RPC, the Task Force will then apply the attributes defined in Task #3 to specific areas in town, and will generate a numerical "conservation score" for each. Using this data, RPC will then apply statistical analysis techniques to graphically display the scores, producing maps of Atkinson similar to the maps of Fremont which are contained in the Appendix (pages 9c, 9d, & 9e). The colors on these maps reflect the relative importance of protecting land in various parts of town.

Timeframe: November 2020 – January 2021

Measurable Results: Maps of Atkinson showing the relative conservation values of various areas in town, that can be used to prioritize conservation efforts to permanently protect high-priority lands. These maps will be reviewed at the February, 2021 Conservation Commission meeting, and presented in a Community Forum progress report.

Budget: RPC hours: 34; volunteer hours: 40

Task #5: Tasks include the following:

- Research and write Section 8 – "Sources of Funding" (RPC writes)
- Write Section 9 – "Conclusions and Recommendations"
- Overall editing and review of the Plan Document
- Community Forum to present the Plan to the Citizens of Atkinson

Timeframe: February – March 2021

Measurable results: the completed Plan Document, and a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the planning process and content of the Plan Document.

Budget: RPC hours: 26; volunteer hours: 40

Proposed Outline for a Land Conservation Plan

Atkinson Conservation Commission

Section 1 – Purpose of the Land Conservation Plan

- A relatively short paragraph or two.
- For example: help make informed decisions when considering protecting additional land; spend the town's Conservation Fund wisely; guide efforts to secure grants to augment the town's funds.

Section 2 – A Brief History of Conservation in Atkinson

- A brief history of the Atkinson Conservation Commission. For example: 1974 TM vote to establish the CC and the Conservation Fund, votes to establish Town Forests and the Forest Maintenance Fund, and a general overview of land acquisitions, how they were funded, and restrictions that may exist (such as hunting).
- Discuss the Conservation Fund and the Forest Maintenance Fund: what their purposes are, how they are funded, and balances as of 1/1/2020
- Briefly describe the major responsibilities of a CC as empowered by RSA 36-A
- List the current (2020) members of the Commission
- End with the Conservation Commission Mission Statement, as approved May 7, 2018

Section 3 – Reasons for Conserving Land

- Lift ideas from other towns' plans (with permission)
- Does not have to be very long
- Helps to legitimize/justify our work to acquire additional land and easements

- Should not really need to write this section – the need is obvious – but for completeness it needs to be done
- Written by RPC

Section 4 – **Methods for Conserving Land**

- Londonderry and Fremont have good examples on this subject
- Written by RPC

Section 5 – **Current State of Land Conservation in Atkinson**

- Update map layers: Town Forests and other open land owned by the town; cluster open space land created through zoning; privately owned land protected by conservation easements, Current Use land open to public access.
- Include a short narrative describing each of these types of land.
- Gather other maps needed when evaluating the conservation value of land: Wildlife Action Plan etc.
- The map updating part of this will be a fair amount of work, with input from CC volunteers and other Town officials.

Section 6 – **Attributes That Make Land Worthy of Conservation**

- First list all attributes applicable to land conservation, and write a short narrative of each.
- Prioritize the list for Atkinson
- Define a numerical scoring method to objectively compare the conservation value of different areas in town.
- This will be accomplished with community involvement, for example, through a survey or round-table event.

Section 7 – **Conservation Priorities for the Town of Atkinson**

- Using the scoring method developed in the previous section, evaluate all areas in town using statistical techniques, and produce a set of color-coded maps showing the relative conservation values of different areas in town.
- Done by the RPC with input from volunteers
- A fair amount of work.

Section 8 – **Sources of Funding**

- State the goal: always try to augment the Town’s resources with grant funding; “use the town’s funds as leverage...”
- List the programs that are available as potential sources of grant funding for major land acquisitions. For example, LCHIP, Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund, Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund, Moose Plate grants, 2018 Farm Bill (farm easements), others? Describe their schedules, processes for applying, what they do and don’t cover, and what matching funds are required.
- List, and briefly describe, potential partner organizations: SPNHF, Southeast Land Trust, The Conservation Fund, others? Discuss what roles they might play in land acquisition and/or easements.

Section 9 – **Conclusions and Recommendations**

- Reiterate (briefly) the purpose of the plan (from Section 1), and how the information presented in the plan can help fulfil that purpose.
- Any recommendations or “next steps?”
- Thank those who contributed to the plan