



TOWN OF GROTON
Groton Conservation Commission
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450-1237
(978) 448-1106
Fax: 978-448-1113
Email: ngualco@townofgroton.org



January 18, 2018

Bruce Easom, Chairman
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall - 173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

RE: FY19 Community Preservation Proposal – Conservation Fund
Groton Conservation Commission

Dear Chairman Easom:

The Conservation Commission is pleased to submit this draft application and proposal to the Community Preservation Committee for consideration. The Conservation Commission is requesting FY19 Community Preservation Act funding in the amount of \$25,000 to help replenish the Conservation Fund.

The Conservation Fund allows the Town to move quickly in the event a priority parcel comes on the market, and it has been a vital tool in the preservation of open space in Groton, most recently with the purchase of the Fritz and Helen Walker Conservation Area (109 acres) in 2013. Commissioners wish to stress the importance of continuing to add incremental amounts to the Conservation Fund on an annual basis. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Nikolis Gualco
Conservation Administrator

Enclosures

CPA PROJECT APPLICATION FORM

[CPC Use Only: Date Received _____ By: _____
Assigned CPC #2018 - _____]

If possible, use word processor to fill out form. Please answer all questions, use "N/A" if not applicable.


1. a.) Applicant Name and Organization: Last Gualco First Nikolis
Organization(s) (if appropriate) Groton Conservation Commission
- b.) Regional Project: Yes or No? X If Yes, Town/Organization: _____
2. Submission Date: January 18, 2018
3. Applicant Address: 173 Main Street
City/ State: Groton ZIP: 01450
4. Ph. # (978) 448-1106 Email: ngualco@townofgroton.org
5. CPA Purpose. Check all that apply:
Community Housing _____ (Affordable Housing: _____) Historic Preservation: X Open Space: X
Recreation X
6. Town Committee or boards participating: Conservation Commission
7. Project Location/Address: n/a
8. Project Name: Conservation Fund – FY19
9. Additional Responsible Parties (If applicable):

Role (specify)	Name	Address	Ph. (w) (cell)	Email
Property/Site Owner				
Project Manager	Nikolis Gualco Conservation Administrator	173 Main Street Groton, MA 01450	(978) 448-1106	ngualco@ townofgroton.org
Lead Architect				
Project Contractor				
Project Consultants				

10. As appropriate, indicate if proposal requires P&S agreement No Deed No
Option agreement No Other-describe: n/a
11. a.) Assessor info. (map/ block/ lot id.(s)): n/a b.) Tax classification type: n/a
12. Permits required: Zoning: No Historic Preservation: No Other: No
13. Historic Commission Approval signoff (when required): n/a Date: _____
14. Funding: a.) Requested from CPC: \$ 25,000 b.) Committed from other sources: \$ 0
c.) Annual anticipated total income : \$ n/a d.) Annual anticipated total expense: \$ n/a
d.) Anticipated net income (loss): \$ n/a e.) Estimator name/company: n/a
15. CCP Objectives - use codes from **Section 5** to indicate all that apply:
OSRP 9.1.1, 9.1.3, 9.2.1, 9.2.3, 9.5.1, 9.7.2; and CPP 5.1.1
16. Project Timelines: Proposed Start Date: n/a Projected Complete Date: n/a
17. Estimated Delivery Date of Completion Report to CPC: n/a

18. Project description and explanation (attach additional sheets as needed): The Conservation Commission is requesting \$25,000 in CPA funds to be added to the Town's Conservation Fund to help preserve open space, protect water resources and wildlife habitat, and preserve land for agricultural, recreational, and forestry activities.
The Conservation Fund allows the Town to move quickly in the event a priority parcel becomes available. In the past, the Conservation Fund has been used to purchase Conservation Restrictions, Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, and fee ownership of conservation land in the Town. The Commission's goal is to maintain an amount between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000 in the Conservation Fund. As of December 31, 2017, the Conservation Fund balance is \$759,923.77.
(See attached proposal for full project description.)
19. Feasibility: The Conservation Fund has been used numerous times to preserve open space, recreational, and cultural/historical assets. (See attached proposal.)
20. List of attachments: a) Proposal; b) Attachment 1, Master Plan Excerpt; c) Attachment 2, OSRP excerpt; d) Attachment 3, Management Plan; e) Attachment 4, Letters of Support List
21. Additional Information: See proposal. Map figures included in Attachments 1 & 2.

22. Management Plan: See attached Management Plan for Land Protection (Attachment 3).

23. Applicant Signature:  Date: 1/18/2018
Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____
Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

FY19 Community Preservation Proposal – Groton Conservation Commission

1. Proposal Summary

The Groton Conservation Commission is requesting \$25,000.00 in CPA funds to be transferred to the Conservation Fund for the following objectives: preserve open space; protect water resources; preserve land for agricultural, forestry, and recreational activities; and protect important wildlife habitat that might otherwise be converted into subdivisions or commercial developments. These objectives are identified as priorities in the 2011 Master Plan and the 2012 Groton Open Space & Recreation Plan.

The Conservation Fund, with allocations through the Community Preservation Act, has been a vital tool in the preservation of open space in Groton. The Conservation Commission has applied most years since the Town adopted the Community Preservation Act for CPC funds. In the past, the Conservation Fund has been used by the Conservation Commission to purchase Conservation Restrictions, Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, and fee simple purchases of conservation land within the Town of Groton. In some years the Commission has withdrawn its application in deference to other worthy projects.

The Conservation Fund is also utilized for professional services necessary for the completion of land acquisition projects, such as title certifications, recordings at the Registry of Deeds, real estate appraisals, and surveys. The Conservation Fund enabled the Commission to hire a consultant to assist in the preparation of both the Groton 2005 *and* 2012 Open Space & Recreation Plans. The Commission will need to update the Open Space & Recreation Plan in FY19 as the 2012 Plan is set to expire in July 2019. A current Plan assures the Town's eligibility to apply for state grants and guides the Commission in prioritizing parcels for acquisition. Applying for state grants enables the Commission to further leverage the funds received through the Community Preservation Act. The Town has received a total of \$1,391,520 through five successful grants from the state.

The Conservation Fund allows the Town to move quickly in the event a priority parcel comes on the market, and the Conservation Commission wishes to stress the importance of continuing to add incremental amounts to the Conservation Fund on an annual basis. To remain competitive in the real estate market, the Commission's goal has been to maintain an amount between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000 in the Conservation Fund. As of December 31, 2017, the Conservation Fund balance is \$759,923.77.

2. Background

Prior to the Town's adoption of the CPA, the Groton Conservation Fund was funded by warrant articles at the Annual Town Meeting. After the Town's adoption of the CPA in 2004, the Conservation Commission has relied on CPA funding to replenish the Conservation Fund. Through good times and bad, the Town's voters have shown a willingness to spend some of their hard-earned money to help preserve and protect the Town's open space resources. **Table 1** on the next page shows Town appropriations to the Conservation Fund from 1996 through 2014.

Voters at Town Meeting approved CPA funding in the amount of \$185,000 in 2005; \$200,000 in 2007; \$100,000 in 2008; and \$100,000 in 2009 to be allocated to the Conservation Fund. A request in 2010 for \$30,000 and another request in 2011 for \$150,000 were not approved at Town Meeting.

In October 2012, Town Meeting approved an additional \$25,000 in CPC funds, as well as an article to purchase the 106-acre Walker-Cox parcels on Chicopee Row for \$716,000.

In 2013, the Conservation Commission withdrew its request for FY14 CPA funding to enable the Park Commission to proceed with their request for \$350,000 unimpeded. In 2014, the Conservation Commission's request for \$200,000 was reduced to \$100,000 by the CPC and approved by Town Meeting. In 2015, the Commission's request for \$200,000 was approved by Town Meeting.

As of December 31, 2017, the Conservation Fund balance is \$759,923.77.

Table 1: Town Appropriations to Conservation Fund - 1996 through 2017

Fiscal Year (July 1 through 30 June)	Amount Appropriated at Town Meeting
1996	\$10,000
1997	\$100,000
1998	\$50,000
1999	\$100,000
2000	\$200,000
2001	\$300,000
2002	\$200,000
2003	\$75,000
2004	\$125,000
2005	\$185,000
2006	0 (Surrenden Farm)
2007	\$200,000
2008	\$100,000
2009	\$100,000
2010	0
2011	0
2012	\$75,000 (Spring)
2012	\$25,000 (Fall)
2013	0 (withdrawn)
2014	\$100,000
2015	\$200,000
2016	0
2017	\$25,000

Table 2 below shows some of the most significant purchases made in recent years with monies from the Conservation Fund.

Table 2: Conservation Fund Critical to Success of Significant Open Space Protection

Year	Parcel	Method of Preservation	Acres Protected
1997	Williams Barn Sorhaug Woods	Purchase at auction \$220,000	93
1998	O'Neill/Fairview Orchards Old Ayer Rd.	Agricultural Preservation Restriction \$35,000; remainder paid by the state	28
1998	O'Neill/Whitman Rd.	Agricultural Preservation Restriction \$35,000; remainder paid by the state	80
1999	O'Neill/Lawrence Higley & Farmers Row	Agricultural Preservation Restriction \$30,000; remainder paid by the state	45
2000	Shattuck Homestead/Baddacook Pond Viewshed	Conservation Restriction \$100,000; Water Dept. and Groton Conservation Trust also contributed funds to complete project.	36
2002	Gibbet Hill and Angus Hill	Conservation Restriction \$500,000 of \$3.5 million purchase price; remainder paid by state & donation of conservation restrictions by Groton Conservation Trust	250
2002	Hurd Property/Skyfields Dr.	Fee simple purchase of \$279,000 w/state (Self-Help) reimbursement of \$161,820 & remainder from Conservation Fund	32.7
2006	Surrenden Farm	Project completed w/local, state, Groton School, & GCT funding; Conservation Fund (\$11,813) used to purchase title certification & insurance as part of Self-Help reimbursement process	360
2009	Fuccillo property	60% (\$93,600) reimbursement grant through state LAND grant program – for \$150,000 purchase	7±
2011	Baddacook Pond NEFF parcel	LAND grant reimbursement of 60% (\$236,100)	52
2013	Walker-Cox parcels	\$716,000 purchase; LAND grant reimbursement \$400,000	106

As mentioned in the *Proposal Summary* above, the Conservation Commission has successfully leveraged some of these monies by getting a total of \$1,391,520 in reimbursements through the State's Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant program (formerly known as the Self-Help Grant).

For example, in 2009, the Conservation Commission purchased the 7± acre Fuccillo property on Lowell Rd. for \$150,000 from the Conservation Fund. Of this amount a successful LAND grant application resulted in a state reimbursement of \$90,000. In 2011, the Conservation Commission negotiated with the New England Forestry Foundation for the purchase of 52± acres on the east shore of Baddacook Pond for \$393,500. Groton received a LAND reimbursement of \$227,621. In 2013,

the Conservation Commission received a \$400,000 LAND reimbursement grant upon completion of the Walker-Cox parcels.

The Conservation Fund allows the Town to move quickly in the event a priority parcel comes on the market. The foreclosure auction at which the Williams Barn Sorhaug Woods property was purchased is a prime example. The Town's willingness to contribute toward the purchase of development rights on farmlands moved the O'Neill parcels up in the state's queue for APR acquisitions. The fact that the Town had already set aside funds specifically for conservation purposes helped convince the state to also contribute funds to the permanent protection of 250 acres on Gibbet Hill and Angus Hill in 2002. In the past, the Town has exercised its right of first refusal for parcels taxed under M.G.L. Ch. 61. The 120-day window of opportunity is a difficult proposition, for which the Conservation Fund can serve as a ready funding mechanism.

3. Benefits to Town of Groton

In early 2004, when the Town first began to seriously investigate the Community Preservation Act, the Conservation Commission voted unanimously to recommend that Town Meeting adopt the CPA. One argument in favor of adopting the CPA was that the Town would become eligible to receive a significant match from the Commonwealth by funding its Conservation Fund through the CPA. This leveraging of our conservation dollars enabled the Town to commit \$5.6 million to the Surrenden Farm project. Town Meeting overwhelmingly endorsed the concept. The Commission received assurance at that time from the CPC and the Town Tax Collector that there remained sufficient CPC funds to continue to fund other CPC-approved projects that might arise in future years. This proposal represents the fulfillment of the expectation that the CPA would be used to leverage the appropriations to the Conservation Fund that the Town would likely have voted for even without the CPA.

Besides the financial leveraging advantages described above, the Groton Conservation Commission believes that there are three more compelling reasons for funding the Conservation Fund through the Community Preservation Act process:

- a) Placing CPA funds into the Conservation Fund makes them instantly available to the Conservation Commission for acquiring open space that may be available for purchase for only a short period of time. As noted above, this is true of Chapter 61 purchases where the town has only 120 days in which to arrange appraisals and exercise its right of first refusal. If the monies remained in the Community Preservation Fund, these short-term opportunities could only be realized if a Town meeting could be quickly held so that the purchase could be approved.
- b) Through years of administering the Conservation Fund, the Conservation Commission has developed expertise in the areas of identifying, appraising, negotiating, purchasing, and maintaining open space in the Town. The Commission has successfully applied for state grants to offset the cost of acquiring open space. The voters in Town have shown their confidence in the Conservation Commission to handle these matters by consistently voting to support the Conservation Fund.
- c) The workload on the Community Preservation Committee will be reduced by having the Conservation Commission be responsible for the acquisition of open space for the Town. The process of negotiating and purchasing open space can be time consuming and span many

years. Relying on the expertise of the Conservation Commission in the area of open space acquisition will allow the Committee to focus more of its attention on the new activities of historic preservation, recreation, and community housing.

The 2011 Master Plan (see excerpt, Attachment 1) and 2012 Groton Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP; see excerpt, Attachment 2) outline some of the goals and objectives for the protection of open space, as well as the issues surrounding a ranking system to prioritize open space acquisitions and the development of alternative funding source.

The following Master Plan goal is addressed by this proposal:

- Goal: Ensure that Groton's agricultural, forested, and recreational open spaces are protected, enhanced, and expanded for present and future generations.

The following OSRP objectives are specifically addressed by this proposal:

- 9.1.1 – Promote the preservation of groundwater resources.
- 9.1.3 – Protect lakes and other water resources.
- 9.2.1 – Preserve lands that support agricultural uses and forestry management.
- 9.2.3 – Preserve lands, including uplands, for conservation and natural purposes.
- 9.5.1 – Work to link local open space and recreation areas to each other.
- 9.7.2 – Continue to connect protected habitats.

In addition, this proposal addresses the following Community Preservation Plan (CPP) objective:

- 5.1.1 – Continue to seek funding for reuse and preservation of Town-owned historic resources.

The updating of the Town's Master Plan and OSRP fine-tuned the Commission's list of priority parcels. There are approximately 58 parcels located throughout the Town. Currently the Conservation Commission has several parcels under specific consideration. All properties under consideration provide exemplary opportunities for scenic views, recreational uses, and wildlife observation. Negotiations with landowners are sensitive and apt to be prolonged and typically involve real estate and legal expertise. The Commission requires one, if not two, professional appraisals before contemplating land acquisitions. The Commission is familiar with the paperwork and process necessary for State and Federal grant applications and has previously used and will continue to utilize this technique to further leverage Town funds.

The Commission gives highest priority to preserving parcels that help to maintain the Town's rural, agrarian character and sustain a healthy and diverse ecosystem. Parcels that link with contiguous protected open space, parcels that protect and preserve a greenway along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers and their tributaries, parcels where significant wildlife habitat or corridors have been identified, parcels that preserve a sense of Groton's agricultural heritage – all of these attributes are considered when prioritizing parcels for protection.

4. Finances

The Commission has previously indicated its desire to maintain between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000 in the Conservation Fund. This remains critically important in a time when the real estate market is still recovering from recession, and there may be opportunities to acquire property at reduced prices. The Conservation Commission continues to stress the need for the Town to set aside funds each year in order to spread out the tax burden over several years rather than creating a tax spike in any one fiscal year or adding to future debt service. This money earns interest while set aside. Some towns have succeeded in using the Conservation Fund as a kind of endowment fund, using earned interest to offset debt service in future years. The Commission has actively sought other sources of funding, such as state and federal grants, to leverage CPA funds to the fullest extent.

5. Accounting

Chapter 44B of the Massachusetts General Laws specifies the uses for which CPA funds can and cannot be expended. In general, funds used for open space acquisition cannot be used for the maintenance of acquired land unless the land was acquired with CPA funds. Conservation Fund monies are not similarly restricted. The fact that the Community Preservation Funds are more restricted in their use requires that CPA funds be segregated from the non-CPA monies in the Conservation Fund. The Commission tracks expenditures of CPA funds separately from the Town Accountant Conservation Fund records. Payments are made with the approval of the Town Accountant's office, Conservation Commission, and Selectmen.

6. Reporting

The Conservation Commission office maintains a database of protected open space held by the Town and managed by the Commission. In most cases these records provide the date of acquisition, a copy of the deed, acreage, survey plans, history of acquisition (including appraisals), flora and fauna information, as well as management strategies. A packet of this information would be conveyed to the Community Preservation Committee as land acquisitions or protection efforts are completed. Monthly reports on the Commission's land acquisition activities are given to the CPC by the Commission's representative. Written reports are provided as requested by the CPC.

FY19 Community Preservation Proposal – Groton Conservation Commission

ATTACHMENT 1

Excerpts from 2011 Master Plan:

- Cover Page
- Pages 54-55 – Open Space Goal & Recommendations
- Map 3.1 – Ecological Diversity
- Map 3.3 – Agricultural Resources
- Map 3.4 – Natural Resources Assessment
- Map 3.5 – Natural Resource Protection Gaps

groton master plan



town of groton, massachusetts

Prepared for:
Groton Planning Board
Land Use Department

Prepared by:
Community Opportunities Group, Inc.
Dodson Associates, Ltd.
Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, Inc.

September 2011



appropriate manner. GCC members and volunteers have begun the labor-intensive process of visiting each parcel to document existing conditions and identify management concerns. The Town may need to supplement the GCC's volunteer efforts by hiring a professional naturalist to complete more thorough environmental reviews. Invasive species and abutter encroachment are just a few of the management concerns that need to be addressed. Related issues include the following:

Active management of forests can cause public concern. Groton recently procured the services of a consulting forester, using revenue from timber harvesting on conservation, water, and municipal land. The forester's first task will be to assess the potential of forested parcels for sustainable forestry practices. In the past, Groton residents have expressed concern about harvesting existing forests, so these types of activities on conservation land may trigger public opposition. A public education campaign and a transparent process to select parcels for sustainable management will be important to alleviate abutter concerns.

Groton has many CRs on small lots throughout town, which makes it difficult for the GCC to review and manage them. However, it is important to survey these properties in order to manage abutter encroachment. Ironically, part of the problem stems from past donations of conservation parcels negotiated by the Planning Board.

Opportunities to participate in active sports are limited by the number of available recreation facilities and the types of programs offered by private organizations. In the past decade, Groton has developed several new recreational facilities and expanded others. However, issues with recreational opportunities remain, including:

- Few recreational programs for adults, seniors, or people with disabilities.
- A lack of affordable recreational programs.
- Limited opportunities for non-competitive sports.
- Recreational facilities that are far from activity centers. For example, the Park Commission is working on expanding the existing Cow Pond Road recreation facility, but this is far from Groton's villages, schools, and other neighborhoods.

The Groton Pool and Golf Center has limited programming and facility issues. Recent changes to the Groton Pool and Golf Center (formerly the Groton Country Club) will expand recreation choices for Groton residents. Still, the Center offers a limited number of pro-

grams and many of its facilities are in disrepair. The facility's location near Groton Center creates an opportunity to expand recreational and cultural offerings and attract more participants.

Groton Fairgrounds requires additional planning to enable greater community access. Groton Fairgrounds (also known as Hazel Grove Park) has significant potential for expanding public recreation options. Its location next to conservation land on the Nashua River offers unique opportunities for trail development, including use of the Fairgrounds for access and parking. However, the current users of the Fairgrounds have concerns about safety and security for the horses and their riders if public access is allowed to the site. Groton will need to consider a range of issues and interests, beyond those of current users, in order to determine appropriate public access to the Fairgrounds.

Groton has not been able to sustain a community garden, despite resident desire and efforts. Although groups such as Groton Local have expressed much enthusiasm for establishing a community garden, securing land for this activity has been difficult. While more common in urban environments where open space is scarce, a community garden in Groton would provide gardening opportunities for those with little or no land and also enhance a sense of community. As with any open space, there are maintenance challenges specific to community gardens, so planning for one would require a strategy not only for land acquisition and design, but also long-term management.

Goals and recommendations

GOAL: ENSURE THAT GROTON'S AGRICULTURAL, FORESTED, AND RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACES ARE PROTECTED, ENHANCED, AND EXPANDED FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Recommendations:

- **Continue to develop and maintain a comprehensive open space inventory database that will identify and assess all of the town's open space parcels and associated resource value.** While Groton currently has a database of public and private conservation parcels, municipal landholdings, and unprotected priority parcels, the database should be expanded to include information on each parcel's resource value. This will allow the users to better understand the role each parcel plays in the larger ecosystem. Updating

Groton's GIS to incorporate this type of data will be important as well.

- **Develop a ranking system to prioritize unprotected open space parcels.** A set of criteria for ranking and assessing unprotected open space parcels will be essential to help Groton set acquisition priorities. This will be particularly important as funds available for acquisition continue to diminish. Criteria should include:
 - Whether the parcel is located in a Preservation or Conservation Design Area as illustrated in Map 3.4.
 - Whether the parcel is adjacent to or could be easily connected to other open space.
 - Whether the parcel can contribute to the development of a town-wide recreational trails network.
- **Protect priority open space parcels.** Using Map 3.4, Natural Resource Assessment, Map 5.1, Open Space and Recreation Resources, an assessor's parcel map, and the open space ranking criteria described above, Groton should aggressively seek to protect high-priority open space and be willing to forego attempts to acquire lower-ranking properties. Once the priority sites are confirmed, the Town should work with other conservation groups to approach property owners and discuss opportunities for land protection, including fee-simple acquisition and conservation restrictions or easements.
- **Pursue development of a town-wide trail system.** As Groton's remaining undeveloped parcels await either development or protection, there is a unique opportunity to create a permanent network of trails linking the town's residential areas, bike paths, regional trails, and the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers. Building on the many existing trails on Town-owned conservation land, the network would give hikers, bikers, and equestrians direct access to a continuous network of trails. Ultimately, the Town could develop various trail segments as interpretive trails with signage and written guides describing the area's historical features and natural history. To begin connecting trail segments, Groton should focus on existing trails on public land with paths and sidewalks along town roads.²⁷
- **Continue to fund land protection with CPA revenue and the Conservation Fund.** While Groton should continue to protect land through donations and other low-cost means, there will be instances where outright acquisition is the only viable option for protecting a significant parcel. Toward these ends, the GCC must have funding available if the Town needs to respond quickly when a vulnerable landscape is threatened. Encouraging property owners to consider other protective techniques such as CRs and APRs would offer another cost-effective alternative.
- **Continue to review the Town's conservation parcels for opportunities to allow agricultural use.** Groton currently leases some of its conservation parcels for agricultural use, but the GCC has received limited interest in other parcels due to site conditions. Working with local farmers to determine their needs and concerns would provide the town with information that could help them to better assess potential parcels for farming.

GOAL: IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PARCELS.

Recommendations:

- **Develop management strategies and individual management plans for the Town's conservation lands.** Working with Groton's conservation groups to complete surveys for all conservation lands will allow the Town to take a proactive approach to land management, identifying and developing strategies to address site-specific concerns such as invasive species. This effort could also include coordination with neighboring towns to manage shared resources like the Squannacook and Nashua Rivers. Due to the effort involved with developing management plans, the town could consider securing professional services to complete these plans. In addition, the GCC may need to update its conservation land regulations as part of the process of developing property management plans.
- **Conduct educational outreach on the benefits of sustainable forestry management.** Groton's sustainable forestry activities need to be accompanied by an outreach strategy to ensure transparency and public understanding. This is especially true for landowners with properties adjacent to forestry sites.
- **Encourage developers to consolidate open space set-asides, rather than create small, fractured conservation properties.** Reviewing the town's Flexible Development bylaw to encourage developers to pre-

²⁷ Chapter 6 also includes recommendations for developing trails.

Groton Master Plan

Map 3.1: Ecological Diversity

March 2011

KEY

ROADWAYS

- Limited Access Highway
- Multi-Lane (Not Limited Access)
- Other Numbered Highway
- Major Road, Collector
- Local Roads

WATER RESOURCES

- Open Water
- Wetlands
- Rivers and Streams

NHESP INVENTORIES

- Certified Vernal Pool (2010)
- NHESP Priority Habitat (2008)
- Biomap 2 Areas (2011)

Core Habitat

Critical Natural Landscape

- Core Habitat: Priority Natural Communities
- Core Habitat: Forest Core
- Core Habitat: Vernal Pool
- Core Habitat: Species of Conservation Concern
- Critical Natural Landscape



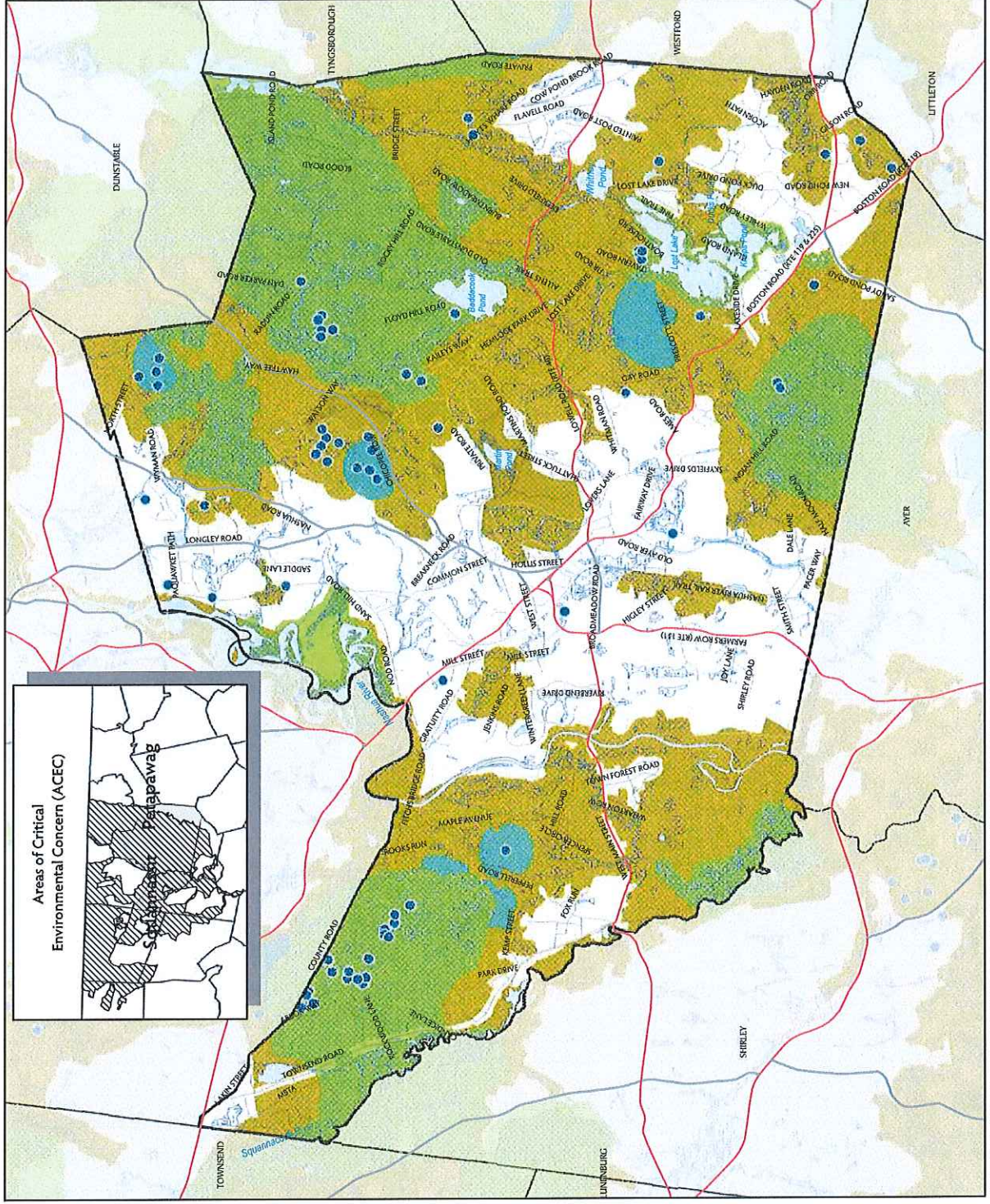
Groton Planning Board

CONSULTANTS

Community Opportunities Group, Inc.
Dodson Associates
Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, Inc.

Data Sources:

Applied Geographics, Inc., Mascois,
Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)
Natural Resources Assessment by Dodson Associates



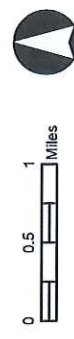
Note: This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal boundary determinations or delineating resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Groton Master Plan

Map 3.3: Agricultural Resources

March 2011

- KEY**
- ROADWAYS**
- Limited Access Highway
 - Multi-Lane (Not Limited Access)
 - Other Numbered Highway
 - Major Road, Collector
 - Local Roads
- Water Bodies
- Rivers and Streams
- Agricultural Uses*
- APR and CR Parcels
- Farmland Soils by Class (USDA)
- Prime Farmland
 - Farmland of Statewide Importance
 - Farmland of Unique Importance
- *Includes any land used for crops, pastures, orchards, and nurseries, Statewide Land Use Map, 2005.

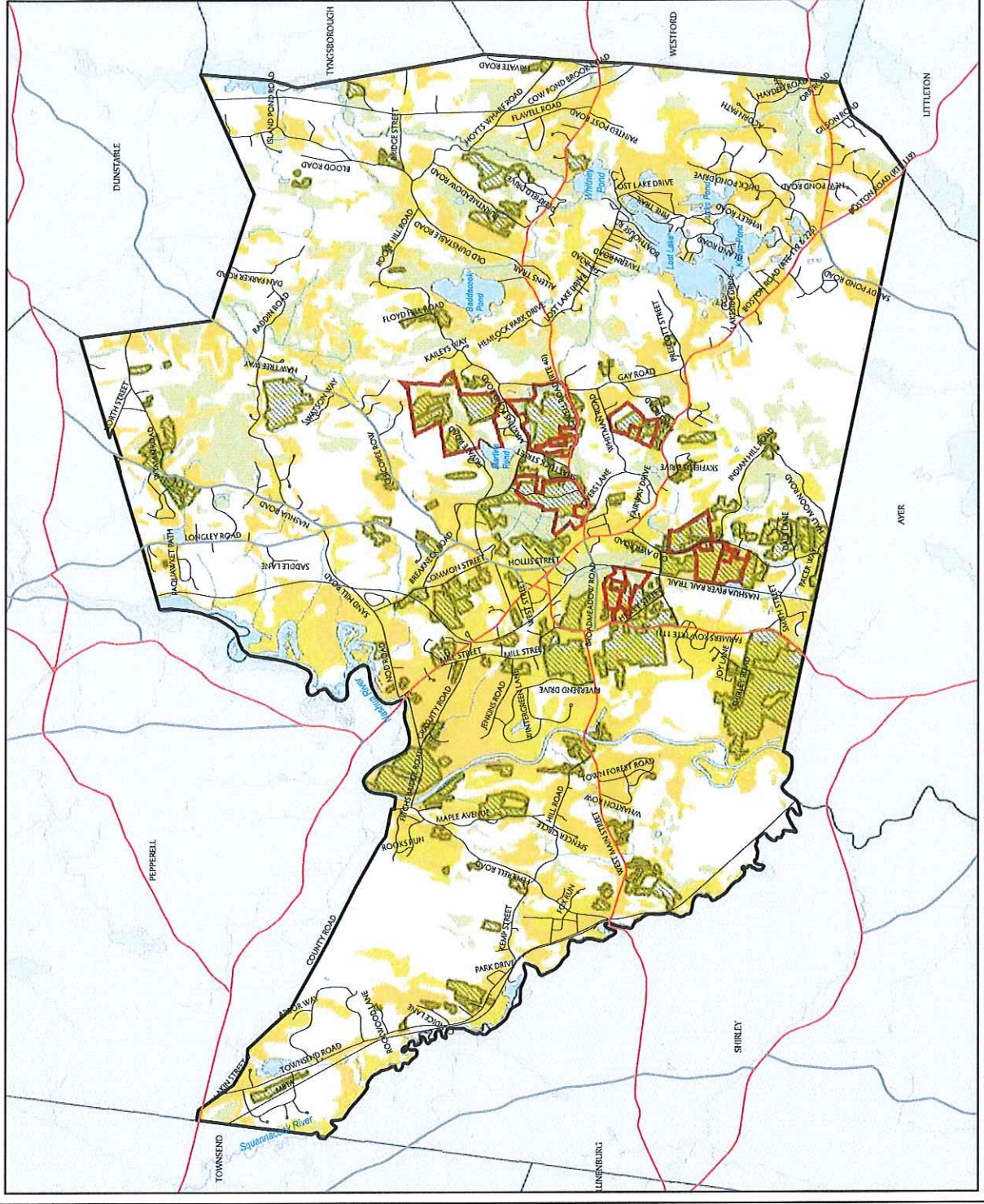


Groton Planning Board

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Data Sources:
Applied Geographics, Inc., MassGIS,
Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)
Natural Resources Assessment by Dodson Associates



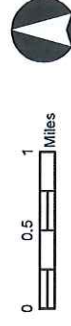
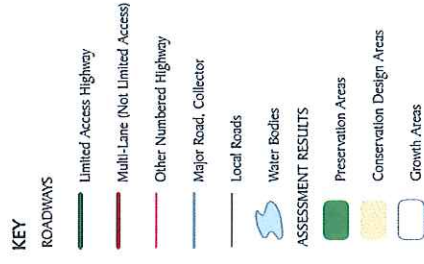
Note: This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal boundary determinations or delineating resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Groton Master Plan

Map 3.4:

Natural Resources Assessment

March 2011



Groton Planning Board

CONSULTANTS

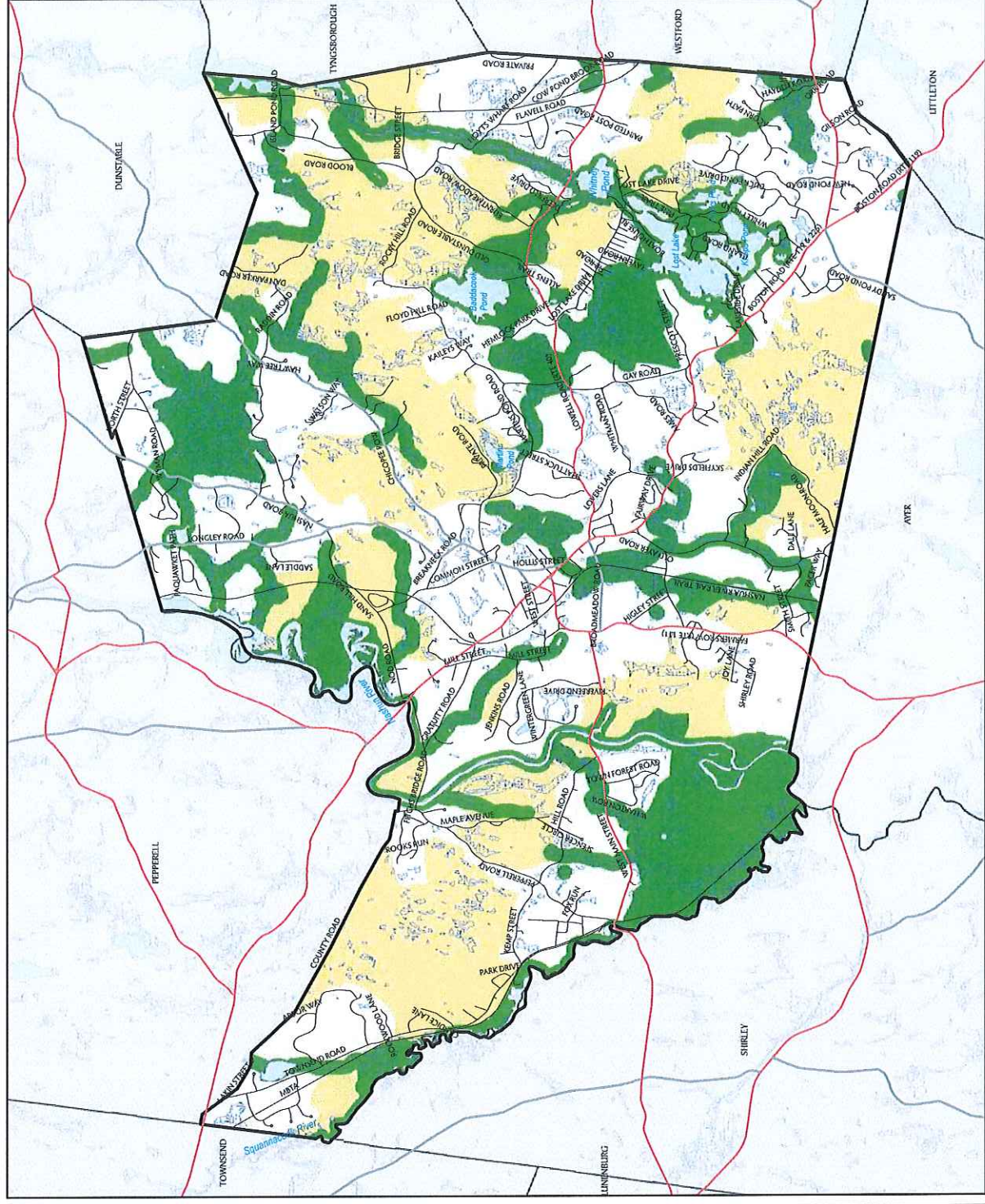
Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

Dodson Associates

Fay, Spofford & Thordike, Inc.

Data Sources:

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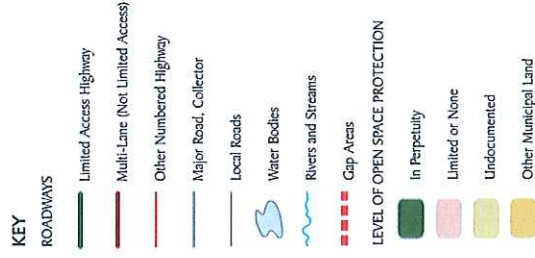
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Groton Master Plan

Map 3.5:

Natural Resource Protection Gaps

March 2011

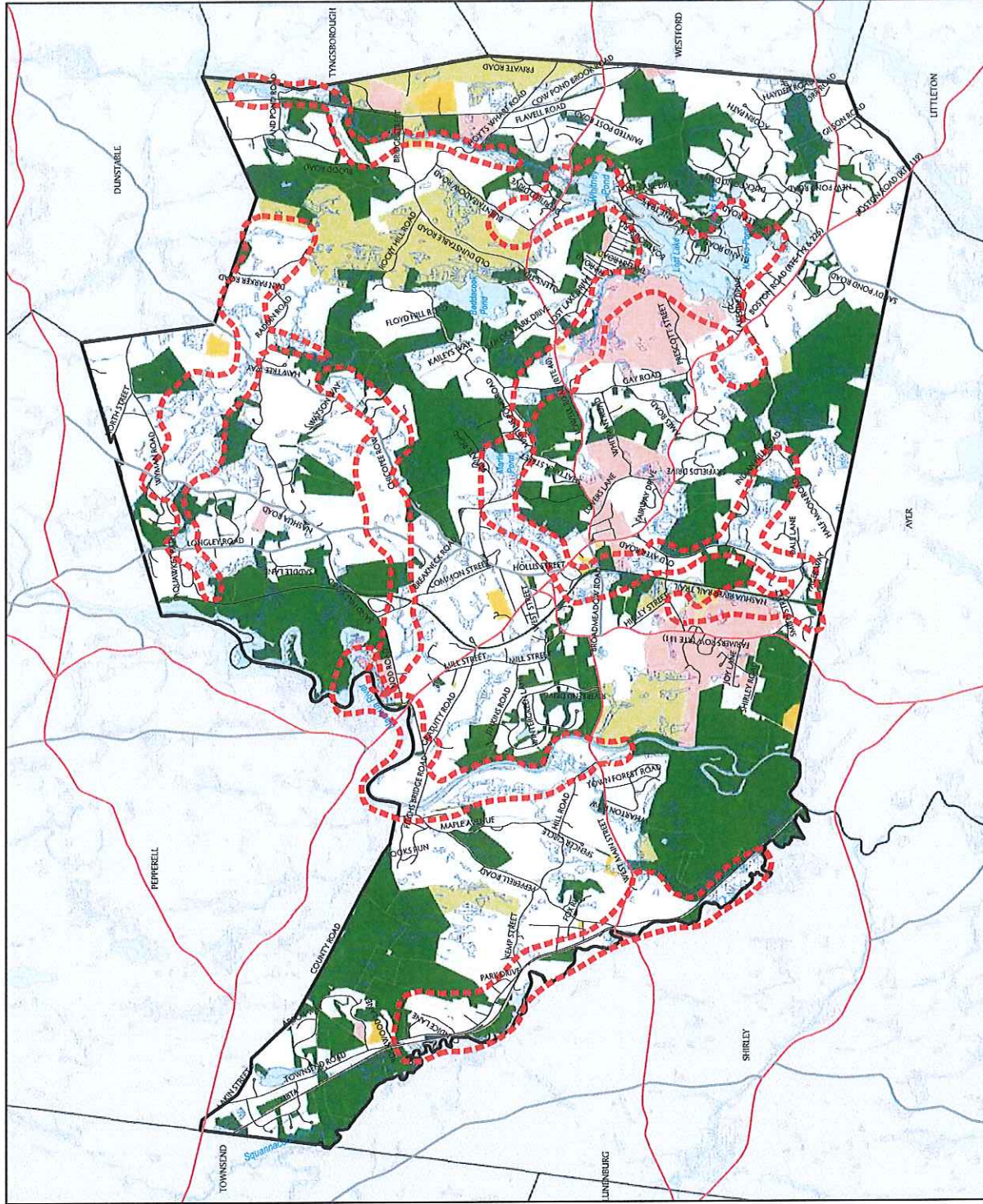


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Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)
Natural Resources Assessment by Dodson Associates



Note: This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal boundary determinations or delineating resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

FY19 Community Preservation Proposal – Groton Conservation Commission

ATTACHMENT 2

Excerpts from 2012 OSRP:

- Cover Page
- Section 8 – Goals and Objectives (Page 79)
- Section 9 – Seven Year Action Plan Update (Pages 80 – 89)
- OSRP Map – Regional Context
- OSRP Map – Unique Features
- OSRP Map – Water Resources
- OSRP Map – Open Space Inventory
- OSRP Map – Action Plan



Open Space and Recreation Plan

2012 – 2017

Town of Groton

July 2012

8. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In this section the overarching goals identified in “Community Vision” (Section 6) are synthesized into specific goals and objectives that will drive the development of more specific recommendations in the “Five-Year Action Plan” (Section 9). The goals and objectives from the previous *Open Space and Recreation Plan* were revised based on the updated “Analysis of Needs” (Section 7), the recent master plan recommendations, and input from Town boards and staff and local residents. The following goals and objectives are not listed in rank order.

Goals	Objectives
1. Promote the preservation of Groton’s important water resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the 300-ft greenway along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers. • Promote the preservation of groundwater resources. • Maintain and improve surface water quality. • Protect lakes and other water resources.
2. Promote the preservation of important land resources in Groton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve lands that support agricultural uses and forestry management. • Protect lands and water resources of scenic value. • Preserve lands, including uplands, for conservation and natural purposes.
3. Provide recreational opportunities for all Groton residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand recreational and educational program offerings. • Develop facilities to support programming and serve future growth areas of town. • Update facilities to meet Americans with Disabilities (ADA) requirements. • Explore special opportunities for recreational facilities.
4. Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas and structures of Groton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve management of conservation lands. • Investigate staffing needs from a management and maintenance perspective. • Implement strategies that will facilitate the care of recreation and conservation areas. • Implement sustainable forestry management practices.
5. Promote opportunities for the linkage of Groton’s open space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to link local open space and recreation areas to each other. • Work with neighboring towns to link adjacent open space and recreation areas.
6. Increase public awareness of natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the public about available recreational, cultural, and natural resources. • Instruct the public on best management practices to protect and enhance natural resources.
7. Assure adequate habitat and corridors for wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect vital wildlife habitat and encourage biodiversity along wetlands and waterways. • Continue to connect protected habitats.

9. SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN UPDATE

This action plan builds on the “Goals and Objectives” (Section 8) by developing specific strategies to be completed by responsible parties, and assigning each a timeframe in which to be completed. The actions listed below are essentially steps that need to be taken to accomplish the outlined objectives. The 2005 action plan was updated in 2010 and then again in 2012 with input from the Conservation and Park Commissions, Town staff, and the public. The action plan items are organized by goal and objective, corresponding with Section 8. While neither the goals and objectives nor the action items are presented in rank order, the action items in themselves suggest priority actions necessary to achieve each objective and the timeframes provide a sense of the immediacy of each action item. Many of the action items are ongoing in nature and will continue to be addressed from 2012 through 2019.

Map 8 illustrates the Action Plan elements that are geographically specific.

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
1. Promote the preservation of Groton's important water resources.	1.1. Promote the preservation of groundwater resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track septic system failures, especially at Lost Lake and near well sites. 	Health	2012-2013
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate alternatives for sewerage areas with failed sewage disposal systems. 	Sewer, Lost Lake Feasibility Study Committees	2013-2017
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire additional land around well sites included in DEP-delineated Zone IIs. 	Water, Conservation, Selectmen	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor landfill closures on the Nashua River and at Cow Pond Brook and consider maintaining as early successional grassland. 	Selectmen, Health	2012-2019
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue water conservation education and efforts, i.e., odd/even watering. 	Water	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate information about protecting private water wells, including the need for regular testing. 	Health	2013-2014
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore regional approaches to protect groundwater resources. 	Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA), Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider emergency interconnection between Groton Water Department and West Groton Water District via Fitchs Bridge. 	Groton Water Dept., West Groton Water District, Selectmen, Greenway Committee	2015-2017
	1.2. Maintain and improve surface water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster public education about pharmaceuticals getting into groundwater and surface water. 	Health, NRWA, Conservation	2013-2014
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage development of comprehensive lake management plans for Great Ponds, particularly Lost Lake/Knops and Baddacook Ponds. 	Selectmen, Great Ponds Advisory Committee, Conservation	2013-2016
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install boat washes at all formal State and Town boat launches. 	DCR, Sewer Commission, Conservation	2016

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve public access to and maintain the quality of the Nashua River, including the removal of invasive species. 	NRWA, Greenway, Conservation, ACEC Stewardship Committee, local groups	2013-2017
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work regionally to improve water quality and access to the Squannacook River. 	Greenway, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide incentives for farmers to keep natural vegetated buffers along rivers and streams. 	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation	2013-2019
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue volunteer water quality monitoring program on local streams and rivers to provide baseline data on stream health. 	NRWA	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate need to appropriately manage land along waterways and water bodies. 	Conservation, DPW	Ongoing
	1.3 Protect lakes and other water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize acquisition of lands adjacent to wetlands, streams, and water bodies. 	Conservation	Ongoing
2. Promote the preservation of important land resources in Groton.	2.1. Preserve lands that support agricultural uses and forestry management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a Farmland and Open Space Overlay District. 	Planning, Assessors	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support funding of Conservation Fund to acquire open space and agricultural land through annual CPC application and other means. 	Selectmen, Conservation, Community Preservation Committee	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs and farmers' markets. 	Selectmen, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participation in Ch. 61 special use tax program. 	Conservation, Greenway	2012-2013
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and adopt Ch. 61 Right-of-First Refusal assignment procedure. 	Selectmen, Conservation	2013

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritize important agricultural parcels to preserve for future farmers. 	Conservation, Agricultural Commission	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a Scenic Overlay District based on DEM 1982 Scenic Landscape Inventory. 	Planning	2013-2017
	2.3. Preserve lands, including uplands, for conservation and natural purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and adopt criteria-based ranking system for open space acquisitions. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update prioritized list of parcels to target for acquisition, linking protection with identified rare and endangered wildlife habitat. 	Conservation, Planning, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to negotiate for open space preservation during permitting processes. 	Planning, Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with the Groton Conservation Trust on land protection efforts. 	Selectmen, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public outreach to encourage and support key applications under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B. 	Selectmen, Conservation	2014-2019
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with land trusts and Conservation Commissions in adjoining towns, as well as the New England Forestry Foundation, Massachusetts Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife, and MassAudubon in land protection efforts. 	Selectmen, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give priority to protection of land identified in the state BioMap to preserve biodiversity. 	Conservation	Ongoing
3. Provide recreational	3.1. Expand recreational and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to implement new programs desired by residents. 	Park, Selectman, Town Manager	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
opportunities for all Groton residents.	educational program offerings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider merging parks and recreation functions into Park Commission. 	Selectmen, Park	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore reinstating municipal recreation department. 	Selectmen, Park	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support nonprofits' and schools' efforts to incorporate environmental education into programs on conservation land or other natural areas. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate soccer and baseball uses and develop additional fields at existing recreation areas. Study future uses of Hemlock Grove Park 	Park, Hemlock Grove Planning Committee	2012-2017
	3.2. Develop facilities to support programming and serve future growth areas of town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate with Regional School System to utilize recreational facilities (soccer and baseball). 	Selectmen, Park	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue good working relationship with private schools for facility use. 	Selectmen, Park	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target population and growth areas for development of neighborhood recreation facilities (Lost Lakes, E. Groton). 	Park, Planning	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add lighting to appropriate fields for night use. 	Park, Highway	2013-2019
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Groton Pool & Golf Center as a recreation facility and open space. 	Groton Pool & Golf Center Dept., Selectmen	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore futures use and ownership of Groton Pool & Golf Center. 	Town Manager, Selectmen, Groton Pool & Golf Center Dept.	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire additional land for active recreation fields. 	Selectmen, Park	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options to address lack of recreation capital planning. 	Selectmen, Park	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
	3.3. Update facilities to meet Americans with Disabilities (ADA) requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate Section 504 recommendations into capital improvements for Town recreation and conservation properties, as well as school associated facilities and complete. 	Selectmen, School, Commission on Accessibility	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt ADA compliance policy. 	Conservation, Trails	2013
	3.4. Explore special opportunities for recreational facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore developing a river walk along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers. 	Selectmen, Nashua River Watershed Association, Greenway, Trails, Park, Conservation, Planning	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to consolidate playing fields. 	Park	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider Fitchs Bridge for a trail connection between W. Groton and Groton, working with abutting landowners to develop a trail system. Explore funding opportunities for renovation of a pedestrian and equestrian crossing at the old Fitchs Bridge. 	Greenway, Conservation	2012-2015
4. Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas and structures of Groton.	4.1. Improve management of conservation lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor conservation and conservation-restricted parcels for encroachment and abuse. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage inappropriate use of public trails by motorized vehicles using public education, signage, and enforcement techniques. 	Conservation, Conservation Restriction Monitoring Sub-committee, Trails, Groton Conservation Trust, New England Forestry Foundation, Greenways Committee, Police	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase trail markings and signs. 	Conservation, Trails	2012-2015

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
	4.2. Investigate staffing needs from a management and maintenance perspective.	• Study highway departmental staffing needs from park and conservation maintenance perspective.	Selectmen, Highway, Conservation, Park	Ongoing
		• Expand volunteer stewardship program of Town-owned conservation parcels.	Conservation, Stewardship sub-committee	Ongoing
		• Consider adding additional staffing to manage conservation lands and provide administrative support.	Selectmen, Conservation	Ongoing
	4.3. Implement strategies that will facilitate the care of recreation and conservation areas.	• Continue working with Park/Highway Dept. on periodic maintenance of Town conservation land.	Conservation, Park, Highway	Ongoing
		• Continue relationships with local groups that maintain conservation areas.	Selectmen, Conservation, Trails, Greenway, Groton Conservation Trust	Ongoing
		• Add automatic irrigation systems to Town fields without them.	Park, Highway	Ongoing
		• Seasonally convert Town Field basketball court to skating rink.	Park	Ongoing
		• Continue and expand Conservation Restriction Monitoring Sub-committee.	Conservation	Ongoing
		• Investigate use of low maintenance (i.e., drought tolerant) grasses for recreation fields to reduce irrigation and mowing needs.	Park	Ongoing
		• Consider the formation of neighborhood stewardship groups as part of the Planning Board permitting process.	Conservation, Planning	Ongoing
		• Support sustainable agricultural activities, including licenses, on cleared conservation land suitable for farming.	Conservation, Agricultural, Sustainability	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
5. Promote opportunities for the linkage of Groton's open space.	4.4. Implement sustainable forest management practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate funding opportunities for the management of invasives on conservation lands. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue sustainable forestry activities on Town-owned lands 	Conservation, Water Dept., Town Forester	Ongoing
	5.1. Work to link local open space and recreation areas to each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and map areas that would help to complete the Town's trail system. 	Trails, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map trails that could be used as linkages to open space and gain permission for their use. 	Trails, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to acquire and link land along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers. 	NRWA, Greenway, Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the protection of Massapoag Pond's shore line in Groton and Dunstable. 	Conservation, land trusts	Ongoing
	5.2. Work with neighboring towns to link adjacent open space and recreation areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Pepperell and surrounding communities to obtain trail easements and preserve and protect areas adjoining The Throne (including Old County Road), Reedy Meadow, and Nashua River. 	Conservation, Trails, ACEC Stewardship	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider old railroad bed lines to link with adjoining communities, i.e., the Hollis branch and the Peterborough and Shirley branch of the Fitchburg line. 	Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Dunstable to extend protection of the abandoned railroad bed known as the 'Red Line'. 	Conservation, Groton Conservation Trust, Dunstable Rural Land Trust and Conservation Commission, YMCA	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a conservation and recreation land sign program to improve access and usage. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
6. Increase public awareness of natural resources.	6.1. Educate the public about available recreational, cultural, and natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and keep current a brochure locating recreation, historic, cultural and natural resources. Consider self-guided bike tours to highlight interesting areas. 	Conservation, Planning, Trails, Historic Commission	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate list and locations of conservation areas and Town trails maps on Town website. 	Conservation, Trails, website	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider state resources available to create ecotourism brochure to market Groton to regional communities. 	Selectmen, Conservation, Groton Conservation Trust	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a regular program of conservation walks and talks to encourage familiarity with available conservation land. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to produce trail maps for individual conservation parcels. 	Trails, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public outreach for recreation areas and resources; publicize resources such as www.grotontrails.org 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
	6.2. Instruct public on best management practices to protect and enhance natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public outreach on best management practices. 	Conservation	2012-2019
7. Assure adequate habitat and corridors for wildlife.	7.1. Protect vital wildlife habitat and encourage biodiversity along wetlands and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a wildlife and flora inventory for conservation parcels. 	Conservation	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
	waterways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify likely wildlife corridors. 	Conservation, ACEC Stewardship, Groton Conservation Trust, State BioMap	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement management plans for conservation parcels based on resources and species present. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider state BioMap identifying Core Habitat and Supporting Landscapes when planning active management practices. 	Conservation, Stewardship sub-committee	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider signage and trail marking to re-direct hikers around sensitive wetland or wildlife resource areas. 	Conservation	Ongoing
	7.2. Continue to connect protected habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider connections between wildlife habitats in land acquisition decisions. 	Conservation	Ongoing

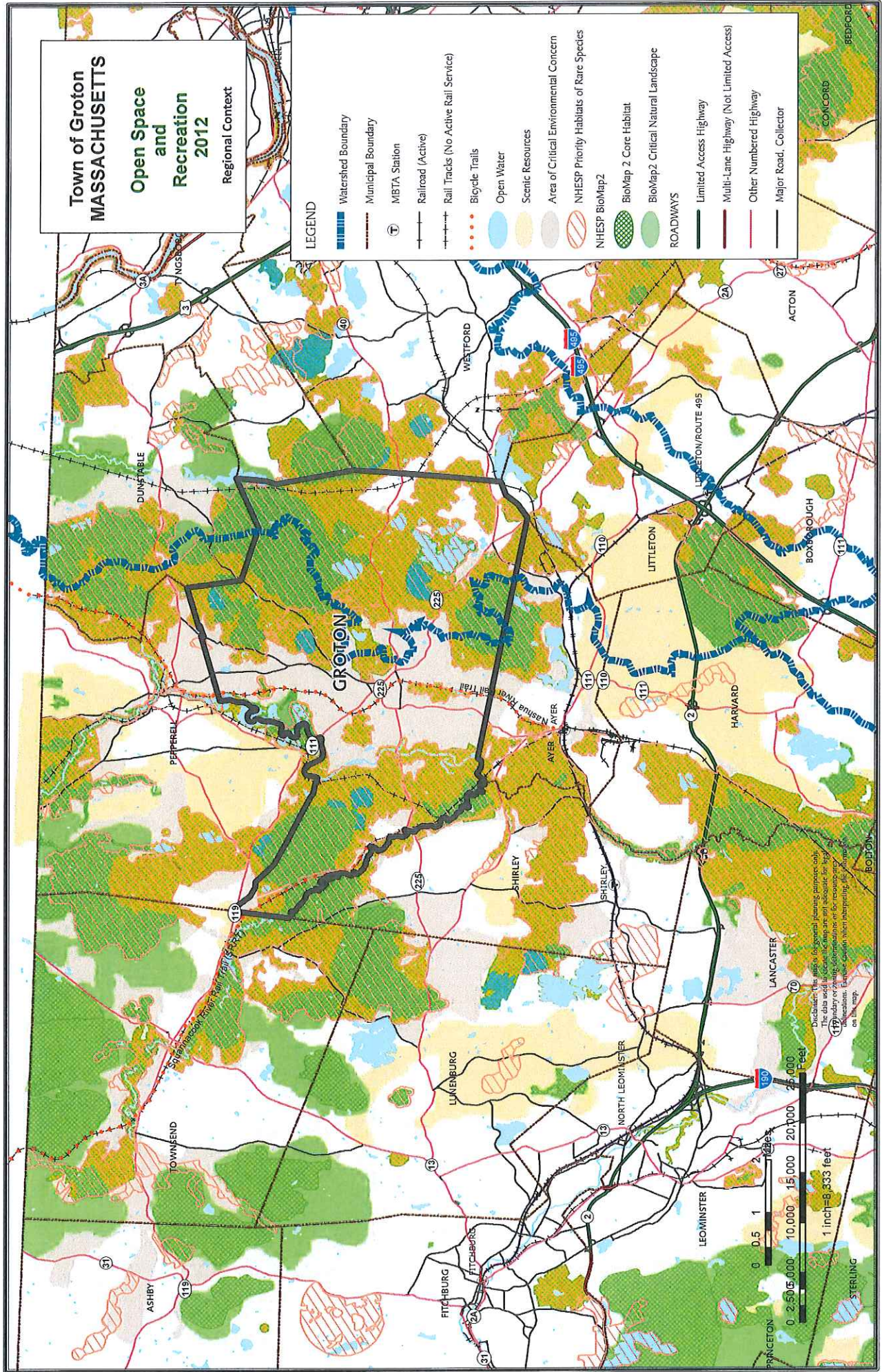
Town of Groton MASSACHUSETTS

Open Space and Recreation 2012

Regional Context

LEGEND

- Watershed Boundary
- Municipal Boundary
- MBTA Station
- Railroad (Active)
- Rail Tracks (No Active Rail Service)
- Bicycle Trails
- Open Water
- Scenic Resources
- Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species
- NHESP BioMap2
- BioMap 2 Core Habitat
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape
- ROADWAYS
- Limited Access Highway
- Multi-Lane Highway (Not Limited Access)
- Other Numbered Highway
- Major Road, Collector



Disclaimer: This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used in this map are not adequate for legal or engineering purposes. For more information, please contact the Groton Planning Board.