



TOWN OF GROTON
Conservation Commission
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450
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csteeves@grotonma.gov



February 22nd, 2024
Russell Burke, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall- 173 Main Street
Groton MA, 01450

RE: Fiscal Year 2025 Community Preservation Proposal- Conservation Fund.

Dear Chairman Burke and members of the Community Preservation Committee,

After taking into consideration the suggestions made by the Community Preservation Committee during the January 29th, 2024 meeting, the Groton Conservation Commission is pleased to submit this final application and proposal for consideration for the 2025 Fiscal Year. The Conservation Commission is requesting funding in the amount of \$400,000 for the purpose of Open Space acquisition.

The Conservation Fund allows the Town to move quickly in the event that a priority parcel with high ecological value comes on the market. It has been a crucial tool in the preservation of Open Space in Groton, most recently with the purchase of the Jack and Mary Allen Conservation Area in West Groton and the Marsh-Lewis Memorial Grove off of Reedy Meadow Road. These two parcels amount to a total of 43.43 acres of permanently protected land which will be enjoyed recreationally for generations while also preserving the Town's commitment to conservation and protection of wildlife habitat.

The Commission continues to respond to the availability of priority parcels on the market by actively exploring and pursuing all opportunities to purchase land. Having funds readily available in the Conservation Fund allows the commission to make competitive and fair offers for land purchasing. So far in the current fiscal year (2024), the Commission has successfully used Conservation Funds to add 43.43 acres of protected land to the Town's open space inventory. However, this has resulted in diminished funds, which the Commission hopes to replenish so that we can continue pursuing land purchasing opportunities as they arise in a competitive manner. Commissioners wish to stress the importance of continuing to add incremental amounts to the Conservation Fund on an annual basis and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Steeves, Conservation Administrator

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Final

CPA Project Application Form

[CPC Use Only: Date Received 2/9/24 By: Katie Berry
Assigned CPC #2025- 01]

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 Steeves First Charlotte
Organization(s) (if appropriate) Town of Groton Conservation Commission
b.) Regional Project: Yes ? or No? X If Yes, Town/Organization: _____

2. Submission Date: January 11, 2024

3. Applicant Address: St. 173 Main Street
City/ State: Groton MA ZIP: 01450

4. Ph. # 978-448-1106 Email: csteeves@grotonma.gov

5. CPA Purpose. Check all that apply:
Community Housing ✓ (Affordable Housing: ✓) Historic Preservation*: ✓ Open Space: ✓
Recreation ✓

* As per MA General Law Chapter 44B, proposed historic projects that are not on the structures listed on the state's registry of historic places require a determination by the Groton Historic Commission that the proposed project is of historic significance.

6. Town Committee or boards participating: Conservation Commission

7. Project Location/Address: N/A

8. Project Name: Conservation Fund- FY25

9. Additional Responsible Parties (If applicable):

Role (specify)	Name	Address	Ph. (w) (cell)	Email
Property/Site Owner				
Project Manager	Charlotte Steeves	173 Main St, Groton, MA, 01450	978-448-1106	CSTEEVES@GROTONMA.GOV
Lead Architect				
Project Contractor				
Project Consultants				
Other:				
Other				

10. As appropriate, indicate if proposal requires P&S agreement Deed
Option agreement Other-describe: N/A

11. a.) Assessor info. (map/ block/ lot id.(s)): N/A b.) Tax classification type: _____

12. Permits required: Zoning: NO Historic Preservation: NO Other: NO

13. Historic Commission Approval signoff (when required): N/A Date: _____

14 a.) Project cost \$ _____ : Estimate Professional quote b.) Requested from CPC: \$400,000 c.) Committed from other source: \$ N/A If applicable: annual anticipated total income: \$ N/A Annual anticipated total expense: \$ N/A Anticipated net income (loss): \$ N/A Name of Estimator name/company: N/A

Groton Community Preservation Plan**2023-2024**

15. CCP Objectives - use codes from **Section 5 of Community Preservation Plan** to indicate all that apply: ORSP 9.1.1; 9.1.3; 9.2.1; 9.3.1; 9.4.1; 9.5.1; 9.5.2; 9.7.1; 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 \$400,000 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 when a
priority parcel becomes available. In the past, the Conservation Fund has used to purchase Conservation
Restrictions, Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, and fee ownership of conservation land in the Town.
The Commission adheres to the Select Board's General Financial Guideline # 6, which states the goal
"to maintain a balance in the Conservation Fund of at least 2% of the Town's current line item budget."
However, due to the rising cost of land, the need to augment the Fund is crucial in Fiscal Year 2025 to
remain competitive in our land-purchasing opportunities. As of the January 1, 2024 the Conservation
Fund balance is \$1,441,533.87. It should be noted that of this amount, \$635,000 represents a gift e
armarked for the conservation of a specific parcel in the coming year. (See attached proposal for full
project description.)

19. Feasibility: The Conservation Fund has been used reliably and consistently to preserve open space, recreational,
and historical assets (see attached proposal).

20. List of attachments: a) Proposal; b) Attachment 1: Master Plan; c) Attachment 2: ORSP;
d) Attachment 3: Management Plan; e) Attachment 4: Letters of Support

21. Additional Information: See proposal and map figures in attachments 1 and 2

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

23. Applicant Signature: Christine Smith Date: 1-11-2024

Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

FY25 Community Preservation Proposal- Groton Conservation CommissionProposal Summary

The Groton Conservation Commission is requesting \$400,000 in CPA funds for Fiscal Year 2025 to be transferred to the Conservation Fund to meet the following objectives: preservation of Open Space; protection of water resources; preservation of land for agricultural, forestry, and recreational activities; resilience to climate change and storms; protection of important wildlife habitat with high ecological value. These objectives are identified as priorities in the 2011 Master Plan and 2019 Groton Open Space and 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 or reduced the amount of funds requested 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, 2012 and 2019 Open Space & Recreation Plans. 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 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, 2012 and 2019 Open Space & Recreation Plans. 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 \$1,752,420.00 through six successful grants from the state.

The Conservation Fund allows the Town to move quickly in the event a priority parcel with high ecological value comes on the market. 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 adheres to the Select Board's General Financial Guideline # 6, which states the goal "to maintain a balance in the Conservation Fund of at least 2% of the Town's current line-item budget."

Based on the projected FY25 budget, this amounts to approximately \$107,371. This balance amount as previously stated is currently being re-evaluated in response to the rising cost of land and recent failed opportunities to conserve priority parcels. As of the January 1, 2024 the Conservation Fund balance is \$1,441,533.87, however, it should be noted that of this amount, \$635,000 represents a gift earmarked for the conservation of a specific parcel in the coming year.

The Conservation Fund – Recent Activity

The Conservation Commission has been in a seemingly continuous state of negotiations with various landowners since the beginning of 2018. This has been in reaction to a number of priority parcels coming onto the market. In 2018, the Commission purchased 21.4 acres of land in West Groton (the Patricia Hallet Conservation Area), which connects the Hemlock Grove-Lawrence Park conservation lands to the old B&M rail line and ultimately to the Town Forest. In 2019, the Commission purchased 18 acres along Martins Pond, which offered the first significant public access to the pond. In 2020, the Commission closed on approx. 40 acres, which reestablished connectivity between the Williams Barn – Sorhaug Woods Conservation Area and Martins Pond /Gibbet Hill Conservation Restriction public lands. This new connection replaces access that was formerly provided across Brooks Orchard, which is no longer open to the public. In 2022, the Commission applied for and was awarded a *LAND* Grant to assist in the purchase of 120 acres off Nashua Road (Casella Preservation), consisting of a network of ecologically important wetland and upland area. The unique geology of the Casella property provides suitable habitat for many species and promotes high biodiversity. It also provides a connection between Chicopee Row and Nashua Road. The Commission finalized this transaction in June 2023. Most recently in 2023, the Conservation Commission purchased the Marsh-Lewis Memorial Grove and West Groton “Palmer” parcels, totaling to an amount of 43 acres of protected land in Groton for the 2024 Fiscal Year so far.

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 FY 1996 through FY 2023.

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. The Commission was awarded a modest amount in 2017 and was denied funding in 2018. The Conservation Fund was funded for \$25,000 in FY19 and \$100,000 in FY20. In 2020, the CPC generously recommended that the Commission's requested amount be increased and ultimately the Conservation Fund was appropriated \$221,000 (up from the \$200,000 which was applied for). In 2021 and 2022, the Conservation Fund was funded for \$350,000 and \$400,000 respectively. The Conservation Fund was also approved to receive \$400,000 in 202, which significantly helped bring the Fund back into a balance to be competitive in the real estate market.

Table 1: Town Appropriations to Conservation Fund - 1996 through 2024

Fiscal Year (July 1 through 30 June)	Fiscal Year (July 1 through 30 June)
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	0
2010	\$100,000
2011	\$75,000 (Spring); \$25,000 (Fall)
2012	0
2013	0 (withdrawn)
2014	0
2015	\$1000,000
2016	\$200,000

2017	0
2018	\$25,000
2019	0
2020	\$100,000
2021	\$221,000
2022	\$350,000
2023	\$400,000
2024	\$400,000

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	Gibbett Hill & 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	360

		& insurance as part of Self-Help reimbursement process	
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 parcel Area	\$716,000 purchase; LAND grant reimbursement \$400,000	106
2018	Patricia Hallet Conservation Area	\$85,000 purchased in fee	21 ±
2019 & 2020	Preist Family Conservation Area	\$635,000 purchased in fee	60 ±
2022 & 2023	Casella Preservation	\$601,500 purchase; LAND grant reimbursement \$360,900	120
2023	Reedy Meadow Road “Marsh-Lewis Memorial Grove”	\$30,000 purchased in fee	15±
2023	West Groton “Palmer” land	\$400,000 purchased in fee	28±

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 Town received an additional \$360,900 in LAND Grant reimbursement funds in 2023 for the purchase of the 120-acre parcel off Nashua Road (“Casella Preservation”).

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. However, maintaining an adequate balance in the Fund is critical. Between 2018 and 2020, Town missed out on the potential to conserve two significant parcels that came out of Ch. 61 status due to insufficient funds.

Benefits to the 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:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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 2019 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 goals are specifically addressed by this proposal:

Goal 1: Promote the preservation of important land resources.

- Objective 9.1.1 – Prioritize open space protection.
- Objective 9.1.3 – Engage the public to support natural resource protection.

Goal 2: Protect water resources.

- Objective 9.2.1 – Prevent disturbance of riparian areas and wetlands and encourage infiltration, water flow, and wildlife movement in rivers and streams.

Goal 3: Promote resiliency to climate change and sustain biodiversity.

- Objective 9.3.1 – Protect wildlife habitat and contiguous greenway corridors.

Goal 4: Support local agriculture.

- Objective 9.4.1 – Secure preservation of priority farmlands.

Goal 5: Provide recreational facilities to meet Groton's needs.

- Objective 9.5.1 – Expand trail linkages to connect recreational areas.
- Objective 9.5.2 – Acquire or reserve additional land for recreational activities.

Goal 6: Enhance Groton's community identity.

- Objective 9.7.1 – Identify, preserve, and commemorate historic landscapes, sites, and structures.

Additionally, 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 2019 updating of the Town's OSRP has provided the Commission an opportunity to fine-tune its list and definition of priority parcels. 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.

Finances

The Commission adheres to the Select Board's General Financial Guideline # 6, which states the goal "to maintain a balance in the Conservation Fund of at least 2% of the Town's current line-item budget". 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.

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. At this point, all money in the Conservation Fund is treated as CPA funds and treated accordingly. To address funding needs for projects not appropriate for CPA funds, the Commission created a dedicated Land Management Revolving Fund, which is funded by land use activities (e.g., agricultural license fees, forestry revenues).

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.

Management Plan

The process of acquiring open space and conservation restrictions in the Town of Groton is performed using a team whose talents come from both members of the towns staff and members of the Commission itself. Typically, two members of the Commission are authorized by the Commission to reach out to interested landowners to determine their level of interest in having their land preserved, what their expectations are and their anticipated timeline. The Commission members will walk the land and discuss, in executive session, the ecological and recreational merits of the property. The seller's timeline is important because longer timelines allow the Commission to apply for and receive state grants which reduces the acquisition cost for Groton residents.

If the property is shown to have sufficient merit, the next step is usually to hire a licensed land appraiser to determine the "highest and best" use of the land and appraise it accordingly using a method outlined in the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services' requirements. The appraisal is typically the starting point for negotiations with the land owner that, if the negotiations are successful, result in Town Counsel drafting a purchase and sale (P&S) agreement. The Commission and Town Counsel will draft the new deed, conduct a title search and arrange for title insurance. The Commission will arrange for an on-the-ground survey and the installation of bound markers where appropriate.

The team of negotiators, appraisers, grant writers and Town Counsel is overseen by the members of the Commission who conduct their business by majority vote. Early activity is usually done in executive session and the minutes of those meetings are released to the public upon completion of the acquisition.

The Groton Conservation Commission often leverages partnerships with other town committees and boards to manage and enhance Conservation-owned parcels. The Groton Stewardship Committee (a sub-committee of the Groton Conservation Commission), along with the Trails Committee, are often responsible for the long-term land management aspects of Conservation parcels in the town. The Stewardship Committee often develops management plans for maintenance and monitoring to ensure that the ecological and recreational value of the parcels remains in-tact. In some cases, management plans involving the removal and treatment of invasive species are enacted. In the past, the Commission has partnered with the Groton Invasive Species Committee to identify areas of concern and create action plans for restoration and removal of invasive plants. The Commission aims to continue these partnerships in FY 25 to ensure that land purchased with CPC funds remains well-maintained and thriving with native biodiversity.

List of Attachments

- Attachment 1: Master Plan Excerpt
- Attachment 2: OSRP excerpt
- Attachment 3: Management Plan
- Attachment 4: Letters of Support

FY25 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 Gap

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

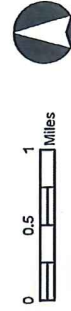
- Limited Access Highway
- Multi-Lane (Not Limited Access)
- Other Numbered Highway
- Major Road, Collector
- Local Roads

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

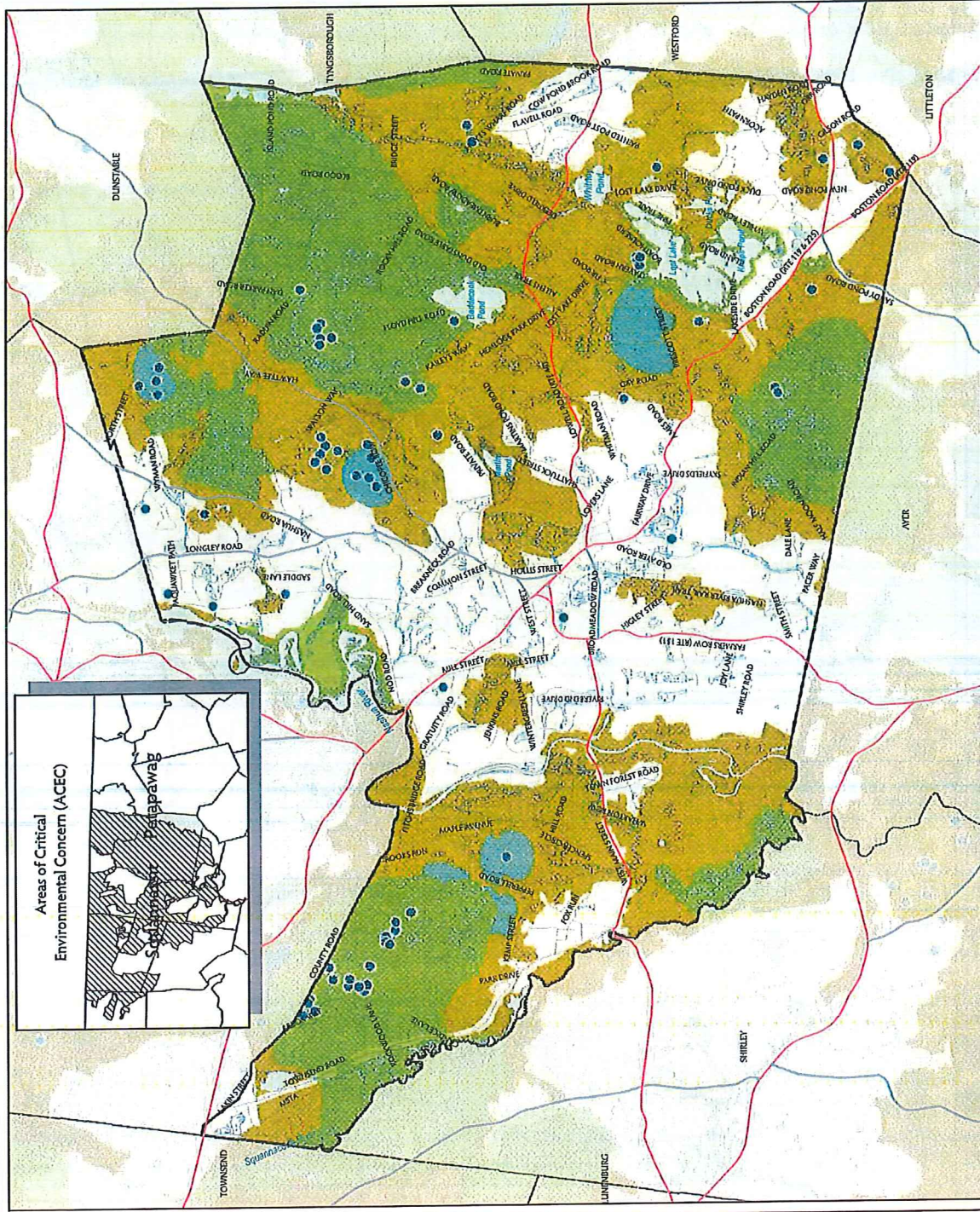


Groton Planning Board

CONSULTANTS

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

Data Sources:
Applied Geographics, Inc., 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 3.3: 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.



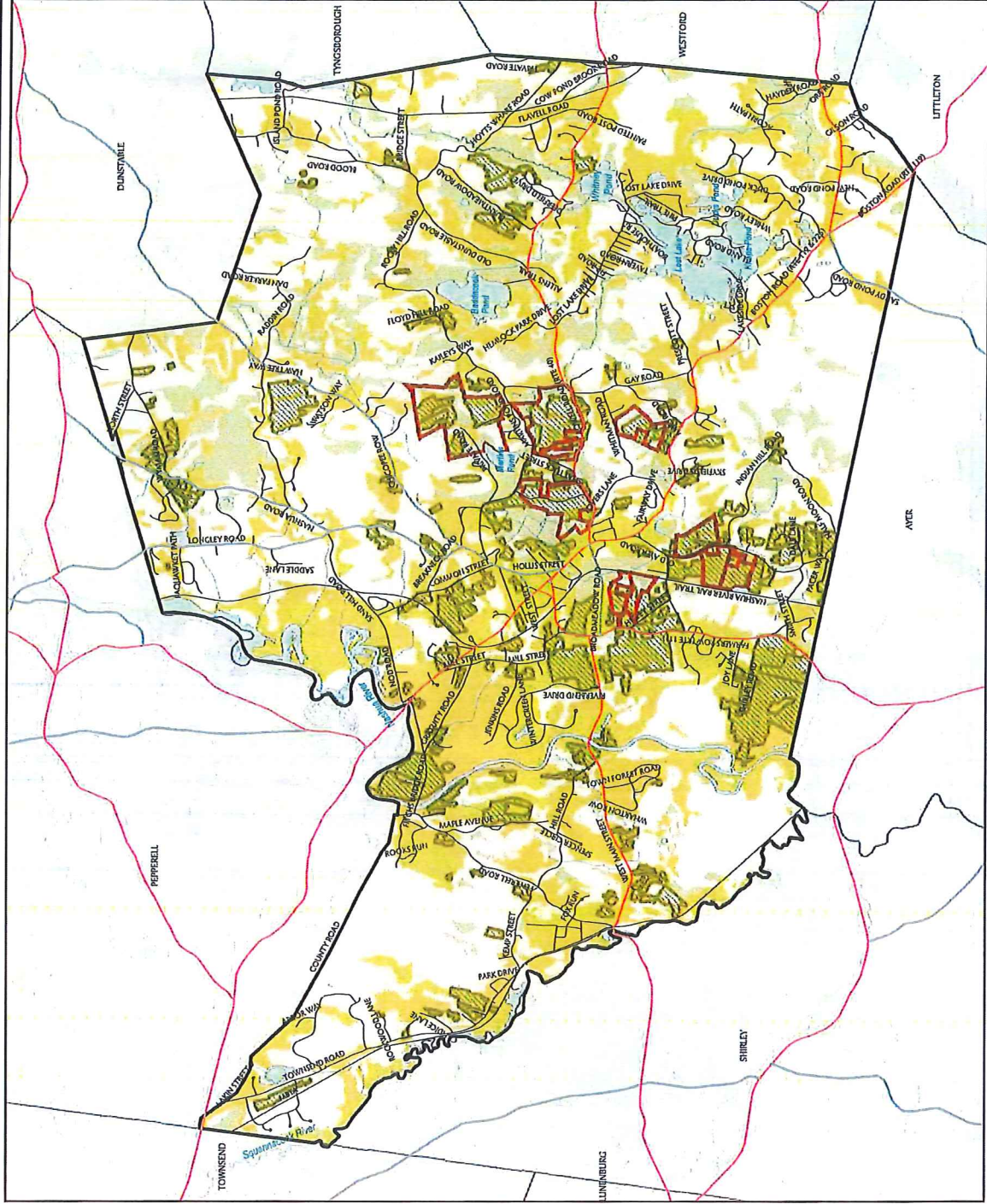
Groton Planning Board

CONSULTANTS

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

Data Sources:

Applied Geographics, Inc., Massachusetts
Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)
Natural Resource 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

- KEY**
- ROADWAYS**
- United Access Highway
 - Multi-Lane (Not Limited Access)
 - Other Numbered Highway
 - Major Road, Collector
 - Local Roads
 - Water Bodies
- ASSESSMENT RESULTS**
- Preservation Areas
 - Conservation Design Areas
 - Growth Areas



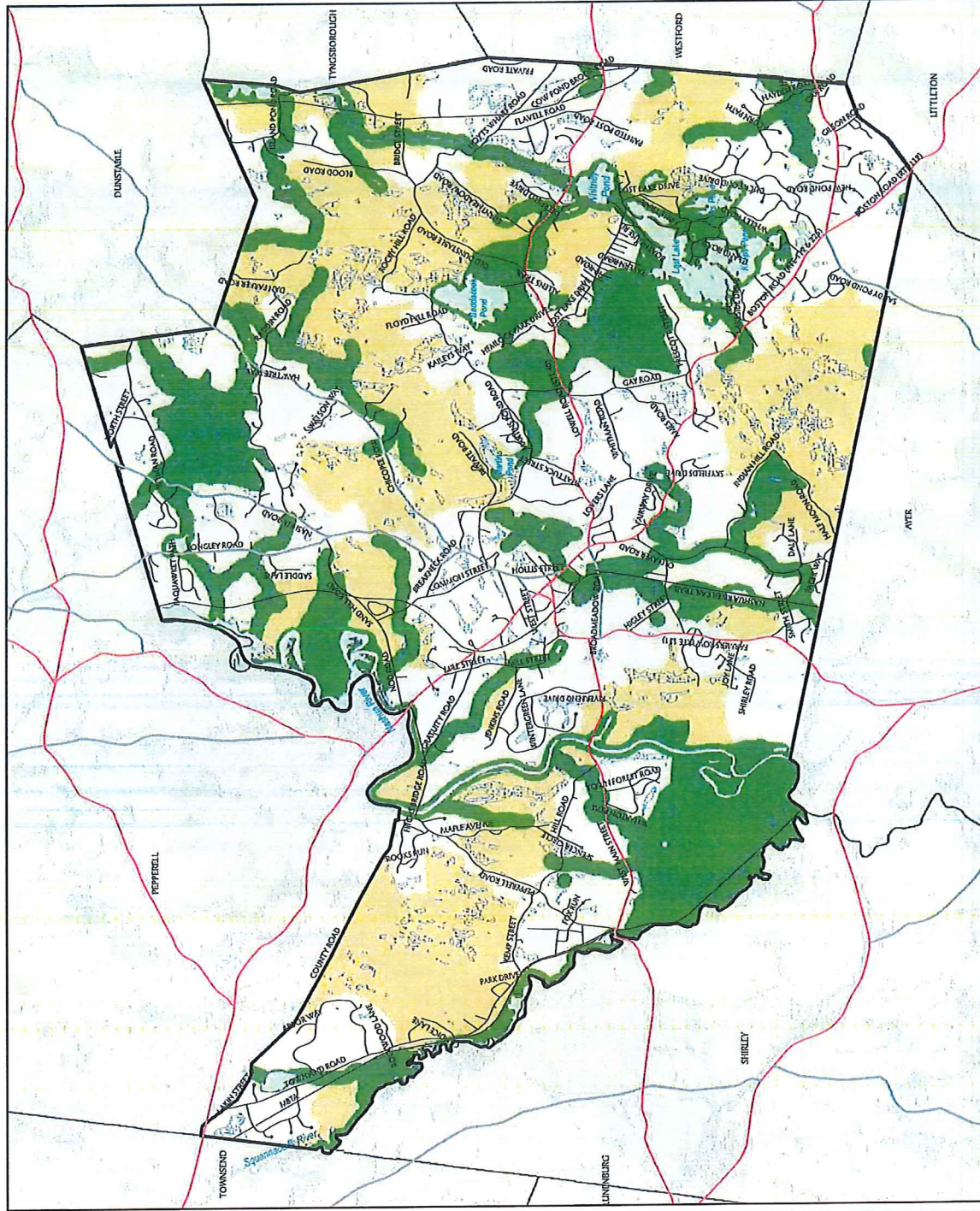
Groton Planning Board

CONSULTANTS

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

Data Sources:

Applied Geographic, Inc., MAZDAS,
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 3.5:

Natural Resource Protection Gaps

March 2011

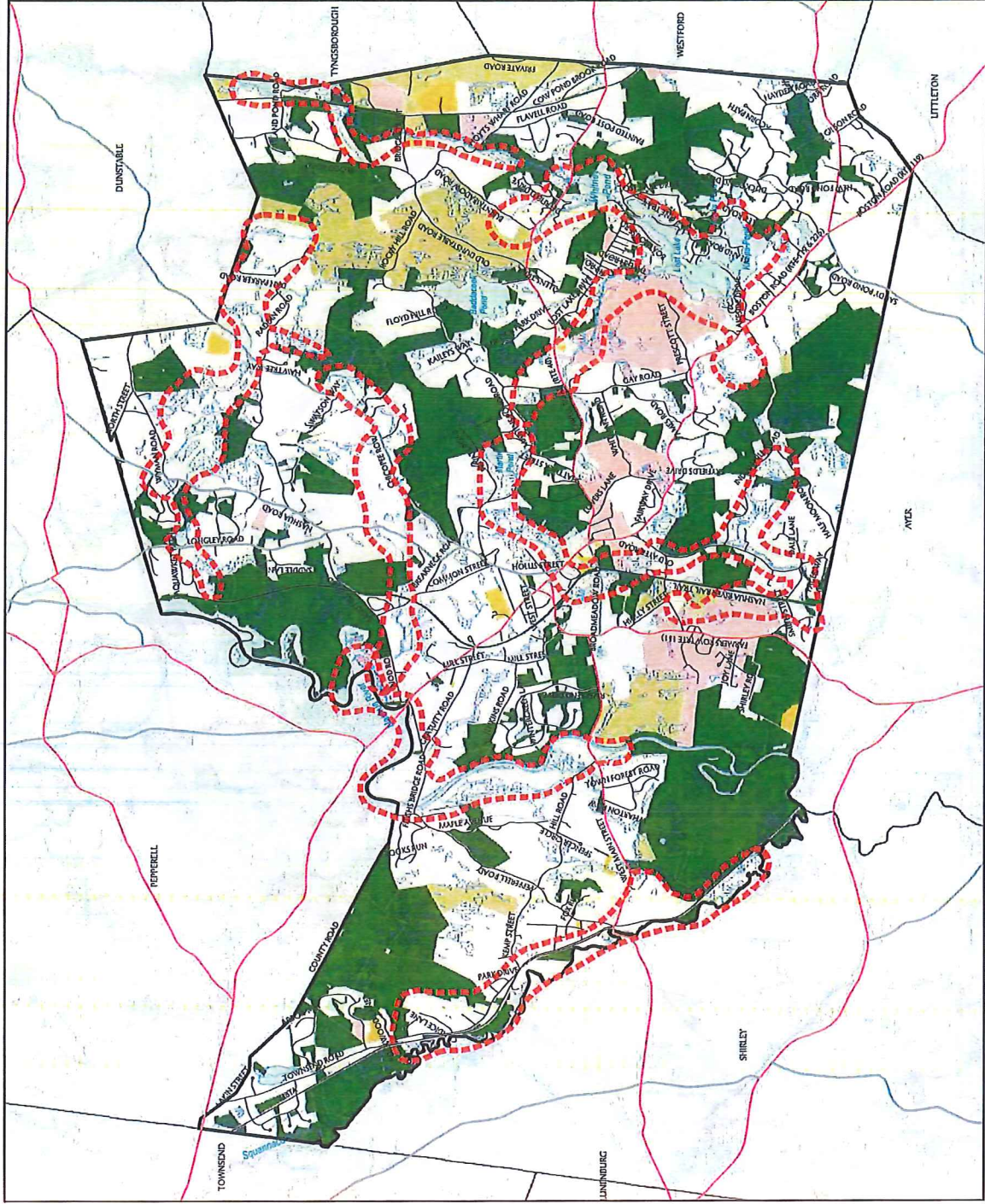
- KEY**
- ROADWAYS**
- Limited Access Highway
 - Multi-Lane (Not Limited Access)
 - Other Numbered Highway
 - Major Road, Collector
 - Local Roads
 - Water Bodies
 - Rivers and Streams
 - Cop Acres
- LEVEL OF OPEN SPACE PROTECTION**
- In Perpetuity
 - Limited or None
 - Undocumented
 - Other Municipal Land



Groton Planning Board

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

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.

FY24 Community Preservation Proposal – Groton Conservation Commission

ATTACHMENT 2

Excerpts from 2019 OSRP:

- Cover Page
- Section 8 – Goals and Objectives (Page 101)
- Section 9 – Seven Year Action Plan Update (Pages 102 - 114)
- OSRP Map – Regional Context (Page 130)
- OSRP Map – Unique Features (Page 134)
- OSRP Map – Water Resources (Page 135)
- OSRP Map – Inventory of Open Spaces (Page 136)
- OSRP Map – Action Plan (Page 137)



Town of Groton

2019-2026

Open Space and Recreation Plan

Section 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 “Seven-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) 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 important land resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize open space protection. • Strengthen partnerships between Groton Town committees, organizations, institutions, neighboring communities, and state agencies. • Engage the public to support natural resource protection.
2. Protect water resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent disturbance of riparian areas and wetlands and encourage infiltration, water flow. • Prevent or reduce the impact of water pollution from local and regional sources. • Evaluate and implement strategies for surface water quality and invasive plant control.
3. Promote resiliency to climate change and sustain biological diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect wildlife habitat and contiguous greenway corridors. • Ensure that activities and amenities on conservation and recreation lands are compatible with the protection of their resources. • Provide resources for effective open space stewardship. • Promote public awareness of natural resources and ecological issues. • Plan and implement strategies for hazard mitigation.
4. Support local agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure preservation of priority farmlands. • Facilitate agricultural use of prime farmland. • Promote policies, programs, and economic development tools to support local farms.
5. Provide recreational opportunities to meet Groton’s needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand trail linkages to connect recreational areas. • Acquire or reserve additional land for recreational activities. • Develop/improve facilities to support programming and serve future growth areas of town. • Update facilities to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.
6. Facilitate the shared use of recreation facilities by residents of all ages and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand recreation programming to provide more variety. • Effectively coordinate and manage recreation areas. • Provide information to the public about passive and active recreation offerings.
7. Enhance Groton’s community identity through landscape and cultural awareness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, preserve, commemorate, and promote historic landscapes, sites, and structures. • Increase awareness of Groton’s historic, natural, and community assets.

Section 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 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. 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 2019 through 2026.

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

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
1. Promote the preservation of important land resources.	1.1. Prioritize open space protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and adopt criteria-based ranking system for open space acquisitions. 	Conservation, Park	2020
	Funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update prioritized list of parcels to target for acquisition. 	Conservation, Planning, Trails, Greenway	2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time CPA Funding DCS LAND Grant MA Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant Program Field Use fees 	<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. 	Select Board, Conservation, Community Preservation Committee	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"> Identify additional funding for open space acquisition or preservation restrictions. 	Conservation, Greenway	Ongoing
	1.2. Strengthen partnerships	<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 Mass Audubon in land protection efforts. 	Select Board, Conservation	Ongoing
	Funding sources:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time Private donations State Universities 			

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
	- Public & Private Schools (gifts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue/expand periodic meetings of environmental and stewardship organizations, institutions, and public entities to share information and facilitate collaboration. 	Conservation, Greenway, various groups	Ongoing
	1.3. Engage the public to support natural resource protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public outreach to support conservation funding and key land acquisitions. 	Select Board, Conservation, Greenway	Ongoing
	Funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time CPA Funding Local Newspapers (good will) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to identify priorities for CPA funding, and promote the value of investment in open space and other Town assets through local revenue and state matching funds. 	Community Preservation Commission	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct public events to highlight conservation lands. 	Trails, Conservation, Greenway	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to owners of priority parcels to identify opportunities for preservation. 	Conservation, Greenway, Park, Agricultural	Ongoing
2. Protect water resources.	2.1. Prevent disturbance of riparian areas and wetlands and encourage infiltration, water flow, and wildlife movement in rivers and streams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize acquisition of lands adjacent to wetlands, streams, and water bodies (including 300-foot corridor along rivers and tributaries) and around well sites included in DEP-delineated Zone IIs. 	Water Districts, Conservation, Select Board, Greenway	Ongoing
	Funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time CPA funding MVP Implementation Grant Stormwater "Rain" fees Private donations In-kind: student projects NRWA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance LID regulations and promote stormwater management best practices through consistent regulation, policies, and education. 	Conservation, Planning, Building, Stormwater, Sustainability	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with other communities to protect shared water resources. 	Conservation, Water Departments, Greenways	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	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider incentives, education, or advocacy to address unregulated types of activities that might disturb riparian zones. 	Conservation Stormwater, Sustainability, Agricultural	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the need for updates to conservation regulations to reflect changes in water flow to streams, wetlands, and ponds. 	Conservation, Health	2022 or Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue water conservation and education, i.e., odd/even watering. 	Water Districts	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide adequate culverts and fish ladders to facilitate wildlife mobility. 	DPW, NRWA	Ongoing
	2.2. Prevent or reduce the impact of water pollution from local and regional sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to investigate non-point sources of pollution in the Lost Lake/Knops Pond area. 	Great Ponds Advisory Committee, Health, Conservation	Ongoing
	Funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time MA Works Development Grant State Revolving Loan Funds for Water & Sewer Infrastructure MassDEP Gap II Grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate alternatives for sewerage areas with failed sewage disposal systems. 	Sewer, Health	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. 	Select Board, Health, Greenway, NRWA	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore regional approaches to protect groundwater resources. 	Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA), Conservation, Water Districts	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster public education about pollution from household chemicals such as lawn treatment or pharmaceuticals, as well as protecting and testing private wells. 	Health, NRWA, Conservation, Water Districts	Ongoing
	2.3 Evaluate and implement strategies for water resource surface water quality and invasive plant control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage development of comprehensive lake management plans for Great Ponds, particularly Lost Lake/ Knops and Baddacook Ponds. 	Select Board, Great Ponds Advisory Committee, Conservation, NRWA	Ongoing
	Funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time Town NRWA in-kind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor where nutrients are coming from that contribute to aquatic plant overgrowth. 	Great Ponds Advisory Committee, Health, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work regionally to improve water quality of the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers and to remove invasive species. 	NRWA, Greenway, Conservation	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
3. Promote resiliency to climate change and sustain biological diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groton Lakes Association fundraising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue volunteer water quality monitoring program on local streams, rivers, and ponds to provide baseline data on stream health. 	NRWA	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install and maintain boat washes at all formal State and Town boat launches. 	DCR, Conservation	Ongoing
	3.1. Protect wildlife habitat and contiguous greenway corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify likely wildlife corridors and prioritize habitat value for open space acquisition. 	Conservation, Groton Conservation Trust, NHESP, Greenway	Ongoing
	Funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time CPA funding MA Wildlife Habitat Grant Private donations NRCS (for private lands bordering open spaces) Garden Club Federation of MA College/Student projects Neighborhood donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to acquire and link land along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers and other identified wildlife corridors. 	NRWA, Greenway, Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with land trusts and institutions to obtain CR's to permanently protect critical biodiversity or resource protection value. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the protection of Massapoag Pond's shore line in Groton and Dunstable. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with surrounding communities to preserve areas adjoining The Throne (including Old County Road), Reedy Meadow, and Nashua River. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a wildlife and flora inventory for conservation parcels. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement sustainable management and stewardship plans for conservation parcels based on resources and species present. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue notifying development applicants of the presence of Priority Habitat of Rare Species on their property. 	Conservation, Building Inspector, Planning	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners such as NRWA, Merrimack River Watershed Council, NHESP to inventory, analyze, monitor, and protect habitat areas. 	Greenway Committee, Conservation	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement strategies for removing or controlling specific invasive species. 	Invasive Species Committee, Conservation, Agricultural, Park, Garden Club	2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster education through various avenues to encourage public participation in controlling invasive species on both private properties and conservation lands. 	Invasive Species Committee, Conservation, Agricultural, Park	Ongoing, but more needed
	3.2. Ensure that activities and amenities on conservation and recreation lands are compatible with the protection of their resources. Funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time Town In-kind: student projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a conservation and recreation sign program to improve access and appropriate usage. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with state and conservation organizations on trail management and usage policies. 	Conservation, Town Forest Committee, GCT, NEFF, DCR, MassAudubon	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor conservation, recreation, and conservation-restricted parcels for encroachment and abuse; consider establishing new Monitoring Committee 	Conservation, Town Forest Committee, Parks, DCR	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and mark boundaries of conservation parcels for purposes of enforcement and stewardship. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage inappropriate use of public trails by motorized vehicles using public education, signage, and enforcement techniques. 	Conservation, Trails, Groton Conservation Trust, Town Forest, Park, New England Forestry Foundation, Greenways Committee, DCR, Audubon, Police	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider state BioMap identifying Core Habitat and Supporting Landscapes when planning for stewardship or for recreational or other usage. 	Conservation, Stewardship sub-committee	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate methods of reducing fertilizer use on recreation fields and golf course. 	Park, Country Club	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue sustainable forestry activities on Town-owned lands 	Conservation, Water Dept., Town Forest Committee, NEFF	Ongoing

Goal	Objective	Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider signage and trail marking to re-direct hikers around sensitive wetland or wildlife resource areas. 	Conservation, Trails	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote best practices for all types of landowners for landscaping in ecologically sensitive areas. Educate & inform townspeople of need to reduce fertilizers & chemicals on lawns 	Conservation, Park, Garden Club, Stormwater, GCC, BOH	Ongoing
	3.3. Provide resources for effective open space and water resource stewardship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider establishment of a Stewardship Committee. 	Conservation, Park	2020
	Funding sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer and staff time Athletic field user groups Other private donations MA Wildlife Habitat Grant CPA Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand volunteer stewardship program, making available appropriate training and equipment. 	Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working with Park/DPW on periodic maintenance of Town conservation land. 	Conservation, Park, DPW	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate staffing needs for management, maintenance, and administration; identify specific roles for which additional staff support is needed. 	Select Board, Conservation	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue coordination between Groton Town committees, organizations, institutions, neighboring communities, and state agencies. 	Select Board, Conservation, Trails, Greenway, Sustainability, Groton Conservation Trust	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the formation of neighborhood or homeowners association stewardship groups as part of the Planning Board permitting process. 	Conservation, Planning	Ongoing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate funding opportunities for restoration or management of conservation lands, such as MassWildlife or CPA. 	Conservation	Ongoing

FY25 Community Preservation Proposal- Groton Conservation Commission**ATTACHMENT 3
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR LAND PROTECTION****SELECT PROPERTY**

Based on the criteria outlined in the CPC application (parcels that link with contiguous protected open space, parcels that protect and preserve a greenway along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers and tributaries, parcels where significant wildlife habitat or corridors have been identified, or parcels that preserve a sense of Groton's agricultural heritage), the Conservation Commission will evaluate the merits of each opportunity and, by majority vote, select an appropriate parcel.

DETERMINE WILLINGNESS OF THE SELLER

Occasionally a landowner will approach the Commission or the Groton Conservation Trust with an interest in doing something that would protect his or her land from future development. At other times, the Commission becomes aware that a significant parcel is on the market or the Town is notified of its right to first refusal on a parcel under the M.G.L. Ch. 61 tax program. The Groton Conservation Trust is also a source of information on important parcels.

IDENTIFY SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING ALTERNATIVES

The Conservation Commission identifies appropriate Federal and State supplemental funding sources, i.e., Forest Legacy, Land Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program, Community Partnership, and Source Water Protection grants. Nearly all grants require a local match and/or strong partnership with like-minded conservation organizations. The funding match may be available through the Conservation Fund, the Community Preservation open space monies, and/or a Town Meeting vote.

OBTAIN PROPERTY APPRAISALS

With landowner consent, obtain bids for appraisal(s) after providing deed, assessors' records and maps, as well as applicable zoning and wetland regulations. The cost of individual appraisals is likely to be between \$3,000 and \$5,000, depending on the size and complexity of the project. Many supplemental funding sources require property appraisals as part of the application process. Coordinate with Town Council and Board of Selectmen to research deeds and obtain warrant articles as required by state LAND Program or other supplemental funding organizations.

RECEIVE CPC APPROVAL/TOWN MEETING VOTE: As required, make presentation at Town Meeting in support of required warrant articles. FY21 Community Preservation Proposal Groton Conservation Commission Attachment 3 – Management Plan.

WRITE GRANT PROPOSAL, IF APPLICABLE, for supplemental funding. Acquisition of property may include survey and legal consultants to prepare a purchase and sales agreement or do title research. The Conservation Fund can be the source of funding. To protect acquired land in perpetuity, the land must be subject to Ch. 40 §8C, the Conservation Commission Act, which is reflected in the deed to be recorded at the Middlesex Registry of Deeds. To qualify for state grants, the parcel's title must be certified by Town Counsel.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Conservation Administrator or other person (s) designated by the Conservation Commission maintains a database on the property that includes the deed, description of the flora and fauna or other significant natural features, management objectives, installation of signing or parking as appropriate, and specific management tasks. With LAND grants, the Town is required to prepare a Baseline Documentation Report and Land Management Plan for individual parcels. On land having a Conservation Restriction, it is necessary to perform on-going monitoring activities to assure there is no encroachment.



Sustainability Commission

Letter to Groton Community Preservation Committee in support of the Conservation Commission grant application for the FY25 Conservation Fund

Date: 5th January 2024

Mr. Russell Burke, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

Cc: Conservation Commission

Dear Community Preservation Committee Members,
At our January 4th meeting, the Sustainability Commission unanimously voted to support the Conservation Commission's CPC grant application for the FY25 Conservation Fund in the amount of \$400,000.

For many years, the Conservation Commission, together with state and regional partners has done a wonderful job of protecting open space; parcels that protect and preserve riparian borders along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers and their tributaries; parcels where significant wildlife or corridors have been identified; and parcels that preserve a sense of Groton's agriculture heritage. Their efforts help protect flora and fauna alike, preserving habitat for native and migratory species.

All of this work plays a vital role in helping to make the Town more resilient to the growing effects of climate change, and to make Groton more sustainable, overall. Moving forward, we look forward to working in close partnership with the Conservation Commission in their efforts.

Respectfully,
The Groton Sustainability Commission

December 26, 2023

Community Preservation Committee
Town of Groton
173 Main Street
Groton, MA. 01450

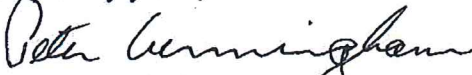
RE: CPA Application 2025-01: Conservation Fund

Dear CPC Members,

On behalf of Squannacook Greenways I am pleased to offer this letter of support for the Groton Conservation Commission's application for \$400,000 for the conservation fund. This fund has been a vital resource for protecting land and creating much of the open space and recreational property that we all enjoy and makes Groton such a special place to live. As you are aware having the flexibility of conservation fund resources allows the ConComm to respond in a judicious way when valuable parcels of land become available. Without that flexibility the ConComm is unable to move in a timely manner on land that may become available and instead must go through the arduous Town Meeting appropriation process. Given the fluid dynamics of the real estate market, most landowners are unwilling to wait for a Town Meeting vote.

Squannacook Greenways shares many of the same values held by the ConComm in their goal to protect open space for the enjoyment of all. The Squannacook River Rail Trail (SRRT) abuts many sections of open space and protected land and is the connection for many townspeople to enjoy that land. We urge you to support this application and report favorably on it to the 2024 Annual Town Meeting.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Cunningham", written in a cursive style.

Peter Cunningham, President
Squannacook Greenways

**Letter of Support from the Groton Greenway Committee for the Conservation Commission's
FY2025 CPA application**

The Greenway Committee fully supports the Conservation Commission's FY2025 CPA application. The Conservation Fund is a critical source of money to purchase land that contains important natural resources including along the Nashua and Squannacook rivers. Two of the Greenway Committee's main goals are to protect additional riverfront property and to investigate management opportunities for the Nod Road parcel, both of which would benefit from a fully funded Conservation Fund.

When the Community Preservation Act was passed, one of the great benefits was that rather than funding the Conservation Fund with line-item transfers from the general fund they could instead come from a state matched source through such requests. The Conservation Commission has been an excellent administrator of the fund for example applying and receiving LAND grants from the State, ensuring that any land purchases are aligned with both the Town Master Plan and the incentives from DCR and the State.

Respectfully,

The Groton Greenway Committee

Peter Carson

Adam Burnett

Carol Coutrier

David Pitkin

Marina Khabituyeva, Chair



Invasive Species Committee

**Letter to Groton Community Preservation Committee in support of the
Conservation Commission grant application for FY2025 funds for open space
acquisition**

To: Groton Community Preservation Committee

Cc: Conservation Commission

Dear Community Preservation Committee Members,

At our Jan 22nd meeting, the Invasive Species Committee unanimously voted to support the Conservation Commission's CPC grant application for funding open space acquisition. The Committee appreciates the Conservation Commission's commitment to preserving open space in Groton.

Respectfully,

The Groton Invasive Species Committee



TOWN OF GROTON

Stewardship Committee

173 Main Street

Groton, MA 01450

(978) 448-1106

Fax: 978-448-1113

csteeves@grotonma.gov

Groton Community Preservation Committee
Groton Town Hall
Groton, MA 01450
January 9, 2024

Dear Members of the Community Preservation Committee,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Groton Stewardship Committee in support of the Groton Conservation Commission's request for CPA funding. Please accept this letter in support of CPC application 2025-01.

The Conservation Commission (the Commission) is requesting CPA funds in the amount of \$400,000 for the purpose of Open Space acquisition. In the past, the Commission has successfully used CPA funds to enhance Groton's Open Space inventory and protect valuable open space parcels in Groton. CPA funds have also been used to secure additional state monies, effectively doubling the value of the CPA investment. These funds are used to purchase Conservation or Agricultural Preservation Restrictions or for land purchases. These funds will also help the town meet its goals identified in the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

During the Stewardship Committee meeting on December 20, 2023, the members present gave their full support to this proposal. The Stewardship Committee strongly supports this funding proposal for open space acquisition from the Conservation Commission and feels it is a worthwhile investment of CPA funds.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

//signed//

Lisa M. Murray

Chair, Stewardship Committee