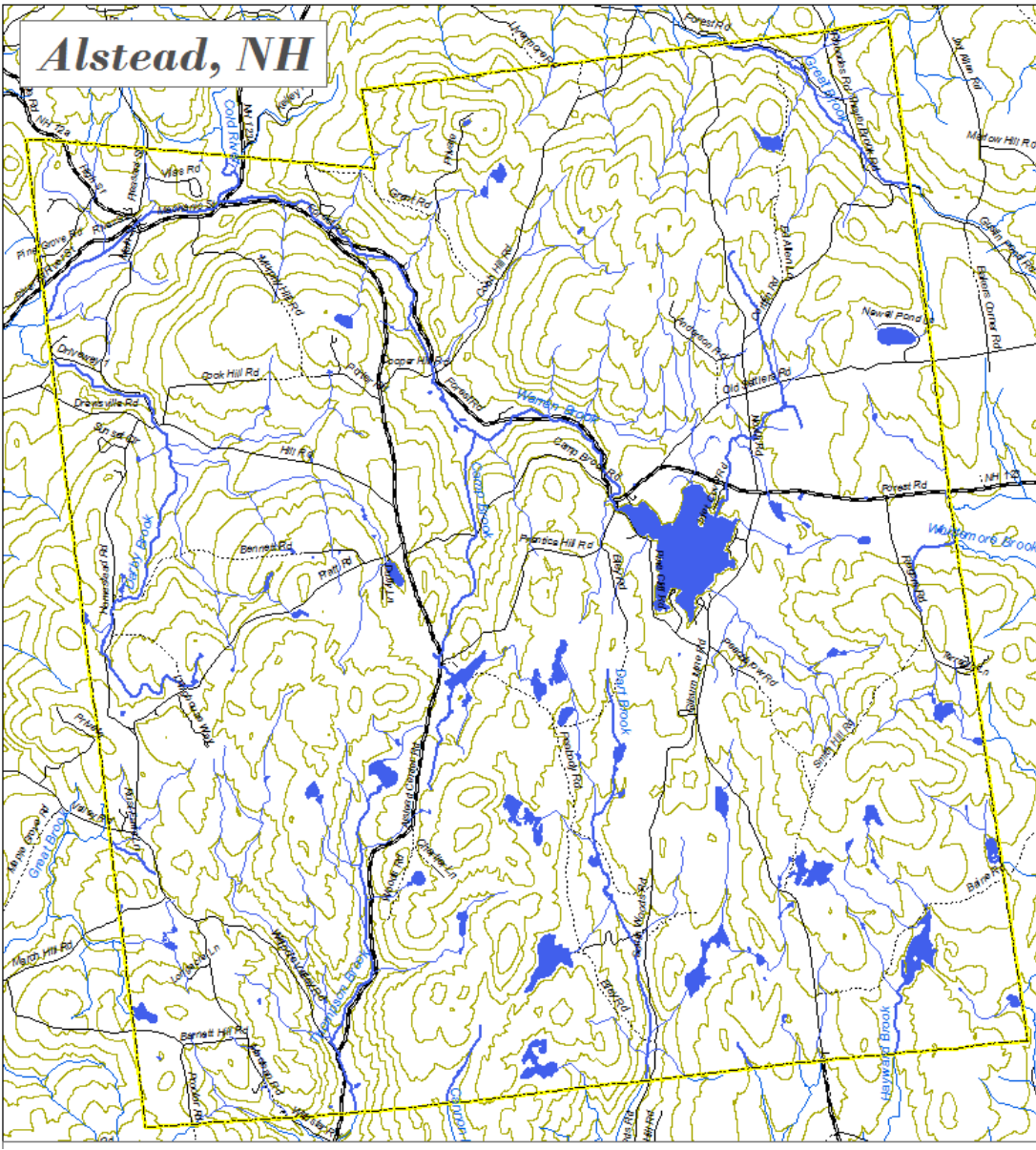


# TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

## Land Conservation Plan 2009



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## I. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### A. Introduction

Land Conservation is a voluntary act by a land owner to restrict future uses and/or sub-division of their land to protect specifically defined conservation purposes or values. Land Conservation is typically accomplished when a land owner enters into a legally binding conservation agreement, called a conservation easement, typically with an organization established specifically for the purpose of conserving land, commonly known as a land trust. Land conservation can also be accomplished when a land owner chooses to sell or donate their land to a conservation buyer, such as a land trust, or to a town for the express purpose of land conservation.

As such, a town's direct role in a land conservation transaction is typically limited, unless it is purchasing land for conservation or is the recipient of a conservation easement from a land owner. Nonetheless, many towns have a strong interest in promoting land conservation among land owners as a primary tool for protecting natural resources, environmental quality and the overall character and quality of life in the community. From the town's perspective, land conservation begins with developing an understanding of what community member's value most about the community and its environment, what natural resources exist, where they are located, and what places are most special to citizens for aesthetic, cultural and historic reasons. When this type of information is gathered, it can be compiled into a land conservation plan, outlining specific land conservation priorities in the community and identifying strategies that can be employed to encourage protection of those priority lands. A land conservation plan may be distinguished from a conservation plan because the latter plan is typically broader and may include recommendations such as influencing community behavior to reduce resource use, restoring previously degraded natural resources in the community, or establishing priorities for developing a resource in one location over another.

This document is intended to serve as a Land Conservation Plan for the Town of Alstead. The purpose of the plan is to provide guidance to community leaders for how land conservation can be used to further the vision and goals set out in Alstead's 2007 Master Plan Update. The vision statement appearing in Alstead's 2007 Master Plan, excerpted in Appendix 1, demonstrates core values held by Alstead residents: rich cultural past, pristine natural environment, dynamic sense of community, and passion for rural character. These values are echoed throughout the Master Plan.

*“Country roads, scenic views, significant forested areas, historic landmarks and village, stone walls, pristine water resources and small town character are highly valued by the citizens of Alstead. Our vision is one where all of these valuable assets are protected. Change here is inevitable as growth pressure impacts Alstead; our vision must guide us toward planned and thoughtful growth that will maintain the rural atmosphere so cherished by our community.”*

*Alstead Master Plan 2007*

The Master Plan calls for the creation of an “Open Space Plan and a Land Conservation Plan to protect and preserve sensitive environmental areas and large areas of unfragmented forest and agricultural land (through purchase in fee or development rights) and help guide public policy regarding development. The Plans would also seek to maintain recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, boating, swimming, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, horseback riding, and hiking, and foster a good relationship between outdoor enthusiasts and land owners.”

The 2009 Alstead Land Conservation Plan which follows, has been created to implement the above referenced 2007 Master Plan goal and to serve as a tool for articulating land conservation priorities that are based on both a detailed understanding of Alstead’s natural resources and a commitment to preserve those attributes of the landscape that define the heart and soul of Alstead. This plan also identifies strategies that can be employed to accomplish land conservation objectives and action steps to move the implementation process forward.

The plan includes:

- A Natural Resources Inventory analysis
- An inventory of special places and scenic vistas identified by community members
- A set of land conservation priorities describing both the characteristics and the locations of important areas for conservation, as well the important values that would be preserved through the conservation of the priority lands
- Specific implementation strategies and action steps for furthering conservation objectives

## **B. Overview of Planning Process**

In January 2008, a task force of Alstead citizens initiated work on a conservation plan that would help the town implement the conservation-related goals and recommendations set forth in the 2007 Master Plan. The conservation planning process was initiated by members of the Alstead Conservation Commission in collaboration with the Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership (MCCP). See Appendix 2 for a brief description of the MCCP. The first step in the planning process was to identify the various stakeholder groups in Alstead and invite their representation and participation in the planning process. A task force was formed to scope out the planning approach and to plan for a community forum.

The task force began the planning process by hosting a town-wide forum to find out what citizens value most about the town. The forum was held on May 8, 2008. During the forum, participants were asked to respond to the questions: “What is special about living in Alstead?” and “What do you want to still be here in 2025?” Participants were also asked to identify places in town that reflect the special qualities identified by drawing circles around the location of these places on maps or aerial photographs of the town.

Invitations to the forum were mailed to all households in the town and a total of 70 residents participated. At the conclusion of the forum, participants and task force members were invited to

join a work group that would further identify and analyze the town's cultural and natural resources and draft conservation priorities for the community.

This work group met over a six month period to review the results of the first forum and identify community values to guide the prioritizing process. They reviewed natural resource inventory data available through the State of NH (GIS) "GRANIT" database. This review helped participants understand what natural resources exist in the town, where they are located, and why they are important to the community. The group also collaborated with the UNH Cooperative Extension to interpret data from the NH Wildlife Action Plan to inform recommendations in this plan and serve to implement objectives from the Wildlife Action Plan. The natural resource inventory included the following data:

- Water resources
  - Watershed delineations
  - Surface waters including streams, rivers, ponds and lakes
  - Wetlands (based on the National Wetlands Inventory and the Soil Survey of Cheshire County)
  - Stratified drift aquifers
  - Public water supplies
  - Steep slopes (included here because of the effects of slope disturbance on water quality)
  
- Wildlife habitat
  - Natural vegetation communities (NH Wildlife Action Plan)
  - Large unfragmented forested blocks (NH Wildlife Action Plan)
  - South and southwest facing slopes (important to wildlife in winter)
  - Known sites supporting rare, threatened, or endangered species and exemplary natural communities (Natural Heritage Bureau)
  - Surface waters including streams, rivers, ponds and lakes.
  - Wetlands (based on the National Wetlands Inventory and the Soil Survey of Cheshire County)
  
- Working lands
  - Agricultural soils (prime and farmland of statewide importance)
  - Actively managed agricultural lands
  - Group I forest soils (good for forest regeneration and limited impediments to harvesting)

The work group also reviewed the special places identified during the first forum and translated these resources into a Cultural Resource Inventory following the themes identified during the forum. The cultural resources identified on the aerial photographs were added to the town map database. Cultural resources were categorized as follows:

- Scenic vistas and viewpoints, and land features that contribute to community identity
- Places where people enjoy outdoor recreation, such as:
  - Hunting, fishing, hiking, swimming, and boating
  - Winter activities such as snowmobiling, cross country skiing, sledding, skating, and ice fishing
- Places where people go to enjoy nature, view wildlife, and experience serenity
- Places where people tend to gather
- Historically significant buildings and landscapes

With the assistance of the MCCP team, the work group completed an analysis, called a co-occurrence analysis. This analysis determines where various resource types overlap with one another, highlighting areas with multiple resource values that a town might consider as higher priority for land conservation. This analysis was further refined by considering those individual resource types that community members value as high priority in their own right, regardless of a geographic overlap with other resources. The group also identified core wildlife habitat areas and potential locations for creating protected wildlife corridors. From these analyses, the work group developed a simplified conservation priorities map and description of land types, resource values, and geographic areas in town that would be documented as priority for conservation.

A second forum was held on November 12, 2008 to share the natural and cultural resource information that had been analyzed and to gather input regarding the conclusions and implementation strategies that were being considered by the work group. This forum provided an opportunity for participants to validate the analysis and action planning that had been done by the work group and to contribute new ideas about how to accomplish town conservation objectives. The community input from the second forum was integrated with the work group's analysis and action planning to form the basis for this land conservation plan.

During the process of developing conservation priorities and implementation strategies, the following planning documents were reviewed and considered:

Alstead Master Plan – Updated 2007

Alstead New Hampshire Water Resource Management and Protection Plan – May 1994

Drinking Water Protection Plan for the Cold River Watershed – December 2005

A Land Conservation Plan for the Ashuelot River Watershed – July 2004

Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan – 2006

Cold River Watershed Management Plan – April 2009

## **II. FINDINGS**

### **A. Themes Identified in the Community Forums**

As previously mentioned, during the first town-wide forum held on May 8, 2008, residents were asked “What is special about living in Alstead?” and “What do you want to make sure is still here in 2025?” Community values identified during the forum were summarized into the following themes and sub-themes (A complete list of values identified during the first community forum can be found in Appendix 3 of this plan):

**Theme 1: Local Agriculture**

- A) Growing our own food

**Theme 2: Outdoor Recreation**

- A) Winter recreation
- B) Water based recreation
- C) Traditional outdoor recreation (hunting, fishing, hiking)

**Theme 3: Natural Environment**

- A) Water
- B) Wildlife
- C) Serenity

**Theme 4: Local Identity**

- A) Sense of community and local culture
- B) Rural and historic character

The work group analyzed the themes and values from the first forum and drafted goals and action plans related to each theme. The draft goals and action plans were presented to community members during the second forum and participants were asked to discuss and comment on the information provided. Input collected at the second forum was integrated into the draft goals and action plans and the results are reflected in Appendix 7 of this document. The themes and values identified in the first forum were also used in combination with the analysis of natural and cultural resources to develop the land conservation priorities and implementation strategies described in the recommendations section of this plan.

**B. Summary of Natural and Cultural Resources**

The analysis of natural and cultural resources demonstrates that the town of Alstead is rich with topographic, biological, and cultural resource diversity. A summary of the resources reviewed and analyzed by the work group follows:

Watersheds

The town straddles the watershed divide between the Cold River watershed and the Ashuelot River watershed. This major watershed boundary cuts through the middle of Alstead with approximately 35% of the town's land area draining southward through Thompson, Dart and Hayward Brooks to the Ashuelot River and 60% of the land area draining northward through Darby, Thayer (Great), Warren Brooks to the Cold River. A small area along the town boundary with Walpole flows directly to the Connecticut River through Great Brook in Walpole.

The significance of this major watershed divide is that most of the land in Alstead is effectively at the upstream end of these watersheds. This means that land uses that might impact water quality in the town's ponds and streams would occur within the town boundaries. This gives the town of Alstead a greater ability to influence water quality within its boundaries than a town located further downstream in the watershed. It also gives the town a greater responsibility to protect water quality so that towns downstream are not subject to degraded water quality flowing into their towns from Alstead.

### Lakes and Ponds

In addition to the major rivers and tributaries listed above, Lake Warren serves as a centerpiece in Alstead's surface water network providing an important recreation resource for the community and wildlife habitat for aquatic species. The lake serves as an important center for recreational activity including fishing, boating and swimming in the summer and ice fishing and skating in the winter. While there is a fair amount of development around the lake, there are still significant stretches of undeveloped shorefront that provide important access for a variety of wildlife species and offer significant scenic values.

The watershed serving Lake Warren is entirely within the Alstead's town limits and land cover within the watershed is predominantly forested with open agricultural lands located to the east and northeast of the lake. Rural densities of residential land uses follow along the roads that cross through the watershed.

There are a number of smaller ponds located in Alstead. Newell Pond is located along the eastern boundary of Alstead and Marlow, north of Old Settlers Road. A dozen or more small ponds are located in the southern part of town including Caldwell Pond, Cranberry Pond, Kidder Pond, and Wellman Pond. Many of these small ponds have relatively small watersheds and little or no development within those watersheds. As such, there may be reasonable opportunities to protect lands within these watersheds, thereby protecting future water quality in the ponds and retaining the relatively undisturbed settings around them.

### Rivers and Streams

Many of the tributaries originating in Alstead and flowing to the Ashuelot River and the Cold River have good to excellent water quality, in large part because the sub-watersheds of these tributaries are sparsely developed. In the Cold River watershed, Warren Brook presents opportunities for improved water quality because of the recent stabilization and restoration work following the 2005 flood. Once trees and other vegetation along the brook are reestablished, we should see an improvement. Within the Darby and Thayer (Great) Brook sub-watersheds, water testing indicates that surface water quality remains acceptable. For additional information regarding stream conditions and strategies for surface water protection in Alstead, refer to the Cold River Watershed Management Plan and the Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan.

### Aquifers

Stratified drift aquifers are important to protect because they can serve as a potential source for high volume water supplies. A large stratified drift aquifer extends along the Connecticut River in Walpole and up through the center of Langdon, with a branch that follows the Cold River to the east. This branch passes through Alstead, underlying most of the lowlands in the northwest corner of town including the entire Alstead Village area. Several additional smaller stratified drift aquifers can be found in Alstead, including one in the Darby Brook lowlands, just south of the Darby Brook and Cold River confluence, and another south of Lake Warren in the vicinity of the intersection of South Woods Road and Gilsum Mine Road.

Alstead currently does not have a municipal water supply infrastructure serving private homes and businesses in town. According to NH Department of Environmental Services records, there



are currently six public water supplies, three of which serve schools in town. Each of these public water supplies draws water from bedrock aquifers. In addition to these public water supplies, residents and businesses in Alstead draw drinking water from individual wells, many of which draw from the bedrock aquifers. For additional information regarding drinking water supplies and strategies for protection, see the 1994 Alstead Water Resource Management and Protection Plan, the Drinking Water Protection Plan for the Cold River Watershed – December 2005 and the Cold River Watershed Management Plan (April 2009).

### Agricultural Soils

Due to the highly variable topographic characteristics of Alstead, the occurrence of good agricultural soil is relatively limited, particularly in the southern half of the town. Agricultural soils, both prime soils and soils of statewide importance, are found in an east/west belt that crosses through the mid section of Alstead. The most significant area of prime soils occurs north and east of Lake Warren and other prime soils are found in and around Alstead Center. Unlike more developed parts of the state, the majority of these soils in Alstead are still available for production and a number of farms continue to be active in town. A comparison of the 2001 land use spatial data to the agricultural soils data indicates that the location of open fields and active farms in Alstead mirror the locations of the most productive soils to a significant extent. In addition, the NH Wildlife Action Plan shows the many open fields along Alstead's midsection as important wildlife habitat.

### Forest Communities

The forested hillsides that rise up from the streams that flow through Alstead contain a diversity of vegetative communities that provide excellent wildlife habitat. The most common vegetative community type in the southwest part of New Hampshire including Alstead is classified in the NH Wildlife Action Plan as the Hemlock-Hardwood-Pine community.

Alstead also contains a significant amount of land area classified as Northern Hardwood-Conifer, a community type that from a statewide perspective is more abundant in northern parts of the state, and within the Monadnock region has its greatest presence in the higher elevations of the Monadnock Highlands. In Alstead, this community type is found at higher elevations mostly north, west, southwest and southeast of Lake Warren. There is also a large area of Northern Hardwood Conifer located in the west central part of Alstead.

Smaller patches of the Lowland Spruce-Fir community type are interspersed with the Northern Hardwood Conifer community creating a mosaic of vegetative community types. There are also small pockets classified as Appalachian Oak-Pine in the northwestern corner of Alstead near the Cold River and along Dart Brook at Alstead's boundary with Surry. This community type is most abundant in the southeastern part of the state, but within the Monadnock region has its greatest presence along the Connecticut River.

### Fragmentation

Fragmentation refers to undeveloped land areas that are separated from one another by roads, and areas of development. Fragmentation is significant because it can cause wildlife populations to be separated into multiple smaller isolated sub-populations that may not be viable on their

own over the long term. Fragmentation tends to increase wildlife mortality as individuals attempt to cross from one fragmented area to another to breed or find resources it needs to survive. Roads are a leading source of wildlife mortality. Fragmentation also increases the area classified as habitat edge and reduces the area classified as habitat interior. Increased edge allows for higher levels of habitat disturbance and degradation from human influences and places greater levels of stress on species that require interior habitat for survival

Wildlife habitat in Alstead is greatly enhanced by a lack of significant fragmentation. According to the NH Wildlife Action Plan, there are two sections of town that are part of large forested blocks in excess of 4000 acres. These sections are the block between Dart Brook and Thompson Brook, which is over 4500 acres and extends into Gilsum and Surry, and a block that is over 9000 acres located in southeastern Alstead that extends across the southern half of Marlow and the northern part of Gilsum. Several forested blocks that are in excess of 1000 acres each comprise most of the western half of Alstead and several forested blocks in excess of 1000 acres are found in the north central part of town and in the land area between the two larger blocks in the southern part of town.

The most significant barriers to habitat connectivity are two state roads, Route 12A, cutting north/south through the western third of the town, and Route 123, running east/west through the northern third of the town, primarily because of the width of the roads and the volume and speed of traffic associated with these routes. Some of the more heavily traveled Town roads also fragment wildlife habitat, but to a somewhat lesser extent where the roads are narrower and have lower traffic volumes. Unpaved, dead-end roads with few residential dwellings and significantly lower traffic volumes have less potential for causing adverse effects on habitat quality and often provide areas where wildlife can cross with only limited exposure.

#### NH Wildlife Action Plan Priorities

The NH Wildlife Action Plan identifies land areas within the Ashuelot River watershed as state-wide priorities, but gives little priority to similar nearby lands within the Cold River watershed. This may in part be due to the relative lack of data for the Cold River watershed as compared to the extensively published Ashuelot River watershed data. Anecdotal local knowledge suggests that many of the same habitat types and species are present in both the watersheds. Furthermore residents of the Cold River watershed report frequent sightings of bear, moose and other wildlife in the Cold River watershed suggesting a relative importance of the latter region as habitat.

The Thompson and Dart Brook stream corridors are identified as among the highest ranked habitat in the state, and Hayward Brook steam corridor is identified as highest ranked habitat in the biological region. The remainder of the land in the Ashuelot River watershed in Alstead is ranked as 'supporting landscape'. The NH Wildlife Action Plan also identifies all "grasslands" in Alstead as 'supporting landscape' and three of the larger agricultural grassland areas in town as priority areas for protection.

#### Cultural Resources and Natural Features

The cultural resource data collected during the town forum and other community events indicate that cultural resources can be found throughout the community. Scenic areas were identified

around Lake Warren, along Route 12A through Alstead Center, at Pratt Rock, and on Prentice Hill. Scenic points were also identified along Old Settlers Road, Camp Brook Road, Rhoades Road, Darby Brook Falls, and Wellman Pond. Natural features identified include the ancestral river channel and glacial pot holes at Cock Hat Hill and diverse minerals found throughout Alstead.

Some recreational activities utilize a network of trails that include snowmobile trails maintained by local snowmobile groups, and the town's class VI roads. Citizens reported using many of the large blocks of forested hillsides for hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and enjoying the serenity of nature. Citizens also reported that historic buildings, farms, and fields throughout town contribute greatly to the rural character of the community. Local farms were also identified as important gathering places for residents and their children.

Maps showing the approximate location of the natural and cultural resources summarized above can be found in Appendix 4 of this plan.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Land conservation priorities were identified by evaluating the type and location of various resources associated with community values to determine where multiple resources overlap. Individual resource values that were deemed important in their own right are also included in the identified priority areas. Lands identified as a priority for conservation are listed by landscape type and general location. Community values that would be retained through the conservation of these lands are also listed. A map showing the general location of priority conservation areas can be found in Appendix 5 of this plan.

**The work group members felt that protecting water quality, wildlife habitat and agricultural lands are the most important objectives for land conservation efforts.** The work group and the Master Plan recognize that protecting rural and historic character is also a high priority and that the focus of protecting water quality, wildlife habitat, and agricultural lands would also serve to protect many of the aesthetic and cultural values.

#### A. Summary of Land Conservation Priorities

1. Watersheds and stream corridors
  - a. Land conservation priorities include:
    - i. Watersheds for Lake Warren, Wellman Pond, Cranberry Pond, Caldwell Pond, and Newell Pond.
      1. The watersheds associated with these lakes and ponds are relatively small, and are entirely contained within Alstead. Several of the smaller ponds have little or no development within their watersheds. Water quality in these ponds during most of the year is believed to be excellent.
      2. Lake Warren is an important recreational and scenic focal point in the community.

- ii. Stream corridors along the Cold River, Warren Brook, Darby Brook, Thompson Brook, Dart Brook, Thayer (Great) Brook and Hayward Brook including the uplands along stream channels and surrounding wetlands, extending away from the stream channels and wetlands by 600 feet or more.
        - iii. Watershed associated with Darby Brook and Camp Brook
  - b. Community values that would be protected through conservation of these lands include:
    - i. Water Quality:
      - 1. Buffers around surface water and wetlands prevent adverse effects to water quality from pollution, sedimentation, and temperature increases caused by removal of shoreline vegetation or disturbance of soils within the buffer.
      - 2. Buffers also allow storm water runoff from adjacent lands to be filtered in the buffer before it enters the water body, trapping sediments, allowing uptake of pollutants by vegetation, and slowing the velocity of storm water, thereby allowing some infiltration to groundwater and reducing the potential for erosion.
    - ii. Wildlife habitat:
      - 1. Stream corridors of sufficient width to provide wildlife travel corridors and critical water-based habitat.
    - iii. Recreation, serenity, and rural character:
      - 1. Continued potential for access to lands for tradition recreational activities and enjoyment of nature.
      - 2. Promote swimming accessibility at Lake Warren.
      - 3. Repair and enhance facilities at Vilas Pool.
- 2. Lands overlaying stratified drift aquifers and bedrock aquifers serving both public and private wells.
  - a. Land conservation priorities include lands overlaying the Cold River stratified drift aquifer and delineated recharge areas for public water supply wells in Alstead.
  - b. Community values that would be protected through conservation of these lands include current and future supply of clean water to serve the town:
    - i. Additional analyses may be necessary to accurately identify aquifer recharge areas.
    - ii. Analysis of existing water quality and quantity within the aquifers may be necessary to quantify this resource.
    - iii. Future growth in Alstead Village is probably best suited on lands in close proximity to Alstead Village. As such, great care should be taken in siting and designing future development and uses over the aquifer so that adverse impacts to the quality and quantity of water in the aquifer are minimized.

### 3. Open Fields and Farmland throughout Town

- a. Land conservation priorities include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Fields and farms in the vicinity of Route 12 A in Alstead Center and Alstead West along Hill Road.
  - ii. Fields in the vicinity of East Alstead and Old Settlers Road.
  - iii. All areas of prime agricultural soils and agricultural soils of state wide importance.
- b. Community values that would be protected through conservation of these lands include:
  - i. Protects the capacity and potential for future food production, even though some agricultural soils are currently fallow or forested.
  - ii. Contributes to the viability of local food production and to the affordability of the land for future farmers.
  - iii. Local agriculture contributes directly to the local economy and helps maintain a stable farm base to support agricultural related businesses.

### 4. Forested Hills and Ridges

- a. Land conservation priorities include:
  - i. Forested hills in northeast Alstead, primarily north of Route 123, in particular including lands that are characterized by steeper slopes, south and southwest facing slopes, wetlands and streams, the Northern Hardwood-Conifer and Lowland Spruce-Fir vegetation types, and land areas that serve as connectors between these vegetation types.
  - ii. Forested hills throughout the south and central portion of Alstead with similar characteristics as described above and in particular those areas that are part of the larger unfragmented blocks and that are identified in the NH Wildlife Action Plan as priority areas for protection.
  - iii. Forested hills throughout the Darby Brook watershed
- b. Community values that would be protected through conservation of these lands include:
  - i. Wildlife habitat:
    - 1. Identified areas include known wildlife corridors and a mosaic of the less common vegetation community types which contributes to the potential for habitat diversity.
    - 2. Maintaining large unfragmented areas allows for connectivity between wildlife sub populations which is necessary for maintaining genetic diversity. Larger unfragmented areas also increase the chances that some wildlife are able to meet seasonal and life cycle resource needs without crossing major roads, one of the greatest contributors to wildlife mortality. .
  - ii. Water quality:
    - 1. Protection of upland buffers along surface water bodies prevents degradation of pristine headwaters, wetlands functions, and surface water quality.

- iii. Working forestry and maple sugaring:
    - 1. Protection of active forest management and the viability of the local land based economy.
  - iv. Recreation:
    - 1. Continued potential for access to lands for appropriate outdoor recreational activities contributes to community quality of life.
  - v. Community character and scenic values:
    - 1. Protection of the scenic forest back drop that contributes to the rural character of the community.
5. Viewscapes contributing to Rural Character

## **B. Implementation Strategies**

Land conservation is a voluntary act of a willing land owner (See Appendix 6 which summarizes the nature of land conservation transactions). The most important roles that a community can play to encourage land owner interest in land conservation is to generate awareness with the owners and the broader community of high priority lands, providing information so they can become knowledgeable about how land conservation works and how it can benefit them and the community, and to provide incentives that can reduce the conservation easement transaction costs for land owners.

The following implementation strategies are proposed to support and enhance land conservation efforts in Alstead.

1. Community Outreach and Education:
  - a. Develop outreach initiatives to educate people in town about land conservation, what it is, how it works, and why it is important to the community.
  - b. Develop a presentation of natural and cultural resources in town and land conservation priorities that have been identified based on these resources and present to local groups, boards and commissions, and the general public.
  - c. Host walks on publicly owned and privately conserved lands, including field trips for school students (Town Forest walks, geologic/river walks, snowshoeing near mines, and tracking in the winter).
  - d. Attend community events and have a booth and presentation geared for the venue.
  - e. Establish an effective Conservation Commission website.
  - f. Make maps available on Google maps or town web site.
  - g. Continue to provide information biannually in the Conservation Outlook publication of the Conservation Commission.
  - h. Work with local and regional organizations to promote the community's understanding of and connection to the natural environment.

2. Landowner Outreach:
  - a. Develop a systematic approach to protecting priority lands.
  - b. Complete a parcel analysis of priority lands to determine ownership.
  - c. Develop approaches for reaching out to land owners:
  - d. Recognize conservation minded landowners.
  
3. Creating dedicated funding source to serve as a conservation incentive:
  - a. Increase available land conservation funds by increasing the percentage of the Land Use Change Tax allocated to the Conservation Fund and pursue new sources (e.g. stumpage tax, proceeds from town forest harvests, and
    - i. Bonding for purchases of easements or high priority lands).
  - b. Develop a clear process for allocating funds to land conservation projects
  
4. Land conservation Priorities:
  - a. Collect additional natural resource inventory data from detailed site-specific studies and ground truthing of GIS data used in this planning process.
  - b. Collect additional cultural resource data during town events.
  - c. Periodically update land conservation priorities and implementation strategies as GIS data are refined, new detailed data are collected, and community values change.
  
5. Master Plan and Regulations Updates:
  - a. Make Natural Resource Inventory, Cultural Resource Inventory and Land conservation Priority information available to the Planning Board to guide future development:
    - i. Encourage new development in areas where municipal services are most available.
    - ii. Promote new types of development and creative zoning regulations that will both seek to preserve the town's natural and cultural resources while enabling and encouraging thoughtful growth.
  - b. Recommend that the Planning Board develop ordinances and regulations to guide development away from land conservation priorities and toward areas deemed most appropriate for accommodating future growth.
  
6. Implement land conservation planning process goals and action plans:
  - a. Address conservation-related Goals and Actions outlined during the planning process. (See Appendix 8).
  - b. Work with Town boards, commissions and citizen groups to implement these actions.

**7. Action Committee(s):**

- a. Create a Land Conservation Committee (a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission).
- b. Establish a goal for total percentage of conserved land within town.
- c. Put Town Forest into conservation easement.
- d. Support Historic Preservation.

**C. Action Steps for achieving implementation****1. Within Six Months**

- Appoint a standing Land Conservation Committee
- Adopt a Land Conservation Rating System
- Inventory Existing Properties
- Identify land owners of parcels greater than 50 acres
- Identify “Key” properties on Lake Warren essential to preserving the natural character of the lake district
- Publicize the Land Conservation Plan
- Prepare materials for permanent display at the Town Library and Town Office entry room
- Launch a website that links to the town website and to land conservation documents and maps
- Create a Google maps overlay and make it available to public
- Sponsor a landowner education workshop with the Monadnock Conservancy
- Present watershed and priority land information to the Lake Warren Association
- Meet with other town boards to inform them of Land Conservation Plan and corresponding actions
- Compile and coordinate information about local farmers and agriculture and distribute to residents to encourage to “buy local”

**2. Within One Year**

- Adopt the Land Conservation Plan as a chapter in the Alstead Master Plan
- Identify major parcels potentially benefiting from formal protection through the inventory data collected previously
- Convey a permanent conservation easement on Town Forest land to a qualified land trust
- Open a dialogue with the key land owners including Timberland Owners of New England (TONE) regarding conservation easements



**3. Within Two Years**

- Apply all Current Use Change Tax payments and Stumpage Tax payments to the Conservation Fund as an addition to regular appropriations to be used for
  - Acquiring land or conservation easements
  - Reimbursing private landowners for the direct costs of donating land or conservation easements
- Obtain Stand-by Bond authority for the purchase of conservation land

**4. Quarterly**

- Open Space Committee should report to Board of Selectmen

**5. Biannually**

- Review the Land Conservation Plan and revise if necessary
- Obtain updated maps from the Southwest Region Planning Commission showing conservation lands, natural resources, and other features related to Land Conservation Plan

**6. Annually**

- Consider at Town Meeting which actions are needed to continue implementation of Land Conservation Plan
- Recognize landowners with easements at Town Meeting and in town publications
- Hold landowner education workshops on land conservation options
- Hold a joint meeting for Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Planning Board, and Selectboard to review Land Conservation Plan and revise if necessary

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Most land protection accomplishments come at the result of being ready to respond to opportunities. Having the Land Conservation Plan in place will help guide decisions when these opportunities arise. It will also help create land conservation opportunities through education and outreach. The Alstead 2007 Master Plan calls for action to identify and protect important open space throughout town. This plan provides further guidance for such action. It should be the responsibility of the Conservation Commission to promote the adoption of the plan by the Planning Board, to ensure it is understood by all municipal officials, and regularly updated by the Conservation Commission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the residents of Alstead who participated in the town forums that formed a basis for the creation of this land conservation plan. We would also like to acknowledge the overall guidance, information, and support provided by the Community Conservation Partnership – Monadnock Conservancy, Antioch New England Institute, Southwest Region Planning Commission, and UNH Cooperative Extension.

This report was prepared by the following Alstead Community Conservation Partnership Work Group members.

**Community Conservation Partnership Work Group**

Marilou Blaine  
Ellen Chase  
Dan Curll  
Joyce Curll  
Jim Gruber  
Dan Hall  
Mike Heidorn  
Ann Latimer  
Bill Latimer

John Mann  
Bruce Montgomery  
Nan Montgomery  
David Moody  
Joy Nalevanko  
Rich Nalevanko  
Peter Rhoades  
Ed Wasowski  
Sarah Webb

**APPENDIX 1: EXCERPT FROM THE 2007 MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

“Alstead is a community that prides itself on several hundred years of rich history. From mills to mining, agriculture and industry, Alstead has generally been left intact as a pristine rural community. The Town’s history has shaped not only the land, but its creative, skilled and dedicated citizens. These residents, many whose families have lived in Alstead for generations, have a strong sense of stewardship of the land, pride in town services and community spirit and a strong passion for the rural atmosphere. Most small towns are held together by the social capital of the community. Alstead is no exception.

Social capital is the value of social networks within a community and the spirit, willingness and attitude of people to engage in community activities and volunteerism. In Alstead, activities that build social capital include the Town Festival, Earth Day Cleanup and the Pancake Breakfast, among others. Maintaining and supporting social organizations that build on the social capital of Alstead is of utmost importance.

Country roads, scenic views, significant forested areas, historic landmarks and village, stone walls, pristine water resources and small town character are highly valued by the citizens of Alstead. Our vision is one where all of these valuable assets are protected. Change here is inevitable as growth pressure impacts Alstead; our vision must guide us toward planned and thoughtful growth that will maintain the rural atmosphere so cherished by our community.

Located in the southwestern area of New Hampshire’s Monadnock Region, there are a number of outside influences that affect Alstead, but which the community has little control over. For many of these issues, Alstead can similarly affect other communities with its own actions. This section highlights the primary areas that Alstead should be concerned about and offers suggestions on how the Town can work toward addressing the issues. The Town’s awareness of these issues will help to ensure that Alstead is prepared to deal with issues as they arise and that Alstead is a good neighbor to its abutting communities.”

**APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP**

The Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership is a coalition of planning, conservation and community education organizations, seeking to help towns throughout the Monadnock Region build their capacity to identify and protect important natural resources and special places that contribute to the character and quality of life of each town. Specific goals of this partnership include:

- Identifying land conservation priorities and develop implementation strategies to further land conservation goals and objectives;
- Training conservation leaders to be able to serve as a local resource to land owners interested in conserving their land and to town boards and commissions in the execution of their duties;
- Building community understanding and consensus about the importance of land conservation to protecting and enhancing community character and quality of life.

The Community Conservation Partnership includes the following organizations:

- The Monadnock Conservancy
- Southwest Region Planning Commission
- Antioch New England Institute
- Center for Land Conservation Assistance
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- Harris Center for Conservation Education

### **APPENDIX 3: VALUES IDENTIFIED AT THE FORUM**

The following outline summarizes the community values collected at a town forum held on May 8, 2008. During the forum, participants were invited to share their ideas related to the following two central questions:

**What is special about living in Alstead?**  
**What do you want to still be here in 2025?**

All ideas offered by citizens (see list below) were captured in a large poster called a “mind map”. Once these ideas were captured, participants were given 6 sticky dots and were asked to place the dots on the mind map next the ideas they thought were most important. The numbers in parenthesis next to each item below indicates the number of sticky dots placed by that item.

1. Children’s Activities (9)
  - A.) Volunteer involvement (2)
  - B.) Quality of Schools/Sports (1)
  - C.) Educational/ Environmental Camps & Activities
  - D.) Orchard School (1)
  
2. Preserving Local Culture (9)
  - A.) Molehill Theater (4)
  - B.) Garden Tours (1)
  - C.) Eclectic Nature
  - D.) Historical Society (3)
  - E.) General Store (3)
  - F.) Library (4)
  - G.) Volunteer Involvement
  
3. Getting Together with People (13)
  - A.) Potlucks (1)
  - B.) Art
  - C.) Barn Raising/Building Houses (1)
  - D.) Orchard School (1)
  - E.) Volunteer Fire Department (1)
  - F.) Village Center
  - G.) Contra Dancing
  - H.) Not Too Many (People?) (7)
  - I.) Millot Green
  - J.) Helping Neighbors (1)
    - i.) Volunteerism (1)
    - ii.) Friendly meals (1)
  - K.) Eclectic Culture (2)
  - L.) Summer Services Alstead Church (1)

4. Growing Food (22)
  - A.) Prime/Important Agricultural Soils (4)
  - B.) Orchard Hill CSA (1)
  - C.) Buy Almost All Food Locally (7)
  - D.) Eggs (1)
  - E.) Draft Horses (1)
  - F.) Sugaring (1)
  - G.) Hill Road Dairy Farm (1)
  
5. Wildlife Viewing (17)
  - A.) Large Tracts of Land (3)
  - B.) Cold River (3)
  - C.) Town Forest
  - D.) Seeing Animals that Need Unencroached Space; Bears, Fishers (3)
  - E.) Habitat for Wildlife; Woods, Wetlands (7)
  - F.) Twombly Property
  - G.) Thrushes in Woods
  
6. Hunting & Fishing (3)
  - A.) Newell Pond (3)
  - B.) Cold River (1)
  
7. Conservation (6)
  - A.) Land Trusts w/Collective Group (1)
  
8. Drinking Water (6)
  
9. Breathing Clean Air (4)
  
10. Mountain Bike
  - A.) Bain Road
  
11. Supporting Local Business (9)
  - A.) Bread Works (2)
  - B.) Bly House (1)
  - C.) Town Forest/Forestry (2)
  - D.) Small Business
  
12. Viewing Historic Sites (3)
  - A.) Cemeteries
  - B.) Open Fields/Stone Walls (6)
  - C.) Churches (1)
  - D.) Village Cemetery (1)
  - E.) Chase's Mill (4)
  - F.) Ice House beyond Vilas Pool

13. Hiking & Walking (8)
  - A.) Town Forest (4)
  - B.) All Woods (2)
  
14. Swimming (4)
  - A.) Spencer Beach (Warren House)
  - B.) Vilas Pool (2)
  - C.) Lake Warren (4)
  
15. Water Activities (4)
  - A.) Kayaking (1)
    - i.) Warren Lake (4)
  
16. Winter Activities (3)
  - A.) Cross-Country Skiing (3)
  - B.) Snowmobiling (1)
  - C.) Snowshoeing (3)
    - i.) Prentice Hill
  
17. Serenity (10)
  - A.) Cold River
  - B.) Safe — Don't Lock Car/House Doors
  - C.) Quietness (3)
  - D.) Driving w/out Traffic (5)
  - E.) Large Tracts of Land (9)
  
18. Viewing (2)
  - A.) Dirt Roads (1)
  - B.) Pratt Rock (1)
  - C.) Camp Brook Road
  - D.) Stars (No Outside Lights) (5)
  - E.) Colony Mine (2)

**APPENDIX 4: NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MAPS**

- A. SURFACE WATER RESOURCES**
- B. WETLANDS**
- C. STEEP SLOPES**
- D. GROUND WATER RESOURCES**
- E. FOREST COMMUNITY TYPES**
- F. SOUTH/SOUTHWEST FACING SLOPES**
- G. UNFRAGMENTED BLOCKS**
- H. AGRICULTURAL SOILS**
- I. OPEN FIELDS AND FARMLAND**
- J. FOREST SOILS**
- K. IMPORTANT CULTURAL RESOURCES**
- L. COMMUNITY IDENTIFIED RECREATION RESOURCES**
- M. SCENIC RESOURCES**
- N. EXISTING CONSERVATION AND PUBLICLY OWNED LANDS IN ALSTEAD**
- O. NH WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES**



































**APPENDIX 5: LAND CONSERVATION PRIORITIES MAP**

**CO-OCCURRENCE ANALYSIS MAPS**

- A. WATER RESOURCE CO-OCCURRENCE MAP**
- B. WILDLIFE HABITAT CO-OCCURRENCE MAP**
- C. WORKING LANDS CO-OCCURRENCE MAP**
- D. OVERALL CO-OCCURRENCE MAP**

**SUMMARY MAPS OF HIGH VALUE RESOURCES**

- E. HIGH VALUE WATER RESOURCES**
- F. HIGH VALUE AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**
- G. HIGH VALUE FOREST/WILDLIFE RESOURCES**
- H. COMBINED HIGH VALUE RESOURCES**

























## **APPENDIX 6: FUNDAMENTALS OF LAND PROTECTION**

Understanding the purpose and benefits of land conservation planning to a town also requires understanding several fundamental principles about the nature of a land conservation transaction:

1. All land conservation is the result of a voluntary act by a willing land owner. Whether land is sold to a conservation minded buyer (a town or conservation organization such as a land trust) or a conservation easement is sold or donated to a land trust, the process begins with the original landowner making a decision to do something with their land. It is very rare that a town or the state exercises eminent domain with the primary intent of achieving land conservation objectives, although it is possible that some land taken for other primary public purposes, such as for road building, or schools, or municipal water systems, or flood control dams, maybe considered as conservation land once the primary public purpose is fulfilled.
2. Land conservation is the result of a legal real estate transaction. It has a force in law in that various rights and interests in a parcel of land are transferred from one person or organization to another, expressly for the purpose of protecting identified conservation values that exist on the parcel. Land conservation is not a form of government imposed regulation. When land is protected by a land trust, there must be a clear, identifiable public benefit from the protection.
3. One of the most common approaches to accomplishing land conservation is through the donation or sale of a conservation easement. A conservation easement essentially is a legal agreement between a land owner and a conservation organization that transfers explicit rights from the land owner to the conservation organization. The land owner is able to retain certain rights (i.e. to farm, harvest timber, engage in non-commercial recreation, and sometimes to withdraw a land for future development under certain circumstances) and transfers other rights (i.e. the right to sub-divide, build residential, commercial, or industrial structures, and in general the right to ensure that the identified conservation values are not adversely compromised or diminished). In negotiating the terms of a conservation easement, a land owner and land trust have a fair amount of flexibility, as long as specific conservation values are identified and there is a clear public benefit associated with the protection.
4. When a land trust takes a conservation easement, it has the legal responsibility to steward and enforce all terms of that conservation easement in perpetuity. This means that the right to sub-divide or develop is essentially extinguished and can not be developed by the conservation organization or further transferred to a third party for the purpose of future development.

Given that land conservation is the voluntary act of a willing land owner, typically in partnership with a land trust, what role can and should a community play in land conservation? Many towns do hold conservation easements or purchase lands for conservation uses. However, many towns do not have the structure or human and financial resources to fulfill their obligations to monitor

and enforce easements. Furthermore, lands purchased by the town are taken off the tax roll and, unless protected by a conservation easement held by a land trust, a future town vote may result in the land being developed by the town or sold for private development, thereby eliminating the conservation benefits intended through the original purchase.

The most effective roles that a town can play to encourage land conservation are to create awareness and provide education to owners of special lands and to provide financial incentives to make land conservation attractive to the landowners. The process begins with understanding how residents in the town feel the landscape that makes up the town contributes to the town's character, desirability as a place to live, and overall quality of life. These qualities result from the combined land use decisions of all landowners in a town. Although connected, not all land is the same. Some parcels contribute more to the character and quality of life than others: some land areas are more important to wildlife, some are critical to water quality, some have prime agricultural soils and contribute to the rural economy, and some are more suitable for residential and commercial development.

When town residents understand what land characteristics contribute most to quality of life in their town and where the landscape supports the best examples of these characteristics, then they are in a position to talk with the owners of these lands about their aspirations for the future of their land. This provides an opportunity for an exchange of information about the resources that exist on the land, the importance of the land to the town, and the potential benefits of a conservation transaction to the landowner and the town.

## APPENDIX 7: ACTION PLANS DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS FORUM THEMES

### Overview

The CCP program aims to achieve goals that reach across four themes and several sub-themes. These goals and themes were developed from a visioning session in Alstead on May 8, 2008. The themes are:

#### **Theme 1: Local Agriculture**

- A) Identify Local Agriculture: farms and products

#### **Theme 2: Outdoor Recreation**

- A) Public property
- B) Public use of privately held property
- C) Youth recreation
- D) Educational Opportunities
- E) Coordination of recreational facilities and sites
- F) Community events

#### **Theme 3: Natural Environment**

- A) Serenity and wildlife viewing
- B) Clean water & water resources
- C) Ecological integrity.

#### **Theme 4: Local Identity**

- A) Historic markers
- B) Historical district register
- C) Certified local government
- D) Historic information and resources
- E) Community events
- F) Scenic roads
- G) Cemeteries

### THEME 1: LOCAL AGRICULTURE

*After talking to farmers in Alstead, we learned that there are problems and opportunities for local agricultural ventures.*

- A) Identify local agriculture farm & products and determine ways the town can help them succeed

Goal 1: Promote and publicize Alstead's farms and products

- a. On the Alstead visitor's map
- b. On the Cheshire County agriculture website being created by Southwest Regional Planning Commission

Goal 2: Create a one-day a week Alstead farmer's market

Goal 3: Distribute maps with farm locations to local retailers and visitors

Goal 4: Investigate the Keene Co-op as an outlet for Alstead's produce and products

Goal 5: Coordinate action with interested state officials

Goal 6: Encourage conservation easements on agricultural land with monetary incentives

Goal 7: Community garden at Bragg Lane

## THEME 2: OUTDOOR RECREATION

*Alstead offers a variety of recreational and educational activities on public and private land for adults and youth.*

### A) Recreation and education on public property

“The town recognizes the value of public property in meeting the outdoor recreational needs of the community.”

Goal 1: Maximize utility and accessibility of town owned facilities:

Vilas Pool- Improve maintenance and revitalize for future use

- a. Re-establish Vilas pool committee to determine needs and oversee expenditure of assets to best serve the public, and to develop a long-term maintenance plan for reservoir and dam
- b. Refurbish buildings, including boat house, bath house, gazebo; reconstitute swan boat, replace canoes and rowboats; revive bell tower
- c. Consider and address driveway congestion issues
- d. Increase hours and enhance publicity efforts.
- e. Plan community events such as picnics, barbecues, swimming classes and related activities, baseball and volleyball games, horseshoe competitions, bell concerts, dances, treasure hunts and other children's activities.

Millot Green- Coordinate uses for maximum public benefit

- a. Revive Town Festival
- b. Hold community events such as soccer games, baseball games, basketball games, equestrian events

Bragg Lane Property - Fully utilize property for the benefit of town's people & to promote connectivity between public open spaces. [This newly acquired town property is across the river from Millot Green and adjoins Vilas Pool. The current bridge across the river in town is to be replaced. While it is under construction, a temporary bridge will allow traffic to cross the river.]

- a. Use temporary bridge as a permanent walking bridge after new bridge is built.
- b. With the help of Ted Benson, the bridge could become a covered bridge. As such, it could be the locale for a future for a farmers market, artisans fair, and other community activities to be held rain or shine.
  - i. Using Bragg Lane property and the temporary bridge, Vilas Pool and Millot Green can be at two ends of a continuous walkway and both sides of the river can be used for the length of Millot Green.
  - ii. Possible soccer and baseball fields.
  - iii. Additional parking for all three sites, and for Papermill Park.

Paper Mill Park: Recreate village garden area

- a. Develop accessible walkway for all townspeople to enjoy the landscaped park and gardens along the Cold River. Some of the park can be on both sides of the bridge.
- b. Furnish the site with a large sign incorporating a map like the one produced by the Conservation Commission. Add another map with the downtown sites enlarged so that all can see the detail of Vilas Pool and Millot Green.
- c. Promote volunteer community flower/shrub growing.

Pratt Rock: Promote destination for birders, hikers, & picnickers

- a. Ask knowledgeable people to conduct hikes to Pratt Rock, to introduce local citizens to the site.
- b. Provide information about getting to the site, including a map at the entrance to the trail. Encourage parking in a safe spot around the corner rather than at the trailhead, which is a dangerous spot for traffic.

Town Forest: Promote community use for educational purposes of the 79 acres of town forest

- a. Develop hiking trails; lead walks for interested citizens
- b. Work with boy scouts, girl scouts or other groups of young people to develop and blaze trails, add signs to promote self-guided walks at the entrance to the forest.

Tennis Courts: Promote community use.

- a. Hold tennis tournaments for all age groups as community activities.

Wellman Pond: Promote non-motorized recreational activity on the 270 acre conservation land.

- a. Improve access and provide a well maintained trail to Wellman Pond. Determine whether it is appropriate, and if so how, to make it an official wildlife refuge. Such a designation might make it off limits for ATV's but more attractive to hikers, birdwatchers, and wildlife observers.

Lake Warren Dam area: Develop an opportunity for public swimming and insure water quality.

- a. Find ways to permit swimming along the town owned shore of Lake Warren, or at the state run public access ramp for boats.
- b. Insure that the dam is well maintained.

## Goal 2: Maximize utility and accessibility of state owned facilities

Lake Warren: Promote swimming access & maintain ecological integrity

- a. Work with Lake Association to insure water quality and prevention of invasive species.
- b. Work with state to consider ways to permit swimming at boat ramp greenway

Warren Brook: Create a greenway (see above) along Warren Brook for non-motorized use

- a. Work with CRLAC to insure water quality.
- b. Make newly acquired state property identifiable and accessible for the public.

Newell Pond: Promote non-motorized recreational activity and public boat access

- a. Make public swimming accessible at the public sites.

Caldwell Pond: Promote non-motorized recreational activity public boat access

- a. Explore whether swimming access is appropriate and desirable.

## B) Public Use of Privately held property

“There is an appropriate role for private owned property in meeting community recreational needs.”

Goal 1: Facilitate public access to special features in the town that are on privately held property

- a. Outcome: compile a list of privately held properties where public access might be desirable. Foster mutually beneficial use of privately owned property for purposes such as bird watching, hiking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, ATV activity, and the like.
- b. With permission of property owners, list special sites on new resources map. Note conditions of use, which might include being open to the public as little as one day each year or open at all times.

## C) Youth Recreation

“There is value to the whole community in maintaining an active program for youth from the town to play sports together, develop teamwork skills, and explore the natural environment together.”

Goal 1: Increase opportunities for youth to engage in group sports activities and other organized outdoor activities including hiking, camping, swimming, boating, skating and the like

- a. Foster use of Millot Green, Vilas Pool and tennis court facilities to engage youth in baseball, soccer, tennis, equestrian events and the like.
- b. Conduct swimming classes at Vilas Pool.
- c. Involve youth groups such as Boy Scouts in hiking and camping activities.

## D) Educational Opportunities

“Education should be life-long, and a program for the townspeople of all ages in Alstead to learn about the special places and features of the outdoor environment has value for the whole community.”

Goal 1: Make use of existing facilities to educate citizens of all ages about the natural environment

- a. Conduct escorted bird watching walks
- b. Conduct escorted wildflower walks and walks for identifying trees and other plants
- c. Educate the public (particularly the youth) about water quality – including testing, invasive plants, and the like.
- d. Gardening – maybe library could sponsor a “black thumb” gardening clinic

## E) Coordination of recreational facilities and sites

“Many outdoor recreational facilities and sites have multiple uses, some of which might be in conflict with others. A plan that helps to accommodate all appropriate uses will enable more in the community to enjoy these facilities and sites.”

Goal 1: Maximize public enjoyment and minimize conflicting uses

- a. Create an overlay map of facilities and activity locations.
- b. Consider activity conflicts and work to minimize



## F) Community Events

“Alstead is a community which spreads out over nearly 40 square miles and has four smaller communities or areas within it. Community events that bring people together from all of these separate areas will help to make the whole town more cohesive.”

Goal 1: Utilize outdoor recreation as a means for bringing people together

- a. Soccer and baseball games and additional sports
- b. Equestrian events
- c. Escorted hikes/walks
- d. Kayak regatta on lake and sailing events
- e. Ice skating, sledding, other winter activities
- f. Star gazing

## THEME 3: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

*The “Natural Environment” theme encompasses a range of values ranging from **serenity** and **wildlife viewing** to services provided by the environment such as pollination and **clean air and water** to the health of the natural environment itself which is called **ecological integrity**. The theme recognizes that the natural environment is the habitat for humans and non-humans alike.*

### A) Serenity and wildlife viewing

*An aspect of the visual and spiritual beauty of Alstead, which adds to such other values as attractive vistas and community spirit, enable people to experience a sense of long-lasting well-being and safety. A wide range of features from quietude interrupted by birdsong rather than industrial noise to extensive natural vistas and roadsides to dark skies undisturbed by “light pollution” to the existence and knowledge of large undeveloped tracts are important to this sub-theme.*

Goal 1: Educate and encourage best management practices that include maintenance of local natural support systems (e.g. bird habitat near homes)

Goal 2: Regulate development to minimize pollution, noise, and nuisance

Goal 3: Educate children with the goal of developing love of nature

Goal 4: Reinforce existing development regulations to explain rationale in terms of protecting the values in this theme and subtheme

Goal 5: Educate children (K through 9) about nature, ecology, and the environment

Goal 6: Educate citizens about the value of protecting the natural environment

Goal 7: Document the values expressed in this theme as required in order that the rationale for Town regulations that protect the natural environment can be grasped by all persons now and in the future

## B) Clean water &amp; water resources

Goal 1: Ensure that water resources plan protects aquifers that might be needed in future years to support highly developed areas

Goal 2: Educate citizens about the value of protecting the natural environment

Goal 3: Document the values expressed in this theme as required in order that the rationale for Town regulations that protect the natural environment can be grasped by all persons now and in the future

## C) Ecological Integrity

*The ability of a given land area or region, based on its size, location, contents, relative freedom from adverse human impact, and other traits to fully and indefinitely sustain itself including all its natural and human populations. (The ecological integrity of a Town is its ability to, with its own resources, sustain itself indefinitely including its human population. A similar definition could be given for the planet.) This subtheme calls for conservation of tracts of land capable of being self-sustaining, as the only way to truly preserve what we now have in the form of natural environment. The fact that fossil-fuel-based industrial agriculture will soon have to give way to more localized agriculture (due to forthcoming decline in available fuel resources) forces us to see that we should no longer assume that we can assume ultimate support from existing wild lands “somewhere else” enabling us to “develop” our own region any way we want to.*

Goal 1: Develop and continue to develop sources of funding for land conservation

Goal 2: Maintain a current knowledge sufficient to help landowners understand the process to follow to conserve their holdings

Goal 3: Educate children (K through 9) about nature, ecology, and the environment

Goal 4: Educate citizens about the value of protecting the natural environment

Goal 5: Prioritize areas to protect in terms of ecological importance, including the need for very large contiguous tracts of undeveloped land

Goal 6: Document the values expressed in this Theme as required in order that the rationale for Town regulations that protect the natural environment can be grasped by all persons now and in the future

## THEME 4: LOCAL IDENTITY

*There is a strong desire to maintain the community's historic past and traditions, along with the realization that people – past present and future – make up these traditions and add to the culture and local identity of the town culture.*

## A) Historic markers

*Historic markers can help remind citizens of the origins and changes in Alstead over the decades. Many towns have created a positive sense of place and tradition by encouraging owners to place date plaques on their houses and buildings and providing other information on marker throughout their towns.*

Goal 1: Increase the number of houses, structures and sites in town that are on the National or NH register of Historic Places.

- a. Put a specific organization or town official in charge of assisting citizens who wish to register their historic place.
- b. All owners of historic structures have been asked to consider historic registration.
- c. Half of the houses that “look old” have a marker on the front showing the date built.
- d. Develop and maintain a priority list ranking sites not already listed.

Goal 2: Obtain from the state state historical markers for structures/sites that are significant to local and state history and culture.

- a. Prepare a priority list for making applications to the state for historical markers.
- b. Seek funds annually from the town to pursue, erect and maintain state markers.
- c. Put a separate article in the town warrant and/or Historical Society budget.

Goal 3: Erect local markers for Alstead's significant local structures and sites.

- a. Erect markers for all 27 places listed in the Guide to Natural & Cultural Resources prepared by the Alstead Conservation Commission.
- b. Support the map with walking tour signs.

## B) Historic District Regulations

*The Town's three Village Districts (Lake, Village, and Rural) zoning presently calls for the “safeguard of historic patterns and types of development”. The adoption of a Historic District Ordinance would significantly expand upon this concept if adopted for any of the three districts.*

Goal 1: Establish the Village area as a Historic District.

- a. Establishment of an historical district commission in accordance with RSA 673:1.
- b. The commission can then establish the legal basis for the Village historic district as described in RSA 674:46a and begin performing the duties of such a commission.

Goal 2: Establish the Alstead Center area as a Historic District.

Goal 3: Establish Lake Warren area as a Historic District.

### C) Certified Local Government (CLG) Program

*Local governments that become a Certified Local Government (CLG) qualify for federal funds for historic preservation that are not available to other towns. The National Historic Preservation Act requires that each state designate at least 10% of its annual allocation from the US Department of the Interior to its CLGs.*

*(Adapted from 2007 Alstead Master Plan)*

Goal 1: Alstead should become a CLG.

- a. Alstead must establish an historic district commission or a heritage commission to qualify as a CLG.
- b. As a CLG, Alstead can begin to receive technical assistance and training from the state and be eligible for certain matching funds for preservation activities.

### D) Historic Information and Resources

*Collecting, storing, and making available Alstead's books, papers, and artifacts is a key element to preserving the town's local identity. This is a responsibility to be shared by town government, the Shedd-Porter Library, Alstead Historical Society, business and individuals.*

*(Adapted from the 2007 Alstead Master Plan)*

Goal 1: Create a database of all information available on the Town's history held anywhere.

- a. Database made available to the public via a web site.

Goal 2: Ensure the books, papers and artifacts in town are stored using the best preservation and conservation practices.

Goal 3: Support the efforts of the Alstead Historical Society to be the lead organization to collect, preserve, protect, display and educate residents and visitors about Alstead.

- a. Historical Society has funding from endowment and annual dues sufficient for its mission.
- b. Historical Society has sufficient paid staff to establish regular visiting hours, rotating exhibits and active curatorial and accessioning programs.

## APPENDIX 8: COMPREHENSIVE ACTION STEPS

### Within 6 months

1. Appoint a standing Open Space Committee that will report directly to the Board of Selectmen. Voting members of this Committee should include one designee each from the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, and the Selectboard, and two “at-large” members. Additional non-voting members should be appointed to assist with the work. This committee should work closely with all town boards, especially the Conservation Commission, but should report directly to the Selectboard.
2. Adopt a Conservation Land rating system to evaluate opportunities.
3. Inventory existing properties that are currently owned by the Town, other public entities, and private institutions to determine the level of protection of each parcel. Each of these parcels should be identified with one or more of the following designations:
  - a. State-owned with conservation restrictions
  - b. State-owned without conservation restrictions
  - c. Town-owned with conservation restrictions
  - d. Town-owned without conservation restrictions
  - e. Owned by a conservation organization such as the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF)
  - f. Protected by a conservation easement by a conservation organization such as the Monadnock Conservancy or SPNHF
  - g. Owned by a private institution (such as Yale University) for the stated purpose of conservation, but not legally protected for those purposes
  - h. Owned by other public or private entities for public purposes
4. Identify all owners of parcels greater than 50 acres within the Land Conservation Priority Areas. Start files on each parcel with information that could be useful someday for discussing land conservation with parcel owners.
5. Identify key properties on Lake Warren under 50 but essential to preserving the natural character of the Lake District.
6. Publicize the Open Space Plan to the general public, landowners in Priority Areas including Lake Warren, and other interested groups such as hunters, fishermen and snowmobilers. This could include mailings, field trips to existing protected lands, and educational forums with land protection experts, etc. The tax implications of land use should be explained [housing vs. commercial/industrial vs. current use/conservation].
7. Prepare materials for permanent display at the Town Library and Town Office entry room.
8. Launch a web site linked to the town’s site with documents and maps. Assign responsibility for keeping the site updated.
9. Make Google Maps overlays and make overlays available to the public.
10. Sponsor a landowner education workshop with the Monadnock Conservancy.
11. Present to Lake Warren Association watershed and priority land information.
12. Meet with other Town Boards to review the Open Space Plan and actions.

**Within 1 Year**

1. Adopt the Open Space Plan as a chapter in the Planning Board's Town Master Plan.
2. Identify the major parcels which deserve formal protection using the inventory data collected and the Findings section of this Open Space Plan.
3. Convey permanent conservation easement on Town Forest land to a qualified land trust such as the Monadnock Conservancy.
4. Open a dialogue with the NH Timberland Owners and other major land owners to determine their willingness to consider permanent conservation agreements on their holdings.

**Within 2 Years**

1. Apply all Current Use change tax payments and stumpage tax to the Conservation Fund as an addition to regular appropriations. This fund should be used to:
  - a. acquire land or conservation easements
  - b. reimburse private landowners for the direct costs of donating land or conservation easements
  - c. other purposes allowed by state enabling legislation
2. Obtain standby bond authority for purchase of conservation land.

**Quarterly**

1. The Open Space Committee should report to the Board of Selectmen.

**Annually**

1. Consider what actions are needed at Town Meeting to implement the Open Space Plan. These could include expanding the Conservation Fund or acquiring specific parcels.
2. Recognize landowners at Town Meeting and in Town publications who have put land into conservation.
3. Hold a landowner education workshop on conservation options.
3. The Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee should meet with the Planning Board and Selectboard annually to review and update the Plan.

**Biannually**

1. Review the Open Space Plan and revise, if necessary.
2. Acquire updated maps from Southwest Region Planning Commission showing conservation lands, natural resources, and other related features.