

Natural Resources AGS - Revised by PC_{3/9/26} then revised by WCC_{7/22/26}

Aspirations

Aspiration 1 – A Healthy, Thriving Landscape

Waterbury protects and conserves its forests, wetlands, waterways, wildlife habitat, and working agricultural lands to support climate resilience, ecological health, biodiversity, scenic character, local food systems, and long-term sustainability. Waterbury guides conservation practices to maintain its rural character and traditional uses.

Aspiration 2 – Equitable Access to Nature

Ensure equitable access to nature, reinforcing a strong sense of place. The community is committed to long-term stewardship, sustaining healthy, connected natural systems for current and future generations.

Goals & Strategies

Goal 1: Strengthen the Town's capacity to identify, prioritize and protect important natural resources and integrate natural resources protection into municipal decision-making.

Strategy 1.1: Create and maintain a mapped inventory of high-priority natural resources through a natural resources inventory process.

Strategy 1.2: Monitor for ecological health and threats, including invasive species and other emerging impacts.

Strategy 1.3: Identify key wildlife corridors and habitat blocks (e.g., potential priority areas such as the Shutesville Hill and Sharkeyville wildlife corridors)

Strategy 1.4: Evaluate conservation tools and measures to mitigate fragmentation and development impacts such as conservation overlays and development clusters.

Strategy 1.5: Develop a set of recommendations to protect mapped resources.

Goal 2: Protect and connect priority conservation lands by building partnerships, securing funding, and advancing long-term stewardship plans for key natural resources.

Strategy 2.1: Partner with regional, state, and nonprofit conservation organizations to assess lands pursuing either conservation easements, shared stewardship agreements, or permanent land protection.

Strategy 2.2: Pursue funding sources (e.g., grants, a conservation fund, or partner-supported land acquisitions) to protect parcels with long-term conservation value.

Strategy 2.3: Work with experts, neighboring towns and landowners to propose a plan to manage the Shutesville Hill and Sharkeyville wildlife corridors by the year 2030.

Goal 3: Support wildlife habitat and watershed protection.

Strategy 3.1: Educate landowners regarding the importance of water quality (including surface water and groundwater) and wildlife habitats.

Strategy 3.2: Support the creation of interpretive signage, citizen science programs and public-facing educational tools in conserved areas to strengthen understanding of local ecology and cultural history.

Strategy 3.3: In designated areas, implement low-impact trail design, and maintenance practices that avoid sensitive habitat areas and reduce ecological impacts.

Strategy 3.4: Monitor and manage visitor impacts to natural resources using community feedback and ecological assessments.

Goal 4: Guide development to protect natural resources identified as part of Goal 1

Strategy 4.1: Limit development in sensitive areas and direct growth toward more densely developed areas and designated village centers to reduce sprawl and protect intact natural and agricultural resources.

Strategy 4.2: Update zoning and subdivision bylaws to consider prime agricultural soils, drinking water source protection.

Strategy 4.3: Provide education on the Vermont's Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) Program that long-term preservation of working lands.

Strategy 4.4: Sustain key open spaces and scenic landscapes that contribute to community character and environmental function.

Strategy 4.5: Update zoning and subdivision bylaws to limit the fragmentation of forests, wildlife corridors and habitat blocks.

Strategy 4.6: Support the development of multi-use conservation easements that allow compatible recreation while protecting habitat and agricultural functions.

Goal 5: Ensure that every resident has access to natural or recreational areas, balancing access with efforts to conserve sensitive habitats and ecological function.

Strategy 5.1: Improve public access to designated natural and recreational areas so that residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy access to outdoor amenities in Waterbury.

Strategy 5.2: Develop a long-term, Town-wide management plan for balancing conservation and recreational use in natural areas.

Goal 6: Strengthen biodiversity and tree canopy health through proactive forestry and invasive species response.

Strategy 6.1: Expand the resilience of Waterbury's shade tree population through planned replacement, species diversification, and long-term canopy management practices.

Strategy 6.2: Establish a dedicated annual tree maintenance budget and schedule to support pruning, mulching, monitoring, inoculation where appropriate, and replacement planting.

Strategy 6.3: Implement an Emerald Ash Borer response approach on Town-managed properties, including inventorying ash trees, inoculating high-value trees where appropriate, and planning for replacement to maintain canopy function.

Strategy 6.4: Support Town staff roles and training needs to ensure proper pruning practices, safe maintenance, and effective coordination with the Town's Tree Board or relevant commissions.

Strategy 6.5: Identify candidate parcels and partnerships for consideration of a Town Forest that supports public access, environmental education, and long-term stewardship.

Goal 7: Protect and enhance wetlands and watershed systems that provide ecological and flood resilience benefits.

Strategy 7.1: Identify and prioritize wetlands, riparian buffers for local protection beyond applicable state regulations based on ecological value, flood mitigation function, and watershed health benefits.

Strategy 7.2: Perform educational outreach on the functions and values of wetlands.