

Conservation Committee 2004 Report

The Warren Conservation Committee is a five-member board appointed by the Selectboard. The committee meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 7 -- 9 PM in the Warren Municipal Building. The public is welcome!

In 2004, the Committee:

- Compiled an inventory of town-owned land;
- Acted as a resource to other town boards on a number of conservation-related issues;
- Worked with the Warren Planning Commission to revise portions of the Town Plan;
- Developed a list of conservation priorities based on community input from the 2004 Planning Commission survey;
- Participated in the Green Mountain National Forest Plan revision process; and
- Investigated several land conservation projects.

The natural and recreation assets that community members articulated as priorities in the 2004 Planning Commission survey are (in order):

1. Land with outdoor recreation resources, including parcels with existing or potential trails, river accesses (especially the Mad River and its tributaries), hunting areas, and potential playing fields and recreation areas;
2. Resources that would protect or enhance water quality, such as wetlands, headwater areas, and riparian buffers along the Mad River and its tributaries;
3. Land with identified wildlife values, including critical habitat for endangered species, black bear, and other wildlife, as well as identified wildlife corridors;
4. High elevation forest (ridgelines and prominent knolls) and farmland and meadows visible from well-traveled town roads and Route 100;
5. Productive farmland, especially land currently under farm management or with the potential for active farm management;
6. Productive forest, especially lands that are contiguous to other undeveloped tracts of forest and conserved parcels;
7. Land that contributes to the Town's historic settlement patterns, including upland areas with poor access to Town centers; undeveloped parcels that define the contrast between an open countryside and village centers; and open space that contributes to the character of Warren Village.

In the coming year, the Conservation Committee plans to compile a more comprehensive inventory of natural features in Warren and proactively pursue the conservation of resources the community has indicated are a priority. Conservation planning is an important component of the local planning process and can help Warren achieve its various goals for protecting open space, including leveraging resources, directing growth, and focusing efforts on the most significant natural and cultural assets. In addition, it helps to focus land conservation efforts on properties with multiple natural and cultural features and reinforce local land use planning efforts and other community objectives. Conservation planning also helps to identify and maintain contact with landowners and alert the community of the importance of specific fragile resources and of an interest in pursuing land conservation projects in the future.

As is widely accepted now, the cost of services necessary to accommodate new residential growth (roads, emergency services, etc.) far outweigh any loss of tax revenue resulting from land being removed from the town's grand list. This is particularly true with the ramifications of

Act 60 (and 68) wherein only a third of the tax rate is municipal taxes (the rest being the school tax).

In fact, the benefits of conserving open land are many. By strategically protecting important lands, we can be assured that an interconnected system of natural and cultural resources will exist in years to come. Some of the many ways conservation of key undeveloped land can benefit Warren and its inhabitants include the protection of: a diversity of wildlife and native plant habitat; surface water and riparian buffers, wetlands, and groundwater; agricultural land and productive soils; unfragmented forests, recreation opportunities, and scenic assets; and historic resources and cultural landscapes.

In addition to the tangible benefits noted above, other benefits of land conservation include:

- Encouraging broad environmental health, hazard prevention, and land restoration;
- Contributing to positive community economics by maintaining the area's rural character, scenic beauty, and recreational assets – which are all fundamental to residents' quality of life, the local tourism industry, construction trades, and retention and attraction of skilled employees for the area's growing, non-tourist-based industries;
- Reinforcing community land use goals by maintaining traditional and/or desired settlement patterns;
- Fostering a cultural, historical and spiritual relationship with the land by providing places for experiencing connections with natural places; and
- Encouraging a sense of stewardship and responsibility for the whole landscape, not just for land we may own.

Please be in touch with us concerning your ideas on conservation-related issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Margo Wade, Chair
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Tara Hamilton
Erin Russell-Story
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