

CONSERVATION

4

Overview

Identifying natural and cultural resources to protect is an important component of a Plan of Conservation and Development. Determining which features are important from an ecological perspective, for preserving character, and for enhancing overall quality of life sets the framework for discussions about future growth in New Milford.

Natural Resources

New Milford's natural resources contribute greatly to the Town's character. The hills and valleys, expansive water resources, wooded areas, and fields create dramatic landscapes around the Town. Each resource also contributes to New Milford's ecological well-being. Some resources warrant preservation, while for others, conservation can be a key strategy (see sidebar).



Housatonic River in Gaylordsville.

Resources for Preservation

Resources so important to environmental quality, public health or character that alterations should be avoided to the extent feasible.

These include:

- Watercourses
- Wetlands
- Very steep slopes (>25%)
- 100 year floodplain

Resources for Conservation

Resources with important functions that can be maintained while compatible development takes place if such development occurs in an environmentally sensitive way.

These include:

- 500 year floodplain
- Existing and future aquifers
- Unique or special habitat (from CT DEP Natural Diversity Database)

Like many communities, early development in New Milford occurred along its low-lying river beds - areas that, today, would warrant preservation. As a result, already-settled areas coexist with important natural resources. It would not be reasonable to expect a community to abandon established neighborhoods and business areas where infrastructure investments have been made. Rather, the focus in these areas should be on minimizing impacts when development and redevelopment occur. This can be achieved by educating residents and business on ways to reduce possible impacts to natural resources; possible future regulatory incentives to encourage property owners to take measures; and ensuring that town policies and practices preserve and conserve natural resources.

Maintaining lower densities and protecting open space are strategies for rural areas. Zoning regulations exclude some resource areas (wetlands, watercourses, and steep slopes) when calculating minimum lot size. Residential zoning strategies are discussed further in Chapter 5. Open space preservation has also helped to protect resources in these areas and will continue to be a valuable tool.

Having an inventory of the Town's natural resources can aid in land use decisions. The Town is fortunate to be a part of the Greenprint Project, which is a regional conservation effort of 27 communities to provide data and help create a regional conservation vision. The project is lead by the Housatonic Valley Association and the Trust for Public Land. Their work can serve as a resource to various town boards and commissions.

Overall Goals for Natural Resource Protection

1. Encourage future development to locate away from sensitive natural resources.
2. When development does occur in conservation areas, minimize potential impacts.
3. When reviewing proposed developments, refer to natural resource inventories to help determine areas that should be protected.

Natural Resources in New Milford (partial list)

Rivers and Streams

- Housatonic River
- Still River
- Aspetuck River (East and West branches)
- Merryall Brook
- Bullymuck Brook
- Squash Hollow Brook
- Winisink Brook
- Rocky River
- Bull Mountain Brook
- Womenshunk Brook
- Cross Brook
- Town Farm Brook
- Little Brook
- Walker Brook
- Great Brook
- Denman Brook
- Naromiyocknowhusunkatankshunk Brook

Lakes, Ponds and Swamps

- Lake Candlewood
- Ella Foh's Camp Pond
- Reservoirs (#3, #4)
- Mud Pond
- Ferris Pond
- Henderson Pond
- Tamarack Swamp
- Meetinghouse Swamp

Mountains (800 feet or higher)

- Bear Hill
- Peet Hill
- Iron Hill
- Green Pond Mountain
- Mt. Tom
- Long Mountain (including Rock Cobble, Pine Hill, and Bare Hill)
- Sawyer Hill
- Candlewood Mountain
- Great Mountain
- Second Hill
- Mine Hill
- Cedar Hill
- Stilson Hill

45

Natural Resources Plan

Town of New Milford, CT

Kent

Washington

Sherman

Roxbury

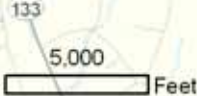
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04 February 2010

Bridgewater

Brookfield

- Legend**
-  Areas to Encourage Preservation of Resources
 - Water
 - Wetlands
 - Slopes > 25%
 - 100-year Floodplain
 -  Areas to Encourage Conservation of Resources
 - 500-year Floodplain
 - Aquifers
 - Habitat (Natural Diversity Areas)



Water Quality and Drainage

New Milford's surface and ground water resources serve many purposes. They can provide scenic value, recreation opportunities, drinking water, and habitat. Some water resources, such as wetlands, protect properties from flooding. The health of water resources is very dependent upon the activities that occur in their watersheds.

Surface Waters

Candlewood Lake

Candlewood Lake is a unique natural resource and a valuable asset for New Milford, the region and the State. Originally built in 1929 as a reservoir for hydroelectric power, the Lake has evolved from a utility project to a cultural, economic and ecological focal point for the region.

Protecting the Lake's water quality has been a continuing challenge. Water quality has generally worsened since the 1950s, despite a period of improvement in the 1980s. The increase in storm water runoff has been an important factor.

Water quality is currently assessed by CT DEP as a "B" (AA is the best quality while D is the lowest quality). Protecting the Lake has been an important priority in previous town plans, regional plans and state plans.

The Candlewood Lake Authority issued the *Action Plan for Preserving Candlewood Lake* in 2002. The *Action Plan* commends New Milford for protection measures in zoning and wetlands regulations.

Since the *Action Plan* was issued, New Milford adopted the Candlewood Lake Watershed zone to "reduce the negative impact of storm water runoff affecting Candlewood Lake" to avoid the need for a public sewer system in the watershed. The regulation requires all development, including alterations to existing buildings, to prepare a storm water management plan if the total impervious surface area on the lot is 20% or greater. The regulation aims to reduce not only the peak rate of storm water, but also the total volume.

The *Action Plan* recommended additional measures for New Milford including:

- Adopting a septic management program for the watershed.
- Reducing the half acre threshold of land clearance that triggers the need for an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan.
- Work with neighboring communities to preserve remaining undeveloped areas in the watershed as open space.

These are important strategies for the Town to consider over the long term.

The Candlewood Lake Authority's *Action Plan* also recommends that New Milford reduce the 20% impervious surface trigger to 10%. While that might be a strategy for the Town to consider over the long term, the Town would need to better understand the potential burden a lower threshold might pose to property owners. As discussed later, there may be other techniques (education and possibly incentives) that might be more appropriate for protecting water quality in the near-term.



Candlewood Lake.

Water Resources Plan

Town of New Milford, CT

55

Kent

Cedar Hill Dam

Mud Pond

West Aspetuck River

Ella Fohs Camp Pond

Washington

202

109

7

Housatonic River

East Aspetuck River

Reservoir #3

Reservoir #4

Sherman

37

39

West Aspetuck River

Housatonic River

202

67




Roxbury

67

Legend

-  Aquifer - Existing Public Water Supply
-  USGS-defined Major Stratified Drift Sand and Gravel Deposits*
-  Water

Existing Water Protection Areas

-  Housatonic Outer Corridor
-  Housatonic Inner Corridor
-  Candlewood Lake Zone

*See www.hvceo.org/water/waternewmilfordmain.php for information.

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02 April 2010

New Fairfield

Candlewood Lake

Kenwood Lake

Still River

Housatonic River

Bridgewater

Brookfield

133

5,000

Feet

Housatonic River

The Housatonic River flows 149 miles from Western Massachusetts to Long Island Sound. Along the New Milford stretch, the River provides environmental benefits, habitat, electricity and recreational opportunities. The River also enhances the Town's character.

In New Milford, the River's water quality is assessed as a C or D with a goal of being upgraded to B. To help improve water quality, the Town adopted the Housatonic River Protection District. The District runs along the River from Boardman Bridge north to the Kent line. The regulation requires a special permit for uses within the stream belt ("Inner Corridor") other than open space, hunting, farming, golf courses and similar uses. Factors such as soil suitability for septic systems, erosion, flood control, and water pollution are taken into consideration when granting a special permit. For the "Outer Corridor" (the remainder of the watershed) uses in the underlying zone are allowed. Any construction or earth-moving activities must provide for erosion and sediment control.

Opportunities for recreation along the River can be found in New Milford. Lacking though are recreational opportunities along the stretch that runs through Downtown. Strategies to better capitalize on the River in the Downtown are outlined in Chapter 5. Just over 70% of residents would like to see more recreation opportunities on and along the River.

The River has also served as an industrial resource to businesses located in New Milford. As discussed in the history section, the River played an important role in the Town's industrial past. That role continues today, as evidenced by the businesses that rely upon water from the River.

Other Major Rivers

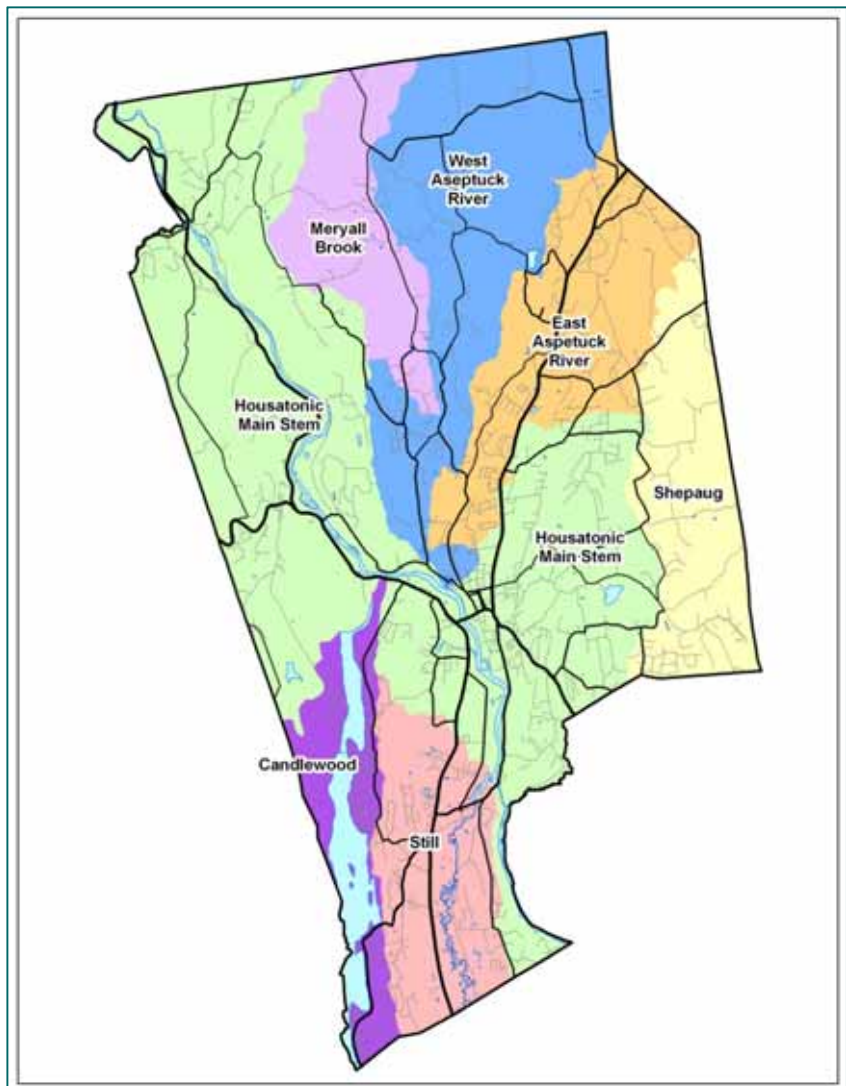
The Still River is assessed as a C or D with a goal of being upgraded to B.

The East Aspetuck River, Town Farm Brook, and smaller tributaries off of the Housatonic River are assessed as B, C or D with a goal of A.

The West Aspetuck River is assessed as AA, and has been identified by the State as a potential future regional water supply. Preserving its AA status is a Regional and State goal.

While the Shepaug River does not flow through New Milford, it has also been identified by the State as potential future public water supply. A portion of New Milford is within the River's watershed.

Watersheds



Aquifers

The Water Resources map indicates the locations of public water supply aquifers and areas that may be able to serve as future public water due to favorable geological features.

The Town recently mapped its public water supply aquifer (this is called "A-level mapping") and will be adopting regulations that allows compatible development while protecting this aquifer.

Because the other potential aquifers (areas of high ground water availability) are not currently used for public water supplies, the Town is not required to adopt regulations to protect those sources. Water quality protection measures already in place and those suggested in this POCD can help to protect these ground water supplies as possible future water supplies.

Protecting Surface and Ground Water Quality

Activities that occur throughout a watershed can impact water quality. Pollutants from failing septic systems, the overuse of fertilizer or pesticides, and sediments and contaminants found in storm water runoff can degrade water quality in rivers and lakes. Research also indicates that water quality degrades when a watershed contains over 10% impervious surfaces.

In addition to protection measures discussed earlier, the Town and conservation groups have been working to protect water resources. The Department of Public Works prepares annual updates of practices and measures it undertakes to reduce water pollution. This practice is pursuant to the NPDES Phase II program (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System), which is a federal directive under the Clean Water Act.

A number of organizations also actively work to protect water resources. They provide public education, test water quality, and help communities protect water quality. Their continued efforts should be encouraged.

These measures are important although challenges remain. Minimizing the potential for septic system failure and addressing storm water runoff (both quality and quantity) are critical strategies to address.

Septic Maintenance

Failing septic systems and those not properly managed in higher density areas can degrade water quality. This is an issue town-wide but particularly an issue in watershed areas where septic systems are still the primary means of treating waste.

Regular maintenance (pumping) can reduce potential pollution. While many homeowners are diligent about regular maintenance, some homeowners may not fully understand proper maintenance. To address this source of pollution and help minimize the need for sewers, communities have adopted septic management ordinances (see below). New Milford should explore the feasibility of a septic management ordinance.

Brookfield and New Fairfield are examples of Connecticut communities that have adopted septic maintenance ordinances.

Septic Management Ordinances

A Septic Management Ordinance generally requires mandatory inspection and maintenance of septic systems. The ordinance sets how often maintenance must occur. Contractors provide proof of maintenance to the local health department.

Storm Water Flow

Reducing storm water flow reduces the flow of pollutants and lessens drainage problems. Strategies to reduce storm water flow might entail reducing impervious surfaces, encouraging on-site storm water infiltration, and maintaining vegetated covers. Residents can be encouraged to take steps, new developments can incorporate measures, and the Town should incorporate these measures into its own projects.

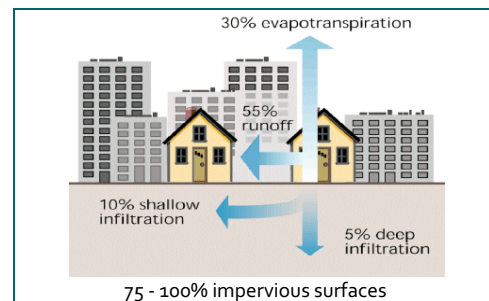
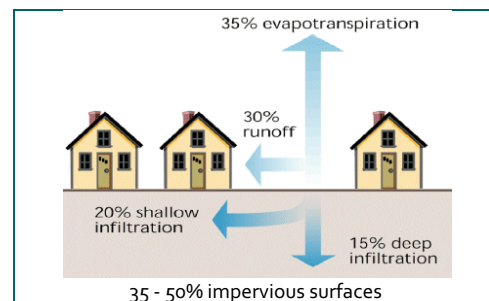
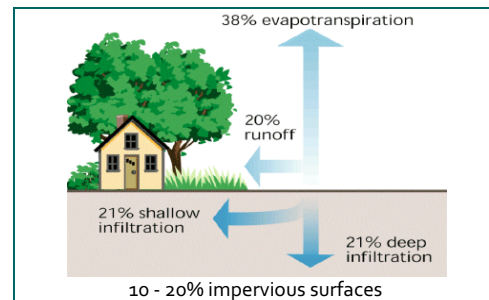
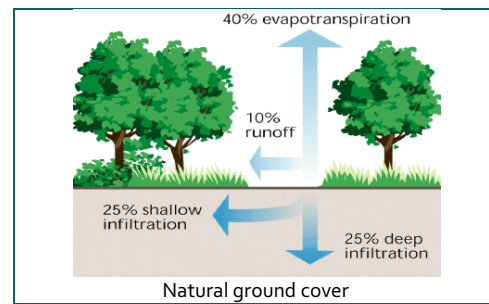
The term Low Impact Development (LID) is a comprehensive approach to reducing storm water flow. Traditional drainage systems tended to move storm water off a site as quickly as possible and empty untreated storm water into downhill water resources. LID encourages on-site infiltration, which slows storm water flow and allows the soil to filter pollutants before reaching water resources. LID also encourages capturing storm water to use for other purposes.

LID in New Milford might include simple measures for homeowners such as planting a rain garden or using a rain barrel to retain / slow down storm water runoff, or using pervious products for walkways, patios, etc.

For new businesses or large-scale residential developments or subdivisions, LID measures might include using underground water storage, vegetated rooftops, and reducing the amount of impervious surfaces used for walkways, access drives and parking lots. Many pervious surface products are available and they are becoming more commonly used by developers and communities. These products still provide the structural support needed but they allow water to infiltrate the ground, thereby reducing runoff.

Vegetation reduces and slows the flow of storm water compared to lawn areas and cleared land (see sidebar). Sometimes during construction more trees and vegetation is cleared than is necessary. Carefully reviewing the building envelope during the land development stage can help reduce excess clearing. Educating homeowners about the importance of maintaining vegetation in reducing drainage problems might encourage them to take action on their own properties.

Groundcover and Runoff



Other Pollution Sources

There are other potential sources of water pollution such as the overuse of pesticides and fertilizers, pet waste, road salt and others. The Friends of the Lake (a non-profit organization) developed guidebooks for homeowners and for landscape contractors. The guidebooks outline best practices to reduce potential water pollution. These guidebooks can serve as models for an educational approach to protecting other water resources in New Milford.

Drainage

Localized drainage problems occur in New Milford – i.e., when a small number of properties are impacted by an up-slope project. In a sense these localized drainage problems can be more challenging than natural flooding in floodplains. It can be difficult to balance the rights of a property owner to build upon their land with the protection of downhill properties from flooding.

Individual boards and commissions address storm water impacts in their regulations, but there is no overall town standard to ensure consistency. In addition, smaller projects may not trigger review or may have storm water standards waived.

Some communities have adopted town-wide drainage policies to ensure consistency in terms of which activities are reviewed and the standards that the projects must meet.

Some towns require drainage review for smaller projects. This can be as simple as requiring review by town staff to ensure that measures are taken to reduce the amount of runoff.

As discussed earlier, employing Low Impact Development techniques (LID) can help reduce the amount of storm water that runs off a property.

Naturally occurring flooding (e.g., along the Housatonic River) can be exacerbated by increases in impervious surfaces within New Milford and within the larger watershed.

Protect water quality and address drainage:

1. Explore the need for and feasibility of a septic management ordinance.
2. Reduce storm water flows:
 - a. Adopt a town drainage policy and standards to ensure consistency.
 - b. Consider adopting Low Impact Development (LID) standards into zoning and subdivision regulations.
 - c. Encourage town practices to employ measures to reduce storm water flow (LID).
 - d. Educate residents and property owners on ways that they can reduce storm water runoff and possibly adopt regulatory incentives over the longer term.
 - e. Continue to require storm water review in the Candlewood Lake District.
 - f. Collaboratively determine which types of construction projects might have potential to create significant off-site drainage impacts and require drainage review to reduce impacts to neighboring properties.
 - g. Continue to require erosion and sediment control review and consider reducing the threshold for triggering review.
 - h. During site plan review, continue to encourage that minimal land is cleared during construction.
3. Continue to enforce existing water quality protection measures.

Open Space

Open space contributes to character, provides passive recreation opportunities, and can protect natural resources. Research indicates that the permanent protection of land as open space provides a fiscal benefit since undeveloped land requires fewer town services than developed land.

To date, over 6,000 acres (or 15% of the Town) have been protected as open space. Another 3,500 acres are categorized as unprotected open space (these numbers may be higher; refer to the inventory prepared by the Conservation Commission). Unprotected open space are parcels that provide an open space function but are not permanently protected from development. These include the golf course, water supply lands, and other parcels. However, the probability that these parcels will be developed over the next 10 to 20 years may be very low.

Recent accomplishments include the protection of the Reservoir parcel and initiatives to provide trails on existing open space. The Town also has acquired open space through the subdivision process. The Cluster Conservation Subdivision provisions allow flexibility in lot dimensions if the applicant preserves 50% of the land as open space and offers a density bonus if the applicant dedicates 70% of the land. Wider use of this provision should be encouraged provided the subdivision results in an attractive, compatible neighborhood (see Chapter 5).

Other entities such as local land trusts have helped preserve open space in New Milford. For example, the Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust has preserved just over 3,500 acres in New Milford.

Residents are proud of efforts by the Town and by conservation groups to permanently protect open space and would like efforts to continue. Almost 80% of residents felt that the Town should set aside funds to purchase open space.

Residents also expressed a desire for New Milford to have an open space “system” rather than pockets of open space. The Conservation Commission is creating an open space plan which could outline such a “system” and provide guidance on areas of focus for future open space acquisition.

Another way to create an open space “system” is with greenways. Greenways – or corridors of open space – can connect destinations, provide wildlife corridors, and provide recreation opportunities. The Town has been working with HVCEO and others to establish greenways (see Open Space Plan). In addition, the Town is promoting the concept of greenways to its rivers by creating “River Trails” (water routes for canoes and kayaks).

The Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust have identified target areas for additional open space preservation based upon the abundance of resources in those areas.

Open Space Definitions

Protected Open Space - land or development rights owned by the Federal government, the State, the Town, land trusts, or conservation organizations intended to remain for open space purposes.

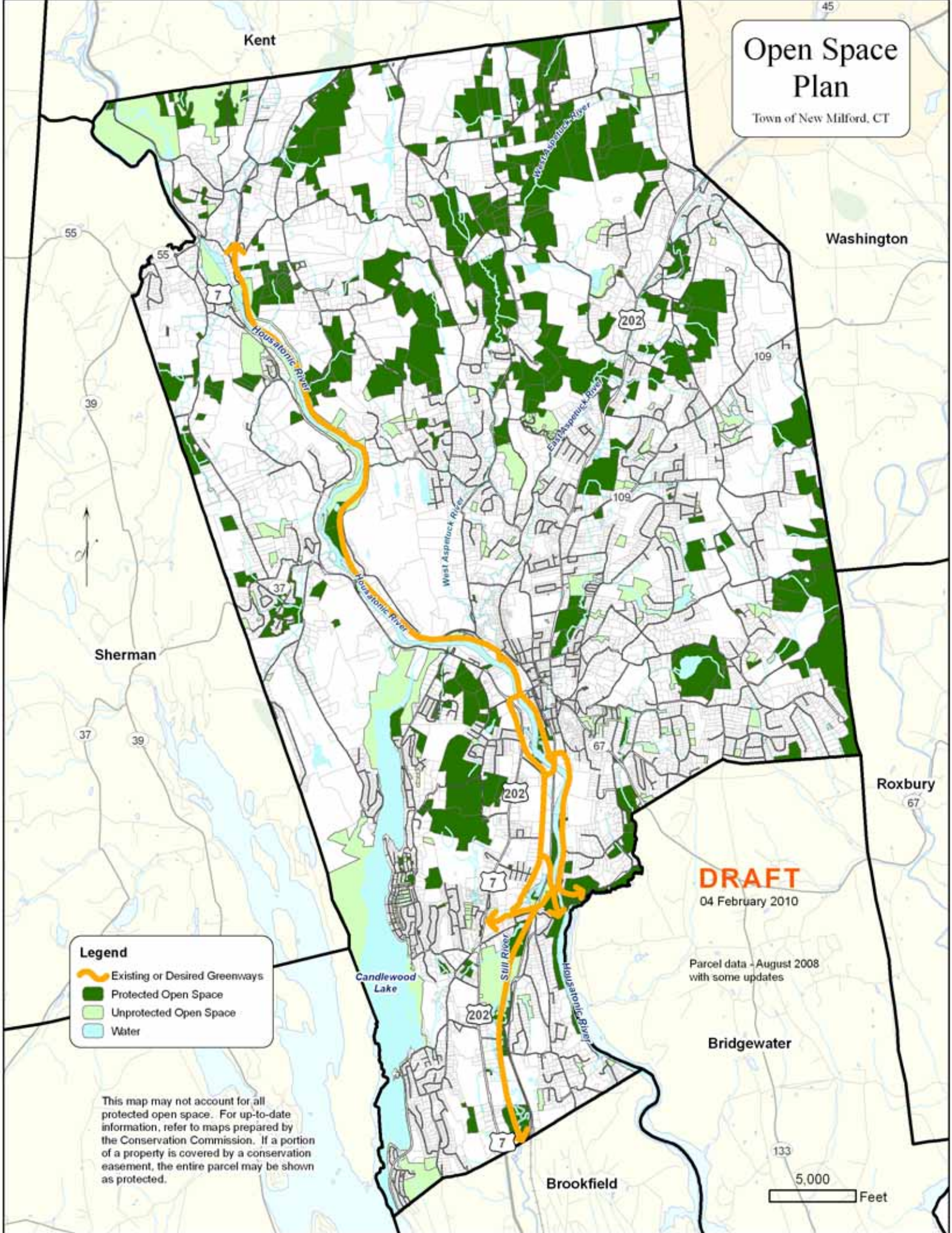
Unprotected Open Space - land used for other purposes but provides open space benefits, such as golf courses and water supply lands.



Lovers Leap State Park.

Open Space Plan

Town of New Milford, CT



Legend

- Existing or Desired Greenways
- Protected Open Space
- Unprotected Open Space
- Water

DRAFT
04 February 2010

Parcel data - August 2008
with some updates

This map may not account for all protected open space. For up-to-date information, refer to maps prepared by the Conservation Commission. If a portion of a property is covered by a conservation easement, the entire parcel may be shown as protected.

5,000 Feet

When it comes to protecting open space, having a source of funding is critical. Currently, the Town does not annually set aside funding for open space acquisitions. Funding has been provided in past budgets for land preservation.

Funds also are acquired through the fee-in-lieu of open space provisions in the Subdivision Regulations. This fee-in-lieu funding is important to support purchases but it cannot serve as the sole source for funding; as of June 2008, that fund contained just over \$110,000. Administering the open space fee collections can be difficult because the fee is collected as lots are sold. This can happen years after the subdivision approval, making it challenging to keep track of sales and fees. A common and effective approach practiced by the Town is to place a note on the land records that the fee is due upon transfer.

The contributions made by private and non-profit entities cannot be overstated. Their efforts to acquire open space, to seek donated land, and to raise funds have been integral to open space protection in New Milford.

Finally, after open space has been acquired or preserved, it must be managed. Trails and amenities (if any) must be maintained, in some cases habitat must be managed, etc. It is a goal in this POCD to make the Town's open space accessible to all to enjoy.

The Town should also encourage private and non-profit entities to provide public access where appropriate, but especially in those cases where the land donor intended for Town residents to have access. The Town should continue to work cooperatively to provide access, connect trails, and promote enjoyment of open space.

Preserve open space and greenways:

1. Continue efforts to create an accurate database (i.e., GIS inventory) of permanently protected open space and make the inventory available to boards, commissions, town departments and non-profit entities that work to preserve open space.
2. Continue efforts to acquire Open Space and create Greenways:
 - a. Create an open space plan that outlines a vision for an Open Space System and includes criteria to help prioritize future open space acquisition.
 - b. Move forward with planned trails and greenways and identify additional opportunities.
 - c. Continue efforts including seeking funding sources, encouraging private donations, working with developers to set aside open space, etc.
 - d. Establish administrative procedures to track when fee-in-lieu of payments are due.
 - e. Continue and expand partnerships between the Town, conservation organizations, the State, Federal funders and private landowners.
3. For existing protected Open Space:
 - a. Manage and maintain existing public open space areas.
 - b. Seek additional public access where feasible on public open space.
 - c. For privately owned open space, encourage the provision of public access in cases where the donor intended such access.

Farmland and Farming

Farmland is a valuable resource for expanded economic activity, job creation, and it provides a local source of food. It is the goal of this POCD that farming continues to be an important economic engine in New Milford. Farmland, along with other scenic vistas, also contributes to the Town's New England character.

Like the rest of Connecticut, New Milford has been losing farmland to development. As a result, over the last few years, maintaining working farms and preserving farmland has emerged as an important town goal. Residents seem to strongly support this goal – 90% feel that the Town should do more to preserve farmland and 77% would like the Town to set aside funds to purchase farmland.

Farmland

New Milford created a Farmland Preservation Committee in 2006. The active Committee has compiled information on existing farms and farmland, prioritized areas of farms for preservation, prepared preservation recommendations, adopted a Strategic Plan for Farmland Preservation (see p. 48), and drafted the recently adopted New Milford Right to Farm ordinance. (The Committee also helped write much of this section of the POCD).

The Town, with help from the State and the Federal government, a local land trust, private citizens and foundations, has successfully preserved 800 acres of farmland. These include: Chapel Hill Farm, Crossmon Farm, Hunt Hill Farm, Smyrski Farm, Sullivan Farm, Sunny Valley Farm and Wasanuski Farm. Preserved farms are shown on the Agricultural Resources Plan map.

New Milford's farmers face a number of challenges including competition from vast, industrialized monoculture operations, structural changes in farming, overall costs of farming, fluctuating markets and advancing age. These challenges can make it more financially attractive for farmers to sell their land for development when they are ready to retire or even sooner. Yet, 21st century trends in farming (Community Supported Agriculture [CSA's], smaller, specialty produce farms, growing demand for organic and locally-grown and the emergence of a new generation of would-be farmers) plus the

existence of a potentially vast and sophisticated market within a 90-minute radius of the Town, offer a potentially powerful alternative. Without farmland, this cannot happen.

The Farmland Preservation Committee has identified the Ridge Road area as a priority area for farmland preservation. According to the Northwest Conservation District, this area has one of the highest densities of high-value farm soils in Litchfield County with over 50% of the area comprised of prime agricultural soils and soils of significance, as compared with 12% for the county as a whole. This area is shown on the Agricultural Resources Plan, along with other areas that might merit preservation due to favorable soils and land cover.

Some preservation tools provide financial equity to landowners, such as purchasing development rights, other creative financial tools, or outright purchase. New Milford should consider these as it continues to preserve farmland.

Importance of Farmland

According to the New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee, preserving farmland is important because it:

- Provides "food security"
- Ensures a source of fresh, locally grown produce
- Provides jobs and fiscal benefits
- Preserves New Milford's agricultural heritage
- Reduces sprawl
- Protects open space



Farm animals in New Milford.

Farming

Even when farmland is protected from development, this does not guarantee that farming activities on the land will be successful. The Farmland Committee understands this and has made economic viability a key component of its mission. Capital for farm improvements and structures, available labor, and a market for products are all needed to maintain working farms.

A number of programs and initiatives help keep New Milford's farms alive as working farms and put them in the public eye. These programs include:

- Sullivan Farm, which is run by the New Milford Youth Agency, where students plant, grow and sell products.
- New Milford Hospital's Plow-to-Plate™ program, a nationally-recognized program where the hospital promotes and uses local produce.
- The New Milford Farmers Market, held downtown May through November.

To help reduce the costs of farming, a number of farms in New Milford participate in the PA 490 use assessment program (see sidebar). This program reduces the assessment of farm land, thereby lowering a farm's property taxes. Communities also can offer reduced assessments on farm machinery and outbuildings. New Milford currently offers a tax exemption for farming equipment, but should consider allowing additional exemptions.

There are additional measures a community can undertake to ensure that local regulations and town policies support farming. Examples include reviewing zoning regulations to ensure that restrictions on farm stand signage and what can be sold on-site do not create great burdens on farmers. As noted in the *Strategic Action Plan*, allowing farm-related uses can help expand the markets of farms.

In some cases, development occurring around a farm can impact a farm's operation. New houses nearby can lead to complaints about noises and smells that are typical of farming. New Milford recently adopted a "Right-to-Farm" ordinance, which states that the Town does not consider farms to be a nuisance and sets forth procedures for resolving disputes between farms and their neighbors.

Requiring new housing developments to provide a buffer screen between the houses and the farm also can help reduce problems, as can requiring alternative site layouts for subdivisions, to ensure that the houses are not too close to the active farm.

New Milford could comprehensively address a number of these zoning-related measures by adopting an Agricultural Overlay Zone (see below).



Sunny Valley Farm.

PA 490 Use Assessment

Use value assessment is a tax reduction program that preserves undeveloped land in private hands by making qualifying land less expensive to own. The program is authorized by Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 12-107 (also known as Public Act 490).

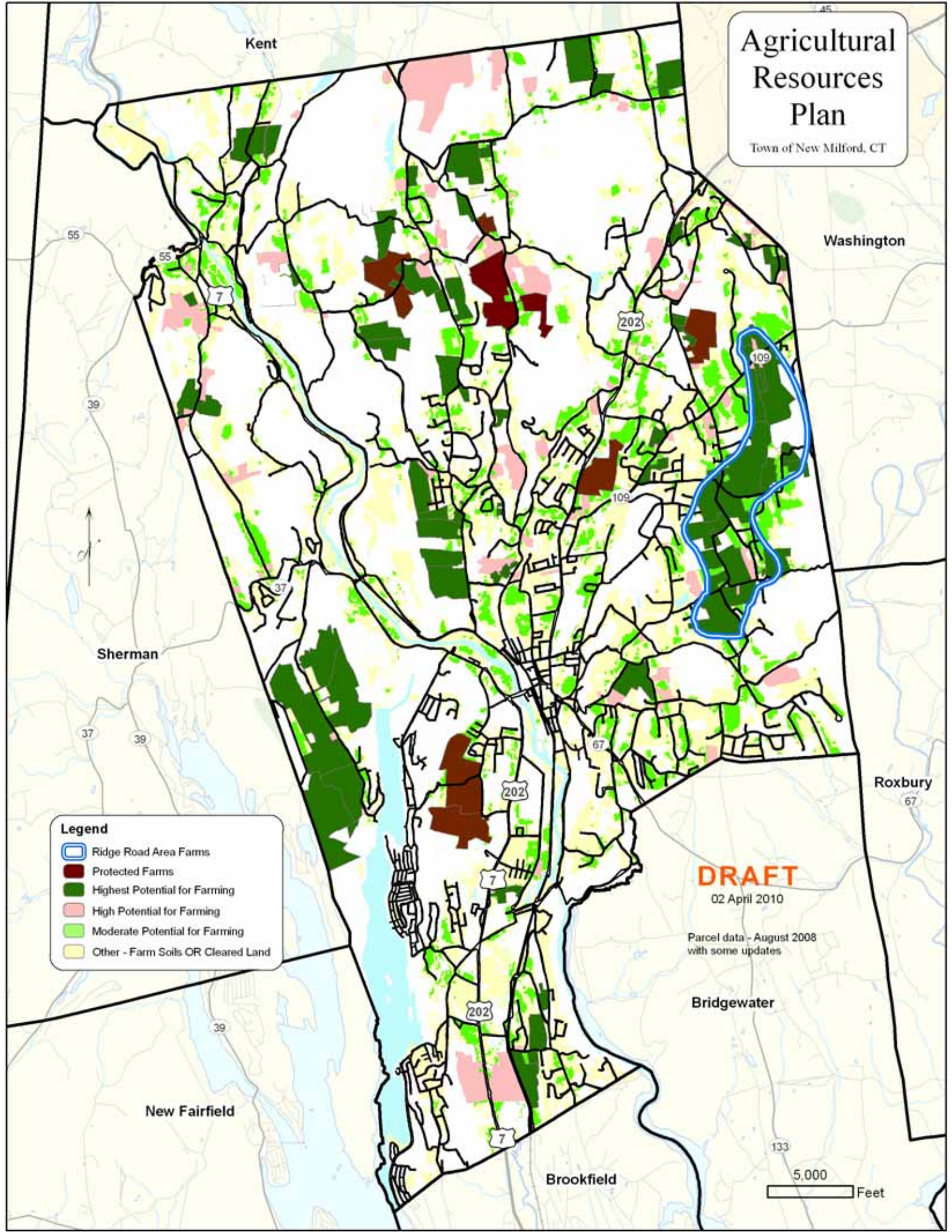
Agriculture Overlay Zone

An Agricultural Overlay Zone could:

- allow additional agricultural-related uses that may not otherwise be suitable elsewhere
- have additional requirements for non-farm uses that occur in the zone, such as providing screening buffers or mandating cluster subdivisions
- serve as "sending zone" if a transfer of development rights program is established

Agricultural Resources Plan

Town of New Milford, CT



Legend

- Ridge Road Area Farms
- Protected Farms
- Highest Potential for Farming
- High Potential for Farming
- Moderate Potential for Farming
- Other - Farm Soils OR Cleared Land

DRAFT
02 April 2010

Parcel data - August 2008
with some updates

Bridgewater

133
5,000 Feet

Preserve, protect and promote working farms:

1. Implement the Farmland Preservation Committee Strategic Action Plan.
2. Maintain communication between the Town and farm owners.
3. Continue to preserve farmland and farms:
 - a. Focus farmland protection on the Ridge Road area and other high priority areas
 - b. Focus on approaches that are equitable to land owners
 - c. Establish a funding mechanism for purchasing farmland or development rights
4. Conduct a zoning audit to ensure zoning regulations are farm-friendly.
5. Consider adopting an Agricultural Overlay Zone as part of the zoning regulations.
6. Review current tax policies in light of tax reductions allowed by the State and determine if additional tax breaks would help farms.
7. Help expand the market for local products:
 - a. Continue to explore options to expand the Farmers Market
 - b. Help to publicize farms (such as on the Town's website and through better signage)
 - c. Promote agri-tourism

Highlights of Strategies for Preserving Farmland, from the New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee 2007 Strategic Action Plan

- Develop a systematic approach for identifying farmland to be preserved
 - Create list of farms and farmland, map them, create inventory of information such as production, tillable acres, etc.
 - Develop criteria for priorities
 - Encourage farmers to share plans for land with the Town; help farmers understand preservation options
- Increase residents' awareness of the economic importance of farmland
 - Develop presentation materials, roadside signage, brochures
 - Learn what other towns in CT have done
 - Encourage residents to visit local farms
 - Work with restaurants to promote local produce
- Enhance the success of New Milford's Farmers Market
 - Determine "best practices" used by other farmers markets
 - Identify strategies to expand the market's customer base
- Encourage other strategies that provide economic benefit to local farmers
 - Update zoning regulations to allow additional economic activities on farms; create Agricultural Zones
 - Allow preserved land to be leased for farming activities
 - Encourage CSA operations, specialty farms, other farm-related ventures
 - Include language in POCD to protect, preserve and promote working farms
 - Ensure that new development next to farms provide a buffer
- Identify funding strategies
 - Work with local trusts, work regionally
 - Create farmland preservation sub-fund within New Milford Charitable Trust Fund, Inc.; provide an annual line item for farmland purchases in the Town's budget

New Milford's Character

"Character" means something different to each resident, but residents tend to agree that the Town's character should be protected. Community character often includes physical features such as natural resources or patterns of development that make a town unique. Residents and local officials identified things that add to New Milford's character and things that detract.

Enhances New Milford's Character

- Farmland
- Open Space
- Scenic roads
- Scenic views
- Town Green
- Lively downtown
- Historic buildings
- Small businesses
- Community events

This section addresses a number of character-related features. Other features are discussed earlier in this chapter (e.g., farmland) or in later chapters (e.g., Downtown, development patterns and traffic).

Historic Resources

Historic buildings and structures add to a community's character, give insight to the community's past, and can create economic activity. Residents have noted the importance of maintaining New Milford's historic buildings and preserving the character of historic areas such as Downtown, Gaylordsville, Northville and Merryall. Most residents (72%) feel that the Town is doing a good job protecting its historic buildings.

National and State Historic District and Place designations recognize areas with historical merit. These designations affect activities involving federal and/or state funding and may prevent unreasonable destruction of historic resources. (see locations on Map).

District listed on National and State Registers

- New Milford Center Historic District (including Town Hall)

Places listed on National and State Register

- Boardman's Bridge
- J. S. Halpine Tobacco Warehouse

- Hine-Buckingham Farms
- Housatonic Railroad Station
- Lover's Leap Bridge
- Merritt Beach & Son Building
- Merryall Union Evangelical Society Chapel
- Noble, John Glover, House
- Schoverling, Carl F., Tobacco Warehouse
- United Bank Building
- Wildman, E. A., & Co. Tobacco Warehouse
- Merwinsville Hotel

Two additional properties are listed just on the State Register: the Bridgeport Wood Finishing Company and the All Saints Memory Episcopal Church.

Local Historic District designations give local historic district commissions the authority to regulate the construction and demolition of structures and the alteration of architectural features. There is one local historic district in New Milford: the Town Hall District.



Merryall Union Evangelical Society Chapel



Lover's Leap Bridge.

In addition to recognition programs, other measures to protect historic resources can include regulatory protection, out-right ownership by a governmental or preservation organization, and active use of historic buildings and structures. Measures taken by the Town and others to preserve its historic resources include:

- In 1979, the New Milford Historic Preservation Society compiled an inventory of historic structures.
- New Milford became a Certified Local Government (a joint effort of the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office that expands funding opportunities for historic preservation).
- The Town adopted a demolition delay ordinance that requires a 21 day waiting period before a demolition permit is granted and up to an additional 60 days if objections to the issuance of a demolition permit have been filed. While the ordinance cannot prevent the demolition, it provides time to work with the owner to see if preservation may be an option.
- Non-profit entities, such as the Gaylordsville Historical Society, own historic buildings and in some cases, open them to the public.
- New Milford has “adaptive use” zoning regulations that allow the conversion of older residential structures to either multi-family or business use. This flexibility can offer an economic incentive for the owners of historic buildings to maintain the building.

Many of New Milford’s historic structures are not protected. There are no regulations in place to prevent the alteration of the appearance of any historic building in New Milford, other than the Town Hall. The Town has attempted to adopt some form protection in the Downtown area, but has not yet found an approach that is agreeable to landowners. Options such as Village District Zoning or the establishment of local historic districts should continue to be explored.

Archeological Resources

In 1990, HVCEO conducted a regional study of archaeological features; overall, the Housatonic River Valley is very rich in resources. Sometimes protecting archeological sensitive areas can be accomplished by redesigning site layout to avoid the areas. In cases where disturbance is unavoidable, the resources can be inventoried and catalogued.

Scenic Roads

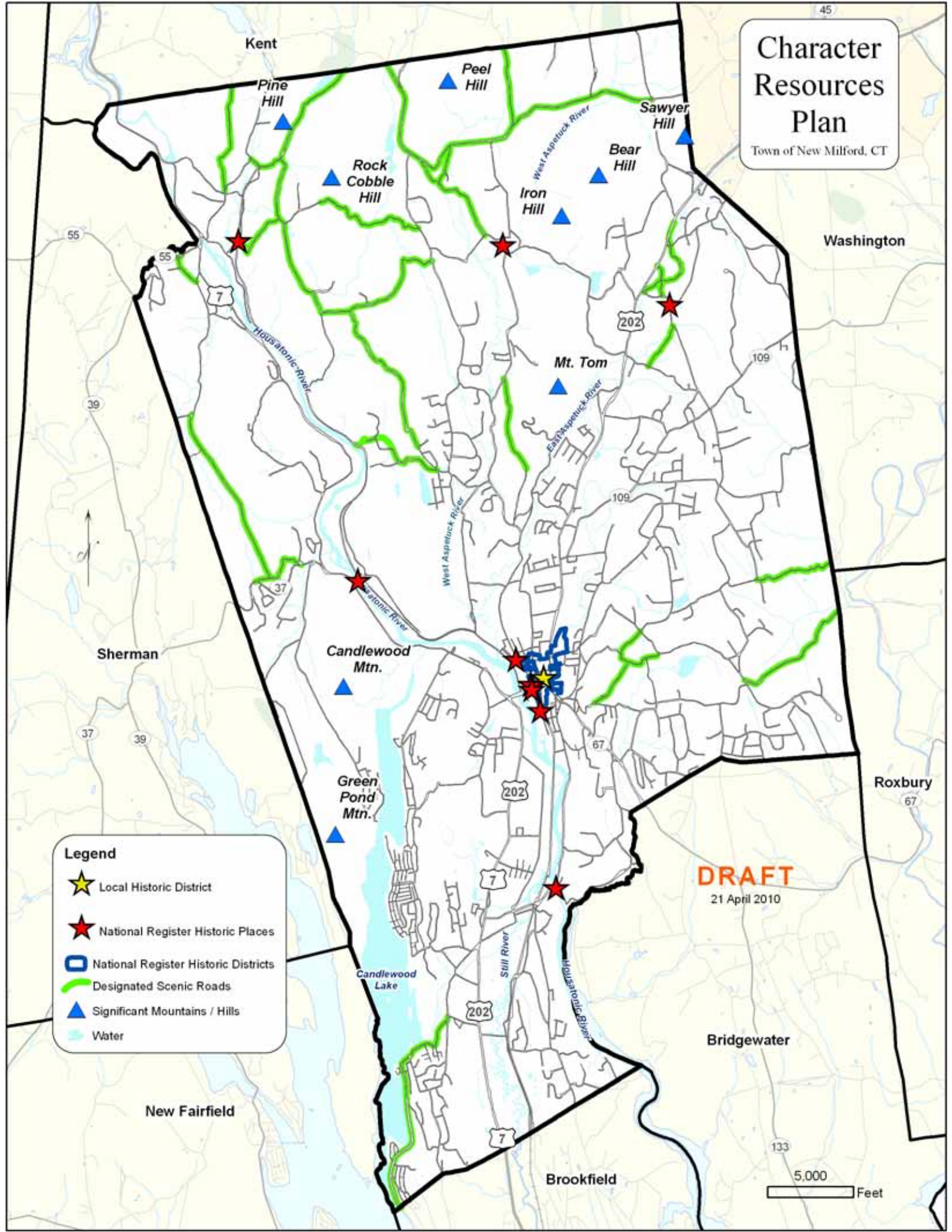
New Milford has designated 27 town roads as scenic roads, pursuant to CGS 7-149a. These roads are shown on the map on page 51. This designation provides that road improvement projects must minimize or avoid impacts to the scenic features, such as vegetation and stone walls. The Town should continue to designate additional roads that merit this type of protection.



Stilson Road.

Character Resources Plan

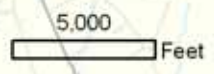
Town of New Milford, CT



Legend

- ★ Local Historic District
- ★ National Register Historic Places
- ▭ National Register Historic Districts
- Designated Scenic Roads
- ▲ Significant Mountains / Hills
- Water

DRAFT
21 April 2010



Undeveloped Land (PA 490)

One of the ways that New Milford helps to maintain its character is through the use value assessment program, PA 490, for farm use, forest use and open space (see sidebar on page 46). This program does not protect land from development; but it can delay development and thus protect the Town's character for some period.

Open Space Use Assessment – Under the open space use assessment program, the assessor incorporates land into the program provided that the land parcel is designated (or the eligibility criteria are specified) in the Plan of Conservation and Development and the designation (or criteria) has been approved by the Town Council. Roughly 15 properties participate in this program in New Milford.

This POCD recommends using a set of criteria for eligibility and that, once the Town Council has adopted the criteria, land owners apply directly to the assessor (i.e., case by case reviews by the Town Council are not needed).

Recommended PA 490 Open Space Criteria

Pursuant to CGS 12-107e, the following land is designated as open space land for purposes of taxation under said statutes:

- A contiguous parcel of land, excluding approved building lots, which consist of at least twice the minimum lot size required for the zoning district within which the lot is located as designated on the official zoning map.

The following are excluded from open space land classification:

- Any land containing improvements such as, but not limited to, swimming pools, tennis courts, buildings and septic systems,
- Any land legally subdivided into residential building lots, and
- Any land zoned for non-residential uses.

Farm Use Assessment – The farm use assessment program is established by statute. In New Milford, 215 properties participate in this program.

Forest Use Assessment - The forest use assessment program is established by statute. Per CGS 12-107d, a state-certified forester determines whether the land meets the eligibility criteria. Currently 173 properties in New Milford utilize the forest assessment.

Protect Trees and Vegetation

In addition to environmental benefits, preserving existing trees and encouraging the planting of new trees contribute to New Milford's character.

The Town is in the process of adopting a tree ordinance which will further protect public trees. Trees can be very vulnerable during construction. Guidance from a professional can ensure minimal damage during construction and ensure that new trees are planted correctly. The Town should continue to require bonds for newly planted trees as part of development approval so that any damage that does occur can be mitigated. Protecting trees is important throughout Town, but special emphasis should be placed on Downtown where the loss of only a few trees can have a great impact to character.

The Town should continue to allow flexibility when laying out residential subdivisions. Landowners can be encouraged to retain trees along the front of properties. Subdivision roads can be designed so that such trees are in the right-of-way of new roads so that they can be preserved. Many communities have adopted provisions to successfully protect trees in this manner.

Town Green

The Town Green is an historic asset that also serves as a community focal point, with various community events held each year on the Green. Residents are proud of having a Town Green.

Preserve New Milford's Character

1. Protect historic resources:
 - a. Protect neighborhoods with historic character, possibly through Village District zoning or the creation of local historic districts.
 - b. Continue to allow adaptive reuse of buildings.
 - c. Promote the historic resources that are found throughout the Town to residents.
 - d. Encourage heritage tourism.
2. Continue to designate scenic roads.
3. Continue PA 490 designations for farm, forest and open space.
4. Update the PA 490 open space policy as recommended in this POCD.
5. Minimize the loss of mature trees:
 - a. Ensure that new development preserves existing trees, particularly in and near downtown.
 - b. When reviewing site plans, ensure that new trees are planted correctly, are maintained, and require a bonding.
 - c. Encourage landowners to retain mature trees along existing roadways when subdivisions are built to "hide" the development, as feasible.
6. Maintain the Town Green as an attractive community focal point.



Dorwin Hill Road.



Town Green.

Notes: