



Helping Communities face the challenge and impacts of growth while maintaining community character and a sense of place.

FACT SHEET: 11

iTRaC is the Nashua Regional Planning Commission's new approach to community planning that focuses on integrating transportation, land use and environmental planning. The program was developed to assist communities in dealing with the challenges of growth in a coordinated way that sustains community character and a sense of place.

Innovative Zoning: Habitat Protection

Ecological Functions ~ Wildlife habitat provides public benefits and performs a variety of important ecological functions including stream buffering, flood retention, carbon sequestration, and contaminant filtering. Preserving wildlife habitat also protects endangered species and biodiversity, which in turn support the health and vitality of natural processes, allowing them to perform important ecological services in our communities and region.



Rural Character ~ Protecting wildlife and habitat also helps maintain the rural character of New Hampshire. Fishing, hunting and bird-watching are cherished past-times of our culture. Access to protected natural and scenic views are long-standing icons of the state, drawing tourists and delighting residents within and outside New Hampshire.

Making it Happen ~ Successful habitat protection occurs at three levels in the community's planning process: regional, town, and site. For each level there are three methods of protection: regulatory, market-based, and voluntary. This fact sheet focuses on regulatory protection.



Successful Habitat Protection - Start BIG

Size Matters ~ Because many animals require a large territory to find food and adequate breeding grounds, wildlife habitat protection usually begins at the largest scale possible. Small, isolated segments of a habitat may not contain enough resources to sustain a species and may result in its decline. Planning to maintain unfragmented habitat blocks as development occurs will protect existing wildlife and create a network of viable habitats.

Crossing Borders ~ Although it is difficult to coordinate across political boundaries, some governments have taken a more regional approach to habitat protection. For instance, in NH habitats like the Merrimack and Souhegan Rivers, which cross many political boundaries, are protected by the Rivers Management and Protection Act (RSA 482:6).

NH Wildlife Action Plan ~ This valuable tool helps communities define & implement strategies that identify, restore, & maintain critical habitats as well as safeguard animal behavior and lifecycle activities.

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Municipal Scale Habitat Protection

Regulating across town lines *and* ecological boundaries makes large scale conservation more difficult, since most land use decisions take place at the municipal level. Using guidance from state programs, town protection starts during the master planning process when critical habitat areas should be identified and prioritized. Strong citizen support and involvement is a driving force for habitat preservation at the town level, where residents can directly benefit from access to conservation lands.

Communities can use several strategies to regulate habitat protection:

- Adopt statements of purpose in the master plan to guide the creation of ordinances and regulations that protect wildlife. These statements often suggest conducting a Natural Resources Inventory, Open Space Plan, or Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan.
- Utilize innovative zoning techniques found in RSA 674:21, including the Village Plan Alternative and Environmental Characteristic Zoning, to provide a basis for growth while preserving wildlife habitat through more efficient and cost-effective land use.
- Participate in a regional open space team or coordinate with a land trust. Important local decisions can be reprioritized when they are part of a larger vision.

On Site Habitat Protection

- Create design guidelines for all new development that provide specific criteria for protecting wildlife habitat and assure visual amenities for the town. Design guidelines must be approved by the Planning Board.
- Develop performance standards within the subdivision or site plan ordinances to assure that the town's habitat and natural resource priorities are not jeopardized as growth occurs.
- Provide attractive incentives to encourage voluntary preservation; they will be repaid by a higher quality of life enjoyed by residents.
- Take individual action! The NH branch of the Natural Resources Conservation Service developed the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, which provides considerable technical and financial support for conservation efforts on private land that contains certain rare habitats. For more information visit: www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/Farm_Bill/wildlife.html.



Success Stories

Critical habitat protection efforts have been accomplished along Purgatory Brook because of the coordination and communication between the Towns of Lyndeborough and Mont Vernon, the Regional Open Space Team, and the Souhegan Valley Land Trust.

www.svlt.org

The Beaver Brook Association assists communities with local open space and habitat protection. To date, they have protected over 2,000 acres in Brookline, Hollis and Milford, providing valuable wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities.

www.beaverbrook.org



Want to learn more about Habitat Protection?

For more details on this topic or an overview of the entire iTRaC program, visit

www.nashuarpc.org/itrac

or contact Camille Pattison, iTRaC Program Manager, at camillep@nashuarpc.org or 603-883-0366 x14.