

# Open Space Plan

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## Supplement to the 2015 POCD

Southington Open Space Committee

1/1/2015



# 2015

## OPEN SPACE PLAN

### Town of Southington Connecticut

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#### Acknowledgements



*Adopted by the Town Council*

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The Southington Open Space and Land Acquisition Committee fosters the balance of natural resources, wildlife, and development through the active preservation of open space lands to protect and maintain the scenic, recreational and cultural landscape for the overall enrichment of the community.



## Introduction

### Purpose of the Open Space Plan

The primary purpose of updating the Open Space Plan is to identify natural, cultural and open space resources in the Town of Southington that exemplify the spirit and aesthetic of this great community. Development pressures endure as the economy continues to fluctuate; the key to successfully balancing economic growth and preservation is to make responsible, strategic land use decisions. These decisions will ensure the success of the community and preserve the many intangibles that have and continue to make this town such a desirable place to settle. To this end, the Open Space Plan will work to promote and supplement the 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

The Open Space Plan will serve as an important part of the land use decision making process. As a companion to the 2015 POCD, this document will guide our various land use boards and committees such as PZC, IW/Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee in determining which lands should be preserved and which should be considered for reasonable development. It is the goal of this compilation of information to aid the process in four ways:

- Inventory areas facing high development pressure and those that may soon experience it
- Analyze the information gleaned from the inventory into a manageable structure
- Prioritize key resource areas and identify goals for preservation
- Present a series of recommendations and strategies to attain preservation goals

### Land Use Inventory

A useful strategy for developing a baseline of natural and cultural resources found within the town is to conduct a resource inventory. The most user-friendly depiction of this information is typically represented by map generation. The maps provide an easy tool for reference and planning purposes; within this report they will aid in the following:

- Cross reference with the 2015 POCD
- Aid in conveying the holistic impact upon an area if a particular decision is made
- Present identification of important linkages of open spaces
- Identify areas currently void of preserved open space
- Represent “hubs” of past, present, and likely future activity
- Aid in grant procurement through accessible, accurate information



The Town of Southington's GIS (Geographic Information System) available online at [Southingtongis.com](http://Southingtongis.com), has been a very useful tool since its inception. GIS provides people from many disciplines the ability to research property and add layers of information pertinent to their inquiry. The ability to compile information such as lot size, wetlands present, slopes and zoning classification is imperative to establish a base of accurate information about a property. GIS has been used extensively to generate information found within this report.

### **Wetlands and Other Water Resources**

Wetlands, watercourses, lakes, streams, ponds and vernal pools are abundant in Southington. A result of glacial activity in the river valley, these valuable assets have shaped and defined land use within the town for centuries. They are important for open space planning as they contain drinking water supply, provide wildlife habitat, offer a buffer for flood control and allow for recreation.

#### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are afforded a high level of protection here and throughout the state for their ability to provide unique habitat for many species. Plants and animals rely upon these areas for propagation, breeding, nesting, food sources and shelter. Wetlands are critical for flood control as they detain and absorb large amounts of water during and after storm events and slowly release water thereafter.

#### **Rivers and Streams**

These conveyances collect and transport water from upstream drainage areas and feed lower lakes, ponds, larger rivers, streams and wetlands. Large buffers are required around these resources within the town given their flood control characteristics and sensitivity to urbanized run-off. Critical fish habitat is found within these resources as the Quinnipiac River flows through the town. Recreational opportunities exist in the form of fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Dayton Brook, Roaring Brook, Misery Brook, Humiston Brook, Cusgutter Brook, Judd Brook, Spring Lake Brook, Mix Brook, Patton Brook, Eight Mile River, and Ten Mile River all provide their unique contribution to the way water moves throughout the town and replenishes our stores of one of the basic necessities of life.

#### **Lakes and Ponds**

Lakes and ponds provide a recharge area for ground water supplies and resting areas for migrating birds. Areas such as Crescent Lake, Lake Compounce, and Sloper Pond define recreation in the Town of Southington. These and many other examples such as Black Pond, Harts Pond, Lily Pond, Podunk Pond, Florian Pond, LaCourse Pond, Duksa Farm Pond, Smith Brothers Pond, Mill Pond, Curtiss Farm Pond, Lake Natural and Spring Lake help define the character and aesthetics of life in Southington.

## **Vernal Pools and Bogs**

A Vernal Pool is defined in the Southington Inland Wetland and Watercourses Agency Regulations as “An often temporary body of water occurring in a shallow depression of natural or human origin that fills during spring rains and snow melt and typically dries up during summer months. Vernal pools support populations of species specially adapted to reproducing in these habitats. Such species may include wood frogs, mole salamanders (*Ambystoma* sp.), fairy shrimp, fingernail clams and other amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. Vernal pools lack breeding populations of fish”. Vernal pools and bogs are afforded the highest level of protection within the regulations as they are so unique and fragile. When selecting a site for preservation, the presence of a vernal pool or bog adds a strong case for inclusion. Southington is also fortunate to have an assortment of bogs such as Podunk Pond off of Meriden Ave, Lily Pond off of Pondview Drive, Black Pond off of Old Turnpike Road, Oak Street Bog off of Michael Drive, Tomasso Bog off of Deerbrooke Circle and the Cusick Ponds East of Pleasant Street. Bogs are typically distinguished by evergreen trees and shrubs underlain by peat deposits, poor drainage and highly acidic conditions. Pitcher Plants, Sundews and Black Spruce are three examples of the rare species of plant life that rely on these critical habitats for their survival.

## **Water Supply Aquifers and Watersheds**

The Town of Southington holds many well heads given the gravel deposits found throughout town. Large reservoirs such as the Wolcott and Southington Reservoirs and Shuttle Meadow and Wasel Reservoirs rim the West and East ridges in town. Protection of these areas and surrounding forests are an important part of the overall long range plan for open space preservation. There is a direct correlation between the protection of wetlands and watercourses and water quality.

## **☞ Plan Objectives**

Conserve and acquire wetland and water resources in ways that promote the following:

- Protect and enhance functions of aquifer protection, water supply nourishment, run-off dissipation, flood management, aquatic habitat, recreation and aesthetics.
- Provide for undisturbed open space
- Preserve unique habitat and wildlife corridors

## **☞ Methodology**

To understand the comprehensive network of these resources the following maps have been included in the Plan:

- Natural Resources Map (Wetland Soils, Natural Diversity Database Areas, Flood Zones)
- Water Resources Map (Aquifer Protection/ Water Supply Watershed)

## Recommendations

It is recommended that whenever possible, conservation easements along wetlands and watercourses be obtained during the development proposal stage. Such easements can create a “greenway corridor” that serves the following purposes:

- Maintains an undisturbed vegetated edge along water resources which reduces erosion and aids in sediment removal and a reduction in pollutant transport.
- Provides for wildlife habitat and travel corridors which reduce fragmentation and increases genetic variability, essential for strong species health.
- Allows for linear recreation trails, promoting undisrupted courses of travel.
- Maintains aesthetics of town by providing a consistent green belt of vegetation.
- Reduces thermal impacts to water quality, fish, and invertebrate populations.

To achieve these goals, the following strategies should be exercised during the planning review process of development:

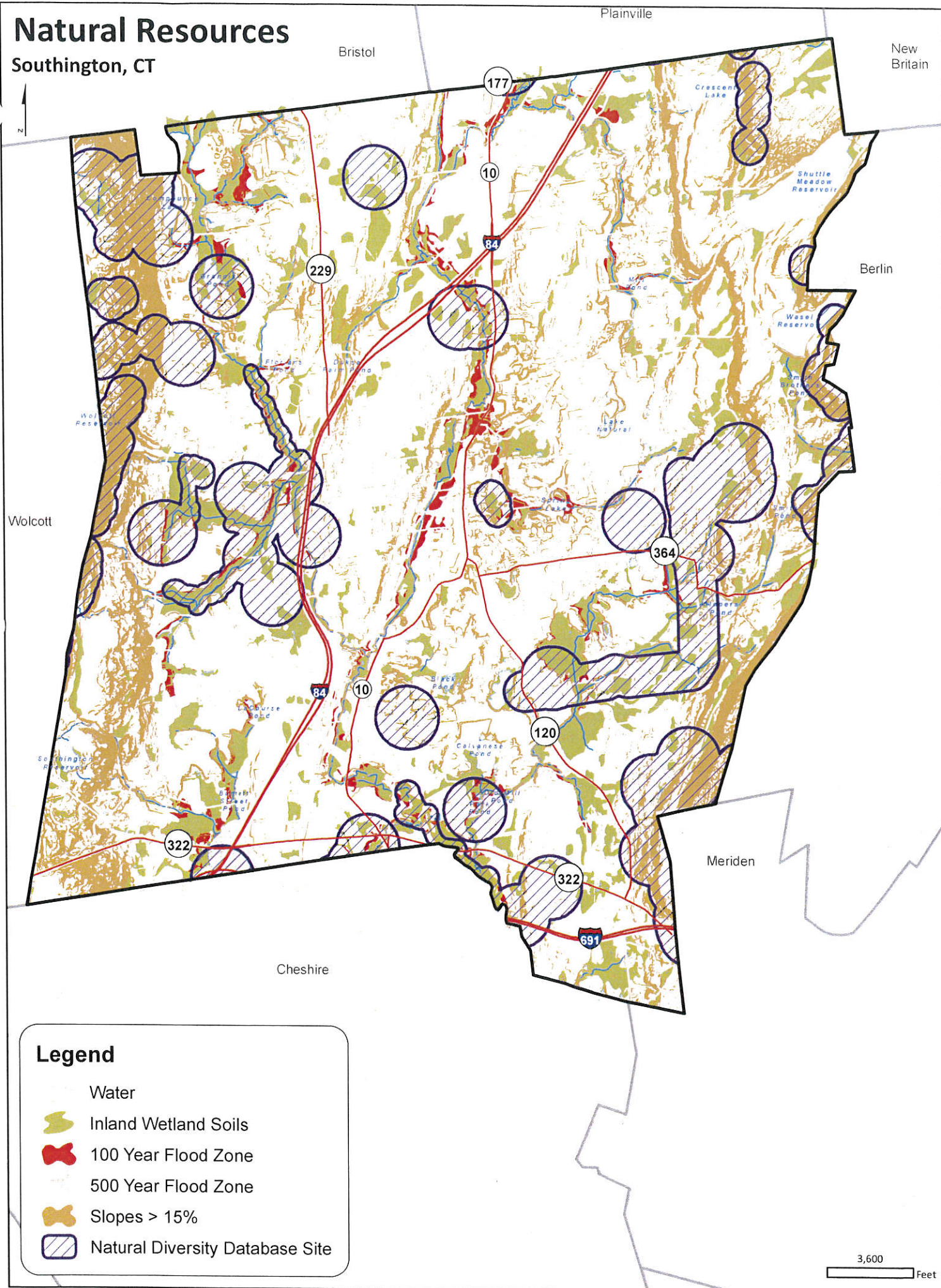
- Continue to review and update IW/CC regulations as technology gains strides in ways to protect water resources
- Implement LID (Low Impact Development) practices to manage water quality and quantity concerns
- Protect water quality by managing storm water runoff and following State initiatives concerning such practices
- Protect water quantity by following and enhancing a net zero increase in run-off (ZIRO) policy for all new development
- Require invasive species management plans in sensitive areas
- Discourage development on areas of steep slope





# Natural Resources

Southington, CT



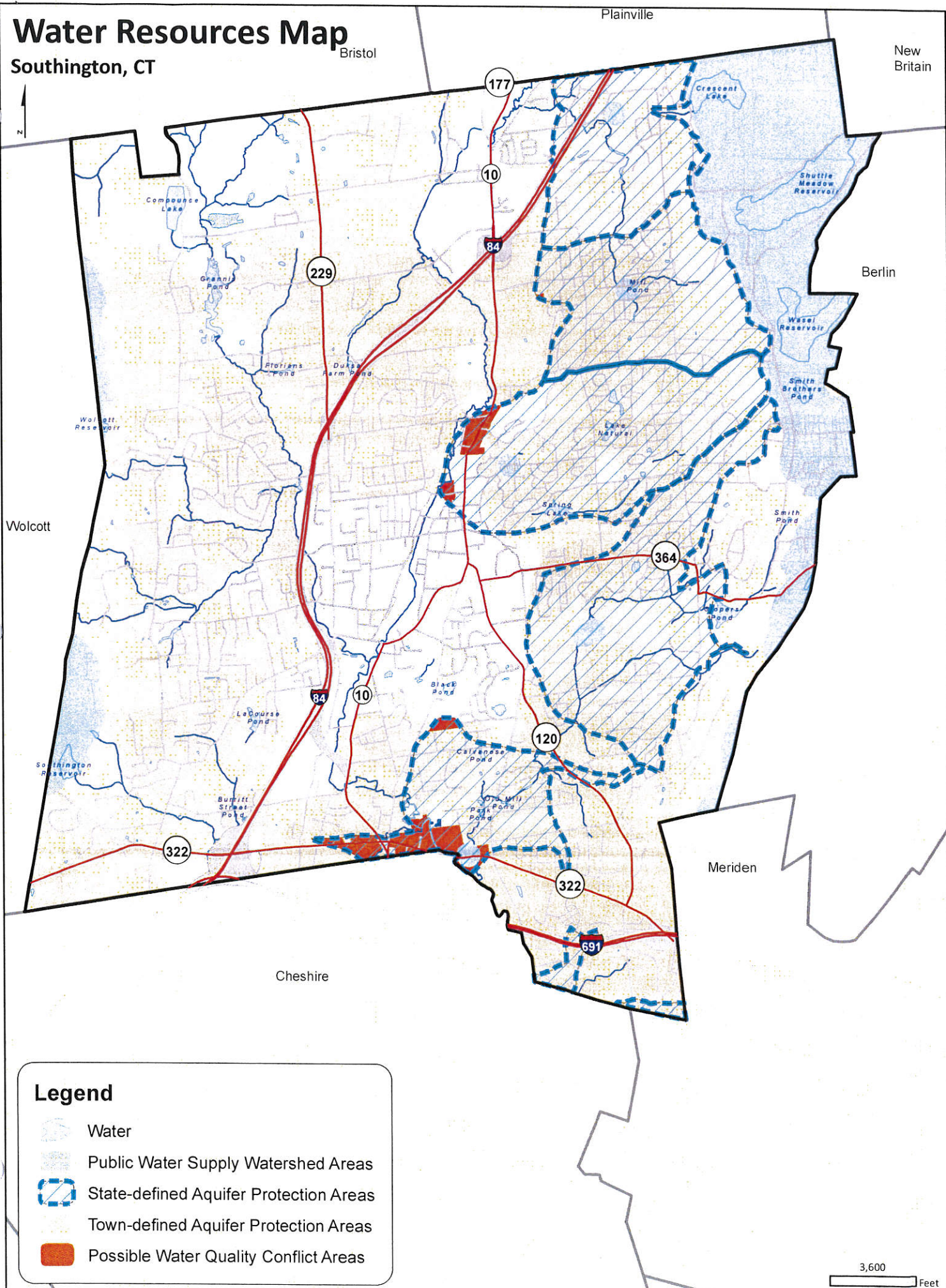
## Legend

- Water
- Inland Wetland Soils
- 100 Year Flood Zone
- 500 Year Flood Zone
- Slopes > 15%
- Natural Diversity Database Site








# Water Resources Map

Southington, CT



## Legend

-  Water
-  Public Water Supply Watershed Areas
-  State-defined Aquifer Protection Areas
-  Town-defined Aquifer Protection Areas
-  Possible Water Quality Conflict Areas

3,600 Feet

## **Forest Resources**

Fortunately, there are still large stands of forest within the Town. Crescent Lake, a 200+ acre Open Space Holding in town recently underwent a Forest Management Plan Study by the University of Connecticut. As a result of the implementation of the plan, Southington was the first town in Connecticut to receive the CT Grown designation for forest products produced from the site. The long-term action plan leading to sustainability of a town forest was key to this achievement. Acquisitions of large forested tracts preserve the fleeting habitats of forested wetlands, riparian corridors and unfragmented natural areas. The dynamic ecosystem of the State of Connecticut and Southington in particular relies upon contiguous undisturbed area to maintain a level of sustainability. The many benefits provided by our forests that are often taken for granted include removal of carbon dioxide and pollutants from the air, oxygen production, noise and wind buffering, and consolidation of the soil.

### **☞ Plan Objectives**

Conserve large tracts of mature forest and reduce fragmentation of forested areas in developments in ways that:

- Recognize the diversity and susceptibility of our native wildlife populations
- Continue to educate the public about importance of healthy forests
- Respect the commercial rights of landowners; promote responsible forest harvest practices
- Maintain view sheds and rural character
- Are compatible with the 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development
- Highlight partnership with UCONN/ track results of 2014 Crescent Lake Forest Management Plan

### **☞ Methodology**

In order to visualize the nodes of connectivity between large tracts of forest lands and plan accordingly, the following maps have been included:

- 2006 Land Cover Map from UCONN Clear
- 2015 POCD PA 490 Map

### **☞ Recommendations**

It is recommended that land use departments within the town continue to minimize the loss of forest areas by considering the following:

- Encourage Open Space Subdivisions where feasible to reduce development area and preserve larger areas of undisturbed land within a development
- Acquire open space containing such areas



- Review all timber harvest plans and comment accordingly
- Encourage connectivity between open space allotments within new and existing subdivisions
- Encourage individual storm water management plans that aim to reduce the area needed for large detention ponds and associated infrastructure.
- Encourage land owner participation in PA 490 (Forest Land Classification)



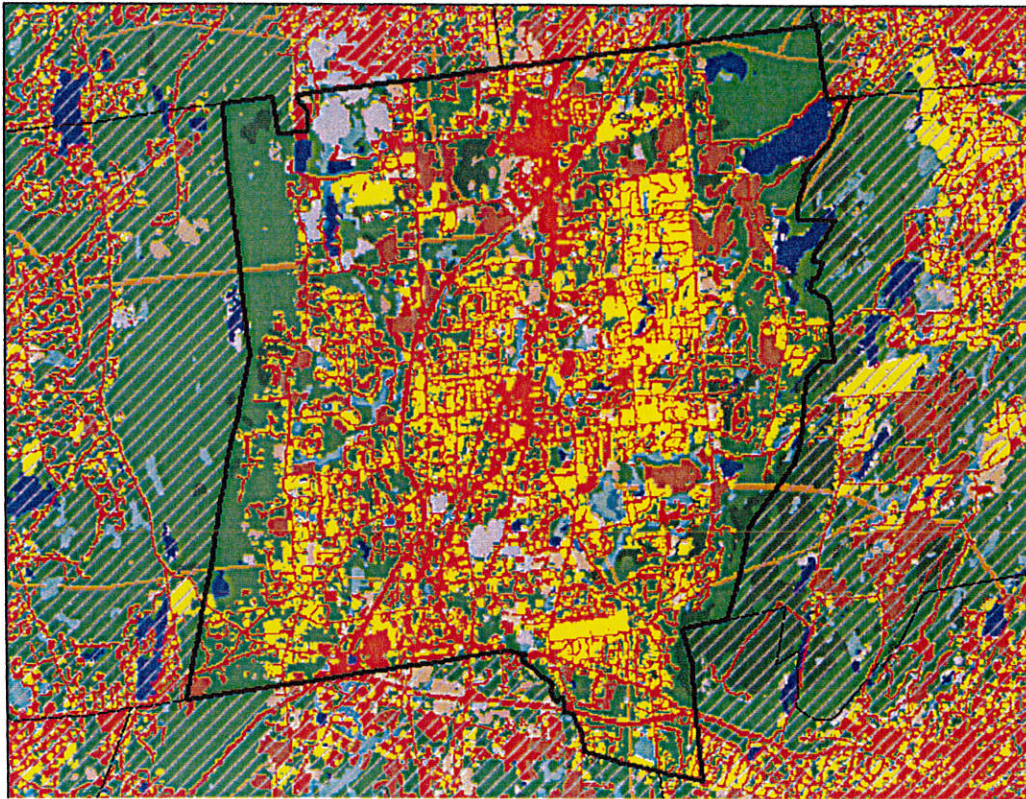


## Southington, Connecticut









### 2006 Land Cover

[Printable PDF](#)

#### LAND COVER

- Developed
- Turf & Grass
- Other Grass
- Agricultural Field
- Deciduous Forest
- Coniferous Forest
- Water
- Non-forested Wetland
- Forested Wetland
- Tidal Wetland
- Barren
- Utility (Forest)

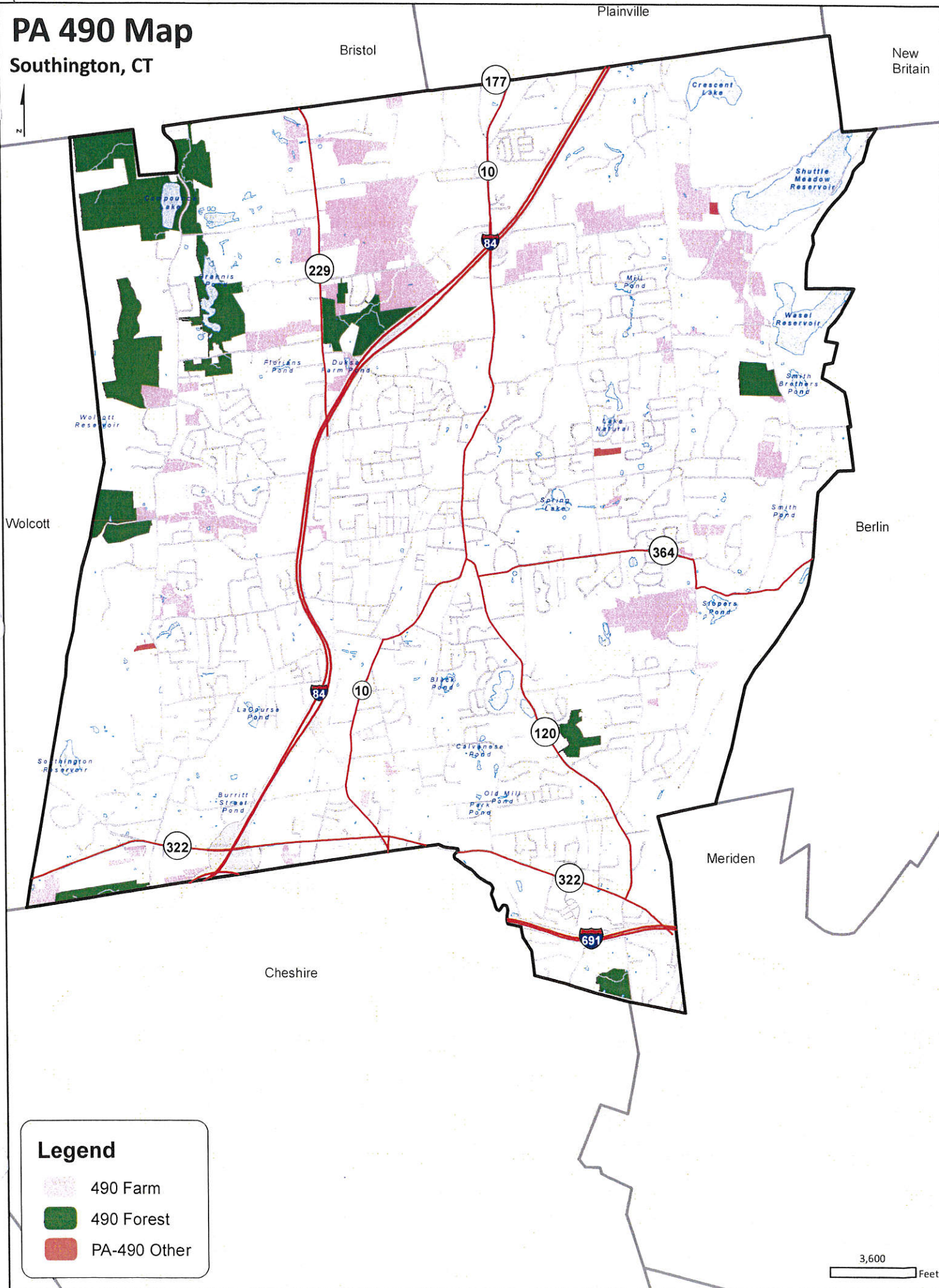
### Southington Land Cover and Land Cover Change

|                         | 1985  |           | 1990  |           | 1995  |           | 2002  |           | 2006  |           | Change |          |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|----------|
|                         | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres  | % change |
| <b>Developed</b>        | 5853  | 25%       | 6485  | 27.7%     | 6641  | 28.4%     | 6987  | 29.9%     | 7219  | 30.9%     | 1366   | 23.3%    |
| <b>Turf &amp; Grass</b> | 3062  | 13.1%     | 3140  | 13.4%     | 3253  | 13.9%     | 3318  | 14.2%     | 3570  | 15.3%     | 508.3  | 16.6%    |



# PA 490 Map

Southington, CT



## **Wildlife Resources**

The unique physical setting of Southington provides for a great variety of wildlife species, both large and small. The ridges on the East and West sides of town are very limiting with regard to development given steep topography. The geology of the town has by default preserved large tracts along the ridges where large predators and raptors can complete their lifecycles quite productively. Along with the ridges comes a center valley housing the Quinnipiac River, lending limited development opportunity adjacent to its banks given the floodplain and deep unconsolidated soils. Both areas serve as much needed corridors key to providing un-fragmented travel ways important for biodiversity.

As noted previously, the town is riddled with wetland soils and water resources that provide food, shelter, reproduction areas, and migration threads. Stream belts continue the theme of connectivity and spread seed stock of native plants that are continually threatened by invasive plant species. A look at the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) Natural Diversity Database indicates a high percentage of areas containing State and Federal listed plant and wildlife species and significant natural communities. Typically, rare turtle and snake species are the subjects of this protection. The larger the size of the undeveloped area, the greater increase in species diversity and habitat value. There are areas in town where either currently or with key acquisitions, hundreds of acres could be linked. There is no greater chance for survival of our local species than to fit these puzzle pieces together.

### **Plan Objectives**

#### **Identify Important Wildlife Habitat**

Key areas of town where strategic preservation of wildlife areas would be most beneficial are:

- Vernal pools and bogs
- Orchards/fields providing edge habitat for songbirds
- Riparian (streamside) corridors along all waterways
- Ridgelines
- Individual parcels between large preserved tracts
- Upland areas within open space and conventional subdivisions (conservation easements)

### **Methodology**

Given the variation in land features and resources needed to sustain a diversity of species, the following references are included for habitat preservation planning:

- The Water Resources Map
- NDDB Map
- UCONN CLEAR Statewide Riparian Corridor Analysis Map



## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that existing wildlife habitats and potential habitat corridors be preserved using the following strategies:

- Minimize fragmentation of habitat by encouraging new development to set aside open space that is contiguous to existing preserved land
- Encourage cluster subdivisions when appropriate to limit tree clearing
- Review forest management/ timber harvest plans for sensitivity and best management practices, particularly on the reservoir properties (Southington and New Britain)
- Refer to the Open Space Plan when reviewing potential development projects
- Ensure that State NDDB recommendations are sustained in the field for projects in sensitive areas
- Review floodplain mitigation plans for habitat restoration/enhancement opportunities, particularly along the Quinnipiac River.
- The Inland Wetlands Agency/Conservation Commission should continue to educate applicants and general public about invasive species management
- Work with fish and game clubs (Bristol, Forestville, and Southington Sportsman's Clubs) to sustain preservation status of their holdings
- Pursue Federal grants for habitat preservation (USFWS)





# Water Resources Map

Southington, CT

Bristol

Plainville

New Britain






Berlin

Wolcott

Meriden

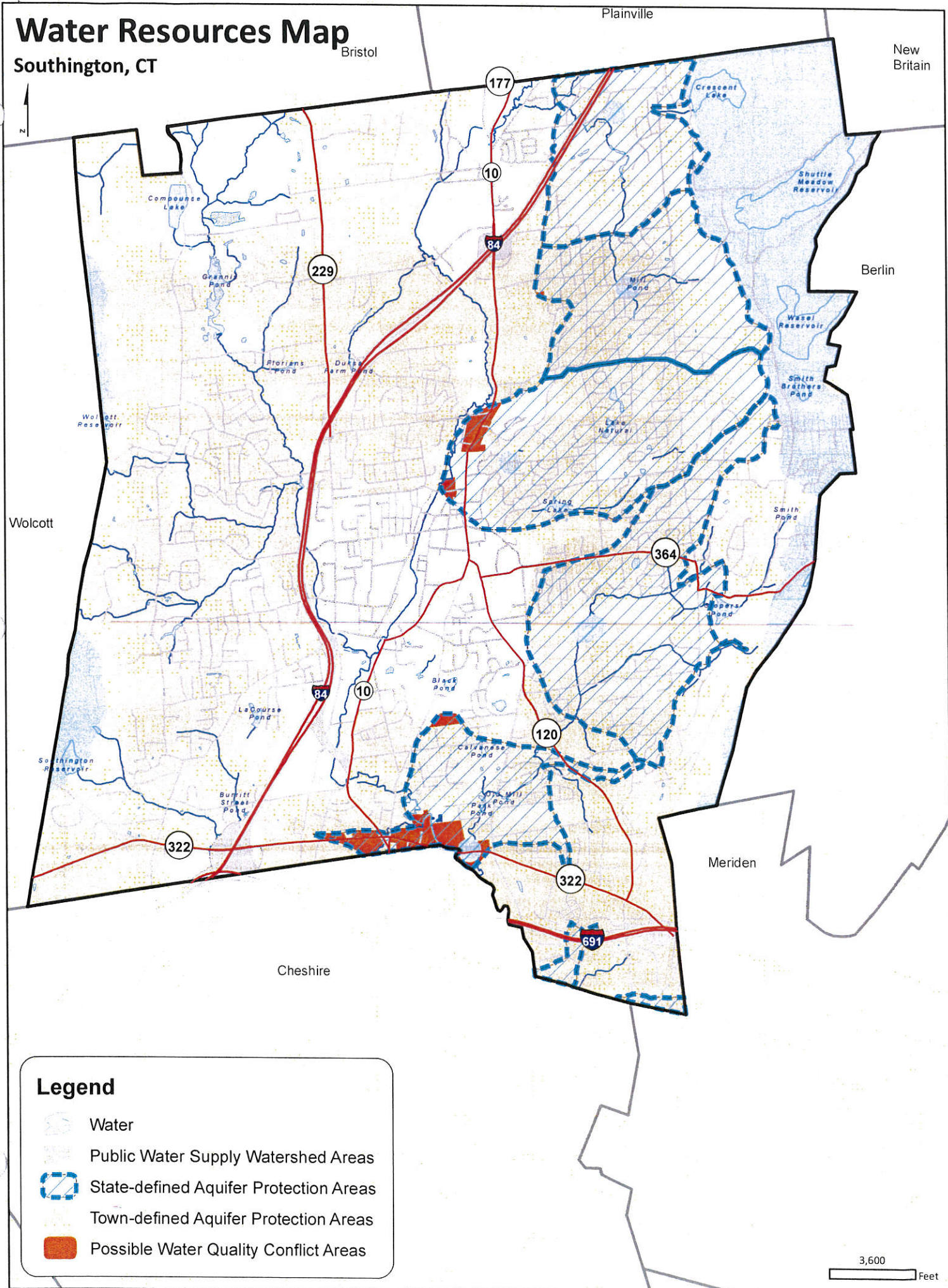
Cheshire

## Legend

-  Water
-  Public Water Supply Watershed Areas
-  State-defined Aquifer Protection Areas
-  Town-defined Aquifer Protection Areas
-  Possible Water Quality Conflict Areas

3,600

Feet





# Natural Diversity Data Base Areas

SOUTHINGTON, CT

December 2014

 State and Federal Listed Species  
& Significant Natural Communities

 Town Boundary

NOTE: This map shows general locations of State and Federal Listed Species and Significant Natural Communities. Information on listed species is collected and compiled by the Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) from a number of data sources. Exact locations of species have been buffered to produce the general locations. Exact locations of species and communities occur somewhere in the shaded areas, not necessarily in the center. A new mapping format is being employed that more accurately models important riparian and aquatic areas and eliminates the need for the upstream/downstream searches required in previous versions.

This map is intended for use as a preliminary screening tool for conducting a Natural Diversity Data Base Review Request. To use the map, locate the project boundaries and any additional affected areas. If the project is within a shaded area there may be a potential conflict with a listed species. For more information, complete a Request for Natural Diversity Data Base State Listed Species Review form (DEP-APP-007), and submit it to the NDDDB along with the required maps and information. More detailed instructions are provided with the request form on our website.

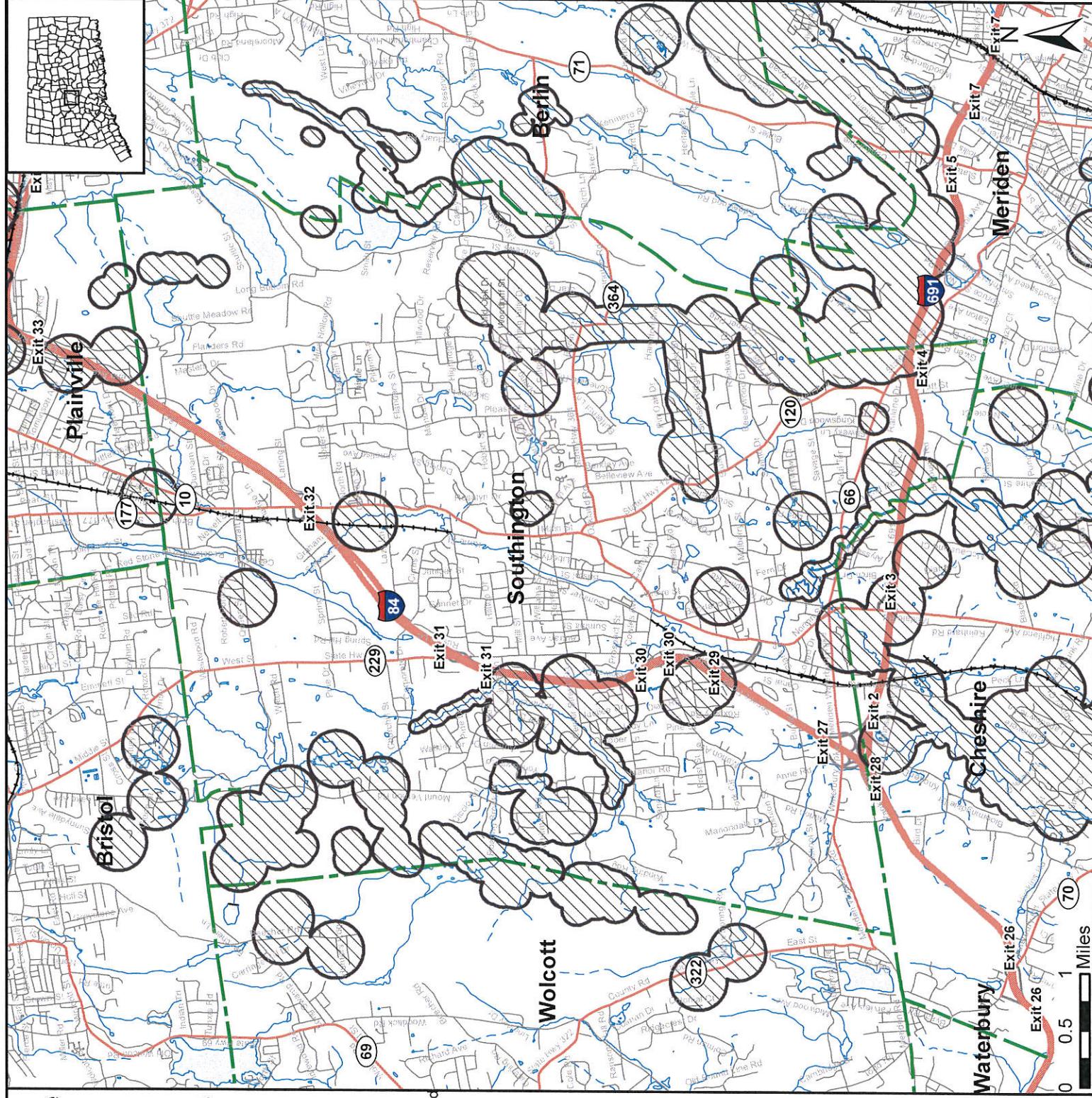
[www.ct.gov/deep/nddbrequest](http://www.ct.gov/deep/nddbrequest)

Use the CTECO Interactive Map Viewers at [www.cteco.uconn.edu](http://www.cteco.uconn.edu) to more precisely search for and locate a site and to view aerial imagery with NDDDB Areas.

QUESTIONS: Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)  
79 Elm St., Hartford CT 06106  
Phone (860) 424-3011



Connecticut Department of  
Energy & Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Natural Resources  
Wildlife Division







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## Your Town: Riparian Corridors



### 2006 Statewide Riparian Corridor Analysis



This page contains static maps and area statistics (scroll down) of riparian zone information for all 169 municipalities in Connecticut.

Select your town by clicking on the map or with the pull-down menu. Then press **Go**.

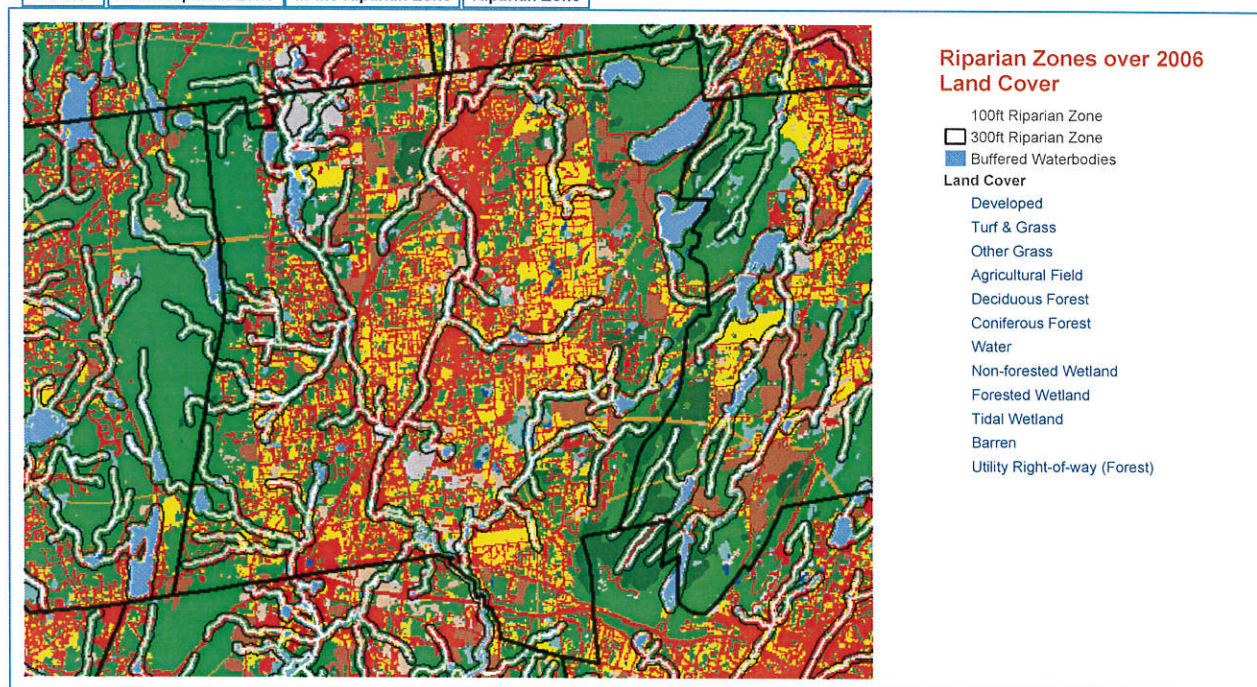
|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Southington area*</b>                                | 23,376.8 |
| Area* of <b>Southington</b> covered by the 100ft Zone   | 1,666.1  |
| Percent of <b>Southington</b> covered by the 100ft Zone | 7.1%     |
| Area* of <b>Southington</b> covered by the 300ft Zone   | 4,738.2  |
| Percent of <b>Southington</b> covered by the 300ft Zone | 20.3%    |

\*All area is in acres.

Southington

## Southington, Connecticut

Riparian Zones    1985 Land cover in the Riparian Zone    2006 Land cover in the Riparian Zone    Change in the Riparian Zone



### Southington Land Cover In the Riparian Zone

|           |                         | Developed | Turf & Grass | Other Grass | Ag. Field | Forest*  | Water | Wetland** | Barren |   |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-------|-----------|--------|---|
| Town Wide | 1985 Land Cover (acres) | 5,852.5   | 3,061.7      | 728.9       | 1,371.1   | 11,308.4 | 647.5 | 60.1      | 346.6  | This table shows change in land cover from 1985 to 2006 town wide and in two riparian zones: 100 foot and 300 foot. |
|           | 1985 Land Cover (%)     | 25.0%     | 13.1%        | 3.1%        | 5.9%      | 48.4%    | 2.8%  | 0.3%      | 1.5%   |   |
|           | 2006 Land Cover (acres) | 7,218.5   | 3,570.1      | 469.0       | 1,123.2   | 9,853.1  | 594.8 | 65.6      | 482.7  |   |
|           | 2006 Land Cover (%)     | 30.9%     | 15.3%        | 2.0%        | 4.8%      | 42.1%    | 2.5%  | 0.3%      | 2.1%   |   |

## **Agricultural Resources**

Southington's early settlers were farmers that relied upon the land for survival. Farms and orchards dotted the landscape, perching upon the hills and sprawling along the fertile soils adjacent to the Quinnipiac River. Today, roughly 2,000 acres remain in private hands as farms, while many public and private fields are still hayed. As the mid-1800's approached, many factories producing bolts, carriage parts and tools were established. Many families can still trace their roots of agrarian and manufacturing heritage to the early beginnings of town. Some of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's economic endeavors drew the workforce away from fields and towards manufacturing. Nonetheless, the farms and orchards were strongly rooted and rode out the change in the demand for varied durable goods. Many farms have diversified over the years, adding farm stands like Lewis Farms, Rogers Orchards and Karabin Farms. The flexibility in their business plans allow the public to enjoy local goods and get a peek at how the operations are still run, often interacting with the farmers in the process as the stands are established on site.

### **☞ Plan Objectives**

Southington, not unlike many other towns, has experienced a significant increase in residential development over the past decade. Oftentimes the well-drained, deep soils are well suited for construction and are the most sought after sites for development. Protecting the remaining farmland is a priority as we look to the future of the town for economic, cultural and aesthetic longevity. Many options are available to farmers to help work toward this goal while maintaining the use of property as agricultural:

- Purchase of Development Rights
- Farmland Preservation through the State (PA 490)
- Sale with Life Use of the property
- Town purchase with a lease back option
- Land Trust Easement/Stewardship Funds

### **☞ Methodology**

- The land cover map shows areas that are currently designated as agricultural fields
- The PA 490 Map shows which land is currently under the Forest Land Protection Act and the Farming Act designations
- UCONN CLEAR Agricultural Fields and Soils Map

### **☞ Recommendations**

- Have open conversations with our farmers about short and long term goals
- Continue to support State and Federal farm protection programs
- Encourage the purchase of local CT Grown goods
- Encourage the sale of development rights to allow perpetual use as a farm



- Continue to cultivate the relationship between the Southington High School's VoAg program and local farmers
- Hold a forum with State and local conservation groups to promote options for farm and forest land preservation
- Continue to support the farmer's market on the Town Green, possibly expand to Plantsville Center
- Continue to improve the town's Community Gardens and encourage participation to educate the public about locally grown goods and sustainable agricultural practices
- Explore alternative business models to support agriculture



Southington

Go

## Southington, Connecticut

1985  
Land Cover

1990  
Land Cover

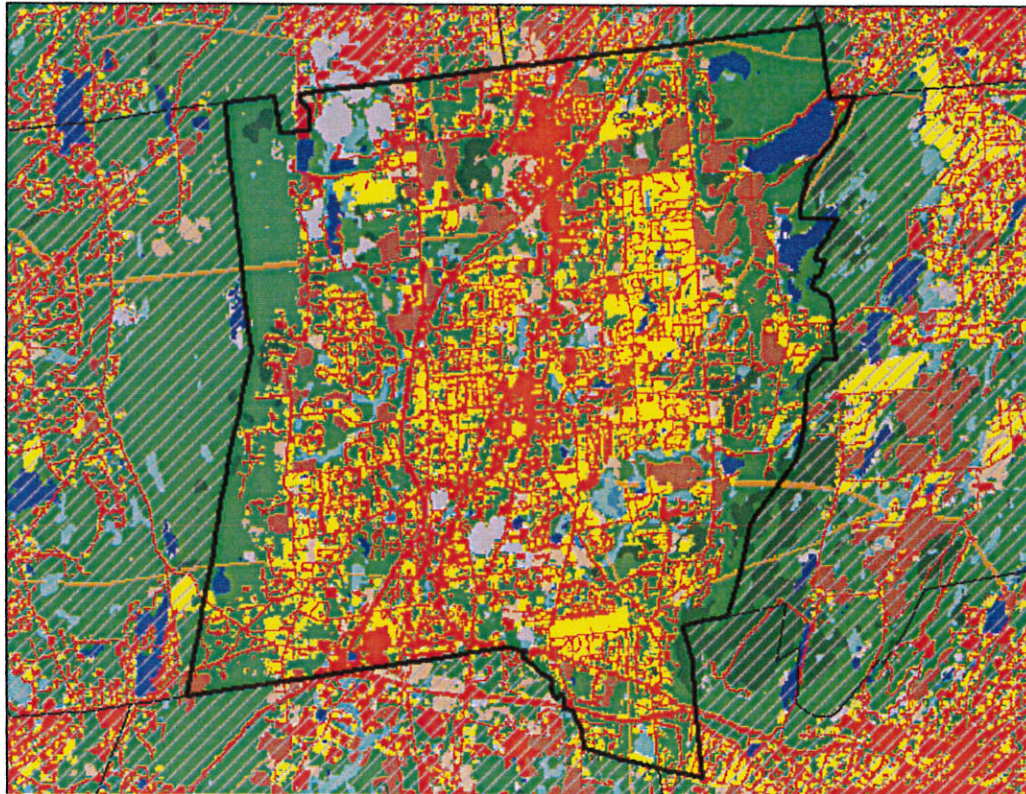
1995  
Land Cover

2002  
Land Cover

2006  
Land Cover

Change To  
Developed

Change  
From



### 2006 Land Cover

Printable PDF

#### LAND COVER

- Developed
- Turf & Grass
- Other Grass
- Agricultural Field
- Deciduous Forest
- Coniferous Forest
- Water
- Non-forested Wetland
- Forested Wetland
- Tidal Wetland
- Barren
- Utility (Forest)

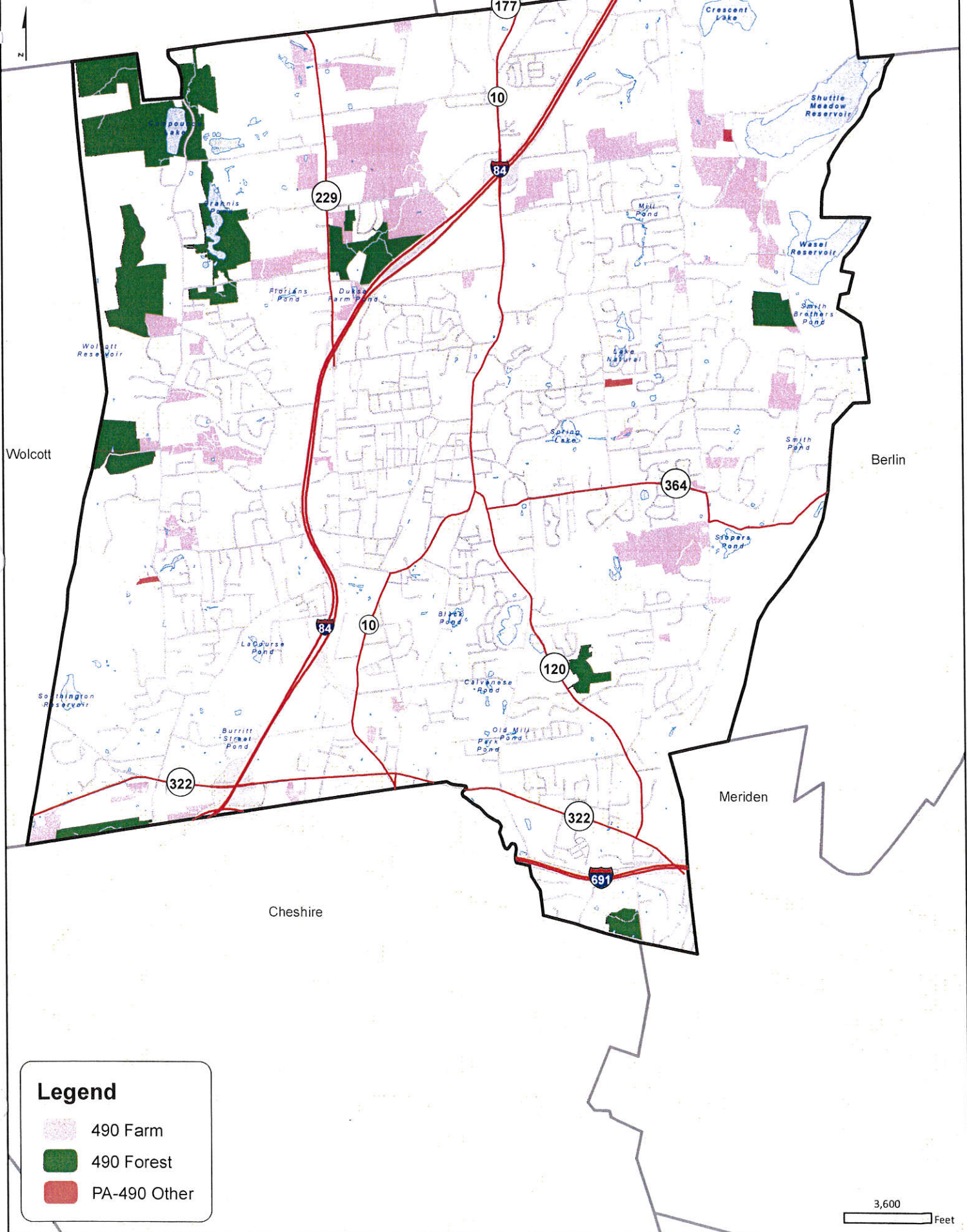
### Southington Land Cover and Land Cover Change

|              | 1985  |           | 1990  |           | 1995  |           | 2002  |           | 2006  |           | Change |          |
|--------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|----------|
|              | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres  | % change |
| Developed    | 5853  | %25       | 6485  | 27.7%     | 6641  | 28.4%     | 6987  | 29.9%     | 7219  | 30.9%     | 1366   | 23.3%    |
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# PA 490 Map

Southington, CT







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## Your Town: Agriculture



Agricultural Fields and High Quality Agricultural Soils



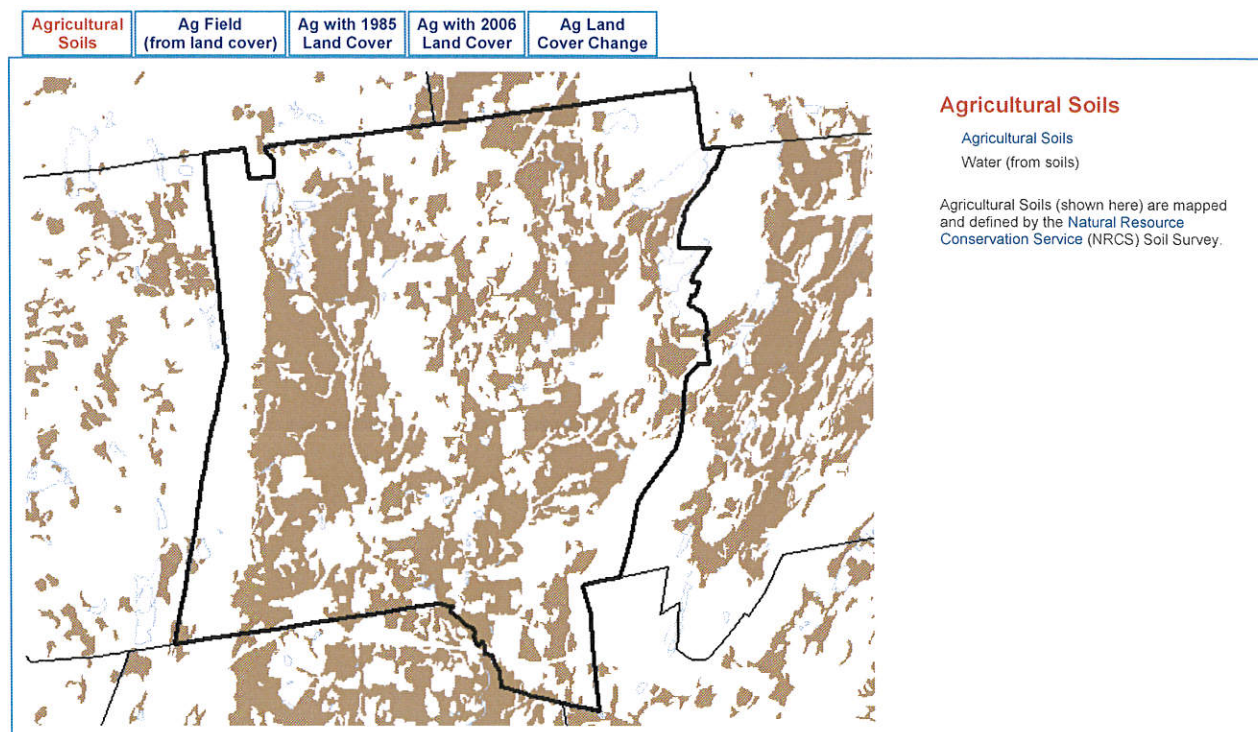
Southington

Select your town by clicking on the map or with the pull-down menu. Then press **Go**.

This page contains static maps and area statistics (scroll down) of agricultural information for all 169 municipalities in Connecticut.

The maps show a combination of Agricultural Soils information from NRCS and Agricultural Field information land cover.

## Southington, Connecticut



### Southington Land Cover Over Agricultural Soils

|                            | 1985  |           | 2006  |           | Change |                   |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|-------------------|
|                            | acres | % of town | acres | % of town | acres  | relative % change |
| Developed over Ag. Soils   | 2,387 | 10.2%     | 2,992 | 12.8%     | 605    | 25.3%             |
| Turf & Grass over Ag Soils | 2,353 | 10.1%     | 2,505 | 10.7%     | 152    | 6.5%              |

This table shows change in land cover from 1985 to 2006 over High Quality Ag Soils in the town selected above.

## **Recreation Resources**

Open Space provides many opportunities for the public to experience the outdoors and learn about their natural surroundings. The use of open space provides for both active and passive recreation.

Active recreation includes activities such as tennis, soccer, baseball and golf. These uses typically involve facilities and an intensification of land use. Dedicating land to these activities would be part of the Land Acquisition portion of the Open Space and Land Acquisition Committee.

Lands dedicated to Open Space purchase typically are used for passive recreation, as required by the State if grant funds are used in the purchase. Hiking, fishing, bird watching and picnicking are common activities in these areas.

The Mission Statement of the Southington Parks and Recreation Department is "To offer diverse year-round leisure opportunities by providing quality recreational programs and facilities to the residents of Southington. The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for planning and implementing youth and adult activities, as well as providing and maintaining quality athletic fields, passive recreational areas and open space land. By providing consistency, dependability and an obligation to our residents and the programs they partake in, we strive to elevate the quality of life for our community".

Southington is fortunate to have a varied inventory of recreational facilities and passive recreational areas:

- Crescent Lake, located on Shuttle Meadow Road is a 223 acre forested property containing a 56 acre lake. Boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking, picnicking and seasonal bow hunting are all available to the visitor. The site was the subject of the recent Forest Management Plan drafted by UCONN School of Agriculture with the aim of initiating a timber harvest to insure the future health of the forest. Roughly 7 miles of trails varying in difficulty are marked for use.
- Recreation Park, located on Maxwell Noble Drive in Plantsville is a 37.5 acre park that has 4 baseball fields, basketball courts, children's playground, concession stand, football fields, hiking, picnic groves, restrooms, 3 soccer fields, softball fields, swimming pool, tennis courts and a volleyball court.
- Panthorn Park located on Burritt Street in Plantsville is a 139 acre multi-use park. Basketball courts, children's playground with an ADA playscape, fishing pond, 18 hole disc golf course, softball fields, jogging trail, nature trail, lacrosse fields, pavilion, picnic grove, restrooms, softball field, tennis courts, and sled run are all found here.
- Veteran's Memorial Park located on Woodruff Street is a 20.5 acre site. Basketball courts, duck pond, football field, little league fields, picnic grove, playscape, swimming pool with changing rooms and tennis courts are found on site. The site is also a connector to the recent Safe Routes to School grant program that offers a pedestrian walkway through a portion of the park.
- The Community Ice Rink located on Mill Street across from the Municipal Center entrance.

- Linear Trail (Rail Trail); The Southington Rails to Trails pathway is part of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. To date, the trail is 4.1 miles in length in town. When completed, the trail will span over 80 continuous miles from the campus of Yale University to Northampton, MA. There is currently a 4.7 mile gap in Cheshire as well as a 9.1 mile gap from northern Southington through Plainville into southern Farmington. The trail offers a paved surface with a processed stone ribbon lying adjacent. An informational kiosk is found at the Southington/Cheshire Line. The trail passes by the historic Train Depot Property and Goat Island Open Space off of East Summer Street recently purchased by the Town of Southington.
- The Southington Community Pavilion is located at 995 Meriden Waterbury Turnpike within the town owned Drive-in property. The site is directly adjacent to Recreation Park and is available for rental. The Drive-in is one of the few remaining actively used outdoor movie screens in the region.
- Canal Street Train Depot was recently purchased and is sited on .55 acres. The site features an open door tour of the 1890's depot on Saturdays and Sundays during warmer months. A bike rack and grills are available for public use and it is located directly adjacent to the rail trail.
- Southington Dog Park located on Mill Street encourages residents to enjoy a fenced 1.5 acre dog run. The site sits on 6 acres of open space directly adjacent to the linear trail.
- The Town Green is a focal point of the community offering Music on the Green and a Farmer's Market during the summer and a beautiful gazebo to gather in year round.
- Plantsville Town Green offers an island of greenspace with a gazebo and parking for the center of Plantsville.
- Centennial Park is a .68 acre parcel located at the corner of Grove and Hillside Streets. This site is important given its proximity to downtown Plantsville, which has limited recreational facilities.
- Jaycee Park is located on Union Street and is another pocket park containing 5.4 acres of open area and woodland. This park was the first recreational area in the western section of Southington and was established by the Southington Jaycees.
- Southington Schools provide recreational opportunities and playing fields. Southington High School recently installed a comprehensive multi-lane track and turf field facility.
- In addition to these public facilities, the town is home to three golf courses. Hawk's Landing Country Club off of Pattonwood Drive, Southington Country Club off of Savage Street and North Ridge Golf Club off of Welch Road.
- The Southington-Cheshire Community YMCA owns and operates the 141 acre Camp Sloper that is attended by hundreds of youths during their summer camp season and is also very active at their downtown based center. The Y administers the Activate Southington Grant that encourages a healthy, active lifestyle for youths and adults in town. Many programs are available to residents through this grant opportunity.
- Mt. Southington Ski Area located off of Mt. Vernon Road has been in business for 50 years and boasts 14 trails. A large portion of the 100 acre site is undeveloped mountainside.



- The Connecticut Forest and Parks Association has portions of the Blue Trail System in town; the Metacomet Trail on the Eastern Ridge adjacent to West Peak State Park and the Tunxis Trail on the Western Ridge adjacent to Lake Compounce.

Southington Youth Baseball and Softball fields are located as follows:

- Northern Little League- Veteran's Memorial Park
- Southern Little League- Recreation Park
- Western Little League- 665 Spring Street

## Plan Objectives

The goal of implementing this portion of the plan will be to meet the present demand and plan for the future recreational needs of the Town of Southington. The Plan should integrate Southington's natural beauty, community character and natural resources into a symbiotic relationship between residents and functional open space areas by:




- Taking the “pulse” of the community on recreation wants and needs
- Integrate passive and active recreational uses and provide physical linkages to trails and greenways
- Maintain budgets that allow for safe, high quality facilities
- Maintain a broad range of programs that serve the greatest number of residents

## Recommendations

- Continue to evaluate the current demand for type and locations of recreational facilities
- Consider upgrades to existing pocket parks (Jaycee, Hamlin)
- Support the proposed upgrades to the three major parks in town
- Continue to be hands-on in closing the linear trail gap to Plainville
- Encourage and explore unique “nodes” of recreation adjacent to the linear trail such as the new skating rink on Mill Street and picnic area at the train depot
- Work with Scouts to update/delineate trails on open space holdings
- Continue relationship with the Y on the Korin and Holmquist Open Space Properties for trail creation, access and maintenance
- Explore potential uses of the Brandenburg property on Dunham Street
- Prioritize sites targeted for acquisition based upon recreational needs
- Be compatible with the 2015 POCD
- Revamp the Open Space webpage to increase interaction between the Park and Rec webpage
- Promote the upcoming video on recreational and open space holdings in town
- Increase publicity of the Open Space Committee's seasonal tours of Open Space holdings
- Update the Open Space Brochure to highlight recent acquisitions and list available uses
- Establish an ADA approved canoe launch on the Germania St. property

## Existing Open Space

Southington has exhibited a very strong commitment to open space endeavors in the past fifteen years, securing over 550 acres in that timeframe. Two referendums totaling 4 million dollars have successfully passed and were key to acquiring these lands:

|      | <br><b>Parcel</b> | <i>Location</i>              | <i>Size</i> | <i>Purchase Price</i> | <i>Grant Amt.</i>                | <i>Restricted to Passive Recreation</i> |
|------|--|------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1999 | Crescent Lake Open Space   | Shuttle Meadow Road          | 200+ acres  | \$2.2 mil.            | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2000 | Curtiss Family Open Space  | South End Road               | 34 acres    | \$650 K               | \$331.5K                         | Yes                                     |
| 2001 | Marion Ave Open Space  | Marion Ave south of M&W Tpk. | 17 acres    | \$150 K               | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2002 | Lewis Farms  | Meriden Ave                  | 11 acres    | \$279 K               | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2002 | Nancy Brown Farm   | East Street                  | 27 acres    | \$719 K               | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2003 | Korin Family Open Space  | Copper Ridge Road            | 70 acres    | \$585 K               | \$326 K (includes YMCA Donation) | Yes                                     |
| 2003 | Open Space Parcel  | Meriden Waterbury Tpk.       | 1.9 acres   | Donation              | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2004 | Burritt Street Parcel  | Burritt Street               | 8.4 acres   | Donation              | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2005 | Darling Street Parcels   | Darling Street               | 10 acres    | Donation              | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2006 | LePage Parcel  | Shuttle Meadow Rd.           | 6.2 acres   | Donation              | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2006 | Novick's Orchard   | Flanders Road                | 80 acres    | \$1.4 mil.            | \$786.5 K                        | Yes                                     |
| 2007 | Holmquist Property   | East Street/Kensington Rd.   | 14 acres    | \$750 K               | \$337 K                          | Yes                                     |
| 2007 | Goat Island Property   | East Summer Street           | 6.5 acres   | \$400 K               | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2008 | Griffin Property   | Laning Street                | 47 acres    | \$1.5 mil.            | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2008 | Jurglewicz Parcel  | West Ctr. Street             | 28 acres    | \$1.2 mil.            | \$500 k                          | Yes                                     |
| 2011 | Germania Street Parcel   | Germania Street              | .75 acres   | \$80k                 | none                             | Yes                                     |
| 2014 | Pleasant Street Stables  | Pleasant Street              | 7.55 acres  | \$935k                | none                             | No                                      |
| 2015 | Upton Parcel   | Marion Ave                   | 34 acres    | \$253k                | none                             | Yes                                     |



The Town of Southington consists of approximately 20,779 acres. Roughly 2.6% of that area is dedicated, town owned open space used for passive recreation. Additionally, roughly 300 acres are found on schools grounds, 200+ for our parks and 300+ from subdivision open space set asides. Another 2,000 acres are under PA 490 restrictions. The percentage of open space increases greatly when the 2,000 acres of Water Dept. lands are factored in. The recent Conservation Policy Summit held at the CT Forest and Parks Association illustrated the State's goal of 21% open space by 2021 initiative, with 10% being State owned while the remaining 11% would be municipally held. Implementing the spirit of this plan will clearly help us achieve our share at the local level, a reasonable 5% to 8%.

The Southington Open Space Committee advises the Town Council on open space acquisition. The committee is comprised of representatives from various land use boards, our Finance Committee, a member of the public and the Town Manager whom all offer unique perspective and insight. The Open Space Committee was formed to promote the conservation of natural and cultural resources within the town. Having such a dedicated committee with a specific charge is instrumental to securing the aesthetic, economic and environmental health of the community now and in the future.

### **☞ Criteria for Open Space Acquisition and Protection**

Through past citizen initiatives and voter referendums, it is clear that preservation is high on the list of community wants and needs. When initially pursuing a parcel for potential acquisition, many factors are considered. Open space takes many forms and through that variety evolves a cohesive inventory of functional, sustainable protected lands. Below is a list of questions commonly asked to determine how to prioritize and garner funding for these parcels.



- Is the property in a public drinking water supply watershed?
- Is the site part of a natural corridor (greenway) that provides protection of groundwater, wildlife habitat, or public access?
- Is the site contiguous to other open spaces?
- Does the land offer surface water protection (streams, river, pond, lake, wetlands, vernal pools, aquifer area)?
- Does the site contain critical wildlife habitat as identified in the State's Natural Diversity Database Map?
- Does the site contain significant natural features (geologic or otherwise)?
- Does the site provide recreational or educational opportunities (access to waterways, areas of historical significance)?
- Does the site contain important cultural resources?
- Does the site provide strategic green space in highly developed areas?



## **☞ Options for Land Acquisition/Protection**

Once a property is considered for acquisition, the type of funding source(es) must be determined.

1. Donation to the Town
  - a. Outright Donation
  - b. Donation with lifetime use of donor (tax deduction while alive; owner pays property tax with a reduction of estate value).
2. Conservation Easement in Favor of the Town  
Landowner retains ownership while paying reduced taxes; agreement (filed on land records) with the town that the land will be preserved in a natural state.
3. Bargain Sale to the Town  
Landowner sells to the town below fair market value. If there is a low basis, uses adjusted basis to offset capital gains taxes. Gets tax deduction between fair market value and the donation.
4. State Municipal Grant Program Matched by Town Funds  
Land owner and town agree on purchase price based on appraisals approved by State as part of the matching grant program. State can contribute up to 65%. Land must be open to the public.
5. Purchase of Development Rights  
Property owner sells development rights to the property but retains use of land for agreed upon activities. Public access typically not allowed.
6. Right of First Refusal  
The town is first to be notified when property owner chooses to market their land.
7. Outright Purchase  
The Open Space Committee has an established protocol for purchases including securing appraisals and Town Board/Commission approvals.

## **☞ Recommendations to Accomplish the Goal of the Open Space Plan**

A key element to the protection of Southington's remaining land is to encourage support of an open space budget that is sufficient and readily accessible if a suitable property comes on the market. Timing is everything in real estate and a level playing field significantly increases our ability to make an offer in a reasonable amount of time. The following tactics should be considered as we move forward:

- Propose and champion an open space referendum of at least 2 million dollars and annually sustain a pool of funding at a significant level once a portion is depleted
- Distribute a letter of inquiry to the owners of large undeveloped properties gauging their interest in land preservation options
- Publicize the ways open space can benefit the town and its taxpayers by spearheading a public awareness campaign recognizing the town's Open Space Plan
- Further the promotion of a Right of First Refusal program

- Promote the option of development rights purchase for large multi-acre parcels on which a business entity exists, such as golf courses and large farms/orchards
- Update the Committee's webpage to provide an interactive user-friendly tool
- Continue participation in the State's Open Space Grant Program
- Explore partnerships with surrounding communities for acquisition of undeveloped properties sharing a town border

## Conclusion

An overriding principal of Southington's Plan of Conservation and Development is that preparing for the future must incorporate environmental protection and smart growth in all land use decisions. Of the many potential land uses, Open Space puts the least stress upon our resources. The protection of water quality, air quality, and rural character are a result of keeping land in its natural state. The protection of wildlife habitat through maintaining contiguous parcels of forests and fields is a top priority in the State of Connecticut's own plan of conservation and development and is mirrored here.

Recent studies have shown that adjacency to open space increases property values as there is less noise, better air quality and increased visual appeal. Reducing the burden upon current infrastructure is an additional benefit of concentrating development where it is most appropriate. It is our hope that this Open Space Plan will guide decision makers in the process of determining the best use of our remaining undisturbed lands and showcase the vibrancy of our existing inventory of open space.

