

Open Space Planning

The Town of Raymond is located within the planning area of a number of land trusts and other similar organizations, including the Rockingham Conservation District, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and the Bear-Paw Regional Greenways. Bear-Paw Regional Greenways was established by volunteers concerned with protecting open space lands and this organization has proposed a greenway that connects private or public lands with large areas of conservation land in a seven-town region including Candia, Deerfield, Epsom, Northwood, Nottingham, Raymond, and Strafford. This network of voluntarily protected lands acts to provide important wildlife habitat and protect rivers, wetlands and recreational opportunities for the public.

According to the Town Planning Department, Bear Paw currently holds two separate conservation easements for abutting properties on land owned by Cody Cramer at 38 Ham Road, one of the easements covers 12.7 acres on Tax Map 36 – Lot 1 (9.8 acres), Tax Map 35 – Lot 59 (2.19 acres), and Tax Map 36 – Lot 4 (0.68 acres). The other easement covers 145.5 acres on Tax Map 36- Lot 2.

The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests currently holds one easement in the Town of Raymond, which was acquired in 1997 on land owned by Christopher J. Stillbach, comprising 5.5 acres located on Tax Map 45, Lot. 4. The entire easement crosses over Deerfield, Nottingham and Raymond. It runs in common with Pawtuckaway State Park.



Sign to Pawtuckaway State Park and Wildlife Viewing Area

The Rockingham Conservation District (RCCD) has indicated that they currently hold a total of six conservation easements in Raymond which include: Aggregate Industries, 223.69 acres along NH Route 102 (Chester Road); Muriel Church, 138.48 acres along Shattagee Road; Gillingham Road, LLC, 32.36 acres, Perimeter Road; Karine Development, 15.65 acres along Blueberry Hill Road; Kellop Development, LLC, 33.54 acres along NH Route 27; and Riverwatch of Raymond, LLC, 12.07 acres along NH Route 102/Ida Lane. In addition, a number of conservation easements can be found within the following conservation subdivisions as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14
Existing Conservation Easements
Town of Raymond, NH

Date	Subdivision Name	Tax Map	Lot
Feb-09	Flint Hill	35	4
Apr-07	Lane Road Conservation Subdivision	8	15
Jan-06	Fox Run Conservation Subdivision	8	35
Aug-06	McFarland Conservation Subdivision	17	46
Sep-05	Gillingham Road Conservation Subdivision	5	5
Apr-03	Sundeen Parkway	27	8
Oct-02	Marquis Subdivision	31	67

At the March 2009 Town Meeting voters agreed to place a conservation easement on 143 acres of the town-owned Flint Hill property (70 acres of the property will remain unrestricted). This forest just west of Route 156 is an important wildlife corridor and provides riparian habitat along a tributary stream of the Lamprey River. It also includes vernal pools, rocky outcrops, and peatlands.

Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds

In August 2006, the State of New Hampshire, acting through a partnership of the NH Coastal Program, the NH Estuaries Project (now known as the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership), the Nature Conservancy, the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and the Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commissions developed for the first time a comprehensive Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds. Because the Town of Raymond is located within the Lamprey River watershed, Raymond is one of the 46 towns within this planning area.

Utilizing a wealth of environmental information and resources, this plan identified several key “*Conservation Focus Areas*”, both core areas and supporting landscape located within the Town of Raymond. These “*Conservation Focus Areas*” are shown on Map 25. As part of the development of this plan, a model conservation overlay district ordinance and wildlife checklist was created for municipalities within the region to utilize during the development review process.

It is recommended that the Raymond Planning Board and Conservation Commission review this plan in detail and evaluate the recommended model ordinance to help protect the “*Conservation Focus Areas*” identified in Raymond

Coastal Watershed Land Protection Transaction Grant Program

In 2008, the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP) provided matching grants of up to \$3,000 per project to communities, land trusts, and conservation organizations for transaction costs associated with permanently protecting land from development. Eligible land conservation projects had to be completed between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008 and located in the coastal watershed area of New Hampshire. In addition these projects had to meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 1) Be located in one of the Conservation Focus Areas identified in the *Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire’s Coastal Watersheds*;
- 2) Include shoreline on streams of any order, tidal waters, or lakes; and
- 3) Include wetlands designated as “Prime Wetlands.”

While these applications were funded on a first-received, first-funded basis, there may be additional application rounds in the future as available funding allows. The Town of Raymond should closely monitor these funds for future conservation and open space funding assistance.

M. Wildlife Habitats

The Town of Raymond has abundant forested land, lakes, rivers, and streams which provide shelter and subsistence for a diversity of animal populations. This natural biodiversity is a reminder of the unique responsibility that humans have to preserve animal species and coexist and work towards a sustainable future. Preservation of wildlife habitat is critical to the Town of Raymond’s ecosystem. The loss of even one species can have a potentially catastrophic ecological impact. Therefore, loss of wildlife habitat is a critical concern. Wildlife habitat loss can occur whenever land becomes developed, or when an invasive plant or a non-native species invades and overwhelms the native flora and fauna. One of the largest destroyers of wildlife habitat is urban development.

Growth and development within southern New Hampshire is rapidly expanding, and many species and habitats are at risk by development, particularly wetlands, ponds and streams and surrounding uplands. Preserving open space is one of the best ways a municipality can assure the preservation of wildlife habitats and natural resources. The Town of Raymond’s Conservation Overlay District addresses some of these concerns, however, the district does not adequately identify what wildlife habitat means and where such protection within the Town of Raymond is most needed.

Currently, the overlay district is designed to:

- 1 Preserve sensitive wetlands, shore land and other water bodies that provide flood protection, augment stream flow during dry periods, absorb nutrients and contribute to the viability of the Town's groundwater.
- 2 Protect the wetlands and water bodies that are close to high intensity development through restrictions such as limitations of certain land uses and buffering.
- 3 Protect wildlife habitat and maintain the ecological values referenced in NH RSA 483-A.
- 4 Limit development in areas where the natural features are not favorable for development.
- 5 Encourage those low-intensity uses that can be harmoniously and safely located in the wetland areas.
- 6 Preserve and enhance aesthetic values associated with our lakes, pond, river systems, and wetlands.

Within the past few years, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NH F&G) prepared the most comprehensive New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) in the state's history. According to the 2006 WAP, southern New Hampshire harbors the greatest diversity of the state's wildlife, including many rare or endangered species, and at the current rate of protection and development, many more species will likely become rare, and several species may become threatened in the future. Maps 26 and 27 from the WAP show the highest ranked wildlife habitat as well as areas of local wildlife habitat in Raymond.

Currently, other than the Conservation Overlay District, the Town of Raymond's major land use regulations which directly address wildlife habitat are the Conservation Development regulations found in Section 4.300 of the Zoning Ordinance. This section entitled "Conservation Development" address several issues that bear directly upon wildlife protection and management. The Conservation Development ordinance provides multiple options for landowners in order to minimize impacts on environmental resources (sensitive lands such as wetlands, floodplain, and steep slopes) and disturbance of natural or cultural features such as mature woodlands, hedgerows and tree lines, critical wildlife habitats, historic buildings, and fieldstone walls. At a minimum, the ordinance requires that fifty (50) percent of a Conservation Development be set aside as permanent open space. These regulations have been a vital step in balancing the needs of environmental sustainability and wildlife protection with economic development. Further guidelines should be adopted to specifically address Conservation Development proposals and their intersection with habitats of species of greatest concern as identified in Maps 26 and 27.

Another useful tool in the protection of wildlife habitat is the New Hampshire Natural Services Network (NSN). The NSN is a GIS-based tool that identifies lands that provide important ecological services that are difficult and expensive to replicate. The NSN consists of water supply lands, flood storage lands, productive soils, and important wildlife habitat and can be used at multiple scales. Municipalities can also choose to incorporate local areas of significance in the NSN.

