# CONSERVATION PLAN

June 2001

# Town of Pomfret

# Conservation Commission


2003 Members

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*MISSION STATEMENT*

*"The mission of the Pomfret Conservation Commission is to inventory and conserve Pomfret's natural resources and open spaces and to serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Selectmen and other municipal agencies."*

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## Purpose of Plan

The Conservation Commission was created in January of 1999. The purpose of the Conservation Commission is to:

> *inventory and conserve Pomfret's natural resources and open spaces, and to serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Selectmen and other municipal agencies.*

The Pomfret Conservation Commission is grateful to the Brooklyn Conservation Commission for allowing us to use the Town of Brooklyn Conservation Plan as a model in preparing this document.

The reason for preparing this plan stems from the critical need to have a community vision of how Pomfret should develop and grow in the years ahead. A primary function of this plan is to distinguish areas that are suitable for development from areas that merit various levels of long-term protection. If we put the plan into practice, Pomfret can be a town known for consistently wise land-use decisions made with a deeper understanding of our natural environment. The ultimate goal is for Pomfret to be a successful community which finds the right balance among economic development, environmental protection and the quality of life.

A land ethic *"... reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects the conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity."* (Leopold, 1949) We hope this plan kindles and sustains a sense of stewardship for the land in our community. We hope it will become a legacy which we, the residents of Pomfret, leave to future generations of our town.

The plan should not be blindly followed but used as a guiding reference by regulatory commissions, selectmen, landowners and concerned citizens so that our town is capable of self renewal. It is intended to supplement the town's Plan of Conservation and Development prepared by the Planning Commission. The Conservation Commission actively encourages adjacent towns as well as State and regional organizations interested in conservation planning to utilize this information as they adopt or amend their own plans.

## Economic Benefits of Conservation Planning

It is important to understand that there are many economic as well as environmental benefits to a sound conservation plan. First, numerous studies have shown that farm, forest and open space lands typically provide a town more money in tax dollars than they require in service expenditures. The ratios of town expenditures to revenues for the defined land use classes indicate that the revenues generated from residential properties are less than the cost of services that those parcels require. Specifically, for every dollar of revenue raised by residential property, the Town of Pomfret must expend $1.06 on services such as police, fire, public works and education. Alternatively, commercial/industrial parcels cost the town only $.27 per dollar, and open space parcels cost $.86 per dollar.(Southern New England Forest Consortium September 1995, pp. 38-43).

Second, communities with sound conservation plans have been shown to actually improve their bond ratings. These ratings have begun to reflect the fact that unlimited and/or mismanaged growth can make a community extremely expensive to manage and threaten its fiscal health. Good conservation and land-use planning, on the other hand, promotes cost-effective development, helps ensure that the quality of life remains desirable and avoids the need for disastrously expensive environmental clean-ups that result from poor land-use decisions. (See State of Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development, 1998-2003.)

Third, conserving land wisely allows nature to continue re-charging our groundwater, cleansing our drinking water, preventing soil erosion, absorbing flood waters and doing many other things we take for granted, but which are tremendously expensive for us to do in their absence.

Fourth, studies have shown that private residential properties adjacent to or close to permanently protected open space increase in value faster than

similar properties elsewhere. This benefits not only the individual homeowners, but the entire town in the form of an increased grand list. (See State of Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development, 1998-2003.)

### Natural Resources Inventory

*In January 1999 the Pomfret Conservation Commission began an extensive inventory and data gathering process in order to understand and account for our community's natural resources in a comprehensive manner. This natural resource inventory is an attempt to quantify the components that make up our environment and quality of life. It is also designed to determine what is important to the residents of Pomfret; i.e. why they enjoy living here. Towards this end, a mail survey was conducted by the Commission. In total, this process provided the information needed to do conservation planning.*

*A heightened sense of environmentalism stemmed from this process as Commission members learned more about the community that they have been a part of for years. The Commission labored over an extensive amount of information to develop a plan that would be understandable and useful from many different perspectives. All aspects of the community, from the individual landowner to the citizenry as a whole, were considered in the process.*

## Statement of Purpose

The following statement of purpose for the inventory was adopted:

To identify and evaluate the quality, quantity and distribution of Pomfret's land, water and biotic resources so that:

1. A town conservation plan will be developed and integrated into the town Plan of Conservation and Development;
2. Land-use decisions made by the town commissions, town officials and individual landowners will be made with full understanding of their environmental impacts;
3. Open space priorities and protection strategies will be developed which create an optimum balance between continued economic growth and the protection of Pomfret's environment and quality of life;
4. Regulatory procedures may be recommended to the town agencies and commissions for the protection of natural and cultural resources;
5. The information compiled will be shared with other local, regional, and state organizations so that they may be aware of community protection goals;
6. Strategies for the protection and preservation of existing open spaces may be developed and strategies for the acquisition of new open spaces be formulated.

In developing a natural resources inventory, the Conservation Commission considered:

1. Significant natural and cultural features unique to the town and unique within the town;
2. Existing open spaces both private and public;
3. Water resources which support both plant and animal life;
4. Existing and future drinking water supplies;
5. Agricultural resources and wildlife habitat;
6. Scenic Vistas;
7. Any other factors which the commission deems to be important to the quality of life in Pomfret.

## Resource Identification and Mapping

Once the inventory goals were clear, the Commission began to identify those natural resources and other town features that could be worthy of various levels of protection.

Advice and assistance in determining what information to gather, how best to interpret it, and which resources to map was sought and received from many sources. Chief among them were the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the UConn Cooperative Extension System, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service, the UConn Department of Natural Resources Management and Engineering, the USDA Agricultural Stabilization

and Conservation Service, and other Connecticut communities which are conducting, and/or have conducted similar studies.

Based on this research, a total of 21 resource maps were produced. The maps are listed in three categories. Category I. includes maps of Cultural Features and Resources. These maps represent areas that are affected by human impacts. Category II. includes maps of Natural Areas. Category III. includes composite maps produced by combining and analyzing data from Categories I. and II. Much of the information used in producing these maps was collected by the volunteer efforts of the Commission members themselves. These members spent many hours compiling and analyzing data and producing maps. Their volunteer efforts saved our town thousands of dollars over what a professional consultant would have charged to produce the same information.

## I. Cultural Features and Resources

1. **Property Line Base Map**

   *This map depicts property lines of all parcels in Pomfret as of July 1999.*

2. **Historic Districts and Sites**

   *This map depicts Pomfret's Historic Sites and those properties that are on the National Register of Historic Places.*

3. **Land in Agricultural Use**

   *This map depicts cropland that was in some type of active agricultural use according to the USDA Farm Service Agency records in 2001.*

4. **Archeological Areas and Rock Outcrops**

   *Prehistoric Native American Sites were identified by Nicholas Bellantoni, Connecticut State Archaeologist, based on known locations of sites compiled from various state records.*

5. **Committed Open Space**

   *This map depicts all land in Pomfret that is permanently protected from development. This includes state forest land, town owned conservation land, private land trust property, private lands containing easements to the town and/or other legal restriction preventing development and farmland where the development rights have been sold to the state. A complete listing of the open space land is included as Appendix B.*

6. **Water Quality**

   *This map depicts the water quality in Pomfret's surface and ground-water as designated by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection standards.*

## II. Natural Areas

7. **Flood Insurance Rate Map**

   *This map, available at the Town of Pomfret Town Clerk's Office, indicates 100 year and 500 year flood hazard zones. The purpose of this map is to identify areas which are prone to flooding due to elevation and proximity to a water body and to discourage inappropriate development in those areas.*

8. **Groundwater Resources**

   *This map depicts saturated stratified drift aquifers which may be suitable for public water supply wells due to their extremely high water yield.*

   *Currently, a majority of the town's drinking water supply is provided from private wells. These untapped high yields areas could be of critical future importance if population growth or contamination of existing wells create the need for additional public water supplies.*

9. **Drainage Basins**

   *This map divides the entire town into drainage areas and identifies the direction of water flow out of each area. The edges of drainage basins are along ridge tops and other high elevation areas, from which surface water flows downhill until it encounters a brook or watercourse which eventually outlets at the lowest point in the basin.*

10. **Inland Wetlands and Watercourses**

    *This map depicts regulated inland wetlands as defined by soil type by the USDA Soil Conservation Service.*

11. **National Wetlands Inventory**

    *This map, available at the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Office in Brooklyn, depicts wetlands delineated by vegetative cover in accordance with the*

*Classification of Wetlands and Deep-Water Habitats of the United States (Cowardin, et al, 1977, US Fish and Wildlife Service). It is not used for regulatory purposes, but is useful in identifying unique plant communities and wildlife habitat corridors.*

12. **Fisheries: Management for Trout and Anadromous Fish**

    *Trout stream stocking and restoration of migratory fish runs are indicated for major streams and the Quinebaug River.*

13. **Natural Diversity Database and Cedar Swamps**

    *This information, provided by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, is particularly useful for the Planning Commission in the review of subdivision applications.*

14. **Productive Forest Soils**

    *This map depicts soils that are particularly productive in growing trees and other forest vegetation. The data were provided by the USDA Soil Conservation Service and is based on average growth rates of two key indicator species, northern red oak and eastern white pine, on soils with slopes under 15%. Because of their ability to produce forest biomass in abundance, the soils have high potential value for both forest products and as wildlife habitat.*

15. **Important Agricultural Lands as Delineated by Soil Type**

    *Prime Farmland Soils and Farmland Soils of Additional Statewide Importance are identified. The soil types were established in "Important Farmland, Connecticut" published by the USDA and SCS in May 1982. The areas identified are most suitable to farming operations.*

16. **Landuse and Landcover**

    *This map was based on 1997 data from the UConn Department of Natural Resources Management and Engineering. The data were generated using satellite imagery.*

17. **Streambelt Map**

    *This map, created by the Resource Conservation and Development branch of NRCS, is available at the NRCS office in Brooklyn, CT.*

### CONSERVATION PLAN

*For planning purposes, the Commission grouped the inventory data into four main categories: 1) wetland and water resources, 2) agricultural resources, 3) forest and wildlife resources and 4) recreational, aesthetic and historic resources. Recommendations were then developed for each category. The Commission recognizes that all of the natural resource features mapped cannot be permanently protected in their entirety. Our goals were to:*

- *Utilize sound, research-based information to develop minimum protection standards for each category, and;*
- *Identify and recommend protection strategies which are cost-effective, which can be implemented without unrealistic expense, and which do not result in undue infringement on private property rights.*

## WATER RESOURCES MAP 18

### BACKGROUND

The primary source of drinking water in Pomfret is individual private wells. Pomfret contains several additional groundwater areas which are currently untapped but which have the potential to support future public wells. Avoidance of potentially polluting land uses over these high water yield areas is essential to assuring their future ability to provide clean drinking water.

Surface water quality and protection of streams and wetlands is a difficult topic to address in general terms. These resources are vast and distributed throughout our town. These resources are also the spine of our biotic community and their protection is crucial to the overall quality of our environment:

> *Wetlands and watercourses in their natural state have an innate ecological value, providing 1) fish and wildlife habitat; 2) environmental quality; and 3) socio-economic benefits. (Callahan et al., 1992.)*

The greatest threat to surface water quality in Pomfret is not industrial or commercial pollutants, but so-called "non-point" pollution sources. These include effluent from septic systems and contaminated storm water runoff carrying such

pollutants as fertilizers, pesticides and petroleum products. Research has shown that "riparian zones" (the vegetative strips of land along stream and pond edges) are critically important in mitigating and controlling pollution from non-point sources (Callahan et al, 1992).

Several of Pomfret's perennial streams {a stream that maintains a constant perceptible flow of water within its channel throughout the year, (Murphy, B., 1991)} support both stocked and native fish populations. These populations are particularly sensitive to pollutants as well as to increases in stream temperature which result from removal of riparian vegetation that shades the stream.

In December 1991 the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) released a pair of documents entitled "Policy Statement, Riparian Corridor Protection" and "Position Statement, Utilization of 100 Foot Buffer Zones to Protect Riparian Areas in Connecticut" (Murphy, 1991). The policy is based on a compilation of existing research data regarding sediment and temperature control, removal of septage effluent, nutrients and other pollutants, and fish habitat considerations. It calls for 100 foot protective buffers around all perennial streams to restrict uses within the strips which pose a significant pollution threat. The policy also calls for 50 foot buffers around intermittent streams (a stream that flows only in direct response to precipitation or which is seasonally dry).

Surface water quality and groundwater quality are interdependent, and proper management of both is critical. Proper management includes appropriate protection of wetlands, protection of riparian zones, avoidance of potentially polluting land uses over high yield groundwater areas, and avoidance of inappropriate land uses in flood management areas. These regulations have been updated by the recent Pomfret Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations, April 2001.

**OBJECTIVE**

The goal was the protection of ground and surface water quality for drinking and other domestic uses, for swimming and other recreational use, and for fish and wildlife habitat. The entire biotic community is dependent upon clean water, and its protection is crucial to the current and future health of our environment.

**APPROACH**

The inventory maps used for this section of the plan include:

MAP 6: Water Quality,

MAP 8: Groundwater Resources,

MAP 10: Inland Wetlands and Watercourses,

MAP 12: Fisheries: Management for Trout and Anadromous Fish,

Map 18: Water Resources highlights where multiple functions of surface waters make them especially worthy of special protection. This should not be interpreted, however, to suggest that other water resources not on this map are not valuable. Significant wetland areas including extensive organic wetlands, unique vegetation types, and streambelts are emphasized in the Water Resources map (Map 18).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A. Groundwater**

Groundwater resources with the potential to serve as public water supply aquifers (MAP 8) must be protected from potentially polluting land uses and other possible contamination. The minimum buildable area required by the Pomfret Planning Commission should not be decreased. Land uses such as auto repair businesses, dry cleaners, printing or machine shops that could permanently and negatively impact future drinking water supplies should be excluded.

**B. Surface Waters**

1. The Inland Wetlands Commission currently regulates activities within 150 feet of wetlands and watercourses. These amendments would not expand the current regulated area, but will provide both the Wetlands Commission and Pomfret residents with more specific guidance regarding allowable activities along watercourses within this regulated area. Donations of protective easements should be encouraged which include these protection zones (See update in Town of Pomfret Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations, April, 2001, Section 6, Page 12).

2. The Conservation Commission further recommends that the Inland Wetlands Commission fully and routinely integrate the use of the above-mentioned Inventory Maps into its deliberation process when considering future permit applications. These maps

can provide tremendous guidance in identifying areas which provide critically important and/or multiple functions (i.e. high water quality, high water yield, high value fishery, unique plant communities and/or habitats, etc.). Such areas should be considered especially worthy of careful consideration and protection when permit applications are presented.

3. The town has begun a detailed, site-by-site evaluation of each wetland system by watershed, utilizing DEP recommended procedures as defined in *The Method for the Valuation of Inland Wetlands in Connecticut,* (DEP Bulletin No. 9). These analyses will quantify even more specifically the functional values of our wetlands based on several criteria such as ecological integrity, wildlife habitat, finfish habitat, flood control value and others. Once complete, this process will enable the Conservation Commission to more precisely rank each wetland system according to its true functional values, and to identify uniquely important wetlands where protection should be more aggressively pursued using the tools outlined in Priorities for Protection of Open Space (see page 11).

## AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES MAP 19

### BACKGROUND

Pomfret is fortunate to have several active farming operations in town, and even more landowners who maintain agricultural fields for lease to farmers (see Map 3). In addition to their farm crops and products, these farms add immeasurably to the aesthetic beauty and rural character of Pomfret which is so often cited as one of its greatest assets. Farmland also provides excellent wildlife habitat for many species, and in some cases recreational opportunities such as hunting, walking and bird watching for town residents. Further, as the previously-mentioned S.N.E. Forest Consortium, Inc. study and others have shown, they provide more tax dollars to the town than they require in-service expenditures. The majority of farm acreage is devoted to pasture for dairy and beef cattle, silage corn, hay, and Christmas tree farming.

As MAP15 shows, Pomfret contains considerable acreage of prime and important farm soils. These are soils which the State Department of Agriculture has identified as particularly productive and valuable for farming, and are therefore especially important to maintain in agriculture.

For several reasons, farmland in Pomfret is probably more threatened by loss to development than any other resource identified for special consideration. First, farmland use is not restricted by state laws or regulation as are wetland areas, and most of Pomfret's farmland is quite suitable to residential development. Second, many of our active farms and prime farm soils are adjacent to or within Pomfret's most rapidly developing neighborhoods. Third, commercial farm owners have been caught in an increasingly difficult squeeze while the cost of doing business rises, the markets for farm products hold steady or decline. Finally, these farms are family businesses, and the land represents the greatest asset. For these reasons, developing and implementing a farmland preservation plan presents perhaps the town's greatest long-term conservation challenge.

#### OBJECTIVE

The Connecticut Office of Policy and Management's Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 1998-2003 lists as a priority statewide goal:
"*To maintain and increase a long-term, in-state food producing capacity: 1) through conservation and preservation of prime agricultural lands, 2) through removal of disincentives to the continuation and expansion of food-producing agriculture... (p. 68)"*

In concert with this statewide goal, our town goal is to preserve important farmland and enhance commercially viable agricultural operations in Pomfret, without unduly restricting the rights of private property owners.

### APPROACH

The inventory maps used for this section of the plan include:

MAP 3: Land in Agricultural Use, 2001

MAP 15: Important Agricultural Lands as Delineated by Soil Type

The Conservation Commission recommends that all commercial farmers and large agricultural landowners be invited to a meeting where their needs and concerns and farmland protection strategies are discussed. A follow-up mail survey of these families should be conducted to compile more detailed information regarding their long-term plans for their property. The results of both the meeting and the survey will be used in developing these recommendations.

Map 19 Agricultural Resources identifies both the active farmland and areas of prime agricultural soils which are located within large areas of contiguous open space. These are priority areas for applying protection

strategies that follow.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Town of Pomfret must clearly establish itself as a town that welcomes and encourages commercial agriculture. A formal town policy of protecting and promoting farming must be developed and reflected in town regulations and ordinances. Specifically, Pomfret should:

1. **Adopt a Right to Farm Ordinance**

   Such an ordinance would clearly set forth Pomfret's position in support of commercial agriculture and farmland protection. Included should be language from Section 19a-341 of the Connecticut General Statutes, which declares that proper and accepted agricultural practices shall not constitute a nuisance.

2. **Reflect This Position in Planning Policies**

   The updated Plan of Conservation and Development must continue to allow farm stands to encourage promotion of locally grown products.

3. **Require Protective Buffers on Land Adjacent to Existing Farmland**

   A vegetative buffer of some optimum width along property lines would limit the effects of dust, noise and odors that new homeowners experience, often unexpectedly, when houses are built next to a farming operation. The buffer would have to be maintained only when the adjacent property is farmland or if it will be permanently protected as farmland.

4. **Promote Farm Profitability**

   Pomfret should seek out all reasonable opportunities to help its commercial farms remain profitable. One such opportunity lies in a 1992 state law which enables towns to abate 50% of the annual property taxes on dairy farms, providing they stay in farming for at least ten years. The law recognizes the extraordinarily difficult financial times dairy farmers have recently experienced and are expected to continue to experience. Pomfret should continue the ordinance providing this abatement.

5. **Acquire Development Rights on Key Parcels**

   Utilizing the State Department of Agriculture's Purchase of Development Rights Program, and supplemental funding from a town open space fund, Pomfret should work with willing farmland owners to permanently protect the most valuable and strategic farm parcels from development while keeping them in private ownership.

   The Conservation Commission further recommends that the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Commission research the potential value of adopting a transfer of development rights program in Pomfret as a tool for protecting the valuable open space in a comprehensive, well planned manner, including the protection of key farmland. Priorities for Protection of Open Space (p. 11) discusses these permanent land protection tools in more detail.

6. **Utilize the Conservation Commission as a Resource for Farmers**

   The Conservation Commission will continually speak out in support of Pomfret farmers to encourage both open space protection and farming as a way of life. The Commission will work to support legislation and other state and regional initiatives of value to agriculture. The Commission will also seek to establish an agricultural advisory committee consisting of farmers, Conservation Commission members, and other interested citizens to provide guidance on farming related issues.

   Further, the town Planning Commission should continue to provide site planning assistance to landowners who seek alternative revenue opportunities from the land without limiting the ability to farm. A careful site plan can be essential to protect long-term agricultural benefits.

## FOREST AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES MAP 20

**BACKGROUND**

Forests are the natural vegetative cover in Connecticut, and a they provide many critical benefits which we often take for granted. They remove carbon dioxide and pollutants from the air and produce the oxygen we breathe. They cleanse and moderate the flow of our water supply. They provide the habitat for virtually all of Pomfret's native wildlife species. They provide countless recreational and educational benefits for our townspeople. Forest based industries, such as sawmills and maple sugaring, contribute to our local economy without changing Pomfret's rural character. Currently, quality timber from Pomfret's forests is made into products which are literally sold all over the world.

The primary threat to the forests' continued ability to provide these benefits is random development and fragmentation. Over 2,000 acres of Pomfret's forest

land is privately owned by individuals and families. As time goes on and long-term development pressures increase, the forest continues to "fragment" into smaller and smaller individual parcels interspersed with housing. In some cases, these forest fragments literally become isolated islands which are completely surrounded by residential and/or commercial development.

As fragmentation proceeds, the ability of the forest to provide its many benefits declines rapidly. When a 100 acre forest becomes forty or fifty, two-acre homesites, for example, it finds itself absorbing septage and residential pollutants and can no longer cleanse our water as it had. Its contribution to air quality improvement is also greatly diminished. It no longer provides recreational opportunities for anyone but the homeowners, and can no longer provide forest products and help support our local forest products industries.

Wildlife habitat value also diminishes rapidly as forests fragment. Some wildlife species such as wild turkey require home ranges of 1,000 acres or more; others like the pileated woodpecker and many of our less common song birds require 300 acres or more per pair to breed successfully. In addition, bluejays, cowbirds and other predatory species that frequent the edges of forests gradually drive interior forest bird species out of existence as parcel size decreases. Finally, the lack of genetic diversity in wildlife populations doomed to isolated forest "islands" causes them to gradually decline due to sterility and other results of inbreeding.

Some degree of fragmentation is inevitable in developing regions such as ours. Land use and conservation plans must therefore consider measures which allow economic growth and development to occur while mitigating these negative effects.

Research has clearly shown that one large, contiguous tract of forest which is diverse biologically provides far greater habitat, recreation and other resource benefits than many small tracts adding up to the same acreage. Further, by connecting such larger tracts to one another with vegetative "corridors," wildlife populations can intermingle and avoid the devastating effects of genetic inbreeding.

**OBJECTIVE**

To conserve productive forests in a way that:

1. protects the health and diversity of our native wildlife populations;
2. allows local forest-based industries to continue to exist;
3. maintains and enhances Pomfret's rural character;
4. provides ongoing forest-based recreational and educational opportunities;
5. is compatible with desirable economic development.

**APPROACH**

Locating and mapping our most valuable forests is less straightforward than locating streams or active farm fields. With assistance from the UConn Cooperative Extension System, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the UConn Department of Natural Resources Management and Engineering, and the DEP Division of Forests and Wildlife, the following approach was developed:

1. Productive Forest Soils (Map 14): NRCS soils maps and field data were used to identify all undeveloped sites in town where the soils are fertile enough to grow timber and other forest products at a reasonably rapid rate. Because of their slope, stoniness and other factors, these productive forest soils may not be well-suited to development, but can provide abundant raw material for the sawmill, maple products and other local forest-based industries.
2. Productive Wildlife Habitats are defined as tracts of sufficient size that provide abundant food, water and cover at all seasons of the year. Because of their innate ability to produce food and cover plants in abundance, wildlife biologists agree that the productive forest soils identified in Map 14 are also, generally speaking, the best potential habitat sites as well. Productive habitats must also contain water, however, and ideally be large enough to accommodate those interior forest species that cannot tolerate forest edge effects and/or human presence.

   Productive wildlife habitats, then, were defined as undeveloped areas greater than 200 (two-hundred) acres in size which consist primarily of productive forest soils, wetlands and/or watercourses.

   The larger the area, the greater the overall habitat value. Additional priority is given to areas meeting the criteria, outlined in the Natural Diversity Database and Cedar Swamp (Map 13) and/or Committed Open Space (Map 5).

3. Forest and Wildlife Resources (Map 20): These connecting corridors were identified after the productive habitat areas, to prevent those areas from becoming isolated "islands." Their purpose is to allow terrestrial wildlife populations to migrate from one habitat area to another. Because wetlands and stream courses have great habitat value themselves and are largely protected from development, these corridors follow streambelts and wetlands wherever possible. *"The junction between land and water is by far the richest of the our wildlife habitats."* (ENFO, 1991)

   Research has determined that certain habitat types such as beech and sugar maple forests cannot reproduce themselves in corridors narrower than three-hundred feet. For this and other reasons, several native wildlife species required travel lanes at least this wide (Adams and Dove, 1989).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Minimizing fragmentation in the productive wildlife habitat areas as identified in Map 20 should be made a land use priority. These areas, along with the important farmland areas discussed in Agricultural Resources, should be given priority in implementing the open space protection methods discussed in Priorities for Protection of Open Space (p. 11). Particular attention should be given to protection of undeveloped parcels adjacent to existing committed open space within these productive wildlife habitat areas to increase the contiguous sizes of protected parcels.

2. Protecting the continuity of the habitat corridors as defined in Map 20 should also become a land use priority. Since most of these corridors are along streambelts, their protection will logically fall to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission and will overlap with the previously recommended riparian corridor protection zones. Specifically, the Conservation Commission recommends that ***the minimum total width of riparian corridor protection zones which are also identified as habitat corridors should be 300 feet.*** {This minimum width can be achieved along perennial streams whose stream and associated wetlands are 100 feet wide with a 100 foot buffer from the regulated wetland area on either side of the stream.} In cases where a habitat corridor does not coincide with a streambelt or wetland, protection of a continuous 300 ft. corridor will fall to the Planning Commission. The Conservation Commission suggests the use of conservation easements along wetland areas as the most effective way to protect corridors.

   Land use changes which interrupt a corridor's continuity should be avoided. When no feasible alternatives exist, allowances should be made in the project design which enable the largest wildlife species that may use the corridor to continue to do so. Mitigating measures may include increasing the culvert size in wetland crossings and bridging for stream corridor crossings.

3. All Pomfret landowners, and particularly those within the wildlife habitat and habitat corridor areas, should be encouraged to implement sound forest and wildlife conservation practices. Several state and federal agencies provide no-cost (cost borne by taxpayers) assistance and in many cases cost-sharing incentives to landowners interested in improving their land for wildlife and other forest benefits. The Conservation Commission should assist in keeping landowners informed about such programs and encouraging their participation.

   The Connecticut Forest Practices Act, (P.A. 91-335) requires registration of loggers and professional foresters and regulates forest management practices. The DEP has established the mechanism to implement this law. Pomfret should actively assist the DEP in ensuring good forestry management practices within the town.

4. The Conservation Commission recommends that the Planning Commission fully and routinely integrate the use of Productive Forest Soils Map (Map 14) into its deliberation process when considering future land use policies. It is important to understand that areas outside of the productive wildlife habitat zones are not devoid of wildlife value. In cases where open space set-asides are involved, this map can provide tremendous guidance in identifying areas within a given parcel which will provide the greatest long-term forest and wildlife value.

## Recreational, Aesthetic and Historic Resources

### Background

Pomfret abounds with remarkable scenic vistas, historic and even prehistoric sites, and other priceless cultural resources that distinguish it from other communities in the region. An understanding of the need to protect and conserve these resources can only come with an appreciation of them. The uniqueness of our town fosters community pride and a sense of place. A long-standing tradition of volunteerism resulting from this pride and appreciation is one of the things that makes Pomfret a special place live.

In 1995 the General Assembly under PA 95-335 established the Greenways Council. The DEP has also established a Greenways Assistance Center to provide assistance and guidance in the development of local greenways plans which incorporate the protection of natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources, and offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation. These greenways connect to existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors and are located along a defining natural feature to preserve scenic vistas and greenspace along our highways and around villages.

By planning for it now Pomfret has the opportunity to tie itself into such a greenway network in a way that will enable future residents to forever enjoy our natural, scenic and cultural resources.

The Town of Pomfret consists of 40.6 square miles, or 25,989 acres of land. As of this writing, 4,400 acres are permanently protected as open space. This protected land represents only 18% of the Town of Pomfret or 1.4 acres per person (population year 2000, 3,200 persons), which are available for public use.

## Pomfret Open Space

### Land Allocation

*Inaccessible to Public*

Conservation Easement

Land Trust

Water Conservation District

Development Rights Purchased

*Accessible to Public*

Municipal

Audubon

Wyndham Land Trust

Nature Conservancy

State Parks and State Forests

Airline Trail

### Objective

To bring attention to, and assure the preservation and protection of, Pomfret's recreational, aesthetic and historic resources so that future generations may appreciate its heritage and maintain the identity that distinguishes Pomfret from other communities in the region.

### Approach

The Inventory Maps pertinent to this section of the plan include:

MAP 2: Historic Districts and Sites;

MAP 4: Archeological Areas and Rock Outcrops;

MAP 5: Committed Open Space.

Public input was received through a mail survey of town residents. Among the most notable resources brought to the Commission's attention were stone walls and Amaral Farm.

### Recommendations

1. The town should strive to protect greenways along the Quinebaug River, Mashamoquet Brook, Lyon Brook, Blackwell Brook, Nightingale Brook, Wappoquia Brook, White Brook, the Airline Trail and other sites as may be identified.

2. Plans should be developed for a town-wide greenway system so that residents can enjoy the scenic, natural and historic beauty of our community. Such a system could be used by all community members for walking, hiking, bicycling and horseback riding. Implementation

of the system, once designed, would logically be accomplished through combined Conservation and Planning Commission efforts, utilizing donated or purchased recreational easements and other appropriate tools described in Priorities for Protection of Open Space (p.11). Plans should be shared with adjacent towns and regional organizations to encourage linkages beyond Pomfret.

3. A scenic road ordinance should be considered which would attempt to protect scenic vistas and other important natural features visible from town roads which add to the beauty of the town. Pomfret currently has scenic Route 169 bisecting the town from the north to the south and a section of Route 97 has also received state designation.

4. A policy to protect Pomfret's best scenic vistas, unique stone walls and ruins and unique natural areas should be devised and incorporated into the town subdivision regulations. The protection of archeological resources is currently addressed in the subdivision regulations. The State Archeologist should continue to be consulted concerning areas of archeological sensitivity. These areas should be fully investigated by a qualified archeologist prior to disturbance.

## PRIORITIES FOR PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE MAP 21

*While this Conservation Plan is divided into four discrete sections, there is considerable overlap among them in any implementation plan. It is the Conservation Commission's position that the highest priority for Pomfret's protection of open space should be given to areas with the multiple resources depicted in Map 21.*

1. THE HIGHEST PROTECTION PRIORITY is given to areas containing priority water resources (Map 18), priority agricultural resources (Map 19), and priority forest and wildlife resources (Map 20).

2. THE SECOND PRIORITY LEVEL is given to areas containing two of the three priority resource categories, and which are adjacent to existing, permanently committed open space (Map 5).

3. THE THIRD PRIORITY LEVEL is given to areas containing two of the three priority resource categories.

4. THE FOURTH PRIORITY LEVEL is given to areas which appear on only one of the resource maps.

Map 21 should be used to design a Town Greenways Plan to link existing committed open space and the priority protection areas described above. Linking these areas the greenways would provide both trails for human recreation benefits, and protects the genetic viability of native wildlife populations. This final map outlines the areas in town that are vital for all forms of living organisms to maintain a high quality of life. This strategy will ensure that the process of linking open space areas will continue as new parcels are protected.

The importance of this approach stems from the understanding that Pomfret has limited resources for open space acquisition. Ultimately, the implementation of this greenway plan would ensure that every resident of Pomfret would live within convenient access of a wildlife corridor or hiking trail, which in turn would lead to other available natural areas.

**Methods for Protection of Open Space details proposed strategies for implementing the plan.**

*The objectives of this plan can not likely be realized without cost, but can be realized with minimal financial impact to the town. There are many options for protecting open space, at least some of which must be utilized if any of the recommendations in this plan are to become reality. Some require financial investment by the town and some do not. Some involve public acquisition of property that is currently privately owned. Others involve leaving property in private ownership, while removing certain rights from the property through purchased from or donation by the owner. Each resource and situation must be examined independently and the most viable option chosen.*

The Conservation Commission recommends that the Town of Pomfret adopt the following open space protection measures as tools for the implementation of this plan:

**A. Enable the Use of Creative Development Techniques**

Regulatory mechanisms should be adopted which will encourage natural resources and open space protection rather than discourage it and still protect the individual landowner. A primary tool in this category is the open space subdivision. Under this option, developers are allowed the same number of units as they would under traditional subdivision, but the orientation of the development sets aside more open land. Houses or commercial buildings are allowed to be "clustered" together on smaller individual lots so that large tracts of open land can be maintained. The Planning Commission should review this option and consider mandatory clustering for residential subdivisions containing large areas designated as worthy of protection.

**B. Establish a Town Open Space Fund**

Some occasions are certain to arise where the judicious use of municipal funds to protect open space will prove to be a wise long-term investment. Once missed, such opportunities can not be regained, and often quick action is required. The existence of a town open space fund will enable Pomfret to act quickly when the need arises.

There are numerous ways to generate funds for such an account, including:

- Municipal bonding: One very commonly used tool. For example, upon completion of an open space plan, the community of Mansfield Center voted a $1 million bond authorization. This option has the advantage of generating a significant sum in a short time, whereas other alternatives take considerably longer to accumulate a usable amount of money.
- Fees in lieu of open space: A recent change in Connecticut's subdivision-enabling statutes allow municipalities to request fees in lieu of open space. This gives the Planning Commission the option of requesting fees from individual subdivisions, rather than requiring small isolated open space parcels to be set aside in each case. The fees that accumulate can be used for future, more valuable open space acquisition.
- Budget incorporation: Another option is for the town to dedicate a percentage of the annual budget to accumulate funds in and open space fund, and/or to target unspent funds previously allocated to certain accounts to roll into the fund.
- Private contributions: Some citizens may be willing to contribute to an open space fund as an expression of their personal community and conservation ethic. The town can offer to match private contributions as a giving incentive.

The Conservation Commission hopes to work with the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen in the immediate future to determine the best, most feasible combination of these and other options.

**C. Establish a Town Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program**

This program would be one use of funds in the open space account. In many cases protection pools that keep the land in private ownership, but preserve the natural resources, make more sense than public acquisition. The land remains on the tax roles, and the town incurs no long-term maintenance expense. Two examples are the purchase of development rights on working farmland, and the purchase of recreational use easements along streams or rivers. A so-called PDR program would purchase development rights, and in some cases, recreational use rights from willing landowners in critical areas which are most threatened by development. The development and/or recreational use rights are sold but the landowners still retain title (and all other rights) to the property.

Importantly, a local PDR program can act as a supplemental fund to the state PDR program for agricultural land. This would be especially effective in cases where the State and a landowner cannot agree on a final dollar amount. In such cases, a relatively small investment by the town can seal a deal that would otherwise fall through. The criteria used by the state PDR program for prioritizing properties fits well with our plan and could logically be used for any local PDR program.

### D. Assist Private Landowners Interested In Voluntary Protection Measures

Research has shown that many Connecticut landowners have developed a strong attachment to their land and have a personal desire to see that some or all of it is permanently protected from development. Some are willing to forego monetary value in order to realize this desire. Landowners who have such an interest should be made aware that assistance is available to help them design the best protection plan. There are significant income and estate tax benefits available to landowners who donate (or sell at a bargain price) conservation easements or land to the town or to qualifying nonprofit organizations.

### E. Consider Adopting a Transfer of Development Rights Program

This type of town-wide program has been shown to successfully protect open space while allowing economic growth to continue. It appears best suited for rapidly urbanizing areas such as northeastern Connecticut.

In a transfer of development rights program, areas which have been previously designated as significant and worthy of protection are designated as "Sending Areas." Designated "Receiving Areas" are those most suitable to more intense development due to factors such as proximity to transportation corridors and public utilities. Developers negotiate directly with willing landowners in the Sending Areas to purchase their development rights at a mutually agreed upon price. The developer can then use the purchased development rights as credits which allow for increased development density on properties in the Receiving Area.

The Conservation Commission would like to jointly explore the feasibility of adopting such a program in Pomfret with the Selectmen, the Planning and Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commissions.

## CONCLUSION

*This plan has resulted from the combined expertise of many resource and planning specialists, and more than two years of hard work on the part of volunteer Conservation Commissioners. No outside planning consultants were hired to generate the ideas and recommendations it contains. Rather, they are the ideas and recommendations of Pomfret residents who either volunteer on the Commission or who made their interests known through the public participation process.*

*The Conservation Commission believes strongly that, if implemented, this plan can assure Pomfret's long-term position as one of Connecticut's most successful and desirable communities. The Commission looks forward to moving from the inventory and planning process to carrying out the recommendations. We can only be successful, however, if our Selectmen, our fellow town Commissions and the people of Pomfret share the Conservation Commission's vision and work with us to make it a reality.*