

Natural Resources Planning Workshop
Thursday, November 6, 2014 at 6pm
Chocorua Library, Runnells Hall

About 30 people, representing Ossipee Watershed planning boards, conservation commissions, boards of selectmen and residents, attended the Natural Resource Planning workshop hosted by Green Mountain Conservation Group. Steve Whitman of Resilience Planning and Design led the group in discussions including:

- The importance of needing a scalable and solution oriented design framework our community
- How “resilience” for our natural resources should factor into planning for growth
- The importance of viewing the whole community as an ecosystem
- Linking town master plan visions to drafted and supported town regulations

The attendees were broken up into six groups, mixing up the town representatives to foster more cross town conversations and networking. A matrix of the know regulations from each of the 7 towns (Eaton, Effingham, Freedom, Madison, Ossipee, Sandwich and Tamworth) was distributed to the groups for reference. The groups were asked to list the significant natural resources in our region, talk about the values of those natural resources, share the various degrees of how these resources are protected or not, and if not, what are the stumbling blocks.

Each Group presented a few “**Take Aways**” from their group discussion:

- The groups all listed the local natural resources requiring attention: water, wetlands, air, soil, agricultural lands, forests, wildlife, mountains, rock, views.
- One group talked about concerns they had over local forestry practices and ridgeline development and steep slopes
- Aquifer re-charge and water extraction were a concern of several groups, including how to manage storm water drainage and control erosion
- Property rights have to be considered and there was a question about how long “grandfathering” remains in effect
- Concerns for how to energize new residents moving into the region and younger adults to take an interest in town natural resource based planning
- Challenges of lack of data and educating the town residents on land conservation and how to demonstrate natural resources impact into the future when drafting land use regulations
- Wildlife corridors development (Sandwich and Ossipee to the White Mountains)
- Are Septic ordinances at the state level enough? Are the setbacks adequate?
- Is there a general reactive versus pro-active response to water extraction?
- Are we doing enough for recycling?

From the open group’s discussion above, a list of possible “**Next Steps**” evolved:

- Develop a more effective “properly functioning and situated septic” awareness and possible regulations strategy. Can GMCG take the lead?

- Gain a better understanding of the impact of water extraction and how the region can be properly prepared for future applications. How and what local ordinances can be drafted to compliment state laws?
- Need for viewshed and ridgeline protection ordinances
- How can the towns plan for more effective public transportation?
- There is an interest in planning for bike corridors
- What about a shared “energy” infrastructure? Wind Energy and Solar Energy ordinances for the towns
- Open Space and Subdivision need attention to improve protection of our natural resources
- Limited professional job opportunities are a challenge to attract younger adults to remain in our region

Jay Buckley, GMCG board of director’s representative for the town of Madison, spoke about past examples of willing land owners to do the right thing for the benefit of the ecosystem. However, as land ownership changes, regulations and ordinances should be drafted to insure continuance of “best management practices”. The Natural Resource Local Ordinance Matrix shows several areas where towns can look to determine what areas they could be working on in the future to improve protections.

The GMCG drafted Natural Resource Planning guide can be a resource for each town. GMCG presented a hardcopy of the guide and a CD in 2010. The guide can also be found at the GMCG website. Each town has also been presented a copy of the Ossipee Watershed town’s collection of ordinances and regulations for the purpose of providing additional reference.