

CHAPTER 6: NATURAL RESOURCES

Challenges and Opportunities

6.1 Lancaster's mountains, hillsides, ponds, wetlands, rivers, scenic views and special resource areas contribute greatly to the economic well-being and quality of life in the North Country. The preservation of rural character and open space are high priorities in Lancaster, from the undeveloped shoreline of Martin Meadow Pond, the Kilkenny Mountain Range and the Israel River Valley to the scenic ridgeline connecting the summits of Mt. Orne and Mt. Pleasant. In order to preserve these resources, Lancaster should promote the sustainable use and stewardship of land through policies and regulations which support the co-existence of the man-made and natural environments. For example, the location of roads, sewer, water and other infrastructure, as well as where new buildings are sited, impacts the natural environment and can have unintended consequences.

6.2 Though only one large dairy operation survives in Lancaster, the town retains the feel of an agricultural community. Unique in New Hampshire, there is a working farm on Main Street. There are a host of active smaller agricultural uses throughout the town, from greenhouses and orchards to hobby farms, retail farm stands and maple sugar orchards. Sweeping floodplain meadows and cornfields along the Connecticut River greet the visitor from the west, and the hillsides to the east of the village are studded with scenic hill farms where pasture is slowly growing back to woods. Knowing that when agricultural lands are built upon or paved over they are lost forever, Lancaster's residents strongly support maintaining traditional agricultural uses in the town.

6.3 Limiting development to agriculture, forestry and recreational uses near undeveloped shoreline, steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, prime agricultural lands and large tracts of forest land serves many purposes: ecological, economic and scenic. Residents strongly favor the establishment of a watershed overlay district to regulate activity in the Garland Brook watershed, the source of the town's drinking water supply. As a first step to protecting natural resources, the community must identify and inventory them. Much of this information is available from state and federal agencies and Community Survey respondents identified a host of scenic resources they wish to see protected. The acquisition of land or easements is an option to protect some resources such as prime agricultural lands. However, scenic resources, surface and ground water resources, and undeveloped watersheds may be more realistically protected through land use regulations.

6.4 While Lancaster's residents support the preservation of open space and scenic resources, they are concerned that increased posting of private land and state and national forest management plans may limit their access to these lands for recreation and timber harvesting.

Goal 6.1: To identify, preserve and protect the natural resources and environment of Lancaster, maintaining access to both public and private land for recreation.

Objectives:

- 1) Recognize the Town's natural and scenic resources including prime agricultural lands, important wetlands, large forest tracts, undeveloped shoreline and scenic vistas.
- 2) Planning and Zoning Boards will encourage land protection and conservation measures on the part of individual landowners and encourage public access.

- 3) Review permitted and special exception uses, lot sizes and frontage requirements in the Agricultural District to foster large and small farming operations, to maintain the productivity of prime agricultural lands and to retain open space.

Goal 6.2: Protect Lancaster's water resources.

Objectives:

Continue to protect the Garland Brook watershed by acquiring land or easements on critical privately-held land in the watershed.