

Conservation Matters

A monthly column focused on conservation education, as the result of collaboration among several area conservation commissions and organizations. If your town's commission or conservation organization would like to contribute articles, please contact Jessica Tabolt Halm jess_tabolt@hotmail.com

Title: The New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan

Submitted by: Larry Spencer, Chair, Holderness Conservation Commission

Did you know that New Hampshire has a Wildlife Action Plan? It does, and the planning is now in the works for a new Wildlife Action Plan. What is a Wildlife Action Plan? Who does it and why do they do it? Who uses it?

The NH Fish and Game Department commonly controls actions pertaining to wildlife in NH. In order for that department of the state government to receive some Federal monies, they must have an approved Wildlife Action Plan. The plan examines all aspects of wildlife in NH, not just the game animals, but also the non-game animals. The plan was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in October of 2005 and approved by the same agency in 2006. Although there exists a narrative for the present plan, one of the major outcomes of the plan was a series of maps. In order to create these maps, a variety of features of the NH environment (kinds of ecosystems, location of deer yards, etc.) were examined, and a Geographic Information Specialist weighted these factors to produce a final map that indicated areas of highest importance for wildlife in the state. That same plan identified 19 habitat areas in NH going from the alpine zone of Mt. Washington to the salt marshes of Hampton and Rye. As a conservation commission, Holderness received the document and also a set of these maps. We often use them in our deliberations about which lands in Holderness we should pursue easements on. In Holderness, we are lucky that many of the areas with a high values associated with them are already under protection (the many easements on the Squam Range, Owl Brook Center, etc.) but the maps indicate other areas that might be appropriate for greater care and concern in the future. Various state agencies (NHFG and NHDES) and many non-governmental organizations also rely on the plan and the maps in making decisions about wildlife.

As mentioned, the past Wildlife Action Plan has been around for a while and now it's time for a new one. The NH Fish and Game in conjunction with the NH Extension Service has been holding a series of meetings state wide to gather input for the next plan. I recently attended an open meeting in Concord at the NH Fish and Game Department. We were broken up into a series of smaller working groups. Leaders from Fish and Game and Extension then moved amongst these groups examining roughly eight different areas. For each of the areas, the group discussed some general features, some problems, and then some possible solutions to the problems. For example, land use is an important attribute. We need land for new schools, industry, homes etc., but at the same time every time land is moved from a natural state to a developed state there is less space for the creatures that occupied that space. Is there a solution to this situation? One possible solution would be to identify locations in a town that are less suitable for wildlife, yet that would be suitable for development purposes. Extension and the NH Fish and Game will now use the feedback from these planning sessions to develop a new plan.

More on the NH Wildlife Action Plan is available on the NH Fish and Game website (<http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife/wap.html>). The whole plan is available for download. There are also locations on the webpage where individuals can supply input to the upcoming plan.

Caption for photo (attached separately): A mother doe and two fawns visited the author's backyard in early spring.

