

## Conservation Matters

### **Title: Conservation Focus Areas and Citizen Planning**

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Land conservation is a core strategy to permanently protect critical watershed areas and guide town planning and development decision making. Led by the NLRA Land Committee, the Newfound Land Conservation Partnership has helped protect over 2,500 acres since 2009, with an additional ~1,500 acres added by the Green Acre Woodlands “Cardigan Highlands” Forest Legacy project in 2016.

To build on this success and with support from NLRA members, Newfound watershed stakeholders recently ranked relative values of 18 natural resources from riparian buffers to watershed views that Dan Sundquist of GreenfireGIS analyzed and incorporated in a Conservation Focus Areas (CFA) map. The CFA map scientifically illustrates three Tiers of conservation priorities, and key findings and recommendations include:

#### Findings

- Much of the watershed is in the two highest Tiers, making it among the very best natural habitat in NH.
- Roughly 21% (mostly uplands) is conserved, while key areas with multiple high-value natural resources (riparian buffers, wetlands, floodplains, aquifers, future water supplies, prime soils, and views) are not protected.
- The estimated 15-year buildout shows ~1,100 new homes by 2030. Change is coming.
- Lack of comprehensive local zoning and enforcement risks damage to clean water and views.

#### Recommendations

- Protect riparian buffers as the best defense against stormwater pollution.
- Protect highest-Tier parcels and headwater streams to maintain clean water, healthy habitat, and views.
- Protect high-value areas with multiple resources, such as the Fowler and Cockermouth River valleys.
- Incorporate CFA data with town planning to balance development growth and natural resource protection. The healthier the watershed, the more valuable the buildings placed in it!

The CFA map and data will be shared with watershed towns (Alexandria, Bridgewater, Bristol, Groton, and Hebron) at a series of public Citizen Planner meetings to assist local citizens in guiding their towns to a sustainable and robust future. The final report will be completed soon, and posted on NLRA’s web site for public use.

Hosted by local Planning Boards, all Citizen Planner meetings start at 7 pm. Please join us for the following 2017 schedule and weigh in on what your town should look like:

- June 7 (Hebron town offices)
- June 20 (Bridgewater town hall)
- June 28 (Bristol town offices)
- June 29 (Groton town hall)
- July 19 (Alexandria town offices)

There is a time-tested anecdote for planning: “Failing to plan is planning to fail”. While this sounds drastic, local control – your taking part in planning – is the best way to choose your future!

The NLRA advocates for action to protect what we all love and what underlies our economic well being: a healthy, clean and pristine natural environment. Our "Choose Your Future" campaign is more than a slogan - it is real and feasible. We have proven strategies and programs to achieve our shared mission, but need your help to wield the tools. Learn more at [www.Newfoundlake.org](http://www.Newfoundlake.org) and [www.facebook.com/Newfoundlake](https://www.facebook.com/Newfoundlake).