New Hampshire Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Protection Plan

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Executive Summary

The national Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) purpose includes important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant ecological, conservation, recreation, historical, or aesthetic values. The NHCELCP program has adopted this same focus. This plan was formulated using two distinct processes, one for the ecological and conservation values and the other for the recreation, historical and aesthetic values.

The New Hampshire plan focuses on ecological and conservation values as the priorities for CELCP funding with recreational, historic and aesthetic values playing a supporting role. The primary vehicle for determining highly ecologically important lands was *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds*. This plan, funded by the N.H. Coastal Program and Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, was written by The Nature Conservancy, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and the Stafford and Rockingham regional planning commissions.

The plan identified 75 conservation focus areas (CFAs) within the coastal watershed, which is the CELCP boundary for the state. The CFAs are a science and expert-based approach to prioritizing lands for conservation. The values taken into consideration are: (1) forest ecosystems, (2) freshwater systems, (3) irreplaceable coastal and estuarine resources, and (4) critical plant and wildlife habitat.

These CFAs and their supporting landscapes are taken into consideration in selecting projects to send to the national CELCP competition conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In general, the priorities for CELCP funding are as follows:

- ***Ecological*** -- Core areas within the conservation focus areas -- those lands that demonstrate exceptional ecological values as indicated by their co-occurring values in four categories of natural resource features.
- ***Conservation***-- The supporting natural landscapes that surround the conservation focus areas and riparian buffers.

The other supporting or secondary values are as follows:

- ***Recreation –*** Public access to rivers in the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program.
- ***Historical --*** Sites containing significant historical, cultural or archaeological features that are recognized by state or national lists.
- ***Aesthetic –*** Lands along Scenic Byways and unobstructed views of tidal waters.

Many other criteria come into play in the CELCP process which are designed to ensure that CELCP lands are effectively managed and protected.

Section I. Description of the Program and Priorities

Introduction

"Southeastern New Hampshire is changing before our eyes. The region's forests, wildlife habitat, clean water, and scenic vistas are increasingly threatened by sprawling development, roads, and other irreversible land use changes. According to *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds,* over the past 36 years, in Rockingham and Strafford Counties, an average of 2,230 acres per year has been converted from undeveloped land to a developed condition. And there is no indication that the pace of development will slow in the foreseeable future. The two counties are projected to add more than 100,000 new residents from 2000 to 2025.

With this conversion comes the loss of important natural resource values provided by undeveloped land, especially for plant and wildlife habitat, clean water, and other "ecological services." To ensure a healthy environment into the future, it is essential that communities identify, retain, and protect the remaining undeveloped lands and waters that support the most important of these natural resource values and functions.

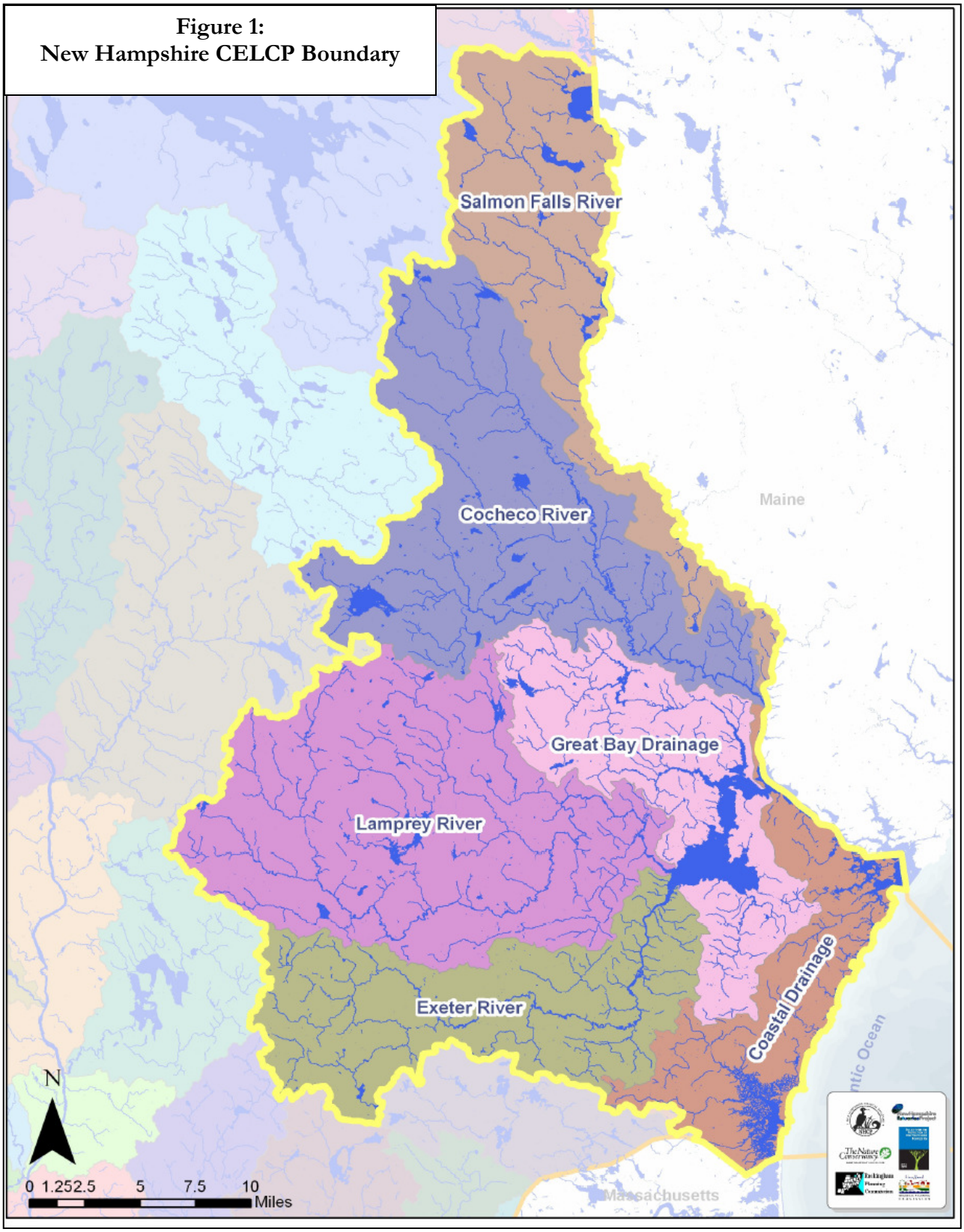
New Hampshire's coastal watersheds *(see Figure 1 for NHCELCP Boundary)* are, quite simply, irreplaceable. Representing only nine percent of the state, these 525,000 acres:

- Harbor our small coastline, sandy beaches and dunes, and rocky shores.
- Provide essential habitat for more than 130 rare species, including many species of plants and wildlife that occur nowhere else in New Hampshire.
- Contain more than 1,800 miles of rivers and streams, ranging from cold brook trout headwaters in the upper watershed to large, meandering tidal rivers near the coast.
- Include two highly productive and important estuaries, Great Bay and Hampton-Seabrook, and several sizeable salt marsh complexes.
- Retain complex and diverse forest and wetland ecosystems that provide habitat, ecosystem services (such as water quality filtering and flood protection), timber supply, and other forest products.
- Offer some of the state's best outdoor recreation opportunities for hiking, hunting, salt and freshwater fishing, boating, snowmobiling, bird-watching, bicycle riding, and more.
- Provide unparalleled, diverse scenery that shapes the region's character and quality of life.

Tens of thousands of people call New Hampshire's coastal watersheds "home." Better than anyone, these residents understand why the coastal watersheds are so special, and why communities must work independently and collaboratively to safeguard these natural assets for present and future generations."

(All the above is from Zankel, et al. 2006. *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds*. Concord, New Hampshire)

Figure 1:
New Hampshire CELCP Boundary



About this Plan

CELCP Program Focus

The national CELCP program's purpose includes important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant ecological, conservation, recreation, historical, or aesthetic values. The NHCELCP program has adopted this same focus. This plan was formulated using two distinct processes, one for the ecological and conservation values and one for the recreation, historical and aesthetic values.

The CELCP program's authorizing language gives priority to lands that have significant ecological values, and which can be effectively managed and protected. For the purposes of the NHCELCP, **significant ecological values** were interpreted to include those lands and waters that are most important for conserving ***living resources*** – native plants, animals, natural communities, and ecosystems--and ***water quality***. The use of conservation focus areas and riparian habitats as priorities for NHCELCP mirrors that CELCP program language.

It is important to note that the NHCELCP considers the ecological and conservation values to be primary values with the recreation, historical and aesthetic values as supporting values.

Geographic Scope

This plan covers priority conservation areas for the coastal watersheds in New Hampshire (*see Figure 1 for NHCELCP Boundary*). As this figure shows, the NHCELCP boundary is the coastal watershed boundary. **Projects outside the coastal watershed boundary are ineligible for CELCP funding.** The watershed boundary was chosen as the NHCELCP boundary for a number of reasons:

- Studies by the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, New Hampshire Coastal Program, University of New Hampshire, and others have all determined that the water quality problems associated with Great Bay, Hampton Harbor and near-shore areas are highly related to development activity in the watershed. About 60 percent of the nutrients entering the Great Bay estuary come from non-point sources outside the coastal zone management boundary.
- Development forces, which focused on the coastal zone management boundary in the past, are now driving much more development farther into the watershed. The reasons for this are clear: local zoning with "sprawl" incentives, the high prices of real estate in the coastal zone, increased employment opportunities in the coastal zone, and improved transportation corridors. These development forces now favor small in-fill type development in the coastal zone and more expansive, lower dense development in the watershed.
- A recent study by U.S. Geological Survey and the Coastal Program demonstrates that a relatively small amount of impervious surface development in a watershed can impact water quality. Even more importantly, the location of that development, especially in riparian corridors has a huge negative effect on the quality of coastal tributary rivers.

- With respect to important coastal flora and fauna, the coastal zone boundary is an arbitrary line based on political subdivisions, not ecological systems. The watershed, while not a perfect boundary, encompasses the diversity of habitats necessary not only for the current assemblage of plants and animals but also a "reserve" of species to better adapt to change climate regimes.
- The Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR) covers the largest estuarine system in New Hampshire. The Great Bay Reserve offers a diversity of land and water areas, including upland forest, salt marsh, mudflats, tidal creeks, rocky intertidal, eelgrass beds, channel bottom/subtidal and upland field habitats. The reserve encompasses 10,235 acres, including approximately 7,300 acres of open water and wetlands. GBNERR has a targeted watershed boundary for the purposes of NHCELCP. The boundary serves to identify areas with potential benefit to the National Estuarine Research Reserve system. *(See Appendix A).*

Plans Incorporated by Reference

The New Hampshire CELCP incorporates and unifies several existing state and federal programs and plans built upon existing conservation efforts, rather than duplicating them. *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds* was used in determining the highest priority project areas in the NHCELCP. Since *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds* was so pivotal in developing the NHCELCP Plan, a more in-depth description of the plan and its methodology is provided at the end of this section.

The following plans (noted in the table below) were used to help identify lands, values, and project areas of highest importance to N.H. These plans, however, are regularly updated and planning efforts are revisited and adapted to reflect continually changing conditions. Several regional conservation planning collaborations are forming to identify acquisition priorities and leverage the resources of participating groups.

Description of Existing Plans

Plan citation	Relevance to CELCP
Zankel, M., C. Copeland, P. Ingraham, J. Robinson, C. Sinnott, D. Sundquist, T. Walker, and J. Alford. 2006. *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds*. The Nature Conservancy, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Rockingham Planning Commission, and Strafford Region Planning Commission. Prepared for the New Hampshire Coastal Program and the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, Concord, N.H. http://www.rpc-nh.org/coastal-conservation.htm	The plan is the source document for New Hampshire's conservation focus areas, which identify the core areas (ecological values) and supporting natural landscapes (conservation values) that are considered primary priority areas under the NHCELCP. For a detailed description of the primary priority areas, refer to page 16.
Justice, D. and F. Rubin. 2006. *Stream Buffer Characterization Study*. UNH Complex Systems Research Center. Durham, N.H. http://www.prep.unh.edu/resources/pdf/stream_buffer_characterization-unh-06.pdf	This plan is the source document for riparian buffers under conservation values, which is considered a primary priority area under NHCELCP. This study shows the intact riparian buffers in the coastal watershed. See the description of riparian buffers on pages 18.

New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan, 2005. New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Concord, N.H. http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Wildlife/wildlife_plan.htm	Data from this plan is integrated into Conservation Focus Area development in *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds*. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and partners developed numerous wildlife habitat models to predict natural communities for the state's Wildlife Action Plan. Nine of these habitat models are relevant to New Hampshire's coastal watersheds. These include cliffs, coastal islands, dunes, floodplain forests, grassland, marsh, peatland, pitch pine barren, ridge and talus.
Exeter River Corridor and Watershed Management Plan, 1999. ERLAC. Exeter, N.H. http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/documents/management_plan_exeter.pdf	This plan is a source document for secondary priority areas under the recreation value specific to the Exeter River Watershed. Refer to pages 21-24.
Isinglass River Corridor and Watershed Management Plan, 2008. IRLAC. Dover, N.H. http://www.strafford.org/natres/isinglassplan.htm	This plan is a source document for secondary priority areas under the recreation value specific to the Islinglass River Watershed. Refer to pages 21-24.
Lamprey River Management Plan for the towns of Durham, Epping, Lee, and Newmarket. 2007 LRLAC. Epping, N.H. http://lampreyriver.org/Plan/LRMP_11.07_FINAL.pdf	This plan is a source document for secondary priority areas under the recreation value specific to the Lamprey River Watershed. Refer to pages 21-24.
Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Plan, 2006-2010. Stratham, N.H. http://nerrs.noaa.gov/Doc/PDF/Reserve/GRB_MgmtPlan.pdf	This plan identifies core and buffer areas for the Reserve and is the source for evaluating relevance to the GBNERR under section I of the scoring criteria *(See NHCELCP Scoring Criteria I Relevance of Proposed Project to Program Goals, Relevance to Other Plans on page 32).*

The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds

The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds was designed to address the ecological and conservation values of land in the coastal watershed and is intended as a land protection planning tool for municipalities and others working to protect natural resources.

In 2006, the New Hampshire Coastal Program developed *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds* primarily through a partnership of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), Rockingham Planning Commission, and Strafford Regional Planning Commission. The partners were contracted by the New Hampshire Coastal Program and the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership to develop the plan because, collectively, these organizations have considerable experience and expertise in conservation planning and strategy development and community engagement.

Through a public process, 75 conservation focus areas (CFAs) were identified within New Hampshire's coastal watershed as lands with exceptional significance for the protection of living resources and water quality. TNC, SPNHF and the regional planning commissions identified these 75 areas through a systematic, state-of-the-art analysis of a wealth of natural resources data. Collectively, the CFAs comprise approximately 190,300 acres, or 36 percent of the watershed. In general, focus areas occur in places where multiple important natural resource

features co-occur to an extent that is significant from a watershed perspective. Occasionally, focus areas emerged that contained only one or two important features, because the features were considered truly irreplaceable, e.g., habitat for a globally rare species or an intact coastal salt marsh. Conservation focus areas have two parts: a **core area** and **supporting natural landscape**.

• *The* **core area** *is the contiguous geographic area that contains the primary natural features and habitat for which the CFA was identified.* Core areas contain essential habitat for plant and wildlife species of concern and exemplary natural communities, highest quality small watersheds and other vital freshwater features, irreplaceable coastal resources such as estuarine shoreline, and the best remaining examples of intact forest ecosystems. These unfragmented areas, which are wholly or almost entirely undeveloped, represent the highest priority for conservation and protection.

• *The* **supporting natural landscape** *includes the surrounding area that helps to safeguard the core area while also providing habitat for many common species.* A supporting natural landscape functions as a buffer around the core area, undeveloped watersheds, and undeveloped forest blocks, helping to maintain ecological processes upon which habitats and species depend. Conserving supporting landscapes will embed the core areas in a minimally fragmented and minimally disturbed matrix, thus helping to maintain the viability and quality of the core area natural features over time. *(Please see Appendix B for Designing the Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs).*

Types of Lands/Values to be Protected

Four land values served as the building blocks for the CFAs: (1) forest ecosystems, (2) freshwater systems, (3) critical coastal and estuarine resources, and (4) critical plant and wildlife habitat. *(Refer to the Appendices for the resource maps: Appendix D for Forest Ecosystems, Appendix E for Freshwater Systems, Appendix F for Critical Coastal and Estuarine Resources, Appendix G for Critical Plant and Wildlife Habitats. See Appendix H for a detailed description of these land values).* The maps are intended to provide additional information on data layers that are built into the conservation focus areas, which serve as the basis for the NHCELCP priority project areas.

The below is an outline of the data sources used to define the core areas and supporting natural landscapes.

1. *Forest Ecosystems*
   - Unfragmented forest blocks
   - Aggregated forest blocks
   - High quality stream watersheds

2. *Freshwater Systems*
   - Pristine Watersheds
   - Riparian Zones
   - Floodplain Forests

- Important Stream Reaches

3. *Critical Coastal and Estuarine Resources.*
   - Undeveloped coastal shoreline
   - Tidal and estuarine riparian zones
   - Tidal wetlands
   - Forest blocks > 500 acres within tidal catchments

4. *Critical Plant and Wildlife Habitats*
   - Rare Plants, Exemplary Natural Communities, and Supporting Natural Habitat

Upon completing resource maps for the above values, we developed what is known as a resource co-occurrence model. The goal of a resource co-occurrence model is to aid in identifying areas where several resource values coincide and overlap, thus signaling locations with multiple conservation values and potentially higher priority for protection. The co-occurrence model was completed by weighting various attributes based on expert input. A facilitated Delphi method with 22 coastal watershed experts generated the weighting factors. The final analysis delineated the core area and supporting natural landscapes around the highest scoring polygons (top 20 percent) using a set of scientifically defensible principles. *(See The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watershed for a full listing of principles at* http://www.rpc-nh.org/coastal-conservation.htm*)*

The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds also includes a matrix of local conservation and open space plans. Understandably, its regional nature does not always reflect resources that might be very important locally but lack watershed-scale significance. Therefore, the land conservation plan also incorporates a matrix of local plans that include the relative value of ecologically sensitive lands at the local level. This matrix is referenced through the scoring criteria.

Threat of Conversion

New Hampshire's coastal watershed is growing rapidly; the less developed places with the high ecological values are growing the fastest, and this threat shows an increasing trend.

Rockingham and Strafford counties' population was slow growing from the start of the decennial census in 1790 until approximately 1940. It stabilized at approximately 80,000 from the mid 1800s to 1930, and then began an unprecedented pace of growth, nearly quadrupling in population from 1940 to 2000, from 101,695 to 389,592. This equates to an average annual rate of growth of 2.4 percent -- a very high sustained rate of population growth, and nearly double that of the state overall. In each of the four decades preceding 2000, an average of about 55,000 people were added to the region. The total number of acres classified as "developed" in the two county areas increased from 51,634 in 1962 to 132,033 in 1998, an increase of nearly 260 percent. The vast majority of this land was converted from forest and agricultural uses, which lost 52,989 acres and 35,397 acres respectively. On the average, the total annual conversion from undeveloped to developed classes was 2,300 acres per year.

The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership recently attempted to measure the amount of "sprawl" in the coastal watershed. One indicator of sprawl, the ratio of the acres of imperviousness to the total population ("imperviousness per capita") was calculated for each town. An increase of impervious surfaces in a town is a particularly good indicator of the level of high impact development (e.g., large shopping malls, highways). Ratios of imperviousness to population for different years are compared to determine whether the development per capita is growing, declining, or remaining the same for a town. Overall, the average imperviousness per capita for the 42 municipalities grew from 0.152 acres per person in 1990 to 0.201 acres per person in 2000 to 0.217 acres per person in 2005. They found, not surprisingly, that the towns with smaller populations had much higher rates of sprawl. (PREP Environmental Indicator Report – land use and development, 2006).

This all points to the fact that the coastal watershed of New Hampshire is facing extreme development pressure. Our proximity to Boston and the high rate of employment growth in the seacoast area combined with ample natural resources have made this watershed a very desirable place to live. At greatest threat are those areas with undeveloped acreage of greater than 500 acres. This is because the most easily developable lands in the watershed have already been developed. The parcels remaining often have development challenges such as wetland and steep slopes. These challenges, along with the high cost of land, translates to the requirement of much larger parcels for developers to turn a profit. The high cost of land also means that land conservation is very expensive and often deals hinge on the ability/desire of a landowner to conduct a "bargain sale."

The Need for Conservation Through Acquisition

The NHCELCP should be seen as a part of a larger land conservation strategy. This includes working with local land trusts on fundraising and capacity building, engaging communities in land conservation, and alternative means of conservation. One such alternative can be found in *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds.* The plan included a section on how regional planning commissions will help the towns in the watershed to create "conservation overlay zones". These zones will include a suite of protection techniques, such as zoning and site plan review, designed to protect water quality and habitat, as well as community character. The overlay district will use the outlines of the CFAs to distinguish where those special provisions will apply. So far several communities are interested in this approach. In March 2008, the town of New Durham incorporated a new Conservation Focus District ordinance into their zoning regulations that identifies lands having exceptional significance for the protection of natural resources and water quality based on the findings of *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds*.

That said, local ordinances can change and the only way to permanently conserve a piece of land is to own the land or place easements on it. Acquisition will continue to be a preferred approach where the land values are particularly high, such as in the CFAs. Sensitive lands can easily be impacted by inappropriate development. In addition, acquisition will essentially guarantee public access to these lands. This is especially true where some of the large parcels in the CFAs, if acquired, could become part of the state park system or state wildlife refuges.

Riparian areas in New Hampshire's coastal watershed are especially threatened because, by and large, they are flat, easily developed, and desireable places for residences. In addition, many of the riparian areas in the coastal watershed have been impacted by both historic and new transportation corridors. Residential and commercial development in turn has been influenced by roads because they are historic transportation corridors. Thus, our rivers are some of the most developed areas in the state. Riparian zones are vital to so many aspects of coastal and estuarine health that they deserve special protection.

Priority Project Areas

The NHCELCP is organized around the five CELCP values (ecological, conservation, recreation, historic, aesthetic) with ecological and conservation values as priorities for CELCP funding with recreation, historic and aesthetic values playing a supporting role. The NHCELCP focuses on the conservation focus areas (CFAs) identified in *The Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds* because these areas have the greatest ecological and conservation significance for New Hampshire's coastal watershed. *(Please see Figure 2 or Appendix C for Conservation Focus Area Map).* Conservation focus areas have two parts: a core area and supporting natural landscape. Core areas correspond to ecological values, and supporting natural landscapes correspond to conservation values, respectively.

The Primary Priority Areas are as follows:

- ***Ecological*** -- Core areas within the conservation focus areas -- those lands that demonstrate exceptional ecological values as indicated by their co-occurring values in four categories of natural resource features. Refer to pages 15 for the map of CFAs, and pages 16-17 for a detailed listing of lands that fall under this category.
- ***Conservation***-- The supporting natural landscapes that surround the conservation focus areas and riparian buffers. Refer to pages 15 for the map of CFAs, and pages 17-19 for a detailed listing of lands that fall under this category.

The supporting, or Secondary Priority Areas, areas are as follows:

- ***Recreation –*** Public access to rivers in the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program. Refer to pages 21-24 for a description/map of lands that fall under this category.
- ***Historical --*** Sites containing significant historical, cultural or archaeological features that are recognized by state or national lists. Refer to pages 24-26 for a description of sites that fall under this category.
- ***Aesthetic –*** Lands along Scenic Byways and unobstructed views of tidal waters. Refer to pages 26-28 for a description/map of lands that fall under this category.

Because many exemplary ecological resources extend beyond the NHCELCP boundary (and beyond the state border), some of the supporting natural landscapes are outside the NHCELCP boundary. **These areas will not be considered for funding through NHCELCP.** That said, areas outside the watershed boundary may well be part of a NHCELCP project area but that portion outside the eligible CELCP area would not be funded**.**

As noted above, the priorities for land protection in the NHCELCP are ecology and conservation. Recreation, historical, and aesthetic resource values mostly serve as supporting values to the ecological and conservation values. The very highest valued lands for recreation, aesthetic and historical resources will be considered as primary purposes for NHCELCP funding on a case-by-case basis and in conjunction with NOAA, the national guidelines, and our program partners, including the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

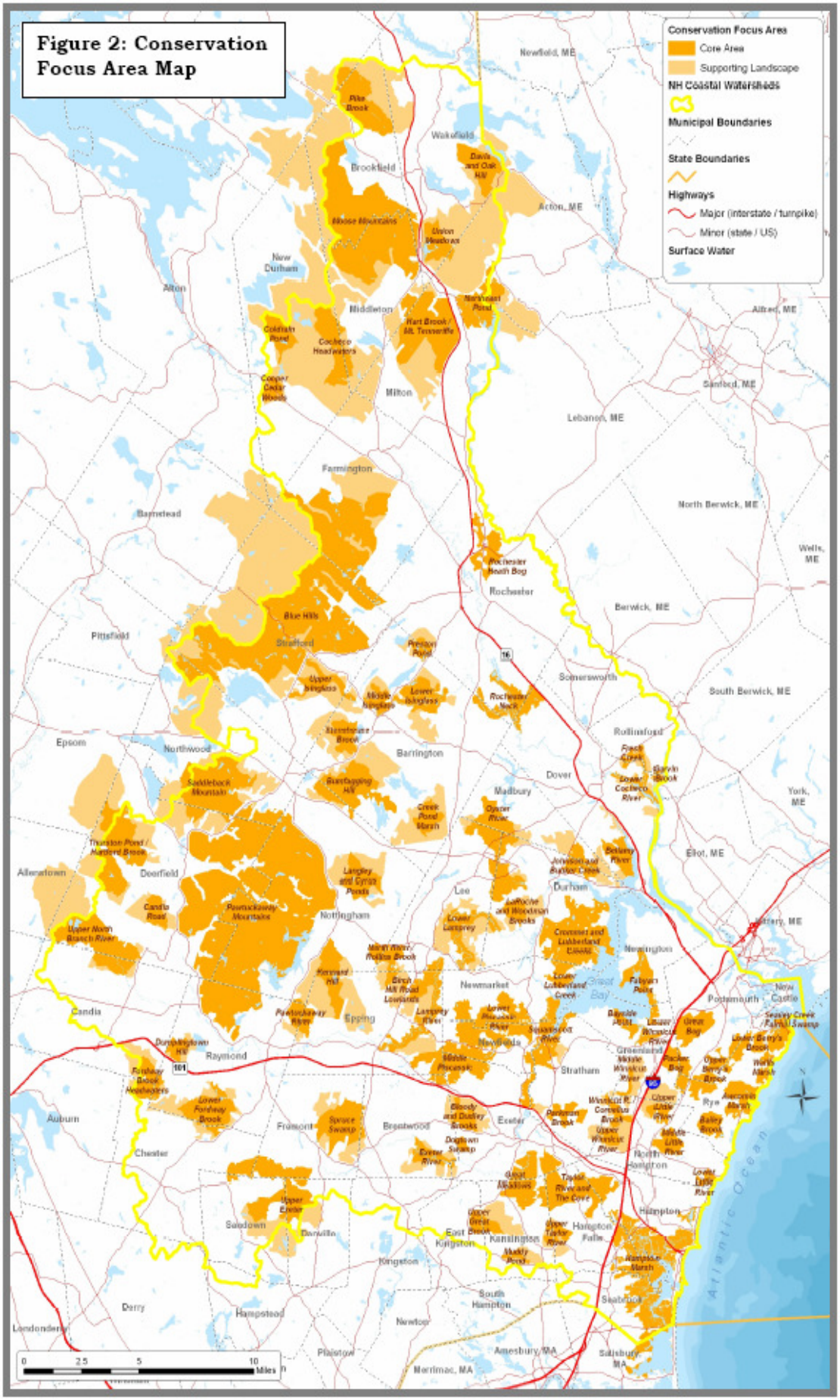


Figure 2: Conservation Focus Area Map
Conservation Focus Area
Core Area
Supporting Landscape
NH Coastal Watersheds
Municipal Boundaries
State Boundaries
Highways
Major (interstate / turnpike)
Minor (state / US)
Surface Water
Newfield, ME
Wakefield
Brookfield
Acton, ME
New Durham
Alton
Middleton
Milton
Alfred, ME
Sanford, ME
Lebanon, ME
Farmington
Barnstead
North Berwick, ME
Wells, ME
Rochester
Berwick, ME
Pittsfield
Strafford
Somersworth
South Berwick, ME
Epsom
Northwood
Barrington
Rollinsford
Dover
Madbury
York, ME
Eliot, ME
Allenstown
Deerfield
Durham
Lee
Nottingham
Kittery, ME
Newington
Newmarket
Portsmouth
Candia
Epping
Raymond
Stratham
Auburn
Fremont
Brentwood
Exeter
Rye
Chester
North Hampton
Hampton
Sandown
Danville
East Kingston
Kensington
Hampton Falls
Atlantic Ocean
Kingston
South Hampton
Seabrook
Derry
Hampstead
Newton
Londonderry
Plaistow
Amesbury, MA
Salisbury, MA
Merrimac, MA
0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Primary Priority Areas

Ecological and Conservation
The types of values that are to be protected through NHCELCP for ecological rationale are those **core areas** within the conservation focus areas. As mentioned previously, core areas are lands that demonstrate exceptional ecological values as indicated by their co-occurring values in four categories of natural resource features: forest ecosystems, freshwater systems, irreplaceable coastal and estuarine resources, and critical plant and wildlife habitat.

There are two caveats to this approach of only core areas within the conservation focus areas as eligible for CELCP funding as ecological projects.

1) Parcels in which some of the property is in the core area and some outside. Not all of the parcel must be included in the core area to be eligible.
2) Parcels with unique ecological values that have not been identified or discovered. It is always possible that a unique or rare species or ecological community may be found in an area outside a CFA. We cannot, as of this writing, predict this occurrence. If such a property is proposed for CELCP funding, the New Hampshire Coastal Program will consult with NOAA and the national guidelines to determine the eligibility of the project and how it relates back to the values that were used in the determination of CFAs.

Please note that some parts of the CFAs fall outside the coastal watershed boundary. (*See Figure 1 for NHCELCP Boundary*). **Only those parts within the watershed are eligible for funding.** Having a portion outside the watershed does not automatically disqualify a project, only those areas within watershed can receive CELCP funding.

Ecological Project Areas
The unprotected core areas eligible for CELCP funds under the ecological value criteria cover 97, 241 acres (out of the 133,982 areas in total of which 36,741 acres are in conservation as of 2007). Only the portions in the watershed are eligible for CELCP funds. These project areas and their respective acreage are listed below (acreage numbers include already protected lands):

Core Area	Acreage	Core Area	Acreage
Awcomin Marsh	884.9	*Lower Lubberland Creek*	239.1
Bailey Brook	564.2	*Lower Piscassic River*	3,027.2
Bayside Point	333.1	*Lower Winnicut River*	229.0
Bellamy River	796.0	*Middle Isinglass*	504.4
Birch Hill Road Lowlands	57.7	*Middle Little River*	595.2
Bloody and Dudley Brooks	552.8	*Middle Piscassic*	2,331.0
Blue Hills	16,905.8	*Middle Winnicut River*	163.9
Bumfagging Hill	2,361.1	*Moose Mountains*	8,799.0
Candia Road	549.2	*Muddy Pond*	156.3
Cocheco Headwaters	1,693.7	*North River / Rollins Brook*	813.9
Coldrain Pond	911.0	*Northeast Pond*	1,395.9
Cooper Cedar Woods	379.5	*Oyster River*	2,691.1
Creek Pond Marsh	671.2	*Packer Bog*	815.1

Crommet and Lubberland Creeks	3,798.7	*Parkman Brook*	547.2
Davis and Oak Hill	1,337.3	*Pawtuckaway Mountains*	23,142.6
Dogtown Swamp	164.1	*Pawtuckaway River*	749.0
Dumplingtown Hill	364.9	*Pike Brook*	2,343.7
Exeter River	620.3	*Preston Pond*	342.5
Fabyan Point	1,071.6	*Rochester Heath Bog*	1,024.0
Fordway Brook Headwaters	943.9	*Rochester Neck*	1,605.2
Fresh Creek	325.9	*Saddleback Mountain*	3,348.6
Garvin Brook	83.5	*Seavey Creek / Fairhill Swamp*	633.4
Great Bog	993.0	*Spruce Swamp*	1,854.5
Great Meadows	1,400.2	*Squamscott River*	2,023.6
Hampton Marsh	5,923.7	*Stonehouse Brook*	726.5
Hart Brook / Mt. Tenneriffe	3,503.0	*Taylor River and The Cove*	2,421.9
Johnson and Bunker Creek	747.6	*Thurston Pond / Hartford Brook*	2,481.2
Kennard Hill	1,294.6	*Union Meadows*	985.9
Lamprey River	1,722.2	*Upper Berry's Brook*	1,460.6
Langley and Cyrus Ponds	1,027.8	*Upper Exeter*	3,009.8
LaRoche and Woodman Brooks	444.1	*Upper Great Brook*	543.5
Lower Berry's Brook	270.2	*Upper Isinglass*	853.8
Lower Cocheco River	485.5	*Upper Little River*	326.6
Lower Fordway Brook	1,679.1	*Upper North Branch River*	2,881.8
Lower Isinglass	1,260.9	*Upper Taylor River*	439.0
Lower Lamprey	1,228.1	*Upper Winnicut River*	289.6
Lower Little River	195.9	*Wallis Marsh*	310.9
Lower Lubberland Creek	239.1	*Winnicut River/Cornelius Brook*	329.4
TOTAL			133,982.2

Conservation Project Areas

While the ecological priority areas are the core areas of the conservation focus areas (CFAs), the priorities for conservation are the supporting natural landscapes that surround the CFAs and riparian buffers (both within and outside of CFAs). High priority water supply lands are considered to be desirable as "supporting values" as indicated in the project scoring criteria section of this plan**.**

Supporting Natural Landscapes

Supporting natural landscapes are the lands that surround the CFAs. This is logical in that the definition of the supporting natural landscapes is those areas that "help to safeguard the core area." There are 43 supporting natural landscapes covering 56,408 acres within the NHCELCP geographic scope. Of those acres, only 6,862 acres are protected by permanent conservation. That leaves 49,546 acres of supported natural landscapes that are eligible for CELCP funding.

These project areas and their respective acreage are listed below (the acreage numbers include already protected lands):

Supporting Natural Landscape	***Acreage***	***Supporting Natural Landscape***	***Acreage***
Bellamy River	357.3	*Lower Lamprey*	1,636.9
Bloody and Dudley Brooks	748.5	*Middle Isinglass*	330.8
Blue Hills	5,295.1	*Middle Winnicut River*	614.0
Bumfagging Hill	1,516.3	*Moose Mountains*	760.8
Candia Road	699.7	*Muddy Pond*	389.1
Cocheco Headwaters, Coldrain Pond, and Cooper Cedar Woods	8,242.8	*North River / Rollins Brook*	840.1
Creek Pond Marsh	1,540.5	*Northeast Pond*	
Davis and Oak Hill and Union Meadows	6,019.7	*Oyster River*	540.6
Dumplingtown Hill	306.5	*Pike Brook*	2,493.2
Exeter River	667.7	*Preston Pond*	470.2
Fordway Brook Headwaters	406.2	*Saddleback Mountain*	,923.3
Fresh Creek	226.3	*Spruce Swamp*	953.8
Garvin Brook and Lower Cocheco River	374.6	*Squamscott River*	262.8
Hart Brook / Mt. Tenneriffe	2,349.8	*Stonehouse Brook*	1,110.1
Johnson and Bunker Creek	1,005.5	*Thurston Pond / Hartford Brook*	827.3
Kennard Hill and Pawtuckaway River	2,860.0	*Upper Exeter*	858.3
Lamprey River	1,185.4	*Upper Great Brook*	809.3
Langley and Cyrus Ponds	1,267.1	*Upper Isinglass*	1,311.3
LaRoche and Woodman Brooks	662.7	*Upper Little River*	761.3
Lower Fordway Brook	1,186.5	*Upper North Branch River*	293.5
Lower Isinglass	1,010.8	*Upper Taylor River*	371.9
Lower Lamprey	1,636.9	*Upper Winnicut River and Winnicut River / Cornelius Brook*	920.1
Middle Isinglass	330.8		
TOTAL			56,407.9

Riparian Buffers

For the purposes of the NHCELCP, all intact buffers of 300 feet or greater will be considered of high conservation value and eligible for CELCP funding.

Riparian zones are vital to so many aspects of coastal and estuarine health that they deserve special protection. These areas not only shade the waters of our tributary rivers, they filter pollutants, provide habitat corridors and connect conservation lands. Many of these riparian areas in the coastal watershed have been impacted by both historic and new transportation corridors. Residential and commercial development in turn has been influenced by roads because they are historic transportation corridors. Thus, our rivers are some of the most developed areas in the state. Because undeveloped riparian areas are often small, many of them were excluded from the larger CFAs.

Again, the NHCELCP considers all intact buffers of 300 feet or greater of high conservation value. A recent study by Complex Systems Research Center at UNH for the Piscataqua Region

Estuaries Partnership mapped the intact buffers remaining in the coastal watershed. In essence, the Stream Buffer Characterization Study identified those with 150 feet and 300 feet wide buffers that have not been impacted by development. The study found that there are about 17,000 acres of intact buffer in the watershed. Very often these intact buffers are parts of the Conservation Focus Areas described above. The Stream Buffer Characterization Study can be downloaded at
http://www.prep.unh.edu/resources/pdf/stream_buffer_characterization-unh-06.pdf

Necessarily many projects will encompass more than 300 feet due to the nature of land ownership. Land beyond the 300 foot buffer will be eligible if it includes the buffer and is ecologically intact enough to protect the 300 foot buffer. Degraded sites adjacent to buffers will only be considered under very rare circumstances and in consultation with NOAA.

Water Supply Lands

Water supply lands have been identified by the residents and non-governmental organizations of the watershed as a priority for protection. While these lands do not strictly fall into the CELCP guidelines as high value resources, they are locally very important. Thus, in the NHCELCP, **water supply lands are considered to be secondary or supporting values** and handled as such in the scoring section of this plan. The supporting value will be for land protection within what is called a "designated" Surface Water Protection Area (SWPA), which is the portion of a SWPA that is within five miles of a surface water intake or within a wellhead protection area (WHPA). *(Please see Figure 3 for Surface Water Supplies in the coastal watersheds. The figure also shows the designated five-mile portions of SWPAs).* In order for the lands to be considered under NHCELCP, they should have intact or restorable natural conditions and demonstrate high ecological values.

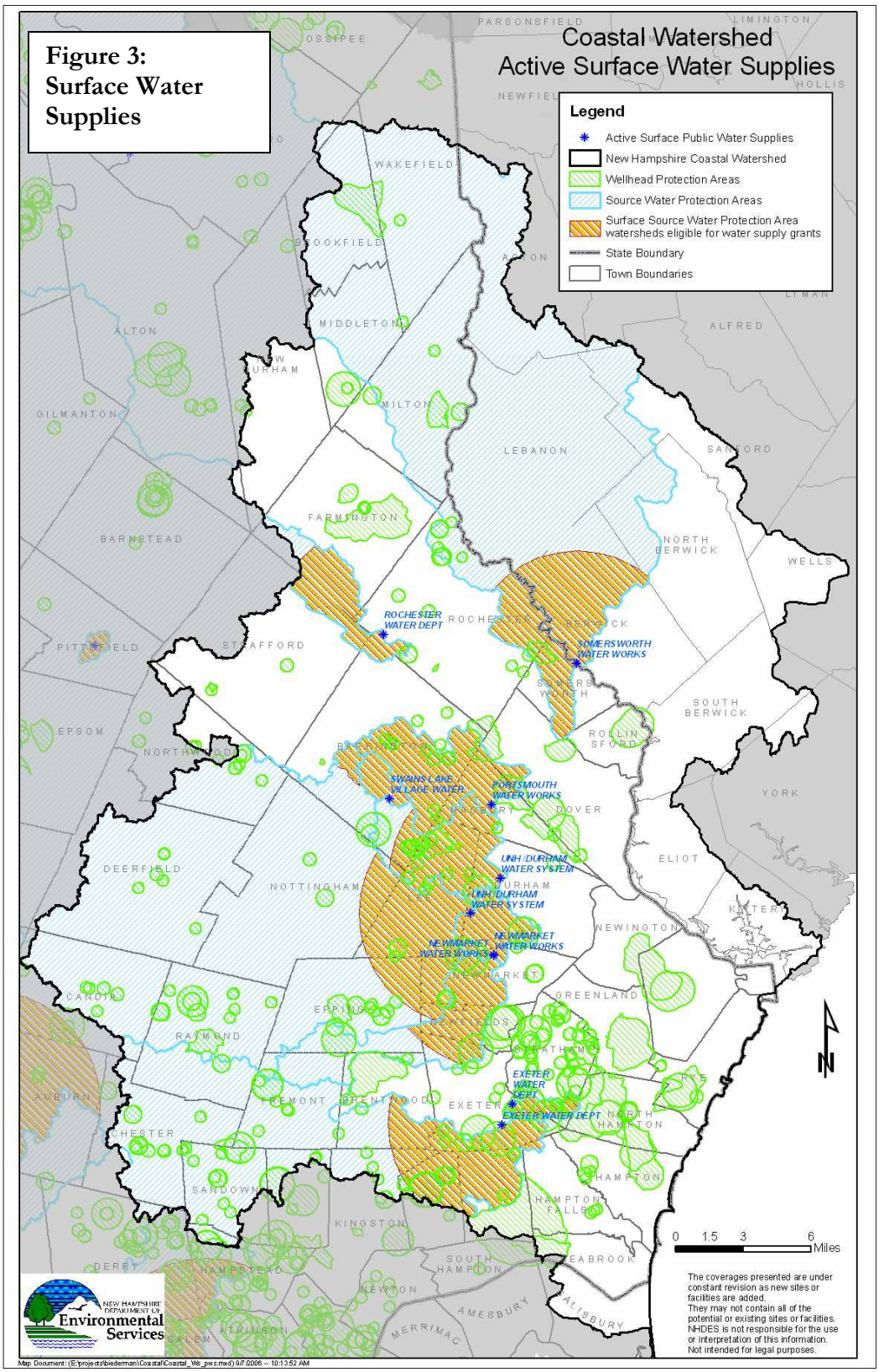


Figure 3:
Surface Water Supplies
Coastal Watershed
Active Surface Water Supplies
Legend
Active Surface Public Water Supplies
New Hampshire Coastal Watershed
Wellhead Protection Areas
Source Water Protection Areas
Surface Source Water Protection Area watersheds eligible for water supply grants
State Boundary
Town Boundaries
ROCHESTER WATER DEPT
SOMERSWORTH WATER WORKS
SWAINS LAKE VILLAGE WATER
PORTSMOUTH WATER WORKS
UNH /DURHAM WATER SYSTEM
UNH /DURHAM WATER SYSTEM
NEWMARKET WATER WORKS
NEWMARKET WATER WORKS
EXETER WATER DEPT
EXETER WATER DEPT
0 1.5 3 6 Miles
The coverages presented are under constant revision as new sites or facilities are added.
They may not contain all of the potential or existing sites or facilities.
NHDES is not responsible for the use or interpretation of this information.
Not intended for legal purposes.
NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Services

Secondary Priority Areas

Recreation, Historic and Scenic Values

In accordance with national criteria, the NHCELCP scoring system requires applicants to identify one of the five land protection values as the primary purpose of their projects. After a primary purpose is chosen, the remaining land protection values are used as supplementary evaluation factors.

The NHCELCP regards Ecological and Conservation values as primary values for the purposes of the CELCP program. Recreation, historic and aesthetic values are considered to be secondary or supporting values. **Recreation, historic and aesthetic values will be considered as the primary purpose for a proposal only on a case-by case-basis and in consultation with NOAA and the national guidelines as well as our program partners.**

Secondary values influence a proposal's score through a sliding scale point system, according to how closely they align with the priorities described below.

Recreation Values

The NHCELCP priorities for recreation are focused on access to water, including land along designated rivers or wild and scenic rivers and public access to tidal waters where no other nearby access is available.

High priorities for recreation:

- Public access sites on rivers in the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program;
- Public access to a Wild and Scenic River or public access to tidal water where no other nearby access is available.

Lower priorities for recreation:

- Parcel that connect regionally significant trail systems; or
- Parcels that provide public access to coastal tributary rivers not in the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program.

These programs are described below.

Designated Rivers

The New Hampshire River Management and Protection Program (RMPP) was established in 1988 with the passage of RSA 483 to protect certain rivers, called designated rivers, for their outstanding natural and cultural resources. Any lands along these rivers that provide public access will be considered high priority for recreation.

The rivers program is administered by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES). For more information, visit state rivers management at http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/index.htm

For a river to be designated for protection, an interested individual or organization must first develop a nomination outlining the river's values and characteristics. Support by local municipal

officials and residents of the riverfront communities for the designation must also be sought and reported. Once completed, the nomination is submitted to the DES commissioner and, if and when approved, forwarded to the General Court for consideration. If the Legislature approves the nomination, looking closely at the level of local support and presence of important river values, and, if the Governor signs the bill, RSA 483 is amended to designate the river for protection under the program. After designation, a management plan is developed so that the outstanding qualities of the river may be protected for future generations. The plan is developed and implemented by a volunteer local river advisory committee that also coordinates activities and recommends actions that may be taken to protect the resources identified in the nomination. At the state level, DES assists with the development and implementation of the management plan and enforces regulations concerning the quality and quantity of flow in protected river segments. A typical plan identifies management goals and recommends actions that may be taken to protect the resources identified in the nomination. At the state level, the Department of Environmental Services assists with the development and implementation of the management plan and enforces regulations concerning the quality and quantity of flow in protected river segments.

There are three designated rivers in the coastal watershed (*See Figure 4 for State Designated Rivers Management Program*).

Isinglass River
From the outflow of Bow Lake Dam in Strafford to its confluence with the Cocheco River in Rochester. Effective June 30, 2002. Municipalities: Strafford, Barrington, Rochester.

Lamprey River
From the Epping/Lee town line to the Durham/Newmarket town line. Effective June 26,1990. Municipalities: Lee and Durham.

Exeter River
From the headwaters at the Route 102 bridge in Chester to its confluence with Great Brook in Exeter. Effective August 11, 1995. Municipalities: Chester, Sandown, Danville, Fremont, Raymond, Brentwood, and Exeter.

NOTE: The tributary rivers to the Lamprey, the tidal portion of the Exeter, and the mainstems of the Cocheco and Oyster Rivers are currently in the nomination process to become designated rivers. They will automatically be included into the NHCELCP program by reference of the River Management and Protection Program.

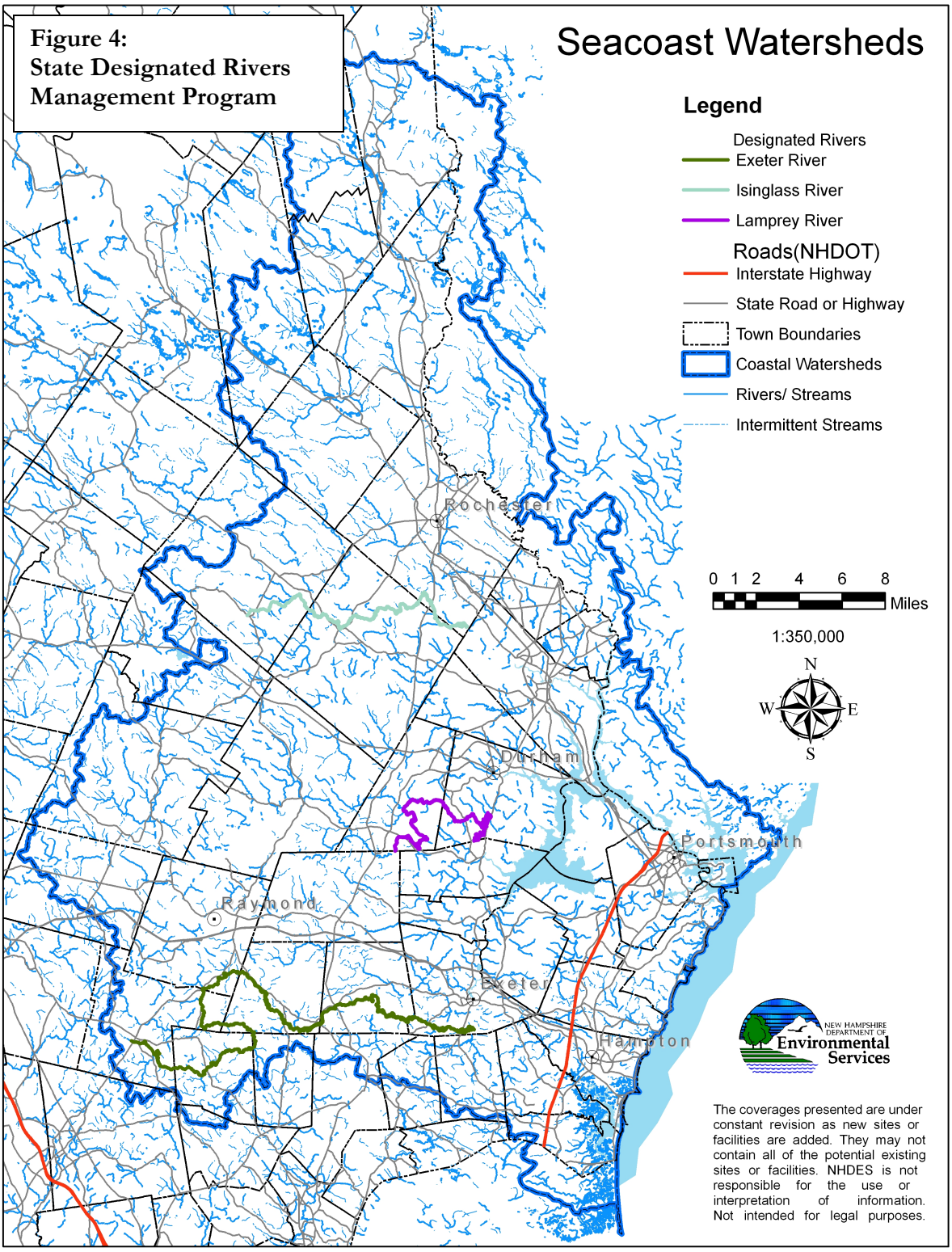


Figure 4:
State Designated Rivers Management Program

Wild and Scenic Rivers

To lend balance to our history of physically altering our waterways, Congress created the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In October of 1968, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act pronounced,

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

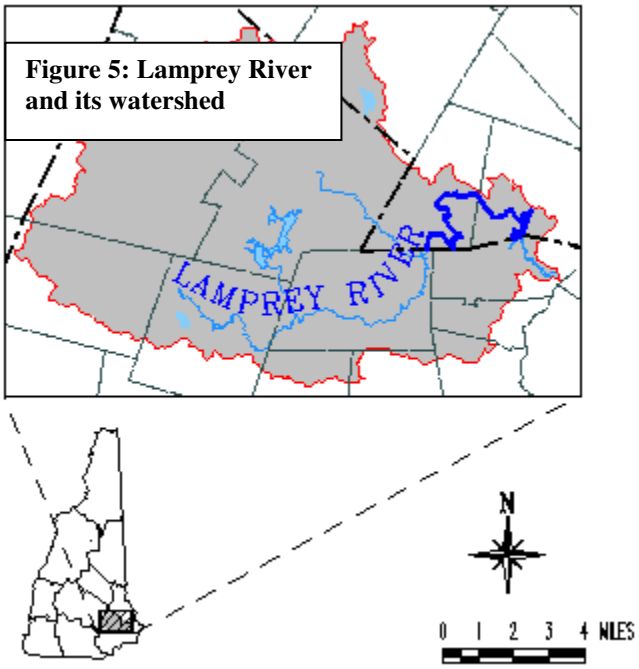


Figure 5: Lamprey River and its watershed

The Lamprey River and its watershed.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers program is administered by the National Park Service. The only river in the program in the coastal watershed is the Lamprey River from the Bunker Pond Dam in the town of Epping to the confluence with the Piscassic River in the vicinity of the Durham-Newmarket town line. All 23.5 miles of the Lamprey River in the program was classified as such for its recreational value.

Lands that provide public access to tidal waters

While New Hampshire has excellent public access to its beaches, other access points are limited, especially along Great Bay and the tidal rivers. For the purposes of NHCELCP, public access is generally considered to be "low impact" recreation, such as hiking, fishing and launching small boats. The NHCP will work directly with N.H. Fish and Game and the Department of Resources and Economic Development to make sure that proposed public access sites will not degrade the natural resources surrounding that site. NHCELCP will not forward applications to NOAA that will be detrimental to our coastal resources.

Historical Values

The NHCELCP priority for historical values is the protection of land with archaeological resources that have a coastal or maritime theme or connection to coastal attributes. These are lands with significant national historical, cultural or archeological features that are designated as a National Historic Landmark or are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or State Register of Historic Places.

It is important to note that the purpose of CELCP is to preserve land and not the built environment. Proposals for CELCP funding should not include built structures, rather, they

should focus on protecting the site from encroachment by development or other uses that would be detrimental to the historic qualities of the site.

High priorities for historic values:

- Sites containing significant national historical, cultural or archaeological features that are designated as a National Historical Landmark
- Sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Sites listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

Lower priority historic projects include:

- Sites deemed by DHR as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, but not yet listed.
- Sites which have been judged by the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program to meet the criteria for protection of historic and cultural lands and features

These programs are described below.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

There are 109 listings in Rockingham County and 38 listings in Strafford County, according to the National Park Service.

New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places

NHCP will consult with the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources (DHR) on historic resource applications listing historic resources as the primary purpose. In addition, evidence documenting historic resources can also help support a project's score when historic values are listed as the secondary purpose. The New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places is one part of the state's efforts to recognize and encourage the identification and protection of historical, architectural, archeological and cultural resources. These irreplaceable resources may be buildings, districts, sites, landscapes, structures or objects that are meaningful in the history, architecture, archeology, engineering or traditions of New Hampshire residents and communities. The State Register is administered by DHR, which is the state's Historic Preservation Office. Visit the website at http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/programs/state_register.html

Since its creation in 2001, there are now 90 properties on the list, 13 of which are in the coastal watershed.

New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program
The New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) is an independent state authority that makes matching grants to New Hampshire communities and non-profits to conserve and preserve New Hampshire's most important natural, cultural and historic resources. LCHIP spent a great deal of time creating criteria for protection of historic and cultural lands and features for their grant program. The criteria for importance of historic resources from LCHIP are used in this NHCELCP as well. Thus, for projects to be considered for application to NHCELCP, these following criteria (at a minimum) shall be met:

(a) Land must have a highly significant historic feature such as stone walls, apple orchards, archeological elements that define the essence of New Hampshire.
(b) Land must be a cultural asset that defines a community and is therefore important to the New Hampshire landscape, such as a farmstead, scenic vista, orchard, town forest, archaeological site, a last remaining example of heritage as defined by the community or a key representative of local community heritage.
(c) The significance of that resource is high, whether it is at a local, regional, state or national level.

Aesthetic Values
The NHCELCP priorities for aesthetic value are lands located along nationally designated scenic byway or unobstructed public views of tidal waters. Proposals exhibiting the above criteria will receive the most points in the NHCELCP scoring system. As mentioned above, aesthetic values will be considered as the primary purpose for a proposal only on a case-by case-basis and in consultation with NOAA and the national guidelines as well as our program partners. For most projects, aesthetic values are considered to be a secondary purpose for protection.

Given New Hampshire's diminutive shoreline, NHCELCP makes conservation of shore views a priority due to their rarity and extreme development pressure. Land with unobstructed public views of tidal water is a high priority in this category. These lands have not been mapped in a systematic way, but the applicant will provide proof of such views through photographs and documentation of the viewscape. Scenic byways, a partnership between the national and state departments of transportation, are a priority.

High priorities for aesthetic values:

- Unobstructed public views of tidal water; and
- Scenic vistas abundant on the site throughout year located along nationally designated scenic byways.

Lower priorities for aesthetic values:

- Unobstructed public views of rivers designated under the New Hampshire River Management and Protection Program (RMPP)

The scenic byways program is described below and the RMPP is described under the recreation section.

Scenic Byways Program
A large part of the New Hampshire economy is driven by tourism. The seacoast is a significant attraction for tourists and residents alike. The picturesque views of the coast draw millions of people to the seaside and Great Bay each year. Protecting those views has always been difficult due to the pressure of development along our shores.

New Hampshire has over 1,000 miles of designated scenic and cultural byways. The National Scenic Byways (NSB) Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and reauthorized in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.

There are three state designated scenic byways in the coastal watershed, and lands abutting these byways represent a national and state CELCP priority. *See Figure 6 for State Designated Scenic Byways.* These scenic byways and their importance within the NHCELCP perspective include:

- Coastal Byway – Running along Routes 1A and 1B along the Atlantic shore, this historic road features state parks, historic sites, beaches, islands, ocean views, harbors and resort towns. This is a major economic engine for the seacoast area and it supports both tourism and recreation.
- Independence Byway - Running along Routes 107, 108 and 27 moving from Hampton through Exeter to Kensington and ending in Seabrook, is known for its historical significance and traces the early European development of the state. It connects rivers, historic towns and museums to benefit recreation.
- Branch River Valley Trail -- Journeying through the small rural towns of Wakefield and Milton in the northwest part of the watershed, and on to the Maine border, features Wakefield Corner and its 26 buildings on the national register and the N.H. Farm Museum. This area is one of the faster growing areas of the state so preserving recreational and tourism opportunities is extremely import along this byway.

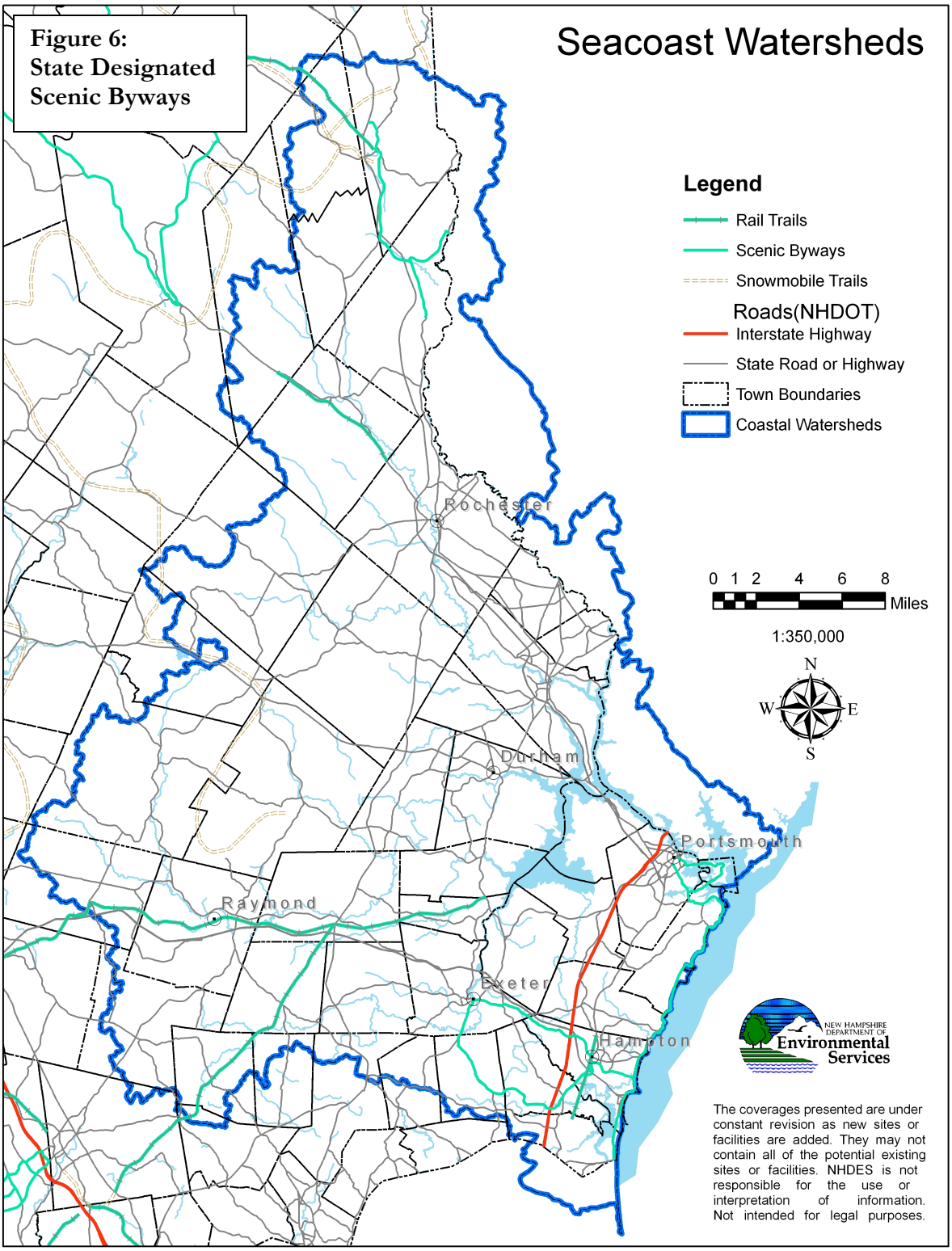


Figure 6:
State Designated
Scenic Byways
Seacoast Watersheds
Legend
Rail Trails
Scenic Byways
Snowmobile Trails
Roads(NHDOT)
Interstate Highway
State Road or Highway
Town Boundaries
Coastal Watersheds
Rochester
Durham
Portsmouth
Raymond
Exeter
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Environmental Services
The coverages presented are under constant revision as new sites or facilities are added. They may not contain all of the potential existing sites or facilities. NHDES is not responsible for the use or interpretation of information. Not intended for legal purposes.

Section II. Project Selection Process

The NHCELCP process will be closely tied to the national process. As such, the details of timing and precise application requirements will not be written into this plan. Rather, those details will be part of an annual request for proposals (RFP). The process for receiving and reviewing those RFPs is described below.

RFP Process

Under the original guidelines developed pursuant to the original CELCP legislation, "the state lead agency will be responsible for: soliciting projects that are consistent with priorities outlined in the state's plan, reviewing them for completeness, prioritizing them according to state criteria, and nominating projects to the national selection process." The New Hampshire Coastal Program (NHCP) is the state lead agency. As such, the NHCP will solicit applications for CELCP funding on an annual basis as a way of implementing the NHCELCP. Below is a summary of that process; the overall timeframe of which is likely to encompass about 12-18 months:

1. NOAA releases the schedule and application requirements.
2. NHCP will produce and distribute an RFP for CELCP funding based on the NOAA schedule.
3. Proposals are due back to NHCP in time to score them for the national competition.
4. NHCP will assemble a review committee of qualified agency, non-profit and land protection consultants to review the proposals; at least one member of the committee will represent the interests of the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR). Other invited members, at a minimum, will include University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, New Hampshire Forests and Land Division, NHCP staff, regional planning commission representative, Land and Community Heritage Commission, and a water quality expert from New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. NHCP will be careful to include qualified individuals who are not personally involved in CELCP applications.
5. NHCP will use the scoring criteria (below) for a preliminary ranking of the proposals.
6. The public will be invited to participate in a meeting to discuss the preliminary ranking and attempt to reach consensus on a final ranking. The review committee will take these public comments under consideration before finalizing the ranked list.
7. Priority project proposals will be revised and sent to NOAA by the due date.
8. NOAA sends national priority projects to Congress.
9. Congress appropriates funds for the CELCP.
10. NOAA selects projects for funding within amounts appropriated.
11. Funded projects complete full application including easement language, management plans, etc. and return to NOAA.
12. Funding available for successful projects.

Project Requirements

Per NOAA guidelines CELCP funds may be used for:

- Acquisition of properties or interests in properties from willing sellers, provided that the terms and conditions will ensure that the property will be administered for conservation in perpetuity, including direct expenses relating to the acquisition of lands and interests in lands acquired under the authority of the CELCP.
- Certain initial costs for land stewardship, not to exceed 5 percent of the federal share of the award and only if incurred during the duration of the award period (may be 18 months, not to exceed three years), to allow for signage, public safety, or other stewardship purposes.

All proposed CELCP projects must:

- Be located in a coastal or estuarine area included within a state's approved Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Plan. *(See Figure 1 for NHCELCP Boundary)*
- Match federal funds with non-federal funds at a ratio of 1:1.
- Be held in public ownership and provide conservation in perpetuity.
- Provide for access to the general public, or other public benefit, as appropriate and consistent with resource protection.
- Be consistent with the state's coastal management program approved under the Coastal Zone Management Act.

The applicant must be a qualified entity (eligible state or local unit of government). A qualified entity for applying for and accepting funds from CELCP include those entities identified as units of government under New Hampshire law. State law dictates that units of government include, state agencies, towns, cities, counties, school districts, water supply districts, and village districts. For a complete list of qualifying requirements, please refer to Section III on page 36.

Project Readiness

The NHCP expects that proposals will be submitted for projects that are well-along in their development. Recognizing that projects can be in various stages of development and that funding from each cycle will not be available for approximately 12-18 months after submission, projects should be as specific as possible. At the very least, proposals should be for specific tracts of land and land-owners should have been contacted about their willingness to sell. By a minimum of 12 months after initial proposal submission, the applicant should be in a position to submit documentation that the current owner is a willing participant in a process of negotiation for possible sale of property, or interests in property, for conservation purposes. This documentation may be in the form of a letter of willingness or intent, option letter, contract, or other similar form.

Scoring Criteria

The scoring criteria for NHCELCP projects is largely based on the national CELCP scoring system. NHCP has adapted it to reflect the priorities of the NHCELCP while taking into consideration that projects need to compete at the national level.

NOTE: These criteria are likely to change over time to reflect changes in the national CELCP scoring system. Contact the NHCP with questions on updated scoring criteria.

NHCELCP Scoring Criteria

Projects are scored on a sliding point scale according to how closely they align with the NHCELCP priorities in five land values, described below and in further detail in the Priority Project Areas section of this Plan. A total of 110 points is possible.

I. Importance and/or relevance of proposed project to the program goals. (55 points)

Projects will be reviewed and ranked according to the degree to which they:

- Protect important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant ecological, conservation, recreation, historical/cultural, or aesthetic values;
- Advance the priorities within New Hampshire's CELCP.
- Support the priorities of the approved N.H. Coastal Zone Management Plan, GBNERR management plan, other state or regional plans, and local plans.

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Protect lands with significant ecological value; and
- Advance the priorities within New Hampshire's CELCP.
- Support the priorities of the approved N.H. Coastal Zone Management Plan, GBNERR management plan, other state or regional plans, and local plans.

It is important to note that the NHCELCP considers the ecological and conservation values to be primary with the recreation, historical and aesthetic values as supporting values. Each applicant should identify the primary purpose of the project as being either 1) protection of ecological values **or** 2) protection of conservation values. The other four values will be evaluated as secondary purposes of the project. Note: only the very highest valued lands for recreation, aesthetic and historical resources will be considered as primary purposes for NHCELCP funding on a case-by-case basis and in conjunction with NOAA, the national guidelines, and our program partners, including the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Applicants should also describe the values provided by any lands proposed for use as in-kind match. For large parcels or projects for which the CELCP funds are only a portion, please describe the characteristics of the portion of the property or project area that would be acquired with CELCP funding.

I. RELEVANCE OF PROPOSED PROJECT TO PROGRAM GOALS – 55 points possible		
Scoring Criteria	**Description of priorities for highest ranking**	**Possible points**
Primary Purpose		
Ecological	*The tract is located in a core area of a Conservation Focus Area (CFA). Areas with unique ecological values that were not taken into consideration during the CELCP process but have high coastal importance, reflecting the values of the CFAs. As such, it exhibits exceptional natural habitat quality, species diversity, and invasive/exotic species presence is minimal.*	**25**
Conservation	*The property is located in a supporting natural landscape of a CFA, or completes protection of a riparian buffer 300 feet or greater.*	**20**
Secondary Purposes		
Ecological	*Same as above, but only as a secondary value to conservation.*	**7**

Conservation	*Same as above, but only as a secondary value to ecological, and for land protection within a "designated" Surface Water Protection Area (SWPA).*	**5**
Historical	*The tract contains significant national historical, cultural or archaeological features that have a coastal or maritime theme and are designated as a National Historical Landmark or are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or State Register of Historic Places.*	**5**
Recreation	*Land along rivers designated by the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program or a Wild and Scenic River, or public access to tidal waters.*	**5**
Aesthetic	*Land located along designated scenic byway; or unobstructed public views of tidal waters.*	**5**
Relevance to NHCELCP	*Clearly supports the NHCELCP.*	**5**
Relevance to other plans	*Clearly supports approved N.H. Coastal Zone Management Plan, GBNERR management plan, other state or regional plans, and local plans.*	**5**

II. Technical/Scientific Merit (25 points)

This ascertains whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this means projects will be reviewed and ranked according to the degree to which they:

- Can be effectively managed and protected over the long-term to conserve or restore its ecological, conservation, recreation, aesthetic, or historical/cultural values;
- Are threatened by conversion from their natural state to other uses; and
- Can be executed within the performance period.

Priority will be given to projects that can be effectively managed and protected.

The degree to which a project can be effectively managed and protected over the long-term will be evaluated in terms of land stewardship and/or need for restoration or enhancement, based on such factors as whether: the land is currently in the desired state for its intended purpose (e.g. land with ecological value does not require restoration, control of invasive species or remediation); surrounding land uses are compatible with long-term conservation of the site's values; and proposed uses of the site are compatible with the primary purpose for which the land is to be protected and will maintain or improve the values present on the site. The CELCP authority specifies that priority be given to projects that can be effectively managed and protected, so "manageability" and "long-term use" will receive a higher weighting than the other two elements described below.

II. TECHNICAL/SCIENTIFIC MERIT – 25 points possible		
Scoring Criteria	**Description of priorities for high ranking**	**Possible points**
Manageability – Land Perspective	*Land is currently in the desired state consistent with the intended purpose(s), (e.g. land with ecological value does not require restoration, control of non-native species, or remediation), and surrounding land uses are compatible with long-term conservation of the site's values.*	**8**

Long-term Use of the Site	*Proposed uses of the site (or portion of site being acquired with CELCP funds) are compatible with the primary purpose for which the land is being protected and will maintain or improve the ecological, conservation, recreational, historic, or aesthetic values present on the site.*	**7**
Threat of Conversion	*Land conversion from its natural state to other uses is imminent, (e.g. The proposed tract has development plans that have been approved by local governing body and regulatory agencies and the owner has received an offer to purchase).*	**5**
Project Readiness	*Site(s) have been identified, negotiations with landowner have resulted in purchase/sale agreement; appraisal, title opinion, and other documentation have been completed.*	**5**

III. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points)

This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, projects will be evaluated by the degree to which an applicant has the proven capacity (such as staffing, resources, authority and expertise) and experience to execute the land transaction consistent with CELCP guidelines and, directly or through partnerships, to manage property for long-term conservation of its ecological, conservation, recreation, aesthetic, or historical/cultural values, consistent with CELCP guidelines.

III. OVERALL QUALIFICATIONS OF APPLICANTS – 10 points possible		
Scoring Criteria	**Description of priorities for high ranking**	**Possible points**
Ability to Acquire Land	*CELCP recipient has funding, personnel, expertise, legal authority and demonstrated success for acquiring lands, or interests in lands, for long-term conservation purposes.*	**5**
Ability to Manage Land	*Applicant has funding and personnel or a partnership/stewardship agreement in place to manage new tract and has demonstrated success in managing other properties for conservation purposes.*	**5**

IV. Project Costs (20 points)

The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. For this competition, this means the budget is evaluated to determine: if land acquisition costs are reasonable and based on an independent appraisal or other assessment of fair market value; if the source of non-Federal matching funds is consistent with CELCP guidelines and is likely to be available within the performance period; and if direct and indirect costs for implementation of the project, if requested, are reasonable and consistent with CELCP guidelines. As the majority of project costs, greater weight will be given to the evaluation of land acquisition costs and matching funds than to other project costs.

To evaluate **land acquisition costs**, applicants should describe:

- How land acquisition costs were estimated, for example whether based on independent appraisal or upon another assessment of fair market value;
- Any other direct acquisition-related costs, such as appraisal, title opinion, etc., including whether such costs have already been expended;
- The source of matching funds and whether they are in the form of cash, in-kind, or donated land or land value from properties that enhance the proposed CELCP project;
- Whether matching funds are currently available or expected to be available within the performance period;
- For any property(s) that will be used for match, what values the property contributes, how this property(s) relates, in purpose and physical features, to the property that is proposed for acquisition with the federal share, when the match property was acquired, what legal rights were acquired (whether fee or easement), who holds title to legal rights, and the basis for the purchase price (*e.g.* whether based on independent appraisal, etc.); and
- Any other administrative costs to be charged to the grant or in-kind services to be used as match to document that they are reasonable and commensurate with the project needs.

For large parcels or projects, for which the requested CELCP funding is only a portion, please explain:

- What portion of the property the CELCP funding would acquire; and
- Whether the project would be viable if funding from other sources did not become available within the grant performance period; (For example, could the project be completed in phases?)

IV. PROJECT COSTS -- 20 points possible		
Scoring Criteria	**Description of priorities for high ranking**	**Possible points**
Land acquisition costs	*Acquisition costs are based on a recent independent appraisal. Project costs account for continuing streams of revenue derived from ongoing uses of the property.*	**10**
Matching funds	*Source of matching funds has been identified, are consistent with CELCP guidelines, and will be readily available at the time of closing or by the end of the award's performance period.*	**7**
Other costs	*Associated costs appear reasonable for the scope of the project; funds for administration are directly related to the project.*	**3**

OTHER SELECTION FACTORS FOR PROJECTS

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order for final funding recommendations. The NHCP may change the rank of the projects based on the selection factors below.

- *Availability of funds – For example, if the next project on the list exceeded the amounts available, the selecting official would be able to select the next highest ranked project that fit within the amounts available.*

- *Geographic distribution of projects – For example, among similarly ranked proposals, the selecting official could give priority to projects that are in areas of the watershed that have been underrepresented in CELCP funding to date.*
- Any "*other factors deemed necessary to select among similarly-ranked projects.*"
- *Success in leveraging other sources of funding.*

SECTION III. Other NOAA CELCP Requirements

Types of Entities Eligible to Apply for CELCP Grant

Under national guidelines, only state agencies and local governments are eligible to receive CELCP funds and hold the interest in the property purchased with CELCP funds. Public agencies should have a mission that is consistent with ownership and management of public lands for long-term conservation. While all the agencies below currently manage conservation land and are eligible to receive CELCP funds, not all projects will be acceptable. The projects must meet CELCP requirements for permanent conservation and allowable uses. Although nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are not eligible to receive CELCP funds, NGOs are eligible to hold in-kind properties, per the 2009 CELCP re-authorization.

For the purposes of NHCELCP, eligible agencies include the following:

- New Hampshire Department of Resource and Economic Development (DRED)
- New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
- New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
- Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Rockingham County and Strafford County
- Towns and cities -- Barrington, Brentwood, Brookfield, Candia, Chester, Danville, Deerfield, Dover, Durham, East Kingston, Epping, Exeter, Farmington, Fremont, Greenland, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Kensington, Kingston, Lee, Madbury, Middleton, Milton, New Castle, New Durham, Newfields, Newington, Newmarket, North Hampton, Northwood, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Raymond, Rochester, Rollinsford, Rye, Sandown, Seabrook, Somersworth, Strafford, Stratham, and Wakefield.
- Water supply districts

Effective Management and Protection

One of the primary goals of the national CELCP program is to give priority to lands which can be effectively managed and protected and that have significant ecological value. Most of the above information speaks to the ecological values of the land. The effective management and protection of those lands are largely determined by the qualities of the land, prior and current land uses, and the qualifications of the applicant.

Largely, these factors are dealt with in the project scoring described above. Projects are favored that are not in need of restoration, have management regimes that preserve the values for which the land is being protected, and meet the other CELCP requirements. Because not all units of government have conservation as their primary mission, they often partner with local non-governmental organizations to protect lands. This has proven to be an effective model for New Hampshire, especially as local governments work with land trusts. Because land trusts must provide a public good to be considered for non-profit status in the state and because their missions largely serve to permanently protect and steward lands, we consider this relationship to be a valid way of fulfilling the "effective management and protection" needs of the CELCP program. Nevertheless, it shall be the policy of the NHCELCP program, with reference to the participation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), that:

- The mission of the organization is focused on long-term protection of lands;
- Public access is maintained and strengthened as much as possible;
- Management efforts protect and strengthen the values for which the land is being protected; and
- Easement language is specific to management and stewardship and meets all national CELCP program requirements.

Public Input Process

In developing the plan, the partners sought input from a variety of people, organizations, and agencies familiar with the coastal watersheds. In addition, six public and expert outreach meetings about the plan were conducted:

October 2005, first public meeting at Newington Town Hall
February 2006, first local experts review meeting
May 2006, second local experts review meeting
June 2006, review of implementation strategies by planners and developers
August 2006, Second public meeting at Newington Town Hall
September-October 2006, public notice on draft plan

At each meeting, the partners requested feedback to help inform and improve the final plan.
(Please see Appendix I for Documented Public Session Attendees)

How This Plan Meets NOAA National Criteria

Criteria 1 - Protects important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses.

This plan used the methods identified above to be specific about the priority areas for conservation. The best science and available information to identify the most significant lands for protection have been used. The mapping methods for the conservation focus areas take an innovative approach of combining existing data with expert input.

Criteria 2 - Gives priority to lands that can be effectively managed and protected and that have significant ecological value.
The focus on lands that "can be effectively managed and protected" is somewhat more challenging to define, however most ecologists and conservation land managers would suggest that larger and more intact blocks of conservation land are more viable and easier to manage (per unit area) for their conservation values than are smaller and more fragmented conservation areas. This realization has been a major driver behind the national movement to establish landscape-scale conservation projects and protected areas.

One of the underlying premises behind the creation of conservation focus areas is that larger areas of conservation are better. That is why the areas tend to clump in certain areas. The same is true on the conservation values. The focus for conservation are linking together existing protected lands and the CFAs, and on protecting buffers around our large tributary rivers. In addition, the focus on recreation, aesthetics and historic values tend to tie into existing programs such as our River Management and Protection Program and Scenic Byways program. By utilizing existing programs, management challenges are greatly reduced.

Because NOAA's interpretation and evaluation of "effectively managed and protected" would also include factors such as the qualifications of the entity(ies) that will be holding title to and/or managing the land, as well as the proposed uses and intended strategy for management (and their consistency with CELCP), these elements are part of the application process. The CELCP clearly states which organizations are eligible to hold title and receive CELCP funds. If land trusts or other conservation organizations hold easements on CELCP purchased lands, the allowable uses and management procedures in those easements must be consistent with both the rationale for protecting the land and with the national CELCP guidelines.

Criteria 3 - Directly advances the goals, objectives, or implementation of the state's coastal management plan or program, National Estuarine Research Reserve management plans approved under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), national objectives of the CZMA, or a regional or state watershed protection plan involving coastal states with approved coastal management plans.

The New Hampshire coastal management plan has several policies related to land protection. Each of these policies is backed up with enforcing laws and rules. The policies that specifically mention land conservation and are implemented through CELCP include:

- Policy 1 – Protect and preserve, and where appropriate, restore the water and related land resources of the coastal and estuarine environment.
- Policy 2 – Manage, conserve and, where appropriate, undertake measures to maintain, restore and enhance the fish and wildlife resources of the state.
- Policy 5 – Encourage investigations of the distribution, habitat needs, and limiting factors of rare and endangered animal species and undertake conservation programs to ensure their continued perpetuation.
- Policy 6 – Identify, designate and preserve unique and rare plant and animal species and geologic formations that constitute the natural heritage of the state. Encourage measures, including acquisition strategies, to ensure their protection.
- Policy 7 – Provide a wide range of outdoor recreational opportunities including public access in the Seacoast through the maintenance and improvement of the existing public facilities and the acquisition and development of new recreational areas and public access.

Policy 8 – Preserve the rural character and scenic beauty of the Great Bay estuary by limiting public investment in infrastructure within the coastal zone in order to limit development to a mixture of low and moderate density.
Policy 15 – Support the preservation, management, and interpretation of historic and culturally significant structures, sites and districts along the Atlantic coast and in the Great Bay area.

In addition, the New Hampshire Coastal Program's approved Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Plan identified protecting wetland and riparian areas as management measure #4.1.4.2.G. This management measure specifically identified permanent protection through easements or fee simple purchase as significant nonpoint source pollution abatement strategies, especially as they protect the tributary rivers to Great Bay and the coast.

The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for New Hampshire's Estuaries identifies land conservation as a priority for the protection of estuarine water quality and estuarine resources. The management plan was developed over a three-year planning period and involved input from numerous stakeholders and the public to identify priorities for the protection and enhancement of New Hampshire's estuaries. Several action plans in the management plan address land conservation, particularly for important lands adjacent to estuaries and their tributaries. In addition, the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership has set a goal of permanently protecting 15 percent of the lands in the coastal watersheds from development by 2010. As of 2003 only 8.4 percent of land was permanently protected. The New Hampshire projects identified for CELCP funding will protect important lands abutting tributaries, including some key headwater areas, and add significantly to the overall amount of land protected in the state's coastal watersheds thereby meeting several objectives of the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership's Management Plan.

The Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is also well represented in and contributed to the NHCELCP Plan. The reserve boundary was one of the data layers in the development of the Coastal and Estuarine Resource map. Also, GBNERR has a targeted watershed boundary for the purposes of NHCELCP. The boundary serves to identify areas with potential benefit to the National Estuarine Research Reserve system. *(See Appendix A).*

The NHCELCP also takes into consideration local and other watershed conservation plans. Consideration of these plans is given in the scoring criteria.

Criteria 4 - Is consistent with the state's approved coastal management program.
The New Hampshire CELCP was prepared by the lead state agency, the New Hampshire Coastal Program (NHCP) within the Department of Environmental Service, responsible for administering the federal consistency provision of the Coastal Zone Management Act. This CELCP plan is consistent with the enforceable policies of the New Hampshire Coastal Zone Management Program.

The New Hampshire CELCP is hereby approved by the NHCP.

_____ _____06/27/2008_____
Ted Diers, Manager, NHCP Date