

# *Setting Goals, Redefining Boundaries*



HOW NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COASTAL WATERSHED  
COMMUNITIES ARE ADDRESSING GROWTH

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Amanda Stone, NROC Coordinator  
University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension  
36 County Drive  
Laconia, NH 03246  
amanda.stone@unh.edu  
603-364-5324

Julia Peterson, Extension Specialist  
University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension/  
New Hampshire Sea Grant  
Kingman Farm  
University of New Hampshire  
Durham, NH 03824  
julia.peterson@unh.edu  
603-749-1565

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Written by Julia Peterson of New Hampshire Sea Grant.  
Edited by Steve Adams of New Hampshire Sea Grant,  
Steve Miller of Great Bay National Estuarine Research  
Reserve, and Frank Mitchell, Jeffrey Schloss, and  
Amanda Stone of University of New Hampshire  
Cooperative Extension.

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BILL MCGREW



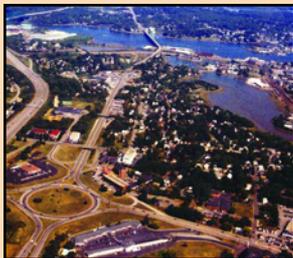
STEVE J. MILLER



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BARBARA MCMILLAN

This publication was inspired by the accomplishments of communities in New Hampshire's coastal watershed between the years 2001 and 2005. During that time, New Hampshire's Seacoast was one of the fastest growing regions in the fastest growing state in New England. Change is seldom easy and all of the communities mentioned in this report did something to actively prepare for growth while protecting what they love most about their communities. Their stories are partially told here. It is our hope that readers will recognize how communities can make a difference in their future through persistence, creativity, and team work.

All of the communities mentioned in this publication worked with the New Hampshire Natural Resources Outreach Coalition (NROC), an alliance providing education and technical assistance to communities wishing to protect natural resources through better land use planning and community-based conservation. The accomplishments reported here, while enabled or facilitated by NROC and its members, truly belong to the hard working community volunteers, board members, and elected officials who applied the education and technical assistance to their community projects. In nearly every situation, volunteerism,

partnerships, and the use of democratic processes made these changes possible.

NROC offers assistance to communities in protecting natural resources according to their specific needs, so results vary from community to community. The changes that NROC has helped communities accomplish can be grouped into five major categories.\* This publication is organized by those five categories in order to offer the reader examples of how communities transform themselves with NROC assistance within each category of change. Each community has a noteworthy story in at least one of the categories, although most communities have accomplishments in more than one. The categories are:

- Greater Community Capacity (*pages 4-7*)
- Improved Information Gathering and Research (*pages 8-9*)
- Better Planning for Natural Resource Protection (*pages 10-11*)
- Enhanced Policies and Regulation (*pages 12-14*)
- Progress from Decisions to Actions (*page 15*)

\*Categories and their descriptions are adapted from National NEMO Network materials.

# THE NATURAL RESOURCES OUTREACH COALITION



NEW DURHAM

BILL MCGREW

## SITUATION

New Hampshire is known for its local land use control, growing economy, rural New England landscape, healthy forests, majestic mountains, and clear waters. Its residents are proud of these assets and want to maintain them. New Hampshire has also been the fastest growing state in New England for the last 40 years and is projected to be the fastest growing state in New England for at least the next 20 years. Naturally, this growth is viewed with both enthusiasm and apprehension because it brings both positive and negative consequences.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE'S NROC

In response to the rapid rate of growth and the concerns of local decision makers, New Hampshire NROC formed in 1998 to offer coordinated assistance to communities wishing to protect their natural resources while planning for growth. Many states across the country have programs similar to NROC. Collectively, these programs form the National NEMO Network, a group of educational programs that are helping communities make better land use decisions. NEMO stands for Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials, an education program started at the University of Connecticut. Nonpoint refers to nonpoint source pollution or polluted runoff, the primary source of water pollution in the nation according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. NROC is a charter member of the National NEMO Network. More information about NEMO and the Network is available at [www.nemo.uconn.edu](http://www.nemo.uconn.edu).

NROC comprises representatives of the following agencies and organizations:

UNIVERSITY OF N.H. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
(COORDINATOR)

GREAT BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH  
RESERVE

N.H. COASTAL PROGRAM

N.H. DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

N.H. ESTUARIES PROJECT

N.H. SEA GRANT

ROCKINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION

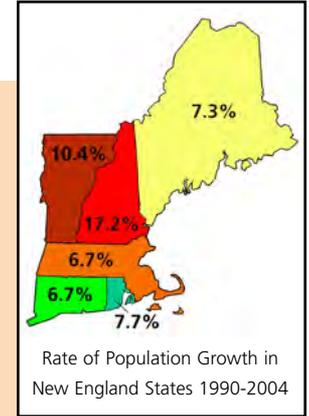
SOUTHERN N.H. REGIONAL PLANNING

STRAFFORD REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

N.H. OFFICE OF ENERGY AND PLANNING  
(PARTNER FROM 1999-2003)

NROC's work is supported by the partner organizations and agencies and is funded in part by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project, as authorized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program, as well as the New Hampshire Coastal Program and New Hampshire Sea Grant as authorized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The NROC team includes professionals with expertise in marine and aquatic ecology, water quality, land conservation, forestry, natural resources conservation, resource economics, land use planning, education, outreach and facilitation.



Rate of Population Growth in  
New England States 1990-2004

SPNHF 2005, OEP 2004



## HOW DOES NROC WORK?

Most land use decisions are made at the local level, typically by volunteer board members whose expertise in natural resource management ranges from novice to expert. NROC offers education to these community decision makers and interested residents about land use decisions and their effects as well as facilitation skills to help them sort out how they might manage their growth for the future.

Communities apply for NROC assistance annually and if selected, they and NROC commit to working together for at least one year. NROC selects up to three communities each year. NROC team members meet with a small group of community representatives about their growth-related natural resource concerns and create a customized presentation called Dealing with Growth in (town name).

The Dealing with Growth presentation includes information about rates of growth in that community, the effects of development on natural resources, geographic information system (GIS) maps of the community's natural resources, possible tools for protecting natural resources, and tools for minimizing impacts of development. It also encourages the use of natural resource-based planning. The Dealing with Growth presentation is open to anyone and serves as a springboard to a "follow-up" phase.

During the follow-up phase, NROC staff continue to meet with community members to address specific growth concerns, typically through the formation of two to three Action Groups. NROC provides facilitation, education, technical assistance, and implementation grants to help the community move forward in developing and carrying out the natural resource protection and growth management strategies they identify.



JULIA PETERSON



SALLY SOULE



FRANK MITCHELL

## *One of NROC's greatest accomplishments*

*must be its talent for finding and mentoring conservationists.... One of the greatest take-aways that NROC program participants leave with is the knowledge that our actions have impact, and that we have the power to change the communities in which we live.*

*—NROC Participant*

## HOW DOES NROC MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Communities have different starting points in relation to their natural resource protection efforts. Communities that work with NROC generally improve in their ability to move progressively along a continuum of community-based natural resource protection and growth management regardless of where they start. Some communities focus on gathering information while others focus on implementing natural resource protection. Some do both. Overall, communities in New Hampshire's coastal watersheds have expressed the desire to preserve the environmental quality of the region's water, forests, fields, farmlands, and community character. NROC helps to lay the groundwork for progress in communities through its ability to educate, motivate, facilitate, and support citizen leadership through repeated and inclusive interactions with community members over a period of time.

## GREATER COMMUNITY CAPACITY

*Featuring Dover, Candia, and Strafford*

*This category describes actions communities take to improve their capacity to address issues by increasing their human, financial or technical resources. Examples include establishing new committees; adding new members to municipal boards and committees; the emergence of citizen leaders; applying for grants; securing municipal funds through bonds, warrant articles, and grants; improving cross-board communication; seeking and offering community education campaigns; and engaging other towns, organizations, and agencies.*

### DOVER 2001

Dover, with just over 28,000 residents, is the second most populated and developed city in New Hampshire's coastal watershed. Its historic riverside mill area has been redeveloped into a thriving downtown and its farmlands represent some of the last remaining open space in town. The city's Open Land Committee (OLC) wanted to make sure these few natural areas would remain so in the face of growth, so they started working with NROC.

With NROC guidance and facilitation, Dover's OLC in the words of one of its members, "became much more focused and deliberate in its mission." Members of the OLC began to establish a process for natural resource protection in Dover and priorities for land conservation. They drafted a list of "24 Steps" necessary for conserving land in Dover and used it to guide their efforts. And although they already had a conservation fund in town, they were able to raise an additional \$2 million for land protection through a bond. The OLC members credit NROC with helping them generate this momentum.

An Outreach Action Group formed during Dover's follow-up work with NROC. They were determined to use outreach as a tool to promote land and natural resource conservation in town. With sponsorship from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Open Lands Committee; a small NROC grant to cover expenses, and



DOVER

ANN REID



speakers from the NROC team as well as a nationally known expert, Dover held an educational workshop series in the spring of 2002 designed to provide information and generate support for natural resource conservation and better development in

town. Close to 300 people attended the workshops over the series' duration.

The workshop series included: *Balancing Growth, Taxes, and Open Space, Estate Planning and Land Protection, Smart Growth: Protecting Our Quality of Life, and Conservation Subdivision Design as a Tool for Building Community-wide Open Space Networks.*

The group credits NROC with helping them involve more Dover residents in local natural resource issues. Some formerly uninvolved residents joined the OLC and eventually took on leadership roles. The Outreach Action Group's strategy proved to be, and continues to be, a very effective tool for slowly and steadily influencing the way people think about land use and management in Dover. Today, the group is called the Outreach and Education Committee (OEC) and is a sub-committee of the very active Dover OLC. The OEC continues to offer informative nature walks and talks to their local landowners and other citizens. They have used the city's Apple Harvest Day to survey residents about various natural resource protection

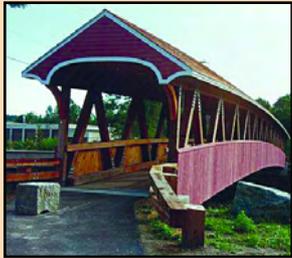
*“NROC gave us the shot in the arm that we needed.”*

—NROC Participant

topics and how they prefer to learn about them. They set up a large display in city hall showing conserved land in Dover. They produced a brochure about the committee and its projects. The group feels that repetitive exposure to natural resource protection concepts through these outreach venues increases residents' familiarity with their local natural resources, how ecosystems function, how important those functions are, and how they can be protected. As one OLC member describes, “it's like repeatedly putting broccoli on your children's plates, eventually they'll try it!” (See pages 12 and 15 for more about Dover.)



DOVER ANN REID



DOVER



DOVER



DOVER

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## CANDIA 2003

Candia is a small town of just over 4,000 people with a modest town center and scenic rolling wooded hills. It is located midway between Portsmouth and Manchester, New Hampshire. The town of Candia was in the midst of a master plan update when they first started working with NROC. The update involved private and public organizations including a Master Plan Committee, Master Plan consultants, Plan New Hampshire, the Minimum Impact Development Partnership, and the N.H. Charitable Foundation. With so many players, coordination was going to be critical for smooth interaction and progress. NROC helped enhance the efforts of the strong team that Candia pulled together.

Through their work with NROC, Candia identified groundwater supply and open space protection as high priorities. This recognition of groundwater as a significant concern led to a revision of the master plan to address groundwater more thoroughly. To gain a better understanding of groundwater issues in town, a subcommittee formed and, with NROC's help, developed a survey for private well owners in the community. NROC staff provided education about groundwater hydrology and funding for the community water survey through its implementation grants program. The town of Nottingham was working on a similar survey at the same time through NROC, and the two communities collaborated on developing the well survey.

At the same time Candia was working on its groundwater concerns, it formed an Open Space Committee (OSC) to implement the Open Space Plan they had developed with their regional planning commission two years prior. The OSC created a series of four newsletters and a brochure about their work to build support for land con-



CANDIA

JUDY & JIM LINDSEY

servation. NROC provided the OSC with organizational help and training through several workshops including: *Land Conservation Nuts and Bolts*, *Conducting Effective Outreach Campaigns*, *The Dollars and Sense of Open Space*, and *Coordinating Open Space Committee Work with Other Town Boards*. At the March 2005 town meeting a warrant article approving \$200,000 for the Conservation Fund was passed and the Committee recently helped complete the purchase of an 82-acre property for conservation.

A Candia OSC member commented: "During our association with NROC, the staff have shown endless patience, understanding and tenacity in guiding us through the throes of our first year. We are all basically novices who are concerned about loss of open space, but do not have the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish its protection. We could not have come as far as we have without their assistance."



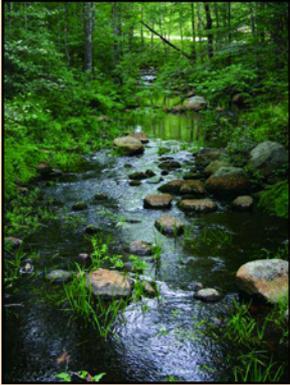
CANDIA

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CANDIA

JUDY & JIM LINDSEY



STRAFFORD FRANK MITCHELL

### STRAFFORD 2004

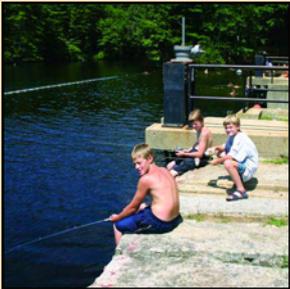
After a large turnout for the Dealing with Growth presentation, Strafford’s residents have maintained a high level of involvement. During their follow-up phase, Strafford NROC participants formed three action groups: Water Quality, Land Protection, and Growth Management. They have been very successful at engaging and maintaining citizen involvement for over a year. They have also been successful in engaging other groups, including the Bow Lake Camp Owners Association and the Bear Paw Regional Greenways that are working on similar efforts in the community.

Strafford NROCers are enhancing and expanding a water quality monitoring program for Bow Lake with 15 volunteers, contacting landowners about their interest in learning about land conservation options, seeking funding for land conservation, and conducted surveys to gather input about proposed zoning revisions. They used NROC grant funds to support these activities. Strafford credits NROC with bringing interested people together, coordinating their efforts, and showing them “how to get the jobs done.”

The Land Protection Action Group in Strafford evolved into a Land Conservation Committee. One community volunteer created additional geographic information systems (GIS) maps to be used for conservation planning. Using these maps, the land conservation group identified priority conservation areas, developed a landowner outreach strategy, contacted landowners in priority conservation areas, and hosted a *Land Conservation and Estate Planning* workshop (delivered by NROC staff) for residents. They used NROC implementation grant funds to hire a land protection specialist to follow-up with interested landowners. (See page 12 for an introduction to Strafford.)



STRAFFORD CAL & PENNY SCHROEDER



STRAFFORD CAL & PENNY SCHROEDER



STRAFFORD

CAL & PENNY SCHROEDER

# IMPROVED INFORMATION GATHERING AND RESEARCH

Featuring Stratham, Nottingham, Somersworth, and New Durham

*This category describes actions communities take to improve their background knowledge for future decision making. These actions help provide local data upon which rational land use plans and decisions can be based. It includes conducting surveys, inventorying natural resources, initiating water quality monitoring, analyzing existing water quality or other natural resource data, and conducting fiscal analyses.*

## STRATHAM 2002

As a result of working with the NROC team, the Stratham Water Commission developed, distributed, and publicized a well survey for its residents with private wells. The survey was designed to help determine current water usage in town and to be consistent with a statewide data format. Nearly 50% of the dwellings in the database responded. (See page 10 for introduction to Stratham.)

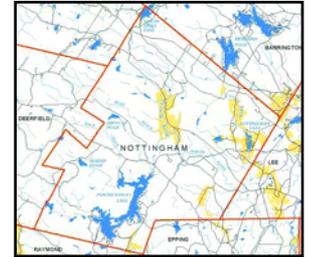
## NOTTINGHAM 2003

Nottingham is a small, but rapidly growing rural community that is home to New Hampshire's Pawtuckaway State Park. Nottingham residents and board members chose to

focus their efforts with NROC on groundwater quantity and quality. Representative members from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Natural Resources Committee cooperatively designed a community well survey. The project team gathered data about all wells and garnered involvement from the broader community. Since the Candia NROC group was about to embark on a similar project, Nottingham and Candia collaborated in the development of a survey of well owners for their towns. The shared survey template helped reinforce collaborations between the two communities who are both members of Bear-Paw Greenways, a regional land trust serving seven towns. The survey results provided Nottingham with baseline information about wells and groundwater issues in town. They will use the information when making decisions about population growth and its impact on the integrity and quantity of their groundwater supply.

## SOMERSWORTH 2003

Somersworth is home to the Salmon Falls River, which flows into the Great Bay Estuary, and is an urbanized, mid-sized community with a strong mill town heritage. NROC participants in Somersworth wanted more information before deciding on a course of action for their natural resource protection efforts. At the time, there were no land conservation efforts under way and they lacked a natural resource inventory. NROC was able to help Somersworth get assistance to complete a set of natural



NOTTINGHAM AQUIFERS

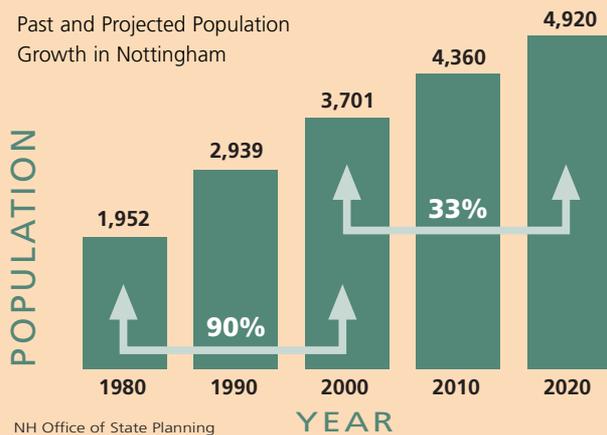


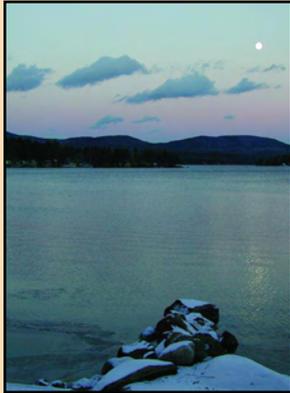
NOTTINGHAM FRANK MITCHELL



SOMERSWORTH

Past and Projected Population Growth in Nottingham





NEW DURHAM BILL MCGREW

resource inventory maps and use them to prioritize areas for conservation. NROC also provided a *Land Conservation Options* workshop to educate municipal board members, city councilors, and interested town residents about the benefits of land protection.

As is true in many historic New England mill towns, the Salmon Falls River is probably cleaner now than it was a hundred years ago, but it is very vulnerable to the impacts of development. After working with NROC, Somersworth decided to monitor the river's water quality to better gauge its condition. A water quality monitoring subcommittee formed during the NROC follow-up process and started monitoring in 2004.

Somersworth credits NROC with helping to heighten the awareness of land use board members and other city officials about the importance of natural resource protection and land conservation and with helping to get non-commission members of the community involved. One citizen requested to join the Conservation Commission as a result of the enhanced community involvement.

### NEW DURHAM 2005

The town of New Durham features the headwaters of two major watersheds in the state—the Great Bay watershed and the Lake Winnepesaukee watershed. Community members are anticipating high growth rates after years of relatively slow growth and are eager to do what they can to preserve New Durham's rural character, scenic vistas, and valuable natural resources. The top issues that emerged through NROC discussions were open space, community outreach, and appropriate growth. The group interested in growth eventually merged with the Planning Board, which was already working on a number of initiatives including a revision of the master plan. The group interested in open space eventually became the Land Conservation Committee and the community outreach group merged into it.

New Durham has demonstrated its desire to make its natural resource-based planning community-driven by creating a survey to gather residents' views about planning board policies, conservation, smart growth initiatives, and related topics. They were awarded an NROC implementation grant to design and conduct the survey with the assistance of the UNH Survey Center during the spring of 2006. The Survey Center helped design and deliver the survey, interpreted the survey results, and ensured that they were statistically valid. Preliminary results show that New Durham residents give stream side buffers for wildlife habitat and water quality protection a high priority rating. NROC also helped New Durham benefit from resources at the University by having students from the Department of Natural Resources assist them with their natural resources inventory report and presentation.

New Durham had a great degree of overlap among the three action groups. They used that overlap to focus their outreach project on engaging more citizens in the master planning process and in land conservation workshops, *Conservation Options and Estate Planning* and *Dollars and Sense of Saving Special Places*. With NROC staff assistance, the Land Conservation Committee (LCC) had developed a set of criteria for determining their protection priorities. As a result of the combined effort of their action groups, several landowners have contacted the LCC about permanently protecting their land and the LCC is busy developing a conservation plan.

One Planning Board member in New Durham credits NROC with helping to increase interest in planning among community members. This interest has encouraged the boards to apply for technical assistance from a professional planner and an environmental consultant to develop a riparian buffer ordinance. The technical assistance program is offered by one of NROC's partner organizations.



NEW DURHAM BILL MCGREW



NEW DURHAM BILL MCGREW

# BETTER PLANNING FOR NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Featuring Stratham, Newfields, Chester, and Wakefield

*This category describes actions communities take to ensure that the way they wish to grow has been articulated and publicly documented. Planning documents provide the “big picture” vision, goals and priorities of the community. This includes actions such as identifying protection priorities and best locations for development, creating or revising master plans, initiating conservation planning, and developing watershed or open space plans.*

## STRATHAM 2002

Stratham is located along the east bank of the Squamscott River and boasts views of some of the most pristine parts of the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. It is close to the coast and has grown at a much higher rate than the state average over the last 50 years. Stratham’s Open Space Committee was looking for help with community outreach and with developing criteria for prioritizing areas for protection. Using NROC implementation grant funds, Stratham contracted assistance from the county conservation district to assist with these tasks.

The Open Space Committee hosted a public workshop on *Land Conservation Options and Estate Planning*. They also created criteria for prioritizing natural resource protection activity and ranked critical areas in need of permanent protection. This included preparation of GIS natural resources maps to assist with prioritization and creation of a conservation information package for interested individuals. In addition, they prepared funding applications for targeted conservation properties leveraging recently passed bond funds.



STRATHAM STEVE J. MILLER

## NEWFIELDS 2002

Newfields is a small community of about 1,600 people and is located along the west bank of the Squamscott River. It has a small, compact village center that reflects its historical heritage and attractive natural landscapes. The focus in Newfields, as it has been in many southern New Hampshire towns, has been on establishing permanent land protection for key areas. The Newfields Open Space Committee, with assistance from the county conservation district, accomplished a number of successes, including:

- **launching a community outreach and education campaign** designed to increase citizen and landowner awareness of conservation options,
- **identifying specific landowners** interested in land conservation options and began working with them,
- **creating educational materials** for landowners and community residents,
- **contracting technical assistance** from the local county conservation district to help prioritize areas for protection and to prepare matching grant funding options, and
- **contracting marketing assistance** to help them with press releases and publicity and marketing materials.



NEWFIELDS

JULIA PETERSON



NEWFIELDS

JULIA PETERSON



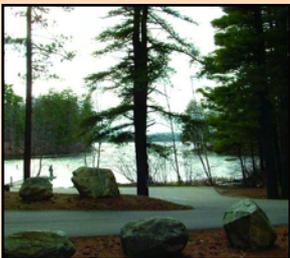
CHESTER LEROY C. NOYES



CHESTER LEROY C. NOYES



WAKEFIELD STEVE J. MILLER



WAKEFIELD STEVE J. MILLER

## CHESTER 2004

Chester is an appealing town of about 3,800 residents. The landscape includes rolling hills, fields, and traditional historic New England architecture. Like many of its neighbors, Chester is a rapidly growing community. Chester's main focus with NROC was the development of an open space plan. They used their NROC implementation grant funds to hire assistance from their local regional planning commission to complete that effort. Through the open space plan, Chester is documenting its vision, goals, and actions for open space protection. The four primary visions identified by its residents draw from various educational workshops and community visioning processes facilitated by NROC and its partners. Chester's visions are:

- 1 Create and maintain Chester's conservation/recreation lands to preserve the natural environment, protect valuable surface and ground waters, and provide passive outdoor recreation and educational opportunities.
- 2 Preserve Chester's most sensitive prime wetlands, vernal pools, wildlife habitats, and wildlife corridors in their natural state to balance development with quality of life.
- 3 Protect Chester's special places of cultural, aesthetic, and historical significance to sustain the community's rural heritage and improve the quality of life for all its citizens.
- 4 Seek and enhance regional open space connections with protected lands in neighboring towns to promote access and to enhance the natural beauty of Chester.

## WAKEFIELD 2005

Wakefield is a charming, rural New England town that abuts the state's border with Maine. It is rich with lakes and ponds that are enjoyed by bathers, boaters and anglers. As community members in Wakefield started to work with NROC, three top issues emerged: concerns about

planning and zoning, land conservation, and water resources. Wakefield had just implemented a one-year growth moratorium and was eager to ensure that future development in the town would fit their vision.

The Water Resources Action Group was quick to reach out to the many lake association members in town. As one participant noted, "For some, it was the first time that lake associations were taking an active role in town government reducing the 'us versus them' perspective of the past." The group outlined an ambitious course with NROC assistance and additional funding from a N.H. DES/EPA 319 grant. They committed to add a water resources chapter to their master plan. The chapter would include a synthesis of current water quality conditions, a review of current regulations and enforcement, and a set of recommendations that the town could pursue that would help protect their water. A water quality specialist was hired with some of the grant funds to conduct the data synthesis and then, citizen leaders applied for and received an additional grant to support hiring a professional planner to write the chapter.

The Water Resources Action Group also held a public forum to inform residents about the chapter development and solicit new participation. The public forum resulted in additional commitments from community members to participate in the master plan process, to be trained in potential pollution assessment techniques, and to join the Acton (Maine) Wakefield (New Hampshire) Watersheds Alliance (AWWA), a newly formed alliance of members of eight watershed organizations within town boundaries. AWWA has met with and received support from the select boards in both Acton and Wakefield to have Youth Conservation Corps students install erosion prevention systems on private shoreland properties, a project also supported by a N.H. DES/EPA 319 grant. (See page 14 for more information on *Wakefield*.)

## ENHANCED POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

*Featuring Dover, East Kingston, Strafford, Deerfield, and Wakefield*

*This category describes actions communities take to give “teeth” to their plans. It includes reviewing or changing zoning ordinances, identifying desired development practices, changing subdivision regulations, and strengthening site plan review criteria.*

### DOVER 2001

Dover’s master plan had just been updated in 2000, helping to lay the foundation for changes to zoning ordinances that were more protective of natural resources including water. Subsequent to working with the NROC team, Dover increased their wetland buffers from zero to 50 feet, made open space subdivisions mandatory for proposed subdivisions in certain parts of the city, and created a Transfer of Development Rights ordinance for residential land uses. One already existed for industrial/commercial land uses.

### EAST KINGSTON 2004

East Kingston offers a classic picture of fields, orchards, quiet charm, and New England heritage. It is home to about 2,000 people. In order to lay the groundwork for their natural resource protection strategies and land use decisions, East Kingston applied for and received Targeted Block Grant funds to help them review and revise their master plan vision statement. Recognizing that regulations are part of the gear set that help move natural resource protection plans into action, East Kingston’s NROC participants worked with NROC staff to review their existing cluster housing ordinance for improvements. As a result of that review, the Planning Board proposed revisions to create a stronger ordinance.

### STRAFFORD 2004

Strafford is home to one of the region’s largest freshwater lakes, Bow Lake, headwaters to the Isinglass River and recently designated as “natural” and “rural” by the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program. The lake is already mostly surrounded by homes, some with sub-standard septic systems, and is also experiencing a boom of shoreline property redevelopment. When Strafford applied to NROC, large parcels of property were on the market and concerns about the rural character and water quality were rising. In addition Strafford had completed its master plan in 2002 and was looking for help to implement the plan.

One focus in Strafford was to review and change some of their zoning ordinances and regulations to better protect



EAST KINGSTON

JULIA PETERSON



STRAFFORD

CAL & PENNY SCHROEDER

natural resources. The following changes were approved during the spring of 2006.

- **Growth management ordinance:** phase in the development of tracts of land and future subdivisions at a rate that will be compatible with the orderly and gradual expansion of community services. This will allow the Planning Board to establish a phasing schedule for subdivision applications requesting approval of six or more building lots.
- **Viewshed protection overlay district:** protect the view of Barn Door Gap, Blue Job Mountain, Evans Mountain, Mack Mountain, and Parker Mountain as seen from public ways or waters by regulating the construction of new structures at or above the elevation of 800 feet above sea level by requiring screening and by implementing height and placement restrictions.
- **Clarifying languages changes:** include eliminating “stores” from the Land Uses Allowed section in order to require review of stores under special exceptions, and prohibiting construction on areas of slopes of 25% or greater.

## DEERFIELD 2005

Deerfield is centrally located between the coast and New Hampshire’s capital. About 4,020 people reside there. They are proud of its scenic, forested rolling hills and attractive architecture. Deerfield is recognized by many because of its annual agricultural expo, the Deerfield Fair.

Deerfield’s NROC program had a strong start and has resulted in some interesting initiatives. Three action groups initially formed: Planning and Zoning, Land Conservation, and a Business Action Group. The business group became the Deerfield Business Ventures Council and has focused its efforts on attracting new businesses that are in keeping with Deerfield’s rural character. The Land Conservation Group merged with Deerfield’s existing Open Space Committee

The Planning and Zoning Action Group and the Open Space Committee both set their sights on educating voters about issues to be discussed and voted upon at the town meeting. Both groups used NROC implementation grant funds to conduct outreach campaigns. The Open Space Committee was seeking to change the Land Use Change Tax allocation. The campaign was successful and resulted in a vote to increase the Land Use Change Tax allocation



DEERFIELD

FRANK MITCHELL



WAKEFIELD

STEVE J. MILLER

to their Conservation Fund from 25% to 50%. This allocation had fluctuated from 100% in 2001 down to 25% with a \$500,000 cap the prior year. The increase is a positive step for conservation funding.

The Planning and Zoning Group was seeking changes that had been proposed by the Planning Board. The vote resulted in Deerfield passing 13 of 15 proposed zoning ordinance changes—said to be a direct result of the outreach campaign supported by the NROC grant. A summary of select changes includes:

- **Improved water protection:** increased setbacks for new buildings and septic systems (increased to 100 ft). This change included wetlands and surface waters.
- **Open space subdivisions:** set aside from open land as a part of each major subdivision.
- **Phased development:** stagger building of units to allow more time to plan for demand on town services.
- **Cell tower requirements:** no impact on mountain views.
- **Senior housing:** ensure affordability, limit number of units.

## WAKEFIELD 2005

During its first year with NROC, Wakefield accomplished a great deal. Their immediate need was to get more people involved in shaping planning and zoning by assisting the Planning Board in their task. NROC helped Wakefield reach out and triple participation by community members.

A Land Conservation Committee formed to lay the groundwork for more permanent land conservation. The committee conducted a number of community outreach efforts including hosting workshops on *Land*

*Conservation Options and Dollars* and *Sense of Saving Special Places*. They also applied for grant funds to produce newsletters, flyers, and traveling displays and to host events at conserved properties. The Planning and Zoning Group used their outreach efforts to build support for changes in local land use regulations that passed during the spring of 2006. Among those changes were:

- an additional rural zoning district;
- an article that results in a prime soils overlay district to promote agriculture, historically viable farm land, rural character, and working landscapes;
- an open space conservation/cluster development article to allow more flexible and creative developments that conserve natural areas;
- a vote to authorize \$500,000 for land conservation (purchase of conservation easements on two properties); and
- a vote to permit 100% of the Land Use Change Tax to go into the Conservation Fund.

## PROGRESS FROM DECISIONS TO ACTIONS

Featuring Dover and Exeter

*This category describes actions communities take to implement natural resource protection strategies. It includes permanent land conservation and the installation of various low impact development designs and best management practices on the landscape.*



EXETER ANN REID

### DOVER 2001

Within just a couple of years of working with NROC, Dover's Open Lands Committee would see the fruits of their labor with the conservation of 212 acres of the Strafford County Farm. The conservation of the County Farm was followed by the conservation of two properties of about 20 acres each with river and stream frontage and an additional property of just under 20 acres particularly valuable for wildlife and wellhead protection. The criteria originally developed with NROC for prioritizing protection is still being used by the OLC as they respond to increasing requests about permanent conservation.

*(See page 4 for more information on Dover.)*



EXETER ANN REID

### EXETER 2002

Exeter is located along the Exeter River and has a population of about 14,000, a distinguished history, and an appealing downtown. Exeter was just beginning to consider starting an effort to bond funds for land protection when NROC came to town. With assistance from NROC, Exeter was able to significantly catapult this existing momentum for permanent land conservation forward. NROC assisted Exeter in finding answers to legal questions, connected them with communities that had been in similar situations, and provided training in conducting effective outreach campaigns. After participating in NROC community outreach training, the group of concerned citizens decided to form the Exeter, A Special Place Committee to work on outreach efforts to build support for the bond.



EXETER ANN REID

The Exeter, A Special Place committee focused on educating Exeter residents about the importance of open space and applied for NROC grant funds to conduct an outreach campaign. The campaign included presentations, one-on-one discussions, personal phone calls, a brochure, news articles and letters, a local TV script, and a series of four newsletters. This outreach campaign contributed to the successful March 2003 passage, with support from 73% of the voters, of a \$3 million bond to fund land protection projects. Exeter's Select Board subsequently appointed an Open Space Committee to carry out the goals of the initiative and fulfill the wishes of the voters to protect the town's natural resources and unique character.

With support from its citizens through passage of the bond, Exeter was able to buy two properties and conservation easements on six others. Two additional projects are currently being negotiated. Within two years of receiving the bond, Exeter had achieved its goal of protecting 800 acres of land as open space. Exeter's Open Space Committee credits NROC with helping them see beyond the community boundaries to work with neighboring towns to pursue natural resource protection.

Exeter continues to reach out to its citizens with a regular newsletter that includes information about open space and water resources. The lands targeted for future protection include parcels that protect water quality, scenic and historic landscapes, land that has potential for public recreational usage, links to existing easements and green beltways, and key plant and wildlife habitats.

## THE FUTURE: LOOKING BACK AND FORGING AHEAD

**A**s NROC looks to the future, it relies on lessons learned from the past. NROC's goal is to function effectively both as a coalition and in assisting communities to grow in ways that protect their natural resources. In 2005, one of NROC's partner organizations solicited an evaluation of the program from an outside institution in order to gauge that effectiveness. The researchers used four broad questions to guide their work.

- 1 How effective is NROC in recruiting, retaining, and mobilizing community involvement?
- 2 Have NROC's conservation and growth management programs been successful in protecting natural environs?
- 3 How effective has the program been following the formal period of NROC engagement with communities?
- 4 Does the NROC program effectively utilize the financial and technical resources of its constituent agencies? Is the program the most cost-effective option for applying a similar amount of money to conservation and growth management problems?

The researchers conducted literature reviews of the characteristics of successful community-based natural resource protection efforts and used them to organize the research and help determine what topics would be explored. Over several months, the investigators gathered information about NROC by reviewing documents—progress reports, media coverage, public presentations, etc; conducting in-depth interviews of NROC partners; and surveying past and present community participants. They also conducted a basic cost benefit analysis of the program. The report concludes with a list of recommendations for improving NROC. Many of those recommendations are being implemented now.

As with any coalition, there is considerable effort and investment in coordinating and delivering the services of multiple partners and funding the program is a consistent concern. The cost benefit analysis revealed that there is no economically favorable alternative to the NROC program because:

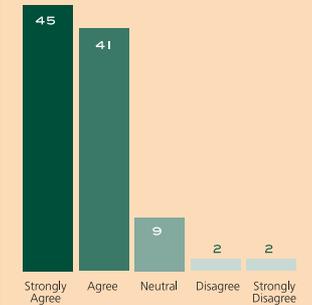
- NROC represents a unique collaboration of organizations.
- The organizational structure provides a means for many organizations to meet their missions in the region and prevents the duplication of efforts.
- “NROC results in a myriad of complex environmental, social, and psychological benefits.”<sup>1</sup>

The evaluation report provides a detailed analysis of the perceptions of NROC team members and community participants. The two charts on the right provide an overall summary of the participants' perceptions of the program, indicating that they strongly believe that the program is beneficial to Seacoast communities and that communities could not have addressed their concerns as effectively without NROC.

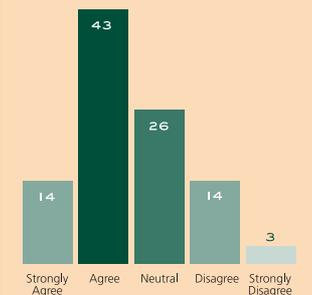
“Based on these analyses, the conclusion of the evaluation is that NROC is a valuable and cost-effective program that provides many valuable benefits to communities, and that the resulting conservation of natural resources is achieved in an inclusive manner that empowers and mobilizes communities to engage in conservation actions.”<sup>2</sup>

This evaluation has strengthened the NROC team's commitment to local engagement for natural resources protection and it has rejuvenated the resolve of team members to continue to work together to serve the communities and the natural resources of New Hampshire's coastal watershed.

Overall, I believe the NROC program is beneficial to communities in the seacoast region of N.H.



Community residents would not have effectively addressed natural resource issues without the assistance of NROC.



<sup>1,2</sup> Dr. Brian W. Eisenhauer and Dr. Mark J. Okrant, N.H. Center for the Environment, Plymouth State University, Plymouth, N.H.

## INDEX OF TOWNS AND TOPICS

Candia, 4, 6, 8  
 Chester, 10, 11  
 committee, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15  
 conservation easement, 14, 15  
 conservation plan, 7, 9, 10  
 conservation subdivision, 5  
 Deerfield, 12, 13, 14  
 Dover, 4, 5, 12, 15  
 East Kingston, 12  
 Exeter, 15  
 grant, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15  
 groundwater, 6, 8  
 growth management, 3, 7, 13, 16  
 land conservation, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15  
 land use change tax, 13, 14  
 master plan, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12  
 monitoring, 7, 8  
 natural resource inventory, 8  
 New Durham, 8, 9  
 Newfields, 10  
 Nottingham, 6, 8  
 open space, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15  
 open space subdivision, 12, 14,  
 outreach, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15  
 overlay district, 13, 14  
 smart growth, 5, 9  
 Somersworth, 8  
 Stratham, 4, 7, 12  
 Stratham, 8, 10  
 survey, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16  
 Wakefield, 10, 11, 12, 14  
 water quality, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15  
 water resources, 11, 15  
 zoning, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14



NEW HAMPSHIRE COASTAL WATERSHED

## NEW HAMPSHIRE COASTAL WATERSHED COMMUNITIES

Barrington	Middleton
Brentwood	Milton
Brookfield	New Castle
Candia	New Durham
Chester	Newfields
Danville	Newington
Deerfield	Newmarket
Dover	North Hampton
Durham	Northwood
East Kingston	Nottingham
Epping	Portsmouth
Exeter	Raymond
Farmington	Rochester
Fremont	Rollinsford
Greenland	Rye
Hampton	Sandown
Hampton Falls	Seabrook
Kensington	Somersworth
Kingston	Strafford
Lee	Stratham
Madbury	Wakefield

## WATERSHEDS

- 1 Salmon Falls River
- 2 Cocheco River
- 3 Lamprey River
- 4 Great Bay Drainage
- 5 Exeter River
- 6 Coastal Drainage



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

