

4 CONSERVED LANDS, PUBLIC LANDS, AND OTHER RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

At the time of this study, there are approximately 2,300 acres of conservation land in Grantham, or 12% of the land area. The Town of Grantham has allocated 100% of the Current Use Change penalty tax to the town's Conservation Fund for additional conservation efforts. In addition to conserved properties, the town manages other open space parcels and holds a trust fund set aside for the purchase of additional playing fields for the town's growing population of youth. Figure 4-1 (Appendix A) illustrates the location of conserved parcels and other town-owned lands within Grantham.

Open space performs a wide range of community and ecological services. Services include the protection of drinking water supplies; protection of lakes, rivers and streams; protection of wildlife habitat; carbon sequestration and air quality benefits; and opportunities for recreational, educational, aesthetic and other quality of life benefits that contribute to the community of Grantham.

4.1 CONSERVED PARCELS

4.1.1 GRANTHAM TOWN FOREST AND SHERWOOD FOREST

Accessible at the end of Miller Pond Road in North Grantham, the adjacent Grantham Town Forest and Sherwood Forest make up approximately 1,289 acres dominated by northern hardwood and spruce/fir forest. Abundant and varied wetlands include forested wetlands, scrub/shrub wetlands, vernal pools, and several seasonal and perennial brooks and streams. Together with the undeveloped parcels to the north of this combined tract, this area is of high quality for far-ranging wildlife or wildlife with large and/or varied habitat needs. Any existing wildlife travel corridors are interrupted to the south by the Corbin Park fence (see Section 7.7).

The Grantham Town Forest is 433.8 acres owned and actively managed by the town for timber production. The land is surrounded by Corbin Park to the south and the Sherwood Forest to the east. Lands are privately owned to the north and west. Fifty-five acres of the Town Forest is held in a conservation easement by the Grantham Conservation Commission. The remainder of the Town Forest is protected through fee ownership held by the town. Although highly unlikely, protection of the forest could be reversed in a vote at Town Meeting. To ensure permanent protection, as recommended in the Forest Management Plan for the Grantham Town Forest (Turner, 2007), the GCC could consider pursuing a conservation easement on the remaining acreage.

Two Class VI roads, Mountain (or Meriden) Road and the Croydon Turnpike, bisect the property and are seasonally used as snowmobile trails. The "Four Corners" warming hut,

owned and maintained by the Blue Mountain Snowdusters Outdoor Recreation Club (BMSD), exists east of the intersection of these two roads. Other recreational opportunities in the Town Forest include cross-country skiing, hiking and hunting. The Forest Management Plan for the Town Forest (Turner, 2007) recommends expanding public recreational and educational use by developing interpretive trails and trail systems for low-impact recreation.

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) usage in the Grantham Town Forest during mud season in spring has resulted in major disrepair to the Class VI roads (Turner, 2007). Off-road vehicles (ORV), including ATV's, often have adverse impacts on the habitat they travel through, especially wetlands. ORV's traveling through freshwater ecosystems stir up sediment and spoil vegetation, degrading or destroying wildlife habitat. Ruts formed by passing vehicles affect water flow and alter hydrology. Wet organic soils, unable to bear the weight of vehicles, can quickly become wide mud puddles or become compacted, leading to increased erosion (Deuver, 2002). ORV usage is both a growing sport and one of the most serious land management issues country-wide. It is also an emotionally and politically charged subject for those who feel they have the right to use their machines on public lands and for those who feel public lands must be protected from damage at all costs. The Town of Grantham should take care in approaching this subject but by all means should not ignore it. Suggestions include enacting restrictions on ATV usage on Class VI roads during mud season to maintain current road conditions, and prohibiting the creation of any new trails. An inventory of organisms and habitats potentially threatened by current ORV usage and a thorough analysis of impacts to these resources should be considered before additional restrictions on usage are discussed.

The town acquired conservation easements on the 825.9 acre Sherwood Forest and an adjacent 19 acre primitive campground, collectively known as the Flewelling Parcels, in 1989. The conservation easements provide for continued rights of access to a number of marked snowmobile trails on the property and grant rights for hiking, hunting, and skiing. Continued maintenance of the existing campground is required by the easements but further development is prohibited for as long as it is used commercially. The Sherwood and Flewelling properties include 4,500 feet of frontage on Miller Pond and its associated wetlands and streams. The property is actively managed for timber production along with the adjacent Town Forest which borders the property to the west.

4.1.2 RENEY MEMORIAL FOREST

Reney Memorial Forest, a 428 acre parcel owned by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), is managed for timber production, protection of water quality, wildlife habitat, education, recreation, and scenic values. The landscape provides extensive interior forest habitat for native wildlife such as moose, bear, deer, bobcat, coyote and fisher. This



property protects the headwaters of the North Branch of the Sugar River and includes a pristine bog and red maple swamp fed by the headwaters of Bog Brook.

A portion of the BMSD trail network passes through the forest and a second warming hut is maintained on the property. A hiking trail adjacent to the BMSD trail holds potential for expansion through new trail creation and by linking to Class VI roads on adjacent parcels. Hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, hunting and fishing are allowed. A biotimber inventory, completed in 2003, is available through the SPNHF office.

4.1.3 HOWARD FOREST

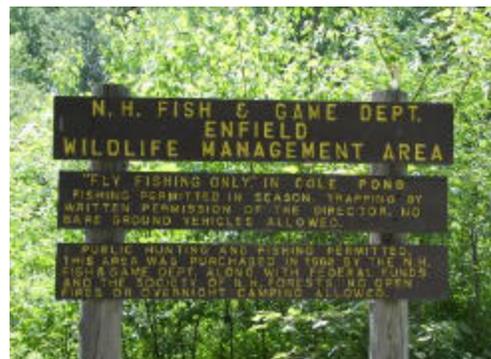
SPNHF holds a conservation easement on the privately owned Howard Forest. This property, totaling 111 acres, is located off Croydon Turnpike and is sometimes referred to as the “Croydon Turnpike Lot.” The landscape, dominated by white pine, red spruce, balsam fir, red maple and hemlock, is gently sloped with elevations ranging from 1,200 feet near its Corbin Park border to 1,000 feet. Public access may be allowed with landowner permission.

4.1.4 EASTMAN FOREST

The Eastman Forest is the first property in Sullivan County acquired by SPNHF. Primary tree species in this forty acre lot include hemlock, birch, sugar maple, balsam fir and red maple. In close proximity to the Eastman Community, this parcel has good public access from Eastman Road.

4.1.5 ENFIELD WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The Enfield Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is owned and managed by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Most of its 3,062 acres lie within the Town of Enfield to the north with approximately 438 acres falling within the borders of Grantham. The Enfield WMA is mostly forested with northern hardwoods and scattered stands of spruce and fir. It has marshlands, beaver ponds, and numerous water bodies including Grantham’s forty-acre Butternut Pond. Butternut Pond can be accessed from trails that primarily cross private property. This tract is highly valued for its water and wildlife resources and is likely a link in a wildlife travel corridor. Hunting, fishing, and hiking are allowed uses.



A Wildlife Management Area is a parcel of undeveloped land, owned by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, managed for wildlife habitat and open to hunting and fishing.

4.2 TOWN-OWNED PROPERTIES USED FOR RECREATION

Table 4-1 includes town-owned properties used for recreational activities.



Table 4-1 Town-owned properties maintained for recreational activities.

Property Name	Recreational Opportunities
Brookside Park	picnicking; hiking
Smith Lot	hiking; hunting
School Lot	ball diamond; tennis courts; nature trail
Juniper Hill Farm	outdoor recreation; adjoining snowmobile trails allow easy access by cross country skiers, snow shoers, and snowmobilers.

4.3 OTHER RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

4.3.1 RECREATIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM

The volunteer group Blue Mountain Snowdusters Outdoor Recreation Club, Inc. (BMSD) has maintained a network of trails in Grantham (Figure 4-1, Appendix A), Croydon, Newport, and Enfield since 1975. These trails are open to permitted outdoor recreational activities including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling. The majority of Grantham’s recreational trails are located on Class VI roads controlled by the town, including the Fay Road Trail which passes through Sherwood Forest and the Olde Farms Trail from Dunbar Hill Road through the Olde Farms subdivision to NH Route 10. These two trails are deeded Rights-of-way, set aside for public non-wheeled recreation in 1979 by a Grantham Planning Board mandate and protected with a Conservation Easement in 1989. The remaining trail system often crosses privately owned land at the permission of the landowner. Respecting landowner rights and club rules is essential to preserving an active trail network. For more information on the BMSD, go to <http://bluemountainsnowdusters.com/>.



Additional recreational opportunities, such as fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching, exist in many of Grantham’s open space areas.

4.4 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- As recommended in the Forest Management Plan for the Grantham Town Forest (Turner, 2007), acquire a conservation easement on the acreage of the Town Forest not currently under permanent protection. Alternatively, transfer fee ownership from the Town of Grantham to the Grantham Conservation Commission.
- Snowmobile usage excluded, apply seasonal restrictions on ATV usage in the Grantham Town Forest. Inventory natural resources along all current ORV routes and apply restrictions to protect sensitive habitat where necessary. Prohibit the creation of any new trails by ORV's.
- Develop interpretive and recreational trail systems in the Grantham Town Forest to enhance recreational and educational opportunities and help residents appreciate the value of conservation easements and public lands.
- Encourage and support SPNHF in expansion of the trail network in the Reney Memorial Forest.
- Additional land conservation efforts should focus on conservation focus areas as defined in Section 5.4.3.