

Town of Goshen, Connecticut
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NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

GOAL:

BALANCE THE NEED TO PROTECT DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES, NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE OBJECTIVE OF MAINTAINING THE TOWN'S RURAL APPEARANCE WITH THE NEED TO PROVIDE LOCAL POLICIES AND REGULATIONS WHICH WILL PROTECT THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND PERMIT LOCAL BUSINESSES TO OPERATE IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER.

ISSUES:

1. Protect Both Surface Water and Ground Water Supplies

Goshen's residents agree that a basic goal of the Town Plan must be to insure that the Town's land use policies are formulated and enforced to protect the Town's valuable natural resources, especially the ground water supply resources which provide drinking water to Goshen. Equally important is the Town's responsibility to protect from pollution the water resources in the several watersheds in Goshen which provide drinking water to other communities – Torrington, Waterbury and Litchfield.

2. Sewer Avoidance and Housing Opportunities

Town residents and officials have consistently supported "sewer avoidance" policies. These are policies aimed at avoiding the need for additional development served by a sewage treatment plant and sewer lines. Except for the Woodridge Lake Sewer District area, Goshen is served by on-site septic disposal systems.

Sewer avoidance policies are consistent with the goal of maintaining the Town's rural density of population and avoiding water pollution. Accordingly the Town's land use and Inland Wetland Regulations, the policies of the Water Pollution Control Authority and the requirements of the Torrington Area Health District have been formulated and enforced to ensure septic systems performance and to avoid the need for sewers.

Although Goshen residents do not want to compromise environmental protection or extend additional public sewers into Goshen, many expressed concern that there needs to be an opportunity for smaller and more readily affordable lots. There is a need to strike a balance between these important goals.

3. Coordinate Open Space Planning and Private Open Space Action

Goshen Residents see the Town's future landscape retaining its pattern of open spaces, rural views and vistas that make it a visual pleasure.

To achieve this vision Town open space planning efforts should continue building upon the 2001 Goshen Open Space Plan. Goshen can continue its success in its open space preservation by coordinating public planning and private land saving work with the Goshen Land Trust and others. An Open Space subcommittee needs to be formed to prioritize open space to be preserved in Town and pursue funding of the purchase of these priority open space areas either outright or thru purchase of the development rights. Protection and preservation of agriculture lands are key to preserving the rural character of Goshen.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Sewer Avoidance

Carry out the Sewer Avoidance Policies set forth in the 1988 Goshen Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) Plan. An important recommendation in this plan is to educate citizens concerning proper septic operation/maintenance. Other key recommendations:

a. Declare the entire Town (outside of the Woodridge Lake Sewer District) to be a "Sewer Avoidance" Area.

b. Remain a member of the Torrington Area Health District (TAHD)

c. The Water Pollution Control Authority remains active in monitoring sewage related aspects of land use in Goshen by:

- cooperating with the TAHD to update the Town's septic rules where necessary,
- cooperating with the Woodridge Lake Sewer District to support safe operation of the District sewer system,
- maintaining a long range program for the disposal of septage (residue pumped from septic tanks).

2. Torrington Area Health District Requirements

Continue support of special TAHD requirements designed to protect local water quality in Goshen including the 75 foot separation requirement between septic systems and wetlands or water courses, the requirements for engineer designed septic systems, and limits on the installation of systems in shallow to bedrock soils.

6. Conservation Subdivision – Open Space Design in Water Supply Watersheds

Change the Zoning Regulations to give the Planning and Zoning Commission the option to require a conservation– open space subdivision plan instead of a conventional subdivision layout in water supply watersheds where the conservation lot designs option would benefit protection of important water supply recharge areas and/or avoid development of sensitive watershed lands. (See Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 126; Section 8-23 (b).) Conservation subdivisions should also be considered to preserve active farmlands.

7. Review and refine 2001 Goshen Open Space Plan recommendations

The Commission should also identify continuous corridors of open space and missing links in "Greenway" corridors for recreation, open space and wildlife protections.

An example of a greenway area is the large band of wetland and associated land beginning behind the Goshen Fairgrounds running south parallel to State Route 63 to the Craig Farm and beyond. Protection and preservation of Goshen's agriculture is another key element in any open space planning and preservation.

8. The Goshen Land Trust and other conservation organizations, such as the Northwest Conservation District, may also offer suggestions for important conservation areas in the Town.

9. Recommendations for low water yield areas There are pockets of land in Goshen with a very limited capacity to yield adequate water supply for single family residential homes. One such area is the Northwest section of the Woodridge Lake Subdivision. To identify and properly plan for development within these areas it is recommended that:

-The Conservation Commission in cooperation with local well drillers and others prepare a map generally identifying such low water yield areas.

-Zoning Regulations be revised to permit the Planning and Zoning Commission to require that, prior to issuance of a Zoning Permit for any lot located in proximity to a low water yield area the applicant must first drill a well and receive approval from the Torrington Area Health District.

10. Minimum Lot Size and "Affordable" Housing

Where the Planning and Zoning Commission considers exceptions to the minimum lot size requirements for the purpose of providing smaller, “affordable” housing lots, it shall maintain the requirements that each lot contain a minimum contiguous area within which there is no inland wetland soil. (See *Housing* section for discussion of “affordable” housing).

11. Monitor Water Quality in Lakes and Ponds

Programs to protect the water quality in the Town’s major water bodies should be based upon ongoing monitoring of water quality. Town’s lakes and ponds are subject to deterioration due to increased algae growth (eutrophication) and pollution.

A basic inexpensive lake water monitoring and testing system should be established with water samples to be collected by volunteers during the spring, summer and fall months under the aegis of the Conservation Commission and a reestablished Watershed Committee. The cost of laboratory analysis should be borne by the Town.

The monitoring program should be designed with information from the monitoring work previously done at Woodridge Lake by the WLPOA, the now defunct Watershed Committee and the Torrington Area Health District.

12. Major Water Bodies – Land Use and Water Conditions

The historic dense development pattern around Tyler Lake and in its watershed is contributing to an acceleration of algae growth in the lake according to the Tyler Lake Clean Lake study. Similar conditions exist in the watersheds of Dog Pond, Westside Pond and other water bodies. Declining lake water clarity due to algae growth is not a water pollution problem but it can diminish the recreational value of the Town’s water bodies. The current low-density zoning should remain in effect for the lake areas and their watersheds areas to protect water quality.

13. Explore Ridgeline Protection Regulations to help preserve Goshen’s ridgelines.

14. Consider amending the Fee in Lieu of Open Space Subdivision Regulation to allow the Commission to accept a fee in lieu of open space for subdivisions with less than 10 lots. Money collected would be placed in an open space account that would be used solely for the purpose of preserving open space.

15. The Selectmen and Board of Finance should set up a line item in the Town’s Budget and fund it annually for the purchase of open space land.

16. Recommendations for the Lake Districts:

- strict enforcement of septic design and installation requirements,

- adequate setbacks between the lake, septic systems and buildings, - require construction plans for storm-water run-off facilities, encourage land treatment of storm-water and groundwater infiltration of runoff,

- require a vegetative buffer along lake and stream shorelines, establish a maximum percentage of impervious surface on a lot,

- establish a minimum percentage for open space on a lot.

- Consider other recommendations by the Watershed Committee, such as maintaining and cleaning storm-water catch basins in the lake watersheds.

17. The Conservation Commission and a reestablished Watershed Committee should provide information to home owners in Lake Districts explaining that to protect the lake residents need to avoid the use of garbage disposals in septic systems, water softener backwash discharge to septic fields and septic system additives.

18. Protect Water Quality from Hazardous Material Pollution. It is recognized that proper regulation of the use, storage and disposal of hazardous materials is critical to the goal of protecting water resources and drinking water supplies in Goshen. Zoning Regulations for businesses and education of residents are key components in protecting water quality. The Conservation Commission and a reestablished Watershed Committee should provide the educational component. Input from Connecticut DEP and other agencies should be sought in providing education to Town residents. The Planning and Zoning Commission must adopt aquifer protection Regulations in accordance with State Statutes.

19. The Selectman should continue and consider expansion of the Town's recycling program to help preserve the environment.