

# New London Conservation Commission

## Strategic Plan

### 2018-2023

#### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Historically, New London's Conservation Commission has been dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enhancing the town's natural resources, open spaces, and its scenic areas. It does so through acquisition of land under conservation or by holding easements, by maintaining an extensive trail system, and through collaborative action.

As the Town of New London prepares to update its planning documents, it seems prudent that the Conservation Commission prepare a strategic plan for its future. It is hoped that this plan will inform the Select Board and other town committees of the work which the Conservation Commission undertakes annually, and will provide a framework for its growth.

This is not intended as a "job description" for the Conservation Commission. Rather it reflects the Commission's hopes for future paths as the scope of its work evolves.

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**Mission.** The mission of the New London Conservation Commission is to advance the town's goals for conservation and open space land set forth in the latest (2011) version of the Master Plan for the Town of New London, New Hampshire, including:

- Protecting New London's open space lands;
  - Preserving the quality and quantity of New London's water resources;
  - Preserving the scenic areas and natural beauty of New London;
  - Preserving agricultural and forest lands and encouragement of sound management;
  - Preserving natural habitat for wildlife;
  - Protecting fragile environments such as hilltops, steep slopes, wetlands and special natural or geologic features;
  - Developing the town's trail system as an outdoor recreational resource.
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#### STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2018 – 2023

##### Goal #1: Continue initiatives to manage lands owned or held under easement by the Town of New London

- ◆ Develop a management plan that encompasses all of the town-owned conservation land, including
  - maintaining sound forest management practices
  - habitat maintenance, improvement and protection
  - surface water, wetlands, and shore land protection
- ◆ Build and maintain relationships with owners of conserved property, trail abutters, and potential easement donors

- ◆ Educate members of the community on invasive species (land-based and aquatic) and appropriate remedial action.
- ◆ Serve as the town's resource and permitting agent on the potential impacts of land development on its natural resources.
- ◆ Offer policy positions as requested by other town boards/commissions or in response to natural resource issues.

#### Goal #2: Identify and conserve New London's most important natural areas

- ◆ Work to achieve the goal of "New Hampshire Everlasting" that each of NH's towns set aside 25% of their land as open space. New London is now at approximately 18%
- ◆ Continue to be pro-active regarding desirable lands acquisition.
- ◆ Maintain an inventory of high conservation quality undeveloped land with particular attention to
  - Water quality protection
  - Wildlife habitat
  - Open space
  - Farmland
  - Contiguous and unfragmented habitat
- ◆ Identify significant natural areas and work with other organizations to protect and restore them through management agreements, conservation easement, or purchase
- ◆ Develop a strategy for land acquisition budgeting

#### Goal #3: Manage the more than 30 miles of town-owned trails

- ◆ Develop new trails and appropriate signage for all trails
- ◆ Expand the number of multi-use trails, including development of x-c trails and maintenance requirements
- ◆ Update trail maps as necessary, including difficulty level
- ◆ Study the efficacy of a dog park
- ◆ Involve community members in maintenance of the trail system
- ◆ Continue trail connections, connecting existing trails to neighborhoods and business districts
- ◆ Develop an equipment and materials maintenance and storage system

#### Goal #4: Improve communication to best serve and inform the community

- ◆ Educate New London's permanent and seasonal residents on the town's conservation values.
- ◆ Involve community members in the Commission's land, wildlife, and trail management projects
- ◆ Expand education and outreach opportunities to connect community members with the town's natural resources and the benefits they provide
- ◆ Increase visibility of the work of the Commission through electronic and print media
- ◆ Schedule events and guest speakers on specific topics such as land use and management, land protection, important natural resources in the town
- ◆ Increase collaboration with New London's boards, committees, and volunteer organizations to best achieve a shared vision for the town and its residents
- ◆ Work with New London's boards and commissions to develop policies and regulations that enhance the town's natural resources and open spaces
- ◆ Advocate for the various elements of the Commission's mission
- ◆ Develop a strategy for annual operations budget