

# CUMBERLAND OPEN SPACE PLAN

APRIL 2000



## TOWN OF CUMBERLAND

### Open Space Plan

#### Introduction

This Plan is the result of recommendations made in the Cumberland Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town Council on June 22, 1998, and certified by the State of Maine in August 1998. Preserving Cumberland's rural character is a goal identified in the Comprehensive Plan, and in previous comprehensive plans dating back to 1949. The Comprehensive Plan indicates that rural character results from a mix of agriculture and forest land, and large areas of contiguous undeveloped land for use by wildlife, for resource protection, and for outdoor recreation. Spaces worthy of protection may include important natural resources and scenic open spaces, and might have low density development interspersed among fields and woodlands. This Plan attempts to identify those areas that are unique to Cumberland, and that the loss of which would result in Cumberland becoming a community indistinguishable from other, more heavily developed, towns in the region.

Early in the development of this Plan, it became apparent that the factors used for evaluating land in mainland Cumberland were not necessarily appropriate on Chebeague Island. For example, preservation of active farmland is a top priority on the mainland, but is less important on Chebeague, where there are few long-time working farms. On the other hand, maintaining waterfront access is perhaps a more critical issue on Chebeague than it is on the mainland. Accordingly, a separate Open Space Plan for Chebeague will be developed at a later date.

The Plan is intended to supplement the comprehensive plan, and to serve as a guide for the Town Council in land acquisition discussions and in deciding whether to offer an owner financial incentives to keep a parcel of land undeveloped, and as a tool for the Planning Board in reviewing subdivision and other development proposals.

The Plan is organized in seven different sections: 1) active agricultural land, 2) oceanfront property, 3) forest land, 4) locally significant wildlife habitat, 5) scenic areas (landscapes and vistas, special features, historic and cultural resources, scenic roadways, and gateways), 6) negative visual areas, and 7) existing open space. Each section includes a brief narrative explaining why these areas should be preserved, a map or series of maps identifying where the land in that category is located, recommendations on how the land might be preserved, and, in certain cases, a method of rank-ordering lands of the same type. A glossary of terms is included at the end of the Plan.

The Plan does not identify specific parcels for action by the Council. The omission of a parcel from the inventory is not intended to preclude the landowner from participation in any programs that might be developed, although it is likely that such land would receive a lower priority than inventoried land. Similarly, the identification of a parcel as “significant” for any reason is not intended to prohibit, preclude, or otherwise limit its development.

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### **The Open Space Committee**

The Plan has been developed by the Open Space Committee, composed of Phil Gleason (chairman), Bill Stiles, Bob Vail, Lisa Cowan, Beth Howe, Sally Stockwell, Dan Caputo, George Turner, Patty Berg, and Mark Kuntz (Town Council representative), with the assistance of Town Planner Donna Larson. Landscape Architect Terry DeWan of Terrance DeWan Associates in Yarmouth assisted in policy development and provided the data for the scenic areas and negative visual features sections of the Plan. Sally Stockwell, Dave Cowan, and Jennifer West supplied the data and policy for the wildlife habitat section. Cynthia Magnuson, special assistant to the Planner, created the inventory maps using Cumberland's geographic information system (GIS).

The Committee began by identifying broad goals for the Plan, as follows:

- Preservation of significant land for future generations
- Preservation or postponement of development
- Preservation of the visual "look" of Cumberland
- Expansion of recreational opportunities for the residents
- Preservation of wildlife habitat and corridors
- Provision of connections between neighborhoods and Town facilities
- Provision of access to bodies of water, in particular the ocean
- Preservation of view corridors

During the course of its discussions the Committee considered developing a system by which land would be rank-ordered by giving weighted value to certain characteristics. For example, if a parcel was used for agricultural purposes it would get a certain number of points, and the larger the parcel, the more points it would get, and so on. As different point systems were considered, it became apparent that this approach was far too mechanical. Instead, the Committee opted for the more conceptual approach contained in this document.