TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD

2750 MAIN STREET, PO BOX 22
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PHONE (603)763-4805 FAX (603)763-3336
www.springfieldnh.net

PLANNING BOARD
WETLANDS COMMITTEE

REPORT TO THE PLANNING BOARD

OCTOBER 2012

The residents of the Town of Springfield have expressed support for the protection of their natural resources in the 2005 Town Plan (Master Plan) and the 2000 Community Attitude Survey. In addition, changes recommended from time to time by the Planning Board have been usually approved at Town Meeting. The 2000 Community Attitude Survey included responses such as:

Question 10 - On lakes, ponds, wetlands, streams, and aquifers, please check those items you favor:

- 68% setback requirements

Question 12 – How important is the preservation of the following natural resources in Springfield to you? Of those responding:

	VERY	MODERATE	SLIGHT	NOT
Scenic natural resources	86%	11%	2%	1%
Agricultural lands	64%	23%	11%	2%
Natural areas	84%	13%	2%	1%
Surface waters	82%	15%	2%	2%
Ground waters	83%	12%	3%	2%
Wetlands	68%	22%	7%	2%

Given the overwhelming support for natural resources protection the Planning Board did propose wetlands and shorelands overlay districts and changes which attempt to address the concerns and interests of the large majority of residents. The proposals have met with consistent voter approval.

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Over the past few years there have been several wetlands-related concerns expressed by the Planning Board. These include that:

- Residents are being required to expend considerable time and money to comply with the Zoning Ordinance
- The 100-foot (150 feet for commercial) setbacks have been viewed by some as too restrictive and the 10,000 square foot minimum for wetlands protection has been thought of by some as too arbitrary and burdensome.
- It is difficult or impossible to construct accessory buildings in the buffer area when house lots predated zoning and/or the creation of the Wetlands Overlay District.
- Too much of the land area in Town is included in the Conservation Overlay Districts.

To quantify land area under discussion the Wetlands Committee obtained calculations from the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission and GRANIT:

Springfield Land Acreage Report	**Acres**
Total Acreage	28,478.80
Acreage of Wetlands	**Acres**
National **W**etlands **I**nventory (only)	1,606.50
Very **P**oorly **D**rained Soils	847.67
NWI and **VPD** Soils	1,875.71
Acreage of Wetlands Overlay District	**Wetlands & Buffer**
Current (100 ft **NWI** + 660 ft around McDaniels Marsh)	3,498.50
Current (100 ft **NWI** + 660 ft around McDaniels Marsh) plus **VPD** soils	3,795.24

In 2011 the Planning Board sought to address the process of identifying wetlands to be protected in Town by replacing the threshold of 10,000 square feet with the 1987 National Wetlands Map. This proposal was presented as a “step-back and evaluate” measure pending a report of recommendations by this Committee. Also proposed was construction of structures in the buffer areas by Special Exception. These proposals were approved at the 2012 Town Meeting.

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In January 2012 this Committee was authorized by the Planning Board and a member, Mike Howard, was charged with a mission:

- Provide an overview of existing wetlands protection
- Make recommendations to the Planning Board

The initial meeting of the Committee was held in February. Members and affiliation include:

- Mike Howard – Planning Board
- George McCusker – Planning Board
- Gene Hayes – Zoning Board of Adjustment
- Bryan O'Day – Zoning Board of Adjustment
- Cynthia Bruss – Conservation Commission
- Bruce Allen – Conservation Commission
- John Trachy – Unaffiliated

The goals for a better wetlands ordinance as outlined by the chair included:

- Reasonable wetlands protection
- Relatively easy for the Town to administer
- Not be an unreasonable burden for landowners

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Much can be said about the ideal amount of protection for our water, wetlands and the creatures that depend on them. The reasoning for protection must be tempered by the need for public support. This report tries to reach such a balance. No one member agrees with all of the compromises made and each member understands that further adjustments will be incorporated, not only in adopting the recommendations contained herein, but as the knowledge about our wetlands and their value evolves. It is hoped that these recommendation will guide the Town for the next 10 or 15 years and that our children, grandchildren and future residents will also make better-informed changes as needed.

It is with that mission and goals in mind that the Committee has developed and recommends the changes in our ordinance outlined and supported in this report and appendices. We urge the Planning Board to carefully consider the recommendations and the impact they will have for all of our residents, now and future.

Mike Howard _____

George McCusker _____

Gene Hayes _____

Bryan O'Day _____

Cynthia Bruss _____

Bruce Allen _____

John Trachy _____