Recommendation

Issue: Should Springfield discontinue use of the National Wetlands Inventory map to identify wetlands?

Overview: Since Town Meeting 2012 the Town has used the National Wetlands Inventory map as the exclusive identifier of jurisdictional wetlands. There are several problems associated with this map:

- The map was not produced or intended for the identification of jurisdictional wetlands
- The map misconstrues the size and location of wetlands that are to be protected, thus leading to unequal treatment of landowners
- The map does not reflect hydric soils which are also wetlands
- The map does not identify wetlands that should be protected as reflected by the 2000 Community Attitude Survey (question 12)

Recommendation: Discontinue use of the map for identification of jurisdictional wetlands

Reasoning:

- Certain wetland habitats are excluded from the National mapping program because of the limitations of aerial imagery as the primary data source used to detect wetlands.[1]
- A margin of error is inherent in the use of imagery; thus, detailed on-the-ground inspection of any particular site may result in revision of the wetland boundaries or classification established through image analysis.[2]
- A Vermont study confirms that relying solely on the NWI (National Wetlands Inventory map) fails to identify 82% of wetlands under 3 acres and 64% of wetlands between 3 and 20 acres[3]
- A Maine study confirms that only 25% of wetlands under 1 acre were identified by the NWI map[4]

Specification: Amend Section 4.11 Wetland Conservation Overlay District Boundaries – delete paragraph - see Draft Ordinance with Changes

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[1] Appendix E – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – National Wetlands Inventory
[2] Appendix E – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – National Wetlands Inventory
[3] Appendix F – Assessment of the National Wetlands Inventory – Morrissey & Sweeney
[4] Appendix G – Map Accuracy of National Wetlands Inventory Maps – US Dep't of the Interior – Fish & Wildlife Service