

Natural Resource Protection in the Town of Stanford
Proposed Changes to the Master Plan and Town Ordinances

Gary Lovett, Concerned Citizen's Group

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A primary goal of The 1980 Stanford Master Plan is “elevating ecological issues to the same level as other planning issues.” The Town has begun that process with the designation of several Critical Environmental Areas and other ordinances, but further steps are needed to adequately address the goals of the Master Plan. The current process of revising the Master Plan provides an opportunity to take these steps. I list below a few actions that the Town could take that would provide a large benefit in protection of wildlife, critical habitats, groundwater and surface water. These ideas are offered in a spirit of assisting the Codes Committee and the Town Board to more fully realize the vision of the Master Plan.

Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs). The report “Significant Habitats in the Town of Stanford, Dutchess County, New York” published by Hudsonia, Ltd. In 2005, (hereafter referred to as “Hudsonia Report”) provides an excellent guide to important natural habitats in the Town. In addition to mapping and identifying important wildlife habitats, the Hudsonia Report lists seven Priority Conservation Areas in the Town. These Priority Conservation Areas were designated because they contain clusters of important habitat types. Of these seven, two are already designated fully as CEAs by the Town, while three others are partially included within a CEA. See the table below:

Hudsonia Report Priority Conservation Area	Covered by Existing CEA?	Recommendation
Stissing Mountain Area	Yes, Upper Wappinger CEA	OK as is
Bloodstock Farms Area	Yes, Upper Wappinger CEA	OK as is
Homann-Bowen Area	Partially, Snake Hill CEA	Expand Snake Hill CEA
Millbrook Marsh Area	Partially, Millbrook Meadows CEA	Expand Millbrook Meadows CEA
Ryder Pond Area	Partially, Ryder Pond CEA	Expand Ryder Pond CEA
Shaw Pond Area	No	Create new CEA

Wappinger Creek Corridor	Not below Cold Spring Rd.	Use watercourse protection regulation
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We recommend that the Snake Hill, Millbrook Meadows, and Ryder Pond CEAs be expanded to include the entire Priority Conservation Areas mapped in the Hudsonia Report. We also recommend that a new CEA be designated to protect the Shaw Pond Area, and that a wetland/watercourse regulation be adopted to protect the Wappinger Creek Corridor (See below). CEA designation signals that the Town considers these areas to be important environmental features and provides an extra level of scrutiny for proposed development within or adjacent to the designated area.

Site Plan Review. The Town zoning ordinance should require that site plans presented to the Planning Board include an ecological habitat assessment, in which the applicant refers to the habitat maps developed by Hudsonia, Ltd. and discusses any degradation or alteration of habitats by the proposed development. The Biodiversity Assessment methodology included as Appendix B in the Master Plan Update report is a good example. For other examples, see the Town of Amenia Zoning Code, sections 121-20, 121-35, and 121-65. (See the Amenia Web Site: http://www.ameniany.gov/docs/cpic/Amenia_Zoning_7_20_07_WEB_clean%20version.pdf)

Large Forest Blocks. Forests are the natural vegetative cover for this region, but as the land becomes increasingly developed, forest land becomes fragmented into smaller and smaller blocks. Unfragmented forests help purify water, support many wildlife and plant species that require large blocks of forest land to survive, and reduce the incidence of Lyme Disease. Contiguous forest blocks of different size categories within the Town are mapped in Figure 4 of the Hudsonia Report. We recommend that the Town designate the forest blocks of over 500 acres with conservation overlay zoning, adopt a policy of no net loss of forest cover in these zones, and implement regulations that will allow us to achieve that goal.

Wetlands and Surface Water. We recommend that the Town pass a wetlands/waterbodies/ watercourse protection law modeled after Dutchess County's "Model Ordinance for Wetland, Waterbody and Watercourse Protection." In implementing this law, the Town should map and protect wetlands down to ½ acre and vernal pools, as well as providing buffer strips of natural vegetation adjacent to surface waters and wetlands.

Groundwater. We recommend that the Town implement a Groundwater Protection Plan, building on the plan it adopted in 2001. The Groundwater protection Plan should include the following components:

- Establish a groundwater monitoring program to track the quality of groundwater in the Town.
- Establish an regulation that requires secondary containment of hazardous substances by businesses.
- Prohibit the installation of new underground oil storage tanks, including residential heating oil tanks. Seek funds to allow replacement of existing underground heating oil tanks with above-ground tanks.
- Review facilities and procedures at Town-owned facilities such as the Town Garage, Salt Shed, and Transfer Station to insure that no hazardous substances are escaping to groundwater.
- Decrease zoning density in areas that have poor septic filtration capacities.
- Require a special-use permit for any proposed activity that involves potential groundwater contaminants.