Town of Cheshire Open Space and Recreation Plan

December XX, 2024



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The Town of Cheshire wishes to acknowledge and is thankful for its agreement with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the District Local Technical Assistance Program, without which this plan could never have been completed.



Section 1: Plan Summary

Background

The town of Cheshire produced its first Open Space and Recreation Plan in 1991 and again in 2000 but hasn't updated the plan since that point. The Town created a Master Plan in 2017, which makes a variety of recommendations for implementation. The previous Open Space and Recreation Plans and Master Plan were used extensively to develop priorities for the current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP.) The town sought feedback from the community through a public survey and public forum. This community input was also used to prioritize the goals and actions of this current open space plan.

Recognition of the need to update the plan and enable the town to access state grant funding provided the incentive for the current update. The earlier plans addressed issues of resource protection, conservation of lands and historic structures. Planning was also identified as an important piece in protecting the character of the town. The 2024 version takes that one step further, asking residents if the town should expend resources to move some of the objectives forward.

Cheshire residents value its rural, wild, and natural character. They use the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and Hoosac Lake extensively and recognize that these resources need management and protection to remain community resources. They recognize the importance of incorporating climate mitigation into planning models. Cheshire has not voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act. Funds from this program are used to support historic preservation, low-income housing, and land protection. The Town is able to use its Right of First Refusal in the Chapter 61 state tax abatement program to conserve land for public enjoyment of history, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation.

Need for Open Space and Recreation in Cheshire

The 2024 plan incorporates residents' needs while addressing the part that comprehensive land protection can play in making a community more resilient and prosperous in a changing climate. A review of past OSRP plans, the 2017 Master Plan, and the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) and Hazard Mitigation Plans (2023) demonstrate that residents continue to prioritize goals that are unmet, a need to evaluate the success of projects already undertaken and assess current development trends within the context of climate mitigation. This 2024 Plan provides an opportunity to do each of these tasks with the support of community members and town boards.

The MVP Plan showed the Town's interest in understanding the town's flood plains, wetlands and ability to reconnect them to reduce the likelihood of flooding during high water events. Cheshire residents expressed a desire to be proactive, protecting its most valuable wildlife corridors, intact water resources, and open spaces while strengthening its access to outdoor recreation. Safeguarding Cheshire's rural character, numerous existing outdoor recreation opportunities, and its historic districts continue to be a priority.

Stewardship of natural spaces and rural character were identified as key factors to the success of the Town's ability to serve residents and attract visitors and second homeowners. The importance of sharing and caretaking what is already available was highlighted in our research. Identifying, through data supported research, areas that are appropriate for slow but steady growth, without diminishing what makes Cheshire a unique healthy climate resilient community, are incorporated in the goals set out in this 2024 OSRP.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan identifies the existence of numerous large, undivided, unprotected parcels that could be used to link other parcels to create wildlife corridors. Cheshire's most notable recreational attractions are Cheshire Reservoir and the large Federal and state-owned properties that extend into neighboring communities, such as Mount Greylock State Reservation, the Appalachian Trail, the Chalet Wildlife Management Area, and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. The 2024 survey of residents identified residents' desire for recreation, including a majority of residents that would like improvements to the Cheshire Reservoir. When asked what the most important resource to be conserved in Cheshire, 67 of 121 respondents stated that Cheshire Reservoir was the top priority. Other popular answers were water resources of all types (streams, rivers, and groundwater), farmland, and conservation land.

The recognition, across the state, of a changing climate has increased the need for strategic planning. Directing priorities based on research so that next steps in protecting open spaces and significant environments that make our town more resilient, while increasing residence access to and knowledge of recreational offerings without diminishing the wild spaces they value.

This 2024 Open Space and Recreation Plan captures the history and context of the Town of Cheshire that makes it a key component in the rural character of Berkshire County.

Section 2: Introduction

2A. Statement of Purpose

The Cheshire community's vision for the protection of open space and accessible outdoor recreation includes protecting its treasured natural resources and parks and maintaining the scenic beauty. This Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) notes existing resources and describes key trends and issues regarding open space and outdoor recreation. It also establishes refreshed goals, objectives, and actions to achieve its vision. This document is a critical step in helping the Town to prioritize open space preservation as it advances economic development plans. Cheshire can use this document to guide growth in a manner consistent with open space preservation tenets while addressing the development needs of the Town and its residents.

2B. Planning Process and Public Participation

In September 2023, the Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) met for the initial planning meeting with the goal of creating and submitting to the Division of Conservation Services the Town of Cheshire's updated OSRP.

Committee Member	Interest/affiliation
Jason Levesque	Chair, Select Board
Art Kaufman	Secretary, Planning Board
Liseanne Karandisecky	Hoosac Lake District
Jennifer Gadbois	Cheshire Citizen
Peter Traub	Planning Board
Jennifer Morse	Town Administrator

Table 2.1: Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee Members

The Advisory Committee posted meeting information and materials created during the planning process on the Town's website under the Committees tab of the website. Initial meetings were held via Zoom technology, but later meetings were in-person. All meetings were held and publicly posted in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

To solicit the public's input the following were undertaken:

- Committee Meetings: 9/6/23, 11/8/2023, 1/10/2024, 2/7/2024, 3/20/2024, 7/10/2024, 8/14/2024, 9/18/2024, 10/2/2024, 11/6/2024, xx
- Public Survey, hosted on Surveymonkey with Paper copies available at the Town Hall, Council on Aging, and Public Library
 - Survey publicized at COA Luncheon and Town Cleanup day
 - o Survey open from 3/1/2024-5/17/2024
 - Survey responses- 148 total responses
- Public Forum- Cheshire Community House 10/9/2024
- Draft OSRP posted on the Town's website from xx to xx

This OSRP builds on several planning initiatives and documents that have been developed by the Town of Cheshire. The 2017 Master Plan was the result of a comprehensive planning process



that evolved over a two-year period. It is intended to guide policy decisions, investment, and decision-making for the next 10-15 years. As part of this effort many components of an OSRP were developed, bringing the findings of previous OSRPs up to date and into the 21st century. The findings and recommendations expressed in the Land Use, Natural and Cultural Resources, and Open Space and Recreation sections of the Master Plan have been of value in establishing a foundation upon which to build and expand in this 2024 OSRP. This plan also reflects the new data found within BioMap3. In addition to the information provided by the Advisory Committee, this plan reflects the existing conditions, capabilities and needs of key Town boards.

Section 3: Community Setting

3A. Regional Context DONE

The Town of Cheshire is nestled in the valley of the South Branch of the Hoosic River. Most of the center of Town is built around this river and its tributaries. Mount Greylock rises to the west of town which contains parts of Mount Greylock State Reservation. To the southeast the Appalachian Trail crosses through North Mountain of the Hoosac Range and continues the center of town toward Mount Greylock. Cheshire shares borders with six Berkshire towns, mainly Adams and Savoy to the north and northeast respectively, Dalton and Windsor to the southeast, and Lanesborough to the southwest, with which Cheshire also shares Cheshire Reservoir's middle basin. To the northwest Cheshire borders New Ashford (See Figure xx.).

The Town of Cheshire covers an area of 27.7

Fig. Regional Context Map



square miles. According to the 2020 census the town's population is 3,138, giving a density of

approximately 115 people per square mile. There are 1,556 households, resulting in a household size of approximately two people per household (US Census Bureau, 2020). According to 2016 MassGIS land use data, the predominate land uses in town are forest (76%), agriculture (11%), residential (1%), and open water and wetland (6%). Development is concentrated around the main travel corridor Route 8 and the Hoosic River. Agricultural operations are primarily located outside town to the south and in the northeast area of Cheshire. To the northwest and southeast are popular hiking areas and protected forest land.

Recreation revolves primarily around the Ashuwillticook Trail, Cheshire Reservoir and the Appalachian Trail that runs from the southern border with Dalton through "The Cobbles", along the western edge of town, and north to Mount Greylock. Cheshire Reservoir is accessible by kayak/canoe and state boat launch at a parking along Route 8 and also along Farnams Road which separates the Upper and Middle Reservoirs. The Ashuwillticook Trail is a paved multi-use trail running along Cheshire Reservoir/Lake Hoosac connecting to points south as far as Pittsfield to points north in Adams.

3B. History of the Community

As noted in the 2017 Master Plan, Cheshire was first settled in 1766 and incorporated in 1793. It is named after Cheshire County in England. The valley town was founded by Baptists from Rhode Island, the first settlers in the region who were not from the established Puritan Church. The land that makes up what is now Cheshire was known as Township 6 and was later divided into portions of the towns of Savoy, Adams, Lanesborough, and Cheshire. The township was six square miles and was originally granted by the General Court of the Province of Massachusetts to "the heirs of Captain Samuel Gallop for their services and sufferings in an expedition to Canada" in what was known as King William's War of 1688-97. One early immigrant to the town was Colonel Joab Stafford, who would later lead the townspeople in the revolutionary war and now has a monument in his honor on Stafford's hill in the town.

The town was a supporter of Thomas Jefferson during the 1800 presidential election between Adams and Jefferson. To celebrate Jefferson's victory, the town created a cheese wheel made from curds from every farmer in the town. The resulting cheese was 4 feet in diameter, 18 inches thick, and weighed more than 1,200 pounds. After several sales and resales, early settlers Cook and Bennet bought the with Jefferson's motto: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." It was transported on a horse- drawn sled to Washington, D.C. President Jefferson responded to the town with a personal letter of thanks. Today the cheese is commemorated by a memorial located along Church Street.

Industry in the early town included forges, mills, and tanneries. High quality sand beds in the area led to the creation of the Cheshire Crown Glass Company in the early 1800s. The calcareous (calcium containing bedrock) found in the area led to the creation of lime kilns and eventually the US Gypsum Company, which operated in Cheshire on the western shore of Cheshire Lake until 1960. The town's proximity to North Adams and Pittsfield made it a bedroom community for many of the workers at manufacturing facilities that developed during the early and mid 20th century. This trend continues today, with most residents commuting to jobs in the large communities of Adams, North Adams, Pittsfield and Dalton.

According to a statewide database of historic and cultural resources maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), records for the Town of Cheshire show 178 individual historic inventory items in several categories including areas, buildings, burial grounds, objects, and structures. It is important to note that while many historic buildings and other resources are scattered throughout town, the majority are clustered within the Cheshire Village area, particularly

Church, Depot, and South Streets. Several historic resources in the MACRIS database have also been recognized as part of the National Register of Historic Places, which is administered by the National Park Service.

The Farnam's Village Historic District is a nationally recognized historic district centered around the intersection of Farnam's Causeway Road, Old Cheshire Road, and Lanesborough Road. The Historic Inventory form notes that the area is located at the foothills of Mount Greylock on the west side of Cheshire Reservoir. The landscape is known as an upland karst valley and contains a system of caves and limestone deposits. It is an area which contain a limestone quarry, originally connected to a limestone processing mill by a railway and tunnel, limestone crusher, workers' housing, office building, stockroom, carpentry shop, and a small network of mining roads. Buildings and mining structures in the area date largely between 1900 and 1930. The village consists of 20 primary buildings.

Cheshire Town Hall is a recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places. The building was constructed in 1898 and was designed by architect Emory Ellsworth. Ellsworth was a graduate of the University of Massachusetts (then Massachusetts Agricultural College) who went on to design several buildings for the University as well other public structures in Western Mass. The structure, a 2 1/2 story cruciform-shaped building, is listed as being in the early Georgian revival style.

There are several town-owned cemeteries scattered across Cheshire, found on Route 8 (near Wells Park), West Mountain Road, Jenks Road, Sand Mill Road, and Ingalls Road. The Old Churchyard Cemetery, also known as the Jenks Rd. or Stafford Hill Cemetery, this area can be found adjacent to 918 Jenks Rd. The cemetery was the burial ground for the original settlers of Cheshire (first known as New Providence) and site of the first Baptist Church in the region. There are around 70 headstones in the cemetery, dating from 1785 to 1848.

Hall's Tavern was constructed in 1804 and is listed as being of the 18th century Federal style construction. The building is located along Route 8 on the left side of the road just north of the intersection of Church St. According to the historical inventory record for the building, British soldiers during the War of 1812 were held as prisoners here, and the building was a secret meeting place for the Masonic Lodge.

The Stafford Hill Memorial is both a memorial to and the final resting place of Joab Stafford. Stafford was one the original settlers of Cheshire and a military hero of the American Revolutionary War and specifically, the Battle of Bennington. The stone tower that marks the site is a replica of an original stone tower from Newport, RI, Stafford's home prior to settling Cheshire. The memorial tower and Stafford's crypt were constructed in 1927.



3C. Population Characteristics

Cheshire is a town with a population of 3,258 (2020 Decennial Census data.) According to the 2022 ACS 5-year estimates, there are 1,698 housing units in Cheshire. An estimated 91% are considered occupied year-round while some 9% of housing units are considered vacant which includes for sale, second homes, and vacant properties. The 2022 ACS data estimated that average size of households are 2.09 people per household.

Municipality	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Cheshire	2,472	3,006	3,124	3,479	3.401	3,235	3,258
Adams	12,391	11,772	10,381	9,445	8,809	8,485	8,166
Lanesborough	2,933	2,972	3,131	3,032	2,990	3,091	3,038
Windsor	384	468	598	770	875	899	834
Pittsfield	57,879	57,020	51,974	48,622	45,793	44,737	43,927
Berkshire County	142,135	149,402	145,110	139,352	134,953	131,219	126,348
Commence United Chapters Decompilation							

Table xx Cheshire Population Trends.

Source: United States Decennial Census;

Age

Like much of Berkshire County, Cheshire faces an increasingly older population. With a median age of 52.1, the Town of Cheshire has only 17.5% of its population at or below the age of 19. Most Cheshire residents (56.1%) are over the age of 50 years.

The decline in younger residents could influence school enrollment and funding, as well as future volunteers and town employees such as police and firefighters.

Age Group Percentages	2000	2010	2022
Age 18 and under	23%	15.5%	14.6%
Age 18 years and over	77%	81.4%	85.4%
Age 65 years and over	14.1%	10.3%	26.1%
Age 75+	2.5%	3.8%	8.8%

Table XX: Chesnire's Age Breakdown 2020	Table xx:	Cheshire's	Age	Breakdown	2020
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Source: United States Decennial Census; 2022 American Community Survey.

Economic and Employment Status

Information provided by the 2022 American Community Survey 5 year estimates, indicates that there are currently 1,646 individuals in the town's labor force and 1,532 individuals employed in the town. Table XX shows the breakdown of employees in different sectors of employment.

Industry Employment by Sector in Cheshire						
Agriculture	8	.5%				
Construction	127	8.3%				
Manufacturing	114	7.4%				
Wholesale Trade	19	1.2%				
Retail Trade	147	9.6%				
Transportation	121	7.9%				
Information	0	0				
Finance	57	3.7%				
Professional	87	5.7%				
Educational Services	602	39.3%				
Arts/Entertainment	106	6.9%				
Other Services	67	4.4%				
Public Administration	77	5.0%				

The largest employment sector in the town is in Educational services with close to 40% of the population employed in this sector. Other important employment clusters include construction, manufacturing, retail trade, transportation, and arts and entertainment.

Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity

According to the 2020 US Decennial Census, Cheshire is predominantly white, like much of Berkshire County. Of the total population in Cheshire of 3,258, 3,095 residents identify as white alone. See Table xx, for a breakdown of the race and ethnicity.

Table xx: Race and Ethnicity of Cheshire 2020

Race and Ethnicity	Number	Percent
White alone	3,095	92%
Black or African American alone	25	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2	0%
Asian alone	31	1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	5	0%
Some other race alone	21	1%
Two or more races	163	5%
Hispanic or Latino	79	2%
Total	3,258	

Source: 2020 United States Decennial Census;

Environmental Justice Population

Conceptually, environmental justice (EJ) recognizes that some of the most highly polluted and undesirable areas to live have tended to contain populations of low-income, minority, foreign-born, and non-English speaking residents. Additionally, these populations have tended to have reduced or limited access to open space. In Massachusetts, these populations have been mapped in each municipality based on Census information. In the state, a neighborhood is defined as an environmental justice population if any of the following are true:

- the annual median household income is not more than 65% of the statewide annual median household income;
- minorities comprise 40% or more of the population;
- 25% or more of households lack English language proficiency; or
- minorities comprise 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income.

According to EEA mapping and using 2020 U.S. Census data (as of autumn 2024), there are no environmental justice populations located within the Town of Cheshire using the state's criteria. There are no public housing projects or developments in the Town, and therefore any residents meeting any of the EJ criteria will be scattered throughout the Town. Residents of Cheshire's mobile home parks and seniors on fixed incomes are likely the largest segment of an EJ population. Nearby communities do have documented EJ populations, Adams has several census blocks that are identified as EJ (including those along Cheshire's Northern border) and the entire town of Savoy is identified as an EJ population (See Figure XX.)



Figure XX Environmental Justice Population in Cheshire

3D. Growth and Development Patterns

Infrastructure

Transportation System

There are approximately 63 miles of roadway in Cheshire. Road maintenance is performed by several entities within the Town of Cheshire, including state, municipal, and private organizations who have jurisdiction over different roads within the community. In 2018, the town developed a Road Management Report to prioritize transportation projects in the town. The Town of Cheshire has the largest share of responsibility, maintaining 44 miles of road (76%). This responsibility includes maintaining Route 116, which serves as a critical east-west link in northcentral Berkshire County. Route 116 is also home to Hoosac Valley High School, the regional school serving Cheshire, Adams, and Savoy. State entities, including the Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Mass. Dept. of Transportation (MassDOT), are responsible for maintaining 6.98 miles or 12% of road miles in the town, including Route 8, one of two major regional north-south routes connecting northern and southern Berkshire County, and several roads on the Mt. Greylock Reservation (see **Table XX**). Private entities, such as individual homeowners or a homeowners' association, are responsible for 5.11 total miles of roadway, or about 8.8% of all road miles in Cheshire. Roads around the Pine Valley Mobile Home Park are an example of privately maintained roads.

Maintenance Responsibility	Road Miles	% of Total
DCR	2.19	4%
MassDOT	6.98	12%
Town of Cheshire	44.03	76%
Private	5.11	9%
Total	58.31	100.0%

Table xx Road Maintenance by Entity

Source: Division of Local Services Website, Data collected 10/18/2024.

Public transportation is limited in Cheshire, with buses passing through the town on Mondays through Saturdays; no services is provided on Sundays and holidays. A fixed route bus service travels through Cheshire along Route 8 between Pittsfield (and to points south) and North Adams. In Cheshire the bus has a regular stop in Cheshire Center on Railroad Street, but riders may flag down the bus anywhere along its route, and drivers will try to stop in safe locations to pick up and discharge passengers. There is no rail service in Cheshire; the only passenger rail service located in Pittsfield on the limited Amtrack schedule.

Safe pedestrian and bicyclist movement is limited due to a limited area with sidewalks and a lack of on-road bicycle accommodations. A small sidewalk network serves much of the Cheshire Village area as well as a small portion along Route 8. However, the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is a north-south route that can be used to walk and bike to Lanesborough in the south and Adams to the north. This rail trail travels through the Town Center, the older and more densely developed area of Cheshire, providing a safe and accessible walking and biking route in close proximity to a significant portion of the population. The limitation to this route is that it is safely available only during daylight hours, as there are no lights along the pathway. This limits its ability to serve as a reliable commuter route to jobs in neighboring Lanesborough or Adams.

Like many communities in Berkshire County, the large public open space lands are located on the periphery of Cheshire, making them out of reach for easy access to the majority of residents who live in the center of town. The Appalachian trail passes through the center of town and residents can access several popular properties such as Mount Greylock Reservation and the Cheshire Cobbles. These trails are rugged with steep and rocky sections which are difficult to access with those with limited mobility. Sidewalks and bus routes do not reach these properties.

Water Supply Systems

The aquifers and reservoirs within Cheshire provide public drinking water supplies for residents of Cheshire and Adams. Drinking water in Cheshire is provided by both publicly and privately maintained sources. There are 565 connections serviced by the Town of Cheshire public water system, which is maintained by the Cheshire Water Department. The Town's two wells are located on the edge of a buried valley aquifer and utilize water from an unconfined, sand and

gravel aquifer within the Hoosic River valley north of the town center. The Zone I radius for both wells is 400-feet, and is predominantly owned by the Cheshire Water Department, although there is a small area coincident with the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail that is owned and maintained by the DCR. The Zone II recharge area for Cheshire's wells is a mixture of residential, forested and agricultural crop land uses and includes much of Cheshire Village. This system serves buildings and residents in the Cheshire Village area. The two wells produce an output capacity of 410,000 gallons per day. Water pressure is maintained in the system through a 450,000 gallon storage tank on West Mountain Road. The Kitchen Brook Reservoir serves as an emergency backup water source.

In addition to the drinking water supply system that serves Cheshire Village, there are two other drinking water supply systems in town, both of which are privately owned and managed. A smaller public water system serves residents of the Pine Valley Mobile Home Park. Another system is owned by the Hutchinson Water Company and provides drinking water to approximately 120 homes (roughly 400 residents) along Hutchinson Lane and Wilshire, Devonshire, and Yorkshire Drives.

The public water supply wells owned by the Town of Adams are located in the northern part of Cheshire. The Town of Adams' wells are located, approximately 6,400 feet north and downgradient of Cheshire's wells. In addition to these, Adams also owns a backup emergency water supply reservoir, the Bassett Brook Reservoir, also located in Cheshire.

Wastewater Systems

All buildings and residences in Cheshire are served by onsite septic systems. Failing septic systems contribute to nutrient loading and increased vegetative growth in the lake.

Telecommunications

The town is served by several internet providers. Spectrum offers cable service, the fastest internet speeds of up to 1 Gigabyte per second. Other internet service providers include AT&T, Viasat, T-Mobile, Earthlink, and Hughesnet.

Stormwater System

Cheshire is within the Pittsfield Urbanized Area and thus recently included in the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) 2018 General Permit. To meet permit requirements, the Town has done more extensive study and mapping of their stormwater sewer system than most municipalities of similar size. Cheshire's stormwater system is focused around the downtown area and Route 8. The Town maintains nearly 300 catch basins and manholes and the associated pipe system. Stormwater infrastructure around Route 8 is maintained and owned by MassDOT.

Land Use (Refer to Land Use Map)

Land Use

According to 2016 MassGIS data, the vast majority of Cheshire is undeveloped. Seventyone percent of Cheshire is forested (12,548 acres), with approximately 3/4 of these acres being deciduous forest and ¼ being evergreen forest. Other natural landscapes include wetlands (645 acres), open water (421 acres) and scrub/shrub cover (230 acres).

Agricultural uses, including cultivated, hay and grassland acreage, cover another 11% (2,494 acres). Historically, agricultural operations are located on gently rolling lands below steeper, mountainous terrain. As can be seen in Figure XX Land Use Map, the majority of

agricultural operations are located in the eastern part of Cheshire, along and east of Wells Road and Windsor Road. Patches of farmland also continue to exist in the low hills west of the Village Center and in the southernmost portion of Town. Cheshire's farmlands are often located adjacent or in close proximity to large expanses of protected open space lands owned by the Commonwealth. Together these open lands provide a mix of forest, wetlands and open fields that provide wildlife with a diverse range of habitats and provide residents with rural, scenic landscapes.

Residential uses are by far the largest component of the developed landscape, covering approximately six percent (1,078 acres), while commercial and industrial uses combined cover two percent (329 acres). For the purposes of this analysis, Town-owned properties have been included in the commercial category.

In an effort to identify recent general land use changes, the 2017 Master Plan analyzed GIS data from 1971, 1985, 1999 and 2005. That plan carefully describes how changes in datacollection methodologies make comparison of the 1971-1999 data sets to the 2005 data statistically impossible. Prior to 2005, land use data was derived manually, from analysis of aerial photography, while after 2005, these processes became automated and more detailed. However, general trends can be discerned from these four data sets, noting that that during the 1970s through the 1990s agricultural land uses declined (by approximately 490 acres) while residential land uses increased (by approximately 390 acres).

It should also be noted that current GIS land use technology (2016) uses a different methodology for mapping and calculating land use than previous technologies. The 2016 GIS technology is much more detailed than the old, attempting to clearly delineate the footprints of buildings and mapping the vegetated cover surrounding those buildings. Take for example a 1acre residential property, which includes a house surrounded by a grassed lawn and separated from its neighbor by a row of mature maple trees. The older technology would simply have mapped the entire 1-acre site as a residential use. In contrast, the newer technology would map the footprint of the house as a building, the lawn as developed open space and the tree line as deciduous forest. This technology more accurately depicts the developed, impervious acreage of the Town and the corresponding lawn coverage. However, it also increases or skews the acreage of forest cover, because mature trees within developed areas throughout the Town center and in residential neighborhoods are being considered deciduous or evergreen forest. But clearly these clumps of trees do not constitute a forest, nor do they provide the same quantity and quality of habitat that unfragmented forests provide. This explanation of current versus previous GIS technologies has been provided to explain why land use acreage from 2016 will not provide a precise land use change analysis of what has occurred since 1999 and 2005. At best the data provides trends in land use changes to provide insight into development pressures in the town.

Table --- Land Use in Cheshire 2016 and 2005

2016 Developed Land Uses	Acres	Percent	2005 Developed Land Uses	Acres	Percent
Commercial & Industrial	329	2%	Commercial & Industrial	214	1%
Residential (includes lawns)	1,078	6%	Residential (includes lawns)	1,248	7%
Agriculture & Grassland	2,494	11%	Agriculture & Grassland	2,216	13%
Total	3,901	19%	Total	3,678	21%

2016 Natural Land Uses	Acres	Percent	2005 Natural Land Uses	Acres	Percent
Deciduous Forest	9,189	52%			
			Forest (Deciduous v	12,428	71%
Evergreen Forest	3,359	19%	Evergreen not available		
Scrub/Shrub	230	1%	Scrub/Shrub	710	4%
Wetland	645	4%	Wetland	323	2%
Water	421	2%	Water	465	3%
Total	13,844	78%	Total	13,926	79%

Direct Sources: 2016 MassGIS; 2005 Cheshire Master Plan (MassGIS 2005)

Map ___ Cheshire Land Use 2016



Development Trends (see Development Trends Map)

Available town data showing the construction date of buildings within the Town of Cheshire allow for a picture of development trends to emerge. This data shows the last available construction date for a given building, so do not capture earlier structures that may have existed on a given parcel and been replaced or lost. As noted in the 2017 Master Plan, most of the earliest buildings constructed in Cheshire are clustered in Cheshire Village, but many of the Town's oldest structures are also found throughout other areas of the Town. Assessor's data show that 492 existing structures were built prior to 1900, with most of these clustered in Cheshire Village and in the West Mountain/Outlook Avenue area. Other buildings of this era are scattered across the northern portion of Town, especially Cheshire Harbor. Between 1901 and 1950, 367 buildings were constructed. Many of these are found in Cheshire Village; however, they also include development along many of the town's existing roadways. During this period, development along the western shore of Cheshire Lake began.

The bulk of Cheshire's existing structures were constructed during the mid- to late 20th century, with 748 built between 1951-1975. Development during this period includes structures scattered along existing roadways, with a cluster along Savoy Road. There are also significant

subdivision clusters in the Pine Valley Mobile Home Park on Wells Road, the Crest Driver/Arnold Court subdivision, the Daniels Road/Willow Lane area on Cheshire Reservoir and along Ingalls Road subdivisions. Another burst of construction occurred between, 1976-2000, with 701 structures scattered along Town roads, particularly along Stafford Hill Road, West Mountain Roads, and expanding in subdivisions off of Route 8 and Ingalls Road. Added together, almost 60% of the Town's existing structures were constructed during the latter half of the 20th century. During this time residential development began to replace road frontage that was largely farmland. Table xx outlines the construction dates of existing structures and Fig. xx shows the distribution of these across Cheshire.

Table ___: Construction in Cheshire

Building Period	Number of Buildings	Percent of Total
1750-1900	492	20%
1901 - 1950	367	15%
1951 - 1975	748	30%
1976 - 2000	701	28%
Post 2000	195	8%
Total	2,503	

Source: Assessor data 2021

Fig. ___. Development Trends Map



Future Development

The vast majority of Cheshire is zoned Agricultural-Residential, and this is where the greatest potential for future development exists. The more recent trend of residential development replacing farmland will likely continue, with loss of forest land also expected to continue. The current tremendous demand and high cost for residential land and housing in southern Berkshire County will likely be a contributing factor in new development pressure increasing in Towns in Central and Northern Berkshire County as local families and generations are unable to afford living or building in those communities south of Cheshire. There are only a few isolated undeveloped parcels in the other zones.

Within the business district located near the center of Cheshire, there is almost no remaining buildable land that is not already developed. There are three parcels that are large enough for subdivision between Route 8 and the lake/ Ashuwillticook Trail and one lot that is not large enough for subdivision, but is vacant and mostly unconstrained. In addition to these areas, there is a lot that could be subdivided and developed near the gas station along Route 8. There is currently a house on the lot, but it is large enough to be subdivided and commercially developed, should the owner choose to do so.

There are a few other business districts scattered around town. The southernmost district area contains Green Acres Plaza. This lot is large enough to be subdivided but would require redevelopment of the existing plaza to relocate the existing building. Another business district area is located off of Hutchinson Lane. There are two lots near the corner of Hutchinson and Wilshire that have some current development but could be further subdivided. While this brief assessment considers only remaining undeveloped or underutilized lands, larger redevelopment projects of existing business and commercial uses are a possibility but would require significantly more investment on the part of a potential developer.

There is the potential for scattered residential development along rural roads across large swaths of Cheshire. The A-R zone provides the best opportunity for individual home construction and residential subdivisions. Also, there are about a dozen parcels that are not developed on the west side of Cheshire Lake. In general, the developable areas are:

- East of Hutchinson development and Ingalls Rd.
- Between Lanesboro Rd. and West Mountain Rd.
- The Cheshire Harbor area in the northern part of town, which includes Fred Mason Rd. and parts of Outlook Ave.
- Wells Road area, from the town line to just south of East Harbor/Jenks Rd.
- Stewart White Rd.
- Sand Mill Road/Windsor Rd. /Stafford Hill Rd. area.\

Zoning (Zoning Map, Figure xx)

ZONING – ANYTHING TO DIRECT DEVELOPMENT AWAY FROM OS AND TOWARD EXISTING DEVELOPED AREAS? REVISIT THE ACTIONS FROM THE MASTER PLAN, CH 8, 9, 10.

ANYTHING TO ENCOURAGE LESS LAND CLEARING/GRADING, MAINTAINING EXISTING VEGETATION? REQUIREMENTS TO RETAIN ALL RUNOFF ON PROPERTY?

CLUSTER / OS ZONING?

FROM HMCAP PLAN: during the 2023 Town Meeting, Chesire recently passed a stormwater bylaw that will assist in mitigating flooding and water pollution effectively. Currently, the bylaw is under review at the Attorney General's Office. As a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) community, the Town is proactively engaging in the identification and retrofitting of opportunities to enhance the infiltration and retention of stormwater. This initiative aims to improve localized flooding. However, it's important to note that funding constraints pose a challenge with these stormwater management goals. WHAT IS THIS?

Below is Table 4.1 from the HMCAP Plan. CAN USE THIS AS A STARTING POINT ABOUT BASIC ZONING. BUT REALIZE THIS IS LOOKING AT ZONING FROM A HAZARD MITIGATION VIEW POINT – PROTECT PEOPLE AND BUILDINGS. IT REALLY DOESN'T DESCSRIBE THE BIG PICTURE ABOUT OS & NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION.



Map xx. Zoning Map

Section 4: Environmental Inventory and Analysis

4A. Geology, Soils and Topography (Refer to Map xx Soils and Geologic Features)

The Town of Cheshire is underlain with schists, quartzites, and gneisses in the upland, while the low-lying valley is underlain with carbonate rock. These layers of metamorphic rock were formed as continental shelf deposits, which have been intensively deformed, folded, and thrustfaulted in two separate mountain building episodes. The more weather resistant rocks are found cropping out at higher elevations. The less resistant limestones have been eroded by glaciers and weathering and are immediately apparent to visitors of Cheshire in the abandoned mines and quarries which operated in the area until the late 1960s.

The following is a brief description of the various rock types:

Gneissic Rocks-Hinsdale Gneiss: These rocks are found along the border with Dalton (southeast) and include quartzite gneiss, granite- biotite epidote schists, and quartz feldspar pegmatite. The outcroppings are underlain with Cheshire quartzite.

Schistose Rocks-Walloomsac Formation: These rocks form the steep western walls of the valley and consist of schistose marble and a quartz mica schist, which is black to dark gray.

Quartzite Rocks-Dalton Formation: Cheshire quartzite underlies most of the eastern section of town and is a pure white quartzite which weathers to yellow. It is generally about 800 feet thick and is highly resistant to weathering. As the softer dolomite bedrock has eroded away, particularly along fault lines below North Mountain, massive steep slopes of this quartzite have been exposed.

Carbonate Rocks: Kitchen Brook dolomite and Clarendon Springs dolomite, deposits of less resistant limestone, and some marble dolomite dominate the valley floor. Soils derived from these rocks are responsible in part for the rich diversity of the floodplain flora along the Hoosic River, east of Town Crest. These rocks are prone to excessive featuring and solution porosity and consequently are valuable as potential aquifers.

Much of the bedrock in the valley is overlain with glacial deposits of unconsolidated sediments. The higher elevations in Cheshire are covered with varying thicknesses (0-50 feet) of glacial till, a yellow-brown layer of sandy clay, pebbles and boulders. Towards Cheshire Reservoir and along the

Hoosic River, however, the deposits of stratified sands and gravels range from 0-250 feet thick, some of which are overlain with recent deposits of flood plain and swamp sediments. The lake bed itself consists of about 250 feet of fine grained clays, deposited by glacial meltwater during the last ice age. An ancient glacial lake was dammed at the southern end by ice contact deposits of gravels and sand just north of the intersection of Swamp Road and Route 8. These stratified deposits prevented a southerly flow and caused the drainage of the valley to flow north. The ice contact deposits, particularly where these layers of sand and gravel overlie limestone bedrock which recharges the gravel through upward leakage. These areas are almost all within the present residential areas of Cheshire or have great potential for being developed because of the proximity to Cheshire Reservoir and Route 8. Future planning in Cheshire should proceed with utmost caution to avoid threats of contamination to this abundant groundwater supply.

Soil is the layer of mineral and organic material that covers the bedrock on the earth's crust and the surficial deposits. Soil characteristics depend upon the hardness and composition of the parent material as well as the shape of the land, the age of the soil, the content of the decomposing matter, and the climate. Generally, soils of higher elevations are thin and stony while alluvial soils (deposits transported by streams) are often composed of particles which are sorted according to size, and many of these soils are fertile.

Soils are described by several characteristics, each having different implications for agriculture, construction and other uses of the land. Some characteristics are: location, depth to bedrock, structure, depth to water, periodic flooding, permeability, natural fertility, and acidity, among other values. In these ways, soils influence which areas are suitable for specific uses. Thin soils on steep slopes erode easily and are not good for septic systems. Wetland soils are important sponges which absorb water during heavy rains but are most often not suitable for septic system function due to poor drainage characteristics. Flood plain soils are generally very fertile and may be best used for agriculture. It should be noted that the soils map is generalized for planning purposes only. Exact soil conditions are extremely localized and can differ greatly from one building lot to the next.

In general terms, the soil associations in Cheshire are characteristic of most mountain valleys in New England, but soils details for a specific site must be confirmed by sampling and analysis. The following presents a brief description of the major soil groups found in Cheshire.

Lyman-Peru-Marlow-Berkshire Association: These soils are usually located on hilly to steep slopes and are very rocky, strongly acidic, and shallow to bedrock. They may also include extremely stony, deep, well-drained soils with hardpan. Generally these soils are found from Hoosac Valley High School south along the eastern side of the town, including Stafford Hill, the Cobbles and Woodchuck Hill, as well as the western section of town bordering the Mt. Greylock Reservation.

Amenia-Stockbridge-Pittsfield: These soils include stony and non-stony, well-drained soils which are calcareous and may or may not have hardpan. They are generally located in a band below Cole Mt. and extending south through the Kitchen Brook and Pettibone Brook regions.

Copake-Winooski-Hero: These soils are basically level, moderately well- drained, calcareous, loamy, and gravelly soils on terraces and silty soils on floodplains. They can be found along the Hoosic River and around Cheshire Lake on both east and west banks.

Pittsfield-Amenia-Kendaia: These soils include those which are stony and non- stony, both well and poorly drained, calcareous, loamy soils without hardpans. The eastern floodplain of the Hoosic and ground rising on the Stafford Wildlife Management Area of Mt. Amos contains such soils.

Westminster-Marlow-Peru-Dark Subsoil: These soils are mostly hilly, rocky, shallow to bedrock which range from non-stony to extremely stony well- drained loamy soils with hardpans. Generally they can be found along the Savoy and Windsor town lines, from the headwaters of Dry Brook to those of McDonald Brook and South Brook.

Much of Cheshire is characterized by soils and slopes which can limit activities which require on-lot septic systems. There are, however, many specific locations within general areas of severe septic limitations where percolation may be acceptable. As is often the case, however, the areas of best drainage, (where one could most easily develop lots for housing from a waste disposal point of view), are also those areas most important to protect and shield from development and pollution. These are the aquifers around Cheshire Reservoir, where glacial gravel and sand allow not only rapid downward movement of septage, but also rapid upward movement of excellent water supplies.

In addition, many of the most easily developed areas of town are classified as prime farmland. So defined because of their characteristic soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops economically; these soils include Amenia silt loam, Copake fine sandy loam, some Hero loam, and some Pittsfield loam. Their importance as a local and national resource cannot be overstressed as these exceptional lands can be farmed continuously without degrading the environment. They can produce the most food with the least energy expended and will respond very well to fertilizer and chemical applications with the least amount of leaching.

These prime farmlands occur in areas along the west and, to some degree, east shores of Cheshire Reservoir (especially Lanesborough Road), as well as along Engles, Windsor, Notch, Jenks, Harbor, and West Mountain Roads. Most of the prime farmland, however, extends from Cheshire Lake north along Route 8 and encompasses the Village of Cheshire and Town Crest Village. In total there are around 3,200 acres of mapped prime agricultural soils in Cheshire, or around 18% of all land in town (see Soils Map for locations).

Creating or expanding recreational trails on steep slopes needs to be done carefully to avoid soil erosion and down-slope sediment deposition into water resources. Clearing of tree canopy and natural ground vegetation should be limited, especially on steeply sloped areas to avoid creating hazardous conditions and habitat destruction.

Map ____. Soils Map





4B. Landscape Character (Refer to Land Use Map xx)

The topography of Cheshire is defined by two mountain ranges separated by the south to north flow of the Hoosic River. The rugged western borders touch the Mt. Greylock Reservation, with elevations of over 2,580 feet above sea level at Rounds Rock, and traverse the steep ravines made by Kitchen Brook and Bassett Brook. To the east, amid open country and rolling hills (Woodchuck Hill, elevation 2,168 feet, and Stafford Hill, elevation 1,580 feet), spectacular views of Mt. Greylock and much of Cheshire Reservoir may be had. The open fields along the rural roads that wind their way through the northeast portion of Cheshire are testimonies to the Town's agricultural heritage.

The Hoosic River flows north about 3.5 miles to the town line of Adams, with an overall drop of 34 feet. Along its fairly even descent, the river has formed floodplains and marshes, rich in diverse plant life and habitats rarely encountered in northern Berkshire County.

4C. Water Resources (Refer to Water Resources Map xx)

Water resources in Cheshire play a key role in providing a diversity of habitats for wildlife and offering outdoor recreation. Cheshire Reservoir is the most recognizable waterbody in Town, providing ample outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike. The Reservoir is a dammed section of the headwaters of the Hoosic River, which flows northward through the center of Town before continuing into Adams, flowing north/northwest where it eventually joins the Hudson River in New York State. Thus, water originating in Cheshire may eventually flow into the Atlantic Ocean by way of New York Bay. In total the Hoosic River flows for 76 miles before joining the Hudson River. The Town's groundwater resources provide drinking water to all residents as well as residents of Adams.

Watersheds and Surface Waters

All lands except for a few small areas along the jagged western border between Rockwell Road in Lanesborough and West Mountain Road in Cheshire, are in the Hoosic River Watershed. The few areas not in the Hoosic drain southwest into the Housatonic River Watershed.

Within the Hoosic River Watershed in Cheshire there are two main subwatersheds: that of Cheshire Reservoir and the Hoosic River (refer to the Water Features map). The headwaters of the Hoosic River originate in Lanesborough and flow through Berkshire Pond and into Cheshire Reservoir watershed. Cheshire Reservoir is a manmade lake created for industrial purposes in the late 1800s. The lake is nearly 600 acres in size and is divided into three basins by two causeways. The south basin, also known as Berkshire Pond, is fairly shallow, with depth of only a few feet in places. The middle basin has a maximum depth of around six feet and the north basin is nine feet at its deepest. The north basin is located entirely within Cheshire and is the waterbody that is commonly known as Cheshire Reservoir. Lands in southern Cheshire drain into Cheshire Reservoir, including the named streams flowing into the reservoir include Gore, Pettibone, and Collins Brooks. Gore Pond is located in this subwatershed.

Water flows out the reservoir into the subwatershed of the Hoosic River, which is the larger watershed in Cheshire. Kitchen and Bassett Brooks and their tributaries flow downgradient from the western hills while South and Dry Brooks and their tributaries flow downgradient from the eastern hills. The Cheshire Water Departments maintain two small emergency reservoirs in this

subwatershed, Thunderbrook and Kitchen Brook Reservoirs. Basset Reservoir, a back-up water supply for the Town of Adams, is also located in this subwatershed.

Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW)

The subwatersheds of Thunder Brook and Kitchen Brook have been designated as ORW because these lands contribute to the Kitchen Brook Reservoir, an emergency backup water supply owned by the Cheshire Water Department. The subwatershed of Bassett Reservoir has been designed as an ORW as it is the backup water supply for the Town of Adams. Most of these watershed lands are protected open space as being either owned by their respective municipalities or by the state as part of the Mt. Greylock State Reservation.

Flood Hazard Areas

As noted in the Cheshire Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan, there are relatively few floodplain acres in Cheshire, largely due to the hilly terrain and narrow stream corridors. There are approximately 1,004 acres of land delineated by the FIRM map as floodplain, which comprises less than one percent of the Town. Approximately seven acres have been developed, which represents less than one percent of total floodplain acres in the Town. It should be noted that the FIRM map for Cheshire was issued in 1982, over 40 years ago. As precipitation patterns and flow regimes change in a warming climate, the boundaries of the 100-year floodplain could shift.

In Cheshire, the largest floodplain area is located along the low-lying terrain of Cheshire Reservoir and the Hoosic River corridor and its associated wetland complexes. The floodplain crosses Main Street and extends northward between Railroad Street and Berkshire Village mobile home park. Other floodplain areas are found along Gore, Thunder and Dry Brooks. Floodplain areas are shown in blue hatching on the Water Features Map, Figure xx.

Wetlands

Wetlands are critically important resources that benefit Cheshire's residents and wildlife. Wetlands provide very valuable functions, including flood water storage, pollutant filtration, erosion control, beautiful open spaces and scenic views. Water speed and flow is greatly reduced in a wetland compared to the open water of a stream or river. This causes suspended sediments to fall out of the water column, thus enhancing downstream water quality.

Wetlands are some of the most productive ecosystems on the planet, measured by the amount of biomass or living biological tissue they help to produce. They serve as habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species and often function as critical nursery and breeding areas. Wetlands often harbor rare plants and animals, providing habitat that may help sustain the region's biodiversity, an effort that will become more challenging in the face of climate change. The larger wetland complexes in Cheshire are associated with the Hoosic River and its floodplain, beginning in the Town Center and extending northward to Cheshire Harbor.

Approximately 1,165 acres within Cheshire have been mapped by the Massachusetts DEP as being open wetland resource ecosystems, including open waters, which can support aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, forested wetlands, and a variety of marsh/swamp wetlands. Almost half of these mapped wetland acres are categorized as open water (44%), with most of this acreage

being Cheshire Reservoir. Forested wetlands constitute approximately 24% of total wetland acres and shrub swamp wetlands 21%. These types of wetlands often accompany river corridors. Much of the non-forested wetlands in Cheshire are located in a large complex surrounding the Hoosic River between Route 8 and Wells Road. Other wetlands are scattered throughout the floor of the valley, along the edge of Cheshire Lake, and near Stafford Hill.

The total wetland acreage discussed here should be considered as a very rough, very underestimated guide. Because GIS mapping only recognizes large wetland areas, the actual acreage of wetlands in Cheshire is undoubtedly higher. Narrow rivers and streams, critical wetland resources and habitats, are linear attributes in GIS mapping, and thus their cumulative acreage is also not calculated here. All wetlands, particularly smaller wetland areas, would need to be field verified to achieve a true accounting of wetland resource acreage. It should also be noted that the mapped MassDEP Wetlands acreage is different from the mapped Land Use acreage discussed in Section xx of this plan. That is because the MassDEP mapping is more focused on wetland ecosystems, while the LU acreage is more focused on land cover. For example, forested wetland types are mapped by DEP as wetlands while they are mapped by the Land Use data layer as forest types (deciduous or evergreen).

The Wetlands Protection Act, as amended by the 1996 Rivers Protection Act, gives some protection to the wetlands and rivers of the state. The goals of the act are to preserve water quality, maintain drinking water quality and quantity, provide recharge through infiltration, retain natural flood storage, sustain fisheries, and protect wildlife habitat. To attain these goals, development within 100 feet of wetlands and 200 feet of perennial rivers and streams is regulated by the Cheshire Conservation Commission.

Groundwater Resources

Groundwater resources in Cheshire are critically important to not only to residents and businesses in Cheshire, but also to those in neighboring Adams. All Cheshire residents receive their drinking water supplies from private wells or from public or private water companies. The public drinking water wells maintained by the Towns of Cheshire and Adams are located in the northeast corner of Cheshire. The wells for these water systems are located on the edge of a buried valley aquifer and utilize water from an unconfined, sand and gravel aquifer within the Hoosic River valley. The bedrock valley was deepened by advancing glaciers some 18,000 years before present and later filled with sand and gravel (glacial drift) as the glaciers melted. Although there is some evidence of fine grained material in the aquifer, there is no confining (protective) clay layer at the site to prevent potential contaminants from entering the aquifer from the ground surface. Wells located in these geological conditions are considered to have a high vulnerability to contamination due to the absence of hydrogeologic barriers that can prevent potential contaminant migration from the surface. The Town of Adams' wells are located approximately 6,400 feet north (downgradient) of the Cheshire Water Department's wells.¹

¹ DEP, SWAP 2002.

Fig. --. Important Water Features Map



4D. Vegetation (Refer to Land Use and Vegetation Maps)

According to MassGIS 2016 land use data, approximately 71% of Cheshire's land is covered by forest. It consists primarily of an oak-maple hardwoods community, spruce-pine softwoods community, and hemlock-beech-mixed community. Hemlocks are found along steep, cool ravines. According to Mass Department of Environmental Protection GIS data, approximately 1/4 of the wetlands mapped are forested wetlands.

According to the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), natural communities are defined as groups of species that are found together over and over again, usually in particular environmental conditions. Occurrences of a community type tend to be in sites with similar chemistry, soils, moisture, slopes, temperature ranges, and other physical conditions. The physical environment, geology, and regional climate are the most controlling features of any community, governing what species grow in different areas. Vertical diversity is provided by different layers of vegetation. Trees, shrubs, and tall herbaceous plants have different shapes and shade the lower layers differently. Different tree species also affect nutrient movement differently, influencing their co-occurrence with other species. Communities have horizontal diversity produced by variation in sunlight, moisture, rock, soil exposure, and other physical and

biological variables. Past disturbances, including glaciation thousands of years ago, and more recent hurricanes and human land use - particularly the extensive land clearing, cultivation, and reforestation that occurred after European settlement - influence the species mixes and community structure seen today.²

Cheshire's varied topography supports three general natural community ecoregions, as defined by MassWildlidfe: Taconic Highlands Association of the Taconic Mountains Ecoregion, Western New England Marble Valley Association of the Taconic Mountain Ecoregion and Berkshire-Vermont Upland Ecoregion (see Fig. __).

Fig. __. Natural Communities Ecoregions of Mass.



The western hills of Cheshire are in the Taconic Highlands Association of the Taconic Mountains Ecoregion, which includes the mid- and upper slopes of the Taconics and Mt. Greylock in this hilly and mountainous region. Streams are generally small and high-gradient. The forests are predominantly northern hardwoods with some transition hardwoods to the south, both with hemlock and white pine. Red spruce and balsam fir mix with northern hardwoods in the upper elevations.

The northern portion of the Housatonic River Watershed, Cheshire Reservoir and the Hoosic River Valley are located in the Western New England Marble Valley Association of the Taconic Mountain Ecoregion. Land features here include the floodplains and rolling hills at the edges of the valleys, and some lower slopes of the surrounding mountains. Marble bedrock and large areas of calcareous outwash deposits are found in the river valleys, producing calcium-rich soil and water in the ecoregion that supports species found few other places in the state. Northern hardwoods dominate this ecoregion.

The eastern portion of Cheshire lies within the Berkshire-Vermont Upland Ecoregion, where low mountains with steep slopes reach down to narrow river valleys. Acidic soils from acidic bedrock and glacially derived materials occur throughout. Spruce mixes with northern hardwood forests in the higher northern areas, with transition forests to the south, where spruce is lacking even at higher elevations.³

² Swain, Patricia, 2020.

³ Swain, 2020.

Agricultural Land

As of 2016, approximately 11% of Cheshire's land is in agricultural use. For the purposes of this plan, agricultural lands in Cheshire are those listed in the MassGIS Land Use database as cultivated, pasture/hay and grasslands. These open farmlands are scattered across Cheshire, clustered in the lower hills of the Mt. Greylock complex andNorth Mountain, and most extensively in the northeastern portion of the Town. These open working landscapes contribute to the Town's rural character, providing a window to Cheshire's agrarian history. The fields that abut forest lands provide an edge habitat for wildlife, which provide both field and forest for those animal species that thrive best when having access to both ecosystems.

Wetland Vegetation

Approximately 1,165 acres within Cheshire have been mapped by the Massachusetts DEP as being open wetland resource ecosystems, including open waters, which can support aquatic and semi-aquatic plants and a variety of marsh/swamp wetlands (see Fig. ___). Wetlands include marshes and wet meadows dominated by herbaceous plants, swamps dominated by shrubs, and wooded swamps dominated by trees. The native aquatic vegetation found in lakes, ponds and marshes provide food and hiding areas for fish, particularly young fish, while emergent sedges, cattails and shrubs of open wetlands provide protective habitat for nesting birds. Forested wetlands provide habitat for a variety of animals that need wet conditions for breeding and raising young. The three types of forested wetlands constitute almost a quarter of all wetland acres that have been identified by DEP. These different wetland ecosystems provide an array of diverse wetland habitats, many of which can support rare plant and animal species.

Forest Land

Forests dominate the landscape of Cheshire outside of the town center, providing residents with a rural atmosphere and wildlife with large tracts of land for habitat. According to 2016 MassGIS Land Use data, there are approximately 12,548 acres of forest within the Town, supporting the diverse natural communities described previously. The more mature forests are typified by sugar maple, ash, oak, yellow birch, beech, spruce and hemlock. Successional forests are dominated by colonizing species such as popular, grey birch and white pine. TRUE IN CHESHIRE?

Priority and Exemplary Plant Communities

*Fig. ___. Mapped Wetland Acreage in Cheshire**

Wetland Type	Acres
Open Water	513
Shrub Swamp	246
Wooded Swamp Deciduous	214
Shallow Marsh Meadow or Fen	83
Wooded Swamp Mixed Trees	52
Deep Marsh	42
Wooded Swamp Coniferous	15
Total Wetland Acres	1,165

*Note: Does not include river/stream data Source: MassGIS DEP Wetlands data

Natural communities may be restricted or widespread in their distribution throughout Massachusetts. NHESP gives conservation priority to types of natural communities that have limited distribution in the state and to those with restricted global distribution. These are referred to as "Priority Natural Communities." Within Cheshire, there are two types of priority natural communities that have been identified, and these are shown on the Vegetation map in purple.

Rich Mesic Forest Communities are found at elevations below 2,400 feet and are usually located on east or southeast facing slopes. Rich refers to the richness of nutrients found in these communities and mesic refers to the moderate moisture regime. Soils are generally deep and fallen leaves and other debris are usually incorporated into the soil quickly. In Massachusetts, this community is designated as S3, meaning it is vulnerable to extirpation in the state due to a restricted range, relatively few occurrences (often 80 or fewer), limited acreage, recent and widespread declines, or other factors. In Cheshire, this community is located in two areas west of Outlook Avenue near the Appalachian Trail along the steep slopes that lead toward the summit of Mt. Greylock.

Calcareous Talus Forest communities form on loose rocky slopes (talus) below calcareous cliffs or rock outcrops. The soil between the talus is usually moist and loamy. Trees are usually found established on lower slopes near the base of the talus. This community is designated as S2, meaning it is imperiled in the state due to its rarity (typically 6-20 occurrences), very restricted range, few remaining acres or miles of stream, or very vulnerable to extirpation for other reasons. In Cheshire, this community, along with the "calcareous rocky summit" type are found at Rounds Rock, a rocky outcrop south of the summit of Mt. Greylock. This area is located near the town's boundary with New Ashford and Lanesborough.

Public Shade Trees

Public shade trees are defined as trees located along the roadways within the public right of way and are regulated by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87. This law outlines the authorities of the Town's Tree Warden, establishes procedures for cutting or removing public shade trees, and sets penalties for violations. The cutting and maintenance of trees along Town-owned roads can only occur by first holding a public hearing, or gaining approval from the Town's Select Board, or in the case of designated Scenic Roads, the Town's Planning Board.

Trees located along state highways are the jurisdiction of MassDOT and do not require a public hearing to be cut, unless the cutting is part of a large improvement project. Due to the large percentage of forested land in Cheshire, many roadways are tree-lined and viewsheds are dominated by the forested landscape.

Fig. ____. Vegetation Map



Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species

Massachusetts is home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Some species are relatively common while others less common or endangered. The Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) lists 259 species of plants as being vulnerable. These native species are listed as Endangered (E), Threatened (T), or of Special Concern (SC) and are tracked in the NHESP's database. These species are either at risk, or may become at risk, of extinction. Rarity in the state, population trend, and overall threat are the main criteria used to determine extinction risk. Under MESA, state-listed species are protected from being harmed by human activity, or a "take".

The following list of rare and endangered vascular plant species comes from the Massachusetts NHESP, as cited on their website on October 30, 2023⁴. The State Rank indicates Special Concern (SC) species are natives that have suffered a decline which could threaten the species, or have a small number, limited distribution, or specialized habitat; Threatened (T) species are likely to become endangered in the future; Endangered (E) species are in danger of extinction. The

⁴ https://www.mass.gov/info-details/list-of-endangered-threatened-and-special-concern-species

Endangered plant species in Cheshire are most often found in mesic forests or calcareous wetland habitats. Priority Rare Species habitat areas in Cheshire are shown in red hatching on the Unique Features Map and the Fish and Wildlife Map. To protect some rare plants and animals that reside within these areas and could fall prey to collectors, NHESP does not reveal the exact site of some individual plant and animal populations.

Common Name	Scientific Name	MESA Status	Most Recent Obs.	Notes
Adder's Tongue Fern	Ophioglossum pusillum	Т	1912	
Bailey's Sedge	Carex baileyi	Т	2022	
Bristly Buttercup	Ranunculus pensylvanicus	SC	1915	
Broad Waterleaf	Hydronhyllum canadense	F	. 1912	Nearest verification 1984-2009 in Adams & Williamstown
Dioecious Sedae	Carex sterilis	T	2022	
Dwarf Scouring Rush	Eauisetum scirpoides	SC	1916	
Foxtail Sedge	Carex alopecoidea	Т	1983	
Frank's Lovegrass	Eragrostis frankii	SC	2019	
Hairy Wood-mint	Blephilia hirsuta	E	2007	Rich mesic forest w/ mature hardwoods
Hairy-fruited Sedge	Carex trichocarpa	С	2009	
Labrador Bedstraw	Galium labradoricum	Т	1921	
Large-leaved Goldenrod	Solidago macrophylla	SC	2010	
Large-leaved Sandwort	Moehringia macrophylla	F	2016	Steep rocky outcrops; only 3 populations known in state
Matted Spike-sedge	Eleocharis intermedia	Т	1986	
Mountain Spleenwort	Asplenium montanum	E	1930	Nearest verification 1985-2010 in Gt. Barrington & Sheffield
Northern Bedstraw	Galium boreale	E	2020	Open calcareous fens or wet meadows
Schweinitz's Sedge	Carex schweinitzii	E	2009	Open calcareous wetlands; north Berk. Co. only known pops.
				Nearest verification 1985-2010 in
Slender Blue-eyed Grass	Sisyrinchium mucronatum	E	1911	Williamstown
Slender Cottongrass	Eriophorum gracile	Т	1911	
Woodland Millet	Milium effusum	Т	2007	

Table 4.1. Rare Plants in Cheshire

Source: NHESP, https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rare-species-viewer downloaded 10-30-23

4E. Fisheries and Wildlife (Refer to Fisheries and Wildlife)

Berkshire County is one of the most ecologically diverse and intact natural landscapes in the state. The region provides important expansive forest habitat that connects the northern forests of New England and New York northward to Canada and southward to the forests of the Appalachian Mountain chain, providing habitat, opportunities to enhance genetic diversity in species and safe passage for roaming animals like black bear, fisher and bobcat and treetop habitat for migratory birds. Providing wildlife travel ways will be increasingly important as some animal and plant species may need to migrate northward or higher in elevation to continue to survive in a warming climate. Large blocks of habitat are particularly important for animal populations that need large territories to sustainably live, breed and disperse, such as black bears and moose. Residents all across Cheshire can enjoy wildlife in their backyard, along hikes in woodlands and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, and along the Town's many wetland resources. Ducks and geese, Great Blue Herons and the smaller Green Herons can all be found in Cheshire's streams and wetlands, observed nicely from shoreline portions of the rail trail.

In Cheshire the Chalet WMA and Stafford Hill WMS are adjacent to each other and offer a variety of habitats, due partially to a wide range in elevations (from approximately 1,000' along the Route 8 corridor to 2,265' atop Weston Mountain on the Dalton/Windsor border) and a mix of wetlands, forest and fields. In Chalet WMA several are kept open through haying to provide habitat for ground-nesting bird species. This also attracts deer, turkey, bear as well as furbearer species such as bobcats, coyotes, fishers, and beavers. Stafford Hill WMA contains high-elevation properties whose sloping fields and forests are home to a wide variety of wildlife. To enrich and improve the habitats found here, the agency actively manages areas of this property, including annual moving to maintain grassland habitat and cover for upland birds such as ruffed grouse and woodcock and edge habitat for turkey. Moose, uncommon in the state, are found in both of these WMAs and the surrounding area. Ring-necked pheasants are stocked in both WMAs for the fall season. DFW USED TO TRACK MOOSE IN SAVOY AREA – ANY IDEA IF THEY HAVE DATA NEAR CHESHIRE? ANY LOCAL INFO ON MOOSE?

Wildlife corridors between protected areas are important to the survival of threatened, rare and endangered species. The waterways, forests and vernal pools provide habitat for common and rare reptiles and amphibians, and for common and rare insects, which provide the basis of the food chain for the wildlife we enjoy. Wildlife can also be found in the more densely developed Village Center for those animals who are less shy of humans, such as several songbirds, fox, coyote, bear, and deer.

E-Bird is a database for bird sightings that was created as a joint project between the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. Users can submit bird sighting data for specific areas. Common areas for bird watching are listed as sighting "hot spots," and allow multiple users to organize their sightings geographically and to create multi-year records of bird sightings for a given area. Within Cheshire, there are several identified hot spots, including the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail (135 species sighted), at four sites along the three bodies of Cheshire Reservoir (ranging from 107 to 165 at each site) and in Stafford Hill (119 species sighted).
Cheshire Reservoir is a local, year-round resource for anglers. MassWildlife has in the past stocked the lake with Northern pike and tiger muskellunge (last stocking 2021).

Coldwater Fisheries

Several streams throughout Cheshire are considered by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (DFW) to be cold-water fisheries because of their ability to sustain reproducing wild trout populations and other species that require cool year-round temperatures. In general, coldwater streams in this region are those that flow through higher elevation forested areas where tree canopy shades the earth and stream channel. The Hoosic River is known to support native brook trout, as well as wild breeding populations of non-native brown trout. Annually in the spring, DFW stocks these waterways with trout: Dry and South Brooks and the Hoosic River. Cold water streams are shown in pink on the Fish and Wildlife Map and the Water Resources Map.

Cool-loving species like our iconic native brook trout and introduced rainbow trout become stressed when water temperatures approach 70°F and can die when waters reach 75°F for even a few hours. Thermal stress in cold water streams impacts the full aquatic food web, from the insects and other aquatic invertebrates at the bottom up to the trout and bass at the top of the food web. Specific, sensitive aquatic insects (e.g. stoneflies, mayflies, caddisflies) and the presence of brook trout often are used as indicators of good, clean cold streams. These habitats are highly vulnerable to slight increases in temperature, usually due to removal of shoreline vegetation that provided shade, heated runoff from roads and development, and the impacts of climate change. Efforts to maintain or increase shoreline vegetation and reduce surface runoff will help to maintain cold water fisheries for future generations.

Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are indispensable to biodiversity, both locally and globally. In many upland areas, where the nearest wetland or other waterbody is thousands of feet away, vernal pools are the only aquatic breeding grounds in the area. Some of the state's rarest amphibians, including the mole salamanders (Jefferson, spotted, marbled salamanders) and some species of freshwater snails and clams, are inexorably linked to the vernal pool in which they were hatched. Most live out their lives within ¼ miles of their natal pool, returning to breed. For a species with a narrow or small distribution, a specific vernal pool may be the only place in the region where the creature is found. If that pool is destroyed, that specific population of creatures could become locally extinct.

Vernal pools are most often found in the Berkshires in woodland areas, where evaporation from sunlight is limited due to the forest canopy. According to a data layer set developed by the Massachusetts DEP, there are 10 certified pools and 21 potential vernal pool sites in Cheshire. The locations of these resources are found on the Fish and Wildlife Map. This data layer has been developed through a desktop analysis, so the true number of vernal pools could be much higher due to thick forest canopy and dense areas of evergreen tree cover.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Animal Species

Some animal species are relatively common while others are less common or endangered. MESA lists 173 species of animals as being vulnerable in the state. The State Rank indicates Special Concern (SC) species are natives that have suffered a decline which could threaten the species, or have a small number, limited distribution, or specialized habitat; Threatened (T) species are likely to become endangered in the future; Endangered (E) species are in danger of extinction. To protect some rare plants and animals that reside within these areas and could fall prey to collectors, NHESP does not reveal the exact site of some individual plant and animal populations. Rarity in the state, population trend, and overall threat are the main criteria used to determine extinction risk. Under MESA, state-listed species are protected from being harmed by human activity, or a "take".

Cheshire's large tracts of forest and calcareous wetland habitats support several rare animal species. The areas where rare species are known to exist can be seen on the Fish and Wildlife Map.

According to the NHESP, many of the animals listed as having been documented in Cheshire depend on having access to an aquatic environment for all or some portion of their life cycles. Longnose Suckers need cool upper sections of streams and rivers with rock substrates while Bridle Shiner needs clear but slack streams and ponds with submerged aquatic vegetation. The Piedbilled Grebe is a shy bird that requires wetlands for breeding and raising their young, the Common Gallinule needs open waters that have cattails and other tall vegetation for hiding and nesting, the Wood Turtle lives most of its life on land near waterways and wetlands but require water or mud in which to overwinter, the Tulet Bluet is an aquatic creature for part of its life, and the Jefferson Salamander breeds almost exclusively in vernal pools. Bald Eagles, always a thrill to see, prefer being near water for nesting and raising their young. Therefore, it is best to conserve not only the waterbodies and wetlands, but the surrounding area, which can provide the needed upland habitats, which can also act as a buffer from development and human intrusion. Limiting the impacts of development such as ground disturbance, tree removal and stormwater runoff, is key in maintaining water quality for prime habitat. Priority Rare Species habitat areas in Cheshire are shown in red hatching on the Unique Features Map and the Fish and Wildlife Map.

All four bat species that spend winters in caves or mines were listed as Endangered in Massachusetts in 2012. This includes the Little Brown Bat, Northern Long-eared Bat, Eastern Small-footed Bat, and Tricolored Bat. The Little Brown Bat was once the most abundant bat species in Massachusetts, but its population declined by 99% after the onset of White Nose Syndrome, an almost always fatal fungal disease. Human disturbance of overwintering sites should be discouraged or prevented with the use of gated entrances, in order to avoid arousal of hibernating bats and the spread of fungal spores.

Common Name	Scientific Name Taxonomic		MESA	Most	Notes	
		Group	Statu	Recent		
		N4 1	S	UDS.		
Eastern Small-footed Bat	Myotis leibii	Mammal	E	2020	Avoid human	
Little Brown Bat	Myotis lucifugus	Mammal	E	2020	intrusion of	
Northern Long-eared Bat	Myotis septentrionalis	Mammal	E	2001	hibernation	
Tricolored Bat	Perimyotis subflavus	Mammal	E	2020	spots	
Bald Eagle	Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Bird	Т	1976		
Common Gallinule	Gallinula galeata	Bird	SC	Historic		
(formerly Common						
Moorhen)						
Mourning Warbler	Geothlypis philadelphia	Geothlypis philadelphia Bird Si		2007		
Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus	Bird	Т	2018		
Pied-billed Grebe	Podilymbus podiceps	Bird	E	1900	Known since	
					1983 in only 2	
					towns	
Wood Turtle	Glyptemys insculpta	Reptile	SC	2022	LOWITS	
Jefferson Salamander	Ambystoma	Amphibian	SC	2013		
(complex)	jeffersonianum					
Bridle Shiner	Notropis bifrenatus	Fish	SC SC	1981		
Longnose Sucker	Catostomus catostomus	Fish	SC	2002		
Early Hairstreak	Erora laeta	Butterfly/Moth	Т	1993		
Tule Bluet	Enallagma carunculatum	Dragonfly / Damselfly	SC	1973		

Source: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rare-species-viewer downloaded 10-30-23

BioMap3

MassWildlife and The Nature Conservancy have partnered together to identify those areas in Massachusetts that are most critical for conserving biological diversity in Massachusetts. BioMap3 combines more than 40 years of rigorously documented rare species and natural community records from MassWildlife with cutting-edge climate resilience data from The Nature Conservancy to identify intact fish and wildlife communities, habitats, and ecosystems that are the focus of the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan. Core Habitat areas have been identified as those most critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, exemplary natural communities, and resilient ecosystems.

In Cheshire, Core Habitat areas often cover and surround habitats of known rare species and along Coldwater Fisheries. Much of these areas are in areas protected from develop, such as areas within Mt. Greylock State Reservation and Chalet and Stafford Hill Wildlife Management Areas. However, Cheshire Reservoir, the Hoosic River and its associated wetlands and the Coldwater Streams remain vulnerable to the impacts of development, from land disturbance to tree removal to stormwater runoff. Also, a large area of land in the southwest corner of Cheshire, between West Mountain and Lanesborough Roads, has been identified as Core Habitat. The mapping created by BioMap3 offer the latest scientific data and resources to help state and local governments, land trusts, non-government organizations, and other conservation partners strategically plan projects to conserve wildlife and their habitats. BioMap3 Core Habitat areas are shown in hatching on the Fish and Wildlife and Vegetation Maps.



Fig. Fisheries and Wildlife Map

4F. Scenic Resources and Unique Environments (Refer to Unique Features Map)

MassAudubon Important Bird Areas (IBA)

MassAudubon has identified and documented key areas across Massachusetts in order to aid land managers in conserving and protecting habitats important for the long-term preservation of bird populations. An IBA is a site providing essential habitat to one or more species of breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. IBAs generally support high-priority species, large concentrations of birds, exceptional bird habitat, and/or have substantial research or educational value. There are two IBAs located partially in Cheshire. Central Berkshire Lakes IBA: Five major lakes/ponds in central Berkshire County have been designated as an Important Bird Area, with Cheshire Reservoir being the northern most waterbody. These lakes annually host considerable species of geese, ducks, loons, grebes, coots, gulls, and other water-loving species of birds during migration, especially fall. A combined total of at least 32 species of swans, geese, and ducks have been found on these lakes, as well as three species of loons, three species of grebes, the Double-crested Cormorant, and the American Coot. These lakes provide important stopover/feeding areas for dozens of species of waterfowl in the Housatonic River valley region of western Massachusetts, including the lower Hoosic Valley.

Mt. Greylock IBA: The land within Mt. Greylock State Reservation's borders has been designated as an IBA, which includes the northwestern portion of Chesire. Mt. Greylock is the state's highest peak at 3,491 feet. The upper 800 to 900 feet of elevation sets Mount Greylock apart from any other place in the Commonwealth. The peak's upper section is host to a boreal forest plant community not found elsewhere in the state and more reminiscent of the vast boreal forest of Canada. The boreal forest zone of Mount Greylock holds the state's entire population of the Blackpoll Warbler, a species of Special Concern. It also contains the largest tract of old-growth forest remaining in the Commonwealth. Although the peak boreal zone is located in the Town of Adams, the lower elevations in Cheshire provide habitat support for those migrating in and out of the summit area.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Fondly known locally as the AT, this is one of the longest hiking-only footpath in the world. It stretches over 2,000 miles along the east coast from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mt. Katahdin in Maine. The trail was completed in the 1930s and is used by hikers for short day-hikes, longer multi-day hikes, or by "thru-hikers" who complete the trail in a single journey of several months. In Cheshire the AT crosses into the Town from Dalton on North Mountain, and descends toward Cheshire Village from the Cobbles. As the trail passes through Cheshire Village, it travels along Furnace Hill Road, Main and Church Streets and School Street. From here the trail moves northwesterly, crossing Route 8 and Outlook Avenue as it makes its way up steep slopes towards and over the summit of Mt. Greylock.

Cheshire is a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and is one of five Berkshire towns listed as an Appalachian Trail community (since 2018.) The town has a unique campsite available to AT hikers, the Father Tom Campsite. Located on the grounds of the Highway Department, the site features 12 tent sites, space for 3 hammocks, a porta potty, municipal water and electricity, and bicycles for hikers to use. The site is a first come, first served site and does not allow fires on site.

Ashuwillticook Rail Trail

The Rail Trail is a 14-mile 10'-wide universally accessible multi-use path that begins in Pittsfield, travels through Lanesborough, Cheshire and Adams. The trail was constructed in the early 2000s along the abandoned Boston and Maine rail bed. In Cheshire, the trail passes along the eastern shore of Cheshire Lake, where it has spectacular views of the shoreline and hills beyond. Access to the Rail Trail in Cheshire is found on Farnam's Road, Route 8 (near the northern end of Cheshire Reservoir), and in the Village Center.

Cultural, Archeological and Historic Areas

As noted in the Cheshire Master Plan, there are several cultural and historic sites in Town. MACRIS is a statewide database of historic and cultural resources maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). MACRIS records for the Town of Cheshire show almost 180 individual historic inventory items in several categories including areas, buildings, burial grounds, objects, and structures. It is important to note that while many historic buildings and other resources are scattered throughout town, the majority are clustered within the Cheshire Village area, particularly Church, Depot, and South Streets.

Farnam's Village Historic District is on the National Register of Historic Places, centered around the intersection of Farnam's Causeway Road, Old Cheshire Road, and Lanesborough Road. As noted in the National Register nomination:

The limestone mining village of Farnam's is located in the foothills of Mount Greylock on the west side of Hoosic Lake, or Cheshire Reservoir. The landscape is known as an upland karst valley and contains a system of caves and limestone deposits. The village consists of twenty primary buildings laid out around the cross- roads of Lanesborough, Quarry, and Farnam's roads. It is an area which contains in a mountainous woodland setting a limestone quarry, originally connected to a limestone processing mill by a railway and tunnel; limestone crusher, workers' housing, office building, stockroom, carpentry shop, and a small network of mining roads. Buildings and mining structures in the area date largely between 1900 and 1930.

The Old Church-yard Cemetery, also known as the Jenks Road or Stafford Hill Cemetery, is located adjacent to 918 Jenks Rd. The cemetery was the burial ground for the original settlers of Cheshire (first known as New Providence) and the site of the first Baptist Church in the region. There are around 70 headstones in the cemetery, dating from 1785 to 1848.

Cheshire Town Hall is a recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places. The building was constructed in 1898 and was designed by architect Emory Ellsworth. Ellsworth was a graduate of the University of Massachusetts (then Massachusetts Agricultural College) who went on to design several buildings for the University as well other public structures in Western Mass. The structure, a 2 1/2 story cruciform-shaped building, is listed as being in the early Georgian revival style.

Hall's Tavern was constructed in 1804 and is listed as being of the 18th century Federal style construction. The building is located along Route 8 on the left side of the road just north of the intersection of Church Street. According to the historical inventory record for the building, British soldiers during the War of 1812 were held as prisoners here, and the building was a secret meeting place for the Masonic Lodge.

The Stafford Hill Memorial is both a memorial to and the final resting place of Joab Stafford. Stafford was one the original settlers of Cheshire and a military hero of the American Revolutionary War and specifically, the Battle of Bennington. The stone tower that marks the site is a replica of an original stone tower from Newport, RI, Stafford's home prior to settling Cheshire. The memorial tower and Stafford's crypt were constructed in 1927.

Fig. Unique Features Map



4G. Environmental Challenges

The Cheshire Open Space and Recreation Committee, using the guidance provided by the *Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook* (EOEEA, 2008), has identified the pressing environmental challenges that face the Town.

Environmental Justice and Equity

As noted by the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), Environmental Justice is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution, and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment. This means that Towns should identify and strive to address any disproportionate share of environmental burdens experienced by lower-income residents and communities of color who, at the same time, may lack environmental assets in their neighborhoods. In practice, there are basically two frameworks of environmental equity:

- Stopping the environmental "bads," such as a disproportionate burden of toxics; and
- Promoting the environmental "goods," such as assuring access to parks, green amenities, and recreational opportunities.⁵

Cheshire is fortunate in that two trail systems travel through the lower elevations and gentler terrain of the Hoosic River Valley: the north-south Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and the southeast-northwest AT. These trails intersect in the center of Cheshire and are found within a mile of most of the more densely populated areas, including the historic Village Center, Berkshire Village Mobile Home Park and the developed shoreline of Cheshire Reservoir. The playground and playing fields at the Cheshire Community Center are also located in the Village Center.

Those residents who live along rural outlying roads often have access to the WMA and DCR lands that ring the western and eastern portions of the Town, but access to trail heads, if the site has any, is varied and often lacking. The trails in the Mt. Greylock State Reservation are best suited to those who can safely hike steep and aggressive terrain, and the WMAs are generally best suited for those who prefer a wild experience with little or no trail systems. The locations of public recreational lands, the AT and the rail trail can be found on the Open Space Map.

Landfills, Brownfields and Hazardous Waste Sites

According to MassDEP data, there have been 31 reportable releases of oil or hazardous waste in Cheshire since 1988.⁶ These releases tend to be small spills of oil or hazardous waste that are reported to DEP and cleaned up to comply with the agency's direction. Most sites as small commercial properties, but a few have been on residential properties. All but two sites have been cleaned up, and these are two Tier I hazardous waste sites in Cheshire. Sites will be classified as Tier I if (1) there is contamination of groundwater close to actual or potential drinking water supply, (2) there is an imminent hazard to health, safety, public welfare or the environment, or (3) immediate remedial action is required. One site is on private property on Mallard Cove and an Interim Report for cleanup response has been submitted to DEP. The second site is on Main Street and is in the process of being monitored. There are no sites in Cheshire that are encumbered with an Activity and Use Limitation. This designation provides notice of the presence of oil and/or hazardous material contamination remaining at the location after a cleanup has been conducted pursuant to Chapter 21E and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan.

Erosion and Excessive Sedimentation

According to the draft Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (2023), erosion of some drainage channels along steeply-sloped roadways occurs during severe storm events, and these severe storms seem to be increasing in number and severity in recent years. Fortunately, outside of roadways, there is little development along these ravines, which helps to minimize development-related impacts. Windsor Road and Savoy Road (aka Route 116) have histories of storm-related bank erosion and road failures, partially due to steep-sloped ravines and stream crossings. Route 116 is particularly crucial as it provides access to the regional middle and high school, serving not only the students of Cheshire but also those from surrounding areas.

⁵ https://www.mass.gov/info-details/objectives-of-environmental-justice

⁶ https://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/portal#!/search/wastesite/results?SearchType=All%20Sites&TownName=CHESHIRE downloaded 12-3-23

Furthermore, Route 116 serves as a lifeline for residents in rural hilltowns situated to the east, such as Savoy and Windsor, by providing them with access to essential services.

Flooding

Cheshire drafted its first Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan in 2023. During the planning process for that plan, flooding of roads was identified as the top natural hazard as rated by officials and residents. Route 8 is the main route through Town, crossing from south to north, serving as a main regional artery for north-south commuter, commercial and emergency travel. It hugs the eastern shore of Cheshire Reservoir and runs through the center of the Town. In addition, Route 8 connects to several residential streets that branch off from it, serving as important access points to and from residential areas. The proximity of Route 8 to the reservoir increases the risk of flooding during heavy rainfall or severe weather events. The road has been temporarily closed during winter when large blocks of ice from Kitchen Brook are thrust up on the road during thawing/high stream flows and have to be removed with heavy equipment.

In Cheshire, flooding conditions also threaten the population at the Berkshire Village mobile home park off Dublin Road, which is comprised largely of low-income and elderly residents. Residents have in past decades reported flood damage at some homes. Although in recent years the trailer homes have not themselves been inundated, the road into the neighborhood floods at least once a year. Also, while the neighborhood is not itself in the floodplain as delineated in the FIRM, it is surrounded by wetlands and floodplain, and some areas in the park can at times become inundated during heavy precipitation events. The flooding of the road is an indication to residents and first responders that flooding is probable and could cut off emergency access, so a CodeRed is issued to residents to inform them of flood risk. Other areas where properties are impacted by flooding are along the Cheshire Reservoir shoreline, where some septic systems tend to fail when water levels of the lake reach higher levels.

Flood impacts could effect a portion of properties along the Hoosic River and surrounding area in the center of Town if the Cheshire Reservoir dam were to fail. According to a draft Emergency Action Plan developed in 2018 for Cheshire Reservoir dam, inundation could impact properties on Main Street (including the DPW facility), where flooding be up to two feet deep

Forestry Issues

Several invasive plant species threaten the natural and dynamic diversity of Cheshire's forests. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a pest that is expected to ravage ash trees in the same manner that Dutch Elm Disease killed our stately elm trees. The EAB was first discovered neighboring Dalton in 2012 and since that time has spread to every community in Berkshire County. Infestations of the borer result in a very high mortality rate. Early stages of infestation in a tree will be seen in the canopy and upper trunk, but as the population density grows, EAB will infest the lower trunk. Tree damage and eventual mortality is caused by the larval feeding on the trees' cambium, eventually girdling and killing the tree. EAB-dying ash trees are easily identified because of the



D-shaped holes from EAB

presence of D-shaped exit holes and bark that is bleached and flaking off. Weakened and dead trees will become safety hazards, especially along streets, utility lines and near structures.

Other invasive species that can threaten forest structure include bittersweet, which can engulf and take down a stand of trees within a few years, and the hemlock wooly adelgid, which threatens the cool-loving hemlock stands that cover steep ravines and protect coldwater streams.

Development Impact

Traditional development patterns involve removal of native vegetation, often forest cover, grading and sometimes removal of native soils, and installation of impervious surface areas such as buildings, roads, parking lots and driveways. All of these activities diminish the land's ability to accommodate wildlife and absorb surface runoff. Although lawns and decorative shrubs are often planted, these land covers cannot function as wildlife habitat and absorb runoff as well as the original forest did.

Aquatic habitats and their surrounding riparian and floodplain areas are some of our most biologically productive areas, hosting a disproportionately higher number of rare species than corresponding uplands. They provide breeding habitat for reptiles and amphibians who need both water and land to fulfill their life cycles and provide resiliency against the impacts of climate change. A large percentage of riparian and other wetland habitats has already been developed over past centuries for agricultural, industrial, and residential uses. The Wetlands Protection Act provides some protection from development within 200 feet of streams and rivers, but development is not prohibited entirely from this area. Development within the floodplain is discouraged but can be allowed if compensatory flood storage is created in the vicinity.

Shoreline development along Cheshire Reservoir and adjacent to streams and wetlands can introduce new sources of nonpoint pollution into these water-based natural habitats. Traditional construction includes the removal of trees and other shoreline vegetation, the planting of lawns down to the water's edge and the introduction of impervious surface areas. Removing preconstruction vegetation removes the water quality and habitat benefits that native vegetation provided.

Cheshire should strive to guide development so that impacts to wildlife and water quality are minimized to the extent possible. This should include minimal clearing on new lots and a requirement to maintain shoreline vegetation. The creation of a pathway through the vegetation allows homeowners access to the water. Vista pruning of a few lower tree branches will provide a framed view of the water. The use of lawn chemical applications should be discouraged or closely monitored.

Because vernal pools are only prominently noticeable part of the year when they hold water, these vital habitats are extremely vulnerable to being destroyed by development. The most effective way to protect vernal pools is to identify and certify them. The certification affords the pools and their surrounding area some protection from development. Vernal pools that are associated with Wetland Resources, such as riverfront or forested wetlands, are afforded some protection by the Mass. Wetland Protection Act. However, small, isolated pools not associated with a Wetland Resource are not protected by the Act.

Aquatic Invasive Species and Surface Water Pollution

Cheshire's surface waters, its coldwater streams and many lakes and ponds provide valuable wildlife habitat and offer outdoor recreational opportunities. The lakes and ponds are a draw for homeowners and camps and important economic contributors to the Town's economy. Maintaining water quality and the integrity of the aquatic habitat are key to preserving these waters for future generations.

Cheshire Reservoir is divided into three basins by causeways. The reservoir's shallow depth makes it prone to accelerated aquatic plant growth, and several non-native aquatic plants are disrupting the ecosystem by outcompeting native species. Submerged vegetation is abundant, leading to ongoing invasive species management for Eurasian Milfoil, Curly Leaf Pondweed, European Naiad, and Thin-leaf Pondweed.

In 2016, boating and fishing were severely disrupted due to the rapid growth of "tape grass" caused by a mild winter, long spring, and hot summer. Large masses of tangled tape grass formed a thick carpet along the shoreline, despite 80 dump truckloads of dead and rotting tape grass being removed from the Reservoir. Currently, the Town relies on annual herbicide treatment to reduce excessive aquatic plant overgrowth.

Cheshire Reservoir is also considered at high risk for the invasive Zebra Mussels based on water chemistry, although no mussels have yet to be found to date.





Source: Town of Cheshire, 2023.

Vigilant monitoring and boat washing should be conducted to reduce the risk of infestation by this species, which has been found in waters in southern Berkshire County and has recently been detected in Pittsfield (summer 2023).

Stormwater and Road Runoff

Stormwater runoff is the greatest single source of nonpoint pollution in Massachusetts. Roads often parallel rivers, streams and brooks, and roadways are now recognized as one of the most serious sources of non-point source pollution. Roads are typically crowned to allow water to drain away quickly from the center and onto surrounding lands. If the road has a storm drain system the water is collected and piped directly into the nearest waterway. Sand, salt, debris, and auto-derived pollutants enter the waterway untreated. If the road does not have a storm drain system, the water flows off the road and onto the surrounding land or the adjacent waterway or wetland. Unnaturally warmer runoff from roads, parking lots and lawns can increase water temperatures in streams and other waterways, particularly impacts Cold Water Fisheries that support native trout.

Cheshire is within the Pittsfield Urbanized Area and thus included in the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) 2018 General Permit. As such the Town has done more extensive study and mapping of their stormwater sewer system than most municipalities of similar size. Cheshire's stormwater system is focused around the Town center (maintained by the Town) and along Route 8 (maintained by MassDOT). The Town maintains nearly 300 catch basins, manholes and the associated sewer pipes.

Despite these efforts, SURELY THERE ARE AREAS WHERE RUNOFF IS DISCHARGED INTO BELOVED WATERS. ARE THERE RUNOFF ISSUES AT A FEW KEY SPOTS? BOAT LAUNCH? ROAD DRAINAGE DISCHARGE INTO CHESHIRE RESERVOIR, STREAMS, ETC?

Section 5: Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

As noted in *America's Great Outdoors, A Promise to Future Generations*, outdoor recreation provides American's physical and emotional rejuvenation and promotes respect for our natural heritage. Research indicates that regular exposure to nature lowers stress, cultivates creativity, and builds self-confidence among young people. Heritage landscapes, which provide us with a sense of our cultural and agricultural past. Revenue from farms and forests support local families, some of whom have worked the land for generations. Local farms also provide fresh produce and meat, while forests provide wood products, heating fuel and maple syrup. GOT ANY FARM OR SYRUP OPERATIONS TO NAME?

Undeveloped natural lands serve many natural and social functions, including wildlife habitat and corridors, water quality protection, flood control and, with the growing impacts of climate change, carbon sequestration. Conserved undeveloped lands entice residents to enter a fresh and quiet environment and to reconnect with nature. Outdoor recreation is increasingly seen as a way to increase peoples' activity level and combat health issues such as high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes.

Fortunately, the Town of Cheshire has a mixture of open space, scenic resources, and recreational areas that add to the quality of life here. The forested and challenging trails of the Mt. Greylock State Reservation, the forests and open landscapes of the Wildlife Management Areas, and the boating, fishing and birdwatching opportunities offered on and along Cheshire Reservoir offer residents a variety of outdoor recreation activities. The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is a gem that offers people of all abilities the chance to travel through a rural landscape, with the added amenities of resting areas, snacks, and toilets at various stops along its length.

This section contains an inventory of undeveloped lands of interest that provide environmental benefits to both wildlife and Cheshire residents. Listed in this section are important parcels with a description of their ownership and management, the level of accessibility to the public, and the level of protection from development they hold. The lands with the highest level of protection are

those owned and managed by the federal and state governments and those on which conservation or agricultural deed restrictions have been placed. Other large tracts of undeveloped land with a good deal of protection are the municipal lands such as the drinking water supply protection lands, as long as the drinking water source remains needed.

Approximately 7,250 acres of land within Cheshire (41% of the Town's total acreage) are considered open space lands which are permanently protected from development, the bulk of which is state-owned land. This leaves the majority of land in Town unprotected from future development. Protected land does not include Cheshire Reservoir, which is considered aquatic land cover.

There are differing levels of protection that are involved in open space and recreation lands. Most federal and state lands maintained for conservation and recreation can be regarded as permanently protected lands. Most conservation lands owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution, and to remove protection status of these lands for development would require an act of the state legislature. Although such a scenario could occur, the action would undoubtedly be contentious. Other lands that can be considered permanently protected are private lands upon which an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) or Conservation Restriction (CR) or easement has been placed.

The Town of Cheshire owns a total of 910 acres of undeveloped land in various sites across the Town. None of the lands owned by the Town of Cheshire are believed to be protected by conservation deed restrictions and so could be vulnerable to change. TRUE? Although it is unlikely that Cheshire would sell public open space lands for development, there could arise a situation in which the public benefits of the land transfer would outweigh the cost of losing open land.

Ownership	Size in	Level of
Ownership	Acres	Protection
Federal (Appalachian Trail corridor)	310	High
State (DCR, DFW)	5,106	High
Private Lands with APRs and CRs	817	High
Town of Cheshire (various parcels)	910	Varies
Town of Adams (drinking water protection)	51	High
Chapter 61, 61A, 61B (acres also under APRs or CRs not included	4 270	
in this total)	4,270	Low
Hoosac Valley Middle & High School	56	Low
Total Acres	11,520	

Table xx. Summary of Open Space Lands with Some Level of Protection (Refer to Map ___: Inventory of Land of Conservation and Recreation Interest) REMEMBER TO REVIEW THESE FIGURES IF ANY SUBSEQUENT TABLES ARE ALTERED

Source: BRPC and Assessor Data 2023.

5A. Private Parcels

Deed Restricted Conservation Lands

There are areas in Cheshire where the landscape is shaped by privately-owned working farms that reflect the Town's agricultural heritage.

There are a few properties where private landowners have placed deed restrictions on their land. A deed restriction is a legal agreement between a landowner and another entity in which the owner agrees to restrict the use of the land. Activities such as farming, forest or wildlife management, recreation and other land uses that the property owner wishes to pursue continue to be allowed. The landowner continues to own the property, but if the land is sold, the new owners much comply with the provisions of the CR, which has been placed on the deed and is transferred in perpetuity. APRs are typically held by the Commonwealth while CRs can be held by governmental agencies, land trusts, environmental organizations and municipalities (Conservation Commissions often hold CRs). A total of 817 acres of private land is permanently protected through APRs and CRs. Conservation restrictions reduce the tax burden on the property and may also provide funding to the landowner if another entity agrees to hold the restriction on the land. APR lands are shown on the Open Space Land of Interest Map in yellow, while the CR land is shown in tan.

Several farm properties are protected from development under the APR program. These lands provide open space and scenic benefits to residents as well as providing locally-sources agricultural products. These lands are not typically open for public recreational use because they are working farmscapes. The exception is where the landowner may allow recreational uses with permission, traditionally allowing hunting on the property.

The Ayrhill Farms deed-restricted lands cover a large expanse of land that is located along Henry Wood Road in Cheshire and stretches northward into Adams. The open fields along this rolling landscape provide spectacular views that stretch west to Mt. Greylock and south into Cheshire. A total of contiguous protected lands is located here, with 126 acres protected in Cheshire and another 276 acres protected in Adams.

The Toporowski and Moor APRs provide protected landscapes that connect conserved wildlife habitats within the Stafford Hill WMA. Working farms, with their open landscapes, can provide complementary wildlife habitats by offering edge habitats and travel corridors, including stop overs for migrating bird species. Likewise, the Janowizcz and Martin APR lands provide complementary open space lands that connect different areas of the Chalet WMA. The small portion (six acres) of the Fletcher Farm located on the Cheshire Reservoir shore in Cheshire is an extension of the farm that is predominantly (approx. 180 acres) in neighboring Lanesborough.

Site Name	Owner	Activities	Public Access?	Acres
Ayrhill Farms APR	Ayrhill Farms Inc	Agriculture	Ν	126
<mark>Fletcher Farm</mark> CR	Gallagher, T	Conservation	Y?	6
Janowycz APR	Janowycz Michael W and Lubow M	Agriculture	Ν	126
Martin APR	Martin Everett L and Doris M	Agriculture	Ν	330
Moore Farm APR	Moore Donald H and Eileen F	Agriculture	Ν	114
Toporowski Farm APR	Casimer Toporowski LT	Agriculture	Ν	115
Total				817

Table 5.2. Deed-restricted Agricultural and Conservation Lands

Source: BRPC and Assessor Data 2023.

Chapter 61 Tax Program Lands

Chapter 61 is a tax abatement program that offers a 95% tax savings to forest landowners. The intent of the program is to protect and enhance the state's timber-producing capacity. To qualify for Chapter 61, landowners must have a minimum of 10 acres that are suitable for timber production. Like Chapter 61, Chapter 61A is a voluntary enrollment program for preferential tax assessment based on current agricultural use of the land. Chapter 61A requires a five-acre minimum of agricultural land which must produce a minimum number of agricultural products. Chapter 61B is a recreational land classification program designed to encourage the preservation of open space and promote recreational uses. To qualify for Chapter 61B the landowner's property must consist of at least 5 acres that are suitable for recreational purposes. The program offers a 75% tax savings.

The Chapter 61 tax programs are of interest to municipalities for two main reasons. First, lands that are managed for forest, agricultural or recreational uses remain open and scenic, helping communities maintain their historically rural roots. Second, if a property that is enrolled in any of the Chapter 61 programs is placed on the real estate market for a change of use, the Town has a 120-day right of first refusal to purchase the property at fair market value. For example, if a farm purchased for the development of a subdivision or a commercial use, which is different from its current agricultural use, then the Town has the right to purchase that property before anyone else. This gives the community some control over the destiny of its rural character. If the Town does not acquire the land and it does change use, the tax savings that had accumulated during the land's enrollment in the Chapter 61 program must be paid back in full prior to the land use taking place.

There are 36 property owners in Cheshire that have placed all or a portion of their lands into one of the Chapter 61 Tax Abatement Programs. The total acreage of land enrolled in the Chapter 61 tax programs is 4,270 acres. Of these, 604 acres are also permanently protected by APRs. When considering the protection level of solely having the land enrolled in the Chapter 61 tax

programs, there are a total of 3,666 acres. A table of lands, ownership and acreage is found in Appendix _____.

As can be seen on the Open Space Lands of Interest map, many of the Chapter lands are located adjacent to existing permanently protected state properties. Communicating and creating partnerships with these landowners could lead to additional conservation or agricultural restrictions, which would create long-term linkages between conserved lands for future protection of habitat, biodiversity and potential recreational opportunities.

Privately Owned Recreational Areas of Interest

Most of the undeveloped land in Cheshire is privately owned. The Cheshire Rod & Gun Club owns 85 acres of land at the end of Curran Road, directly abutting land within the Mt. Greylock State Reservation. This land is enrolled in the Chapter 61B tax program and is included in the total presented in Table ____.

Table xx. Privately-Owned Recreational Areas

Address	Owner	Public Access?	Level of Protection	Acres
Curran Road	Cheshire Rod & Gun Club	Yes, with permission	Low (Ch.61B)	85
Total				85

Source: BRPC and Assessor Data 2023.

5B. Public and Non-profit Parcels

A significant portion of Cheshire is owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and includes state forests, Cheshire Reservoir and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). The National Parks Service owns parcels along the National Scenic Appalachian Trail (AT). Together these state- and federally-owned lands total 5416 acres, or 31% of Cheshire's total land area.

State and Federal Lands

Cheshire is fortunate in that state-owned lands in Town offer a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities for people of all abilities. For those who seek a challenging hike, the Appalachian Trail (AT) travels northwest up steep terrain to the Mt. Greylock Summit or southeast through the Cobble to North Mountain. For those who need or prefer more level terrain the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail travels north to Adams and south to Lanesborough. These two trails intersect in the Village Center, providing easy access to either option. For those who prefer a more wilderness experience with little or few trails, the WMAs provide large contiguous acres across a variety of terrains and habitats.

Cheshire Reservoir is arguably the most prominent outdoor recreational asset in Cheshire, providing residents and visitors with opportunities to view wildlife, fish, boat and OTHERS? The lake is popular year-round with anglers, including hosting fishing derbies for residents of all ages.

Public boat launches are found on Route 8 and Farnam's Road, each with an estimated 8-10 parking spots. The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail travels alongside the lake, from which scenic views of the water set against a mountainous backdrop can be enjoyed. As noted in the previous section, Cheshire lake and its accompanying wetland complexes are key Central Berkshire birdwatching areas, especially for water-dependent species.

The National Park Services owns land in Cheshire along the AT, which crosses into Berkshire County from Connecticut and moves northward where it leaves the county in Clarksburg and enters Vermont. In Cheshire, the AT crosses into the town from Dalton on North Mountain and descends toward Cheshire Village from the Cobbles. The trail passes through Cheshire Village, where it intersects with the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and moves northwesterly, crossing Route 8 and Outlook Avenue as it makes its way up steep slopes towards the Mt. Greylock Summit. As discussed in the previous section, the AT is a community asset that is embraced by residents of Cheshire and beyond.

The Mt. Greylock State Reservation, more than 12,400 acres in size, is a large state holding maintained by DCR that surrounds Mt. Greylock, the state's highest peak (3,491' elevation). This property has 70 miles of trails, many of which are rated strenuous or aggressive. From Cheshire, access to the trail system is found off of the AT on Outlook Avenue or Greylock Mountain Road. While there are many outdoor activities and facilities offered within the Reservation, with the exception of the trail system, all of these facilities are located outside the Town's borders.

The two WMAs in Cheshire are adjacent to each other and are open to hiking, hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing. Chalet WMA is a large holding of more than 7,000 acres that stretches across the towns of Dalton, Cheshire, and Windsor. Approximately 1/3 of these acres are within Cheshire's borders. Parking in Cheshire for this WMA is found on Windsor Road, Notch Road and Gulf Road. Stafford Hill WMA is a set of unconnected parcels across the east-central portion of Cheshire. Of this WMAs total 1,400 acres, 882 acres are within Cheshire. Along with the biological diversity, visitors can enjoy stunning views throughout the property, including a spectacular look at Mount Greylock from the top of Stafford Hill. IS THERE WHERE THE MEMORIAL IS? There are three parking areas on Stafford Hill Road in Cheshire—one on the northern parcel and two on the southern parcel, and there is a town pull-off on Wells Road on the western parcel. A small portion of Savoy WMA is found at the Cheshire/Windsor/Savoy border, but there is no parking in Cheshire to access this property.

Site Name	Owner	Activities	Acres in Cheshire
Appalachian Trail Corridor	National Park Service	Footpath only	310
Ashuwillticook Rail Trail	DCR Div. of State Parks and Rec.	All abilities biking, walking, wildlife viewing, snowshoeing, x-country ski	84
Chalet WMA	Department of Fish and Game	No trails; hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing	2,540
Cheshire Reservoir Boat Launch & Island	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	Fishing, boating, wildlife viewing	8
Mount Greylock State Reservation	DCR Div. of State Parks and Rec.	Hiking, biking, wildlife viewing, hunting, wilderness camping, snowshoeing, x-country ski, snowmobiling, educational facility, seasonal summit view tower/lodging/food service	1,577
Savoy WMA	Department of Fish and Game	No trails; hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing	15
Stafford Hill WMA	Department of Fish and Game	No trails; hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing	882
lotal		*	5,416

Table 5.4. State- and Federally-owned Lands in Cheshire (all open for public use)

Source: BRPC and Assessor Data 2023.

Municipal Lands

A significant amount of land in Cheshire is under municipal ownership, with the towns of Cheshire and Adams and the Regional School District being the owners of these lands. In general, most water supply protection and municipal conservation and recreational lands are protected under Massachusetts Article 97 if they were acquired with conservation and/or recreation in mind. The Towns of Cheshire and Adams own an additional 921 acres protected as part of water supply watershed protection. Article 97 expressly states that Massachusetts citizens have a Right to a Clean Environment. This authorizes local and the state governments to utilize their traditional Police Powers (public health, safety, welfare and morals) to protect and promote the environment in general. Article 97 requires a two-thirds roll call vote of each house of the state legislature in order to dispose of or change the use of certain local, county or state lands taken or acquired for natural resources purposes, which is broadly defined. Watershed protection lands are not open to public recreation, but open spaces surrounding the middle/high school are open to public use if they are not being used by sports teams or other school activities.

Table 5.5. Municipally-owned Open Space Lands in Cheshire

Name of property	Ownership	Activities	Total Acres
Bassett Reservoir Lands	Town of Adams	None - drinking water protection	51
Town of Cheshire Lands*	Town of Cheshire	Mixed - see Table for details	910
Hoosac Valley Middle &	Adams Cheshire Reg.	School lawn, athletic fields,	
High School	School District	running track	56
Total			1,017

*Detailed list of Town of Cheshire open space & recreation lands in Table . Source: BRPC and Assessor Data 2023.

The Town of Cheshire owns relatively few open space lands, and the majority of these acres are for water supply protection, making them unsuitable for development of outdoor recreation. The main Town-owned property that offers outdoor recreation is the Community House, which still hosts the playing fields and playground inherited from the site's former use as an elementary school. While the open space lands owned by the Town of Cheshire and listed in Table _____ are currently considered somewhat protected from development, none have formal deed restrictions prohibiting their sale or their development. TRUE? Therefore, these lands cannot formally be considered as permanently protected open space. However, if these lands were to be considered for sale or a change of use it would likely require a vote of Town Meeting, and Cheshire residents have traditionally favored preservation of lands that provide historic, natural or recreational value. TRUE? As such, the Town considers many lands listed in Table. ____ as having a Limited level of protection. Therefore, these lands are considered as having a High level of protection. While Hoosac Middle and High School is currently active, the future student population could conceivably fall below a level that is economically sustainable, and therefore, the school is being considered as having a Low level of protection. Town-owned cemeteries are valued historic resources to the Town, and although they have no formal protection, it is very unlikely that residents at Cheshire Town Meeting would approve the removal of graves for development.

Table 5.6. Town of Cheshire Municipal Conservation & Recreation Land ARE WE MISSING ANYTHING? UNSURE OF WHAT A FEW OF THESE ARE FOR - OS?

Site Name	Ownership / Management	Current Uses	Acres	Condition	Rec. Potential	Public Access?	Level of Protection	Grants Used if Any	Zoning
Cheshire Cemetery		Graveyard, history, quiet solitude	18		None	Yes	High	??	A-R, R-1
Cheshire		Town Offices/Meeting space, playing fields, playground, picnicking?							
Community House		OTHERS?	11		??	Yes	Low	??	R-1
Cheshire Water Co. Watershed Lands		Water Supply Protection	870		No	No	High	??	A-R
Farnams Crossing		Boat launch, shoreline recreation	1		??	Yes	??	??	В
Farnams-Goodlife Corp TOWN??		??	1		<mark>??</mark>	<mark>??</mark>	<mark>??</mark>	??	Ц
Landlocked parcel off Wells Rd		??	1		<mark>??</mark>	<mark>??</mark>	Limited	??	<mark>A-R</mark>
Land across high school		<mark>??</mark>	7		??	<mark>??</mark>	<mark>??</mark>	??	<mark>A-R</mark>
Rt 8 / Wells Cemetery		Graveyard, history, quiet solitude	1		No	Yes	High	??	В
Stafford Memorial Tower		History, picnicking	2		??	Yes	Limited	??	A-R
Total			910						

Source: BRPC and Assessor Data 2023.

Land Trusts

There are no land trusts or other non-profit conservation organizations that own land in Cheshire, but the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, the regional Berkshire land trust, holds a CR on six acres of the Fletcher Farm. These lands are an extension of the Fletcher Farm that is largely located in Lanesborough.

Historic and Cultural Properties and Resources

As noted in Section 4 of this Plan, Cheshire is endowed with several areas of historic and cultural importance. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains a database of properties listed as historic sites. Currently there are 186 sites listed in the town as registered with the MHC. Appendix xx features a table of MHC registered properties.

Fig.. Open Space Lands of Particular Interest



Section 6: Community Vision

6A. Description of Process

The process of updating the Cheshire OSRP began in the Autumn of 2023. Meetings were held on 9/6/2023, 11/8/2023, 1/10/2024, 2/7/2024, 3/20/2024, 7/10/2024, 8/14/2024, 9/18/2024, 10/2/2024, 11/6/2024, 12/4/2024. The public survey was available on Surveymonkey from March 1, 2024 until June 17, 2024, paper copies were available in the Community House (Town Hall), Cheshire Library, and Council Aging. A presentation was made at a Council on Aging luncheon on 3/5/2024 regarding the survey as seniors were assisted with completing the online survey. The survey was also publicized at the town-wide Clean Up Day and at the Town Meeting, June 10. A public forum was held at the Community House Facility on 10/9/2024 to review the survey results and proposed Goals and Actions of the 2024 Cheshire Open Space Plan.

6B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

Cheshire residents value the town's water resources highly. They recognize the importance of Cheshire Reservoir as a town and tourism resource. The first survey question asked, "What is the most important resource to be conserved in Cheshire", 67 of the 121 responses mention the reservoir. Many residents stated that they enjoy hiking and walking (73%) in the town and that they use the Ashuwillticook Rail trail very frequently. Many residents have expressed a desire to enhance recreational offerings for youth in the town.

Large portions of Cheshire are owned by the State of Massachusetts (Mount Greylock State Reservation, Chalet Wildlife Management Area, Stafford Hill Wildlife Management area, Ashuwillticook Rail Trail). Because a large percentage of the remaining land in Cheshire is privately owned, it is important to enlist and educate private citizens in land and natural resource conservation efforts. Many residents have stated through the public survey and during public forums that they would like to learn more about the world around them and what part they can play in preserving the town's natural communities. Many property owners state that they are interested in learning how to become better stewards of their land. It is important that these landowners are given the tools to succeed. Partnering with environmental conservation organizations and state agencies will be key in providing these educational tools.

Although residents are surrounded by nature, properties formally open for public recreation are somewhat limited and many are not well known. New outdoor recreational facilities must be designed for long-term sustainability and protection of natural resources. Publicizing Cheshire's public outdoor spaces, including newly developed and updated sites, can help to facilitate residents' use of these properties. The Berkshire's Outside website will help to inform local efforts to increase awareness of open space resources.

Considering public input provided through the public survey and the October 2024 public forum, the Open Space and Recreation committee developed goals for the protection of natural resources and enhancement of recreational opportunities. The Actions that have been developed during the planning process have been categorized under these overarching Goals. More than xx actions have been identified.

Section 7: Analysis of Needs

7A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

As noted in *An Assessment of the Forest Resources of Massachusetts* (2010), the forests of the Berkshire Highlands region, in which Cheshire is located, are among of the highest priority areas in the state for hosting intact forest blocks and providing timber products. The forests here "provide the full suite of ecosystem services. The top watersheds are comprised of forestland that provides basic supporting ecosystem services such as protection of water quality, prevention of soil erosion, protection of biodiversity and wildlife habitat, while also providing wood for local markets. This forestland also provides opportunities for recreational, spiritual, and aesthetic experiences, a forest environment in which people of all ages can connect with nature and the outdoors."⁷

The Town's forest cover, mixed with the rugged terrain, provide residents with a feeling that they are living in a rural and wild place. It is a main reason why they live or vacation here. Forests also provide habitat for wildlife, including rare species that reside in or travel through the area. These forests may also be harboring rare species that have never been documented or have not been documented for decades. However, most of the land in Cheshire is privately owned, including large camp properties, and very little is permanently protected open space, particularly in the Town's interior.

Given the Town's limited resources, it may be most productive to partner with state agencies and focus protection measures in areas where rare species are known to exist or where they can reasonably be expected to exist. The Town should actively work with the DCR, DFW and conservation organizations to expand conservation land around their existing properties.

The Town should encourage developers to minimize intrusions into forest lands and to limit the amount of clearing that occurs for roads, buildings, and driveways. Low Impact Development techniques, which seek to maintain existing topography and vegetation, should be promoted for all development and possibly be required for larger developments needing special permits. Amending zoning bylaws can be undertaken to achieve these goals. Reducing openings in the forest may also aid in limiting the introduction or spread of some invasive species.

Adopting the Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act will provide the Town with a land use tool to guide development along the ridgelines and slopes of Cheshire's higher elevations. This tool protects specific water resources of the town as well as views of the surrounding mountains and rural character. The act enables the town to regulate such things as grading and tree removal to reduce the impact of runoff on surface waters. The Scenic Mountain Act is applied to predefined areas as selected by the town. At a minimum or default level, the act applies to areas over 1,800 feet in elevation. However, the town can tailor

⁷ de la Cretaz, et al, 2010.

this to select the appropriate areas and elevation as it relates to watershed protection for the town. At least 10 towns in Berkshire County have adopted this Act, including the nearby town of Dalton.

It is expected that the majority of the land in Cheshire will remain in private ownership in the near future. If the forests, fields and wetland resources are to be protected for future generations, it is key that owners understand how to become good stewards of these precious resources.

7B. Summary of Community's Needs

In the spring of 2024, the Cheshire Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee conducted an Open Space and Recreation Survey as part of the process of updating its Open Space and Recreation plan. The survey was open from March 1 until June 17, 2024. A total of 148 total responses were received, the majority through the Surveymonkey website, however paper copies of the survey were available for residents at the Town Hall, Council on Aging, and at the town Library. Paper copies were entered into the Surveymonkey after June 17th. The survey was advertised on the town's website, through email blasts, and in the Cheshire Chatter, a monthly newsletter published by the Council on Aging.

The second question asked residents to choose up to 5 activities they enjoy doing in Cheshire. Hiking and walking was the overwhelming preference with 73% of the 148 respondents. Boating/canoeing/kayaking was second with 52%. Bicycling, gardening, and bird watching rounded out the top 5 responses with 48%,34%, and 33% respectively. The full results are shown in Figure xx.



Q2: Choose up to five (5) activities that you enjoy doing in Cheshire.

Answered: 148 Skipped: 0

Powered by Association SurveyMonkey

The third question asked about residents three favorite outdoor sites in the town. Respondents chose the Ashuwillticook Trail (76%), Cheshire Cobbles (43%), Hoosac Reservoir (41%), Mount Greylock State Reservation (34%), and the Appalachian Trail (20%) as the top 5 choices. Figure xx shows the results of this question.



Q3: What are your three favorite places to visit in Cheshire?

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Answered: 148 Skipped: 0

Question 5 of the survey asked about groups that need additional recreational opportunities in the town. Respondents wanted to see more offerings for youth (58%), adults (44%), and seniors (33%). Figure xx shows the results of this question.



Q5: Does Cheshire need more recreational opportunities for: (check all that apply)

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Respondents were asked about how often they utilize outdoor recreation sites in the town in question 6. The most frequently used sites were the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, Cheshire Reservoir, Farnam's Causway, the Cheshire Community House, and local farms as the top 5 choices. The results of this question are presented in Figure XX.



Q6: In a typical year, how often do you visit the following locations in Cheshire? Please tell us which is your favorite.

Very Frequently (13+ times/year) Frequently (6-12 times/year) Occassionally (1-5 times/year) Never Haven't heard of it

Powered by SurveyMonkey

Question 7 asked residents activities that they would be willing to participate in to improve open space and recreation in Cheshire. Respondents stated that they would like to shop at a local farmers market, participate in maintenance/cleanup days at local sites, and attendance of meetings and committees were the top three choices. Figure xx shows the results of this question.

Q7: Which of the following are activities you would be willing to participate in to improve Open Space/Recreation in Cheshire?

Answered: 148 Skipped: 0



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Residents were also asked about conservation practices that they would be willing to institute on their own properties (Question 8.) The results of this question are shown in Figure XX.

Q8: Which of the following conservation practices would you be willing to implement on your own property?

Answered: 128 Skipped: 20



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Question 10 asked respondents to weigh in on the installation of adult/senior exercise equipment at the Community House. A majority of respondents said that would use this equipment if it was installed. Figure XX shows the results of this question.

Q10: Would you use adult/senior exercise equipment (similar to Housatonic Commons or Lee's Outdoor fitness court) if it was installed at the Cheshire Community House (Cheshire Elementary)?



Powered by Astronautic SurveyMonkey

When asked to rate the highest priority categories for using town funds to improve and protect open spaces in the town, the respondents stated that protecting drinking water, maintaining and improving hiking/walking trails, preserving wildlife corridors and habitats, and preserving farmland and open space were the top 5 priorities. This information is presented in Figure xx.

Q12: Rate the following categories for town use of open space and recreation funds from high to low priority?

Answered: 143 Skipped: 5



Powered by 🏠 SurveyMonkey

Several questions in the survey asked specifically about the Cheshire Reservoir.. Question 14 asked how residents accessed the lake (see Figure XX.)

Q14: How do you access Hoosac Reservoir/Cheshire Lake? (Please select all that apply)

Answered: 136 Skipped: 12



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Question 15 asked about preferred activities at the lake. Residents said they enjoy canoeing/kayaking, fishing, and ice fishing at the lake. For more information see Figure XX.



Q15: What activities do you enjoy on the lake? (please check all that apply) Answered: 130 Skipped: 18

To understand who had completed the survey, several questions asked respondents a series of demographic questions. These include residency status and how they obtain information about open space issues in the town. Figures XX and XX show the results of these questions.





Powered by SurveyMonkey



Q18: How do you get information about open space issues in Cheshire?

Powered by Association SurveyMonkey

Answered: 134 Skipped: 14

7C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

Cheshire has limited tax money to protect open space through land acquisition or to create additional recreational facilities. Additional funds for open space and cultural resource protection could be obtained if the town were to pass the Community Preservation Act. The preservation of existing unprotected open space in Cheshire depends on citizens organizing or using the services of existing land trusts and additional volunteer organizations for information and opportunities. See Figure XX for a map of communities in Massachusetts that have passed the Community Preservation Act.



Effective lines of communication among the State, Town, and citizens are needed if any of the open space and recreation goals are to be achieved. The committee members and townspeople expressed concerns about the responsiveness of state entities regarding Cheshire Reservoir, the maintenance of the spill way, and state boat ramp.

Within Cheshire there are conflicting opinions on the most important issues of economic growth. One view holds that additional regulations or additional protection of open space will hurt the financial situation of the town. Another view is interested in exploring the economic benefits of open space and the cost of residential and/or commercial growth as it relates to environmental damage and strained infrastructure. Long-term planning will be difficult if cooperation and collaboration does not take place. Coordination between town agencies is needed to prevent additional development and the installation of septic systems within sensitive areas such as around Cheshire Reservoir and wetland areas.

Resource Management

Cheshire also owns and maintains xx cemeteries throughout the town. These properties offer a place of quiet reflection and provide a window to the town's past. Like town parks and school grounds, the DPW maintain the grounds of the cemeteries.

Like other rural towns, Cheshire has a few civic-minded people who serve on multiple boards. These dedicated people have little additional time to attend workshops offered for their benefit. Strategies for increasing participation of residents in town government are needed. More volunteers on committees will bring more resources, experiences, and energies to the process of making important decisions.

Agencies and boards have overlapping roles in ownership, management, and maintenance of town land. Handling trail maintenance, dealing with use and/or abuse, and negotiating with landowners for access across private land are just a few of the many situations needing

management. Utilizing the managerial skills of regional Land Trust organizations would greatly assist with the task of land management. Private landowners interested in protecting open space must be willing to assist the town financially in order to obtain the services of the Land Trusts.



Section 8: Goals and Actions

In developing goals and actions for this OSRP, the Cheshire Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee revisited the outdated OSRP, as well as considered recommendations that emerged from the 2017 Master Plan AND 2023 MVP/HM Plan. They used community input from the OSRP Survey, public forum, and stakeholder meetings to develop Goals and Actions for the plan.

Goals of the plan are as follows:

- 1. Enhance parks facilities throughout the town.
- 2. To improve and increase the waterfront recreation opportunities at Cheshire Lake and the Hoosac River.
- 3. Create a town Parks and Recreation Committee.
- 4. To protect and enhance the town's ground water resources.
- 5. To protect and enhance the town's surface water resources.
- 6. Create a Cheshire Farmers Market.
- 7. Encourage town policies and bylaws that protect open space resources in the town.

Fig. xx Action Map

TBD

Section 9: Seven Year Action Plan

This Seven-Year Action Plan below established goals with associated objectives and actions with help from community input and integrated with other community planning efforts and their associated public processes. Continued Town commitment and citizen support are essential to accomplish these goals. Many of the listed actions reflect priorities and recommendations that have been in development for many years, and some will undoubtedly continue beyond seven years. The Town's ability to implement any of the given objectives is also dependent on the current budget and available funding for a given year.
Table xx. Seven-year Action Table

Open Space and Recreation Seven Year Action Plan							
Task #		Activity	Notes	Time Frame	Cost to the Town		
0.1	Goal	Enhance parks facilities throughout the town.					
0.1.1	Objective	Improve recreation offerings in the town.					
0.1.1.1	Action	Improve access and parking at Cheshire Cobbles Trailhead (not on Furnace Hill Road).					
0.1.1.2	Action	ldentify additional sites for "pocket parks" or smaller parks in the town in addition to facilities at Cheshire Community House. Potential Improvements include: Community Gardens, Exercise Facilities, Courts, Splash Pad, Dog Park, and Skate Park.					
0.1.1.3	Action	Apply for various state and federal grant programs which provide increased recreation opportunities for additional town sites.					
0.1.1.4	Action	Seek private donations and/or partner with non-profits to increase the town's recreation- oriented needs.					
0.1.1.5	Action	Work with State agencies and seek grant funding to create a park at the location of the old arch bridge off Route 8, which well may be the oldest such bridge in the Commonwealth.					
0.1.1.6	Action	Improve parking and trail access at Town Water District Land of West Mountain Road.					
0.1.1.7	Action	Work with Historical Society, Recreation Committee, and other town groups to identify needed improvements and grant sources for Stafford Hill Monument.					
0.1.1.8	Action	Identify areas to create ATV trails in the town. Create organization to oversee policing, maintenance, and trail creation.					
0.2	Goal	To improve and increase the waterfront recreation					
		opportunities at Cheshire Lake and the Hoosac River.					
0.2.1	Objective						
0.2.1.1	Action	Work cooperatively with the Hoosac Lake Recreation and Preservation District, and Hoosac River Watershed Association to increase funding and study of Hoosac Reservoir to enhance recreation potential and to support efforts for lake restoration and water-quality improvement.					
0.2.1.2	Action	Support efforts of Hoosac Lake District, State, and other local lake restoration and water quality improvement programs and continue the development of a lake master plan to address invasive species in the lake. Continue to develop short and long term goals for lake management. Identify infestations of common reed, Japanese Knotweed, water chestnut, and honeysuckle to determine areas of greatest efficacy.					
0.2.1.3	Action	Develop a lakefront town recreation facility on the north end of the lake which promotes both water-based and lakefront recreation uses. Install informational kiosk at parking area regarding lake health. Promote the Appalachian Trail, Leland Park, Cheshire Lake, the Ashuwilltico ok Trail, and Mt. Greylock as recreation destinations in the community.					
0.2.1.4	Action	Continue to make improvements such as improved lake access points, handicapped accessibility features, and others at Farnum's Causeway.					
0.2.1.5	Action	Remove trash cans at State boat ramp to limit dumping of trash at site. Install "carry in, carry out" signage to					
0.3	Goal	Create a town Parks and Recreation Committee					
0.3.1	Objective	-	V				
0.3.1.1	Action	i o initiate a volunteer membership drive, to increase committee membership.					
0.3.1.2	Action	To develop committee bylaws, consistent with town needs and policies.					
0.3.1.3	Action	Seek annual funding in the town budget.					
0.3.1.4	Action	To provide programs and facilities based on community demand and need.					
0.3.1.5	Action	To evaluate the committee's efforts on a regular basis.					

<u>0.4</u>	<u>Goal</u>	To protect and enhance the town's ground water resources.			
0.4.1	Objective				
0.4.1.1	Action	To identify aquifer recharge areas, based on the best available information.		Ĩ	
0.4.1.2	Action	To explore potential funding programs which would allow the town to initiate a more detailed hydrogeological study.			
0.4.1.3	Action	To identify existing pollution sources and attempt to remedy, where possible.			
0.4.1.4	Action	To work closely with the Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission regarding ground water protection programs and strategies.			
0.4.1.5	Action	To work closely with the Pine Valley Mobile Horne Park and Hutchinson Water Company to identify and protect the recharge area and quality of their existing wells.			
<u>0.5</u>	Goal	To protect and enhance the town's surface water resources.			
0.5.1	Objective				
0.5.1.1	Action	Investigate the construction of a sewer system connecting with the Adams Wastewater Treatment Plant to alleviate the introduction of raw sewage into Cheshire Lake		Î	
0.5.1.2	Action	To implement strict enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act to ensure the protection of valuable wetland areas.			
0.5.1.3	Action	To increase public access to the Hoosac River and Cheshire Lake, thereby increasing public awareness and interest in the watercourses.			
0.5.1.4	Action	To work cooperatively on lake management of the lower basin of Cheshire Reservior with the Town of Lanesborough.			
0.5.1.5	Action	Seek grant funding and coordinate with the state, surrounding communities, and the Cheshire Lake Association to develop an updated lake management plan focused on improving recreation and water quality in the lake			
0.5.1.6	Action	Collaborate regionally and coordinate with MassDOT to ensure compliance with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems) Permit.			



<u>0.6</u>	Goal	Create a Cheshire Farmers Market			
0.6.1	Objective				
0.6.1.1	Action	ldentify source of funding to initiate and organize a farmers market in the town.			
0.6.1.2	Action	Solicit farms and producers to staff market.			
0.6.1.3	Action	Publicize farmers market to town residents.			
0.7	Goal	Encourage town policies and bylaws that protect open space resources in the town.			
0.7.1	Objective				
0.7.1.1	Action	To promote the viability of the local farming industry by encouraging farmer participation in the Farmland Assessment Act (Ch. 61A) and the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Act.			
0.7.1.2	Action	To guide development to certain areas of town, where a utility base exists; rather than promoting strip development along existing roadways.			
0.7.1.3	Action	To discourage development along town river and stream corridors through the strict enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act and flood plain zoning.			
0.7.1.4	Action	Evaluate the appropriateness of adopting the Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act to preserve ridgetops and minimize negative impacts on steep slopes.Pursue if appropriate.			
0.7.1.5	Action	Coordinate with the state to promote less well-known recreation areas such as Stafford Hill WMA (Wildlife Management Area) and Chalet WMA and encourage the state to clear access areas for fire control and suppression.			
0.7.1.5	Action	Sponsor pollinator garden/soil amending classes and workshops. Encourage property owners to plant native species, eliminate invasive species, and reduce insecticide, herbicide, and fertilizer use to reduce infiltration into town water bodies. Involve children and local schools in these efforts as a recreational activity.			



Section 10: References

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