

# Town of Windham

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**Comprehensive Plan Review Team #7  
RSU Superintendents Office Building,  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room (School Road Entrance)  
7:00 PM, Thursday, May 28, 2015**

## AGENDA

1. Public Comment/Review Team Comments from the Public
2. Summary of last meeting: April 30
3. Review of draft Inventory Chapters
  - a. Revisions
    1. Parks, Recreation & Open Space
  - b. New
    1. Agriculture & Forestry
4. Upcoming meetings:
  - a. Review Team meeting –June 25 (4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month, and 1 meeting per month
  - b. Summerfest – June 27.

**Comprehensive Master Plan  
Review Team  
April 30, 2015 Meeting**

Team Members present were: Sparky Hurgin, Alan Phinney, Dave Tobin, Mike Duffy, David Lavigne, Marge Govoni, John Eddy, and Patrick Corey.

Planning Director, Ben Smith, and Planner, Amanda Lessard, were also present.

Public Comment/Review Team Comments from the Public:

- The Clark Farm house and 10 acres had been sold. What would happen to the remaining 300 acres?
- Open Space was to be added to the recreation chapter instead of Agriculture and Forestry. The Review Team discussed:
  - Open space should be connected to agriculture because large tracts of land were necessary and open space should not count as “recreation” land unless it was identified for active recreation, fields, trails, etc.
  - There was no open space for unstructured recreation – Where can someone fly a kite in this town?
  - The need for conserved open space was in the last Comp Plan, but there was no particular strategy or prioritization.
  - A public/private partnership for conservation of land?
  - Part of implementation is how to pay for it.
    - It should be a structured deal with many partners.
    - The Rec Department should pay for itself.
    - No public access to Sebago Lake. Is that a public priority?

Summary of March 26, 2015 meeting:

There were no revisions to the draft Population & Demographics and Historic & Archaeological Resources chapters at this time.

The Review Team discussed the draft Recreation chapter.

- The goal was very broad. There were other things the town wanted to address.
- Conditions and Trends – Inventory of:
  - Recreation programs
  - Parks
  - Public Spaces
  - Including municipal and other properties (land trust)
- Mountain Division Trail
  - Was the town keeping tabs on the project to add rail back to the corridor?
  - There might be a conflict between the Mountain Division Line coexisting with trails, in that the trail may be lost because the land could be taken by eminent domain for the rail.
  - Low speed freight may be able to coexist but a passenger train couldn't because of the speed of the train.
- The State also wanted to know about public use of private land.
- The Recreation Department Facility Summary 2012 could be included as an appendix.
- Are there regional priorities, a map of future areas to be preserved? Large contiguous parcels should also be mapped.
- The Review Team should make connections between the chapters and connect the strategies that are the most important to implement.
- Existing town properties should be looked at to maximize recreational useage.

Local Policies and Strategies:

- Work with other entities for new facilities like a community center or sports complex funding:
  - Community groups
  - Business community
  
- Coordinate efforts with:
  - RSU 14
  - Other municipal capital facilities plans

The next Review Team meeting was scheduled for May 28<sup>th</sup>.

## Recreation, Parks & Open Space

State Goal: To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine Citizens, including access to surface waters.

### Conditions and Trends

#### Recreation Programs

There are many recreational programs available for Windham residents of all ages. Some of these programs are run through the Town's Department of Parks and Recreation while others are organized and run by private associations or clubs.

The Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of programs, including babysitting classes, dances, 4x4 basketball, ski and snowshoe programs, and their largest program, Summer Day Camp. The Parks and Recreation department coordinates an annual fishing derby and hikes associated with National Trails Day.

The number of programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department has decreased over the last several years. For example, the Department used to offer many programs specifically for seniors, including day trips to regional destinations. These programs have not been offered since 2013.

Many of the recreational sports programs for youth and adults are offered through private programs organized and operated by Windham residents. Examples of youth sports organizations include soccer, basketball, and lacrosse. Windham Little League provides organized baseball and softball opportunities.

All of these programs are successful and growing, as Windham's youth population increases. ***Should get a comprehensive list of youth and adult sports programs, and participation numbers for each.***

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#### Recreation Areas & Facilities

Unless otherwise noted, these properties are all owned and maintained by the Town of Windham.

Please see **Map X-X** for the location of each of these areas and facilities.

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#### *Donnabeth Lippman Park*

This is a 123-acre park, which includes a 10-acre pond in North Windham commercial district. This was formerly a Portland Water District property, and was maintained in a natural state to protect the well heads used for a public water supply. The Town purchased the property in 2011<sup>12</sup> and was reimbursed for the cost by Martin Lippman, who requested the Park be named for his wife. The park contains several trails, including a loop around the pond. This park contains several types of natural habitats, which makes this an excellent spot for *bird watching* and enjoying nature. The access road was widened and a parking area was built in 2014, and that winter the Town plowed a small portion of the pond for informal skating and hockey use. A playground will be installed adjacent to the parking area in 2015. The park is open year round. No hunting is allowed.

*It should be noted that a Master Plan for the development and improvement of Donnabeth Lippman Park was adopted by the Town Council in 2012 (click here for the plan). There were several public*

meetings and an online survey designed to solicit opinions on community needs and suggested uses that should be incorporated into this facility. Reviewing the input from the public process that was part of the park Master Plan, residents seemed split on keeping the Park in more of a natural state with some additional amenities and creating a place for baseball and soccer playing fields. Based on the input received as part of this Comprehensive Plan, advocates for new field space may not have particularly cared where in Town the fields were, or what the environmental constraints of this property might be, as long as the Town was considering additional playing fields somewhere in Town. See “Facility and Service Needs” below, for more on the need for additional playing fields.

#### ***Dundee Park***

This 20-acre park was purchased by the Town in 1966. The park is located on the shore of Dundee Pond, and has long been a popular local swimming and picnic area. This park contains the only public beach in the Town of Windham. Dundee Park has also become a regional summer destination, drawing families and buses full of daycare and summer camp children from surrounding towns. The park is open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. No hunting is allowed.

#### ***Lowell Preserve***

This 308-acre property was gifted to the Town in 1999 with the stipulation that it be open to access and left in an undeveloped state. This large wooded property contains several miles of multi-use trails, which are cooperatively maintained with the Portland Chapter of the National Mountain Bike Association. This property abuts conservation land in Falmouth, and the trails are interconnected. This makes the associated trail network even larger and more valuable as a resource. The Preserve is open year round, and hunting is allowed in season.

#### ***Black Brook Preserve***

This 105-acre preserve is a Windham Land Trust property located in Windham Center. There are access points to the property from Windham Center Road, which includes a parking area that can accommodate half a dozen cars, and from Gray Road (Route 302), with parking available across Gray Road on School Road at the Town Office. The several trails and all signage are maintained by the Windham Land Trust.

#### ***Gambo Road Complex***

This 19-acre property is the Town’s playing field complex, located on the Presumpscot River and owned by the Portland Water District. The Town leases the property and has been developed by Windham Youth Soccer into a 6-8 field complex. The fields are accessed from Gambo Road. On Saturdays in the summer, this area is likely the busiest part of Town outside of North Windham with its summertime traffic. This facility is gated when not in use by Youth Soccer, though a hand carry boat launch has been approved at the far end of the existing parking lot, and the site is also a popular access point for the Mountain Division Trail.

#### ***Town Hall Playground & East Windham Playground***

Outside of school facilities, these are the only two playgrounds in Town. These playgrounds were both installed in 1999. They are both functional but aging and will be due for upgrades or replacement in the next several years.

### ***Windham Skate Park***

This facility was constructed in 1999 and located next to the Public Safety Building on Route 202 (Gray Road). This facility contains about ten ramps and a half pipe. Until the summer of 2013, the Town staffed the facility during operating hours. Since then the park has been an unsupervised facility. The skate park is open from April through October 31.

### ***Town Office Gymnasium/Haskell Hall***

This gym is a remnant of the days the Town Office building served as Windham's High School. It is used for senior exercise programs, for productions of the Windham Community Theater, and youth and adult basketball programs. It is also the venue for the annual Town Meeting every June. A stage with stage lighting and a small kitchen are part of this facility.

### ***Manchester School Basketball Courts & Ice Rink***

The two outdoor basketball courts located on the Manchester School property were repaved in 2013<sup>2</sup>. Access to these courts are unrestricted in the summer. In the winter, the courts are flooded and used as a skating rink. A fire pit is established in the winter, as well. The facility is lit for evening use in both summer and winter.

### ***Deer Hollow Sanctuary***

This 16-acre sanctuary is accessed from Mount Hunger Shore Road, and includes shoreline on Lower Mud Pond. It is owned by the Town. There is a trail from the small parking area, large enough for 3-4 cars, down to the Pond. At the end of the trail, there is an observation platform suitable for viewing birds and other wildlife at Little Mud Pond. The trail is very wet in the spring, and the observation platform is not accessible without knee-high boots or waders. There is one large property between Deer Hollow Sanctuary and Donnabeth Lippman Park.

### ***Otterbrook Sanctuary***

This Town-owned property is 41-acres and consists of the open land that was created through the approval of the Otterbrook cluster subdivision. This subdivision is just off River Road and the open space is accessible via Otterbrook Drive. There is a single trail on this relatively long and skinny parcel. Given the limited hiking options and the absence of public parking, this property likely serves primarily as a local neighborhood resource.

### ***Pringle Wildlife Preserve***

This 17-acre preserve is a Windham Land Trust Property located on the corner of Windham Center Road and River Road. There is a small parking area and an observation platform for viewing birds and wildlife at this corner of the property.

### ***Claman Preserve***

This 14-acre Town-owned Sanctuary is located on the eastern side of Route 302 in North Windham, just north of the Windham Assembly of God Church. There are no trails on the property and no parking available on the site. It is not uncommon to see cars parked on the shoulder of Route 302 over several weeks in the summer while people are picking blueberries at the while they are in season here.

## **Regional Facilities**

### ***Mountain Division Trail***

This is a regional recreational asset, maintained by several towns within the state-owned Mountain Division Railroad right-of-way. After many years without active rail operations, the rail was removed and the trail was opened in 2002. The trail was paved by the state in 2009, from the Route 202 (Main Street) intersection in South Windham, through Gorham and into Standish. The trail continues south into Westbrook, but is not paved south of Route 202.

In 2014, MaineDOT conducted a count of walkers and cyclists using the trail on a Tuesday in August. This count was for two locations in Gorham, the closest station to Windham being the one just south of Shaw Park, on the Presumpscot River and close to the trail access in Windham on Gambo Road. The count showed a total of 90 southbound users, and 127 northbound users. Cyclists accounted for about 20% of the users. Peak usage hours were between 9-11 am, and 5-7pm. Usage can be much higher on summer weekends. The trail is open year round.

### ***Snowmobile Trails***

The local snowmobile club, the Windham Drifters, coordinates and maintains the trail network of about 47 miles on 14 major trails in Town. Most trail miles utilize existing utility corridor rights-of way. That being noted, there are many sections of trail that are located on private property, which must be authorized by land owners annually, and every year there are changes to the trails based on changing property ownership or changes in permission for access.

### ***Boat Launches***

There is one boat launch in Windham that can accommodate a trailered boat. This launch is owned and maintained by the State, and is located on Little Sebago Lake. It is accessed from Mount Hunger Shore Road.

There are several hand-carry launches in Windham, where one can park a car and carry a canoe or kayak to the water. These are primarily located on the Presumpscot River, and are provided by the SAPPI or Florida Power and Light as part of federal dam relicensing requirements. One is located below the North Gorham Dam with access from Windham Center Road and is maintained by the Town and the other is located at the South Windham Fire Station on Main Street (Route 202). There are several other informal access points to the Presumpscot River and its impoundments which provide access for a canoe and kayak users.

It should be noted that there is a hand-carry launch in Falmouth for Highland Lake access, and at least two hand-carry launches in Gorham for access to the Presumpscot River.

### **List of Publicly Used Open Spaces**

There are many access points to the Presumpscot and Pleasant Rivers, primarily at or near road crossings, where access is provided over private property. Rather than provide a complete list of crossings and property owners, selected examples include:

- the “fishing park” access on the Presumpscot River at Route 35, owned by S.D. Warren, located just below the Eel Weir Dam (fly-fishing only),
- the Route 302 crossing of the Pleasant River, owned by Charlie and Carol Hall (fly-fishing only), and
- the Pope Road crossing of the Pleasant River, owned by Andrew and Deborah LaFleur (~~fly-fishing~~ artificial lures only).

Significant hunting access ~~points~~ on private property include land owned by Larry and Ann Clark on the Swett Road and Russell Hall on Walter Partridge Road. These spots are used as a pheasant release sites for fall hunting opportunities.

In addition to the above types of public uses on private property, there are a number of landowners enrolled in property tax programs that incentivize the preservation of open space and assist commercial forestry and agricultural operations by lowering local property taxes. These programs are generally referred to as “current use tax programs” which allow adjustments to local property tax levels based on the current use of a property as opposed to the market value of a fully developed property. Please note that public access is not guaranteed through these programs, but the programs do encourage undeveloped properties to remain undeveloped, which provides scenic and environmental value, as well as preservation of Windham’s rural characteristics.

These programs are authorized through state law, and include:

- Open Space. There is no minimum size for property to be enrolled in this program, but the property must provide public benefit, which is broadly defined in the law. The amount of property tax reduction is defined in the law, and increases based on criteria such as permanent protection as open space, “forever wild open space” limitations, and availability of public access. Through this program, land valuation can be reduced by 20% to as much as 95% of full valuation.
- Tree Growth. This program is meant for commercial woodlots, as the property must have a forest management plan in place that is updated every 10 years. A property must be a minimum of 10 acres to be eligible. The amount of property tax reduction is set by the State Assessor for each region of the state based on wood type on the lot, each local assessor applies this rate locally.
- Farmland. Land in this program must be at least 5 acres, and gross income from agricultural products must be at least \$2,000 annually. Eligible land can include pasture land, crop land, orchards, and more. The law provides guidelines for municipalities to use for reduced values per acre depending on the use, but it is up to each municipality to adopt their own values. Actual values can be higher or lower than state recommendations, but local assessors must justify the values that are chosen.

As of 2014, Windham had the following number of acres enrolled in each program:

- Open Space: 402 acres

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- [Tree Growth: 2,940](#)
- [Farmland: 2,100](#)
  - [Farm Forest Land: 1,047 acres](#)
  - [Pasture Land: 811 acres](#)
  - [Crop Land: 241](#)

[Please refer to Map X-X which shows the location of these properties in Windham.](#)

## Analysis

### Adequacy of Existing Facilities

One measure of the adequacy of existing facilities is based on how much the Town pays to run and maintain the Parks & Recreation Department each year. The Parks & Recreation Department received [Parks and Recreation Community Standards Report](#) from the National Recreation and Park Association in 2014. The report does not present standards or recommendations for the number of basketball courts or playgrounds based on population, for example, as presented in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. Rather this report provides very broad data categories that compare Windham with national medians and with median data for communities with a population density of less than 500 people per square mile.

The Community Standards Report looks at expenditures both per acre of park & recreation areas and per capita. By either measure, Windham is far below national median expenditures, and still low but better when compared other “low density” communities around the country. It also looks at revenue generated by parks and recreation programming and entrance fees. [In Windham, revenues come primarily from summer day camp fees and entrance fees to Dundee Park. Windham is again on the low side for revenue generation, which in Windham comes primarily from summer day camp fees and entrance fees to Dundee Park.](#) Looking at revenue as a percent of expenditures, Windham seems to compare favorably, but this is in large part due to the relatively low expenditure levels compared to the more nationally comparable revenues.

### Facility & Service Needs

#### Existing Facilities

The Parks and Recreation Department completed a [Facility Summary dated July 2012](#), which identifies necessary improvements to existing facilities to improve access and user experiences. The inventory includes all of the Town owned properties and facilities listed in the Conditions section above. The report can be accessed by clicking here ([fix link](#)). Recommendations relate to parking needs, trail improvements, and replacement/upgrade recommendations for equipment and amenities.

#### New Facilities

The public input received at the outset of this planning process gave shape to community needs that are not being met through current facilities.

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For several years, members of Windham’s youth sports communities have been expressing a desire for more outdoor field space. These community members are involved with Youth Soccer, Lacrosse and others, including Little League. As the community has grown over the years and the number of people participating in youth sports has grown, the number of playing fields has not. This has led to crowding and scheduling conflicts among these groups. There is a need for an outdoor athletic facility independent of the RSU schools, because the schools must prioritize scheduling for student athlete needs, must limit use during times of potential damage to the turf facilities and take into consideration liability and insurance issues. Examples of comparable facilities in the region include Twin Brooks in Cumberland and the Wainright Fields in South Portland.

Another major need seemed to rise to the top of several group’s priorities was for a Community/Recreation Center. There has been a long identified need for a senior center which would serve social and recreation needs. High School students noted that there was no place for them to go after school for social, recreation, and academic needs. Youth sports volunteers noted that there is a need for more municipal indoor recreation space beyond the single basketball court at the Town Office Gym. A well-conceived and well-located Community/Recreation center could meet the needs of all of these groups.

#### Status of Publicly Used/Private Owned Areas and Facilities

None of the access noted above for snowmobile trails, hunting or fishing access is guaranteed. The Clark Farm property is currently for sale and the continued use of this property for hunting is not certain.

#### Water Access Needs

The following Great Ponds (defined by the State as 10 or more acres of surface area) are entirely or partially within the Town and have no public access:

- Collins Pond – 42 acres
- Little Duck Pond – 43 acres
- Forest Lake – 198 acres
- Pettingill Pond – 42 acres
- Sebago Lake – approximately 30,000 acres, no public access in Windham
- Highland Lake – 640 acres, no public access in Windham

#### Policies & Suggested Strategies to Implement Policies

**State Policy 1: To maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities as necessary to meet current and future needs.**

Strategy 1.1. Create a list of recreation needs or dDevelop a rRecreation and Open Space plan to meet current and future needs. Assign a committee or community official to explore ways of addressing the identified needs and/or implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.

Note: The 2012 Facility Summary identifies needs and required maintenance for existing facilities. This should be used as a starting point for a Recreation and Open Space plan

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which would take a more comprehensive look at new recreation facilities and how to identify and prioritize land for to be preserved for environmental, scenic, cultural/historic, or agricultural and forestry purposes.

**Strategy 1.2.** Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.

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Note: Coordination is ongoing for trails like the snowmobile network. However, the Town should examine how it might be possible to connect parks, recreation facilities, and conserved land with bike lanes or off-road trails as appropriate.

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**Strategy 1.3.** Prioritize the build-out of Donnabeth Lippman Park per the Master Plan.

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#### State Policy 2: To preserve Open Space for Recreational use as appropriate.

**Strategy 2.1.** Identifying land for preservation should be included as part of the recreation and open space plan suggested in Strategy 1.1. See Strategy 1.1 above.

~~Strategy 2.~~ See Strategy 1.2 above.

~~Strategy 3.2.~~ Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.

**Strategy 4.2.3.** Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.

#### State Policy 3: To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing and swimming and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.

**Strategy 3.1.** Use the list of water bodies identified in the "Water Access Needs" section of this chapter as a starting point to prioritize proactive Town efforts related to additional public access See Strategy 1.1 above.

**Strategy 3.2.** Work with land trusts, lake associations, and landowners to establish new access points to Windham's lakes and ponds. See Strategy 2.3.2. above.

#### Local Policy 1: Increase access to Great Ponds in Windham

~~Strategy 1.~~

~~Strategy 2.~~

~~Strategy 3.~~

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**Local Policy ~~42~~ – Build new facilities to serve an expanding demand and a growing population. ~~Build a Community/Recreation Center~~**

**Strategy 4.1.** Build a Community/Recreation Center. Note that his effort required to determine the size, services, and facilities of such a Center may or may not be part of a Recreation and Open Space Plan.

**Strategy 4.2.** Identify and obtain land in order to build an Outdoor Field complex as part of a Recreation and Open Space Plan.

**Strategy 4.3.** Build more playgrounds within walking distance of existing neighborhoods. This can be implemented through the subdivision process, or through the Recreation Capital Plan for properties identified in a Recreation and Open Space Plan.

**Local Policy 35 – Preserve important open space, forests, and agricultural land important to the residents of Windham. ~~Prioritize the build-out of Donnabeth Lippman Park per the Master Plan~~**

**Strategy 5.1.** Develop a Recreation and Open Space Plan to further detail and prioritize recreation needs and to create a framework for evaluating land to be preserved for environmental, scenic, cultural/historic, or agricultural and forestry purposes..

**Strategy 5.2.** Establish a program for the preservation of land important to the people of Windham, similar to the state’s “Land for Maine’s Future” program, in order to contribute to the conservation of high priority conservation lands, establish points for public access to water and preserve agricultural land. This program should receive funds from the Town every budget cycle.

**Strategy 5.3.** Maximize property tax reduction programs to the full extent allowed by state law to encourage and incentivize the private provision of open space, forested lands, and agricultural operations.

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## **Agriculture & Forest Resources**

State Goal: To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

### **Conditions & Trends**

One of the most strongly held values held by Windham residents based on how often comments were made in the Community Survey and the Visioning Forums was that open fields, forested land and working farms are important to Windham residents. These places are important for their scenic, recreational and quality of life values, but also for the connections they provide to Windham's rural roots and heritage. Protecting the most important of these places should be high on the list of priorities that come out of this planning effort.

### **Employment in Agriculture and Forestry Sectors**

It is difficult to get an exact number of people employed in the Agriculture and Forestry sectors for several reasons, including the fact that there are many different scales of agricultural or forestry operations. According to the 2011 numbers from the Maine Labor Statistics there are 14 residents employed in the agricultural and forestry sector.

### **State of Maine "Current Use" Property Tax Laws**

State law allows for property tax breaks based on the current use of a property rather than looking at the potential fully maximized valuation of a property based on its potential for development. These programs exist to assist and incentivize property owners to keep their land open and productive.

### **Farms & Farmland**

There are 2,100 acres enrolled in the Farmland Tax program as of the 2014 tax report for Windham. Of this number, there are 811 acres of pasture and 241 acres of cropland. The remaining 1,014 acres are farm Woodland.

### **Tree Growth**

The Tree Growth Tax program provides tax breaks for working woodlots. These properties are managed for timber production and as such are required to have a forestry management plan. As of 2014, there were a total of 2,940 acres enrolled in this program.

### **Open Space**

Open Space tax programs are available for anyone who is not involved in farming or interested in managing an active woodlot. Property tax breaks could be reduced as much as 95% of the standard tax rate, depending on the level of protection and the amount of development on the property. There are 402 acres of land enrolled in the open space tax program in Windham.

## **Community Activities**

### ***Farm Stands***

There are two well-known farm stands in the community. The first is the Hawkes Farm Stand on Route 302 near Nash Road and the second is Windy Hill Farm Stand on River Road.

The Hawkes Farm Stand has been in operation since 1932 and has provided a location for residents and visitors to purchase fresh local produce, especially sweet corn, since then. The Lakes Region Weekly ran a feature on the farm stand in 2011 – [click here](#) for the story.

Windy Hill Farm Stand is owned and operated by the Winships, a family of farmers on the River Road going back generations. This farm stand sells a variety of produce in season, but also features beef right from the farm.

### ***Farmers Market***

The Town of Windham hosted the Lakes Region Farmers Market from 20XX – 20XX. There has been no farmers market in Town since that time. Staff at Saint Joseph's College in Standish began looking at what it would take to reestablish a market in Windham that would not only provide access to local, fresh and healthy foods, but would serve as another venue for building a stronger sense of community.

### ***Community Garden***

The Windham Community Garden is located on Gray Road, on the Town owned property that is also host to the Public Safety Building and the Skate Park. The garden was established in 2010. A small greenhouse was built in 2014, and a second garden shed was added when the garden expanded in 2015. For a small annual fee, members of the garden rent 10-foot by 20-foot plots for their own gardens, but also participate in growing food in the community plots. Food from the community plots and “extra” food from individual plots are donated to the Windham Food Pantry.

### ***Community Supported Agriculture***

There are thirty (30) Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations in Cumberland County, but none of these are located in the Town of Windham. CSAs are operations where members buy a share of the farm's production over the course of a year. This model for small local agriculture works because shares are purchased in the winter and early spring when the farmers need funding for the upcoming growing season and shareholders are pre-paying for an assortment of produce that is received as it is ready throughout the summer and fall. CSAs may include “pick your own” fruit or vegetable options. In addition to having a guaranteed source of income on the front end of each growing season, the farmer benefits from sharing the risks of farming with the shareholders. Shareholders understand that there will be good years when they receive a lot of many types of vegetables, along with years where some of the crops don't do as well.

The Maine Association of Organic Farmers (MOFGA) maintains a website listing CSAs by county. To view this website, [click here](#). In addition to the farms on that list, St. Joseph's College runs a CSA out of the College farm on Whites Bridge Road in Standish.

### ***Community Forestry – Lowell Preserve***

The Town of Windham has been working with a local forester on forestry operations for the Lowell Preserve property on the Falmouth Road in East Windham. This 308-acre property is almost completely forested, and a forestry plan dated July 1, 2011, was adopted by the Town Council that year. The Plan suggested cutting annually for 4-5 years, in order to meet several goals, including:

- Maintaining the land as a recreational trail property
  - preservation of aesthetics and natural qualities of the property
- Maintaining deer habitat including
  - patches of deer forage and fruit and nut trees
  - dense softwood cover for winter habitat
- Grow and harvest high quality large diameter trees

Cutting operations were carried out in accordance with that plan in the winter of 2013. It should be noted that this is the first known commercial-scale cut of a municipal property. As such it was somewhat controversial with neighbors and users of the Preserve property. A follow-up cutting operation in a second part of the Preserve was not carried out in the winter of 2014 as recommended by the Plan.

### ***Analysis***

Though small in number, the impact of Windham's farms on the quality of life in Windham is large. Working farms are not only a connection to Windham's rural past, but are high on the list of what makes Windham an attractive place to live. Residents identified "rural character and open space" among the top advantages to living in Windham, as part of the community survey conducted in October and November 2014. This advantage was just behind "favorable quality of life." There is no doubt that working farms and the associated open farmland contribute significantly to Windham's rural character and quality of life, which are valuable to current and future residents and visitors.

As part of the visioning and public input process for this comprehensive plan update, the Review Team reached out to members of the agricultural community. This group of community members identified several areas where the Town could assist farmers in their efforts to earn a living and keep farmland productive. See the Policies and Strategies section below.

### ***Current Steps to protect Farming and Forestry in Windham***

#### ***Regulatory***

Through the Town's Subdivision Review ordinance, landowners may opt to develop a cluster subdivision in any area in Town zoned for residential use. In exchange for lower infrastructure costs and potential density bonuses, developers agree to set aside 50% of the developable land on the property as common open space. In higher density zoning districts, this may provide space for smaller open spaces that might provide for local playgrounds, open spaces, or community gardening. In the more rural parts of Town, land set aside as part of cluster developments can serve as a recreational asset for the community, preserve wildlife habitat, and preserve rural characteristics of that portion of town.

Note that the provision of open space through the cluster subdivision standards is predicated on development that goes through the subdivision process, and it is up to the discretion of the property owner or developer to follow the regular subdivision standards or the clusters subdivision standards. Additionally, there is no guarantee as to the size or suitability of the land for agricultural or forestry purposes.

### *Non-regulatory*

There are no non-regulatory approaches to protecting productive agricultural or forestry lands. This is similar to the issue identified with the lack of proactive identification and protection of lands that are suitable for future parks, recreation areas, or playing field facilities.

### **Community Support for Local Agriculture and Forestry**

As noted above in this chapter and in several other places in this Plan, working farms and forested lands, as well as open spaces, are one of the hallmarks of how Windham residents see their Town, and are highly valued throughout all sectors of the community. These components of the landscape have been identified as deserving of protection since Windham's 1985 Comprehensive Plan thirty years ago. The 1985 plan did also recognize the counterpoint that these farms and forests and open spaces are almost entirely private properties, and owned by people who have their own needs, ideas and visions for the future of their lands. The need for balancing private ownership rights with public values is as relevant now as it was then. What has changed, perhaps, is the increasing public value on these lands that have remained undeveloped over the years.

As development pressure continues to build on the owners of large undeveloped tracts of land in the community and it becomes more difficult to pass farms down from generation to generation, Windham will continue to see housing appear where there were once open pasture lands or working forest lands. As noted in the Recreation, Parks & Open Space Chapter, the Town should take a more proactive approach to identifying and permanently protecting the most important farms and woodlands. The Town has long relied on market forces or generous gifts on the behalf of landowners to preserve scenic vistas and open space for the community. The reality is that unless measures are put in place for the permanent protection of individual properties, that land is just waiting to be developed.

### **The Clark Farm Story**

The Clark Farm, located on Swett Road, is a prime example of an iconic property that continues to face development pressures. Larry and Ann Clark owned over 550 acres of land that had been in the family for generations. Over the course of several years starting in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Clarks began selling house lots around the edges of their properties with frontage on existing roads. In 2008, a framework for a deal that would conserve the entire property as open space and working farmland was assembled in partnership with Maine Farmland Trust, the Trust for Public Land, the Land for Maine's Future program and the Windham Land Trust. This coalition of groups, along with the Clarks approached the Town with a request for \$1 million dollars in matching funds that went to referendum. The request was narrowly defeated by the voters that November. A conservation project went forward for a large portion of the property, but the Clark home and about 250 acres on Swett Road were not part of that deal. The Clark home and 10 acres are under contract as of the drafting of this chapter, with

an additional 170 acres going on the market soon. Residential development of this property is likely to result in the loss of a scenic farmstead in the heart of rural Windham that would have ranked high on almost any measure of prioritization of farm and forest land.

## **Goals and Suggested Strategies to Implement Goals**

### **Policy: To safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.**

*Strategy 1.* Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices as required by 12 M.R.S.A. §8869.

*Strategy 2.* Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.

*Strategy 3.* Amend land use ordinances to require commercial or subdivision developments in critical rural areas, if applicable, maintain areas with prime farmland soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable.

*Strategy 4.* Limit non-residential development in critical rural areas (if the town designates critical rural areas) to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations.

*Strategy 5.* Create an Open Space Plan for the Town that identifies the most important working farms forest lands in Windham. Properties identified should be targeted for preservation of productive capacity.

### **Policy: To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.**

*Strategy 5.* Permit land use activities that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as roadside stands, greenhouses, firewood operations, sawmills, log buying yards, and pick-your-own operations.

*Strategy 6.* Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.

### **Policy: To establish programs that incentivize keeping farms and forest lands in production.**

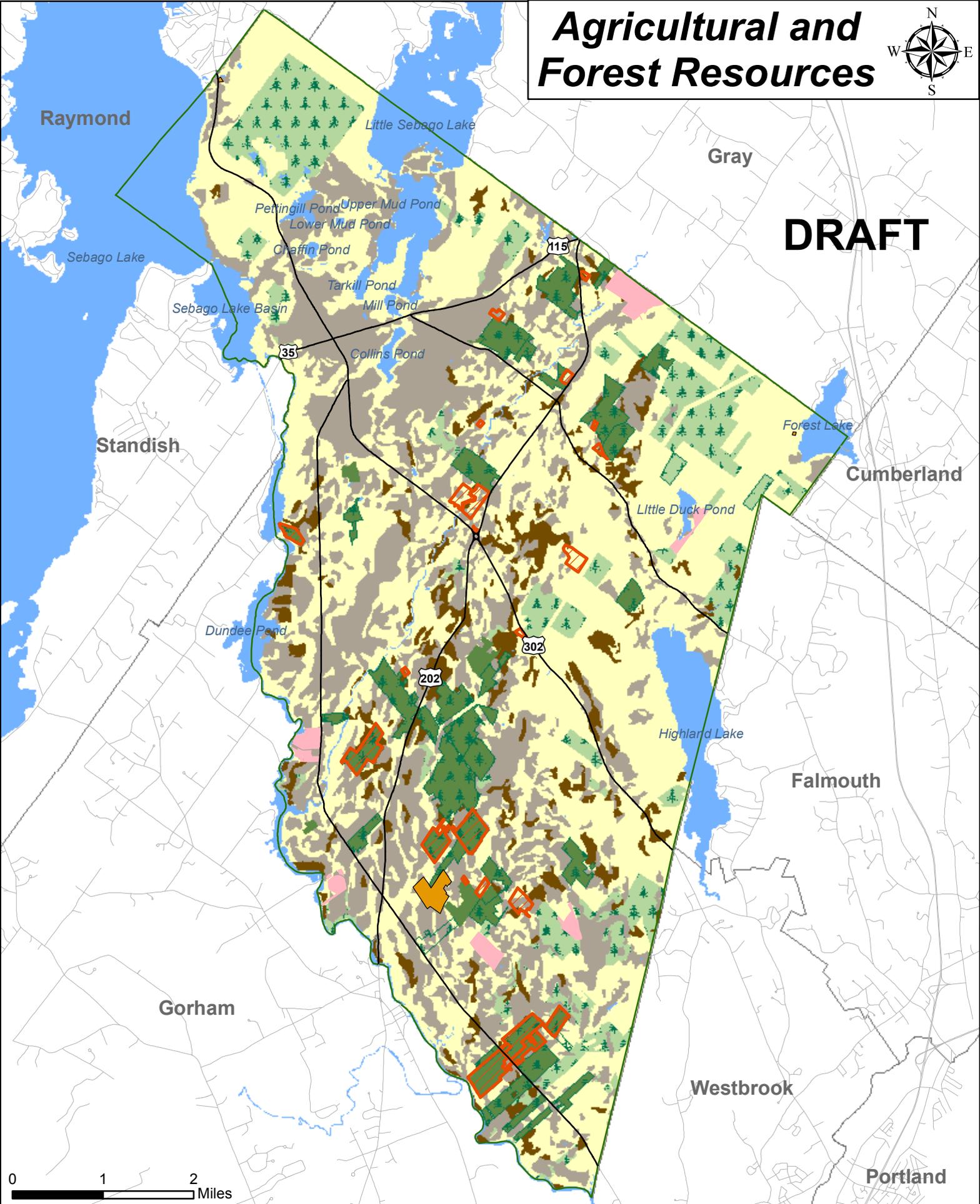
*Strategy 7.* Create a program that is funded annually to create and build-up a source of funding for the purchase of development rights or of land as opportunities present themselves to the community. This fund could be used as matching funds when working grant money or funding sources from other organizations.

*Strategy 8.*

# Agricultural and Forest Resources



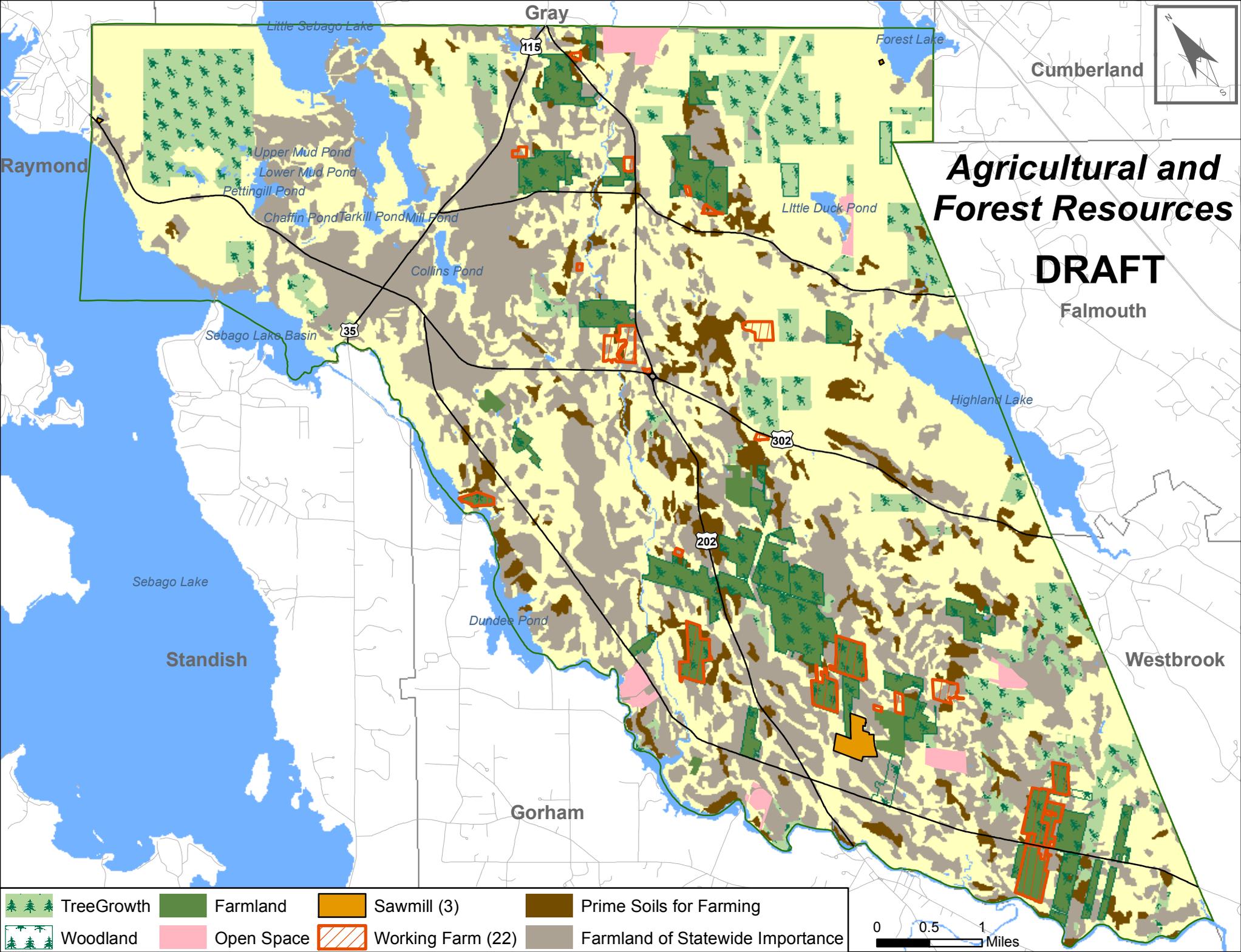
**DRAFT**



0 1 2 Miles

- |            |            |                  |                                  |
|------------|------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| TreeGrowth | Farmland   | Sawmill (3)      | Prime Soils for Farming          |
| Woodland   | Open Space | WorkingFarm (22) | Farmland of Statewide Importance |

Sources: Maine Office of GIS  
 Windham Assessor's Database  
 Prepared by: Windham GIS  
 Department  
 May 22, 2015



# Agricultural and Forest Resources

## DRAFT

Falmouth

Raymond

Standish

Gorham

Westbrook

Cumberland

Gray

Little Sebago Lake  
Upper Mud Pond  
Lower Mud Pond  
Pettingill Pond  
Chaffin Pond  
Tarkill Pond  
Mill Pond

Collins Pond

Sebago Lake Basin

Little Duck Pond

Highland Lake

Dundee Pond

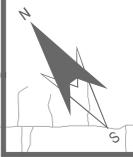
Sebago Lake

115

35

202

302



- Tree Growth
- Farmland
- Sawmill (3)
- Prime Soils for Farming
- Woodland
- Open Space
- Working Farm (22)
- Farmland of Statewide Importance

0 0.5 1 Miles