PIERMONT MASTER PLAN

I. Introduction to the 2013 Master Plan of Piermont: Vision for the Future

Planning Boards in New Hampshire have, as their most important responsibility, the creation and periodic revision of a Master Plan. The central goal of the Master Plan is to serve as a guide to the development of the Community, especially with respect to Land Use. The underlying Statute (Chapter 674) instructs Planning Boards to seek guidance from the citizens of the town so as to establish principles and priorities that can guide such development. Thus, it is natural that the first step in producing a new Master Plan is to survey town citizens.

The first Piermont Master Plan was adopted in 1968 and the initial revision of that Plan was begun in 1988 and completed in 1991. The current Piermont Planning Board has been working on this, the latest revision of the Master Plan, for some years. We began in 2004 surveying the opinions of town residents regarding growth and what changes, if any, they would like to see in town. Interestingly, consensus views of residents were quite similar in 1988 and 2004. For example, both in 1988 and 2004, residents were well satisfied with town services. In 1988, 75% of residents thought that our natural resources, e.g., woodlands, water supplies, agricultural land, open fields and meadows and the Connecticut River shoreline, were very important and in 2004, 90% of respondents were in favor of preservation and conservation of these resources. At both times, when asked what they like about the town, people cited farms and the natural beauty of the environment. Regarding growth, 70% of the 1988 sample preferred "no growth" or "slight" growth, and by 2004 that percentage grew to almost 90%. In the 2004 survey, some residents expressed a hope that retail businesses might come to town, but this was a minority view.

The message we take away from these surveys is that Piermonters like the town pretty much as it is, though most recognize the likelihood that we will continue to grow and are accepting of this as long as growth is measured. Census data show that growth is occurring in Piermont but not at a rate that is alarming. Census figures in 1970 show 462 residents, rising to 507 in 1980, 624 in 1990, and 709 in 2000, and then falling slightly to an estimated count of 688 in 2008. As a frame of reference, the percentage increase over that 38-year period is 45% in Piermont, while the increase in Grafton County as a whole was from 54,914 in 1970 to an estimate of 86,291 in 2009 for an increase of 57%.

The job of the Planning Board is to try to translate the desires of town residents into policies that help to maintain what town residents want while preserving the rights and opportunities of landowners who wish to develop their land and prospective residents of Piermont who see a place they would like to live. In the next Chapter we will briefly consider the history of Land use in Piermont and attempt to evaluate how natural resources and other factors account for both the past and the present Land Use situation. Finally we will discuss whether changes are necessary in land use regulation in order to maintain the town the way current residents like it as well as remaining an attractive place for new residents.

II. LAND USE

A. Introduction

The principal determinants of land use in Piermont are physical features such as topography, soil types, roads and water resources. As an example, dairy farming is located almost exclusively along the river because the soils are best for the necessary support crops. Planning and regulation have also played a part in existing land use. For example, the zoning ordinance that was enacted in Piermont in 1971 prohibits mobile homes from certain areas of town and instituted a one-acre minimum lot size throughout town. Another factor influencing community attitude toward land use is the character of the town and its people as revealed by historical patterns of land use. We begin with a brief summary of how land use has evolved in Piermont over time.

B. Brief History of Land Use in Piermont

The table below shows how widely the population of Piermont has varied in the nearly 220 years for which we have census data. As can be seen, from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the Piermont population grew dramatically as sheep farming prospered.

Year	Population
1790	426
1830	1042
1860	989
1890	707
1900	637
1920	577
1930	475
1940	535
1950	511
1960	477
1970	462
1980	507
1990	624
2000	709
2010	790

During those times, many of the hillsides that are now forested were pasture and homes were scattered throughout town. Old cellar holes found today along abandoned roads such as the

North/South Road and elsewhere mark these old home sites. Corn was the principal crop of the valley farms and cattle were kept only in limited quantities. In those times of limited transportation there were small village centers scattered around town where schools, churches, cemeteries and, in some cases, taverns were located.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the population of Piermont declined to roughly 700 people as the promise of new more fertile lands in the West and regular paychecks from mills to the South lured many away from the harsher uncertainties of life in the North. The days of sheep were finished. In 1887 a Piermont creamery was incorporated and from that time to the present farmers have concentrated on dairy as the principal source of revenue.

During the twentieth century the population first declined from a high of 637 in 1900 to a low of 462 in 1970. During this period forests replaced most of the hillside pastures. The number of small family farms began to dwindle with the economic pressures of the Great Depression during the 1930's and the advent of mechanized farming. In the era of World War II, demands on the economy for greater production led to entirely mechanized farming practices and a wide variety of other jobs became available in and around Piermont. A recreation industry developed with the Lake Tarleton Club (1934-1969) and summer camps for children being established on Lakes Tarleton and Armington. Toward the end of the century, Piermont began to grow again along with the growth of the surrounding Upper Valley.

An important development during the latter part of the 20th century was an increasing trend toward second, or "vacation" homes. Especially attractive were Piermont's two largest lakes: Tarleton, which was virtually undeveloped, and Armington, where roughly half of the shoreline was still available. Subsequent to the demise of the Tarleton Club, its lands were acquired by Boise-Cascade but their effort to recreate a resort and add a large housing development never came to fruition. In the 1980's, another developer did manage to acquire these and other undeveloped properties in the Lake District of Piermont and had plans for a very sizeable subdivision including a large number of homes and a Resort with a golf club. The second-home market slowed in the late 1980's, giving time to conservation forces led by the Trust for Public Lands and the Upper Valley Land Trust to find a way to conserve most of these lands for all. The remaining undeveloped lands were purchased by the White Mountain National Forest. A key parcel, later to become Tarleton State Park, was acquired by the State of New Hampshire, and the protection of forest lands on the eastern slope of Piermont Mountain adjacent to Lake Armington was achieved through the New Hampshire Forest Legacy Program. These lands, though privately held, are overseen by the State thereby ensuring best management practices in connection with any logging operations. These watershed events, along with other successful land conservation efforts during the same time frame, especially of farms along the Connecticut River, are likely to be viewed as the single most important determinant of the character of Piermont looking forward.

C. Current Land Use

The use of land in Piermont today is differentiated according to the soils and topography of the different areas of town as well as previously developed infrastructure (principally roads). The success of the effort to conserve the remaining undeveloped land in and around Piermont's lakes, Armington, Tarleton, Katherine, and Constance, has taken further residential development mostly off the table in that area of town.

The Town of Piermont has a wide variety of soils, elevations, and wetland characteristics that combine to make development more or less feasible. For purposes of creating an overview, it is possible to identify specific regions in town whose land uses are:

1. Flood Prone Areas

Flood prone areas are those areas adjacent to rivers, streams, ponds, lakes or wetlands that are likely to be flooded due to snow melt, heavy rainfall or prolonged periods of precipitation. The federally defined flood hazard areas along the Connecticut River are tightly regulated. (See Article 12 of the Piermont Subdivision Regulations and also Addendum B in the Zoning Ordinance for details).

2. Flood Plains

Flood plains along the river have broad areas of medium textures, very fine sand which is only moderately well-drained. The poorly and very poorly drained areas are usually confined to old channel depressions and seep areas along the base of the terraces and these areas are subject to flooding. The frequency of flooding depends on elevation. Development in these areas is not recommended.

3. Terrace Areas

The terraced areas along the River, in addition to containing prime farm land also contain most of Piermont's commercial development, all its public buildings, and many homes. A bank is located at the intersection of Route 25 and River Road. Further down River Road are several farms. Proceeding east from the junction of River Road and Route 25 there are more farms, and several homes before entering the Village. In the Village, there is a General Store with gas service, Church, Fire Station, School, an Inn, Cedar Grove and South Lawn Cemeteries, the Post Office, a Hair Salon, the combined Library/Town Office Building, the Old Church Building used for general community purposes, and also contains the Police Department, the Recycling/Transfer Station, Town Highway Garage, the John E. Metcalf Athletic Field, and the Bedford Road Town Forest. Piermont today has only modest commercial development and no major employer. Only a small number of residents are employed full or part time in the Town. Though some residents noted in their surveys a desire for more small business in town, the majority say they like things the way they are. Currently, the Town Zoning Ordinance gives preference to land being used for residential purposes throughout town in the sense that other uses require a Special Exception be granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. However, businesses are not ruled out; they simply must make their case to the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Along the Connecticut River on the flood plain and the terraced areas are located some of the outstanding farms in New Hampshire. Piermont is fortunate to have agricultural soils that are of national or statewide importance. Unfortunately, from 1980 to 1990, a number of excellent farms sold their herds and are no longer in the dairy business. This means that about 1,000 acres of farmland in Piermont are no longer involved in dairy farming and could become available for development. On the other hand, a variety of forces may prevent the continued loss of farmland to development, at least in the near term. Three such forces are: (1) The bursting of a US housing bubble beginning in 2007 that led to the economic crisis of 2008 that is still continuing in 2013 with no immediate prospects for returning to really strong housing development. This may give some time to two other developments which may make small farms more viable namely (2) increased recognition of the importance of our farming tradition in New Hampshire and specifically in Piermont with a resulting increase in the availability of funds to buy so-called "development rights" on farms that provide farmers with the time and resources to develop more viable economic plans, and (3) the "local foods" movement which provides further economic support to farmers who are able to provide their products to growing local market outlets eager for alternatives to large corporate farms that may spoil the land through use of intensive farming practices with high levels of pesticide. These recent developments give hope that the rural character of Piermont, so valued by many residents, may be sustained and valuable agricultural land may be preserved for its highest and best use.

4. Rolling Hills

The rolling hills in the central part of Town and the lower slopes of Piermont, Indian Pond and Peaked Mountains are mostly forest with few farms and some open fields. Homes in this area are mostly permanent single family with a few mobile homes scattered about. Some of the otherwise buildable land in these areas presents sufficiently steep terrain that would prevent large subdivisions, given current Planning Board policy to discourage subdivisions in areas with greater than 15% slopes. According to "Innovative Land Use and Planning Techniques: "A Handbook for Sustainable Development" (2008), many New Hampshire communities use the 15% figure as defining steep slopes which are unsuitable for development.

5. The Lower Slopes

The lower slopes of the mountains to the east merge with the hill areas, and like those areas are subject to appropriate development if careful consideration is given to planning, soil conditions, and preservation of natural resources including, but not limited to wildlife habitat and water resources.

6. The Mountainous Areas

The mountainous areas of Piermont, Indian Pond, and Peaked Mountain are predominantly steep to very steep, very rocky, and have broad areas of shallow soils with extensive rock outcrop. These steep slopes and rocky characteristics add to the scenic value, provide unique habitat and are useful for recreation and low production forests, but are not desirable for development.

The mountainous areas of Piermont are mainly forests that, along with the lakes, provide the major wildlife habitat in Town. These lands tend to be larger tracts with some hunting camps and a few homes. Some logging takes place while many private trails permit access to the mountain tops and are frequently used by Piermont residents and their visitors.

7. The Mountain Lakes

Four maintain lakes and their surrounding areas are located in the northeastern sector of Piermont. These lakes are a major natural resources, and the larger three are easily accessible making the land around them highly desirable for development until the early 1990's when their lands were conserved. The lakes are: 1) Lake Tarleton, 315.4 acres, 3.7 miles of shoreline, 1305 feet of elevation. 160 acres and 2.3 miles of shoreline are in Piermont, the remainder lying in the Town of Warren. Land around the lake is now mostly either State or National Forest with very little development except a summer boy's camp and fewer than ten residential properties. 2) Lake Armington, 142.2 acres, 2.8 miles of shoreline, roughly a quarter of which now belongs to the White Mountain National Forest, 1334 feet elevation. 3) Lake Katherine, 37.1 acres, 1.1 miles of shoreline, 1339 feet elevation. This lake is now within the National Forest and is totally undeveloped. 4) Lake Constance, 6 acres and more remote than the others, and also within the National Forest.

The smaller mountain lakes, Katherine and Constance, are totally undeveloped. Katherine's roadside location invites fishing and non-power boating, whereas Constance is a favorite of day hikers. Tarleton is home to a boys' summer camp and has a scattering of summer homes and one permanent residence. It offers easy access for swimming, boating and fishing as provided by Lake Tarleton State park and a New Hampshire Fish & Game boat launch, and it is a major center for ice fishing during the winter months. Lake Armington also has a town-owned boat launch and a coed summer camp. There are many summer "camps", mostly owned by non-residents, and some year-round homes. The undeveloped shoreline on Armington in its northwest quadrant is owned by White Mountain National Forest.

D. Taking Stock.

- **How Well Does Current Land Use Conform to Community Wishes ?**

Current community wishes regarding land use can be assessed in two ways. First, our existing Master Plan, created in 1991, recommends a series of land use outcomes that reflected Piermont residents' desires according to a community survey. To what extent has subsequent land use followed these recommendations? And second, how well does current land use conform to our 2004 survey of what residents want in terms of land development?

- **Does Current Land Use Conform with Recommendations in our 1991 Master Plan?**

The 1991 Piermont Master Plan, after due consideration of the then existing land use and results of a community survey, made the following recommendations for Land Use Policy.

1. TO PROMOTE THE TRADITIONAL PATTERN OF RURAL LAND USE

The following policies were recommended:

(a) Maintain undeveloped space (woodland, agricultural land, open fields and meadows) to the maximum extent possible when development is proposed.

(b) Intensive land use which creates a demand for community services and or causes negative environmental impacts is not consistent with the existing pattern of land use and is not recommended.

(c) No heavy industry is recommended.

(d) No shopping centers are recommended.,

(e) Residential or commercial strip development along highways is not recommended.

(f) Preserve valuable agricultural soils.

(g) Maintain the character of Piermont as a rural community with a limited commercial base except for farms.

(h) Commercial and or intensive residential development should only occur near existing similarly intense development.

(i) Development should be permitted only if consistent with the capability of the land and compatible with existing neighborhood character; and after a careful review of impact on community services and the environment.

(j) A mix of lot sizes, house types and land uses is desirable and should be consistent with the existent pattern of uses.

(k) The density of development or number of buildings permitted per acre should be dependent upon the ability of the land to support the use, the availability of community services, and upon traditional existing community character. These factors will vary for different areas of the Town. The areas that encompass similar density factors should be similarly identified.

2. TO PROTECT PIERMONT'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROMOTE THE EXISTING PATTERN OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST LAND USE

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The following policies were recommended:

(a) Maintain undeveloped space (woodlands, agricultural land, open fields, meadows) for conservation, preservation, and aesthetic purposes to the maximum extent possible when development is proposed.

(b) Discourage development on steep slopes, on or within the specified setbacks of wetlands or surface waters, on the floodplain.

(c) Implement land use regulations with density consistent with existing patterns in the various areas of town.

(d) Encourage the establishment of undeveloped open space through regulations that permit more dense development on a portion of the parcel in order to keep the remainder open.

3. TO GUIDE GROWTH TO THE PREFERRED LOCATIONS AT TIMES APPROPRIATE FOR THE TOWN:

The following policies were recommended:

(a) Scattered or premature growth that necessitates excessive expenditures of public funds for community facilities or services shall not be permitted unless properly mitigated.

(b) Phased development should be encouraged as one means of mitigating impacts.

(c) Streets should be constructed to Town standards; however, standards should be reviewed and modified to be consistent with the rural character of the Town. The revised standards should be different for traffic loads and take into consideration the density and character of the area.

4. TO PRESERVE THE AESTHETIC QUALITIES OF PIERMONT:

The following policies were recommended:

(a) Discourage development that would adversely impact important scenic resources.
(b) Create natural visual buffers between roadways and new development.
(c) Regulate signs.
(d) Preserve forested ridge lines.
(e) Scenic areas should be identified and preserved throughout Town.

5. TO SET ASIDE LAND FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY NEEDS:

The following policies were recommended:

(a) When and as opportunities arise, the town should acquire:
1) A boat ramp on the Connecticut River.
2) Beach front on one or more lakes in the Tarleton area.
3) Land for improved Town facilities.
4) Land for parks and recreation.

In general, we believe that most of the outcomes described as desirable in the 1991 Piermont Master Plan have been achieved or maintained but without many of the regulatory steps the authors of that Plan thought necessary. Little large-scale development has occurred since 1991 and overall population growth during that period of roughly 10% is compatible with slow or no growth preferences expressed both in 1991 and today. None of the undesirable developments described in #I above have come to pass. We think it is safe to say that Piermont still offers its residents a traditional pattern of rural land use.

Protecting Piermont's Natural Resources (for an excellent review of these resources see the Natural Resource Inventory published in 2008 by the Piermont Conservation

Commission, an abridged version of which is included in this Plan as Chapter 8), including its Aesthetic Qualities, as well as its Agricultural and Forestlands seems well in hand (2 and 4 above). Thanks to the Piermont Conservation Commission and the major acquisition by the White Mountain National Forest in the Lakes district of Piermont, as well as a series of conservation easements purchased with help from the local Land Trusts and the State of New Hampshire protecting agricultural lands near the Connecticut River and other forested and agricultural lands scattered elsewhere in Piermont, we have reached a point where fully 25% of Piermont's lands are protected. This is a truly outstanding accomplishment, and the Selectmen and town residents deserve much credit for supporting these initiatives.

As far as guiding growth through policy, no additional regulation has yet been necessary. The existing mandate to the Planning Board is to prevent growth that is "scattered and premature" and we believe that has been accomplished. Phasing in development has been necessary and road infrastructure has kept pace with, rather than leading and creating, development pressures. We are not complacent and realize the need to maintain vigilance, but most of the tools necessary to cope with development pressures that might endanger the goals of the 1991 Master Plan seem in place. The current Planning Board has considered innovative zoning practices that provide for various forms of "clustering" development so as to maintain open space when development does occur but we are reluctant, given the slow and measured pace of development, to meddle with success by removing freedoms of individuals and developers. We do believe, however, that clustering homes on a major subdivision may provide an aesthetically superior and more economically viable project and so we are planning to informally encourage developers of large tracts to consider this alternative in the future but not requiring it.

The current attitude we have adopted is partly based on consideration of the availability of developable lands remaining in Piermont. Although existent development plus conserved lands, water bodies, and wetlands combine to occupy less than 50% of land in Piermont, examination of the prevalence of steep slopes (15% or greater) as seen in Map 2 of the Piermont Natural Resource Inventory, suggest that land remaining for development in Piermont is sharply reduced by virtue of our topography. The Planning Board has firmly held to the view that development of lands with steep (15% or more) slopes should be discouraged and although compromises can sometimes be worked out, this constitutes a natural bar to widespread new developments on existing roads.

As for setting aside land for future community needs (#5 above), some of the concerns expressed in 1991 have been addressed as the new Tarleton State Park has a beach available for use and, along with the new White Mountain Forest lands, extensive new park and recreation land has become available. A readily accessible boat launch on the Connecticut River is still not a reality but movement toward this end is being made. Still awaiting action is the task of improving Town facilities. We urge forward-looking action toward this end by the Selectboard.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

A. Goals

1. To encourage, promote, develop and support a system of transportation resources that is at once orderly, safe, efficient and affordable for the residents of Piermont as well as for those who may be visiting or passing through.

B. Current Transportation Resources

1. AIRPORTS

a. Dean Memorial Airport, North Haverhill – 11 miles, has a 2500 foot lighted asphalt runway, no navigational aids.

b. Lebanon International Airport, Lebanon – 35 miles, offers commercial service to various destinations, as well as charter and private plan service.

c. Manchester Airport, Manchester – 100 miles, full commercial service.

d. Burlington Airport, Burlington, VT -90 miles, full commercial service.

2. RAILROADS

a. The former Boston & Maine Railroad line runs parallel to the Connecticut River and runs through Bradford, VT. Except for a few seasonal excursions there is no passenger service on this line. There is at least one daily freight train at this time. AMTRAK service to either New York or Montreal is available in White River Junction, VT – 33 miles.

3. ROADS

a. Federal Highways

Piermont has no US or Interstate highways within its borders. Access to major routes is as follows:

Interstate 91, 3 miles to Bradford, VT

Interstate 93, 27 miles to Plymouth, NH

Interstate 89, 32 miles to either White River Junction, VT or Barre, VT

US 302, 12 miles at Woodsville, NH

US 5, 2 miles to Bradford, VT

b. State Roads

Piermont has 4 State roads within its borders comprising 20.6 miles. NH Route 10 runs north-south parallel to the Connecticut River between the Haverhill and Orford town lines -5.3 miles.

NH Route 25 runs north-south between the Haverhill town line (concurrently with NH Route 10) and the Four Corners (Junction of 10, 25 and 25C) then east-west between the Four Corners and the bridge over the Connecticut River – 1.9 miles (excluding the concurrent Rte 10 portion).

NH Route 25C runs east-west following Eastman Brook between the Four Corners (Junction 10, 25 and 25C) and the Warren town line – 9.6 miles.

River Road runs north-south paralleling the Connecticut river between Route 10 near the Haverhill town line and Rte 25 near the Connecticut River Bridge – 3.8 miles.

c. Town Roads

Piermont has 26 Town roads comprising 28.2 miles as follows:

20.5 miles of Class 5 roads of which, 16.1 miles are maintained year round (5 miles of asphalt paved) and 4.4 miles are seasonal – open in summer only.

3.4 miles of Class 6 roads

4.3 miles of undetermined Class or status.

d. Private Roads

Piermont has approximately 12 privately owned roads comprising about 1.8 miles.

4**.** PUBLIC CARRIER TRANSPORTATION

a Interstate bus service is available via Vermont Transit Lines (owned by Greyhound) in Bradford, VT – 3 miles.

C. Current Programs for System Maintenance and Improvements

1. The Town currently appropriates about 75% to be raised by taxes and another 25% from the NH State Highway Subsidy money each year for maintaining highways and bridges.

2. The Town Bridges Expendable Trust Fund is a "savings account" that was set up to fund repairs and rebuilding of Town bridges. The Town typically appropriates $5000 each year to this account.

3. The Vehicular Equipment Capital Reserve Fund is a "savings account" that was set up to fund major purchases such as a road grader, etc. The Town typically appropriates $5000 each year to this account.

4. The Town's Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Ordinance both contain provisions relative to the transportation system. They are as follows:

a. Minimum standards for design and construction of new roads.
b. Minimum standards for improvements to existing roads.
c. Driveway Permits.
d. Minimum building set-backs from roads.

D. Recommended Programs for System Improvements

1. Maintain all of the current programs as listed in Section III, B, 1 through 4 above.
2. Improve and "fine-tune" current programs wherever possible.
3. Consider "Scenic Road" designation for some of Piermont's most beautiful roads
4. Investigate and document each Town road as to legal status and ownership of right-of-way.
5. Encourage the development of existing roads as opposed to the construction of new in cases of subdivision.
6. Encourage the development of public transportation as an energy saving measure and also to provide assistance to those who can't drive.

V. HOUSING

This section of the Master Plan provides goals and policy recommendations for the future of housing in Piermont. These are based on the Community Attitude Survey, census data, historic and current housing characteristics, housing problems, and the current Piermont Zoning Ordinance.

A. Summary of Community Survey relative to Housing in Piermont

Attitudes toward housing have changed little between the last two Community Surveys conducted by the Planning Board in 1988 and 2004. In 1988, 78% of Piermonters desired slow or no growth in population; that percentage grew to 89% in 2004. Fewer than 10% in both surveys thought that the lack of housing was a serious problem. Indeed, a larger percentage in each year, 25% in 1988 and 18% in 2004, saw "excessive housing development" as the more serious issue. Similarly, feelings about different types of housing

changed little over time. Single-family homes were widely regarded as acceptable in all areas of town by Piermonters in both 1988 and 2004. Multi-family homes, condominium developments, mobile homes, cluster housing, and rent subsidized housing were viewed as undesirable. In both surveys, residents indicated a greater need for housing for the elderly.

B. Piermont Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance with amendments through March 8, 2011, defines three districts in the Town: Lake, Village, and Rural. Relative to housing, the Ordinance provides as follows:

"Alteration or enlargement of any residential building is permitted."
Mobile home provisions (Article VIII, Subsection 2.6): "The establishment of a mobile home for dwelling purposes shall only be permitted in the Rural District."
"A mobile home so established shall be placed on a foundation and be skirted by material of a permanent nature."
Residence provisions (Article VIII, Subsection 2.9):
"The construction of single family residences is permitted in any district.'
"No more than one residential building is permitted on a lot unless specifically permitted under the Ordinance."
"Condominiums, or apartment buildings not exceeding 3 stories or 42' in height, as measured from the average finished building front grade, may be permitted in any District under the Special Exception use provisions of Article V, Section 4."
"The construction of cottages for seasonal use is only permitted in the Lake and Rural District."

C. Existing Housing Characteristics and Population Trends

1. Housing Trends

There has been little change between 1990 and 2012 in terms of total number of housing units and the proportions of the different types of housing. Total housing units were 404 in 1990 and 437 in 2012. Of these, the number of single-family went from 338 in 1990 to 422 in 2012. The number of multi-family units was stable until 2003 but increased sharply from 26 to 39 between 2003 and 2005. Manufactured housing was stable over this period, increasing from 28 to 29 between 2003 and 2005. Of some interest is the proportion of total housing stock that is seasonal. Although census data obtained from the Town of Piermont website fails to break the data down according to year-round vs. seasonal homes, we know that the proportion of seasonal homes was nearly one-third in 1990 and anecdotal evidence indicates that the percentage remains around this level. This high percentage of seasonal residents, many of whom own property in the Lakes region, especially around Lake Armington, provide relatively high tax revenues to the Town without much demand on services.

2. Population Trends

Although census figures show that Piermont has grown very steadily from 1970, when it had 462 residents, to 2005 when 691 people lived in own, we still have more "elbow room" than most other communities in the area. According to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Planning Commission's 2005 report, we have the fourth lowest population density of the 30 communities in the region. On the other hand, that same report projects that our population will grow to 902 by 2025.

Given the preference of community members for slow or no growth in housing and population, Piermonters need to be wary of the strong job growth in the Lebanon-Hartford area coupled with the lack of affordable housing near the centers of employment. However, thus far little effect has been felt perhaps because few large tracts of land have become available for development.

D. Housing Problems

Housing problems in Piermont are not unique. To a large degree they reflect the housing problems of the Nation and State of New Hampshire. Typical of these problems are high cost of housing, high property taxes, and low income levels.

High cost of housing – Recent data provided in the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Plan (2005) show that Piermont is generally in the middle of the 27 communities in its region in terms of mortgage and rental costs as a proportion of median income. However, it is distressing to note that roughly 25% of Piermonters were paying more than 30% of their household income in 2000 for housing. This situation has surely worsened in 2010 for housing.

Property taxes are high in New Hampshire because the State is uniquely reliant on this revenue source for funding government. As property values have increased, more and more citizens, especially seniors, find themselves "land rich" but increasingly unable to pay escalating property taxes. Solutions to this problem will almost certainly have to be sought at the state level.

Low income levels – This problem is usually faced by the younger and older segments of the town population. People on starting salaries or those depending on Social Security may not be able to afford a conventional permanent home. For the younger people, the lower-cost alternatives may be buying a used mobile home, a badly deteriorated permanent home, or a make-do, non-winterized seasonal home, or renting in a single or multi-family rental unit. For older people, it can mean losing a family home of many generations with little opportunity to relocate in Piermont, a town where housing is overwhelmingly single-family residences. Property taxes on the low-cost alternatives cited above will not cover the actual cost of town services, especially the cost of schooling, which utilizes about 75% of tax revenues.

E. Goals for Housing and Housing Policy in Piermont

Piermonters are on record as preferring slow growth in the size of the community and maintaining the mix of housing that reflects its rural New England roots and farming

traditions. The development of manufactured housing permits lower-income young adults to enter the housing market and Piermont, through its Zoning Ordinance, has chosen to restrict this housing option to the Rural District where land prices would be more moderate than in the Village or Lake District.

Finding solutions for the housing needs of the elderly are harder to fashion. Long-time and aging Piermont residents suffer in two distinct ways. Because of the State's heavy reliance on property taxes, seniors on fixed incomes find it increasingly difficult to afford recent increases in their property tax bills, increases that have far out-paced overall inflation. This problem could be handled by moving to smaller, less-heavily taxed quarters if such housing were available in Piermont, but it is not. One example would be to promote development of senior apartments (55 plus). Such developments add to the tax base, but typically require little increase in Town services.

VI. UTILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

1. Electric Power

a. Public Service of New Hampshire is the major provider of electric power to Piermont. Their local service facility is located on Route 10 in North Haverhill.

b. New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, Inc. (REA) is the other provider and serves the rest of the town.

c. Eastman Brook Hydro with a dam on Lake Tarleton, water rights to Eastman Brook, and power dams and generation in Piermont Village is the only locally generated power. Their generation is sold to Public Service of New Hampshire.

2. Voice Communication

a. Telephone – wired is provided to the entire town by FairPoint Communications.

b. Telephone – wireless is available through many providers – Verizon, US Cellular, AT &T and more, but coverage is scattered and unreliable in the rural parts of town.

c. VoIP through companies such as Vonage is available to anyone with internet access.

3. Internet Communication

a. Dial-up access is available anywhere there is a telephone line.

b. Broadband access is available to subscribers of cable service. Cable is available to residents in the Village, North on Route 10, River Road, Rivervale Road, Sanborn Circle, Mazzilli and Arron Drives, but not in the rural areas where population density falls below the providers' requirements. Charter Communications is the only licensed operator in Piermont.

c. Satellite access is available town-wide

d. DSL service provided by FairPoint Communications is available in some parts of town. Broadband is available through wireless service from AT & T and Verizon Wireless.

4. Television

a. VHF/UHF reception is available with rooftop antennas in most parts of town depending on surrounding mountains. The stations available are WNNE/NBC, White River Junction; WCAX/CBS, Burlington; WVNY/ABC, Burlington; Vermont Public TV and New Hampshire Public TV.

b. Cable TV access is available to subscribers of cable service. Cable is available to residences in the Village, North on Route 10, River Road, Rivervale Road, Sanborn Circle, Mazzilli and Arron Drives, but not in the rural areas where population density falls below the providers' requirements. Charter Communications is the only licensed operator in Piermont.

c. Satellite TV access is available town-wide from several providers including Dish Network, DIRECTV and others.

5. Radio

a. There are many AM and FM stations available for reception in Piermont including stations located in White river Junction, Hanover, Lebanon, Wells River, Waterbury, VT and Vermont and New Hampshire Public Radio stations. Sirius/XM is the satellite radio provider that is popular in this area.

6. Recommendations:

Among the most urgent needs, Piermont residents would benefit from the expansion of broadband internet service to cover more areas of town. As recent or new technologies emerge, rural areas such as Piermont are never the first in line to receive their benefits. Sometimes it takes many years to be profitable enough for a private provider to bring these services to towns our size. However, with a proactive Selectboard and with enough concerned and willing citizens to explore our options, we can hasten the arrival of these benefits.

It is also recommended and supported by a majority at the 2008 Town Meeting that the Selectmen research, develop and activate an interactive website to provide the residents of the Town with information on all matters pertaining to Town business such as planning, zoning, taxes, ordinances, police, sewer, solid waste, roads, property maps, officers and terms, hours of operation, upcoming events and meetings, etc.

VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

A. BUILDINGS

1. Town Office/Library: The Town Office is located in a renovated farm house in the Village on Route 10 next to the Fire Station. The Selectmen and Town Clerk/Tax Collector share the first floor of the building with the Town Library. The Historical Society is situated on the second floor of the building. There is a brick fire-proofed vault adjacent to the selectmen's office to house important town records. The Library is heated by a hot-air furnace. The Selectmen and Town Clerk/Tax Collector's offices are heated by a propane furnace. There is a ramp for the disabled to access the Town Library and another ramp to access the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office. A separate entrance is also available from the

parking lot to the Selectmen's office, though this one is not handicapped accessible. There is one bathroom on the first floor located in the Library.

The building is not sufficient for the town's needs. There is inadequate storage space for records. The wiring needs upgrading. An internet connection has been installed in the building. There is no room for expansion of the Library, and no area for patrons to sit quietly and read, nor to hold a meeting. The bathroom is not accessible to the disabled. The stairwell to the second floor is narrow, steep and dark.

Consideration should be given to expanded facilities for both the Library and the Town Offices.

There is a paved parking area adjacent to the Selectmen's Office. There is a paved driveway entering from the Selectmen's office circling around the building and exiting at the Library. There is paved parking located across from the library driveway.

2. "Old Church Building" Across the street from the Town Office/Library building is another building owned by the Town. It was originally the Methodist Church and was given to the Town to be used for town purposes. It is on the same land as the Village Elementary School. The front room of the building is large and bright. It has been renovated to serve as the meeting rooms for all town Boards. Voting booths have been permanently set up in this room, and it is used for all elections. There is a wheelchair ramp to the front door and a large handicapped accessible bathroom. A telephone is available.

The back room has recently been painted and refurbished for use by the Historical Society to hold special exhibits. There is one other room in the building that has been renovated for the use by the Police Department.

This building is currently referred to as the "Old Church Building". A standing sign should be installed in front of the building to identify it. Parking is very limited at this building.

3. Fire Station The Fire Station is located in a building next to the Town Office/Library. It was built in 1963-1964 by a volunteer effort. The first floor has three bays to house the fire and fast squad equipment. An addtion to the rear of the building serves as a meeting room and contains a kitchen area and a handicapped accessible bathroom. The second floor of the building is used for storage.

The three town buildings described above are all connected to the sewer facility. Their water comes from an artesian well behind the fire station that was drilled in the late 1990's.

4. Town Highway Garage Located on Bedford Road, the garage has no facilities except electricity. A Port-a-Potty is available behind the building. A furnace has been installed to allow work to be done on the equipment during cold weather. The garage should be expanded to allow inside parking of equipment.

5. Recycling Center The Center is a small building containing an office to store records and an area to hold returnable cans and bottles for refund and aluminum cans. There are separate large containers for recyclable tin, #1 through 7 plastic, paper and cardboard products and glass and ceramic items. There is a separate container for iron and a burn pile for brush. Tires and appliances are deposited in separate areas and are charged

special fees for disposal. Piermont instituted a "Pay as you Throw" Program that requires residents to purchase town labeled plastic bags to dispose of trash. This has resulted in a significant drop in the cost of trash removal. Currently, residents leave good, but no longer needed, items on the table or on the ground next to the building for others to take. A covered area protects these items.

Every effort should be made to encourage more recycling to further reduce the cost and to help protect the environment.

The Town no longer has a Town Hall and uses the Piermont Village School multi-purpose room for its Annual Meeting and any other large public gatherings.

Consideration should be given to the construction of a building to serve as a Town Hall, with rooms to serve as offices for the selectmen, town clerk/tax collector and all the various town boards. Records of all town boards would be centralized and easily available.

B. LIBRARY

The first action to establish a Public Library in Piermont was taken by approval of a warrant at the March 1892 Town Meeting. From that time until 1958, the library was located in various buildings around town. In 1958, the library moved to its present location, a circa 1830 farm house on Route 10, across the street from the Village School and the Old Church Building. Since 1969 it shares this location with the Town Offices.

The Piermont Public Library serves the residents of the town as both a public library and an elementary school library. The library is taxpayer supported with funding appropriated in the annual town budget. In addition, it receives some income from a trust fund and memorial funds. The operating budget of the library in 2010 is $38, 958 of which $29,650 is a town appropriation.

The library is governed by an elected board of seven trustees, each serving a three year term. The library has two part-time paid librarians and several volunteers and is currently open 18 hours a week.

The library houses 11,300 volumes of books and 19 periodical subscriptions. The number of patrons is estimated at 523 with a total circulation of 10,344 in 2010. All this in an 850 square foot space.

As an associate library in the New Hampshire State Library Systems, the library connects to the State's Automated Information System which allows access to statewide library materials, giving Piermont access to well over one million titles in public, academic, private libraries throughout the State. In addition, as part of its commitment to the information age, the library offers its patrons direct, limited access to the Internet via a cable connection, as well as use of a laptop for word processing or other research requirements. A recent addition was a Kindle.

Based on comparisons with other libraries serving similar sized towns, Piermont rates quite well in staff, service hours, budgets, and size of its collection and circulation, providing a real and needed service for the community.

Recommendations:

**The library is cramped for space lacking facilities for a meeting room, reading room, computer space, etc.

** Expansion is possible if space is found for a new town hall to house selectmen and town clerk.

C. EDUCATION

The Piermont School District is a member of SAU 23, which includes Warren, Benton, Bath and Haverhill. For grades 9 to 12 students may choose an area high school with which the District has a tuition contract; or parents may pay to send their child to any other school as long as they are responsible for tuition.

The Piermont Village School is located on a 5 acre lot near the center of town across Route 10 from the Fire House, Library and Town Offices. The present facility was completed in 1991 and was a 12,000- square- foot addition to, and a major upgrade of, an 1880's two room school house. The new facility was built to accommodate approximately 130 students in grades K through 8 in five classrooms, a resource room, nurse's office, office, principal's office, kitchen, mechanical room, two public restrooms, two staff restrooms and a 52 x 66 multi-purpose room. Storage is minimal to non-existent. The school library is located at the Town Library across Route 10. The grounds have a playground area, soccer field, bus drop-off and pick-up. Staff parking and minimum visitor parking are on Town property at the rear of the Old Church Building. The school is connected to the Town wastewater treatment facility and is served by its own on-site drilled well

The Piermont Village School also serves the Town for the Annual Town Meeting and any other large gatherings such as community suppers, variety shows, dances, etc.; and may be rented to outside organizations for a fee.

Although the pupil population is not technically at its limit for the current school facility, the following persistent space issues remain to be considered:

1. Storage
2. Special Education
3. Guidance
4. One-on-one instruction
5. On-site library
6. Combined-class instruction
7. Parking

D. SEWER DISTRICT

The Town does not provide sewage disposal to residents except for a small area in the Village serving 21 properties. These properties cannot support a private sewer disposal system due to small lot sizes and proximity to Eastman Brook and Route 25. In 1981, the State of New Hampshire mandated that these properties be provided with an acceptable means of sewage disposal. With Federal and State grants and a Municipal Bond, a sand filter system was installed in 1984 on property located on Route 25 south of the Village. This property was purchased from the Stetson Estate, and the house and buildings were razed. The cost of maintaining the system and paying off the debt is the responsibility of the users. They receive a tax bill based on these costs annually. An operations manager, certified by the State of New Hampshire, is in charge of the daily operation of the system. There is one additional person, also certified by the State, to assist in the testing. The effluent is tested daily, as it is a direct discharge, after undergoing chlorine treatment, into Eastman Brook.

In 1999, the State increased the testing requirements, with a resulting large increase in maintenance costs to the users. The Selectmen and Operations Manager worked with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to devise a better system, one that would comply with State regulations without excessive cost to the users.

As of 2007, the Village has a new system which required the leasing of a parcel of land from the Metcalf farm.

E. CEMETERIES

Piermont has 6 public cemeteries as follows:

Name	Location	Status
Rodimon/Cross	Route 25C	Full
Cedar Grove	Church Street	Full
Clay Hollow	Indian Pond Road	Active
East Piermont	Cape Moonshine Road	Full
River Road	River Road	Full
South Lawn, Sect. I	Route 10, south of Village	Active
South Lawn, Sect. II	Route 10, south of Village	Active

The Town cemeteries are maintained by the Cemetery Trustees (who are also the Trustees of the Trust Funds) with the income from the Cemetery Fund, burial fees and a minimal Town appropriation requested by the Trustees annually. South Lawn, Sect. II was opened in 2010.

The driveway dividing the two sections of South Lawn Cemetery is in need of replacement. The water lines to the cemetery have deteriorated beyond their ability to provide water. New water lines will be installed to serve the entire cemetery.

F. SERVICES

FIRE DEPARTMENT AND FAST SQUAD

The Fire Department Facility is described in the Town Buildings section of this Plan.

The Fire Department consists of volunteers who are trained in fire prevention and firefighting. They devote many hours to this endeavor, and also keep the equipment in good repair. They are on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day to respond to any emergency. In addition to fighting fires, they also respond to motor vehicle accidents, power outages, and road emergencies due to flooding or other natural disasters. They hold fund-raising events during the year to purchase equipment to help reduce the amount of money needed from taxes.

The Fast Squad also consists of volunteers who spend many hours training to respond to medical or trauma emergencies. They are certified to evaluate, stabilize and perform a number of medical procedures, including performing CPR, inserting airways, IV's, and many other lifesaving procedures.

In 2005, the Town voted to purchase a new fire engine, to which the department volunteers donated $7,500 from their fundraising activities. The Town has a capital reserve fund to purchase future fire and fast squad equipment. This fund should be continually funded in order to keep the necessary equipment safe and current. An on-going effort should be made to recruit more members of both departments, as volunteers are not always available in an emergency. In 2007, a new Pumper truck was purchased with the funds approved in 2005. Successful grant applications also led to the purchase of more gear for the firefighters.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Police Department office is described in the Town Building Section of the Plan.

The police department currently consists of a full time Police Chief in charge of the department and one part time officer under him.

In 2006, the Town purchased its first cruiser. It is garaged in Piermont and used by whichever officer is on duty. It is fully equipped complete with an on-board computer for fast access to information. The police department also has two computers in the office and internet access to State forms and records.

The State Police assist the Town in a serious emergency as well as operate a satellite office within the town's office.

VIII. HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

In response to Federal legislation designed to promote local planning to deal with potential natural and man-made emergencies, the Town of Piermont created a Hazard Mitigation Committee that developed a Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2005 and an updated version in 2011. The Plan is included as an Addendum to this revision of the Piermont Master Plan.

IX. RECREATION

A Goals

1. To encourage, promote and provide a balanced mix of indoor and outdoor programs and facilities and open space areas to meet the current and future recreation needs of all Piermont residents.

B. Current Inventory of Recreation Resources

1. Swimming hole-Bean Brook Road, Tax Map R-1, Lot 3. Includes fresh water pond, changing rooms and portable toilet. Seasonal. 5.7 acres.

2. Recreation Field – Bedford Road, Tax Map U-1, Lot 1. The John E. Metcalf Athletic Field was upgraded with a clay infield and new backstop.

3. The town-owned Bedford Lot is located just east of the recreation field and consists of trails for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and nature walks. It is managed by the Conservation Commission and contains many different species of trees and plants. It is also used as an outdoor classroom for Village School students to learn about nature and forest stewardship.

4. The Appalachian Trail runs through the eastern part of Piermont.

5. The beach at Lake Tarleton State Park is open to the public.

6. The Sarah Moore Lot on River Road provides canoe access along with a picnic area on the Connecticut River. A small parking area on River Road connects to a walking trail to the river. Seasonal.

7. A canoe access is located on the Connecticut River behind the former Underhill Farm on Route 25. It is accessible only by canoe and provides an area to rest and enjoy the quiet setting. Seasonal.

8. Hunting and fishing are an important part of Piermont's heritage. Although more and more land is being posted against hunters, there are still ample areas available to enjoy this activity.

9. Indian Pond. Although located in the Town of Orford, Piermont residents have permission to use the beach and participate in swimming lessons offered there. There is a boat landing to allow for recreational use of the water.

In addition, a Recreation Committee has been formed to manage the recreation resources in Piermont. Future activities to be considered should be geared toward things that young people, teenagers and older people can participate in and enjoy. Tennis courts are always mentioned in the town surveys as an activity all ages would enjoy. A skateboard park and teen center would be enjoyed by our young people.

Also, a Capital Reserve Fund has been created to accumulate funds to provide for any future opportunity that may arise to implement any of these goals.

X. CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION

All questions about Conservation and Preservation should begin by identifying Piermont's most valuable assets. These would seem to be in the areas of rich farmland, beautiful lakes, and mountainous areas, the jewels among Piermont's natural resources. Thus, we begin this section of the Piermont Master Plan with a selective summary of the information included in the Piermont Conservation Commission's 2008 Natural Resources Inventory.

A. PIERMONT'S NATURAL RESOURCES

1. TOPOGRAPHY

The topography, or the form of the Earth's surface, of Piermont is both varied and unique, ranging from 400 feet above sea level in the Connecticut River Valley to 2,717 feet at the summit of Piermont Mountain. In Piermont, the hills, mountains, rivers, stream, lakes, and valleys have had a great influence on the very shape of life itself in Piermont.

From the agricultural soils in the valley to the high-elevation forest on Piermont Mountain, our topography has been shaped by the glaciers of the past. The Connecticut River Valley was once the Connecticut River Lake, also known as Lake Hitchcock, which was 200 miles long and 10-20 miles wide. This ancient glacial lake stretched from Connecticut to the Town of Monroe in New Hampshire. When the last glacier retreated 10,000 years ago, Lake Hitchcock drained, leaving behind a large river valley with fine-grained sediments that have developed into excellent agricultural land. The glaciers also

sculpted the hills and mountains of Piermont, exposing the bedrock and carving out mountain valleys. Three distinct topographic areas in Piermont are:

* The Connecticut River Valley, covering the western portion of the Town,
* Foothills and Mountains, covering the central and eastern portions of the Town, and
* The Lake Tarleton/Armington/Katherine area, on the easternmost edge of the Town.

As human pressure to change and develop the land increases, the topography should be considered in identifying areas that should have limitations on development (See Map 2, NRI). Erosion from land clearing on steep slopes can cause sediments to be washed into streams and rivers, destroying aquatic habitat. In addition, nutrients in these sediments can cause artificial enrichment of the stream, leading to the growth of algae and a reduction in oxygen levels in the water. Cleared land on steep slopes is also at higher risk of landslide, which could block roads or destroy other human infrastructure.

The effect of land use decisions in Piermont affect not only the Town, but also the entire length of the Connecticut River downstream from Piermont. What we do here can be carried down the Connecticut River, then to the Atlantic Ocean and beyond. Water quality, community health, and scenic beauty should be of the utmost importance when considering how our actions and development change Piermont's topography.

2. SOILS

Soil is the thin layer of the earth's surface where the plant and animal kingdoms meet the mineral world and establish a dynamic relationship. Plants obtain water and essential nutrients from the soil. Animals depend on plants for their lives. Plant and animal residues find their way back to the soil and are decomposed by the teeming microbial population living there. Life is vital to soil and soil is vital to life.

Piermont has five soil associations as described by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Each association has a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, and drainage. Each is a unique natural landscape. An association is named for the major types of soil in each association; Table 1 below lists all soil types of each association in Piermont.

Table1. Soil Types within Each Soil Association in Piermont

Windsor-Hitchcock-Quonset	**Bernardston-Cardigan-Pittstown**	**Marlow-Peru**	**Tunbridge-Lyman**	**Becket-Monadnock-Hermon**
Agawam	Bernardston	Berkshire	Lyman	Becket
Dartmouth	Cardigan	Lyman	Marlow	Hermon
Hadley	Charlton	Marlow	Rock outcrop	Kinsman
Hitchcock	Kearsarge	Peru	Tunbridge	Lyman
Occum	Pittstown	Pillsbury		Lyme
Quonset	Stissing	Tunbridge		Monadnock
Suncook				Moosilauke
Walpole				Pillsbury
Windsor				Skerry
Winooski				Tunbridge
				Waumbek

The Windsor-Hitchcock-Quonset soil association covers the smallest area in Piermont. These soil types are located in the very western edge of town along the Connecticut River and the lower end of Eastman Brook. The landscape in this area ranges from level to gentle slopes to very steep terraces. Low-lying areas are prone to flooding. These soils can be very deep and well drained with underlying rock that is poorly drained. Most of this soil is considered Prime Farmland, which has been designated as a priority for protection by the Federal Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981. Because it has few stones or rocks, these soils are highly erodible and should be managed with that in mind. Forest vegetation on this land is dominated by White Pine, Hemlock, Sugar Maple, Red Oak, and Elm.

The Bernardston-Cardigan-Pittstown soil association is found mainly along the Route 10 corridor. The landscape here is characterized by smooth, strongly sloping hills and very narrow valleys. The hilltops are broad with nearly level to gentle slopes. These soils are moderately deep and well drained, however bedrock and slowly permeable hardpan require careful selection when developing in these soils. Stones cover 1% to 3% of the surface area. Cleared land is used primarily for hay and pasture. Forested areas are dominated by hardwoods and White Pine.

Marlow-Peru soils are most common in Piermont. Marlow-Peru soil associations can be found mainly along the 25C corridor and Indian Pond Road. The landscape is smooth hills and uniformly sloping mountainsides. Rock outcropping and shallow soils along the valleys are not uncommon. Forest areas are primarily hardwood with Sugar Maple, Beech, White and Yellow Birch and Red Oak as the main species. Because of the slopes, stone outcropping, and slowly permeable hardpan, appropriate land uses in these areas must be selected carefully.

The Tunbridge-Lyman soil association is characterized by rugged hills and mountains, with fast flowing streams in the valleys with small or no floodplains. This soil association

makes up a large section of Piermont. Peaked Mountain and Piermont Mountain are two areas where Tunbridge-Lyman soils are located. Because of slope, surface stone, and rock outcropping, potential development in these areas is very limited. Erosion and pollution of groundwater are hazards. Tunbridge soils support more hardwood species like Maple, Beech, Ash, and Oak. Lyman soils are dominated by more softwood like Pine, Hemlock, and Spruce.

The Becket-Monadnock-Hermon soil association is located in the eastern part of town around Lakes Tarleton and Armington. The landscape ranges from smooth hills for Becket soils to irregular slopes for Monadnock and Hermon soils. Agriculture is limited to slightly sloping areas where surface stone has been removed; the predominant land use is forestry, with moderate to moderately high forest productivity of hardwoods and White Pine.

3. WATER RESOURCES

Piermont's water resources include our aquifers, surface waters and wetlands. These resources are among the most vital to every community, providing:

* year-round supplies of water for use by all plants and animals,
* critical habitat for wildlife,
* a renewable source of energy,
* an important and varied group of recreational opportunities, and
* scenic enrichment to our everyday life.

Occasional instances of water shortage, contamination, and infestation remind us of the necessity of vigilance and enforcement of existing regulatory measures to protect these resources.

a. Watersheds

Watersheds are the catch basins for all precipitation falling from the skies. Rain or frozen precipitation falling within the confines of a watershed's interconnected ridges and high points eventually become surface or ground water. Normally, a watershed is defined in terms of a particular river or stream.

Piermont is almost entirely within the Connecticut River watershed with Eastman Brook serving as the primary tributary (See NRI, Map 3). With the exception of a small amount of precipitation that flows south from the southeasterly corner of Piermont toward Upper Baker Pond, eventually draining into the Merrimack River, the vast majority flows westward from the mountain areas on our eastern border with Warren until reaching the Connecticut.

Piermont is fortunate in that we have a relatively great amount of potential control over our own water supplies. This is because the high lands from which our water flows are largely undeveloped and much of this land is conserved or owned by the White Mountain National Forest. In addition, because a great deal of this flow is initially captured by three

lakes: Tarleton, Armington, and Katherine, before entering Eastman Brook, the quality of the water can easily be measured for pollutants, thus assuring early detection of contamination. Through a partnership between the town and the Armington and Tarleton Lake Associations and the State of New Hampshire's Department of Environmental Services, these lakes are tested three times a year for a variety of contaminants. This is especially important because Lake Armington is one of the most developed areas in the Town with roughly 50 summer cottages, a few year-round homes, and a large children's camp. Our vigilance has paid off as all three lakes continue to receive high grades for water quality.

b. Lakes and Ponds

Piermont boasts four mountain lakes in its northeastern corner: Lake Tarleton, Lake Armington, Lake Katherine, and Lake Constance. The largest is Lake Tarleton, which we share with the Town of Warren. Tarleton has 315.4 acres and 3.7 miles of shoreline of which 160 acres and 2.3 miles of shoreline is within Piermont. Over 90% of Lake Tarleton's shoreline is undeveloped. Second largest, and the most developed, is Lake Armington which is 142.2 acres with 2.8 miles of shoreline. Roughly 30% of Lake Armington is undeveloped. Both of these lakes have access and boat launch capability provided and maintained by New Hampshire Fish and Game. Lake Katherine is 37.1 acres with 1.1 miles of completely undeveloped shoreline. Lake Constance is the smallest at 6 acres but shares the beauty of the others and its remoteness enhances its allure.

These four lakes are a major natural resource because of their beauty and the recreational opportunities they afford since the largest three are easily accessible via New Hampshire Route 25C. These lakes have been subject to occasional development pressures until recently when their surrounding undeveloped lands were acquired by the White Mountain National Forest. This ensures that undeveloped land around these lakes will stay as it is, protecting it from the risks that human habitation creates.

Piermont has a number of wetland ponds of various sizes and significance. The two largest will be mentioned here with the remainder discussed below in the Wetland section. The largest wetland pond at 60.5 acres is Whitman Pond, which is located to the west of Cape Moonshine Road. The pond is named after Camp Walt Whitman to its north. More than half the pond is open water, but it is not used much for boating because of its relative inaccessibility. Whitman Pond is home to an active great blue heron rookery and also has a recent history of being an osprey nesting site. The next largest wetland pond is Lily Pond at 38 acres. Lily Pond is situated to the east of Lily Pond Road off Route 25C. Mostly open water with abundant wetland vegetation, this pond is best known locally as home and safe gathering spot of the migratory Canada Goose flock that spends the late spring, summer, and fall in Piermont

Aside from their recreational and scenic value, these lakes and ponds provide wildlife habitat and their waters directly or indirectly contribute to our drinking water supplies as well. Lake and pond waters can recharge groundwater supplies during times of excess precipitation and provide groundwater replenishments during times of drought.

c. Rivers and Streams

The Connecticut River, Eastman Brook, and Bean Brook are important natural resources. These water courses and their adjacent riparian corridors are home to many aquatic species, providing both habitat and travel corridors. Many bird species are attracted to the water and food sources that are located nearby. The historic importance of the Connecticut River in terms of commerce and farming is being transformed into an important recreational resource, justifying the attention it receives from regional initiatives such as the Connecticut River Scenic Byway and the Conte National Wildlife Refuge.

Recent decades have seen a dramatic increase in the Connecticut's water quality. Regional groups such as the Connecticut River Watershed Council and the Connecticut River Joint Commissions have been able to coordinate protection efforts, allowing separate communities to work together more effectively. As sources of pollution have been eliminated or ameliorated, more people can safely use the water for swimming. Some uses must still be limited, such as consumption of fish from the river because of high mercury levels or swimming in areas directly downstream from some water treatment facilities. As the reputation of the river has improved, communities have increasingly chosen to create improved access to, and use of, the river with the addition of new boat launches and camping sites for canoeists and kayakers. The conserved Sarah Moore Lot provides canoe access to the river and the Underhill Farm easement provides a primitive camping site.

The most prominent brook is Eastman Brook. Draining Lakes Armington, Tarleton, and Katherine, Eastman Brook empties into the Connecticut River after flowing through the Village, where two small hydroelectric stations provide electricity as well as tax revenue. Bean Brook emerges from the southeast quadrant of Piermont, crosses under Indian Pond Road, and then flows westward to the town "swimming hole" before continuing its path under Route 10 and into the Connecticut River.

d. Wetlands

Wetlands are defined as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetland areas include, but are not limited to, swamps, marshes and bogs.

Though the definition of wetland is not controversial, identification of a specific area as wetland sometimes generates disagreement because it involves combining evidence about the presence of hydric soils, wetland plants, and the degree and duration of saturation. Perhaps this is why current estimates of wetland acreage in Piermont vary. For example, in Piermont's 1991 Master Plan, it is said that there are approximately 743 acres of wetland (about 3% of all land) in Piermont. However, according to the GRANIT database, only 401.3 acres of wetland can be found in Piermont. According to a study released in 2005 by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, between 10 and 20% of Piermont's wetlands are protected. Most of this protection can be attributed to the acquisition by the

White Mountain National Forest of the lands surrounding Lakes Tarleton, Armington, Katherine and Constance.

For a long time, wetlands were considered to be worthless or, worse, a source of disease. Gradually scientific study has shown the value of wetlands for ground water and stream recharge, erosion control and flood attenuation, pollution abatement, and wildlife habitat. Nonetheless, despite all that wetlands provide to us, they are disappearing across the country as wet areas are filled in to allow for new development. More gradual destruction of wetland can occur when development occurs too close to existing wetlands, i.e., without adequate buffers. Wetlands can often be found in close proximity to scenic areas with high recreational value. Therefore development of these scenic spots leads to wetland ecosystems that are isolated like islands surrounded by development. This decreases their value for all of the above functions, but particularly for wildlife habitat.

Though no comprehensive inventory of Piermont wetlands has been carried out, a selected few were studied during the 1990's by Erik Solberg, a graduate student at Plymouth State University. This work was done in collaboration with the Piermont Conservation Commission and the UNH Cooperative Extension. Five wetlands were evaluated including the above-mentioned Whitman Pond and Lily Pond as well as three smaller wetlands:

* the Eastman Brook wetland, located a short distance from the Piermont Town Library and adjacent to Eastman Brook covering approximately one acre,
* the Day Farm Preserve, an 8.5 acre wetland near the intersection of Routes 10 and 25, and
* the Beaver Pond at Clay Hollow, a 2.3 acre wetland associated with a series of beaver dams constructed in the lowlands of Clay Hollow.

All five wetlands were submitted to an evaluation technology that involves ratings of 14 different aspects that combine to give wetlands an overall "functional value". Examples include wildlife habitat, visual or aesthetic quality, flood control potential and ability to trap sediment. Because the overall functional value of a wetland if calculated by multiplying the average functional value across all different aspects by the size of the wetland, it is hardly surprising to find that Whitman and Lily Pond wetlands, at 60.5 and 38 acres respectively, turn out to have greater functional value than the smaller wetlands but, as the report shows, each performs important tasks for our environment, both locally and downstream.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services is the agency responsible for protecting wetlands in the State. RSA 482-A authorizes the NHDES to protect the State's wetlands and surface waters by requiring a permit for dredge or fill or construction of structures in wetlands or other waters of the State. The administrative rules of the NHDES Water Supply and Pollution Control Division, Subsurface Bureau, currently require setbacks from wetlands only for subsurface wastewater disposal systems. These requirements are: A 50-foot setback from wetlands of predominantly hydric B (poorly drained) soils and a 75-foot setback from predominantly hydric A (very poorly drained) soils. The Town of Piermont currently has no additional wetland regulations in place.

e. Aquifers

Aquifer materials in Piermont are mainly stratified, sorted, mostly coarse-grained sand and gravels deposited by glacial melt water. These deposits were laid down when the Connecticut River Valley was occupied by glacial Lake Hitchcock. The glacier retreated from this area about 112,000 years ago. The successive stages in the lowering of the level of Lake Hitchcock can be seen in the terraces along the Connecticut River.

In Piermont the principal stratified-drift aquifers are found under the floodplain of the Connecticut River and its higher terraces. The pattern of deposits includes fairly coarse-grained material in the deltas derived from tributaries of the Connecticut River overlaid by fine-grained sediments that settled out of Lake Hitchcock. Deep wells drilled into these formations can yield flows ranging from 1 to 5 gallons per minute to wells producing 25 gallons or more per minute in highly permeable strata. Smaller aquifers are found along Eastman Brook. Isolated aquifers are also located along Mazzilli Drive, Arron Road, Rivervale Road, and Piermont Heights Road.

Much of the land covering the aquifers along the Connecticut River is valuable farm land and a significant proportion of that is protected through conservation easements, as well as wetland restrictions. No such protection covers the smaller aquifers on higher tributaries. In New Hampshire, however, ground water is protected from commercial exploitation by a comprehensive protection law.

f. Current Water Resources Protection Efforts

Piermont residents have been both wise and fortunate. As a result, we have an extraordinary degree of protection of our water resources. There are very few potential threats to water resources in Piermont because of the rural nature of the Town (See NRI, Map 4). Threats of further major development around Lakes Tarleton, Armington, Katherine, and Constance have been almost completely eliminated, thanks to all those who participated in and supported the purchase and/or protection of the 5000+ acres surrounding these lakes. The land is now owned or managed by the White Mountain National Forest and the State of New Hampshire. In addition to limiting adverse impact from development, Piermont residents and Town government have proactively taken steps to both monitor and protect these public waters from other sources of harm. Serious threats are posed by exotic species of plants such as milfoil that have infested many other lakes in the area. Both the Lake Tarleton and Lake Armington Associations have applied for and won grants from the New Hampshire Lakes Association to mount boat inspection programs that guard against the importation of milfoil and other exotic species into these lakes. The Town of Piermont also makes a financial contribution to this program. In addition, both Lake Associations have active groups of "weed watchers," who survey lake waters continually for signs of known invasive plants. Finally, both Associations have for many years paid for three annual

inspections of the quality of water in their lakes as well as in Lake Katherine by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

4. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Piermont's location in the Connecticut River Valley has allowed commercial and homestead agriculture to develop and be sustained throughout the history of the Town. Farms and agricultural soils are important natural resources for the farmers, the buyers of farm products, and all Town residents. Farms keep land open, which adds to our diversified landscape. This landscape promotes wildlife and adds to our viewing pleasure. Farms also provide a locally grown food supply. More locally grown food reduces our dependence on having food shipped in from far off places. Farms also offer economic advantages to the town. Farms are rural businesses that pay taxes, while keeping land open, undeveloped, and requiring little in the way of town services.

a. Piermont Farms

The Town of Piermont has eleven commercial farms and several non-commercial farms. Of this farmland most is used for growing forage crops, such as hay and corn, or is used as pasture. This is indicative of Piermont's agricultural resources being used for livestock production, including dairy cattle, beef cattle, horses, and sheep. However, there are signs of more diversification in agriculture as farmers change their production practices over time. Piermont has two Certified Organic farms, one greenhouse vegetable farm, one horse-breeding farm, dairy farms, a blueberry/maple syrup farm, sheep farms, and one beef farm. Farm products from these farms are sold locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

There are numerous other rural residents of Piermont who raise livestock, poultry, vegetables, fruits, herbs, and other crops both for themselves and others. There are other landowners who rent their land for other farmers to use.

b. Agricultural Soils

Piermont has a limited amount of Prime Agricultural Soils. These soils represent less than 10% of Piermont's land area, roughly 1,500 acres. However, these two soils are considered to be of national, statewide, and local importance. The Windsor-Hadley-Quonset soil association composes the predominant agricultural soils in the Town. These soil types are located along the Connecticut River, Route 10 north, and along the low-lying area of Eastman Brook and Lake Katherine. (See Table 2 below).

Agricultural soils are characterized by level to gentle slopes, few stones or rocks, and fairly good drainage. Because of these characteristics, these soils are easily tilled and ideal for crop production. A portion of Piermont's agricultural soils are under conservation easement . (See Map 3 in the Natural Resource Inventory).

Table 2. Agricultural soils in Piermont.

Soil Type	Acres	Soil Type	Acres
Agawam	234	Marlow	73
Becket	4	Occum	83
Berkshire	6	Peru	108
Bernardston	42	Pittstown	273
Charlton	16	Pootatuck	67
Dartmouth	51	Skerry	76
Groveton	6	Winooski	68
Hadley	361		
		Total	**1,467**

5. FOREST RESOURCES

Piermont's forests provide valuable habitat for plant and animal populations. Forests absorb rain water, increase groundwater infiltration, and buffer surface waters from sedimentation and contamination. Forests provide us with wood and food products, wildlife, scenic beauty, a modified microclimate, stabilization of steep slopes and snow pack, the control of water flows, the creation and maintenance of stream habitat for aquatic animals, and recreation. Many of Piermont's forests have grown up from abandoned agricultural land and are now mature.. Piermont is just over 75% forested (Table 3).

Table 3. Forest Types in Piermont.

Forest Type	Acreage	% of Town
Beech-Oak	2,107	8.3%
Paper Birch –Aspen	3,615	14.2%
Other hardwoods	5,079	19.9%

White/Red Pine	2,050	8.0%
Spruce-Fir	523	2.1%
Hemlock	2,078	8.1%
Mixed forest	4,173	16.3%
Forested wetlands	157	0.6%
Total Forested Area	**20,095**	**77.5%**

Forestry products provide an important revenue source to the Town, and if forests are sustainably managed, this can be a stable income flow for landowners as well as the Town. In 2007, 24 Intent-to-Cut forms were filed in Piermont. The Town receives a timber tax which is based on 10% of the value of the timber harvested. The timber tax received in the 2003 through 2007 period totaled over $50,000.

Table 4. Piermont Timber Tax Revenues, 2006-2010.

Year	**Timber Tax Revenues**
2006	$19,465
2007	$ 7,325
2008	$ 6,979
2009	$ 3,196
2010	$ 4,728

Currently there are three landowners holding 2,521 acres who have enrolled their land in the American Tree Farm system. In addition, there are three landowners enrolled in the Tree Farm System who own 967 acres located partially in Piermont and Orford. A Tree Farm is a privately owned forest managed to produce timber with added benefits of improved wildlife habitat, water quality, recreation, and scenic value. Town forests and other publicly owned land may also be certified as a Tree Farm. To qualify, a landowner must:

* dedicate at least 10 acres to growing and harvesting forest products;
* have a written plan for the future management of their forest;
* follow management recommendations prescribed by a licensed forester;
* demonstrate a commitment to stewardship of their forest for multiple values.

In addition to land that has been officially designated as a Tree Farm, there are many acres that are actively managed under a Forest Management Plan written by a licensed professional forester. A list of licensed professional foresters is available from the Grafton County Cooperative Extension Office.

Forest soils have a range of productivity for different types of tree species and suitability for management. Forest soils in New Hampshire have been classified for their productive value and operability in the County Soil Survey (Table 5). Piermont has large areas of Group I soils, which are the most productive soils with the fewest limitations (See NRI Map 4).

Table 5. Forest Soil Groups, Grafton County Soil Service

Soil Class	Description
IA	Deeper, loamy soil, moderately to well drained (best for northern hardwood sites)
IB	Sandy or loamy soils, moderately to well drained (mixed hardwood sites)
IC	Outwash sands and gravels (best pine sites)
IIA	IA and IB soils with limitations such as steepness, Shallow depth to bedrock
IIB	Poorly drained soils
Unclassified	Muck and peat, rock outcrop, gravel pits, marshland

a. Town Forests

Piermont has two Town Forests, which cover 170.2 acres (Table 6). In addition to the Town Forests a portion of the White Mountain National Forest is also located within the Town.

Table 6. Town Forests

Town Forest	Acreage	Location
Glebe Lot	113 acres	Northern border with Haverhill; East of Route 10
Bedford Road Town Forest and Trails	57.2 acres	Near Piermont Village; on Bedford Road

The Glebe Lot was originally allocated in the Town's 1764 charter as "one whole share for a glebe for the Church of England," a glebe being land that benefits a church. In 1975,

thanks to the effort of Robert Michenfelder, then Chairman of the Piermont Conservation Commission the land was legally acquired by the Town. The deed specifies that the property shall be under the supervision of the Piermont Conservation Commission. The property has been a Tree Farm under the American Tree Farm System since 1991 and has been under the management of O'Brien Forestry Services. The property was last inspected in 2007.

The Bedford Road Town Forest and Trails was developed by the Piermont Conservation Commission in 1997 for recreational and educational purposes and to promote wildlife and forest stewardship. The site serves as an outdoor classroom for students of the Piermont Village School and townspeople use the trails for hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling.

6. WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Piermont's wildlife is valuable to those who like to hunt, fish, bird watch, or just enjoy sharing a landscape with wild animals. In addition, certain wildlife species control pest populations. Songbirds eat large numbers of mosquitoes and other bugs; beneficial insects attack garden and agricultural pests, and hawks, foxes, and other predators control rodent populations.

Piermont's wildlife includes white-tailed deer, black bears, squirrels, songbirds, game birds, red-spotted newts, and some native brook trout. Piermont also is home to two rare and threatened animal species, the common loon and the peregrine falcon. There are tens to hundreds of species that we see and hear regularly, but there are thousands of insects, mollusks, and other invertebrates which we know little about. In order to protect all these species that compose the wildlife community, we must protect their habitats.

a. Wildlife Habitat

Piermont's backyards, farmlands, rocky ridges, forests, water bodies, and wetlands provide rich and diverse habitats for many species of wildlife. Each species of wildlife utilizes one or more natural communities during its lifecycle, the natural communities that wildlife uses for mating, breeding, and/or overwintering are of special importance. Species that rely primarily or entirely on one habitat type are referred to as habitat specialists, those that range over many different habitat types are referred to as habitat generalists. Table 7 describes several wildlife species in Piermont and some of their habitat requirements

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Table 7. Habitat Requirements for Selected Wildlife Species

Wildlife Species	Habitat Requirements
White-tailed deer	Dense coniferous forest for overwintering (deeryards); this species prefers edge habitats, as it eats both grasses and woody plants

Brook trout	Clean, cold water with high oxygen levels Gravel beds in spring-fed streams or lakes for spawning
Bobcat	Large unfragmented, heavily wooded forest Rocky areas for den sites
Peregrine falcon	Undisturbed cliff areas for nesting Open land for attacking its prey on the wing
Black bear	Large forested areas with a mix of wetlands and thick understory vegetation, prefer areas with little human disturbance

Habitat is generally defined as sufficient food, water, shelter, and space to survive. This definition is valid, but the table above shows that the habitat requirements of many animals are much more specific. Game species (i.e., deer and trout) and endangered species (i.e., peregrine falcon and bald eagle) generally have well-documented habitat requirements and management plans developed by the state and federal fish and wildlife agencies. Species that do not fall into either of these categories often have not been studied as closely, and the habitat requirements for these species are not as well understood. This creates a complicated and difficult situation for understanding the effects of development on all species of wildlife.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department has created a multi-species approach to wildlife conservation, where the conservation focus is on important habitat types rather than individual species. The Wildlife Action Plan, published in 2005, identifies important habitat types and also the species that depend on these habitats for their survival.

b. Human Impacts on Wildlife

Human activities affect wildlife in many different and sometimes surprising ways. It is not realistic to assume that our actions will not affect wildlife and wildlife habitat. What is realistic is to understand how our actions do affect wildlife and habitat, and then to do the best we can to minimize these effects and be responsible in our actions. The most common activities in Piermont that have major impacts on wildlife are new residential and commercial development, forestry, farming, and lawn and garden care.

As the population of Piermont grows, so does the demand for housing, jobs and services. The conversion of agricultural or forested land to residential or commercial use changes the landscape in many ways. The soil is disturbed, native vegetation is removed, and impervious surfaces (roofs, roadways, etc.) are built; all these activities change the way water drains, and can have detrimental effects on aquatic wildlife habitat. When development breaks up continuous tracts of natural land cover, the

quality of wildlife habitat is diminished. Landscape fragmentation is harmful to many species of wildlife in terms of:

* loss of habitat area,
* loss of habitat connectivity,
* increased potential for movement of invasive or damaging species into native plant communities, which degrades food resources and nesting sites,
* increased potential for vehicle-wildlife collisions, and
* other undesirable human-wildlife interactions, e.g., nuisance bears and raccoons.

Planning new development in an environmentally sensitive manner and following best management practices at the construction site can go far to minimize the impacts of new development on wildlife.

A thriving forest products industry preserves a forested landscape, which is good for wildlife, but forestry practices can also be harmful to wildlife. Placing logging roads and skid tracks on steep slopes increases runoff and can cause erosion of sediment into streams. In addition, stream crossings can destroy the structure of aquatic and wetland habitats. When foresters follow Best Management Practices for forestry operations, these impacts are greatly minimized. In addition, the way forest products are harvested affects wildlife; for example, patch-cut clearings provide food and cover for small mammals and some game birds. A professional certified forester can develop a forest management plan to balance timber yields with long-term sustainability and habitat protection.

Like forestry, farming and conserving wildlife habitat can be compatible activities. Orchards, cultivated lands, abandoned fields, field edges, and hedge rows all provide wildlife habitat. Many animals are attracted to the edge habitat at the interface of field and forest, as the forest provides shelter and the field provides food. Several species of bird, including the bobolink and eastern meadowlark, rely on pastures and hayfields for nesting.

Agricultural practices may also harm wildlife. Nesting grassland birds lose their eggs if hayfields are mowed too early in the summer. Erosion from cleared fields and runoff of animal waste, fertilizers and pesticides into streams and rivers degrade aquatic habitat. Careful timing, crop rotation, cover crops, and the use of naturally pest resistant crops can have short and long-term beneficial effects on wildlife habitat.

Every home impacts wildlife habitat to some degree. Pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers applied on our lawns and gardens can run off into streams and lakes. Pesticides will often kill beneficial insects as well as nuisance bugs. Another common household impact on wildlife is the use of birdfeeders. Many people put out birdfeeders to provide winter food. Birds and squirrels generally utilize these food sources as supplement to their wild foraging, but black bears can become accustomed to the free birdseed and learn to find other easily available food sources, such as food in trash cans. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department suggests taking down birdfeeders in early spring or bringing them in at night to minimize bear problems**.**

B. WHAT NATURAL RESOURCES DO WE MOST WANT TO PROTECT

1. Farmland - Scenic value, agricultural heritage, local food supply, protection of important soils.
2. Wetlands - Wildlife and plant habitat, water filtration, flood control.
3. Lakes, Brooks, and Rivers - Maintain water quality, scenic value, recreation, wildlife habitat
4. Unfragmented lands – Wildlife habitat, recreation (hunting, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling).
5. Aquifers, drinking water supplies.
6. Forest Resources – Hunting, timber, protection of water quality and supply.
7. Wildlife – Biodiversity, recreation (bird watching, hunting, fishing).

C. Tools for Protection

1. Innovative zoning
   a. Village plan and similar subdivision plans that allow preservation of open space by increasing density of dwellings in designated areas while maintaining other areas as undeveloped common land. Standard lot size, lot line and frontage requirements do not apply. Still must comply with setback requirements for wells, septic systems and DES wetlands regulations.
   b. Environmental characteristics zoning such as soils based lot sizing or creating overlay districts based on floodways and floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, aquifers, rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes. Such zoning would add restrictions and requirements to those of the underlying district.
2. Increasing setbacks from wetlands and water bodies.
3. Designation of Prime Wetlands (Conservation Commission has jurisdiction)
4. Acquisition of Conservation Easements by the Town (Town Meeting has jurisdiction).

D. Discussion and Recommendations

The Planning Board has had extensive discussions as to whether there is a need to take steps to further protect our natural resources. In particular we have covered the issues of (1) Increasing restrictions on subdividing where there are steep slopes, (2) Increasing minimum lot sizes, and (3) Adopting various innovative zoning techniques to preserve open space or increase the availability of affordable housing, housing for seniors, etc. In each case, the consensus of Board members has been that our current zoning and subdivision regulations appear to be working well and seem to give us the flexibility to shape development as the need arises. We are also reluctant to become more restrictive in view of certain facts. First, examination of Map 2, "Development Limitations" in Appendix "E" of the Conservation

Commission's recently adopted (2008) Natural Resource Inventory appears to show that developable land on existing roads is less extensive than envisioned in our 1991 Master Plan report, especially if we maintain our bias towards discouraging development where steep slopes exist. Second, the dramatic improvement in the amount of protected lands in the Lake Tarleton area has brought the percentage of protected acreage in Piermont to just short of 25% of all land in Piermont. Though specific conservation projects may still be wise investments in our future, the feeling of the Board is that a general press to do more on this front is not currently warranted.

Two more limited steps seem justified to protect what we already have. First, the Planning Board has voted to adopt the recommendation from the Conservation Commission that we recommend to town voters that they amend the Zoning Ordinance so that when the Board of Adjustment receives an application seeking approval of a special exception or variance for a parcel that is subject, in whole or in part, to the provisions of the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (RSA 483-B, as revised), the Board shall submit a copy of the application to the Conservation Commission for their review and comment. This recommendation from the Planning Board to the voters is based on our feeling that the Conservation Commission members are, by virtue of their charge and their work, more informed about certain issues in these cases and, thus, may be able to improve the Board of Adjustment's decision-making process. This proposed amendment was approved by voters at the 2010 Town Meeting day.

Second, the Planning Board is concerned about steps recently considered by the State Legislature that may put at risk one of Piermont's most valuable natural recreational resources. In 2009 and early 2010, legislation was introduced in the House that would facilitate the leasing of State Park land such as Lake Tarleton State Park to private entities. This step was contemplated as a way to improve the flow of funds into the State Park System. We are wary of such plans and believe that the next step might be to ultimately dispose of State Park properties that cannot pay for themselves. The beach at Tarleton State Park is a wonderful warm-weather asset to the Town and anecdotal evidence suggests increasing use by Piermont residents during the summer months. We believe the Town should take all necessary steps to ensure that the people of Piermont have final say on any changes from its current status as a State Park should such changes be further considered.

In conclusion, Board members are unanimous in their feeling that Piermont offers a high quality of life to its residents because of the richness of our land and the extraordinary beauty of our landscape. We also agree that the best way to preserve this quality of life at this time is through thoughtful application of rules that seem to be working well. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"