

- **Policy:** Encourage management of natural resources that preserves the diversity of habitats and species and achieves sustainable yields of renewable resources.
 - Continue DEP's comprehensive inventory and monitoring program of the state's natural resources. Maintain up-to-date tools to analyze the health of natural resources systems and stresses on them and to enable easy sharing of this information. Encourage interagency and cooperative efforts, such as the Connecticut Resource Protection Project, to identify and develop information about the most critical of these resources and to devise innovative tools for their protection. Promote resource-based decisions in state and municipal planning and joint resource planning efforts across municipalities and all levels of government.
 - Maintain the species diversity of Connecticut's flora and fauna. Avoid the loss of, or serious adverse effects on, any protected species or its essential habitat and mitigate all clearly unavoidable adverse impacts on such areas. Alter state-funded projects when necessary to avoid such effects.
 - Enhance the public's understanding of resource conservation and natural diversity, and foster beneficial land use practices through educational programs and demonstration areas.
 - Avoid significant adverse impacts to essential fish and wildlife habitats and migration corridors in permitting and supporting development projects.
 - Encourage and promote the formation of greenways and acquisition or protection of contiguous tracts of open space for recreational and natural resource management purposes. A statewide system of greenways should tie to urban areas, link existing regional trail systems and major open space holdings, and use abandoned rail rights-of-way and other available corridors. (See Appendix showing officially designated greenways.)

D. Rural Areas

The western and eastern uplands of the state and areas along the lower Connecticut River offer some of the last major rural expanses in the heavily urbanized Washington-Boston corridor. These places embrace much of the state's remaining active farmland, vital environmental resources, and numerous historic villages and town centers. However, the urban-rural distinction increasingly blurs as urban scale development spreads farther into the countryside. Many rural towns now grapple with development controls ill-suited to the task of preserving the community character that makes them unique and attractive. Uniform large lot zoning, road standards based mainly on traffic movement, strict on-site parking requirements and similar measures replicate a creeping suburbanization of the landscape, degradation of valued natural and cultural resources, loss of prime agricultural

land, increasing dependence on the automobile, and perhaps even growing social isolation. Development at “in between” densities (greater than one half acre to approximately one and a half acre lot per dwelling) tends to increase the demand for public services but make their provision inefficient and expensive. Accommodating future economic development, job creation, industrial diversification, needed social services and availability of public transportation while maintaining the desirable qualities of rural towns is thus a critical planning concern at state, regional and local levels.

Rural area goals as set forth in Executive Order No. 31 (October 1980) are as follows:

- To preserve and protect the land, water, farm open space, and forest resources which characterize the state's rural areas, and effectively coordinate such preservation with the needs of rural residents for employment, housing, public services, and accessibility to commercial and cultural facilities
- To improve the quality of life for the residents of the rural areas of the state, ensure that rural citizens have adequate access to health care, education, human services, housing, and other basic programs and services provided by both the public and private sectors, and to help overcome isolation, discrimination, and other problems which often face the elderly, people with disabilities, low and moderate income residents, and minorities in rural communities;
- To ensure appropriately scaled economic development in rural communities which provides an adequate financial base and range of employment opportunities but which is compatible with the varied economic, social, and environmental needs and concerns of rural areas; and
- To simplify the administrative procedures which accompany state and federal programs and regulatory functions so that they more appropriately reflect the administration and planning capacities of rural communities.

This Plan seeks to properly scale responses to identified rural economic and social issues and to concentrate development activities within or adjacent to traditional village areas in order to maintain rural character and to protect environmentally sensitive places.

Techniques such as open space development (cluster development with its primary aim the preservation of open space), regulations to encourage new development that mesh with historical development, mixed use development in community centers, and traditional street networks are some of the methods to maintain rural character and the resources that define that character.

Investment in infrastructure has shaped community character. Public sewer and water systems and highway improvements support urban scale and densities that are not consistent with rural character. Recent advances in on-site wastewater treatment technology have the potential to complicate greatly the issue of infrastructure in rural land use, even though their use will continue to be limited by soils and groundwater conditions. Their greater treatment efficiencies may enable substantially larger and more intensive development projects without conventional sewer service. Yet, they may also provide communities more flexibility in applying such techniques as cluster development and community centers.

Development and infrastructure in rural areas should be guided by the following guidelines:

- Encourage development in Rural Lands of a form, density, and location compatible with the carrying capacity of the natural environment, and which avoids the need for large scale and costly urban infrastructure for water supply, waste disposal, and transportation;
- Encourage rural plans and land use regulations to protect the rural environment through controls and techniques, such as cluster subdivisions, that direct development patterns in conformity with rural values. Further, rural communities should pursue a watershed planning framework that encourages inter-town cooperation to promote water quality and natural resource protection;
- Encourage the concentration of higher density or multiple use development into Rural Community Centers where practical and consistent with historic character; support industrial and business development within Rural Community Centers only of a scale and type which respond to an existing local employment need without inducing major development;
- Promote development and refinement of design and engineering standards for community infrastructure and facilities that are consistent with historic rural character and natural resource values, while adequately meeting public health and safety concerns;
- Ensure new projects are consistent with “rural design” principles and do not have unacceptable adverse impacts upon districts and sites of historic significance, important natural areas or concentrations of prime farmland;
- Supporting industrial and business development within Rural Community Centers only of a scale and type which respond to an existing local employment need without inducing major development;
- Foster application of best available design practices and control methods to nonpoint water pollution sources;
- Give priority to transportation improvement projects that recognize and reinforce the viability and character of village centers, particularly with regard to pedestrian access and safety;
- Encourage greenway projects that provide links both to and within Rural Community Centers and that provide alternative transportation and recreation opportunities;

- Locate highway interchanges in urban rather than rural areas to support the concentration of growth in those areas;
- Protect the capacity and safety of existing state roads through cooperative efforts with municipalities to control the number and location of access points; Improve traffic flow on existing highways, where feasible, as a preferred alternative to the construction of new highways;
- Protect significant natural areas, resources and ecological systems in order to protect and enhance the local economy and quality of life;
- ✶ ○ Vigorously pursue sewer avoidance programs and limit development to those uses and densities that ensure indefinite functioning of on-lot or small community water supply and waste disposal systems, review zoning regulation and eliminate insufficient lot sizes, assure sufficient oversight of the permitting and maintenance of septic systems to ensure that on-site septic systems function indefinitely, and encourage enactment of local ordinances that require septic tanks to be inspected every three to five years and pumped out as needed; further, limit of water pollution control facilities to project costs required to correct an existing pollution problem (as environmental carrying capacity depends on many factors, site-specific factors and proper installation and maintenance have to be considered in any decisions as related to actual lot size);
- Support application of advanced on-site wastewater treatment technologies only when their long term functioning is assured and only where the development they support meshes with and complements existing rural patterns and avoids scattered development; in particular, they may be necessary:
 - To develop affordable housing in conformance with local and regional plans,
 - To support higher intensity uses and economic development within Rural Community Centers, or
 - To enable cluster development to preserve environmental resources;
- Support the introduction or expansion of public facilities or services only when there is a demonstrated environmental, economic, social, or general welfare concern and then introduce such services only at a scale which responds to the existing need without serving as an attraction to more intensive development. An exception may be made to assist municipalities in the provision of infrastructure to service a particular site when: a) there is a definite commitment from a firm to relocate to the site in the immediate future; b) substantial employment will result from the relocation; c) a feasible site is not available within a development area; d) a project plan is prepared which sets forth the costs and the anticipated economic, social, and environmental impacts including availability of affordable housing; and e)

there is no overriding environmental condition or concern that would preclude such service.

- Limit the extension of public water supply infrastructure to rural areas by using individual wells where well capacity is adequate.