

TOWN OF BEACON FALLS, CONNECTICUT



NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY & ASSESSMENT

Produced by the Natural Resource Inventory Committee
A Subcommittee of the Beacon Falls Conservation Commission

2011

Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment

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Preface

In accord with its charge to manage the Town's natural resources, the Beacon Falls Conservation Commission is pleased to present this first edition of the Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment (NRIA.) In this document the reader will find a broad array of factual information from diverse sources, gathered for the first time in one document. Maps developed from the COGCNV map system and other sources illustrate the locations and inter-relationships of these resources.

The Plan of Conservation and Development (2011) call for completion of a natural resource inventory and assessment, and the Beacon Falls Conservation Commission has been given the responsibility for developing and maintaining such a document. In 2009, the Conservation Commission (CC) voted unanimously to establish a Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment sub-Committee. The Mission Statement is presented on page 4. Three members of the CC are appointed to the NRIA sub-committee. The group consulted with other experts and reference materials, bringing together disparate sources of information to supplement their own contributions.

The NRIA team carried out its initial work over a two-year period, resulting in this first edition. The NRIA is an effort that goes beyond the publication of this document, and will continue to evolve for as long as questions remain and new data is uncovered. Additional work is being planned by the CC in order to add to, and refine existing data and analysis, and to create future editions. We hope that more citizens of Beacon Falls who are skilled in scientific observation and/or presenting and organizing data will want to participate in the process of adding to the body of knowledge presented here.

We hope that the NRIA will serve both as a tool for those Town officials whose responsibility it is to maintain Beacon Fall's quality of life, and as an educational reference for all citizens interested in supporting natural resource conservation. The document is designed to be informative and practical without being excessively technical. Numerous references are given for those seeking technical information.

Questions, comments, or additional information from the general public and natural resource professionals are encouraged. These should be directed to the Conservation Commission Chairperson, Beacon Falls Town Hall, 10 Maple Ave., Beacon Falls, CT 06403.

Conservation Commission
October, 2011

Acknowledgments

The Conservation Commission wishes to express gratitude to the many individuals who in some way contributed to Beacon Fall's first Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment. The original Natural Resource Inventory Committee consists of the following people who volunteered their time and expertise in the early phases: Chris Beilik, and Jeff Goerig. Thanks also are due to key members of Town Boards and Commissions who provided feedback and advice on early drafts.

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Town of Beacon Falls
Conservation Commission
Land Use Committee
Council of Governments of Central Naugatuck Valley (COGCNV)
CT ERT Team
CT DEP
NEMO/CLEAR
UCONN

This first edition of Beacon Fall's Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment was truly a team effort!

The Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment (NRIA)

Mission Statement

Charge to the Natural Resource Inventory Committee from the Conservation Commission: July 2009: To create a comprehensive Natural Resource Inventory for the Town and to present such document in draft form to the Conservation Commission for approval, with amendments if needed, and subsequent dissemination to the Planning and Zoning Commission, other Town Commissions and other interested organizations and individuals.

The Natural Resource Inventory will be formatted to make it informative and practical for Town Commissions and land-use agencies, and other potential users.

Purpose of the Beacon Falls Natural Resource Inventory

A primary purpose of the Natural Resource Inventory is to establish an information baseline that can enable Beacon Falls' decision makers and land use agencies to make informed decisions regarding development, conservation, and natural resource management issues. This will be accomplished by producing a document that describes qualitatively, and to the extent possible, quantitatively, the diverse natural resources of the Town of Beacon Falls. The Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment will document the geographical location of these resources, the importance of these resources to the citizens of the Town, the threats to the health and integrity of these resources, and discuss the various strategies that can be used to protect these resources.

Plan of Action and Methodology

1. Assemble a work group (Conservation Commission's NRIA sub-committee and advisory group)
2. Determine the study area (NRIA Committee)
3. Form work teams (to research and assemble information on components of NRIA)
4. Assemble and review existing documents
5. Assemble existing maps related to NRIA components
6. Publicize the NRIA effort and solicit information and needs
7. Compile work team reports and maps and create draft NRIA document
8. Editing team formats and edits draft for approval by Committee
9. Print, publicize, and disseminate final NRIA document

Introduction

What are natural resources?

If we define natural resources in terms of values, in one sense they are the basic components of the environment that sustain the life and health of all creatures. In another, they are the riches of the natural world that sustain human economies and quality of life. Natural resources are the aquifers that provide our families safe drinking water. They are the hilltops, boulder-strewn woods, and tidal marshes where children first learn to explore the great outdoors, and where adults seek renewal and recreation. They are the open spaces and rocky ridges that shape our community's unique character and sense of place, while enhancing property values. Natural resources are fundamental to Beacon Fall's heritage and quality of life.

What is a Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment?

A Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment (NRIA) is a compilation of data, descriptions, and maps to document the natural resources of a given geographic area. An information baseline is established and built upon by continued observation and research. Key functions of the NRIA are:

- documentation of the geographical location of resources
- display and summaries of existing data
- assessment of natural resource functions, health, and their relative importance
- analysis of the inter-relationships between natural resources
- identification of the stresses and threats to their health and integrity
- provision of benchmarks against which future change can be measured
- identification of additional areas for further study
- incorporation of new or revised information.

An NRIA provides an indication of what resources are likely to exist on a particular site, how sensitive they are, and whether or not closer examination is needed. This NRIA can also guide landowners to a fuller understanding of the resources over which they have stewardship.

Why does Beacon Falls need a Natural Resource Inventory?

According to Beacon Fall's 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), the Town is committed to managing its natural resources and protecting them from harm. In order to do so there must be a detailed understanding of what resources exist, where they can be found, and how they relate to one another.

An NRIA is a tool to bring about such understanding. Used properly it can enable land use decision makers to protect the integrity of natural resources while providing for compatible residential and commercial growth. The NRIA could also be used to enhance residents' understanding about the environment in which they live. While the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) continues to be an indispensable source of natural resource information, this data is often lacking in detail useful at a local scale. An NRIA can fill this gap by focusing on the unique array of resources that characterizes Beacon Falls. For the first time, the Town will have data from DEP and many other sources assembled in a single document, so that it can be easily cross-referenced and analyzed. With this information, our land use agencies can make decisions with greater wisdom and accuracy. The Town will also be able to more effectively refine its Plan of Conservation and Development.

What are the goals of the NRIA?

This NRIA has been developed in order to:

- disseminate accurate and practical knowledge of our environment to both town officials and the public
- promote conservation of the Town's native plants, animals, and ecosystems
- identify those areas in which knowledge is lacking
- establish a framework and impetus for future study
- facilitate natural resource-based conservation and development planning

The ultimate goal of producing the NRIA is the maintenance of a healthy, functioning environment, and the preservation of Beacon Falls's quality of life. It is the Conservation Commission's role to assist the Town in realizing these goals.

Who should use this document?

Town Staff
Town Boards and Commissions
Non-governmental organizations
Developers
Landowners
Teachers and students
Tourists and visitors

How is this document organized?

The NRIA is divided into two documents: descriptive text and a separate Map Atlas (11x17) that illustrates spatial data for each resource and combined data layers to show important relationships among them.

How were the maps compiled?

The maps were generated by the COGCNV and gathered through NEMO.

How will this NRIA be updated and revised?

One of the goals of the NRIAC is to provide a structure around which future investigators can organize incoming data and more detailed studies. This NRIA therefore includes a section in which known gaps in the in the data are listed on page 11, with suggestions about areas in which future efforts should be focused. The Conservation Commission will be responsible for organizing further studies, verifying information in the field, and describing any changes in the resources over time.

Besides its paper form, this document will be available electronically. As new data is gathered, the maps found in this document can be updated. The Town website will be available to provide easy access to the NRIA by both the public and town officials. New or corrected information will promptly be made available to all land use agencies in Beacon Falls.

Part I Open Space

Maps and Environmental Review Reports