**2020 Fairlee Town Plan**

**Summary of Specific Environmental Goals, Policies, & Approved Actions as Related to Natural Resources [*highlights by LF*]**

**Goal 1**

**To protect the natural, scenic and historic character of Fairlee while allowing the land to be worked and enjoyed safely and harmoniously.**

**Policies to Further Goal 1**

1. It is the policy of the Town to protect the natural, scenic and historic character of Fairlee’s working landscape.

2. It is the policy of the Town to actively *enhance and maintain* Fairlee’s outdoor environment for both active and passive recreational uses including hiking, fishing, boating, camping, hunting, music and the arts.

3. It is the policy of the Town to protect both the view-shed and noise-shed surrounding Lake Morey from possible development and noise obstructions.

**Goal 2**

**To maintain or enhance the quality and quantity of drinking-water resources (groundwater).**

**Policies to Further Goal 2**

1. It is the policy of the Town to permit development in Fairlee only if it does not result in the pollution of groundwater or cause unreasonable reductions in supply.

2. It is the policy of the Town to carefully review and monitor land use activities which potentially threaten groundwater quality.

**Actions to Achieve Goal 2**

1. The Town should continue testing water quality in Lake Morey and verify that the same is being done by the surrounding towns on Lake Fairlee.

**Goal 3**

**To maintain or improve surface water quality and quantity.**

**Policies to Further Goal 3**

1. It is the policy of the Town to not allow ground disturbance within 35 feet of the top of the bank of designated permanent streams except those that by their nature must be located near streams, such as bridge or culvert construction or permitted bank stabilization.

2. It is the policy of the Town to not allow buildings within 50 feet of the top of the bank of designated permanent streams.

3. It is the policy of the Town to review all proposed development for appropriate location away from brooks, streams, tributaries, and well head recharge areas and for adequate protection of the recharge environment of these resources.

4. It is the policy of the Town to encourage preservation of the natural State of streams by protecting adjacent wetlands and natural areas and by maintaining existing stream bank and buffer vegetation including trees.

**Actions to Achieve Goal 3**

1. The Planning Commission should support the watershed district overlays in the update to the Land Use Chapter & Town map for Lake Morey and Lake Fairlee.

**Goal 4**

**To protect Fairlee’s lakes in a fair and equitable way that ensures their economic and recreational use for future generations.**

**Policies to Further Goal 4**

1. It is the policy of the Town to conform development within the vicinity of Lake Morey, Lake Fairlee and the Connecticut River to State stormwater and lakeshore regulations. These areas are also subject to Fairlee’s Unified Bylaws and any additional local permitting requirements deemed necessary by the DRB.

**Actions to Achieve Goal 4**

1. The Planning Commission *should consider* additional limitations on removal of vegetation within the buffer of streams and lakes as a method of reducing erosion and improving water quality.

**Goal 5**

**To identify and encourage land use development practices that avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on significant wetlands.**

**Policies to Further Goal 5**

1. It is the policy of the Town to abide and adhere to State wetlands regulations.

2. It is the policy of the Town to not locate structural development or intensive *land uses* in mapped wetlands or within buffer zones to significant wetlands. *[applies to logging near “Great Fairlee Wetlands”]*

3. It is the policy of the Town to plan development within a distance adjacent to mapped wetlands (to be determined by the Planning Commission) so as not to result in undue disturbance to wetland areas or their function. *Mitigating measures* (including but not limited to buffers) to protect the function of a wetland are an acceptable measure. *[potential loophole for logging]*

4. It is the policy of the Town to direct funding from the State of Vermont *which comes from off-site mitigation* [???] to the Fairlee Conservation Commission (if such a commission is created) for future land preservation and protection.

**Actions to Achieve Goal 5**

1. The Planning Commission should develop buffer rules for mapped wetlands. [yes, and we should submit recommendation that it be 100 feet to protect beaver/otter habitat]

2. The Town should consider completing a Town-wide wetlands inventory. [possible task for conservation commission]

**Goal 6**

**To identify and encourage land use practices that avoid or mitigate depletion and erosion of soil.** *[applies to farms not forests]*

**Policies to Further Goal 6**

1. It is the policy of the Town to support soil conservation practices including crop rotation, cover crops, conservation tillage, and windbreaks.

2. It is the policy of the Town to reduce impermeable surfaces (such as concrete) to encourage water penetration into the ground.

**Actions to Achieve Goal 6**

1. The Planning Commission should support State best soil management practices for farmers and landowners.

2. The Town should encourage farmers to transition to better soil conservation practices.

**Goal 7**

**To reduce risk to residents from flood damage.**

**Policies to Further Goal 7**

1. It is the policy of the Town that flood hazard areas and river corridors shall not be built upon in order to preserve public safety.

2. It is the policy of the Town that land development shall not result in net loss of flood storage or increased or diverted flood levels that would increase risk to adjacent areas.

3. It is the policy of the Town that utilities or facilities serving existing development (e.g. water lines, electrical service, waste disposal systems, roads and bridges) may be located within these areas only when off-site options are not feasible and provided that these utilities or facilities meet the flood proofing requirements in Fairlee’s Zoning Regulations.

4. It is the policy of the Town to maintain its membership in the National Flood Insurance Program.

5. It is the policy of the Town to *recognize* that upland areas adjacent to unstable rivers and to steep streams may be at risk of erosion during floods. [how? to what end?]

6. It is the policy of the Town to prevent new buildings (except development exempted by State law, such as agriculture) in the Flood Hazard Area. [we should look at this map to see if it includes the forest streams]

**Actions to Further Goal 7**

1. The Planning Commission should ensure the latest river corridor maps, adjusted as needed to accommodate existing development under State rules, are used to delineate flood risk areas.

2. The Planning Commission should maintain the Fairlee Zoning Regulations’ prohibition on new development within the floodplain, only allowing renewable energy generation facilities, recreational and agricultural uses.

3. FEMA should revise Fairlee’s Flood Hazard maps to accurately reflect the locations of current and future flood hazard areas to assist in appropriate land use decisions.

4. When building or repairing roads and drainage structures, the Town shall seek to minimize future flood risk by sizing structures so that they take into account past flood events.

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**Goal 8**

**To preserve large, connected blocks of forestlands for habitat, wildlife corridors, *and as a base for forestry.***

**Policies to Further Goal 8**

1. It is the policy of the Town that rural development, other than isolated houses and camps, should be designed to preserve continuous areas of wildlife habitat whenever possible, and efforts should be made to maintain connecting links between such areas. [a Conservation Commission could assist Zoning with this]

2. It is the policy of the Town **that forestry, conservation and outdoor recreation** [we should challenge this order so forestry comes last when Plan is revised] are the preferred uses for lands more than 300 feet inside areas shown as high priority forest blocks or wildlife corridors.

3. It is the policy of the Town that new roads or power lines shall avoid cutting through forest blocks.

4. It is the policy of the Town that subdivisions on large lots with forest shall practice conservation subdivision design by concentrating new lots on the edge of forest so as to retain interior forest in a contiguous and unfragmented lot.

5**. It is the policy of the Town to work with conservation groups and others to allow public recreational use of conserved and/or Town lands in ways that maintains their habitat functions**. [**YES!]**

6. It is the policy of the Town to *promote* sustainable forestry on forestlands. [emphasis should be on sustainable, not forestry]

**Actions to Further Goal 8**

1. The Planning Commission should revise the zoning regulations to create districts or provisions to limit development in the Forest/Conservation future land use area from the Town Plan. [See p. 5 below]

2. The Planning Commission should create conservation subdivision standards, waivers, and incentives to achieve forest protection balanced with economic benefit for forest owners. [Yes, and a Conservation Commission could help define this balance]

**Goal 9**

**To sustain the natural diversity of flora and fauna found in Fairlee.**

**Policies to Further Goal 9**

***1. It is the policy of the Town that native wildlife populations and natural diversity should be sustained and enhanced. [YES!]***

**Actions to Achieve Goal 9**

1. The Planning Commission should partner with local conservation groups *or any other interested parties* to protect vulnerable flora and fauna populations. [Need more specifics; need research on vulnerable populations and their habitat requirements; need a local conservation group (CC) to assemble and validate recommendations. THIS IS THE ROLE I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE ON.]

**Goal 10**

**To maintain or improve the natural diversity, populations, and migratory routes of natural species, including peregrine falcons, bald eagles, warblers, and the Palisades natural area.**

**Policies to Further Goal 10**

1. It is the policy of the Town *to encourage long- term protection of critical habitats and significant natural communities through conservation easements, land purchases, leases and other incentives*. [precisely the role of a Conservation Commission].

2. It is the policy of the Town to protect deer wintering areas from development and other uses that adversely impact these areas.

3. It is the policy of the Town that *preference shall be given to development that utilizes existing roads* and whenever possible preserves existing agricultural use.

**Actions to Achieve Goal 10**

1. The Planning Commission should consult with the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife to understand how to best maintain habitat for natural species. [Why not a Conservation Commission or group?]

**Goal 11**

**To reduce the impact of invasive species on Fairlee’s ecosystems.**

**Policies to Further Goal 11**

1. It is the policy of the Town that new occurrences of invasive species should be controlled to prevent further infestations. [Ask Town to treat invasive Giant Knotweed creeping into Town Forest on Bald Top Rd.]

**Actions to Achieve Goal 11**

1. The Town should encourage Town employees, contractors, businesses and individuals to become familiar with the best management practices to prevent the accidental spread of invasives.

2. The Town should schedule roadside mowing to minimize and reduce the spread of invasive species.

3. The Town should work with concerned parties to ensure that all boats are properly cleaned before going into or coming out of the lakes.

4. The Town should work to inventory the trees alongside its roads and stay abreast of emerald ash borer spread to plan for removal of trees if needed.

5. The Town should explore hardwood replacement species for ash trees (e.g. oak, elm, and hickory) with consideration to location and nut production.

**Specific Forest-Related Goals**

**Chapter 10, Goal 1**

**Encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the Town's agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain its environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural features.**

**Policies to Further Goal 1**

1. It is the policy of the Town to discourage fragmentation of existing or potential contiguous areas of high value farming or forestry, into uses other than those incidental to agriculture or forestry [***Way too much license for Knox-ification!]***

2. It is the policy of the Town that where high value agricultural and forested land are identified, clustered or peripheral development is especially encouraged to protect such resources and prevent fragmentation and sprawling settlement patterns.

3. It is the policy of the Town to encourage farmers, loggers, and foresters to use Accepted Management Practices (AMP) and implement Best Management Practices (BMP) in their operations and to minimize point and non-point source pollution***. [Should be REQUIRED, not encouraged]***

**Actions to Achieve Goal 1**

1. The Town should encourage the agricultural industry, conservation organizations, public schools and the tourism and recreation industries to sponsor continuing educational opportunities to the public that would promote a better understanding of farming and forestry practices and natural resource management in general. [Like FFF guided forest tours, website, Forest Fest, Great Fairlee Wetlands research and presentation, and FCA’s “Secret Lives” slide presentations]

**Goal 2**

**Protect the Region's rural agricultural character, scenic landscape, and recreational resources**

**Policies to Further Goal 2**

1. It is the policy of the Town to preserve recreational and scenic access by ensuring that at the completion of logging projects all roads are restored to their previous condition.

2. It is the policy of the Town to skirt tracts of productive agricultural land rather than divide them when constructing utilities, roads or other physical modifications.

**Goal 3**

**To encourage the economic growth of agricultural and forest operations at a scale that is appropriate for Fairlee**

**Policies to Further Goal 3**

1. It is the policy of the Town to support the development of *value-added* [?] farm and forestry products in Fairlee.

2. It is the policy of the Town that contiguous forest and significant agricultural areas should remain largely in non-intensive uses unless no reasonable alternative exists to provide essential residential, commercial and industrial activities for the Town’s inhabitants. [*Needs definition of “reasonable alternative” and “essential”; needs commitment to “Town’s inhabitants”, not loggers from Corinth]*

**Actions to Achieve Goal 3**

1. Local land use planning activities and programs affecting agriculture and forestry should consider the ways to *promote* these industries. This could include local bylaws and the creation of farm and forest land conservation programs, including overlay districts, agricultural zoning, transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, cluster development, area based allocation and/or performance standards. [This needs to be closely watched as it could be used to undermine many other policies and actions protecting forests, wetlands, and wildlife*. It would be interesting to know exactly how many Fairlee residents earn money from logging on land in Fairlee and what the annual net income and trends have been over the past decade*.]

**Chapter 11: Recreation**

**Goal 1**

**To maintain, enhance, and expand recreational opportunities in Fairlee.**

**Policies to Further Goal 1**

It is the policy of the Town to encourage patterns of land use that maintain and enhance the opportunity for outdoor recreation. [Research should be done on each type of forest-based recreation and its impact on the environment and on the other types of forest recreation. Types that damage trails and wildlife habitats or infringe on wildlife refugia or the rights of other users should either be discouraged or restricted to designated areas.]

**Actions to Achieve Goal 1**

1. The Town should explore efforts to create public access to the Connecticut River Byway.

**Goal 2**

**To make outdoor recreation a strong part of Fairlee’s year-round local economy.**

**Policies to Achieve Goal 2**

1. It is the policy of the Town to encourage the development of outdoor recreational businesses which operate in harmony with the surrounding area.

**Actions to Achieve Goal 2**

1. The Town should explore updating the Town Forest plan to include recreational uses.

2. The Town should consider updating the ATV’s ordinance on limited use of public trails.

***-- WE SHOULD TRY TO MAKE SURE THEY DO MORE THAN “EXPLORE” AND “CONSIDER”!!!***