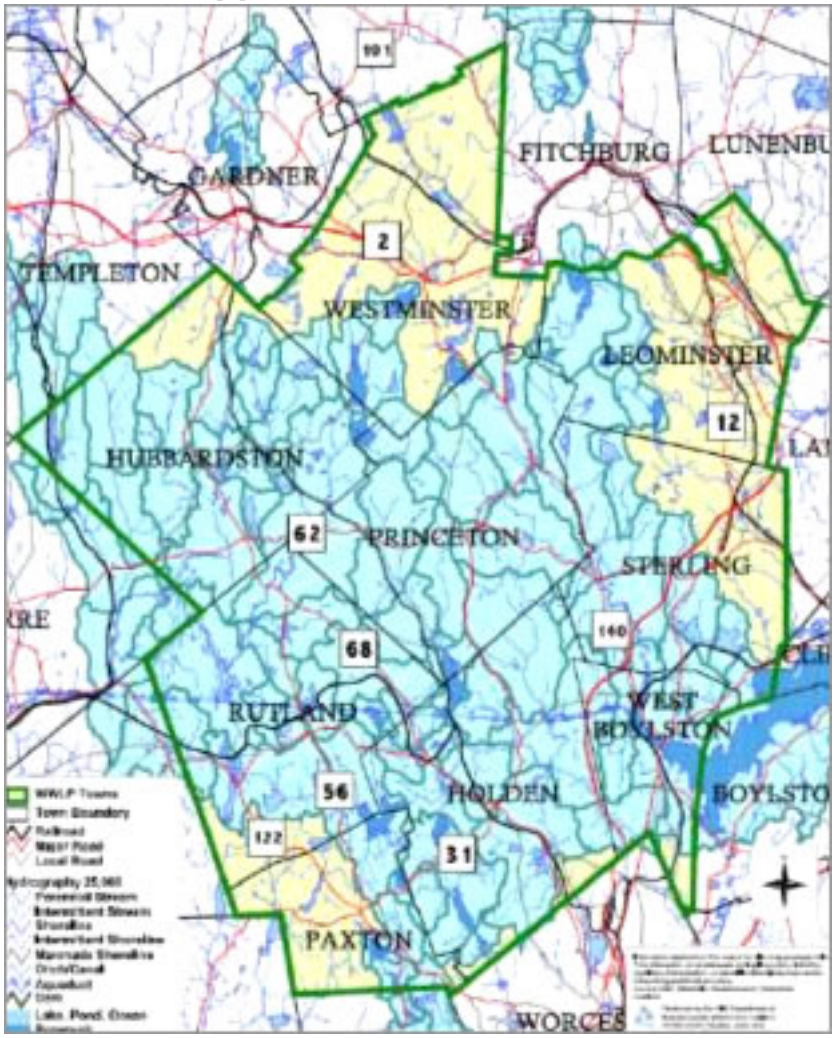
The four conservation priorities presented in the Greenprint are based on community surveys, regional reports, public forums, and state and federal policies, and support the similar objectives of Wachusett communities.

A. Water Supplies



Wachusett Regional Water Supply As the map shows, **most of the land in the Wachusett region is part of public water supply watersheds.**

Wachusett watersheds are unique resources that produce high quality drinking water for local residents, as well as other communities including Worcester, Fitchburg, and metropolitan Boston.

The region supplies water to two-thirds of the state's population, and Wachusett waters are vital

to the state's economic future.

Since future growth can impact the region’s ecosystems, land protection and Low Impact Development   are essential to avoid damages to water supplies.

The growth of eastern Massachusetts has shown that sprawling subdivisions can impair water quality and lead to increasing costs for water users. Acquisition of additional watershed lands is an ongoing priority of local and state water suppliers.

B. Working Lands and Forests



Photo credit: K. Blanchflower Along with clean water, residents of Wachusett communities highly value the region’s agricultural and forested landscapes. The preservation of rural landscapes is a main objective of the *Greenprint*.

Protection of both working farms and forests has many benefits for wildlife, water supplies, scenic qualities, energy, tourism, and the local economy. It prevents fragmentation of forests, stimulates expansion of small businesses that create jobs for the region’s residents, and slows the alteration of open spaces into new housing.

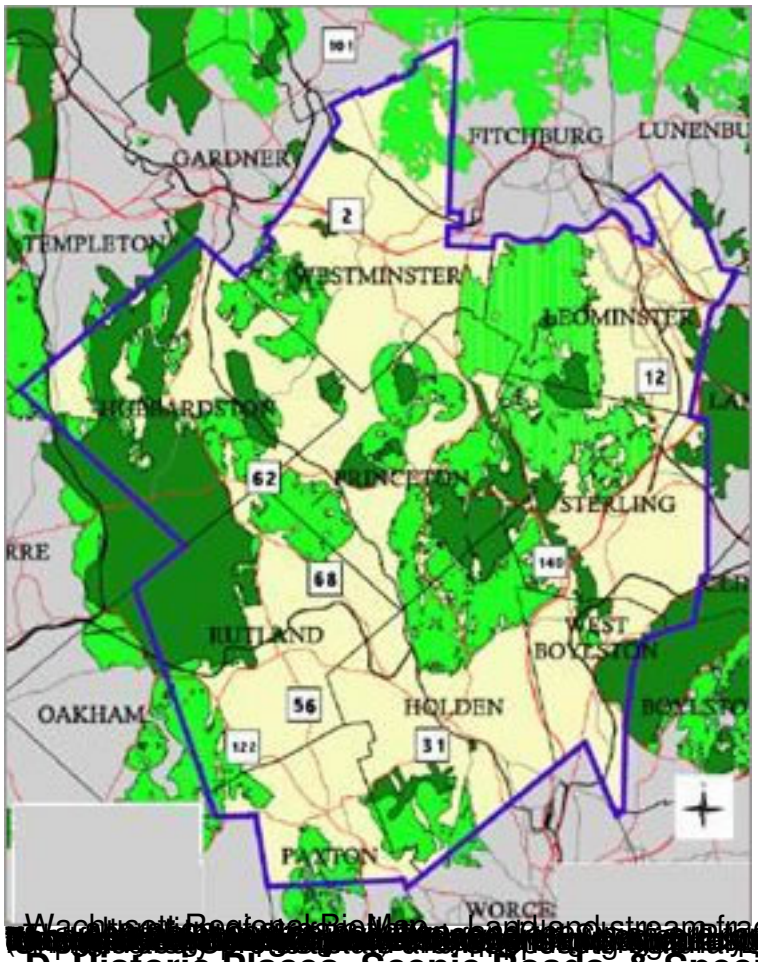
Central Massachusetts has seen a rapid loss of working lands during the past thirty years, as fields and forests are developed for new housing. **The acreage of farms and forests decreased by more than 20% between 1985 and 1999** (CMRPC). Furthermore, the **increasing age of owners** is placing the future of working lands at risk to development. Working lands are often zoned for large-lot residential use, which tends to hasten forest fragmentation and the loss of rural character, wildlife habitats, and other benefits.



C. Wildlife Habitats

Wildlife abounds in the Wachusett Region, and places like the DCR Ware River Reservation are noted for biodiversity. Along with wildlife, coldwater fisheries and warm water fisheries are popular with community residents and visitors.

Fish and wildlife can thrive if habitats are not developed and one aim of the *Greenprint*is to preserve important wildlife areas.



Wachusett Regional Bio Map - Landscape fragmentation can cause

D. Historic Places, Scenic Roads, & Special Landscapes



Source: Town of Sterling, MA Website Many local roads, especially numbered routes, have evolved from the cart paths and stage coach routes of earlier times, which link town centers and historic places. Municipal plans recommend preservation of scenic roads, and careful site design can allows commercial development to occur in compliance with this goal. Preservation of historic routes is necessary to sustain rural character and foster the tourism desired by Wachusett communities.

Historic roads trace the settlement of the Wachusett region and connect

residents and visitors to historic,
scenic landscapes. Many local roads, especially numbered routes, have evolved from the cart paths and stage coach routes of earlier times, which link town centers and historic places. Municipal plans recommend preservation of scenic roads, and careful site design can allows commercial development to occur in compliance with this goal. Preservation of historic routes is necessary to sustain rural character and foster the tourism desired by Wachusett communities.

Major routes which link neighboring communities have not been targeted for preservation. These are the travel corridors most often used by residents and visitors, and preservation of scenic landscapes along these roads is essential to sustain the region's small-town qualities.



The alteration of major roads by new land uses can greatly affect residents' "sense of place" and their perception of the rural character of their community. For example, the presence of strip malls and sprawling subdivisions on well-traveled routes diminishes the scenery that initially attracted people to live in Wachusett communities. **Although intensive land uses may only affect a short road segment, the high visibility of these alterations can have a much greater impact on community character.**

Specific locations targeted for conservation on the basis of these four priorities can be found in the full text of the *Wachusett Greenprint*