

## 4. Priority Areas of Conservation



### A. SIGNIFICANT RESOURCE AREAS

This Open Space and Farmland Plan identifies the key issues facing open space and agricultural resources in the Town, highlights the location and importance of these resources, and provides a framework for collaborative efforts for their conservation. The inventory of the existing natural resources, agriculture lands, and open spaces that contribute to the Town's character, as described in Chapter 3, provides the basic environmental data and analysis necessary to make qualified judgments on which areas would provide the greatest benefit and are worthy of closer consideration for conservation.

The 2009 Pleasant Valley Town Comprehensive Plan laid the groundwork for land conservation policy in the Town. As part of the Town Plan, three important greenway areas were identified; the Wappinger Creek corridor, the area to the east of the Taconic State Parkway bordering the Town of Washington, and the rural/agricultural areas in the north and west sections of Town.

This Plan expands upon the foundation established in the 2009 Town Comprehensive Plan, by providing additional detail on identified greenway areas and their specific environmental and natural resource characteristics. As such, this Plan apportions the three originally identified

greenway areas, into six Significant Resource Areas (see Exhibit 4.1). These Significant Resource Areas are a synthesis of overlapping layers of important resources and existing land conservation patterns and this Plan recommends that land conservation efforts by the Town should be focused within these areas:

1. Gretna Road / Salt Point Area
2. VanWagner Road Area
3. Wappinger Creek Corridor
4. Traver Road / Drake Road Area
5. Pine Hill Area
6. Taconic East Area

Land conservation is already taking root in most of these areas as some large landowners have already recognized the importance of conserving open space. This is evidenced by the more than 500 acres of land, which have been preserved via voluntary private conservation easement agreements.

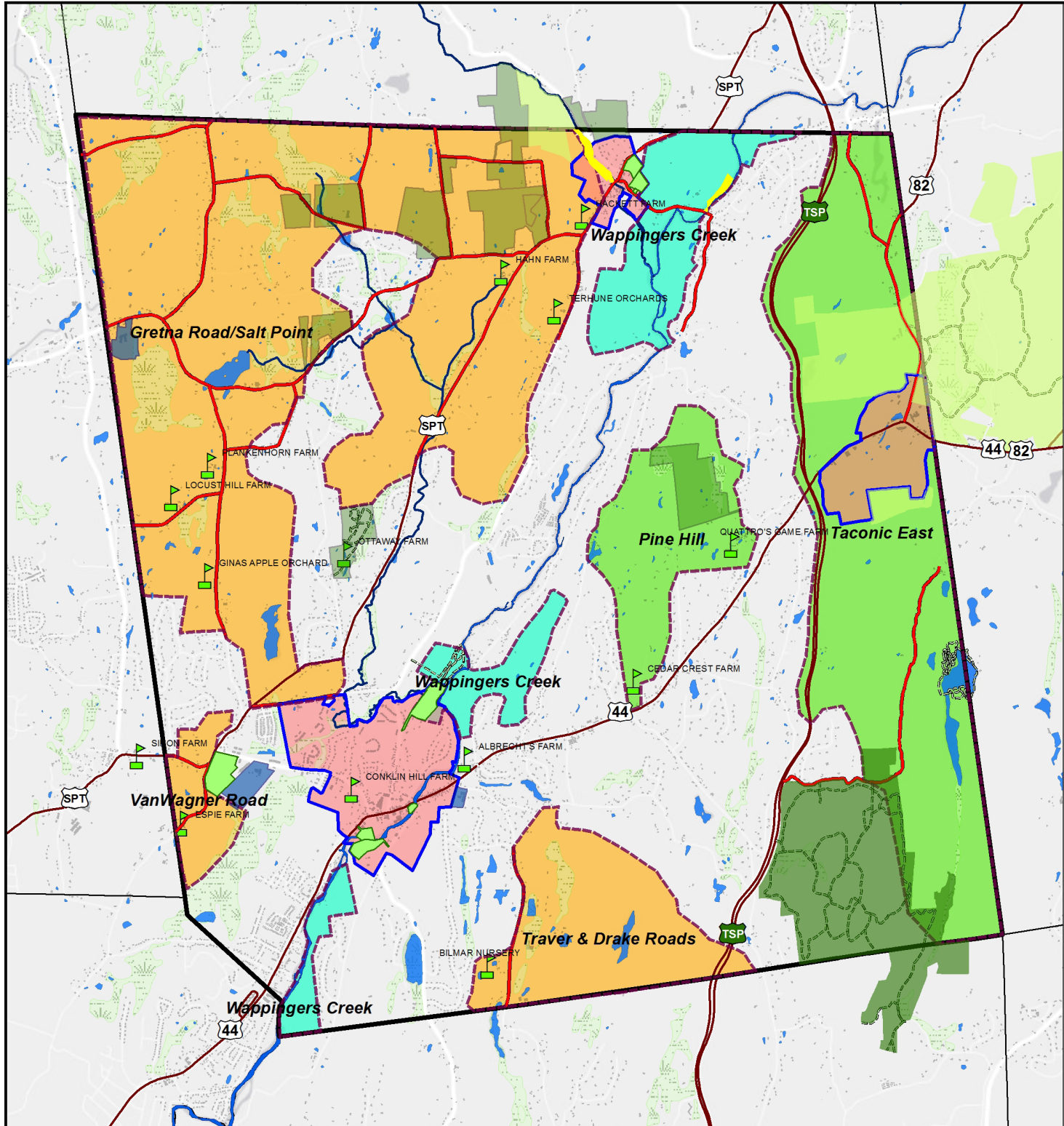























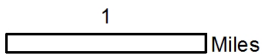
Exhibit 4.1—Significant Resource Areas

Legend

-  Priority Area (Agriculture/Habitat)
-  Priority Area (Forest/Habitat)
-  Priority Area (Water Quality/Habitat)
-  Town Parks
-  Taconic Hereford Multiple Use Area (NYSDEC)
-  Public School
-  Other Town Owned Parcels
-  Lands of Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies
-  Conservation Easements (Dutchess Land Conservancy)
-  Hamlets
-  Scenic Roads
-  Farms
-  Pleasant Valley Boundary
-  Wappingers Creek
-  Little Wappingers Creek
-  Great Spring Creek
-  Trails (Open to Public)
-  Water Body
-  NYSDEC Wetland
-  State Highways
-  Structures
-  Other Municipal Boundaries



Data Sources:  
 Dutchess County OCIS - GIS Division  
 Dutchess County Department of Planning & Development  
 Dutchess County Real Property Tax Service Agency  
 Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County  
 Cornell University Geospatial Information Repository  
 NYS GIS Clearinghouse  
 Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies



### 1. GRETNA ROAD / SALT POINT AREA

Identified as a 'Greenway Area' of the Town by the 2009 Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan, the Gretna Road / Salt Point Area traverses most of the north and west sections of Town, in and around the hamlet of Salt Point and along the Gretna Road and Salt Point Turnpike corridors.

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*Important conservation goals in this area include preservation of working farms (agricultural resources), wetland systems (critical habitat areas) and maintaining the Town's rural character (scenic viewsheds).*

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Gretna Road, with its high elevation, is widely acknowledged in Town as a significant scenic road with views of rolling farmland and distant mountains. There are several large working farms along Gretna Road as well as two small lakes, numerous small ponds, and large tracts of forested areas. Many of these defining resources are located on large tracts of land.

Salt Point, with its sharply defined small hamlet center provides a uniquely pastoral setting and exemplifies the scenic and agricultural character that embodies Pleasant Valley's rural beginnings and traditions. Salt Point is a unique, historic farm hamlet that has, for the most part, withstood the pressures of development. Active farmlands right on the edge of the hamlet are, to this day, producing corn, vegetables, fruit and livestock not only for Town residents, but also for the regional population. The hamlet center is surrounded by open land of exceptional pastoral beauty that is mostly devoted to agricultural production. Protecting this farmland, which contributes substantially to the Town's agricultural economic vitality, is worthy of special attention.

Fertile agricultural soils extend westward from the Wappinger Creek to high quality lands in the Towns of Clinton and Hyde Park. Most of the Town's working agricultural enterprises operate from this area including Hahn Farm (which operates a Farm Market and offers fall harvest seasonal activities), Atkins Farm (a cattle farm that serves as the western gateway to the Salt Point hamlet), and Terhune Orchards (an apple and peach orchard). Currently there are approximately 500 acres of land in this area that are protected through voluntary private conservation easements.

Two major tributary's of the Wappinger Creek flow through this area supplying the larger watershed with clean water. The Wappinger Creek and the Little Wappinger Creek flow through the hamlet and converge to the south. The Little Wappinger Creek flows over a dam in the hamlet, creating a scenic waterfall and providing a ripe opportunity for the development of some passive recreation activities including: fishing and hiking.

The Dutchess Wetlands Complex, identified as a significant ecosystem by NYSDEC, includes many of the wetlands in the northwest corner of Town. This wetlands system contains high biodiversity value with confirmed habitat patterns and sightings of Blanding's Turtle, a New York Threatened Species. These wetlands also form the headwaters for the Great Spring Creek, another major tributary to the Wappinger Creek.

This Gretna Road/Salt Point Turnpike areas offer some of the most scenic views in the County. Many of the scenic roads identified in the 2009 Town Comprehensive Plan are located northwest of the Salt Point Turnpike.



Despite pressure from residential development since the early 1980s, land ownership remains comprised of mostly large parcels of agricultural and undeveloped land. This Plan recommends that the Town actively encourage the development of more agricultural uses in this area in an effort to protect agriculturally significant soils and rural character.

The Gretna Road/Salt Point Area provides a great opportunity for the Town to build upon the success of existing voluntary private conservation easements by encouraging more voluntary participation in permanent easement programs. Any future development that is adjacent to these protected lands should include plans to form larger contiguous blocks of open spaces in order to foster habitat connectivity.

## 2. VANWAGNER ROAD AREA

The VanWagner Road Area is characterized by open rolling farmland and contains a small area between West Road and the Salt Point Turnpike directly adjacent to one of the only large open areas within the adjacent Town of Poughkeepsie.

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*Important conservation goals in this area include preservation of working farms (agricultural resources), wetland systems (critical habitat areas) and maintaining the Town's rural character (scenic viewsheds).*

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This area contains some of the best agricultural soils and consequently active farms in the Town and these prime soils continue north and west into the adjacent Towns of Hyde Park and Poughkeepsie.

The VanWagner Road Area borders a large NYS-DEC wetland and contributing stream corridor

and the southern portion of this area is located in a prime aquifer recharge area. According to adopted habitat mapping from the Town of Poughkeepsie, this area contains a high potential for Blanding's Turtle nesting habitat that extends into the Town of Pleasant Valley from the west.

Both VanWagner Road and Salt Point Turnpike are identified as Scenic Roads by the 2009 Town Comprehensive Plan and offer important scenic qualities of both well maintained farm structures and rolling agricultural fields and expansive bucolic view to the south.

## 3. WAPPINGER CREEK CORRIDOR

Identified as a 'Greenway Area' of the Town by the 2009 Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan, the Wappinger Creek is the foremost significant natural feature in the Town of Pleasant Valley. The Creek bisects the Town from the northeast to the southwest and is flanked by steep, rocky terrain to the east and rolling hills to the west. Ninety percent of the Town of Pleasant Valley is located in the Wappinger Creek Watershed and its network of streams, ponds, and wetlands.

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*Important conservation goals in this area shift from agriculture to the protection of water quality while still placing importance on habitat protection and maintenance of scenic beauty.*

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The lowest elevations in Town run along the Wappinger Creek corridor and some of the steepest slopes are located between Pleasant Valley and Salt Point along the Creek valley. The Wappinger Creek corridor is the primary water resource in the Town and contains most of the major floodplain areas. The Creek also feeds a major Zone 1 groundwater aquifer, which serves as a major

source of drinking water source for the Town and beyond. This area also contains large contiguous wooded areas along its banks and in the surrounding elevations, especially on the eastern side of the valley. Retention of natural vegetation should be required in order to maintain water quality and overall health of the Creek.

Because there is already significant residential and industrial development along the Creek, especially in the central portion of Town, this Plan identifies three focus areas along Creek that offer the best opportunities for conservation. These areas are:

- The fields and wooded areas surrounding the confluence of the Wappinger Creek and Little Wappinger Creek to the south of Salt Point Hamlet;
- The fields and forested hillsides to the north-east of the Pleasant Valley hamlet; and
- The fields and floodplains along the Wappinger Creek south of the Pleasant Valley hamlet extending to the Town of Lagrange.

The Wappinger Creek itself, long valued by fishing enthusiasts, can play a far more prominent role in the Town's identity, business base and park (recreation) system. Currently, access to the Creek is severely limited. This Plan recommends that the Town seek opportunities to create a Creek-side trail, especially a connection from the Pleasant Valley hamlet to the Wappinger Creek Greenway Trail in the Town of Lagrange. Also, as recommended by the 2011 Recreation Master Plan, the Town should continue efforts to create more fishing and boating access sites at and between Hibernia Road and Bower Park.

#### 4. TRAVER ROAD AND DRAKE ROAD AREA

This Significant Resource Area, in the south-central area of the Town to the east of Traver Road and south of Drake Road, is an extension of the large, pristine areas along the Taconic State Parkway. Currently, this area includes a mix of large forest tracts and scenic agricultural fields. Residential activity has primarily occurred along the existing Town roads, creating a large contiguous undeveloped interior.

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*Important conservation goals in this area include preservation of working farms (agricultural resources), wetland systems (critical habitat areas) and maintaining the Town's rural character (scenic viewsheds).*

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This area serves as the southern gateway into the Town of Pleasant Valley and contains several important large and small ponds, connecting streams and wetland systems. The area is contiguous to open space conservation initiatives in the northern part of the Town of Lagrange extending south to James Baird State Park.

The Dutchess Wetlands Complex, identified as a significant ecosystem by NYSDEC, includes many of the wetlands in the south central portion of Town. As previously noted for the Gretna Road/Salt Point, Significant Resource Area, this wetlands system contains high biodiversity value with confirmed habitat patterns and sightings of Blanding's Turtle, a New York Threatened Species, just south in the Town of Lagrange.

## 5. PINE HILL AREA

The fifth Significant Resource Area identified in the Plan, is the forests and higher elevations along Pine Hill Road north of Route 44, south of Davis Road and west of the Taconic Parkway. This significant area contains some of the Town's steepest terrain (slopes) and high quality, contiguous forested lands.

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*The primary conservation goal in this area is the preservation of contiguous forests.*

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Preserving large contiguous forest areas has many benefits including maintenance of water quality, protection of necessary habitat areas and corridors for non-threatened species and the absorption of carbon.

The Pine Hill Area is located mostly in the Pleasant Valley East sub-watershed and contains a significant portion of that watershed's northern headwaters land.

The Pine Hill area also contains some spectacular western views of the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains along a large stretch along the higher elevations of Pine Hill Road.

The recent establishment of a large voluntary private conservation easement of primarily forested land south of Davis Road can serve as the cornerstone for land conservation initiatives within this area. This Plan recommends that the Town explore opportunities to expand these conservation initiatives along Pine Hill.

## 6. TACONIC EAST AREA

Identified as a 'Greenway Area' of the Town by the 2009 Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan, the Taconic East Area lies along the Town's eastern boundary and includes the land east of the Taconic State Parkway including the Washington Hollow hamlet area.

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*Important conservation goals in this area include conservation of high quality forests, critical habitat areas and protection of water quality.*

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Several public agencies and private organizations own large land holdings in this area thereby preserving a corridor of great beauty and environmental significance. From south to north, the NYSDEC Taconic Hereford Multiple Use Area, Rockefeller University Research Facility, Innisfree Foundation, and Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies own and maintain thousands of contiguous acres of high quality forests and scenic meadows devoted to environmental research, resource management, and public recreation. These large open spaces continue east into the Town of Washington with many, very large single-ownership parcels and very low density.

This area contains some of the most rugged land in the Town of Pleasant Valley. The general combination of steep slopes, shallow soils and exposed bedrock over much of the terrain makes the development of septic systems and foundations difficult. Road access is poor or non-existent to many areas.

The Taconic East Area includes approximately 2,200 acres and has been designated a "Significant Area of Dutchess County" by the Dutchess

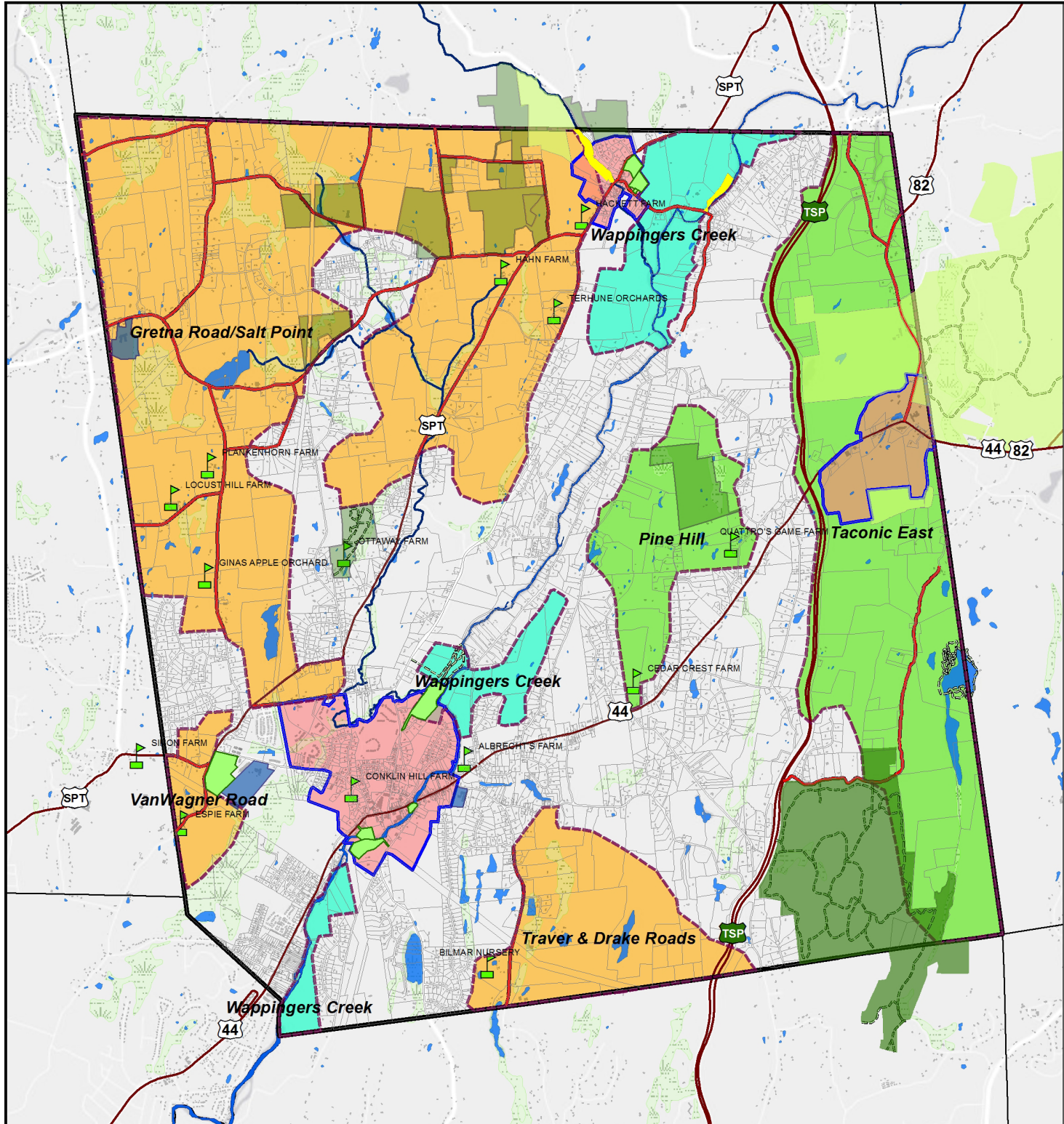



























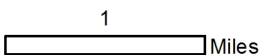
Exhibit 4.2— Significant Resource Areas (with Tax Parcels)

Legend

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 NYS GIS Clearinghouse  
 Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies



County Environmental Management Council (DCEMC). This designation means that this area contributes significantly to the health, diversity, and enjoyment of the County's resource base. This same area supports a variety of wildlife and as such, has also been designated by NYS-DEC as New York State Significant Habitat. However, most privately owned parcels within this greenway area are not under any permanent development restrictions.

It is this combination of existing conserved lands, high quality natural resources and large contiguous adjacent open spaces extending well to the east that makes this area particularly important for a coordinated conservation effort. This Plan recommends that the Town work to initiate partnerships and take steps to ensure that more lands within this greenway corridor are permanently protected.

## **B. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP**

It is important to note that Significant Resource Areas defined in this Plan, were based on analysis of overlaying environmental data and development patterns and not targeting specific, individual private properties. However, with the significant areas now defined, overlaying these areas with the individual tax parcels allows one to see exactly which land parcels lie within each of the Significant Resource Areas.

Exhibit 4-2, Significant Resource Areas (with Tax Parcels) will be important to reference when opportunities arise to engage individual land owners about land conservation options.

When assessing conservation opportunities, consultation and reliance of the identified Significant Resource Areas is only a first step. The Town would also most likely need to conduct a second-filter analysis of priorities that would include factors that enter into land conservation priority decision-making, such as:

- Criteria of available grant funds or other potential sources of funding;
- Criteria or requirements of any potential project partners (such as a nonprofit land conservancy organizations or other public agencies);
- Taxpayer support for a particular project;
- Public cost/benefits analysis; and
- Geographic distribution of projects and the distribution of projects within particular resource categories (i.e. farms, forests, aquifers, etc.) and governmental boundaries (i.e. school districts).