



Comprehensive Plan  
For  
The Town of Somerville, Maine

For Adoption at Town Meeting

June 23, 2018

**DRAFT**



# Comprehensive Plan



For the Town of  
**Somerville, Maine**  
May 2018



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## Introduction

Somerville is a small very rural town located in the northern tip of Lincoln County. It is bordered by five other towns located in four counties. Prehistoric sites in town indicate that people lived here 6,000-8,000 years ago. The first settlers arrived in the 1700s, forming the Plantation of Patricktown. In 1858 it incorporated as the Town of Somerville. Somerville went bankrupt and de-organized in 1938, becoming Somerville Plantation, until it reorganized in 1973. Since then the population has gradually increased and now equals the 550 people who lived here in the mid 1800s. We are lucky to have both a well written 2 volume town history titled Then & Now, and a fascinating book titled Birth, Death and a Tractor, for those who want to know more of our history.

The Town originally consisted of farms carved from the forests. In time there were school houses, mills, churches, and a hotel. There has never been a singular town center. The current roads follow the routes of roads laid out over 150 years ago. Driving from one end of town to the other requires either driving through surrounding towns or using a very capable vehicle to traverse the unimproved gravel Crummett Mountain Road which periodically has deep mud in places.

Somerville does not have any particularly famous past residents. But it is noteworthy that several families listed in the early 1800 census reports still reside in town. This includes family names of Hewett, Crummett, French, Brown, Peaslee, Hisler and Glidden. And we had at least one minuteman - Simeon Fish (8 October 1752 - 27 April 1841) - who fought in the Revolutionary War, settled and raised family here, and was recorded on census and military pension documents as living in the Plantation of Patricktown, County of Lincoln, and died here. A book<sup>1</sup> was even written about Simeon.

Townpeople have diverse occupations, including farmers, loggers, a few small business people (including home-based businesses), a few professionals, retirees, laborers and office-workers. There are also seasonal residents, mostly spending summers in shoreline homes on ponds. Somerville isn't a known tourist destination or noteworthy name in the state. Yet our out-of-the-way natural resources and unpretentious surroundings, within easy commute to Gardiner, Augusta, Waterville and the midcoast from Belfast to Bath, have made Somerville a good place to call home. In the last ten years, farming is the business sector that has seen the most growth.

Over 15% of town residents serve the Town in employee or volunteer capacities. This includes town officers and officials, various boards, the Somerville Volunteer Fire Department, and groups such as the Somerville Fire Department Auxiliary, Somerville Days Committee, etc.

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1 The ancestors and descendants of Simeon Fish, minuteman of Mason, N.H. and pioneer of Lincoln County, Maine by Hale, Nathan, Published 1969 by Simeon, Amos, and Asa Fish Cemetery Association in Gardiner, ME

Many public services are shared regionally. The fire department has mutual aid agreements with many neighboring departments. We have professional help for Code Enforcement, Assessing, etc. by employing trained people who also work for other towns. We are part of a regional school system that has had great success in trimming administrative costs below the state average and reined in facilities and energy costs, all while improving instruction and adding a Pre-K and Head Start collaboration to better prepare a growing number of economically disadvantaged children to succeed in school. We are a member of a regional solid waste management and recycling organization. And Somerville has participated for a number of years in the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission.

Our children attend RSU 12 schools, primarily Windsor School, through 8th grade and then attend a variety of local high schools. With no town center and few services, the largest item in the Town budget is education expenses as part of RSU 12.

Somerville has a school building that now houses adult education, a combined Head Start and pre-K collaborative program, and the RSU's administrative offices. The school building can serve as an emergency shelter, as it did during the 1998 ice storm when many residents went without power for three weeks.

There are two fire stations, a town office, a road sand and salt storage building, a church and three conservation preserves.

There are three significant ponds and several branches of the Sheepscot River.

The Town of Somerville is spread out geographically with almost 25 miles of public road, or 237 feet per person. And there are over 7 miles of private roads. Local public roads are rural, with 57% of road miles being gravel, with no sidewalks, no rail, no marine transportation, and no airports in or near Somerville. Road capital improvements and maintenance are the Town's second highest portion of its annual budget expenditures. Many local roads need capital improvements as identified in a 2016 engineering report, and the Town is engaged in prioritizing and planning those capital improvements.

Once heavily utilized for sheep, dairy, and other forms of farming, the land has reverted to being mostly forested. The major exceptions are the growing number of small farms and private lawns.

## **Vision for Somerville**

A number of factors have come to the forefront during the comprehensive planning process and have helped frame an understanding of what future community character befits Somerville. Among them is an appreciation of what makes Somerville special.

We are pleased that small farms are the current growth industry in Somerville. This trend is likely to continue. We have inexpensive land available, a lot of soil rated 'farmland of statewide importance' and 'prime farmland', while small scale farming is growing in Maine. The average

age of farmers in Maine is also declining, and the young families starting farms in Somerville reflect that trend, taking advantage of growing markets for local foods.

Somerville started with farming, and the recent resurgence of small farms and young farm families is strongly aligned with our sense of identity. It's a trend that must be well supported by farm-friendly policies as we look to Somerville's future, building not only a way of life for farmers, but also a sense of community and a relationship with the land that become part of many townspeople's lives.

Somerville wants to retain our rural nature and ability to enjoy our natural resources while enabling residents to not be left out of the opportunities and advantages of changing times. This means we must make our policies smarter to reduce sprawl and promote and retain our rural character. It means we must strengthen preservation and protection of natural resources. And it means making capital investments to improve roads and enable Internet based civic and social engagement, business opportunities, remote worker employment, and educational opportunities. All of which will keep our Town a place where people want to live in years to come.

We want townspeople to be a little more in control of their circumstances and to thrive more. The community must remain vital, and even strengthen its sense of community. That includes encouraging farming and other business opportunities in keeping with and based upon sustainable natural resources. And the Town needs to support and encourage more affordable housing, good education, active social involvement, and economic opportunity to meet the needs of both young and old to thrive.

We envision a town that is bucking the trend in Lincoln County by experiencing slow population growth, and of younger families. Although the state predicts a falling population over the next decade, the recent arrival of several families with small children and examination of age demographics make this unlikely. Somerville's largest 2010 age group was the 40-60 year olds with school age children close to that number. Whereas retirees were only half that amount. By 2020 the younger age peak will begin to hit the workforce, starting a new wave of people seeking homes and starting families between 2020 and 2030, provided we meet not only retain our quality of place, but also that generation's expected minimum criteria – regional job and career opportunities, broadband, and good schools.

We want the Town to be a place where there are housing and other supportive options making it easier for residents to live as independently as possible when they grow old. Being rural shouldn't mean insurmountable hardship for elders, it should mean keeping strong connections with friends in the community, and remaining here as a respected elder.

Townspeople like the Town the way it is. They are proud of Somerville. They trust and respect the Town leadership. But the times are changing, and we must work to address limitations and meet evolving expectations in the world today while retaining what makes Somerville special in our low-key way.

## Challenges to Realizing Our Vision

In the course of examining data and polling townspeople several issues, unmet needs, and challenges have been brought to light.

Somerville has a significant number of households that are economically disadvantaged. For instance<sup>2</sup>:

- Median Household<sup>3</sup> income is \$10,000 less than county and state.
- Median Family<sup>4</sup> income is \$22,000 less than county and state.
- Percentage of families in poverty is approximately double the county and state.
- Educational attainment: high school and college are both 5% lower than county or state.
- An estimated 47% of households could not afford to buy a new home.
- An estimated 43% of rental households are cost burdened<sup>5</sup>.
- A household earning 80% of median income cannot afford to purchase or rent a home.

There is inadequate age-appropriate housing to accommodate an aging population. Somerville can be a difficult place to grow old, and that needs to change, as it does for many Maine communities. Housing for the elderly is a growing problem. We lack any assisted living facilities. The Town's 4 acre lot minimum size in most of the Town makes it very difficult for a family to build a small house near their own for relatives. There are no taxis, buses or other organized transportation systems.

The four acre lot minimum in nearly all of town, meant to preserve the Town's rural character, has actually led to more sprawl with most new houses spread along the roads in town. Clustering of houses has been discouraged. New policies are needed which support affordable housing and clustering in subdivisions while preserving large adjacent open spaces which protect and avoid carving up important resources.

The lack of high quality broadband internet service severely limits the ability of Somerville to add home businesses and attract small businesses or professionals that work remotely.

The lack of three phase power limits industrial growth but would also be expensive to change.

We have a wealth of water resources in streams, ponds, wetlands and vernal pools, contributing to two major watersheds. We also have very large tracts of unbroken forest. Preserving these for

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2 Sources include ACS 2010-2015 5yr estimates and MaineHousing analysis

3 A household consists of one or more persons living in the same house, condominium or apartment. They may or may not be related.

4 A family has two or more members who live in the same home and are related by birth, marriage or adoption.

5 Cost burdened housing is when rent or home ownership monthly costs are more than 30 percent of household monthly income, leaving too little for other non-discretionary living expenses.

hunting, recreation, logging, wildlife habitat and regional wildlife corridors will require greater cooperation and assistance of surrounding towns, state agencies, and Midcoast Conservancy.

In the future we need to look for additional opportunities to coordinate and cooperate with surrounding towns for other services. For instance, because of challenging geography and roads segmented by municipal boundaries, it is clear that significant improvements to broadband will require a regional collaborative effort. Regional solutions may be needed for elder housing and for preservation of farm, forest, water, and habitat resources shared with other towns.

There is interest in growing commercial marijuana in Somerville, which the Town will have to decide whether to allow and how to regulate.

We have an important aquifer in town that is very shallow and therefore could be easily polluted. However, most of the people who live over this aquifer are unaware of this.

There has been controversy over dynamite blasting in a gravel pit overlying the aquifer and also the removal of topsoil from an unused farm. This has led to work on a new mineral extraction ordinance proposal. It has also raised awareness of the importance of protecting other valued physical qualities of our rural town.

People are concerned about the cost of taxes, especially the property tax. Ongoing changes in state and national tax policies have increased pressure on property taxes while failing to invest in infrastructure, the next generation's education, modern regional broadband capability, elderly housing needs, nor the growing numbers of families and children living in extreme poverty. All of which makes planning a better future for the people in a small, poor and rural town like Somerville very difficult.

In the next few years, Somerville will need to commit time and resources to the policies and strategies in this plan and work with surrounding towns, with state, county and regional agencies, and with nonprofit organizations to address each of these challenges.

## **Public Participation Summary**

The Comprehensive Plan Committee was originally appointed by the Board of Selectmen in 2013. The Committee was expanded over the next few months and in 2014 formulated a 14 question survey that was mailed to all households, including seasonal residents. We had approximately a 20% return rate. The results showed strong support for the current system of town governance, for limiting building and growth in certain areas to preserve wilderness, for attracting business to town, for continuing current ambulance and emergency services, for maintaining our identity as a residential rural community, and for offering tax incentives to promote farming and agricultural growth.

The Committee then spent many months interviewing people who served the Town in a volunteer or paid position or who were leaders of a group such as the fire department, planning board etc. They were questioned about the role they play, ways things could be changed, how much time they spent, etc. We were amazed that about 15% of all townspeople were engaged in such activities.

Representatives of the committee were present at several town meetings and answered questions and recruited new members for the board. In 2014 an open meeting was held to discuss general concepts that the committee felt were most crucial. The Committee then drafted the individual sections of the proposed plan.

In February and March of 2017 three evening meetings were held to present the draft sections. There was lively discussion, producing several new ideas and corrections presented by townspeople in the audience which have been incorporated into the comprehensive plan. Because of the length of time required to produce this plan there has been turnover of members and only one original member of the Committee is still serving. More than ten residents have served on the Committee.

In April and May a draft plan was produced from the sections, data and maps updated, and policies and strategies aligned among sections and based upon public comment.

On May 24, 2017 a formal hearing of the plan was conducted, with very supportive sentiments and a number of specific suggestions for improvement. Some written comments were also received, including from Garrison Beck of the Midcoast Conservancy and Tyler Kidder of Growsmart Maine. And new Beginning with Habitat maps have been received from MDIFW.

At least one selectperson has been present at the great majority of Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings. The First Selectman reviewed and commented on the entire document.

On May 30 a work session was held and further input was given by loggers and landowners who were present.

At its Town Meeting on June 17, 2017 the Town narrowly defeated Comprehensive Plan approval. All those with concerns were asked to be involved in future meetings to arrive at a plan the townspeople can approve.

An expanded Comprehensive Plan Committee met several times from July through October 2017. The Committee reviewed concerns with its members and the public attendees. Revisions were made to the Plan. At the October meeting the committee voted to accept the revised Plan and send it to the Board of Selectmen. The Board approved submission to the State and the State responded on April 25, 2018 with recommendations and approval of the Plan as Complete and Consistent, with or without the recommended changes. The committee meet on May 9, 2018 to consider and vote which of the recommendations to incorporate into the Plan. And the Committee scheduled a public meeting to present the plan and answer questions for June 1, 2018. The changes decided by the committee based on State recommendations are reflected in the May 2018 version of the Plan.



## Historic and Archaeological Resources

### Findings and Conclusions

- *Somerville has an interesting prehistoric and historic past including mid 1700s settlement. Some of those historic resources have been lost.*
- *There are some protections of areas and architecture of historic and prehistoric significance are protected in the recent Subdivision ordinance, in addition to State and Federal regulations applicable when State or Federal funds are involved in a project.*
- *Somerville should strengthen protections through amendments to the Land Use and Subdivision ordinances.*

### State Goal

To preserve the State's historic and archaeological resources.

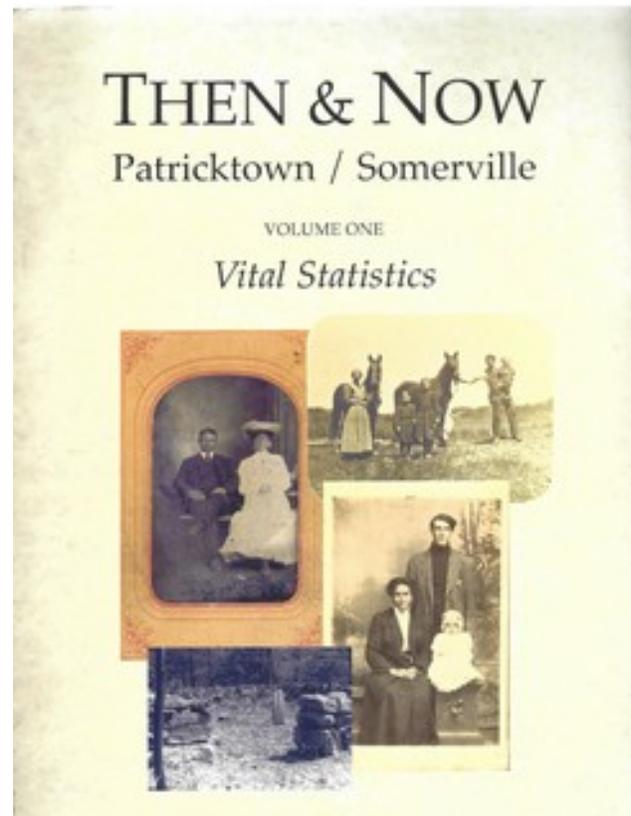
### Condition and Trends

*Based on interview with archaeologist Leon Cranmer 5/22/2014 and on data from Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC).*

Somerville's Comprehensive Planning Historic Data Set as prepared and provided to the community by the Historic Preservation commission (MPHC) consists of three letters at the end of this section of the Plan, and Map 1 - Areas of Prehistoric Archaeological Interest, which is within Appendix A.

Somerville has an interesting prehistoric and historic past. Prehistoric sites indicate occupation in Middle Archaic Period (6000 to 8000 years ago) and Susquehanna Tradition 2800 to 3900 years ago.

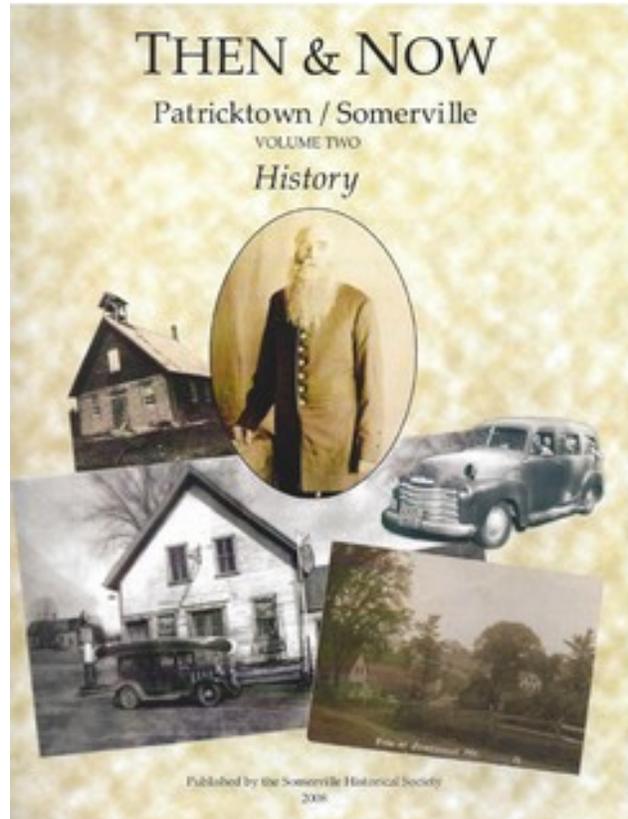
First settlers arrived in mid 1700s into Patricktown on land owned by Kennebec Proprietors. Conflicts evolved into the Malta Wars and eventual payments by settlers to the Proprietors. In 1858 the town incorporated and changed name to Somerville. Outmigration after the Civil War lowered population but during this time the first church and store were



established. The town was bankrupt during the depression and de-organized in 1938, becoming a plantation. It then re-organized in 1970. Slow migration into town gradually raised the population above 500 in the 1990s for the first time since the Civil War.

There is a comprehensive two volume town history, Then & Now, prepared by the Somerville Historical Society in 2008. In 2015 Kelly Payson-Roopchand published Birth, Death, and a Tractor which provides a very human view of Somerville's history, following an early family establishing a farming homestead and their decendents to the present day. Their covers illustrate this section of the Plan. There is also a collection of photos taken by Gordon Parks during the depression. One of them graces the cover of this plan.

There are historic patterns of settlement still evident in Somerville. Comparing the 1857 map (Then and Now Patricktown/Somerville volume one) to a modern map shows main and side roads still exist on historic routes. Several 1800s era houses and stonewalls and home sites (cellar holes) still exist.



Current protection regulations state that if state or federal funds are used for development, areas will be examined for potential historic and archeological sites. This did cause the path of a pipeline to be changed. There is no protection for stonewalls. Somerville does not require examination for private development.

Historic buildings have been lost in recent years. The water powered mill on Turner Pond has deteriorated, the old Somerville School House on Sand Hill Road was torn down, Brown's Store on Patricktown Road was torn down. A one room Somerville school was moved to the historic village at the Windsor Fairgrounds and is preserved as a museum with artifacts from Somerville.

There are known prehistoric sites near James Pond that caused the route of the pipeline to be changed. Historic buildings include the Sawmill on Turner Pond, The South Somerville Baptist Church, and the Brown home on Turner Ridge Road. The MHPC document shows the known prehistoric sites.

The major threats to historic sites are development and modernization or neglect of historic structures. Some areas have never been assessed.

## Policies

In addition to state and federal regulations, polices to protect the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community are limited to the Subdivision Ordinance. The Subdivision Ordinance, within Article I, includes this general purpose:

- 1.8. Will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites or rare and irreplaceable natural areas or any public rights for physical or visual access to the shoreline;

The Subdivision Ordinance, within Article XI, includes the following general standards which must be met:

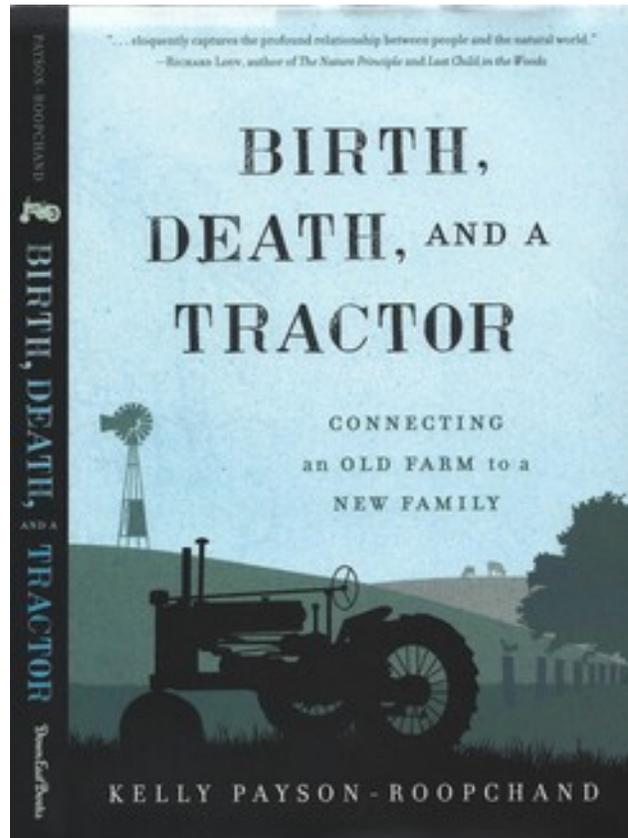
11.2.6 The Board may require that the development plans include a landscape plan that will show the preservation of any existing trees larger than 36” inches diameter breast height, the replacement of trees and vegetation, graded contours, streams and the preservation of scenic historic or environmentally significant areas. Cutting of trees on the northerly borders of lots should be avoided as far as possible, to retain a natural wind buffer.

11.2.7 If the proposed subdivision contains any historical or archaeological sites, or any areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan or by the Maine Critical Areas Program as rare and irreplaceable natural areas, these areas shall be included in the open space, and suitably protected by appropriate covenants and management plans.

The Town of Somerville should strengthen protections of areas, sites, and architecture, of historic or prehistoric significance.

## Strategies

The Town should amend Land Use and Subdivision ordinances to add review of maps and other information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into the review process. And to make clear that if the Planning Board or Code Officer have reason to suspect presence of historic sites (e.g. historic buildings), prehistoric archaeological sites (e.g. Native American sites ) or historic archaeological sites (e.g. cellar holes) within the geographic scope of an



application or plan, then the town will require consultation with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and any agencies that Commission further recommends, to evaluate whether and where there are sites of such significance, and consider the safeguards they recommend.

The Town should amend the Subdivision Ordinance to add excavation limits, not just a final disposition of open space, to the protections for known historic archaeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archaeology within subdivision general standards.

The Town should amend the Land Use Ordinance to extend the same protections to all development, not just subdivisions.

The Town could recognize the work of the now defunct Somerville Historical Society at the next Somerville Days festival, and encourage and support education of residents and landowners about the importance of maintaining historic and prehistoric features. This can include keeping the original appearance of historic buildings, preserving cellar holes and stone walls and keeping up the many cemeteries in town.

The Town could encourage reestablishment of the Somerville Historical Society as an independent organization or a division of a regional society.

The Town should work with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and local or regional historical society if re-established, to assess the need for, and if necessary plan for, a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources.

## MHPC Data – Prehistoric Archaeological Sites

### MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

#### Inventory Data for Municipal Growth Management Plans

Resource:     Prehistoric Archaeological Sites: Arthur Spiess  
               Historic Archaeological Sites: Leith Smith  
               Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects: Kirk Mohney

Municipality: SOMERVILLE.

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Inventory data as of December 2015 :

Three prehistoric archaeological sites are known, on the banks of the Sheepscot River and associated marshes. Various professional archaeological surveys have been completed (shown in yellow on the accompanying map).

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Needs for further survey, inventory, and analysis:

The Sheepscot River valley and marshes, James Pond, and Turner Pond shorelines need survey.

## MHPC Data – Historic Archaeological Sites

### 1 MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

#### Inventory Data for Municipal Growth Management Plans

Resource:     Prehistoric Archaeological Sites: Arthur Spiess  
               Historic Archaeological Sites: Leith Smith  
               Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects: Kirk Mohny

Municipality: Somerville

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Inventory data as of October, 2015 :

To date no historic archaeological sites have been documented for the town.

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Needs for further survey, inventory, and analysis:

No professional town-wide surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in Somerville. Future archaeological survey should focus on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage, particularly those associated with the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## MHPC Data – Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects

### MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

#### Inventory Data for Municipal Growth Management Plans

Resource:   \_\_\_ Prehistoric Archaeological Sites: Arthur Spiess  
              \_\_\_ Historic Archaeological Sites: Leith Smith  
              X Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects: Kirk Mohney

Municipality: Somerville

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Inventory data as of November, 2015 :

No data.

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Needs for further survey, inventory, and analysis:

A comprehensive survey of Somerville's historic above-ground resources needs to be conducted in order to identify those properties that may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.



## **Water Resources**

### **Findings and Conclusions**

- Somerville's water resources and related habitats are valuable to the town's character, attraction, and support of farming, rural living, and many activities, all deserving our protection.
- Somerville should strengthen protections through amendments to the Land Use, Subdivision, and other ordinances and municipal practices.
- Somerville should strengthen its education, inspection, and enforcement practices to ensure protections in ordinances are understood and followed.
- Somerville should work to strengthen regional coordination with communities, with whom we share upstream or downstream watersheds, perhaps through regional conservation organizations.

### **State Goal**

To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas.

### **Town Goal**

To maintain and improve the quality of our abundant and varied water resources for all their uses and habitat importance.

### **Conditions and Trends**

Lands comprising the Town of Somerville are predominantly forest, with many rivers, ponds, seasonal water bodies, vernal pools, and one surface aquifer. These resources are a large part of what makes Somerville special. It is important to protect wetlands and forests to prevent erosion and siltification of streams. Wetlands also serve the important function of filtering and cleansing the water that passes through them, contributing to cleaner water in lakes and streams and providing important habitat such as bird nesting sites.

Wesley Ashe of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife states that most of our town's waters are lotic (flowing). Our ponds are warmwater so they do not support salmon or brook trout. They do support robust bass, perch, pickerel and other fishes. The Sheepscot River supports both warmwater and coldwater fishes including brook trout, brown trout, smallmouth bass, fallfish, yellow perch, white suckers, alewives, American eel, and Atlantic Salmon.

There are several maps in Appendix A documenting the various water resources in the Town of Somerville:

- Map 2 – Regional Landscape (BwH overview)
- Map 3 – Watersheds
- Map 4 – Water Resources & Riparian Habitats
- Map 5 – Significant Sand and Gravel Aquifers

Somerville uses the State Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act as our primary town regulations for water protection, as do all the surrounding towns, reinforced through Somerville's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Other ordinances which provide protections of surface and ground water include the Holding Tank Ordinance, Site Plan Review Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Land Use Ordinance. Low impact development standards are already covered by the Shoreland Protection Regulations. In addition, the mostly four acre minimum lot sizes in Somerville's Management District (all of town not within the Development, Resource Protection, Limited Residential, or Stream Protection districts), and a two acre limit in the Development District comprised of three relatively small regions, ensure that lots provide ample opportunity for recharge without erosion problems when proper practices are followed, and ample capacity for local septic systems. The Subdivision Ordinance provides that for projects within lake watershed districts a phosphorus control analysis and plan shall be submitted for review and approval.

Somerville contributes to both the Sheepscot watershed and the Damariscotta Lake watershed. The recent consolidation of several local conservation associations into the Midcoast Conservancy will make our future coordination easier. This organization serves Somerville plus many upstream and downstream communities. For the portion of Somerville in the Damariscotta Lake watershed, in 2017 and 2018 Midcoast Conservancy has funding available to correct large issues of non-point source pollution (runoff). This funding is awarded on a cost-share basis, where Midcoast Conservancy will pay for some of the project and the recipient can pay for the rest with either cash or labor. This funding is available to towns, road associations, corporations, individuals, and others.

Midcoast Conservancy also has a Youth Conservation Corps program each summer which is open to all Somerville residents. They hire local high school students to help fix erosion issues on anyone's property, and the labor is provided at no cost to the landowner. This program can be used as a cost-effective solution to fix pollution issues throughout Somerville. The programs manager of the Midcoast Conservancy stated that the biggest issue for the Sheepscot watershed is maintaining buffers along lakes and rivers. This is affected by homebuilding and lawns, agriculture (both fertilizers and animals grazing in or near water), timber harvests, and pollutants from households, roads or businesses. Something as simple as one incident of dumping old antifreeze can do serious damage to water quality.

## **Threats**

### *Point Source Pollution*

There are no known point sources of pollution. To strengthen detection of point source pollution our Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) should inspect and enforce septic regulations. The Town, possibly through the CEO, should take an active role in promoting best management practices for septic system maintenance in addition to inspecting and enforcing septic regulations. We can also interview or survey commercial site operators regarding toxic material use to identify other potential sources and educate businesses on best practices.

### *Non-Point Source Pollution*

Non-point source pollution is the most significant threat because many landowners, and some loggers and contractors are unaware of rules for stream and pond protection. We need to increase understanding of the importance of following these rules even for small streams and rivers.

There are very limited areas identified in the Development District - where future residential, commercial, public and industrial development is planned and is considered to be the most desirable in terms of highway access, economic viability, concentration of development, and the retention of natural character in the remainder of the town. The Land Use ordinance has a lengthy General Standards section with an Environmental subsection applicable to activities in all districts. A new subdivision ordinance has also been enacted. These all serve to ensure low overall density of development and give attention to protection and low impact on water and other resources.

The old town dump on Valley Road has been properly sealed and capped so it should not be a pollution problem. If possible toxins such as old railroad ties have been buried, landowners should be asked to unearth them and dispose of them properly.

### *Road Treatments*

The town's salt/sand mixture is already stored in an enclosed building. A problem with the sand and salt mixing process was discovered during the planning process and has been resolved by the Town. The application of salt and other chemicals to roads remains a threat. New chemical mixtures are being used in place of sand on paved roads in winter and need to be used correctly. This is a new concern for non-point sources of pollution deserving education and examination of procedures for proper use and application of these chemicals to minimize surface water impact, particularly at stream crossings.

### *Barriers*

A culvert on Jones Road was repaired and is no longer a barrier for fish passage on the West Branch of Davis Stream. The Turner Pond dam blocks fish migration upstream into the pond.

## Important Water Bodies

The town of Somerville has several important bodies of water.

**Turner Pond:** Turner Pond is 199 acres<sup>6</sup> with a mean depth of 4 feet and maximum depth of 7 feet. It is almost undeveloped with the great majority of shoreline in forest. Water level is maintained by a privately held dam. It is home to fish and turtles. The surrounding forest is part of a large multi-town forest area of over 7000 acres providing home for many animals and unobstructed areas for animal migration. Outflow is to a wetland and Lovejoy Stream which lead to Sheepscot River. The dam blocks fish migration upstream into the pond. It has no known water quality or invasive problems. The dam itself has been vandalized and will require repairs.

**Long Pond:** Long Pond is 504 acres with a mean depth of 11 feet and maximum depth of 16 feet. It is moderately heavily developed with many shoreside septic systems. Removal of Coopers Mills Dam downstream is planned for the near future. However, due to rips in between, the removal will not affect water levels in the pond. This is the only water body in town with frequent motorized boat activity. Long Pond is habitat for alewives which are incredibly important for the watershed as a whole, as well as the health of fish populations in the Gulf of Maine. And it is a major source of habitat in the entire Sheepscot watershed.

**James Pond:** James pond is 56 acres with a mean depth of 11 feet and maximum depth of 18 feet. It has a few homes on its western shore. Described by MDIFW as lentic (water turnover and flow is very slow) due to this lake being beside the Sheepscot River with no definite inflow and outflow track. Water enters the pond from the river through a wetland that is the nesting site for birds. James Pond is habitat for alewives which are incredibly important for the watershed as a whole, as well as the health of fish populations in the Gulf of Maine.

**French Pond:** French Pond is considered by [www.lakesofmaine.org](http://www.lakesofmaine.org) as having 14 acres with no listed mean nor maximum depth. Although shown on various MDIFW documents and maps this 'pond' has existed only as a stream and seasonal water body since the dam was taken out by the flood of 1987. There are numerous seasonal water bodies in Somerville. Some, like French Pond, are good sized and visible to the public. But many are small and located in private woodlots.

There are several important resource protection areas on Long Pond and the wetlands of James Pond. These include identified nesting sites for birds and other animals.

**Sheepscot River:** Many stretches of the main stem of the River are documented Atlantic Salmon spawning and rearing habitat. With removal of the dam at Coopers Mills and improvements at Head Tide, both alewife and salmon populations should be expected to increase, making fish habitat protection/improvement even more important on the upstream branches in Somerville.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.lakesofmaine.org/>

## **Watersheds in Somerville to lakes and ponds outside town**

Damariscotta Lake has 22% of its watershed within Somerville. The watershed includes most of the southeastern quarter of town including Route 17 and Hewett, Jones and Valley Roads. The lake has had 2 infestations of the invasive aquatic plant Hydrilla since 2009, and Midcoast Conservancy works to control it so it doesn't spread within the lake or to other lakes in the region. Midcoast Conservancy also has developed a Damariscotta Lake Watershed Protection Plan describing how they want to address non-point source pollution issues in the watershed.

Travel Pond in Jefferson has 59% of its watershed within Somerville and is identified as most at risk from new development in MDEP assessment data related to Chapter 502 of the Maine Stormwater Management Law. That watershed includes a large central area of town including Sand Hill Corner and Crummett Mountain, and should be the subject of regional cooperation discussions with the Town of Jefferson and Midcoast Conservancy.

An unnamed pond in Hibberts Gore has 34% of its watershed within Somerville. This is in the northeast corner of town.

Various Branches of the Sheepscot River: One originates from Turner Pond. Another comes from Sheepscot Lake with the addition of water from the fish rearing facility in Palermo. A third branch drains from Long Pond. They all are at risk of inappropriate forestry practices along the streams themselves and along small feeder streams, from malfunctioning septic systems, and from roadside contamination. The Sheepscot River below Sheepscot Lake for 5.67 miles, Class B water, much of which is in Somerville, is listed on Maine's 2014 Integrated Water Quality Report<sup>7</sup> (and Draft 2016 report) as being impaired due to low dissolved oxygen levels assumed to be due to the fish rearing facility.

The Palermo Preserve (located just north of Somerville) is monitored by the Midcoast Conservancy. The State maintains and monitors the fish rearing facility in Palermo and the boat landing just south of Somerville. There have been periods of time when volunteers monitored the water quality of various ponds using secchi discs but this has not been consistent.

Somerville has one significant aquifer as shown on map 5 in Appendix A. It is near the surface and could be easily contaminated. However, most people are unaware of its existence including the residents living on the aquifer. This puts the aquifer at risk. Landowners of property overlying the significant aquifer should be made aware of its existence under their lands, the shallow nature of the soil cover, and the need for special protection from contamination.

## **Policies**

To protect current and potential drinking water sources.

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<sup>7</sup> Page 93 of the 2014 Integrated Water Quality Report appendices.

To protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed.

To make sure that town employees and contracted services (e.g. snow plowing) use best management practices to avoid unnecessary runoff of road treatment chemicals, particularly in the vicinity of waterways.

To protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas.

To minimize pollution discharges through the upgrade of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities. Somerville has neither public sewer systems nor wastewater treatment facilities, but would need to observe this policy if such public facilities were established.

To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources. If we do our part well, the downstream resources in other towns will not be impacted. Preserving the quality of some of our ponds and streams require encouragement of upstream towns (Palermo and Liberty) to join in this activity. This too impacts our ability to pass clean water on to downstream communities and to provide suitable streams for salmon and other fish propagation.

In a town with so many ponds and streams, protection of groundwater and surface water is important. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) fisheries experts and Midcoast Conservancy staff have advised making such protection a high priority. Non-point source pollution is the greatest threat, making faithful implementation of best practices important to reduce stormwater runoff pollution from residential, commercial and agricultural lands.

## **Strategies**

As the Town of Somerville considers amending local land use ordinances to address concerns in other sections of the Plan it should ensure that water and other resources are protected, and should consider how best to maintain low impact development standards. The Town's Shoreland Zoning ordinance should be reviewed, and input sought from Midcoast Conservancy, to strengthen protection, particularly on Long Pond's important habitat for the Sheepscot Watershed.

Having no public water or wastewater facilities, Somerville has no need to improve them. And not being urban, Somerville has no need for an urban impaired stream program.

There is no public stormwater infrastructure. However Somerville should conduct a review to ensure the stormwater provisions in the Subdivision Ordinance and future ordinances meet the requirements of:

- Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 M.R.S.A. §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502);
- Maine Department of Environmental Protection's allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds; and
- Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Program.

To protect drinking water sources the Code Enforcement Officer shall enforce proper septic and shoreland zoning rules. Inspection and certification of septic systems should be required when residences are sold, and perhaps more often within Shoreland Zones.

The Town Health Officer and selectpersons and/or CEO shall respond to complaints of polluting sources, and involve state agencies when appropriate for interdiction or assistance.

Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees. For example: construction and road crossing projects that impact our flowing water bodies should be completed between July 15 and September 30 if possible to minimize effects on fish populations. Winter icy road treatment standards should be set to reduce or prevent chemicals impacting adjacent and crossing waterways. Midcoast Conservancy recommends resources at the University of New Hampshire<sup>8</sup> and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services<sup>9</sup> on proper application.

The Town should consider setting a schedule and assign responsibility for inspection of culverts to determine whether repairs or changes are necessary to correct barriers impacting upstream fish migration. The Maine Stream Habitat Viewer<sup>10</sup> can be consulted to prioritize culvert work. This inspection and report might be best performed by the road commissioner annually and seek assistance from Midcoast Conservancy in those assessments.

Somerville should encourage all businesses to register, and among other benefits the Town could inform all businesses of ordinances pertaining to their type of business in regards to pollution. Townspeople need safe water, businesses need predictability. Improved communication and awareness serves both ends. This is especially important for businesses that have collections of operating or junked vehicles or are situated on aquifers. Somerville should establish minimum expectations for how often and for which priority aspects of town ordinances the CEO must perform inspections to ensure compliance and awareness by townspeople and businesses. Examples for which periodic inspection may be appropriate are the Water Quality and Aquifer Protection sections within the General Standards of the Land Use Ordinance.

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8 <http://t2.unh.edu/road-salt-reduction>

9 <http://t2.unh.edu/nhdes-links>

10 <http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mcp/environment/streamviewer/>

Aquifer protection is important as all town houses are supplied by wells. The town can use town maps to determine which landowners or renters are over or abutting the significant aquifer. If we prepare or obtain a brochure which explains the nature of aquifers and how to protect them it can be distributed to the appropriate families and businesses. In response to a recent threat to the surface aquifer by a landowner blasting without a permit over the surface aquifer, the town is in the process of developing a protective ordinance regarding mineral extraction.

The Town should review ordinances and also consider whether overlays or other mechanisms are best to prevent location of businesses utilizing dangerous materials from being located over or near surface aquifers.

The Town should evaluate the adequacy of the current sand/salt shed to not just store, but to contain in practice the salt from contaminating groundwater.

The town can work with Midcoast Conservancy, the State fish rearing facility in Palermo, MDIFW, and other state agencies to help maintain the quality of our water resources.

The Town should consider whether to adopt by ordinance the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) recommendations for allowable levels of phosphorus in Lake/Pond watersheds. The Town should explore the possibility of creating setbacks to streams that are not currently in shoreland zoning. Since most families in town do not fertilize lakeside or streamside lawns this may be most applicable to farms. Vegetated buffers between streams and farmland are highly effective ways to protect water quality in adjacent streams and downstream waters. Farmers or casual large animal owners need to be educated about best practices to prevent manure from damaging lakes, streams or water supplies.

The most important step that the town can take is to proactively inform residents, landowners and contractors so that they understand how much their activities on their own land can affect the water for all of us and encourage them to protect water quality. Somerville can provide local contact information at the municipal office for water quality best management practices from resources such as the Midcoast Conservancy, Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Knox-Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine. Encourage or sponsor conservation group and agency participation at local events such as our Annual Somerville Days.

The Town should also make landowners and contractors aware of the need to protect small streams as well as large ones, and inform loggers of proper practices to prevent erosion and encourage all townspeople to protect water quality. The Town should stock fliers for all town residents and contractors that succinctly presents steps they can take to protect our water resources. In addition we can have more detailed information available in town office for specific subjects, and encourage or sponsor conservation group and agency participation at local events such as our Annual Somerville Days to educate people on both point and non-point source pollution and best management practices for septic systems and lands to avoid stormwater

pollution. Maine DHHS has resources as well as Massachusetts DEP (Title 5) which could be useful for this education effort.

Encourage shoreland owners to participate voluntarily in a water quality monitoring program on our ponds through the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program – Lake Stewards of Maine in conjunction with Midcoast Conservancy.

Regional efforts are important since almost all of our surface water is connected to towns upstream and down stream. We can work with Midcoast Conservancy and SWOAM as they maintain preserves in town and nearby. We can request help from MDIFW and MDEP for advice on pond protection, culverts, roads, etc. We can engage neighboring towns seeking regional coordination of these efforts either directly, or through mutual cooperation with applicable regional conservation organizations such as Midcoast Conservancy.

We can post information<sup>11</sup> at Turner Pond access about invasive species and make sure that MDEP posts this information at the state boat launch on Long Pond (in Jefferson). Seek assistance from Midcoast Conservancy to implement a courtesy boat inspection program with Jefferson for Long Pond to prevent invasive plant infestation.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.maine.gov/dep/water/invasives/>



# Natural Resources

## Findings and Conclusions

- *Somerville has a number of protections of natural resources in its Land Use Ordinance and its Subdivision Ordinance.*
- *Ordinances should be strengthened by requiring non-residential applicants and subdivision developers to identify critical natural resources.*
- *Ordinances should be strengthened by requiring use of BwH maps and other datasets to identify critical natural resources subject to the natural resource protections in the ordinances.*
- *Somerville should encourage protection of connections among large habitat blocks, and coordination with surrounding towns, with the possible assistance of Midcoast Conservancy, regarding protection of shared natural resources.*

## State Goal

To protect the State's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.

## Conditions and Trends

Somerville is special in the amount of large intact forested tracts within town and abutting those of neighboring towns. We also have many streams, ponds, wetlands, seasonal water bodies, and vernal pools. In addition we have one large sand and gravel aquifer.

Much of the information relevant to this section is covered in the Water Resources or the Forestry sections of the comprehensive plan and will not be repeated in detail here.

There are several maps in Appendix A documenting the various natural resources in the Town of Somerville:

- Map 2 – Regional Landscape (BwH overview)
- Map 4 – Water Resources & Riparian Habitats
- Map 6 – High Value Plant & Animal Habitats
- Map 7 – Undeveloped Habitat Blocks & Connectors and Conserved Lands
- Map 8 – Wetlands Characterization
- Map 9 – Natural Resource Co-occurrence
- Map 10 – Fish Passage Barriers

Somerville uses the State Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act as our primary town regulations for water protection, as do all the surrounding towns, reinforced through Somerville's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Though we do not have a pattern of imminent threats to these resources, we also do not have a plan to protect them, especially the large tracts of undeveloped forest and farm soils. However we have sustained losses, including topsoil stripping and woodland harvesting that are not monitored or regulated by the town. These tracts are important because they allow animals to live and move around undisturbed. The wetlands provide very important habitat as well. Both are very important for survival of wildlife and for hunting and fishing.

Shorelands are protected by the town's adoption of the State Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act via the town's Shoreland Zoning ordinance. The identical guidelines are used by our neighboring towns. This is reinforced by protections in the town's Site Plan Review Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and Land Use Ordinance. In addition, the mostly four acre minimum lot sizes in Somerville's Management District (all of town not within the Development, Resource Protection, Limited Residential, or Stream Protection districts), and a two acre limit in the Development District comprised of three relatively small regions ensure that much of the land will not be crowded with developments.

The state has identified several important sites for wildlife. Including significant seasonal water bodies, vernal pools, an eagle nest site, a great blue heron nesting site, and large areas of inland waterfowl/wading bird habitat. Not all these are within the scope of shoreland zoning.

In particular the Land Use Ordinance, Article VII General Standards, includes sections on Natural Resource Protection and Erosion Control which regulate natural resource impact. The Land Use Ordinance requirements should be updated to reflect current departments, programs, and information sources equivalent to the ones currently referenced, per MDACF recommendation. For example MDACF recommends updating the following paragraph therein:

If any portion of the parcel to be developed has been identified as a Critical Natural Area by the Maine Natural Areas Program, or as containing threatened or endangered species of plants or animals by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, these areas should not be developed. If development of these areas is proposed because no other reasonable alternative exists, the applicant shall develop a mitigation plan in cooperation with the Maine Department of Conservation (MDOC) and/or ...

It should reference the "Maine Natural Areas Program (within MDACF)", not the "Maine Department of Conservation", and "a mapped rare plant or rare or exemplary natural community or ecosystem, rare animal (endangered, threatened, or special concern), or significant wildlife habitat" instead of "Critical Natural Area" (which is a defunct name) and "or as containing threatened or endangered species of plants or animals by MDIFW".

These areas are shown in Appendix A Map 6, High Value Plant and Animal Habitats. For the most current information, consult with Maine Natural Areas Program for botanical features (rare plants, natural communities and ecosystems) and with Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for animal features (rare animals, significant wildlife habitats). Both agencies are available to provide input and recommendations regarding natural resource features and any planned development.

The Subdivision Ordinance criteria include that it will not cause unreasonable soil erosion or reduction in the capacity of the land to hold water, and not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites or rare and irreplaceable natural areas or any public rights for physical or visual access to the shoreline. MDACF also recommends updating terminology in 11.2.7 of the Subdivision Ordinance, replacing “Comprehensive Plan or by the Maine Critical Areas Program as rare and irreplaceable natural areas” with “Comprehensive Plan as rare and irreplaceable” when referring to what shall be included in open space and suitably protected by covenants and management plans.

Those are the current town policies to protect our natural resources. Although minimum lot size was once felt to be protective, there are now questions about whether it promotes sprawl and encourages breakup of large farm and forest plots, and whether clustering with requirements for equivalently large areas of associated land preserved for agriculture or open space would be more effective.

The Town is encouraged by MDIFW to contact them for more information on which of the following Significant Wildlife Habitats are known or are likely to occur in Town:

### **Significant Vernal Pools**

Vernal Pools are naturally occurring, temporary to semi-permanent pools occurring in shallow depressions in forested landscapes. Vernal pools provide the primary breeding habitat for wood frogs, blue-spotted and spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp and provide habitat for other wildlife including several endangered and threatened species. Significant Vernal Pools are a subset of all vernal pools that have higher numbers of breeding indicator species as determined by spring surveys described in the Natural Resources Protection Act Significant Wildlife Habitat Rules. A comprehensive statewide vernal pool inventory has not been completed at this time and it is possible additional Significant Vernal Pools are present within the Town.

MDIFW and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection can assist the Town in locating Significant Vernal Pools.

### **Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitats (IWWH)**

These habitats provide important breeding, feeding, migration, staging, and wintering habitat for waterfowl and wading bird species. High and moderate value IWWHs within

the Town include both the wetland complex and a 250-foot upland zone. The upland habitat portion of IWWHs provides important nesting and roosting functions to several waterfowl species using the IWWH complex, including wood duck, hooded merganser, and common goldeneye that nest in cavities of large-diameter trees, while waterfowl including black ducks, mallards, and green winged teal typically nest on the ground in upland vegetation. Reduction in the upland portion of IWWH's has been shown to diminish the habitat's ability to provide nesting sites and protect the birds that use them.

### **Deer Wintering Areas**

Deer Wintering Areas are areas that contain habitat cover components that provide conditions where deer find protection from deep snow and cold wind, which is important for overwinter survival.

### **Great Blue Heron**

The great blue heron is a State Species of Special Concern due to a 64% decline in the coastal breeding population observed from 1983 to 2009. Since 2009, MDIFW has been monitoring the statewide population to determine if the decline seen along the coast is also occurring statewide. Great blue herons build large stick nests in live, dead, or dying trees 8-100 feet or more above the ground, and may nest in uplands, wetlands, or on islands.

### **Bats**

Of the eight species of bats that occur in Maine, the three *Myotis* species are protected under Maine's Endangered Species Act (MESA). The three *Myotis* species include little brown bat (*M. lucifugus*, State Endangered); northern long-eared bat (*M. septentrionalis*, State Endangered); and eastern small-footed bat (*M. leibii*, State Threatened). Four of the remaining bat species are listed as Special Concern: red bat (*Lasiurus borealis*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and tri-colored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). While a comprehensive statewide inventory for bats has not been completed, it is possible that several of these species occur within Somerville during migration and/or the breeding season.

The state forestry and farmland protection programs are used by some landowners in town. Also the newly merged Midcoast Conservancy offers one route for cooperation between towns to preserve natural resources. The very large tract of unbroken forest surrounding Turner Pond shared by Somerville and Palermo is an example that could be pursued. In addition, the Midcoast Conservancy has aided landowners in developing easements to protect land along lakes and rivers. Further partnering with Midcoast Conservancy makes a great deal of sense given past relationships and important natural resources in Somerville.

There are local scenic areas, but no state or regionally identified ones. Turner Pond is almost completely undeveloped and is an important scenic area. Crummett Mountain and Patrick Mountain are also important scenic areas. The new preserve in the southern end of town is being protected as well as the preserve just north of town in Palermo for their scenic walks and habitat.

## **Policies**

To conserve critical natural resources in the community.

To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.

## **Strategies**

Review land use ordinances to ensure they are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources. Invite input from Midcoast Conservancy and the town's Agricultural Advisory Board (see Agricultural and Forest Resources section of this plan) to that review process.

Designate critical and other natural resources as Natural Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan, and consider including wetlands among those. Provide education to owners of wetlands, significant seasonal water bodies, vernal pools, deer wintering yards, and nesting sites of species of special concern regarding proper management of these resources.

The Town should consider amending local land use ordinances to require subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.

The Town should consider amending local land use ordinances, require the Planning Board (or other designated review authority) to include, as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent BwH maps<sup>12</sup> and information regarding critical natural resources.

Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources. The Town should work with adjoining towns to help protect critical resources. Because our neighboring towns are in four separate counties, county planning is not especially helpful. Once again, Midcoast Conservancy may be of help in coordinating with the appropriate towns.

Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers. As described above, within the Town of Somerville there are several existing public/private partnerships to preserve land or create easements. The Town should encourage preserves and protective easements of the most critical

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.beginningwithhabitat.org/the\\_maps/status-s.html](http://www.beginningwithhabitat.org/the_maps/status-s.html) and map viewers linked at the bottom of the page.

natural resources. However, conservation easements, placing land in the tree growth program or agricultural use will likely reduce the Town's tax revenues.

Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical or important natural resources about current use tax programs and applicable local, state, or federal regulations. Encourage or sponsor agencies and conservation groups providing educational programs at Town events such as Somerville Days.

Work to ensure farmers, logging contractors, and site or subdivision developers know they can consult with Midcoast Conservancy for independent guidance on best practices, how to comply with regulations, and effective ways to resolve stormwater runoff, implement soil conservation, and other environmental or conservation problems. The Knox-Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District is another resource as well.

# **Agricultural and Forest Resources**

## **Findings and Conclusions**

- *Somerville is experiencing growth in farming and consumer interest in local foods.*
- *Managed forest acres have remained fairly steady over the last decade, while there has been a 38% increase in harvesting events over the last 20 years.*
- *Tracts of undivided farmland and farm soils are both at risk, requiring strengthening of protective measures in land use ordinances.*
- *Somerville should encourage Forestry best practices through education to ensure soil, natural resources and watersheds are protected.*
- *The growth opportunity and risks to agricultural lands deserve proper attention through organizing local farms into an Agricultural Advisory Board to help guide town policies in a farm-friendly way.*

## **Introduction**

Agricultural land provides many benefits to Somerville residents that would be lost if it were to be developed. Besides its aesthetic value, forest and farmland have many environmental benefits, from wildlife habitat to watershed protection and soil conservation. Farmland's economic contributions are equally important but less recognized. In point of fact, farmland contributes more to the municipal tax base than residential or commercial development, as farms typically pay more in property taxes but require less in municipal services than residences or non-ag businesses. As one researcher stated, "cows don't go to school." Likewise forestry has remained a consistent economic activity since many of the historic farmlands grew back to forested land. Forested tracts are an important provider of habitat and unbroken migration corridors for wildlife as surrounding communities have become more heavily developed.

## **State Goal**

To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

## **Conditions and Trends**

The Town of Somerville has one community forest preserve. There are no community gardens, nor town based farmers' markets or CSAs. However the farmers, many of them new young farm families, have a number of farm stands and a growing spirit of collaboration and community that brings people together. It is an economic sector consistent with the rural nature townspeople wish to preserve, driving a resurgence of young families, and experiencing economic growth and

strong demand as Maine's local foods, food culture, and interest in sustainable living have exploded.

There is a Somerville Farmers' Network<sup>13</sup> founded in 2016, with a mission of supporting each other's growth, fostering connections with the community, raising awareness of sustainable agricultural practices, and providing great local food!

The Somerville Farmers' Network hosts an annual Somerville Open Farm Day, and has a web site where folks can find more information on both individual farms and their town events.

This is a sector deserving greater voice in the town's land use policies and more active support from the town.



### **Farming**

Although agriculture is currently a minor player in Somerville's economy, it is beginning to grow and has the potential to become a viable and valuable enterprise in an otherwise isolated rural community. Consult Map 14 – Agricultural Resources, in Appendix A for the DACF provided map of farmland of statewide importance and prime farmland.

Farming in Somerville is undergoing a revival, on both the homestead and commercial level. As with most towns in the region, farming was historically the major economic activity. However, Somerville has hilly land and thin rocky soils compared to the nation's south and heartland. Consequently, most families left commercial farming as modes of delivering goods changed and other opportunities presented themselves. However, small homestead operations have always been important as a direct way to provide food for the family, and have continued to the present day as a valued activity in many households. Two farms (Peaslee in the south and Hisler in the north) have played an important role in preserving open fields in town by harvesting hay from historic farmlands.

Recently, there has been a resurgence in locally based agriculture, with several farms expanding their commercial operation and marketing directly to area residents (Sand Hill Farm and Pumpkin Vine Family Farm). Long-time families, seeing the revived interest in local food, are developing farm stands with the intention of serving the local population (Turners on Brown farm, Orffs on Valley Road). These farm stands are an important addition to a town lacking in shopping facilities. In the last few years, new families (Bray, Greeley, O'Connell, and Slayman) have moved to Somerville and are re-establishing farms on historic farmland.

Because it still has large tracts of historic farmland and open space, Somerville offers the potential to expand its farming sector. The new families re-establishing farms and renewed

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<sup>13</sup> [www.somervillefarmersnetwork.com](http://www.somervillefarmersnetwork.com)

public interest in local food are making this potential a reality, one which should be supported by farm-friendly local policy.

Many areas in town with prime farmland (See Map 14 in Appendix A) are at risk of being developed, as these lands were never identified and explicitly valued as such. Many pieces have quietly regrown into forest or been turned into house lots. Several large strips lie along Somerville Road, which bears the most development pressure as the access to Long Pond, our largest recreational water body. In the worst cases, some have been mined of their topsoil.

Currently the town has no special measures to protect productive farming land, although residents have identified agricultural growth as a sector they are willing to promote. In a survey of residents, 86% wanted to maintain Somerville as a rural area, and an astounding 76% were willing to offer tax incentives to promote farming and agricultural growth (this in a town where only 47% felt the collection of personal property tax should be enforced!!!)

Midcoast Conservancy has an easement on one of the largest historic farms (Sand Hill Farm), and works to conserve farms in the region generally. Maine Farmland Trust does not protect any land in Somerville.

Although a couple of farms are enrolled in the farmland tax programs, most farms are wary or misinformed about these programs. Both the methodology and the pros and cons should be more clearly explained to the farming population. Farmers need to be able to make an informed decision as to whether these programs are right for them; some of those currently enrolled find it rather burdensome.

The subdivision of historic farms into smaller lots has had the most immediate impact on farmers, as it leaves less open land for hay production, and may make some parcels too small for a viable farming operation.

Almost all farmers expressed concern about neighbors' future decisions, as there are currently no municipal protections on farmland.

A large portion of the former Peaslee farm on Route 105 was bought by a developer and mined for its natural resources, including its topsoil which was farmland soil of statewide importance. This can never be reclaimed, and is a permanent loss to the town.

The Brann farm on Crummett Mountain Rd was subdivided, however, fortuitously, most of the remnant pieces have been purchased by families with the intent to farm.

The Gilpatrick farm, now owned by the Patzlaffs on Route 105, remains one of the few large historic farms that is still intact, but its future is not ensured. It would behoove the town to consider some form of protection on this land, as it is prime farmland and will benefit the town most as working farmland, or at least as open space, which preserves the rural character that residents value.

Much of Somerville’s former farmland has grown back into brush and forest, which could be reclaimed.

Somerville does have large tracts of woodland, both working and fallow. The largest portion belongs to the Bessey Development Corporation, which has some 800 acres, divided among two parcels, in tree growth.

Within the last year, two farms stands have begun operation, which include produce from several of Somerville’s farms. The initial community response has been encouraging, and could be promoted even more through the promotion of these businesses on town media, including the website, brochures and entry way signs.

**Inventory of Somerville farms**

Somerville farms fall into three categories - commercial, homestead and hobby.

There has recently been an increase in the number of commercial operations, including farms still in the development phase.

Homesteads have been important from the first settling of Somerville, and continue to attract people here for the satisfaction of producing and consuming their own food.

The presence of many hobby farms in Somerville indicates the value that many residents place on agricultural activities, as they are willing to subsidize their farming activities from non-farm employment.

<b>Farm Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Briggs Farm	Jones Road	39
Duane's Acres	Crummett Mountain Road	117
Farmer in the Dell	Patricktown Road	3
Peaslee Boys	Route 17	150
Pumpkin Vine Family Farm	Hewett Road	80
Sand Hill Farm	Sand Hill Road	190
Shivering Cold Farm	Crummett Mountain Road	6
Eyrie Hill Farm	Crummett Mountain Road	66
Summit Farm	Patricktown Road	58
Top of the Hill	Sand Hill Road	10
<b>Total Acreage</b>		<b>719</b>

## Forestry

Forestry has been a key economic industry in Somerville since its founding, and it continues to be so in the current day, despite a statewide decline in price and harvests. In fact, in the last 10 years, forestry harvests have increased 38% from the previous decade.

Based on Maine Forest Service Records, in the 10 years between 2005 and 2014, there were 179 commercial harvests in Somerville, covering 4808 acres harvested. This is an average of 18 harvests / year or approximately 480 acres per year. In the preceding decade (1995 – 2004), there were 129 commercial harvests, covering 3134 acres harvested. This was an average of 13 harvests a year, or approximately 313 acres per year. So timber harvesting has increased 38%, despite an industry-wide slowdown.

The importance of the timber industry is expected to continue in Somerville, as the vast majority of the town is covered by forest. Although the soil productivity of the Somerville's forestland varies, (most soils are moderately deep, from well to somewhat poorly drained) they are generally well suited for tree growth. A variety of trees species are found within the following general forest types (in decreasing order of prominence: white pine-hemlock type, red maple – white ash – mixedwood type – maple-beech-birch type, spruce-fir type, and oak-pine type.

With the exception of small areas of wooded wetland and scrub covered ledges, most forested lands are suitable for growing trees of commercial size.

In Somerville, there are 191 parcels of 20 acres or more that are suited for commercial woodlot management, with an average parcel size of 59.3 acres. This totals 11,333 acres, and represents 82% of the total town area. While many of these parcels contain home sites, the majority of this acreage currently has its highest and best use as forestland. There are 111 parcels of 40 acres or greater, virtually all of which is undeveloped.

However, the creation of parcels of less than 20 acres is eroding the base of manageable woodland in Somerville. Generally, parcels under 20 acres can only be managed economically if they contain high quality timber.

Somerville has no forestry ordinances beyond the state mandated shoreland zoning provisions.

The Brann Memorial Forest has 215 acres that are protected by the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine Land Trust, and has a current (2010) forest management plan. Midcoast Conservancy owns and stewards 24 acres in Somerville of the Palermo Preserve, as well as 269 acres of the West Branch Preserve.

In 2016, 9 parcels in Somerville were enrolled in the State's Tree Growth plan, for a total land area of 1,786 acres. All of these properties have current long-term management plan, which are approved by professional foresters. This is a slight decrease from 1997, when it was reported that 14 parcels, totaling 2,026 acres, were enrolled in the Tree Growth program.

This is a potential area of improvement for Somerville, given that in 1997, Somerville had only half the level of management state-wide, where an estimated 40% of woodlot acreage is under professional management. For professional management to have further declined may indicate many things, including a distrust of professional services in a highly traditional forestry sector. However, many reports document the value to landowners of using professional forestry consultants. Typically landowner’s timber sale proceeds are greater, post-harvest woodlot volumes and values are higher, and environmental violations are less frequent. Managed woodlots are more productive, offering more frequent harvests of higher value timber.

Proximity of new homes or other incompatible uses has not been reported as impacting normal logging operations, however, the town does not regulate forestry.

The Bessey Development Corporation is the only known industrial forestry company in Somerville, owning 698 acres. Ownership is passing from father to son, but at this point the son has indicated that he will continue harvesting the land as before, and no sale seems imminent.

It does abut Somerville’s largest and oldest farm, so sale of that land would ultimately have the greatest impact on the farm, for whom it creates a buffer, and helps maintain its integrity as an organic producer.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee has not been able to discern the nature and intentions of Green Mountain Land Holdings, LLC's designs on their 154.6 acres for inclusion in this narrative.

The Brann Memorial Forest is open to the public for recreation and is the only public woodlands in town, managed by Maine Woodland Owners. Many landowners harvest their own wood for personal and commercial uses. There have been a few Tree Farms throughout the years.

**Inventory of Somerville Managed Forests**

<b>Entity</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Plan</b>
Bessey Development	698	2011 forest plan
Leon Cranmer	66	2011 forest plan
Thomas Fletcher	220	2012 forest plan
Claudia Fujinaga	32	2008 forest plan
Green Mountain Land Holdings LLC	154.6	2015 forest plan
Clyde Pignolet	25	2008 forest plan
Freda Pullen	318	2015 forest plan
Small Woodland Owners of Maine Land Trust	215	2010 forest plan
Susan Wooley	58	2011 forest plan
<b>Total</b>	<b>1786.6</b>	

There are 1,786 acres total managed land, in 9 parcels as of 2016. This has been fairly steady since 1997, for almost 20 years, when the total was 1,940 acres, in 13 parcels.

In recent years the former Elden Bartlett 284 acres has been dropped from management. The last forest plan dated 1994.

Brann Memorial Forest is the SWOAM parcel.

### **Timber Harvesting**

Based on Maine Forest Service Records, in the 10 years between 2005 and 2014, there were 179 commercial harvests, covering 4808 acres harvested. This is an average of 18 harvests / year or approximately 480 acres per year.

In the 10 years between 1995 and 2004, there were 129 commercial harvests, covering 3134 acres harvested. This is an average of 13 harvests a year, or approximately 313 acres per year.

There has been a 38% increase in harvesting events in the last 20 years.

### **Policies**

To safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.

To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

### **Strategies**

Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices as required by 12 M.R.S.A. §8869.

Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.

The Town should consider amending land use ordinances to require commercial or subdivision development in critical rural areas to maintain areas with prime farmland soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable, with protective covenants which allow farming as a use.

The Town should consider amending land use or other ordinances to preserve topsoil in areas classified as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance and ensure best practices for soil and watershed protection are adhered to.

The Town should consider limiting non-residential development in critical rural areas (if the town designates critical rural areas) to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism / outdoor recreation businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations.

Reduce environmental violations in timber harvesting. Without proper procedures, water quality and soil conservation can be impacted, with long-term consequences. Mechanisms to reduce violations include: provide forestry information at the town office; ensure that harvest

notifications provided by the Maine Forest Service are kept on file and brought to the attention of the Code Enforcement Officer.

The Town should consider allowing properly sited land use activities that support productive forestry, including firewood operations, sawmills, and log buying yards and set land management practices for the site to prevent non-point source pollution.

The Town should include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional development plans.

Coordinate with abutting towns to conserve large forestry plots and corridors unbroken.

Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.

Encourage professional forest management through the use of foresters and forest-management plans. Mechanisms to encourage professional forestry include: provide forestry information at the town office, sponsor a town “Forestry Information Fair.”

**Agricultural Advisory Board:** The town should form an Agricultural Advisory Board with members from local farms to advise the Town, helping guide town policies in a farm-friendly way. The Board could act as a local foods council, assisting the Town in implementing local food sovereignty. The Somerville Farmers' Network may be able to help the Town organize the council.

**Ordinance Review:** Review ordinances, with the guidance of the Agricultural Advisory Board, and should ensure they do not restrict (ie do not require explicit permitting for) activities that support small farm and woodlot operations, such as roadside stands and signs, greenhouses, farm ponds, and pick-your-own operations. Consider allowing on-farm processing, agri-tourism, and retail sales of products “by right” without requiring a permit or site plan review as long as best practices for soil and watershed protection are adhered to. Consider creation of an overlay for areas designated as 'prime farmland' or 'farmland of statewide importance' to limit uses and protect such areas for agricultural use to the greatest extent possible.

**Promotion:** The town could promote these operations by publicizing their activities on town media such as the website and creating entry way signs.

**Education:** Because many new farmers have relatively little experience or training in agriculture, it would benefit them to access more information, both from older farmers or formal workshops such as those offered by the Cooperative Extension Service, MOFGA, and/or Midcoast Conservancy. The town should facilitate these opportunities by hosting them in the town office or other public space, and at events such as Somerville Days.

## **Marine Resources**

Somerville is entirely an inland community, having neither ocean shoreland nor any tidally impacted portions of watersheds within its boundaries. Consequently there are no marine resources to address in Somerville's comprehensive planning process.



# Population and Demographics

## Findings and Conclusions

- *Tempering the model with facts on the ground, we expect Somerville's population to either remain steady or experience a slow steady growth. Due to the limited OPM model and small population, projections are not high confidence and should be reexamined periodically.*
- *In the next 10 years we will need to accommodate both a growing number of elderly residents and a growing number of young adults interested in starting families.*
- *Median Household income is \$10,000 less than county and state.*
- *Median Family income is \$22,000 less than county and state.*
- *Percentage of families in poverty is approximately double the county and state.*
- *Educational attainment, HS and college, are both 5% lower than county or state.*

## Conditions and Trends

### Population

The Town of Somerville, at its 2010 population of 548, had almost regained its historic high, recorded as 606 in 1860. However, if predictions are correct, future population growth will be minimal or may once more begin a slow decline. This would allow Somerville to continue to function as a small town and retain its rural character, if not for 100 years, at least for the 10–15 year planning period.

### Historic Population of Somerville

After its boom period as a farming community in 1860s, Somerville's population declined steadily. Industrial development and improved transportation drew people off of marginal farmland and Somerville shrank to a third of its size in the 1900s, bottoming out at 217 people in 1970. However, the '70s ushered in a period of massive growth, as "back-to-the-landers" once again saw opportunity in Somerville's undeveloped landscape. Between 1970 and 1980, the population increased 75%, while Lincoln County as a whole saw only 25% growth. The decades since then have seen continued growth in Somerville, albeit at a gradually decreasing rate (21%, 11%, and 8%).

### Population Estimates for the Future

Data and conclusions of the State of Maine Governor's Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the State of Maine's *Town Population Projection from 2017-2032* are the starting point for this Population section of the plan and its conclusions, after tempering with local observations

and factors. The State projection is that the population of Somerville will begin a slow decline from its current peak, with a loss of 10% of its population between 2012 and 2032. However, the state notes that these figures must be treated with caution, especially in smaller towns, as they are based on county-wide projections. It goes on to say:

“These town population projections must be interpreted with caution. They are based on assumptions and past trends that may or may not hold into the future. In some ways, these population projections represent what will happen under a business-as-usual scenario where all the moving pieces (including migration rates, life expectancies, and sprawl patterns) continue on their current trajectories...

Use these projections as a starting point for your planning and adjust them as you see fit.”

Somerville's projection is that population is more likely to gradually increase over the next ten years based on two factors not taken into account in OPM's model: Land attractive to homeowners and farmers, and age demographics of Somerville's population.

#### *Undiscovered Land*

There are several features in Somerville that distinguish it from other Lincoln County towns and make it more desirable for development (Lincoln County as a whole is predicted to decrease around 20%). Nestled in the northernmost tip of Lincoln County, Somerville is the most distant town from the coast, and has remained relatively undiscovered. With large tracts of affordable undeveloped land, it is starting to attract more homeowners, including those looking to farm, as neighboring farming communities run out of affordable farmland. However, it is still a small town, with few nearby amenities, which may only be appealing to people looking for a truly “rural” lifestyle.

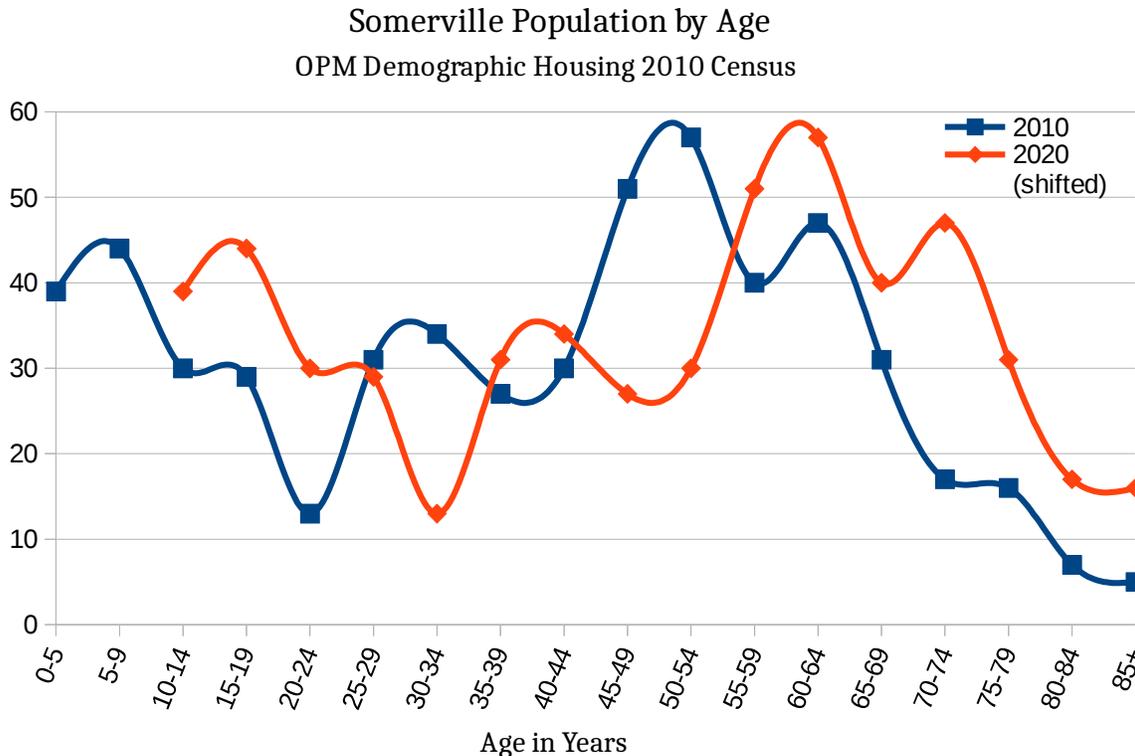
Somerville has proven itself hard to predict. While the State predicts a declining 2032 population of 498, Somerville’s unique situation may continue to attract new residents even as surrounding towns shrink. While change in either direction would be small, it is the possibility of growth that requires the most planning on Somerville’s part. As a small town, Somerville does not have a lot of infrastructure to maintain, and it has weathered many downturns.

However, if accommodating population growth continues to impact/convert Somerville’s undeveloped lands, Somerville may lose its rural character. Therefore, this is a critical time to guide the characteristics of growth to retain qualities most valued.

#### *Age Demographics*

Based on OPM's projections for Lincoln County from present day to 2032, the county as a whole is expected to experience an increasingly aged population, with a dramatic decrease in school-

age children and even adults in the workforce. The retired population is forecast to be stable, and the population over 80 to increase significantly.



Looking more closely at Somerville however, the largest 2010 age group was the 40-60 year olds, with school age children close to that number, whereas retirees were only half that amount. The median age per 2010 Census was 42.2. In this way, Somerville is distinct from the county. These data points in particular inform the plan's determination that slowly increasing population may be a more likely future trend. By 2020 the younger age peak will begin to hit the workforce, starting a new wave of people seeking homes and starting families between 2020 and 2030, provided we meet that generation's expected minimum criteria – regional job and career opportunities, affordable housing, broadband, and good schools. ACS 2015 data was not useful due to different age bracket groupings. The 2020 line is just a 10 year age shift of the 2010 data, showing 2010 status quo at their 2020 ages. Likely some numbers will be higher in 2020 given the slow growth of overall population and recent year increases then leveling off of school enrollment.

Somerville's cost of educating its children within RSU 12 is based upon an RSU-wide cost per pupil times the number of students from Somerville. Thus if the town follows the county trajectory of an aging population, our largest town cost – education – will not be disproportionately impacted, although state subsidy for education to Somerville would decrease. However, if the town continues its current path, the cost of education will continue to increase

slowly with time, as will the tax base, as the number of families continues to grow, especially now that pre-K is included in school services. See Public Facilities and Services section of the Plan for greater school funding data.

Given that we expect to see modest population growth in Somerville, coupled with the availability of undeveloped land, there will likely be a slow but steady growth in home construction and repair. This will increase the demand for passable roads, which are already desperately in need of repair. Although many local residents enjoy the character of Somerville's dirt roads, few will deny that they need major repair, which will be a substantial expense.

### **Seasonal Residents**

Somerville has several hundred summer residents, many along Long Pond, which comprise almost a third of Somerville residences. Although the homes do change hands, the total number is fairly stable at this point, as much of that land is already developed to capacity.

The summer residents contribute a significant amount to the tax base, as their property values tend to be higher than the average year-round resident. Once the current revaluation is completed, this may increase even more.

### **Small Rural Nature**

Somerville is not a service center community, nor does it have a major employer.

### **Income & Education**

Other demographic statistics of significance based on ACS 2015 5yr estimate data, which illustrate both the need for assistance *and* some of the town's eligibility criteria to obtain grants. The relatively low income level qualifies us for many grants.

- Median Household<sup>14</sup> income is \$10,000 less than county and state (\$38,750 vs \$50,462 and \$49,331)
- Median Family<sup>15</sup> income is \$22,000 less than county and state (\$40,000 vs \$62,227 and \$62,279)
- Percentage of families in poverty is approximately double the county and state (16.9% vs less than 7.9 and 9.3%)
- Educational attainment: high school and college, are both 5% lower than county or state (86.2% high school vs 90.4 and 91.6%; 22.9% bachelors vs 27.7 and 29.0%)

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14 A household consists of one or more persons living in the same house, condominium or apartment. They may or may not be related.

15 A family has two or more members who live in the same home and are related by birth, marriage or adoption.

## **Policies**

The town of Somerville currently has no policies directly addressing population, although staying current on trends is important to inform policies under Housing, Public Facilities and Services, Economy, Fiscal Capacity and Capital Planning, Transportation, and Future Land Use.

## **Strategies**

Consider reexamining population projections, again tempered by local observations, every 5 years, or at least after each decennial census as data becomes available, and re-evaluating comprehensive plan policies and/or strategies in response to any significant changes.



## **Economy**

### **Findings and Conclusions**

- *Somerville is a bedroom community for a workforce that is 15% home-based, 10% local, 44% regional from midcoast to central Maine, and over 31% commuting as much as 90 minutes which could include greater Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Bangor regions.*
- *There is no downtown or traditional community center in Somerville and there are no employers within town of more than 4 workers other than the school system.*
- *Farming and local food production are experiencing a growth in town and attracting young farm families bolstered by growing demand for local food and the good soils and comparatively cheap land in the Town of Somerville. Local food and value added operations are part of the Midcoast Economic Development District's 2016 Community Economic Development Strategy.*
- *With our attractive natural resources and rural lifestyle, Somerville could also attract more young technology workers and remote workers to make their home here if we had competitive speed and more accessible broadband Internet service.*

### **State Goal**

Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

### **Historical Economy**

The Town of Somerville was settled in the mid-1700s, with lumbering and trapping as primary occupations. The land was not easy to settle as lowlands were rocky, swampy and covered with a growth of huge hemlocks and pines. Much of the Town's land was nothing more than rocky hills with considerable ledge about. Eventually tracts of marginal soil was cleared and small farms began to appear.

Lumbering provided a cash crop, always in demand for growing cities and shipyards. The Sheepscot River provided hydro power for some small sawmills and the limited production of goods. Agriculture played an important role in the local economy as well providing products such as corn and beans for canneries in nearby towns.

By 1858 Patricktown, as it was then known, became developed sufficiently to incorporate as an organized township.

The Civil War and the opening of the American West had a lasting impact contributing to a large loss of population that changed the character of the Town. In the early 1900s the Town went bankrupt. The Great Depression helped inspire an unusual move by the townspeople to de-organize and in 1938 the Town became a plantation after 80 years as a town. After the end of the

Korean War a large proportion of the Town's residents began commuting to work in larger towns and cities, many finding work in mills or growing State agencies. By 1970 much of the farmland was abandoned and many of the small home industries closed shop.

In 1970 changing rules for plantations reduced the share of education and welfare funding provided by the State. Voters decided that re-organization was appropriate and Patricktown Plantation was re-organized in 1973 and became the Town of Somerville. Around this time Somerville closed its one-room schoolhouses and started busing all of its students to the new Elementary School near the Washington town line. The 1970's saw an influx of new residents to the town. Many came to escape urban living and embraced rural living. New families located in Somerville, attracted by cheap land and the proximity to Augusta. By the 1990's the town's population increased above 500 people for the first time since the Civil War. The town's population has risen to slightly more than 548 people (2010 US Census data) since then with most people making their living outside of the town or retired.

### **Conditions and Trends**

The Town of Somerville has no downtown, or traditional town center, and is proudly self identified as a small rural town. Consequently, with no commercial center, most of the local business is home based.

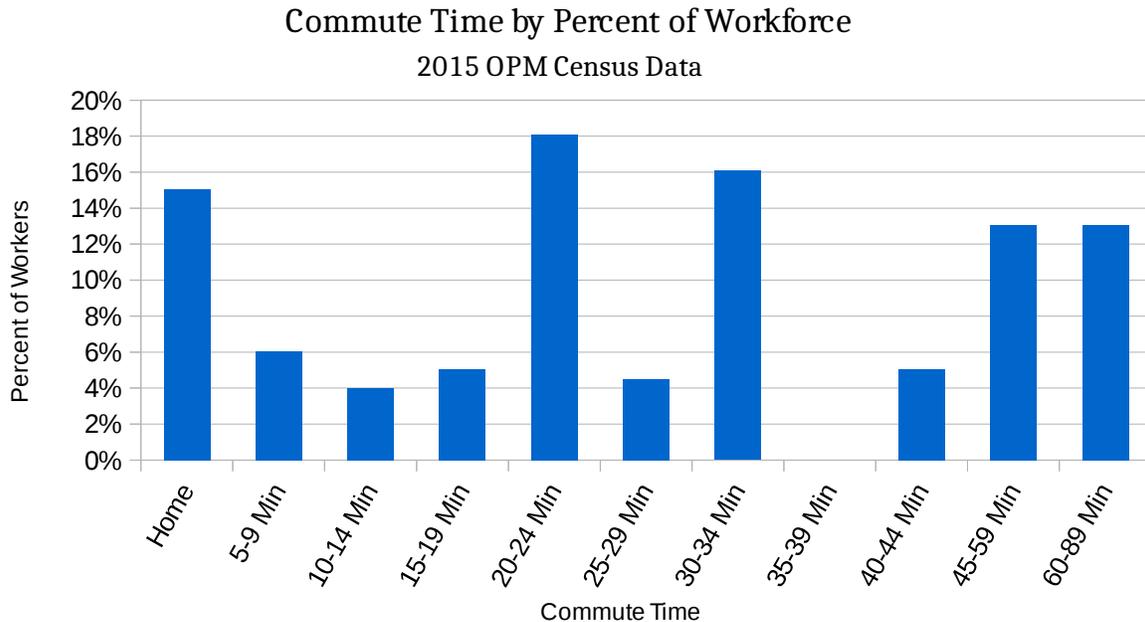
The local economy has changed very little as most of the workforce commutes to their place of employment. There is no local economic plan for Somerville, and there are no economic development incentive districts. There are efforts to improve the school system and educational attainment, support the growing trend toward farming, and improve broadband Internet speed and accessibility to enable more good paying remote work opportunities for people choosing to live our rural lifestyle among a treasure of natural resources. Somerville's wealth of natural resources are also enjoyed by camp owners and people visiting to enjoy our several preserves or many streams and ponds. However tourism has no significant role in the community and is not likely to change greatly in the near future, because there is no need for place-based services such as tour guides, and there are no good locations where consumer oriented businesses could expect a steady flow of business to benefit from those visitors.

As documented in the Agriculture and Forest Resources section of the Plan, farming is a growing sector based on the local foods movement and demand in Maine, influence of MOFGA programs, availability of a lot of good farm land, etc. and is attracting young farmers. Several small farms are currently offering locally raised and grown produce. Agriculture in the form of small farms is consistent with the Town's desire to preserve its rural nature and preserve and utilize its natural resources.

Other than farm stands, the greatest economic impact due to seasonal visitors is the tax base contribution of camp owners on our ponds. Those properties occasionally change hands, however the shoreland is reasonably saturated and thus stable.

Home occupations play a modest role in the local economy and are documented below.

The Town of Somerville's economy is not experiencing dramatic changes and has seen little effect on the local population, employment or municipal tax base. Somerville's economy is for the most part dependent on jobs within the regional economies of the Midcoast from Wiscasset to Camden, and the greater Central Maine region.



There is a small segment of home-based workers within Somerville as indicated by the 15% of workers doing so at home. Another 10% must work in Somerville or a neighboring town. Beyond that, nearly 44% of the work force commutes 15-35 minutes which encompasses the Midcoast to Central Maine regions. Just over 31% commute between 40-90 minutes which could be as near as BIW or as far as Portland, Lewiston/Auburn or Bangor areas. The high percentage of the labor force working outside of Somerville and lack of stores in town mean that the families of this working population are likely to conduct much of their shopping in the same area where they work or in the course of their commute.

Central Maine Power does not supply 3 phase power to any locations within the town borders, although it does cross Route 17 in one corner of Somerville. This makes the town currently unsuitable for industrial type business development.

Other than the School, Town Office, and fire stations, there are no public facilities, and no public sewer or water. The town has no Post Office and is serviced by the Jefferson Post Office, sharing Jefferson's Zip Code as well.

With no village center or traditional downtown, Somerville's economy is not driven by local retail businesses such as gas stations, restaurants or convenience stores within its borders.

A Comprehensive Plan Survey was sent out to Town Residents and Taxpayers in November 2013. A total of 73 Surveys were completed and returned, many with comments on the direction the Town should take. A public forum was held at the Town Office on April 29, 2015 with 25 town residents attending. The topics discussed were as follows: Community buildings, Beautification committee & projects, Fire protection services, Internet connectivity, Rivers/streams/ponds protection, Shared Personnel and contracts, and Trash/solid waste removal.

Consolidated Communications has expanded ADSL Broadband Internet service availability in the north of town. While this is an improvement, because of limited speeds which diminish with road distance, this service remains below State and Federal broadband service standards. And even this service is not universally available to townspeople. Competitive Internet service is essential for Somerville to continue to attract residents and small businesses. The poor availability and limited capability of Internet service is an increasingly important deterrent to businesses choosing to locate in Somerville.

We must remove such deterrents while building on our advantages – natural resources, rural vistas, and good farm lands – all things compatible with Somerville's rural identity. Thus economic priorities include:

- Improving protections and implementing farm-friendly policies in support of farming
- Improving Internet service speeds and accessibility
- Continuing to allow home-based businesses that do not endanger groundwater or other natural resources
- Continuing to allow forestry while strengthening oversight to protect soil and water resources

There is a Midcoast Economic Development District<sup>16</sup> (MCEDD) 2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for several counties including Lincoln, and therefore Somerville. Its goals are:

- Accelerate the growth of the Midcoast's local food sector
- Expand job opportunities in the manufacturing and technology sectors across the region
- Increase experiential tourism opportunities which attract new visitors to the Midcoast throughout the year
- Attract and retain young talented people to the region while utilizing the skills and experiences of older talented people in the Midcoast

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<sup>16</sup> [www.mceddme.org](http://www.mceddme.org) (207) 370-6045 Jeff Kobrock, Executive Director jkobrock@mceddme.org

Somerville is positioned to participate directly in the first goal through an emphasis on the capacity here for expansion of farming and support of local food production. We would benefit indirectly from the next two goals through the jobs for its commuting workforce within the surrounding region. The latter goal is another of Somerville's priorities that would benefit to a greater extent from our great location to live if we also had better broadband service. None of the MCEDD plan's key regional investments however, are at all inland. All are located in larger immediately coastal towns. So we cannot expect help creating greater opportunity for experiential tourism business here, and Somerville is unlikely to see any advantages other than a few more good paying regional jobs which people can compete for, and potentially an increased demand for our farm products.

### **Existing Somerville Businesses**

These are the known businesses within the Town of Somerville. There may be additional home-based businesses that have gone unnoticed.

1. Dan Barnett, Rubbish Removal
2. Kewl Interpreting, Deborah Myers
3. Ms. Alice's Designs, Alice Rafuse
4. Why Not Farm Pet Grooming, Trina Havey
5. Porter's Antiques, Bob & Pam Porter
6. Hisler's Garage, Leon Hisler
7. Sand Hill Garage, Rick Stimson
8. Sand Hill Farm, Shaun & Belinda Keenan
9. North Star Dog Training, Carolyn Fuhrer
10. Pumpkin Vine Family Farm, Anil & Kelly Roopchand
11. Lil Munchins, Lisa & Geoff Basinett
12. J.M. Grenier Construction
13. Farm in the Dell, Antoinette Turner
14. Fern Gully Farm, Doug Shartzter
15. J.A. Turner Forest Products, Jesse Turner
16. Ralph Turner Trucking, Ralph Turner
17. Darrell Hutchins Roofing & Lawn Care
18. Plante Lobster Trap Products, Eric Dedoes & Greg Sabins
19. Auto repair, Hunter Peaslee
20. Farming and construction, Neil Peaslee

#### Public/Institutional

1. RSU #12 (Superintendents Office/School)
2. Town (Office)

Somerville's employers are small, falling into the 1-4 employee category and all employers fall into the less than 20 employee category.

There are no medium to large employers here to draw or retain younger working people in good paying jobs. Somerville is not a center of economic activity.

The Median Household Income for Somerville is \$38,750<sup>17</sup>, which is \$10,000 less than county and state median household income. Further information on the population and demographics, and economic challenges living in Somerville can be found in the Population and Demographics and Housing sections of the Plan. Suffice to say that Somerville residents would benefit from lowering the costs of living, increasing self-sufficiency, a greater number of higher income jobs in the region, and quality broadband enabling Internet based remote work.

## **Policies**

To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region. These, as communicated above, include:

- Improving protections and implementing farm-friendly policies in support of farming
- Improving Internet service speeds and accessibility
- Continuing to allow home-based businesses that do not endanger groundwater or other natural resources
- Continuing to allow forestry while strengthening oversight to protect soil and water resources

To make a financial commitment, if necessary, to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements. In Somerville this is likely to take the form of road improvements, participation in a regional broadband Internet project, and potentially in farm market promotion.

To coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.

## **Strategies**

If appropriate, assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).

The Town should consider enacting or amending local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development. In particular the Development District segments on Route 105 are poorly situated for commercial or industrial development and should be reassigned to Route 17. Also there is more that should be done to support the success

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<sup>17</sup> 2010-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

of farming. See the Future Land Use and Agricultural and Forest Resources sections of the Plan for more details.

If public investments are foreseen to support economic development, identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance them (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc.) The only public investments being considered are road improvements, joining in a regional solution to broadband Internet, and helping farms succeed economically. These will require various forms of funding which the town will explore as more definite plans are made for those projects. See the Transportation, Public Facilities and Services, Agriculture and Forest Resources, and Fiscal Capacity and Capital Planning sections of the Plan for more detail.

Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.

Review local ordinances. If appropriate, amend or, if necessary, enact new ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity and location of future economic development.

Ensure citizens have access to the Town's ordinances through documentation on Somerville's web site as well as at the Town Office.

Encourage home-based occupations provided they are not incompatible with residential uses or environmental and natural resource protections, or harm the rural character of Somerville.

Somerville is currently undergoing a nearly completed revaluation involving updated tax maps and assessment procedures. This will enable the Assessor to more accurately and consistently determine property valuations for businesses, home owners and utilities, and ensure the Town receives the appropriate revenues for the properties sizes and structures owned within the town.



# Housing

## Findings and Conclusions

- *Housing needs are expected to either remain steady or experience a slow steady growth.*
- *An estimated 47% of households could not afford to buy a new home.*
- *An estimated 43% of rental households are cost burdened.*
- *A household earning 80% of median income cannot afford to purchase or rent a home.*
- *There is inadequate appropriate housing to accommodate an aging population.*
- *Investigate modified land use policies with dense clusters accompanied by preserved large open space.*

## Introduction

Housing characteristics are essential to the well-being of a community. Sufficient decent and affordable housing to meet the needs of aging populations and new young families while avoiding homelessness and abandonment are an important part of the town's plans to remain a vital community.

## State Goal / Minimum Policy

To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.

## Conditions and Trends

The projection in the population section of this Plan is for slow growth, limiting Somerville's future demand for additional housing. However there are current needs which should be better addressed, including elder appropriate housing and housing affordability.

## Affordability

Examining MaineHousing data, Somerville has a 1.05 rating on the MaineHousing's home ownership index. Generally speaking, this means that buying a home is affordable to people earning the median household income of \$40,589<sup>18</sup> (NOTE: ACS 2011-2015 5yr estimate data referenced elsewhere in the Plan shows Somerville median household income to be \$38,750 while MaineHousing used the Claritas 2016 number for its analysis). However, as of 2016 an estimated 47% of households could not afford to buy a new home. The income needed to afford a home in Somerville is \$38,792 or the equivalent of an \$18.65 hourly wage.<sup>19</sup> 80% of median income is \$6000 too low at \$32,471 which makes homes in Somerville unaffordable to those earning 80% of median income or less.

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18 Claritas (US Census); Maine Real Estate Information System ("MREIS")

19 IBID

On the rental side MaineHousing doesn't have sufficient data to make a determination on affordability. Lincoln County overall has an rental index rating of 1.03 which means a renter earning median income can also afford a market priced two bedroom rental unit. It also means that such a rental is barely affordable for someone at 97% of median income, thus quite unaffordable for someone earning 80% of the median income. Looking at the data MaineHousing does have on renting in Somerville from a housing affordability perspective, 43% (14) of Somerville's rental households are paying more than 30% of their income on housing. By HUD standards they are considered cost burdened and in need of some housing assistance in order to avoid not being able to pay for food, clothing and other core needs. The number of rental units in Somerville, has remained steady between 2015 and 2016. There are no income based subsidized rental properties in Somerville.<sup>20</sup>

A substantial number of owners with and without mortgages are also cost burdened in Somerville. MaineHousing data shows there are 36 (48%) of owned homes with a mortgage that pay in excess of 30% of their income on housing and 90 (22%) of those without a mortgage are in a similar situation. In total 33% of all owned homes are cost burdened. Given the full range of housing tenure by income this is not surprising. See Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution by Percent Average Monthly Income (AMI)

All Households	<30% AMI	<40% AMI	<60% AMI	30% to 40%	40% to 60%
2015	14	23	43	8	21
2016	27	35	55	9	20
<b>Owners</b>					
2015	12	18	36	7	17
2016	19	26	45	7	19
<b>Renters</b>					
2015	3	4	8	1	3
2016	7	9	10	2	1

## Housing Stock

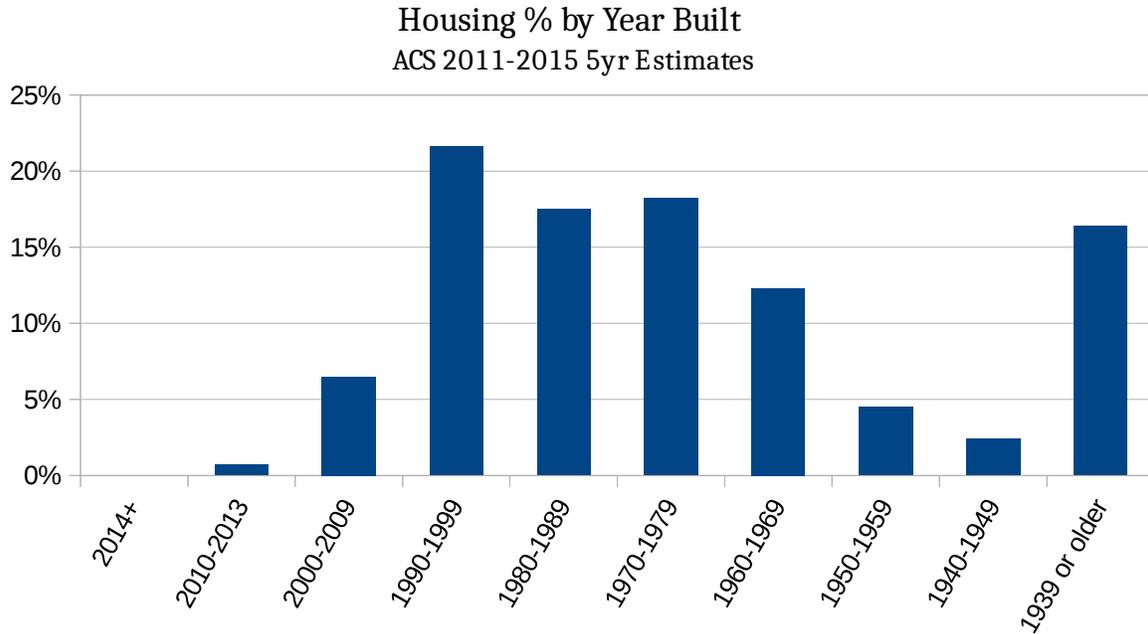
In all there are 292 households in Somerville with a population of +/-530. Of these 204 are occupied with 165 (81%) owned and 39 (19%) rented. There are another 88 vacant units of which 68 are seasonal and another 20 not known. The homeowner and rental vacancy rates are not known. There are 70 mobile home units, 211 single detached, and 11 two unit structures.

In terms of household type, Somerville has 142 homes with families and 62 non-family. There are 54 homes where people live alone and 17 of those are occupied by seniors over 65. Over 90% of the population lived in the same home last year.

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<sup>20</sup> IBID

Based on US Census, 2011 - 2015 ACS 5 Year, Table DP04, Somerville has moderately aged housing stock with over 75% of it being constructed after 1960 and only 2 units built after the recession.



The population of Somerville has remained at roughly 530 with 14% (75) being over age 65 and 54% (289) being 25 – 64. While the Maine Office of Policy and Management's model projects an 8% decrease in population between 2019 and 2034, the Population section of this Plan projects slow growth after applying local factors.

In the last 5 years, 11 houses and 5 mobile homes were permitted for new residential units.

In the last 5 years, 4 new residential lots were created by approval of the Planning Board within a subdivision.

All new construction, identified mobile homes, and commercial construction in the last 10 years which could be identified are reflected on Map 17 – New Construction and Mobile Homes in Appendix A. In all there are 32 identified construction permits or mobile home installations. Some of these may be improvements via replacement structures. And anecdotally we know that several houses which have burned in the last decade have been replaced. Unfortunately that information is not readily available in the records kept, and recordkeeping requirements need to be improved.

If Somerville does experience slow growth as projected in the Population and Demographics section of the Plan, our best estimate is that housing needs will grow at a rate of between 3 and 5 new homes per year over the next 10 years.

## **Other Factors**

Somerville has rates of poverty higher than Maine's 14% rate. Among families<sup>21</sup> in Somerville, 17% lived below poverty in the past 12 months and 18% of all people.

There are no known regional efforts such as affordable/workforce housing coalitions in this region. In fact Lincoln County has a shortage of affordable housing and elder housing, both low income and not.

There are two local ordinances which in effect discourage the development of affordable housing by virtue of requiring large house lots. The Land Use Ordinance specifies a Management District with 4 acre minimum lot size in well over 90% of the town and a Development District with 2 acre minimum lot size in three small regions consisting of 400 feet on either side of the road centerline for a total of roughly three miles of roadway. The Subdivision Ordinance also requires lots in accordance with the district in which they are located, with a collective 5-10% open space required for recreation in the subdivision.

As identified in the Population and Demographics section of the Plan, there will be an increasing segment of the population in retirement over the next 10 years. Thus some of the new housing needs will be elder appropriate housing. With support in ordinance changes, possibilities include adjunct apartments or cottages on the same lot as existing homes of younger relatives, assisted living homes such as those operated by Eldercare of Lincoln County in other towns, or a portion of affordable housing developments with housing clusters and associated preserves of open space. Many of our elders grew up and spent their entire lives in Somerville. Thus it is preferable to meet their housing needs here rather than elsewhere in the region.

There is also anecdotal evidence of some waterfront properties, which once were camps, becoming year-round homes. The numbers are small, however, and are not expected to place additional needs on the community.

On occasion homes are discovered to have deteriorated into substandard conditions, or trailers installed without permits discovered which lack proper water or septic systems. Estimates for these have high error factors. Therefore the estimated 2 homes with substandard kitchens and 6 with substandard plumbing should be taken with a grain of salt<sup>22</sup>. Those estimates represent 1% and 3% respectively of Somerville's total housing.

## **Policies**

To encourage and promote adequate workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.

To ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.

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21 A family has two or more members who live in the same home and are related by birth, marriage or adoption.

22 ACS 2010-2015 5yr estimates

To encourage and support the efforts of the regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

To encourage and support development of adequate elder appropriate housing, apartments, and/or assisted living homes.

## **Strategies**

The Town should consider the following strategies:

- Enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.
- Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.
- Designate a location(s) in growth areas where mobile home parks are allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(3)(M) and where manufactured housing is allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(2).
- Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.
- Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable.
- Conduct a review of land use ordinances and obtain public input, including retirees and the Agriculture Advisory Board (as proposed in the Agriculture and Forest Resources section of the Plan) for the purpose of determining how to amend or enact ordinances which balance competing needs: resource protection, farming, and preservation of the town's rural nature versus construction of higher density, affordable, and energy efficient housing. The aim would be to identify specific districts which meet the needs of low income individuals, families, and retirees with varied degrees of independence or assisted living needs. Concepts to be considered include but are not limited to:
  - Permitting small cottages added near existing homes on current lots to provide housing for elderly relatives, subject to site suitability;
  - Encouraging development of an assisted living home similar to the Lincoln County 'Greens', possibly in conjunction with Eldercare of Lincoln County;
  - Encouraging construction of affordable dense cluster home developments with adjacent large areas of preserved open space (which must allow farm use if it contains prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance) to meet affordable quality housing needs. Variations include a percentage of each development designed to be

suitable for independent living of elderly people, at least one dwelling being a multi-tenant apartment building. Developments may still average 4 acres per home, but achieve greater cost savings while preserving open undivided space; and

- Encouraging construction of a cooperatively owned mobile home park with a dense cluster of lots with adjacent large areas of preserved open space, as described above.

## Recreation

### Findings and Conclusions

- *Somerville has many natural resource based recreational opportunities which are reasonably accessible to the public.*

### State Goal

To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters. In Somerville, this includes hiking, hunting, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, skating and water activities on lakes and streams.

### Condition and Trends

There are many opportunities for recreation in Somerville and the surrounding region, none of which will be impacted by projected growth or demographics. As described in the Natural Resources section of the Plan, Midcoast Conservancy is involved in creating and maintaining many of the regional preserves, including some in Somerville. Please refer to Map 7 – Undeveloped Habitat Blocks & Connectors and Conserved Lands in Appendix A as preserves and water bodies are described below.

The town has access to Turner Pond off of the Colby Road. This allows wading and launching of watercraft. This site was recently improved and is an easy walk from roadside parking. It is not meant for loud or nighttime activities.

There is public access to Long Pond at the state operated launch site in Jefferson. This site allows launching of motorized boats. Long Pond is the only body of water in Somerville with significant motorboat activity. Neither site is wheelchair accessible. All the ponds in town are used for ice fishing and snowmobiling.

There is no true town beach in Somerville and response to our mailed survey showed little interest in developing one. James Pond is only accessible to the public through a wetland off of the Sheepscot River. French Pond still appears on maps but has been only a vernal pond since the floods of April, 1987 washed out the dam. Likewise, Mill Pond shown on maps as across from the school, has been dry for over 40 years.

State park beaches are available in Jefferson (Damariscotta Lake) and Liberty (Lake St. George). The Hidden Valley Nature Center of the Midcoast Conservancy in Jefferson offers 30 miles of trails that are maintained year round for hiking, biking, snowshoeing and skiing. It also has cabins, a yurt and campsites available.

The Palermo Preserve of the Midcoast Conservancy, located on the north side of town has 1.5 miles of hiking trails that allow access to a branch of the Sheepscot River. A new 20 acre

addition to the preserve in Somerville is being developed and new trails there may be more accessible to casual walkers. It has a parking lot and well marked trails.

The Cecil and Virginia Brann Preserve of the SWOAM stretches across Turner Ridge Road and also reaches the Sheepscot. However, that eastern portion does not have easily accessed trails.

The West Branch Preserve of the Midcoast Conservancy, located on the south end of town, provides access to about 7 miles of walking trails with parking and an entry kiosk.

Biking on roads in Somerville is difficult due to the many hills, curves, and the lack of paved shoulders.

Somerville has large areas of undeveloped forest and wetlands. The State Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act based ordinance establishes the Town's shoreland policies regulating much of the wetlands. The large forest area around Turner Pond extends into Palermo and a joint plan of both towns could help preserve this as undeveloped forest while continuing to allow logging and hunting. Another large area of forest is located at the end of the Hewett Road. Like the Turner Pond area, there are multiple landowners. Developing a system of access to this area could be beneficial.

Hunting is a valued traditional use of others' lands. It is still very available because few lands are posted, and those which are posted, mostly allow hunting with landowner permission.

With support from the town the Backwoods Bouncers Snowmobile Club coordinates with landowners and maintains snowmobile trails for use by the general public. The Midcoast Conservancy gives attention to opportunities to create connected preserve corridors for wildlife ranges and migration, and when possible supports the creation of regionally connected trails as well.

Under the Town's Subdivision Ordinance developers have an option to make a payment into a municipal open space or recreation land acquisition fund in-lieu-of dedicating 5-10% of the subdivision to open space if there is no suitable land to dedicate. This has not been exercised yet.

## **Policies**

To maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities as necessary to meet current and future needs.

To preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.

To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming, and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.

## **Strategies**

The Town should consider the following strategies:

- Create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs. Assign a committee or community official to explore ways of addressing the identified needs and/or implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.
- Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible. Somerville works with Midcoast Conservancy and provides assistance to the local snowmobile club – Backwoods Bouncers – for the purpose of maintaining trails for use by the public.
- Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land. We can receive help from the State through people such as District Foresters and MDIFW. In addition, the recent merger of four conservation groups into the Midcoast Conservancy has allowed that group to hire people with expertise in these matters. Somerville has worked with Midcoast Conservancy on several projects.
- Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine’s landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.



# Transportation

## Findings and Conclusions

- *The Town of Somerville has 24.66 miles of public road, 237 feet per person.*
- *Many local roads need capital improvements as identified in a recent engineering report, and the Town is engaged in prioritizing and planning those capital improvements. A plan has been developed, approved, and funded.*
- *Local roads are rural, with 57% of their miles being gravel, with no sidewalks, no rail, no marine transportation, and no airports in or near Somerville.*
- *Road capital improvements and maintenance are the Town's second highest portion of its annual budget expenditures.*

## State Goal

To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

## Conditions and Trends

Not counting 7.52 miles of private roads, there are 24.66 total miles of roads within the Town of Somerville. Based on 2010 census that is more than 237 feet of road per capita. As shown by Map 11 – Road Connections, in Appendix A, Somerville has two state highways and one collector road. Local public roads total 16.04 miles, roughly 57% of which are gravel, and the remaining miles are state roads as follows:

- Route 17 – 2.42 miles (arterial)
- Route 105 (Patricktown Road) – 3.66 miles (collector)
- Turner Ridge Road (to Palermo) – 2.54 miles (collector) under state aid classification

## Arterial Roadways

Arterial roadways are defined by MDOT as travel routes that carry high speed, long distance traffic usually with a US Route number designation. In Somerville there are 2.42 miles of arterial highways consisting of Route 17.

## Collector Roadways

Collector roadways are defined by MDOT as travel routes that collect and distribute traffic from and to arterials, serving places of lower population densities and somewhat removed from main travel routes. In Somerville the 6.20 miles of minor collector roadways include Route 105 and Turner Ridge Road.

## **Local Roads**

Greater detail of local and private roads is shown by Map 12 – Public and Private Roads in Appendix A. Local roads are defined by MDOT as all roadways not classified as an arterial or collector and include 10 roads totaling 16.04 miles in Somerville. All local roads are maintained by the Town.

## **Private Roads**

Private roads are maintained by individuals, associations or private businesses and total approximately 7.52 miles in Somerville.

## **Road Maintenance and Capital Improvement**

For the purposes of defining local road work as a capital improvement, The MDOT defines it as any work on a road or bridge which has a life expectancy of at least 10 years and restores load-carrying capacity such as:

1. Pavement and/or base recycling, pavement cold planning and resurfacing and preparatory work, medium to heavy overlays which improve the strength and ride quality (minimum 1 inch on a shimmed surface), road reconstruction or rehabilitation , gravel road grade-raising or paving, a series of driveway and cross culvert installations and/or replacements, heavy ditching, or guardrail installation.
2. Underdrain and catch basin installation, permanent erosion control, sidewalk construction or reconstruction, bridge replacement or rehabilitation, any bridge repair activities with a 10 year life span traffic signal or sign installation.
3. The urban match component of any federal-aid project, the local share of any project performed under the Collector Road Development Award Program (CRDA), the local share of any bridge project performed under the Local Bridge Program.

The maintenance of the Town roads in Somerville is the second highest budget cost, second only to the school budget. The Town receives funding from the State for Local Roads Assistance Program which can only be used for Capital Road Improvements with a 10 year lifecycle. Severe winters that require extensive snow plowing and sanding drive significant winter maintenance costs. The current Town annual budget for roads is \$63,000 for summer maintenance and \$92,000 for winter maintenance which includes plowing and salt/sanding. Plowing and Sanding contracts are currently under a 2 year bid process subject to approval by the Board of Selectmen. Other than the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for roads which is under development, the future maintenance costs are likely to be similar to current costs, although somewhat driven by the price of sand, salt, or other de-icing chemicals, and asphalt for patching.

The paved roads in Town consist of Route 17, Route 105, Turner Ridge Road, Somerville Road, Jones Road, Valley Road, a portion of Sand Hill Road from Route 105 to the Town Office and a small amount of paved aprons accessing these and other roads. The remainder of the Town roads

are gravel of varying quality. Some of the roads have limited use during the spring thaw. The road standards utilized in the recent engineering assessment and recommendations for our Road Improvement Plan are quite adequate for a small rural town. The task before us is to bring town roads up to those standards over time.

Somerville has two state highways, Routes 17 and 105 and one state-aid road, Turner Ridge. Routes 17 and 105 provide reasonable access to the east and west. Valley Road provides limited north-south access from Route 17 through Jefferson to Route 32 and has recently been paved. At the intersection of Route 105, Turner Ridge Road extends north through Palermo to Route 3. Somerville Road starts at the intersection of Route 105 and Turner Ridge Road, south into Jefferson where it meets the north end of Route 218 at the Route 17 intersection. Improvement and basecoat paving was completed in late 2017 and topcoat will be completed in 2018.

Route 17 is a relatively high speed highway with wide paved shoulders. There are only very limited services on Route 17 and cross-road pedestrian movements are minimal. Most residential development in Somerville is dispersed along state, local and private roads with little pedestrian or bicycle traffic. Pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian traffic is increasing on many local roads. Only Route 17 has traffic volumes that exceed 1,000 vehicle trips per day. Conflicts between through traffic and vehicles entering or exiting driveways are relatively infrequent on the other roads. MDOT repaved Route 17 in Somerville during the summer of 2015. Route 105 was skim coated in 2016.

The highway bridges in town are all on state roadways and maintenance is a responsibility of the State. The two small bridges on Route 105 near the western border were rebuilt by the State in recent years.

Due to the low density nature of residential development in Somerville and without any traditional downtown or village center, there has been no demonstrated need for sidewalks or pedestrian facilities in the community.

The elementary school is currently used by RSU 12 for Head Start/Pre-K and the Superintendent's office. The RSU is the largest employer in town, but does not cause undo traffic issues.

There are no local access management or traffic permitting measures other than seasonal posting of limited loads on some roads to protect the road from damage during spring thaw, and access control and traffic standards imposed by the Subdivision Ordinance.

The Town of Somerville has retained an engineer to assist in preparing a long term plan for road improvement. The Town is in the process of making road improvements based in part on the age and condition of road surfaces as described in Table 1 following.

**Table 1 Somerville Public Roads**

Public Road	Function	Length (mi)	Town Paved (mi)	Town Gravel (mi)	Cond.	Comments/Required Work
Rockland Road (Rte 17)	Minor Art.	2.42			VG	Repaved 2015.
Patricktown Road (Rte 105)	Minor Col.	3.66			VG	Repaved 2016.
Turner Ridge Road	Minor Col.	2.54			F	
Brann Road	Local	0.18		0.18	P	Inadequate base, drainage, surface, width.
Crummett Mountain Road	Local	4.23		4.23	P-VP	Inadequate width, no drainage or base, poor surface, extreme horizontal and vertical curves, exposed ledge.
Gore Road	Local	0.32		0.32	F	Inadequate drainage, horizontal and vertical curves.
Hewett Road	Local	1.05		1.05	F	Fair Surface
Jones Road	Local	1.44	1.44 <sup>23</sup>		P-F	Inadequate base, width, drainage, travel surface.
North Mountain Road	Local	0.59		0.59	P-F	Inadequate width, drainage
Sand Hill Road	Local	1.86	0.60	1.26	P-F	Inadequate width, drainage, and, poor surface. Partially paved 2015
Somerville Road	Local	3.08	3.08 <sup>24</sup>		P-F	Very poor drainage, poor base and surface. Improved 2015
South Colby Road	Local	1.57		1.57	F	Inadequate base, drainage, surface.
Valley Road	Local	1.72	1.72		VG	Paved 2015
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>24.66</b>	<b>6.84</b>	<b>9.20</b>		<b>16.04 miles local</b>
					LEGEND: VG – Very Good F – Fair P – Poor VP – Very Poor	

Somerville private roads and their lengths/status are shown in Table 2 following.

23 NOTE: Jones Road was improved and paved in 2017 after this assessment. Formerly it was 1.37 miles gravel, 0.07 paved in the condition indicated.

24 NOTE: Somerville Road was improved and paved with basecoat in late 2017, after this assessment. Formerly it was 3 miles gravel, 0.08 paved in the condition indicated.

**Table 2****Somerville Private Roads**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Length (feet unless otherwise noted)</b>
Black Brook Dr.	780
Cabin Rd.	910
Choate Dr.	520
Colomy Ln.	1060
Cross Rd.	3640
Deer Run.	500
Dodge Rd.	4780
French Pond Rd	2080
Frye Rd.	5840
Grace Ln.	950
Guides Way	Discontinued
Hemlock Ln.	1000
Hisler Mountain Rd.	3790
Hodgkins Ln.	820
Island Rd.	600
Long Pond Rd.	800
Loon Dr.	300
Marus Ln.	1060
Middle Pond Rd.	1800
Nolka Ln.	2500
Paradise Cove Rd.	760
Scenic Ln.	680
Sunset Dr.	1120
Sunset Ext.	100
Thompson Ln.	1060
TLC Way	760
Turtle Cove Ln.	1480
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.52 mi</b>

There are few businesses in Somerville and those that do exist have few employees. There are no retail uses that generate significant traffic. The only public spaces in Somerville are the Town Office on Sand Hill Road, the RSU 12's Somerville School and the Somerville Fire Department on Route 17 and Route 105. None of the facilities generate much traffic.

Somerville has an extensive private road network with 7.52 miles of private roads, many of which serve seasonal residences on Long Pond. Many of these roads were developed incrementally over time and do not meet basic road construction standards. In addition, all private roads have a non-paved surface. Because these roads satisfy the standard for road frontage, additional lot-by-lot development can occur on them without improvements.

There are no parking standards. The only parking issue in Somerville is the lack of adequate parking at the Brann Preserve on Turner Ridge Road operated by SWOAM. The entrance to the property has been blocked with boulders and the shoulder is too narrow to allow safe parking. This has been communicated to SWOAM as a problem. Also there is no parking on Colby Road for the Turner Pond access and there is a need for it.

See Table 3 for the number and location of public parking spaces.

**Table 3 Public Parking Spaces in Somerville**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Type</b>
Town Office	16 (est.)	Off-road
Somerville Fire Department (South)	20 (est.)	Off-road
RSU #12 – Offices	30 (est.)	Off-road

There is no fixed route bus system that serves Somerville. Coastal Trans, Inc. (CTI) is a private non-profit corporation that provides demand services to Somerville residents. CTI uses volunteer drivers whenever possible to reduce transportation costs. These drivers use their own vehicles to transport program-qualified people needing non-emergency transportation. Regionally Concord Coach provides twice-daily service both north and south bound. The bus picks up and drops off customers on Main Street in Damariscotta 30 to 40 minutes away, but there is no bus service in Somerville nor adjacent towns.

The Town of Somerville does not host a transportation terminal. It is not a coastal community and does not have nor abut any public or private airports. There are no rail lines within the Town.

Map 12 – Public and Private Roads, in Appendix A, presents Somerville’s public and private road network. As of 2016 there were 32.26 miles of public and private roads in Somerville as described in tables 1 and 2 above. These roads vary in function and character from high-speed arterials to private gravel roadways.

There has been very little development of new roads in Somerville except for private roads serving seasonal residences on Long Pond and elsewhere as well as private roads that serve single family residences. The current public road network is virtually the same as existed in the early 1900’s. While new growth has occurred on these roads since 1970, it is more associated with those commuting out of Somerville for employment, creating new demands on these gravel roads. For example, roads need to be maintained for year-round and post storm use, creating potential runoff and drainage impacts on adjacent land. Environmental impacts from roads are

not significant issues in the community and one opportunity for improvement has been identified in the Water Resources section of the Plan. Resources to aid in identifying needs, which the Town has used previously in consultation with the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission, include *Stream Smart*<sup>25</sup> and the *Maine Stream Habitat Viewer*<sup>26</sup>.

Somerville Road serves as a direct connector between State Route 17 and State Route 105, and a continuation of State Route 218 and Turner Ridge Road. Thus it has a fair amount of non-residential traffic including heavy trucks. This formerly gravel road was paved late in 2017. This does not change the need to preserve farmland of statewide importance and prime farmland along Somerville Road for farming and discourage development dividing it into house lots. What is not farmland is mostly wetlands or shoreland. As paving proceeds, zoning and other ordinance changes may be necessary to protect farmland and wetlands.

There are only minor existing subdivisions currently. The recently enacted Subdivision Ordinance does address dead-end roads and allows the Planning Board to require designing for expansion if appropriate.

No records are maintained regarding transportation-related wildlife mortality. Given the relatively high speeds on Route 17, however, there is probably relatively high wildlife mortality.

Somerville specifically exempts from regulation the noise generated by traffic on public ways. There have been few transportation-related noise complaints over the years.

The only traffic control devices in Somerville are stop signs at intersections.

There is an ongoing problem in Somerville with the theft of town installed street signs. There is no obvious solution to this problem.

## **Policies**

To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.

To safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.

To promote public health, protect natural and cultural resources, and enhance livability by managing land use in ways that maximize the efficiency of the transportation system and minimize increases in vehicle miles traveled.

To meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and through travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).

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25 <http://maineaudubon.org/streamsmart/>

26 <http://maine.gov/dmr/mcp/environment/streamviewer/index.htm>

To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.

The Town already has a policy that other than work performed by the Road Commissioner, any project over \$5,000 must be put out to bid, unless it has been determined by the Board of Selectmen that a sole source is the only available, reasonable resource for the project.

## **Strategies**

Develop or continue to update a prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for the community's transportation network.

- An engineering assessment of Town roads, their condition, and needed improvements has been recently conducted.
- The Board of Selectmen developed a Road Improvement Plan. This includes reconstruction of all Town gravel roads, and the paving of Somerville Road and Jones Road. All work will be completed by spring of 2018. The Town issued a municipal bond for \$800,000 to finance this project.
- The Town should also consider whether improvements encourage patterns of growth contrary to the Comprehensive Plan, and consider amendments to ordinances and/or zoning it deems necessary to prevent outcomes inconsistent with the plan.
- Because unforeseen events such as storm damage, weather delays, and rising fuel and pavement costs can have significant impacts on planned projects, the capital improvement plan should be viewed as a living document rather than a fixed plan and be subject to review on an annual basis.

Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.

The Town should review its ordinances and maintain, enact or amend them as appropriate to address or avoid conflicts with:

- Policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. §73);
- State access management regulations pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704; and
- State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704-A.

Maintain, enact or amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections. The Town's Subdivision Ordinance has such provisions and the Town should maintain and amend them as appropriate.

## **Public Facilities and Services**

### **Findings and Conclusions**

- *Somerville has no public water or sewer system.*
- *Somerville has no stormwater management facilities.*
- *Somerville has no 3-phase power.*
- *Somerville has no cable service.*
- *Somerville has substandard broadband speeds, and service is not universally available.*
- *Somerville has typical rural response times and volunteer coverage of emergency services through regional cooperation.*
- *Somerville shares a regional school system with 6 other towns. The school system is cost efficient and innovating to meet the needs of increasing numbers of economically disadvantaged and special needs students.*
- *Somerville shares waste management including recycling with other towns through town membership in a regional cooperative.*

### **State Goal**

To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

### **Conditions and Trends**

#### **Public Infrastructure Data**

Refer to Map 1 – Public Infrastructure, in Appendix A. It should be noted that contrary to the indication on map 1 there has not been a library at the intersection of Turner Ridge Road and Route 105 at any time within recent memory. The very few items of note on the map are consistent with very limited public facilities in our town. Other data has been obtained from the RSU 12 Superintendent's office, Somerville Volunteer Fire Department, and Lincoln County offices. Somerville coordinates with other communities on a range of services as described below, and in other ways documented within the Regional Coordination section of the Plan.

The Town Office, owned by the Town, was relocated and expanded within the last 10 years. It is located on Sand Hill Road, with a part time staff of 11 people including Board of Selectmen, Road Commissioner, Health Officer, Addressing Officer, Emergency Management Director, and Moderator. The Town also contracts for road maintenance not performed by the Road Commissioner, for a Code Enforcement Officer, an Assessor's Agent, a town Attorney, and

Animal Control Officer. Townspeople participate without compensation on many other boards. The Town Office and the Somerville Volunteer Fire Department's northern building are both shown on Map 17 – New Construction and Mobile Homes, also in Appendix A.

Municipal facilities and equipment are in reasonable condition. However, the Somerville Volunteer Fire Department Station on Route 17 (South Station) does not meet all needs and the firefighting equipment will need planned replacement. The fire South Station building size and design preclude meeting current safety standards:

- It is impractical to install an exhaust system to properly ventilate the station when the fire trucks are running as they leave or return to the building.
- It does not meet the Department of Labor standard for 28" clearance around the trucks inside the building.
- It does not include facilities to meet State safety standards for crew decontamination.

Firefighting vehicles include: 2 Fire Engines, 1 Tanker Truck, 1 Forestry Truck, 1 Rescue Vehicle, and 1 Fire Boat. All of the trucks are over 25 years old.

None of the services will be overburdened by the rate of growth anticipated in Somerville in the next 10 years. However improvements to address building inadequacies and equipment replacement must be considered in capital planning.

Municipal services are adequate except that Code Enforcement should be strengthened, and better retention/management of records of permits, property purchases and construction are available ten years later for future Comprehensive Plans.

### **Emergency Services**

The Town has the Somerville Volunteer Fire Department which provides emergency services including first response for medical emergencies, structure fires, forest fires, grass fires, hazmat emergencies, motor vehicle accidents and cold water rescue. They also provide assistance to the Emergency Management Director for disasters. The Maine Forest Service is available to the Town of Somerville by request from the Somerville Volunteer Fire Department for training and assistance during a fire. It has 2 stations, one on the South end of Town on Route 17 and one garage on Route 105 next to the school. The Somerville Volunteer Fire Department has Mutual Aid with the Towns of Washington, Whitefield, Jefferson and Palermo. For Emergency Medical Aid, Windsor Rescue provides coverage for the North End of Somerville and Jefferson Rescue and Whitefield Rescue provide coverage for the South End of Somerville. Transportation is provided by Delta Ambulance. Law Enforcement is provided by the Maine State Police and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department. We were only able to obtain an aggregate number from the Lincoln County 911 Communications Center for average response time across all services of 20.6 minutes. Delta Ambulance in 2016 had an average response time on calls to Somerville of

19.3 minutes. Shorter would be better, however these are quite good considering the regional nature of services.

### **Street Tree Program**

The Town of Somerville does not have sidewalks, nor a traditional village center or downtown. So there is no Street Tree Program.

### **Public Water and Sewer**

The Town of Somerville does not have a public water system nor a public sewer system.

Every house in the town must have some source of water supply such as a drilled or dug well, or other means of a water supply.

Every house in Town must have a septic tank and leech field to dispose of solid waste if they have water pumped into the house, distances vary depending on the depth of the well casing or liner seal below ground level and reduction in the minimum 100 ft. setback distance for first time disposal systems.

Not having a public sewer or water supply does not prevent the Town of Somerville from accommodating current and projected growth given our low population density due to lot size requirements.

### **Septage**

The Town of Somerville Holding Tank Ordinance and Land Use Ordinance both address contents of septic systems and the need to comply with state law in disposing of same.

For disposal of septic tank waste there are many private businesses in the area which provide pumping services for septic tanks. If desired, homes can have outhouses on the property, which is allowed by State of Maine law. They may also have a gray water area.

### **Solid Waste Management**

The Town of Somerville has a contract with the Tri-County Solid Waste Management Organization (TCSWMO) on Route 17 in Union to accept all our waste and recycling, paying only a per-bag fee for garbage, and by weight for construction refuse, etc. Most recyclable items are accepted at no charge from residents of member towns. All residents may take waste to the TCSWMO facilities on their own or have them hauled by a private contractor. Some residents use private companies that do not recycle and haul everything as waste to Hatch Hill in Augusta.

### **Public Storm Water Management**

The Town of Somerville does not have any storm water overflow facilities because it has no storm drain infrastructure.

## **Telecommunications and Energy Infrastructure**

Somerville has adequate telephone service. Internet service is insufficient for many 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. Portions of Town are served by wireless unlicensed band radio Internet service from dedicated towers. Other areas receive DSL service from Consolidated Communications. Only the school building receives Internet via a fiber optic connection. This severely limits the Town's ability to attract technology based businesses. It also limits residents' access to online college courses and limits the Town's ability to attract young professionals to live here. Due to the topography of roads and utility distribution systems a regional solution is needed to improve Internet service.

There is no cable service in Somerville.

There is no 3 phase power in Somerville, although it does cross Route 17 in one corner of town. This limits the ability to attract manufacturing and industrial businesses. Changing that would require zoning Route 17 to encourage industrial development and could still be expensive to get Central Maine Power to tie in to deliver 3 phase power. The next closest approaching three phase line would, if extended, enter town in an area not suitable for industrial use. That would be on Somerville Road situated between shoreland zones on Long Pond and prime or statewide importance farmland and wetlands.

## **Public Education**

The location of Somerville School precludes new residential development around it. However the rural roads without paved shoulders and without sidewalks also preclude children walking to school as a norm. Most of the Town's children are bused to surrounding towns' elementary schools within the RSU, and high school students to schools of their choice in an even broader region.

## ***Facilities***

Somerville School is owned and used by Regional School Unit #12. Expansion of the existing school building in the Town of Somerville is not anticipated at this time since other than Pre-K, the student population now attends Windsor Elementary School and Palermo Consolidated School. For secondary education they attend Erskine Academy, Lincoln Academy, Cony High School or other High Schools in the local area. This does not mean that the Town of Somerville will never consider School expansion in the future, however the RSU has no expansion plans at this time. Somerville's school building houses adult education, a combined Head Start and pre-K collaborative program, and the RSU's administrative offices, with room to spare.

## ***Cost Sharing Model***

When RSU 12 was created it served the Towns of Windsor, Somerville, Chelsea, Alna, Palermo, Westport Island, Wiscasset and Whitefield. Wiscasset withdrew from the RSU, but the other 7 towns remain. Since its inception the student population of Somerville has declined slightly, but

in the last few years several families with young children have moved into Town. Excluding the capital portion, the school budget divided by the number of students produces an RSU-wide per-pupil cost. Somerville's cost share is based on the number of Somerville students enrolled multiplied by that per-pupil cost. Part of the Town's share is paid by applying Somerville's State education subsidy, and the remainder is the amount Somerville must pay RSU 12.

*Student Enrollment*

Projecting student enrollments over 10 years is an exercise in speculation for small populations such as ours with many factors outside our control influencing whether young families move into or out of town. Examine the last 7 years of Primary and Secondary enrollments in Tables 1 and 2. Notice that there are wide swings from year to year.

**Table 1 Elementary Enrollment data from RSU 12 Superintendent**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Pre-K</b>							2
<b>K</b>	5.5	3	1	0.5	2	5	6
<b>1</b>	6.5	4	2	0.5	1	6	4
<b>2</b>	4	5	3	2	6	11	8
<b>3</b>	4.5	4.5	5.5	3	4	8	12
<b>4</b>	5.5	3.5	3	3.5	3.5	9	8
<b>5</b>	2.5	4.5	3.5	3	6	8	8
<b>6</b>	4	1.5	3	3.5	3	9	10
<b>7</b>	4	3	1.5	3.5	3.5	2	7
<b>8</b>	4.5	3.5	3	1.5	3	6	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>67</b>

**Table 2 Secondary Enrollments per RSU 12 Superintendent**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Cony High School</b>		1	2	1	0	0	0
<b>Erskine Academy</b>	26	11	11	13	11	13	14
<b>Hall-Dale High School</b>		1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Lincoln Academy</b>		2	3	1	0	2	2
<b>Medomak Valley High School</b>		0	1	1	1	1	1
<b>River View Christian Academy</b>		0	2	2	0	1	1
<b>Wiscasset High School</b>		3	5	5	3	0	2
<b>Waterville High School</b>		0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Home Schooling</b>		1	0	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>

Enrollment fluctuations cannot be used for accurate projections. However Somerville is one of the smallest towns in a much larger RSU with a student population of nearly 1500 students. That is a better base population to make projections, and those numbers are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 Total RSU12 Student Enrollments by Fiscal Year per Superintendent**

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1452	1474	1446	1472	1468

The RSU is experiencing a stable student population. While significant enrollment increases from Somerville would impact our share of education costs, the larger RSU population moderates the likelihood of needing to expand RSU schools. Somerville should not expect the RSU to outgrow its facilities in the next five years.

**Local & Regional Health Care Facilities and Public Health & Social Service Programs**

The local and regional health care facilities and public health and social service programs include the following: Good Shepherd Food Bank, Healthy Kids, KV Mental Health, Jefferson First Responders, Maine Chapter of the American Red Cross, Midcoast Maine Community Action, New Hope for Women, Spectrum Generations, Washington Fire Dept., Meals on Wheels and Windsor First Responders. Town residents can choose from four hospitals, Penbay in Rockland, MaineGeneral Medical Center in Augusta and Waterville, Miles Memorial Hospital in Damariscotta. The nearest non-emergency health clinic is the Sheepscot Valley Health Center in Coopers Mills. The Country Manor Nursing Home in Coopers Mills provides nursing care. Washington Manor in Washington and Jefferson Green in Jefferson are Private Non-Medical Institution (PNMI) assisted living facilities. To assist agencies in providing residents with needed assistance, the Town of Somerville appropriates contributions to various health and social service agencies based upon their requests if approved at the annual Town Meeting. In the 2016-2017 fiscal year those organizations were:

- Good Shepherd Food Bank
- Healthy Kids
- Jefferson First Responders
- Kennebec Valley Mental Health
- ME Chapter, American Red Cross
- Midcoast ME Community Action
- New Hope For Women
- Senior Spectrum
- Washington Fire Department
- Windsor First Responders

## **Policies**

To efficiently meet identified public facility and service needs.

To provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.

## **Strategies**

Identify any capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate the community's anticipated growth and changing demographics.

- The Town should create a plan for firefighting apparatus replacement based on expected life and obsolescence, and incorporate that into the Town's Capital Investment Plan.  
Note: firefighting apparatus includes fire trucks with appropriate equipment, individual firefighter gear, and utility vehicles with appropriate equipment.
- The Town should consider whether it would be to the Town's advantage to address inadequacies of the Somerville Volunteer Fire Department South Station by planning for future construction of a municipal complex, as a number of other towns have done. The complex could include municipal office space, room for community activities and meeting space, and a modern fire station with appropriate space for the fire apparatus, training rooms, offices and an emergency operations center for the Somerville Volunteer Fire Department.
- The Town has also been encouraging neighboring towns and the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission to participate in a Planning Grant from ConnectME to explore a Regional Municipal Utility District based solution to improve the available service speeds and the accessibility town wide of quality Internet service.

Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas. There are no singular public facilities investments planned. Capital investment needs consist of roads and Internet service.

Encourage local sewer and water districts to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan. Until such time as the Town of Somerville determines that a municipal or regional public sewer and water district makes sense, there will be no need to plan service extensions.

The Town of Somerville has no public water supply, thus no expansion is anticipated. Our water supply, via private wells, can best be protected by protection of groundwater, surface aquifer, surface water streams, ponds, and wetlands which recharge Maine's open aquifers. This protection is already an objective described further in the Water Resources section of the Plan.

Explore options for regional delivery of local services. Somerville already utilizes regional services as detailed above. However we are always looking for other opportunities to do so that make sense to serve local needs, and will continue to do so.

# Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan

## Findings and Conclusions

- *State funding of education is the most influential and unpredictable factor impacting the largest portion of Somerville's annual costs – education.*
- *Overall State education funding has declined significantly, and due to formula adjustments the percent Somerville receives as state subsidy has varied from 0 to 30% of Somerville's share.*
- *Consequently, in spite of reducing RSU administrative and energy costs the average annual increase to Somerville has been 8% even though the school budget increases have hovered around 3%.*
- *Somerville experiences an average annual County tax increase of just under 3%.*
- *Somerville has nearly no debt obligations, carries balances in capital accounts, and has significant ability to borrow for future capital improvements. Borrowing of up to \$800,000 has been authorized for road improvements, well below the \$7.9 million permitted under Maine law.*

## State Goal

To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

## Conditions and Trends

### Fiscal Capacity

A town's fiscal capacity refers to its ability to meet current and future needs through public expenditures. These needs include regular daily operating expenses and public services which are planned for in the town's annual budget. Periodically, there will also be need for improvement to existing facilities, and in the case of growth, for entirely new infrastructure. The Comprehensive Plan has identified areas of growth and critical areas for improvement, which highlights the need for a capital investment plan. These recommendations must be considered in light of Somerville's fiscal capacity.

In considering all the analyses below, it is important to note that the Town changed its fiscal year during this period, from a calendar year to a July 1 – June 30 fiscal year that aligns with the State fiscal year. This change necessitated an 18 month fiscal accounting period between January 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

## Revenues

By far the largest source of revenue in Somerville is real estate taxes. The town has enforced property tax collection more vigorously in recent years and has reduced delinquency from 22% in 2012 to 8.7 % in 2015. In 2016, the town valuation was \$50,017,800, which was a slight decrease from the year before. Recent creation of tax maps and overdue assessment of all properties will result in changes in overall valuation of Somerville and changes in individual property tax bills due to corrections to individual property valuations.

### **Valuation & Mil Rate Fiscal Years 2012 - 2017**

	<b>2012</b> (12 month)	<b>Jan 2013 – June 2014</b>	<b>2014 – 2015</b> (12 month)	<b>2015 – 2016</b> (12 month)	<b>2016 – 2017</b> (12 month)
Local valuation	\$48,352,300	\$49,559,850	\$49,956,500	\$50,068,300	\$50,017,800
% change		2.5%	0.8%	0.2%	(0.1%)
State valuation	\$53,900,000	\$53,653,000	\$52,600,000	\$50,200,000	\$51,400,000
Annualized Mil Rate	14.75	*14.33	15.4	16.9	18.3

\*A total of 21.5 mils were levied over the 18 month fiscal period, due to change of fiscal year from the calendar year to the current fiscal year, July 1 – June 30.

As shown below excise taxes are the second largest single source of municipal revenue, and have followed a consistent slow growth pattern. Intergovernmental transfers are a significant source of revenue for the town, but have been more variable over the years. In 2014, the town switched accounting firms, and as a result, these governmental revenues have been broken down by category, which allows better analysis of the fluctuations.

### **Municipal Revenue Fiscal Years 2011-2016**

<b>Revenue Source</b>	<b>2011</b> (12 months)	<b>2012</b> (12 months)	<b>2014*</b> (18 months)	<b>2015</b> (12 months)	<b>2016</b> (12 months)
Property Taxes	\$692,781	\$682,197	\$1,152,966	\$779,142	\$811,916
Property Taxes (annualized)	\$692,781	\$682,197	\$768,644	\$779,142	\$811,916
Excise Taxes	\$72,686	\$66,764	\$102,788	\$81,141.09	\$80,680
Intergovernmental revenues	\$78,037	\$73,442			
State Revenue Sharing			\$40,249	\$20,796	\$40,000
General Government			\$40,249	\$22,738	\$39,027
Health & Welfare			\$732	\$1,167	\$502
Roads			\$51,774	\$29,017	\$23,208
Homestead Reimbursement			\$20,188	\$11,850	\$13,013
Fire Protection				\$925	\$4,775

Interest				\$1,249	\$1,721
Total	\$847,299	\$834,459	\$1,410,693	\$948,026	\$1,014,842
Total (annualized)	\$847,299	\$834,459	\$940,462	\$948,026	\$1,014,842

\*\$1,152,966 was raised in property taxes over the 18 month fiscal period January 2013 through June 2014, due to change of fiscal year from the calendar year to the current fiscal year, July 1 – June 30. This equates to an annualized property tax of \$768,644 for purpose of comparison with other years. An annualized total revenue figure has been provided for the same reason.

Somerville does not collect tax on personal property. We could choose to do this. However, the results of the written survey were very strongly against doing so.

Municipal revenues over the next 10 years will continue to be largely dependent on property taxes.

### **Expenditures**

In 2016, education accounted for 62.5% of the tax commitment, followed by the municipal budget at 29.9% and the county tax assessment at 7.6%. Although the municipal expenditures vary from year to year, there are some clear trends in the last 5 years. Education has been consistently the highest portion of the budget, and has been increasing percentage-wise every year.

#### ***Municipal Expenditure Fiscal Years 2011-2016***

<b>Expenditure Purpose</b>	<b>2011 (12 months)</b>	<b>2012 (12 months)</b>	<b>2014* (18 months)</b>	<b>2015 (12 months)</b>	<b>2016 (12 months)</b>
Education	\$387,231	\$406,764	\$659,145	\$477,662	\$528,778
General Gov't	\$9,660	\$25,005	\$139,029	\$140,848	\$125,626
Health & Welfare	\$9,166	\$11,752	\$5,324	\$3,015	\$3,229
Roads	\$210,030	\$193,268	\$194,944	\$140,647	\$214,575
Fire Protection	\$31,357	\$38,491	\$52,914	\$42,261	\$58,868
County Tax	\$57,532	\$58,486	\$61,555	\$63,591	\$64,667
Unclassified	\$7,463	\$77,852	\$235	\$317	\$953
Interest on Long-term debt	\$1,438	\$2,249	\$2,725	0	0
Total	\$713,877	\$813,867	\$1,115,871	\$868,341	\$996,696
Annualized Total	\$713,877	\$813,867	\$743,914	\$868,341	\$996,696

\*These expenditures are over the 18 month fiscal period January 2013 through June 2014, due to change of fiscal year from the calendar year to the current fiscal year, July 1 – June 30. An annualized Total has been provided for comparison with other years.

#### ***Expenditures - Education***

The number of students has not been a consistent driver for Somerville's Local Share of education, although there has been an upward trend in the last 5 years and the RSU cost sharing model has changed to a per-student basis. Somerville currently raises 71.2% of their per-pupil

costs while the other 27.7% comes from state education subsidy, adjusted for student count on a one and two year delayed basis.

**Somerville Student Count and Per-Student Cost  
School Fiscal Years 2009-2018**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (est)
Per Student Cost (\$)	\$9,930	\$10,833	\$10,781	\$11,924	\$12,876	\$13,273
Per Student Subsidy (\$)	\$2,455	\$1,351	\$0	\$2,171	\$3,880	\$3,827
Somerville Local Share / Student	\$7,475	\$9,482	\$10,781	\$9,753	\$8,996	\$9,446
% through State subsidy	24.7%	12.5%	0.0%	18.2%	30.1%	28.8%

School costs are controlled by the RSU12 board. We have two voting members on that board, however Somerville has some of the lowest weighted votes under the regional agreement. Our town's influence depends more upon the strength of our board members' persuasion than their votes. Nonetheless, the RSU has been very financially responsible, proactively managing facilities and energy costs, and achieving very effective administration at a cost of \$764 per pupil compared to the state average of \$1036.

Beyond small percentage budget increases, the primary factors have been the multi-year transition to a new RSU cost sharing formula which is now completed, and the declining percent of State funding for education over a number of years. A 2.8 % increase (\$588,374) in the proposed 2017-2018 (FY2018) school budget is driven mostly by factors not within the RSU's control. High School tuition and Special Education Tuition increases comprise 65% of that budget increase.

Declining State education funding pushes costs onto property taxes, turning the 2.8% budget increase into a 5.4% increase in funding, raised locally among RSU member towns. With each decrease in the percentage of State education funding, the statutorily required 'mils for education' increases as well. Mils for education have gone from 6.79 in 2009 to 8.3 in the FY2018 ED279 report.

To put that in perspective, if the State actually funds 55% of K-12 education in FY2018 instead of repealing the direct initiative passed by voters in 2016, RSU 12 is estimated to receive an additional \$1,335,786 which is more than twice as much as our budget increase. That would enable a reduction in Somerville's Local Share, rather than an increase.

***State funding of education is the most influential and unpredictable factor impacting the largest portion of Somerville's annual costs - education.***

***Expenditures – County***

County taxes have also been increasing annually at an average rate of 2.98%.

### *Expenditures - Municipal*

The municipal budget had been increasing, but was reduced by 9% in 2016. However, the total budget has continued to grow significantly every year, which has necessitated a steep rise in the mil rate to meet town requirements: from 14.75 in 2012 to 18.3 in 2016.

### *Expenditures – Capital Road Improvement*

In 2016, the town used a portion of its Capital Road Improvement Reserve to reconstruct and pave a 0.4 mile section of Sand Hill Road and a 0.7 mile section of the Valley Road, as well as overlay a one-mile section of Valley Road and repair the bridge section on Somerville Road.

Roadways are expected to be the largest future capital investments for Somerville. The Town retained a consultant to evaluate all town roads and write an engineering report recommending Capital Road Improvements in 2016. It provided detailed recommendations for improvements and maintenance of each segment of road. That work is scheduled to be completed by spring of 2018. See the Transportation section of the Plan for further details.

### **Debt**

The town office construction loan was paid off ahead of time, leaving Somerville with no outstanding municipal debts as of December 31, 2016. The town ended the 2015/16 fiscal year with \$292,134 in cash which is in line with state recommendations.

The local school property and building are owned by RSU 12 effective when consolidation was completed. As part of RSU 12 we are responsible for a small portion of their debt on other school buildings. As of 12-31-2016 Somerville's proportional share of school debt is \$838,734 of which the state funds roughly 98% of the debt service as a pass-through. Assuming the state continues this commitment, Somerville's debt would be approximately \$16,775. The Town will be borrowing up to \$800,000 to finance the Capital Road Improvements as approved by voters in June 2017.

Capital items have historically been funded by building up reserve funds, by bonding, by seeking donations and fundraising, and by seeking grants. When necessary, loans are used for smaller amounts. The town has become much more aggressive about grants in recent years. In addition, more diligent collection of past and current property taxes has reduced delinquent taxes from 22% in 2012 to 8.7% in 2016. In 2016 Northern Geomatics prepared the first ever tax maps for Somerville. In conjunction with this process, new assessments have been completed for all properties in town. This has made for much more accurate information on assessed valuation in town.

The amount of debt a municipality can incur is governed by State law; the law limits a town's outstanding debt to 15% of the town's last full State valuation. Based upon Somerville's 2017 state valuation of \$52,600,000, the maximum debt under state law would be approximately \$7.9 million. However, should the town need to borrow for public improvements, Somerville has

ample borrowing power, likely more than it would want to inflict upon property taxpayers as debt service. Somerville's debt is well below Maine Bond Bank recommended limits.

### **Capital Improvement Expenditure Funds**

The town of Somerville has several reserve accounts that can be used for capital improvements. As of June 30, 2016, the town had \$171,367 in reserve accounts, many of which are earmarked solely for capital improvements. The sand and salt shed account contained \$10,136, the road machinery capital account held \$71,896, and the capital road construction account held \$24, 298.

### **Summary of Fiscal Capacity**

A town's fiscal capacity is the level of normal operating costs, including education and public works, and finance capital expenditures as needed, which it can reasonably bear based upon the ability of the property tax base and other revenue sources to support such expenditures.

Due to increasing education costs, a higher county assessment, and decreasing state revenue sharing, the mil rate has been increasing more quickly than desirable, creating some hardship in a town with a limited tax base and a median household income \$10,000 less than Lincoln County and Maine (see Population and Demographics section of the Plan). However, the municipal officers are continuing to pursue ways to lower the cost of providing essential services to Somerville's taxpayers, and Somerville's financial position remains excellent. Somerville had significant borrowing power if needed for capital improvements, although the impact upon taxpayers must be considered as well as the community benefits of the improvement.

### **Policies**

Continue to finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost effective manner.

Actively explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community. Adoption of this plan will open up more grant opportunities.

Reduce Maine's tax burden by staying within LD1 spending limitations unless doing so prevents compliance with other legal and constitutional obligations.

Continue diligent tax collection.

Continue involvement in the RSU 12 regional school system.

Work for improved broadband to allow us to attract small businesses that require bandwidth.

In the current circumstances, extension of 3 phase power by the town would not seem a prudent capital investment.

Establish road capital improvement plan based on recent engineering study.

## **Strategies**

The Town should consider developing plans for construction of a municipal complex as indicated in the Public Facilities and Services section of the Plan. And if determined to be appropriate, incorporate the capital and financial considerations into the Town's Capital Improvement Plan.

The Town should establish a capital reserve account and build its balance consistent with the firefighting equipment replacement plan recommended in the Public Facilities and Services section of the Plan.

Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared or adjacent capital investments to increase cost savings and efficiency.

Work with surrounding communities to seek planning grants and work toward establishment of regional broadband service. Our geography does not make it practical to go alone.

Try to attract farms and small tech businesses that do not require 3 phase power, unless the business requiring it is willing to incur the costs of CMP extending service to an appropriate site within the Development District.

Consider regionalization of more services providing services such as code enforcement, logging rule enforcement, etc. to lower costs.

Consider joining with a bordering town to provide an elderly housing arrangement.

## **Capital Investment Plan**

There are several likely capital investments in the next five years for Somerville as identified in other sections of the Plan. Neither is a direct requirement of growth, but both may lead to more growth or better services. The first is for road improvement and maintenance as recommended in the engineering report. The total cost based on bids for all recommended capital improvements in the engineering report is \$936,706. This includes reconstructing gravel roads and paving two that are a priority. The road capital improvement plan was developed. In 2017 the townspeople authorized borrowing and the Town has issued a municipal bond for \$800,000.

The second likely capital investment is for broadband infrastructure. This might be accomplished through a number of towns forming a regional municipal broadband utility district. Somerville has been exploring this with other towns' selectmen and promoted the idea in Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission sponsored Broadband information sessions. This only makes sense as part of a regional program, especially as the geography of our towns and the likely routes for fiber optic lines bears no relation to the town borders. This will require a joint effort with other towns, perhaps through the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission, and possibly funded by a ConnectME Authority planning grant. Here again, there may be federal money available or other grants to assist with the actual build-out of fiber optic lines.

The third would be incremental capital investments as indicated in recommendations for firefighting apparatus replacement consistent with a plan developed based on the expected life and obsolescence of vehicles and associated apparatus.

A fourth possible capital investment, but one which might not be started within five years due to the necessary scope of analysis, design, financial and other planning, is the possibility of a municipal complex as described in the Public Facilities and Services section of the Plan and earlier in this section. If the Town decides against such a complex it will need to consider and plan for capital investment in a standalone replacement for the South Station that addresses the current inadequacies of that building to address safety issues.

## **Regional Coordination Program**

Currently Somerville participates in several types of regional coordination:

- The regional school system – RSU 12
- Recycling and solid waste management – Tri-County Solid Waste Management Organization
- Mutual aid agreements with surrounding towns for fire and emergency responders
- Somerville contracts with Lincoln County for Animal Control services as do many towns in the County

While Somerville shares a professional CEO and assessor with other area towns, each town does so through individual contracts, not a regional agreement. Somerville has also participated in the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC) by appointing two commissioners since its inception.

### **Shared Resources**

There are some shared watersheds and ponds that present opportunities for protection through regional coordination as described in the Water Resources section of the Plan. In particular, three water resource management issues should be addressed through regional cooperation as noted in the Water Resources section of the Plan – Travel Pond, Jefferson is identified on the State's most at risk list and its watershed is in Somerville. Also Sheepscot Stream parallel to Turner Ridge Road on Map 3 – Watersheds in Appendix A is identified as impaired, apparently due to discharge in Palermo that has yet to be corrected by MDIFW. Most of Long Pond's shore is split between Somerville and Windsor with a lesser amount in Jefferson, and the outlet feeds into Whitefield downstream.

Overlapping tracts of farmland and habitat are identified as opportunities for preservation or protection through regional coordination, as included in strategies in the Natural Resources section of the Plan.

### **Shared Facilities**

The only shared facilities are the school facilities owned by RSU 12 as shared facilities providing educational benefits to the member towns, and the solid waste management/recycling facilities of the TCSWMO.

### **Shared Services**

There is some potential for regional coordination to help address housing affordability problems as identified in the Housing section of the Plan.

Somerville is already exploring regional opportunities for improved broadband service quality/speed and access with other towns. This may involve a Regional Municipal Utility District for Broadband. The Town has interest in exploring that further through discussions already begun between boards of selectmen, and a planning process which may be facilitated by LCRPC through a ConnectME planning grant. This need is described further in the Public Facilities and Services section of the Plan.

### **Conflicts**

There are no known conflicts with other towns regarding shared resources or facilities.

## **Existing Land Use**

### **Findings and Conclusions**

- *Somerville has a reasonably complete set of up to date ordinances.*
- *Some changes to those ordinances are necessary to address adverse impacts on various valued resources, on the rural character of the Town, and to better meet needs of residents, as identified in other sections of this Comprehensive Plan.*

### **Conditions and Trends**

Reference Map 16 – Shoreland and Development Zones, in Appendix A for a map of current land use classifications.

Somerville's Districts as defined by the Land Use Ordinance and the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance are:

#### **Development District**

The Development District consists of 3 areas within 400 feet on either side of the road centerline and together comprise a total distance along roadways of roughly 3 miles. This district comprises the area where future residential, commercial, public and industrial development is planned and is considered to be the most desirable in terms of highway access, economic viability, concentration of development, and the retention of natural character in the remainder of the town.

- Minimum lot size: 2 acres
- Minimum highway frontage: 200 feet
- Minimum road setback 50 feet from edge of the traveled way
- Minimum setback side and rear 40 feet

#### **Management District**

The Management District includes all the land not regulated by the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance or located in the Development District. The purpose of this District is to permit forestry and agricultural management activities to occur with minimal interference from unrelated development. In addition, it is necessary to provide protection for the food supply of the large number of deer and other wildlife habitat that inhabit the forested areas in Town.

- Minimum lot size 4 acres
- Minimum lot frontage 300 feet
- Minimum road setback 50 feet from the edge of the traveled way

- Minimum setback side and rear 40 feet

### **Limited Residential District**

The Limited Residential District includes those areas suitable for residential and recreational development. (See Shoreland minimum lot standards)

### **Resource Protection District**

The Resource Protection District includes areas in which development would adversely affect water quality, productive habitat, biological ecosystems, or scenic and natural values. (See Shoreland minimum lot standards)

### **Stream Protection District**

The Stream Protection District includes all land areas within seventy-five (75) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a stream, exclusive of those areas within two-hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a great pond, or river, or within two hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the upland edge of a freshwater or coastal wetland. Where a stream and its associated shoreland area are located within two-hundred and fifty (250) feet, horizontal distance, of the above water bodies or wetlands, that land area shall be regulated under the terms of the shoreland district associated with that water body or wetland. (See Shoreland minimum lot standards)

### **Shoreland Minimum Lot Standards**

Minimum Lot Area (sq. ft.):

- 30,000 for Residential per dwelling unit
- 60,000 for Governmental, Institutional, Commercial or Industrial per principal structure
- 40,000 for Public and Private Recreational Facilities

Minimum Shore Frontage (ft.):

- 150 for Residential per dwelling unit
- 300 for Governmental, Institutional, Commercial or Industrial per principal structure
- 200 for Public and Private Recreational Facilities

Land below the normal high-water line of a water body or upland edge of a wetland and land beneath roads serving more than two (2) lots shall not be included toward calculating minimum lot area.

Lots located on opposite sides of a public or private road shall be considered each a separate tract or parcel of land unless such road was established by the owner of land on both sides thereof after September 22, 1971.

The minimum width of any portion of any lot within one hundred (100) feet, horizontal distance, of the normal high-water line of a water body or upland edge of a wetland shall be equal to or greater than the shore frontage requirement for a lot with the proposed use.

If more than one residential dwelling unit, principal governmental, institutional, commercial or industrial structure or use, or combination thereof, is constructed or established on a single parcel, all dimensional requirements shall be met for each additional dwelling unit, principal structure, or use.

## **Ordinances**

The Town of Somerville made a concerted effort to enact updated ordinances bringing much needed protection to various resources as general conditions, and addressing basic health and safety needs.

The Land Use Ordinance defines Development and Management Districts and sets the baseline for land use conditions.

The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance implements local policies compliant with State shoreland zoning requirements.

The Floodplain Management Ordinance implements compliance with requirements of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-488, as amended) and adopts by reference specific areas of special flood hazard relevant to Somerville. It is by this ordinance that the Town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. See Map 15 – Development Constraints, in Appendix A for 100 year flood zone areas.

The Subdivision Ordinance defines criteria to be considered by the Planning Board before granting approval for a subdivision.

The Site Plan Review Ordinance applies to all new developments in the Town of Somerville involving commercial, retail, industrial or institutional buildings and structures, and multiple family dwellings consisting of three (3) or more attached dwelling units. It also applies to alterations or substantial enlargements of such structures and accessory uses and structures of same.

The Planning Board Ordinance codifies the existence and composition of the Planning Board, its organization, rules, and powers.

The Holding Tank Ordinance establishes procedures for the use and maintenance of holding tanks designed to receive and retain wastewater from residential or commercial uses.

The Cemetery Ordinance establishes rules and standards for the use of the Somerville public cemetery and authorizes and clarifies the roles of Town officials in managing its cemeteries and the funds allocated for the cemeteries.

## **Other Observations**

Most recent development in Somerville has been lot by lot, though recently the Town has adopted a subdivision ordinance. One subdivision has been approved in the last year. Some houses have been clustered and occupied without complying with the current regulations. Our community survey showed that residents wish to preserve the rural character of the town including several largely undeveloped ponds, large forest tracts and several farms. This probably requires more sophisticated policies than the current four acre lot minimum size which has encouraged sprawl along roads. Please refer to recommended policies and strategies relating to retention of that rural character in most sections of this Plan except Public Facilities and Services, and Fiscal Capacity and Capital Improvement.

Somerville has an active planning board. In recent years the Town has hired a professional Code Enforcement Officer (shared with other towns) and this led to a major increase in code enforcement. The Town needs to further monitor, educate, and enforce compliance with ordinances and strengthen logging practices oversight. Given the slow growth anticipated we do not expect issues with the administrative capacity necessary to achieve this.

See Map 16 – Shoreland and Development Zones (2012) within Appendix A for current District Zoning. In short there are five districts:

- The shoreland zoning districts of Resource Protection, Limited Residential, and Stream Protection;
- Development District - where future residential, commercial, public and industrial development is planned and is considered to be the most desirable in terms of highway access, economic viability, concentration of development, and the retention of natural character in the remainder of the town; and
- Management District - including all land not included in the other four (4) districts, and intended to be largely residential and agricultural use, including home-based businesses.

Most of the town (the Management District) has a four acre lot minimum with a two acre lot minimum in the Development District.

One subdivision plan has been approved.

See Map 17 – New Construction and Mobile Homes within Appendix A for all information we were able to obtain about new construction of homes, commercial construction, and mobile homes sited, as well as two town facilities built or installed within the 2006 to 2016 timeframe. There was no reliable source of new lots in general nor for mobile home installations. This needs to be remedied via improved recordkeeping and information retention policies. Preserves are indicated on Map 15 – Development Constraints.

The town follows the State of Maine Shoreland Zoning, as do all surrounding towns. Zoning was established in 1973 and needs improvement as many areas are zoned for uses that are inappropriate for their location. For example, the Development zone is the only one permitting Commercial or Industrial use other than commercial farming, yet parts of it are road sections with no safe location for a driveway. Form-based Zoning is a consideration for the future. The town is preparing a new ordinance to address mineral extraction, including quarrying (there are four grandfathered quarries in town), removal of topsoil, etc.

There is a great deal of available land in Somerville. There is little chance of industrial development in town due to lack of three phase power as described in the Public Facilities and Services section. Most commercial growth is expected in farming and home based industry as described in the Agriculture section and Economy section of the Plan.

### **Growth Areas**

Somerville was laid out physically in a different time and largely designed along rivers, with roads suitable for horse and foot travel added later. With the development of roads for vehicles over the last 150 years the town has been divided into two sections, north and south. Crummett Mountain Road still connects the north and south, but is narrow and at times impassable. Hewett Road at one time connected via Crocker Road (now defunct), to Hisler Mountain Road, to Patricktown Road, but no longer does. Therefore travel from one end of town to the other requires passing through neighboring towns. There is a very limited Development District where development is encouraged. The Management District includes the remainder of the town except for the three shoreland protection districts, and still permits home construction and other uses. Growth has occurred slowly throughout the town with a slightly higher concentration in the region surrounding Route 105 and west of Somerville Road.

Growth has averaged 3 to 5 residences per year. Based on slow growth projected in the Population and Demographics and Housing sections of the Plan approximate acres required would be 20 acres per year, or roughly 200 acres over ten years.



## **Future Land Use Plan**

### **Findings and Conclusions**

- *All of Somerville is rural. Townspeople want to keep the Town's rural character and they value the varied natural resources. This Future Land Use Plan balances this with the need for housing, elder housing, and affordable housing which townspeople also value.*
- *Farming is a growth industry in Somerville, deserving protection of valuable farmland and encouragement through farm friendly policies.*
- *Somerville should consider how to amend its Subdivision Ordinance to allow clustering of housing while preserving important lands in open space, and in doing so, avoid the roadside sprawl which endangers our rural character.*
- *Development District locations may need to be redefined, replacing unsuitable locations for commercial business with more appropriate ones such as the Route 17 corridor.*

### **State Goal**

To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the state's rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.

### **Growth Areas**

Somerville has no town center and no densely developed areas. New development in Town, both residential and commercial, has tended to sprawl along existing roads with the exception of a few long driveways into the forest. The current three development zones comprising the Development District (where commercial development and smaller lot sizes are encouraged) are placed along 3 miles of the 26 miles of road in Somerville. However, those located along Route 105 and adjacent are inappropriately placed on sections of road that are:

1. Often on steep sections or curved sections of road that would be unsafe for road access from a commercial property or parking lot.
2. Abutting rivers and streams that require protection, thus requiring setbacks and restrictions on impermeable surfaces such as paving.
3. Largely 'prime farmland' or 'farmland of statewide importance'.
4. Not located in areas with sufficient traffic for commercial uses.

Therefore the Development District needs to be reassigned to locations which are not in areas of prime farmland or near waterways, and are attractive to commercial or industrial users for their road access and traffic volume. Traffic patterns anticipated due to newly paved or improved

roads should also be considered. This could still include the current Development District on Route 17 abutting the Town of Washington. That may be suitable for shared abutting development zones with Washington as both towns already have businesses in that area. It could also be extended along the remainder of Route 17 in Somerville in lieu of the discontinued Development District sections on and adjacent to Route 105.

Residential development outside of the Development District and shoreland zoning is currently controlled by the 4 acre minimum lot size (Management District) and the Subdivision Ordinance. As discussed in the housing section of this plan these rules have:

1. Made new housing and rental housing unaffordable for almost half the residents of Somerville,
2. Made it difficult for families to accommodate older relatives by adding a small home near their own home.
3. Led to sprawl along the roads in town, thus breaking up the forest and open land which are important to our town's character into small lots.

We determined from our survey of townspeople that there is a strong desire to preserve the rural quality of Somerville. There are also many reasons to preserve the large areas of unbroken forest in Somerville. Zoning certain areas of town as rural and other areas for housing development would not make the best use of either area. And it would also devalue lands designated as rural. The whole town is rural.

A sensible solution to this would be to modify the subdivision ordinance to allow cluster development with minimum acre requirements met by reserved open space. Houses could be placed closer together in one part of the subdivision. This would reduce the costs of providing roads, electric power etc. A proportion of the housing units would be required to be affordable. This could be accomplished with duplexes, small apartment buildings or small homes. A proportion of the homes would also have to be elderly accessible, i.e. one floor, no steps, etc. The remainder of the land in the subdivision would be preserved in large tracts of forest, open land or farmland. The 4 acre minimum would be preserved by requiring the subdivision overall to contain 4 acres of land per housing unit, not 4 acre lots. Clustering should be allowed for commercial development following similar rules.

A well designed mobile home development could also supply affordable housing by following the same rules. The use of shared electric access, water supply, and sewage disposal would lower the cost of each unit considerably. Land is inexpensive in Somerville so the mobile home park would have sufficient open land to provide a pleasant and attractive housing development.

Farming is returning to Somerville and is our biggest growth industry. Therefore in the new subdivision ordinance 'prime farmland' or 'farmland of statewide importance' should be added to the protections set forth in Article XI, section 11.2 of the current Subdivision Ordinance. Farmers need to be aware of best practices to avoid contamination of water bodies. In addition,

development should not occur in areas of critical natural resources including wetlands, nesting areas, the large undeveloped shorelines of Turner Pond, the undeveloped areas along our rivers and streams, etc. The Shoreland Ordinance already regulates many of these issues.

Our town is small and growth has been very gradual for the last 25 years. This makes it very difficult to predict rates of growth in the future. In addition, current town record keeping monitors the number of new homes but not the number of new lots or mobile home installations. As discussed in the Economy section of the Plan, lack of 3 phase power limits the likelihood of heavy industrial development. The lack of high quality broadband internet limits the growth of 21st century home businesses. Farming is growing but is unlikely to bring a massive influx of new residents. With the development changes described, the town will be able to accommodate the continued gradual growth of 3 to 5 residences a year while retaining rural character.

Somerville will be making capital investments in their roads over the next ten years based on the recent engineering plan. Gravel roads that are paved under this plan will become more desirable for development and the Board of Selectmen will need to take this into account as they make decisions regarding where improvements are made.

Because of the lack of a traditional village center or dense development in Somerville, the concept of designated rural areas, transitional areas, etc. are not logical. We are also located at the northern tip of Lincoln County, far from the county seat. Our surrounding towns lie in four different counties and each of these towns is also at the far end of their county. Thus regional cooperation is more difficult. We can work with individual towns to seek cooperative preservation of streams and forests. Midcoast Conservancy, District Foresters, MDIFW, and MDEP are our most likely partners. Somerville does participate in regional cooperation for a number of vital services as described in the Regional Coordination Program section of the Plan. This includes schools, fire, law enforcement, emergency responders, solid waste management, code enforcement, regional planning, and animal control.

## **Critical Natural Resources**

The following natural resources are designated as Natural Resource Areas:

- Areas Sensitive for Prehistoric Archaeology (see Map 1 in Appendix A)
- High Value Plant & Animal Habitats (see Map 6 in Appendix A)
- Wetlands (see Map 8 in Appendix A)
- Farmland of statewide importance, prime farmland (see Map 14 in Appendix A)
- Resource Protection, and Stream Protection (see Map 16 in Appendix A)

There are no state designated 'Highly Important Critical Areas' in Somerville, however there are some abutting the Town. As described in the natural resources, water resources and recreation

sections of this plan Somerville has many areas of importance. This includes wetlands, rivers and streams, large areas of unbroken forest, bird nesting sites, a large shallow aquifer, and several preserves. The preserves are all new in the last ten years and are a good start to preserving these important areas. The Palermo Preserve of Midcoast Conservancy has just added 20 acres along the Sheepscot River in Somerville. In addition, Midcoast Conservancy has designated much of Somerville and the various branches of the Sheepscot River as important for preservation and for salmon (and other fish) restoration. The Town can continue to work with Midcoast Conservancy and their staff, along with MDIFW to preserve these important areas. Education of landowners in these areas is necessary so that they are aware of their importance and know how to protect them.

Somerville currently does not require occupancy permits before people can move into new homes. This makes enforcement of rules regarding proper septic systems, setbacks, etc. difficult.

We also need to educate loggers and landowners about proper logging practices to avoid disturbance of rivers and streams, vernal pools, etc.

Education about the shoreland ordinance and enforcement of its rules must be accomplished.

Somerville does not have any municipal water or sewage facilities. Therefore each potential site for housing or commercial development must be evaluated for appropriateness of development. The Code Enforcement Officer controls this issue. Soils vary from almost pure sand along the border of Somerville and Washington on Route 105, to farmland of statewide importance and prime farmland many places in town (see Map 14 in Appendix A) to clay and rock on many hilltops. Almost all areas can accommodate a home septic system though this sometimes requires addition of the proper soil for the drainage field. There are many steep slopes in town but most are located in sites that are very unlikely to be developed.

The sand and gravel aquifer on Route 105 is not properly protected at this time. An operating gravel pit and an auto repair business lie atop this aquifer.

## **Policies**

Protect our numerous critical resource areas, and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.

Protect 'prime farmland' and 'farmland of statewide importance'.

Support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires as stated in its vision.

- Maintain or even strengthen Shoreland Zoning ordinance consistent with State law to protect water resources and riparian zones.
- The Town Should redesign and redefine the Development District to be in safe, logical areas that will not impact important natural resources. In doing so, the Town should

determine how best to Grandfather the rights of owners of pre-existing lots between 2 and 4 acres in size within the Development District segments being discontinued.

- The Town should update the Subdivision Ordinance to allow cluster housing while preserving large areas of associated adjacent open space, and should develop a similar ordinance for commercial buildings within the Development District.

Coordinate the community's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.

Educate landowners, loggers, developers etc. about how to protect our streams and rivers, aquifers, ponds, wetlands, and forests.

Encourage farming and home-based businesses.

Improve record keeping at the town level to make it possible to monitor new lot development, new mobile homes, etc. This allows future planning to be much more accurate.

## **Strategies**

The Planning Board and Board of Selectmen should reevaluate the current Development District locations and consider establish of locations per the guidance above, as illustrated in Map 18 – Proposed Zoning, within Appendix A.

Continue to employ/contract a code enforcement officer with the tools, training, support, and certification<sup>27</sup> necessary to enforce land use regulations.

The Board of Selectmen should initiate town wide discussion of housing needs, and consider changing the Subdivision Ordinance to allow cluster development with minimum acre requirements met by reserved open space. This can satisfy our need for more affordable housing and the Town's desire to maintain our rural character.

The Board of Selectmen should:

- Assign responsibility for implementing the Future Land Use Plan to the appropriate committee, board or municipal official.
- Review Land Use and related ordinances to ensure that they:
  - Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources.
  - Clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas, if proposed.

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<sup>27</sup> Certified in accordance with 30-A.M. R. S. A. §4451

- Implement policies and strategies relevant to ordinances identified in the Water Resources, Natural Resources, Agricultural and Forest Resources, and Housing sections of this plan.
- Propose a mineral extraction ordinance to prevent stripping of topsoil from farmland and to protect our aquifers and streams. This is currently in the planning process.
- Consider amending ordinances to require occupancy permits.
- Encourage registration of businesses so they can be informed of relevant ordinances and how important resources can be protected.
- Maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures.
- Assign responsibility (possibly to a volunteer) to seek out pamphlets and information already available from various state agencies or conservation associations regarding stream and river protection, shoreland protection, aquifer protection, vernal ponds, etc. This information could then be provided by the Town Office to appropriate landowners, loggers, farmers, and business owners. See the Natural Resources section of the Plan.
- Assign responsibility to a town employee to establish a more accurate system for recording new lots, houses and mobile homes, track new development in the community by type and location.
- Establish a Broadband Committee to investigate how to establish high quality broadband in this region by working with surrounding towns, the Regional Planning Commission, and any other helpful entities. This includes determining how it would be achieved and how to finance it. Implementing regional broadband may require capital investment by the town.
- Assign responsibility for coordination with other towns to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies for the purpose of protecting shared natural resources. It is expected that they will work with Midcoast Conservancy's easements specialist and Maine Farmland Trust to help residents understand the tree growth program, farmland programs, conservation easements etc.

## **Evaluation**

Every five years the Board of Selectmen will ask the Planning Board to evaluate:

1. The degree to which the land use plan strategies have been implemented.
2. The percent of the municipal capital investments that have been used in appropriate growth or housing areas.

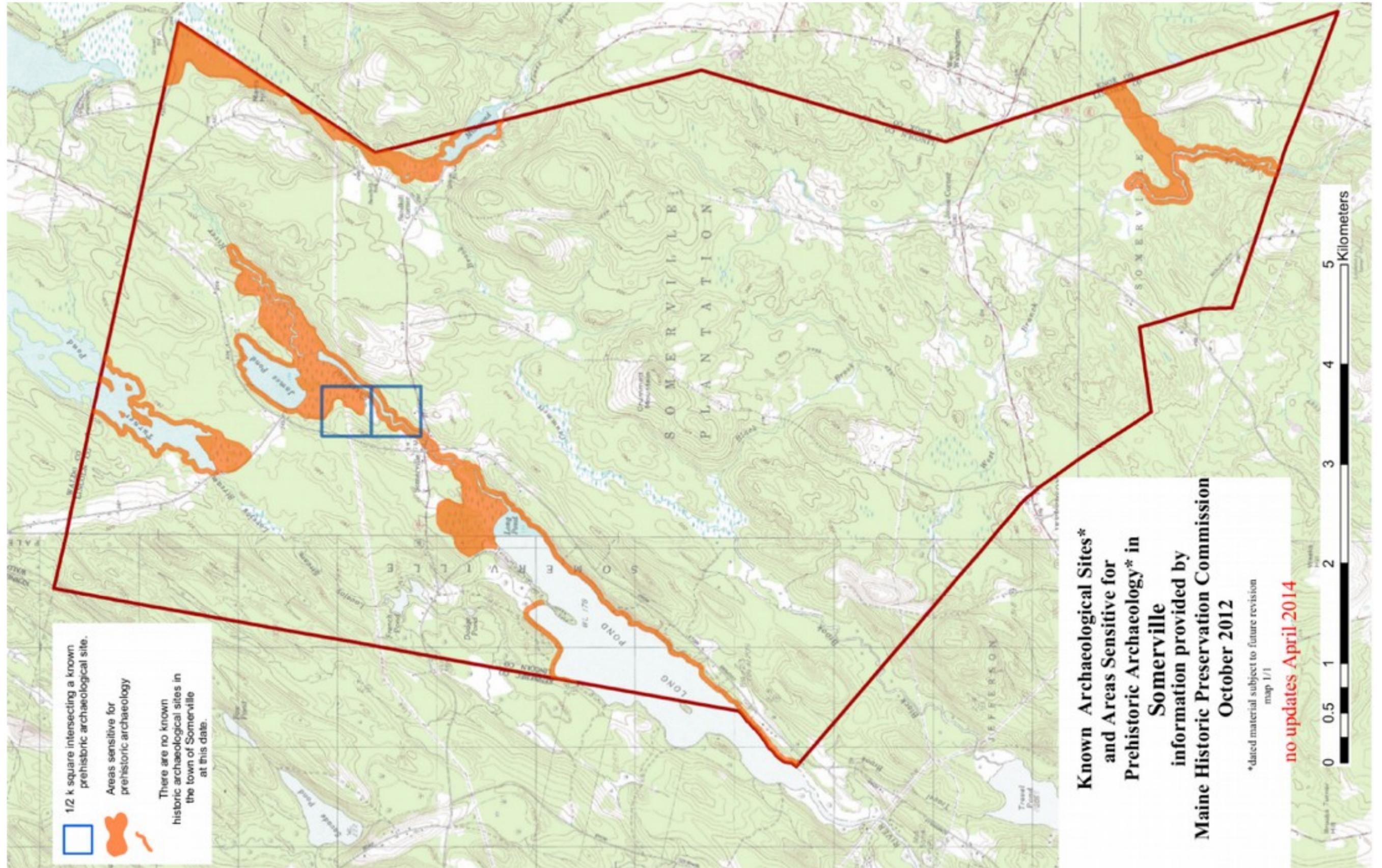
3. The amount of critical natural resource, critical waterfront, farmland etc. areas that have been protected.
4. Whether the current comprehensive plan is continuing to serve the needs and wishes of the town.

If the community's evaluation concludes that portions of the current plan and/or its implementation are not effective, the community is encouraged to propose changes as needed.



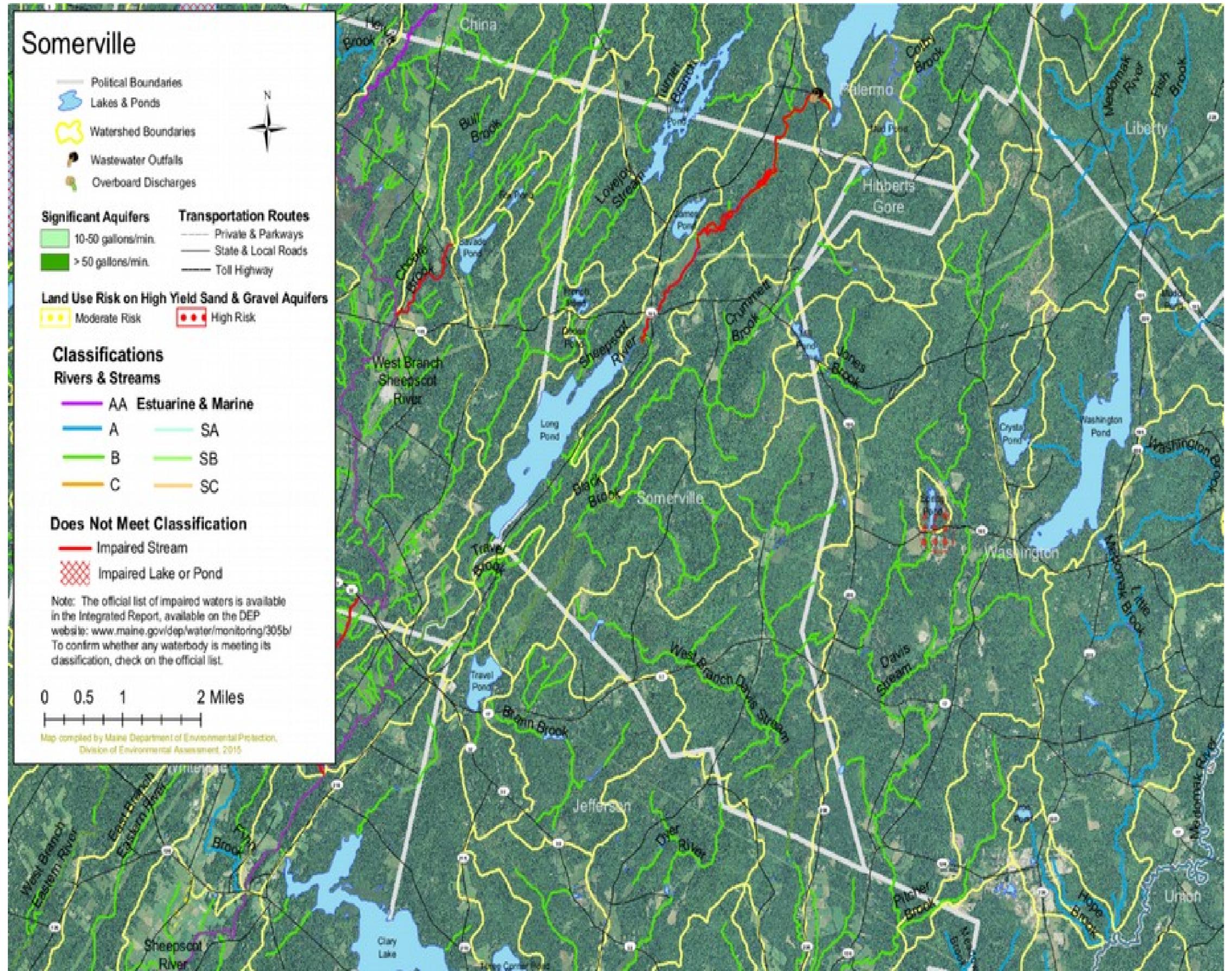
## Appendix A – Maps

Map 1 – Areas Sensitive for Prehistoric Archaeology





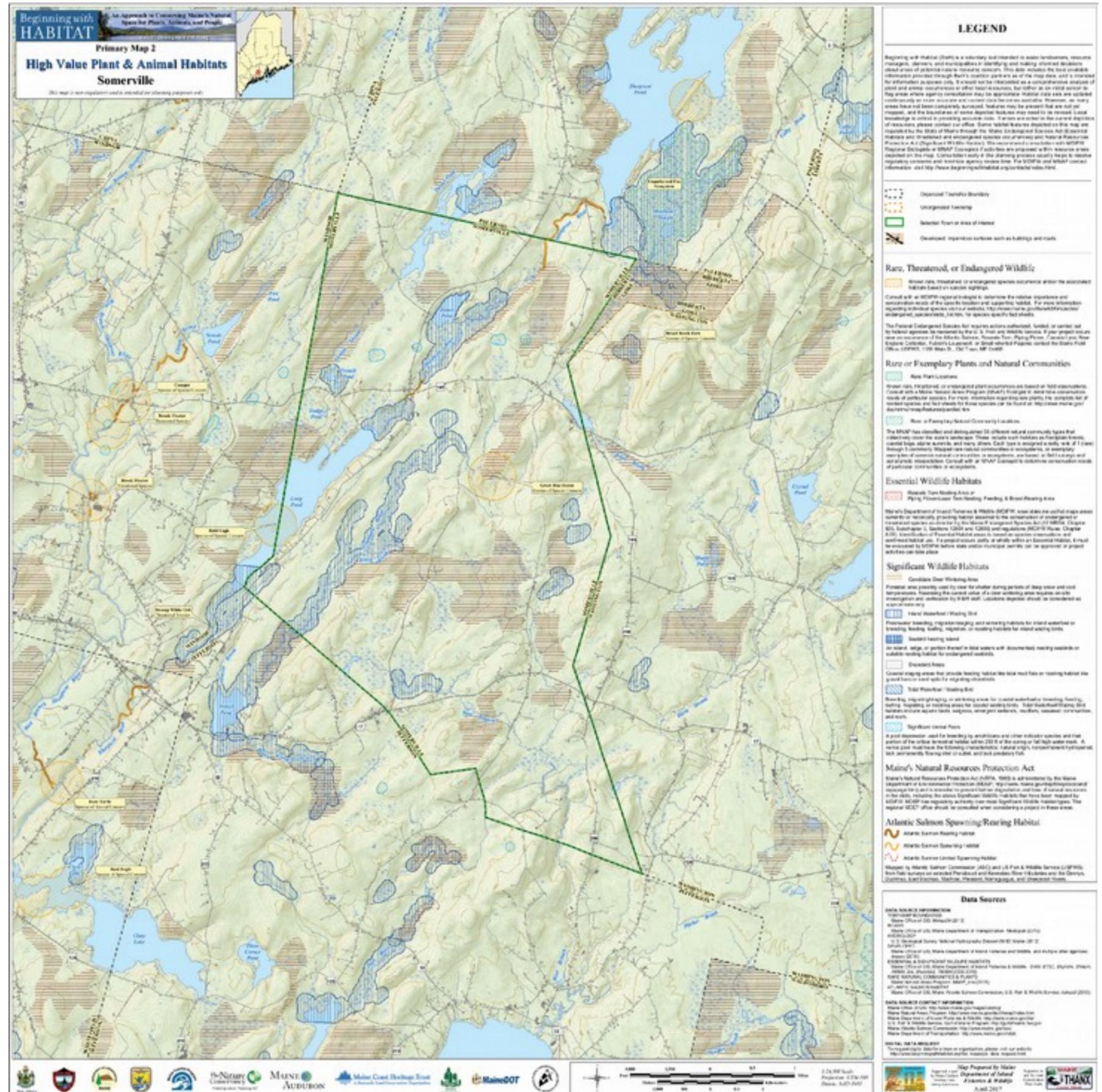
Map 3 – Watersheds



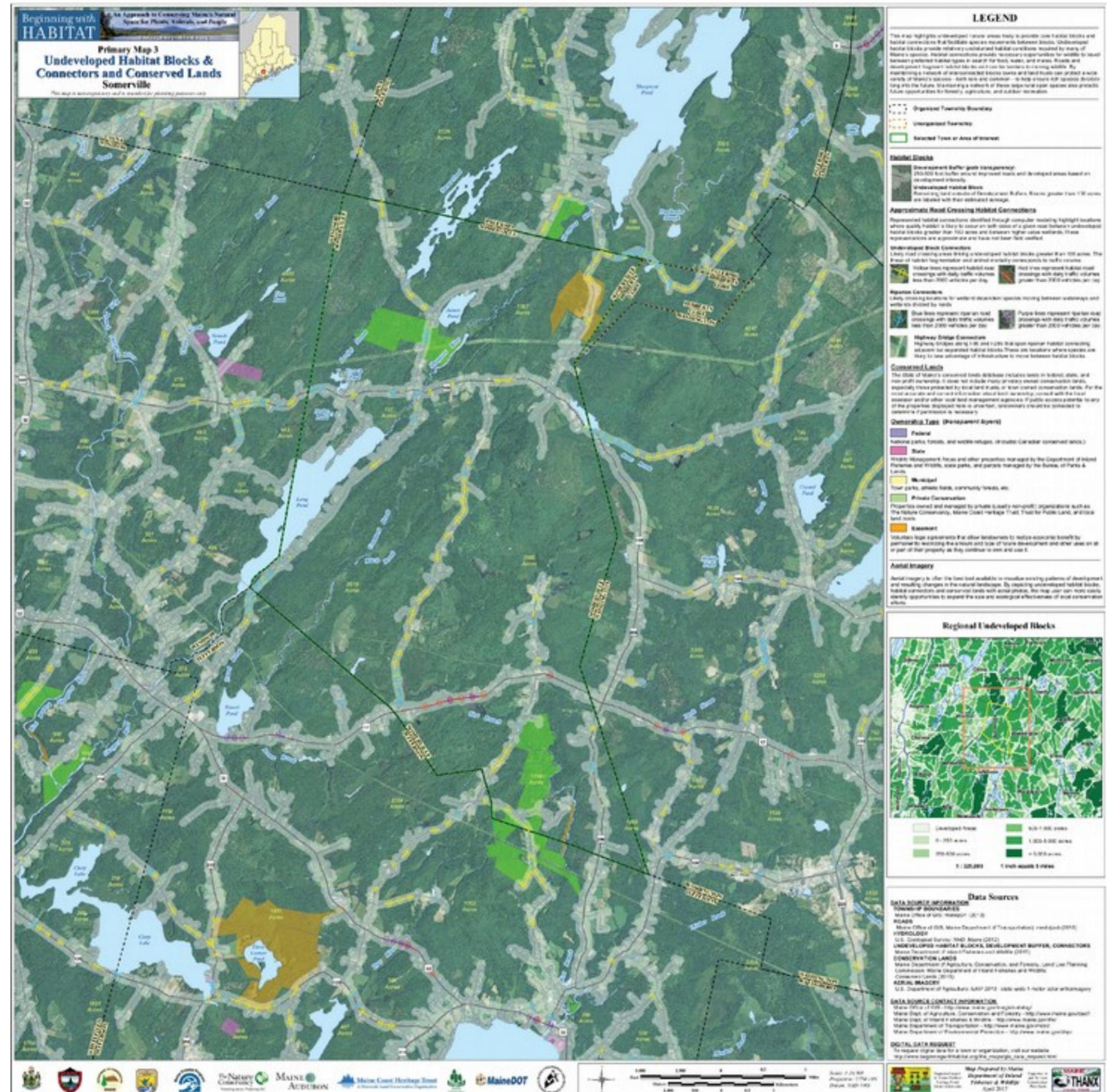




Map 6 – High Value Plant & Animal Habitats



# Map 7 – Undeveloped Habitat Blocks & Connectors and Conserved Lands

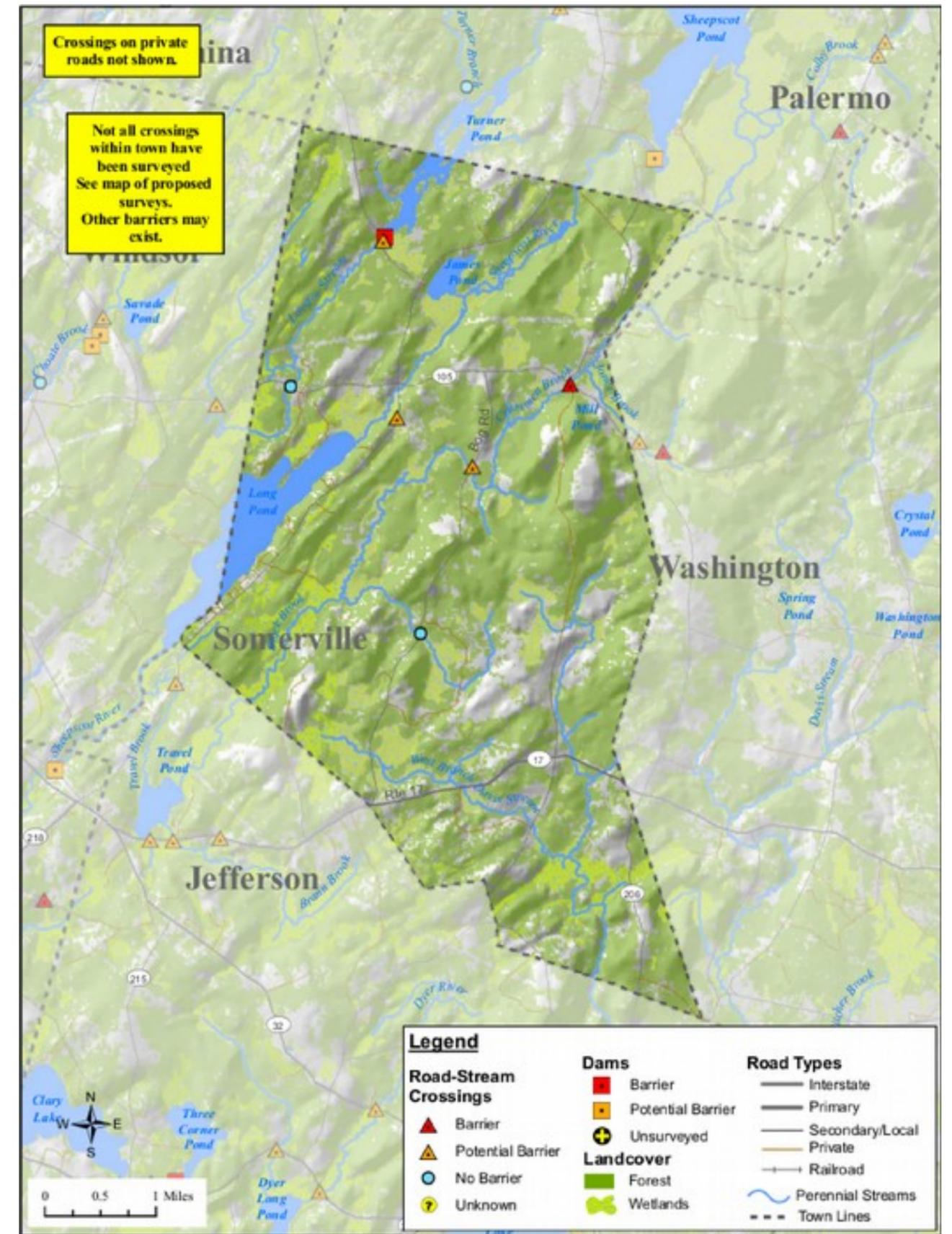




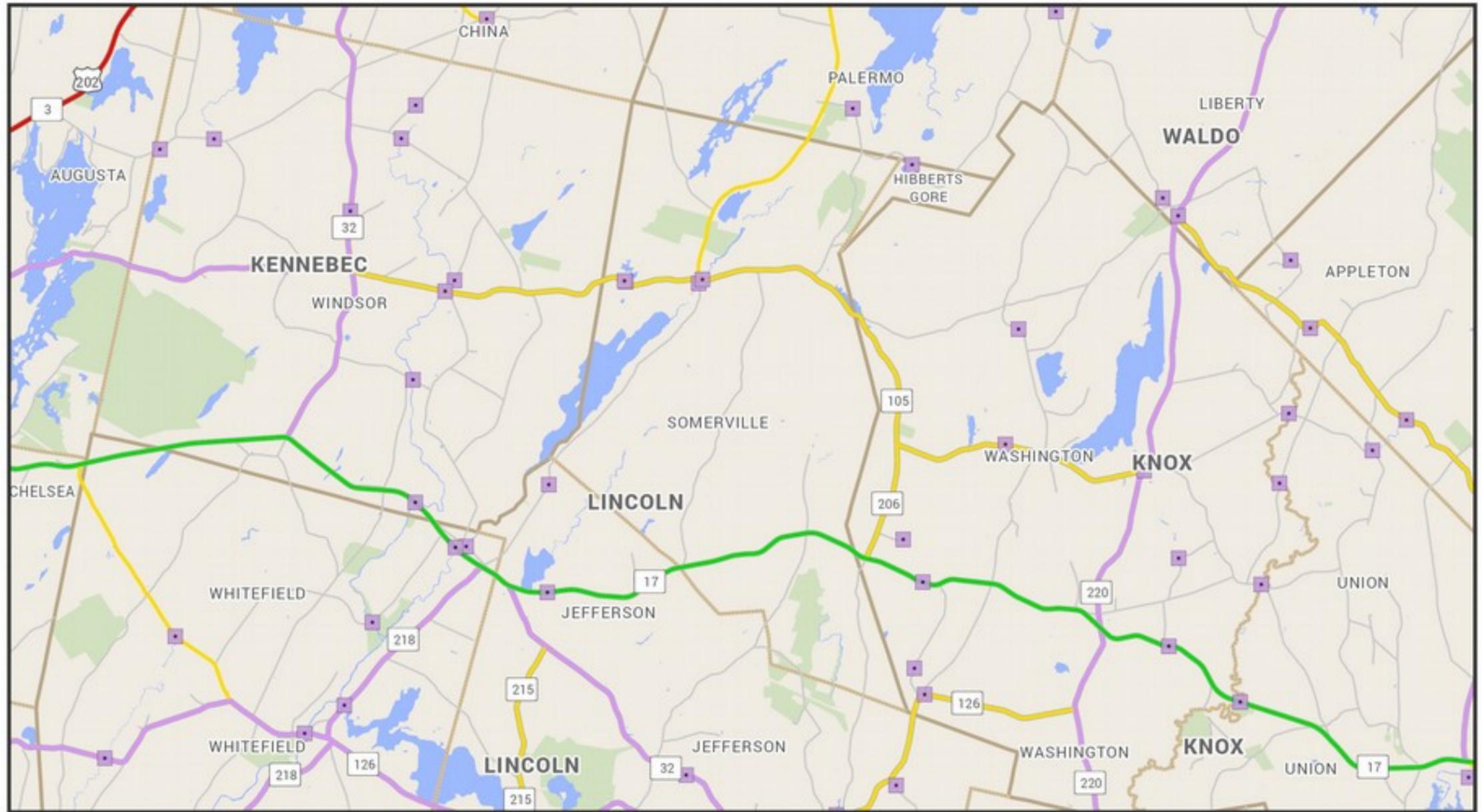


## Map 10 – Fish Passage Barriers

NOTE: The barrier on Crummett Brook at Route 105 crossing has been resolved by a culvert replacement project.



# ROAD CONNECTIONS



The Maine Department of Transportation provides this publication for information only. Reliance upon this information is at user risk. It is subject to revision and may be incomplete depending upon changing conditions. The Department assumes no liability if injuries or damages result from this information. This map is not intended to support emergency dispatch.

3.5 Miles  
1 inch = 2.58 miles

Date: 4/28/2017  
Time: 10:40:31 AM

**LEGEND**

- Bridge
- Principal Arterial / Other Freeway
- Minor Arterial
- Minor Collector
- Other Principal Arterial
- Major/Urban Collector
- Principal Arterial Interstate

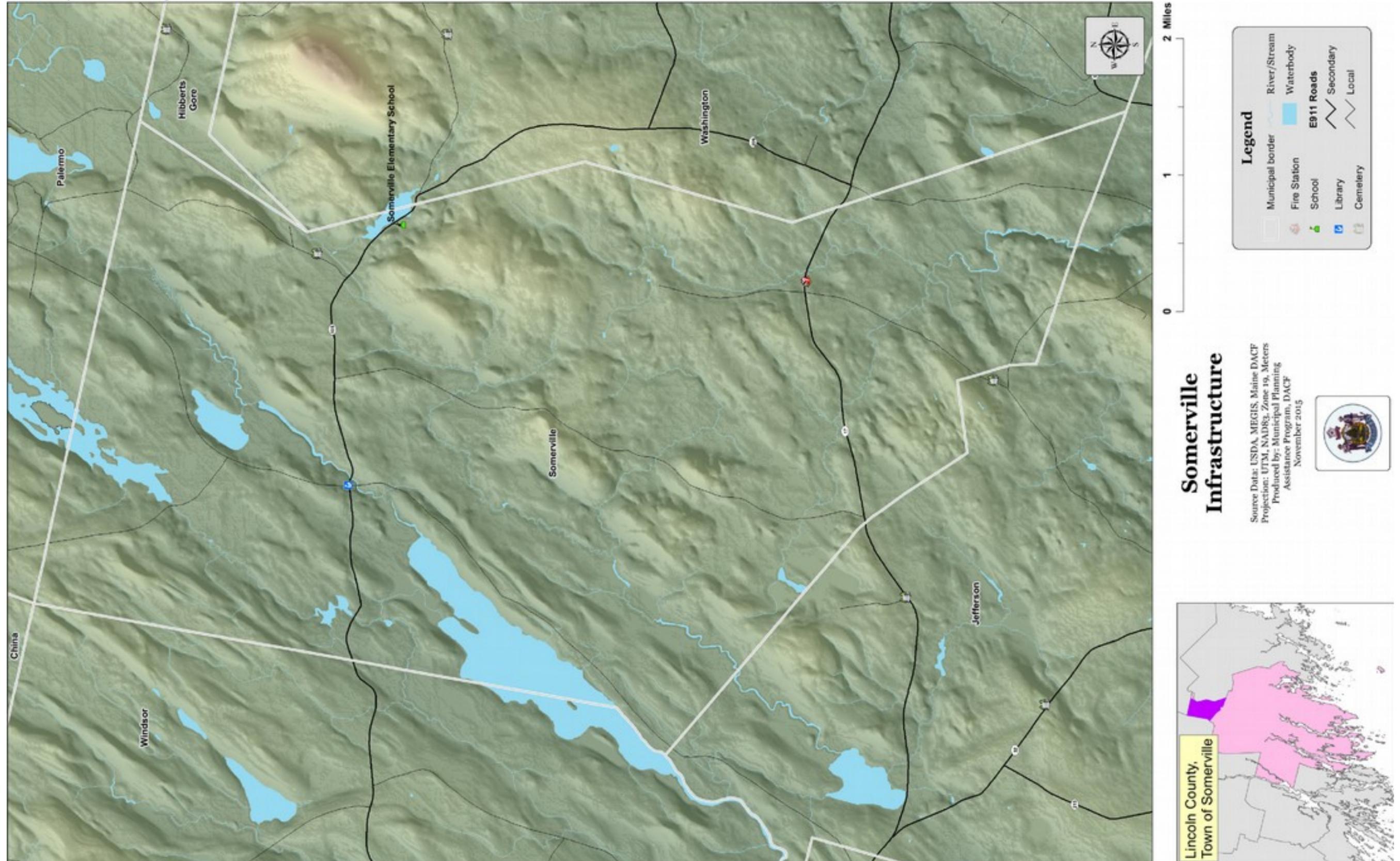
## Map 12 – Public and Private Roads

Map courtesy of Tay Vaughan,  
Timestream Multimedia,  
Appleton, Maine. 207-785-5511

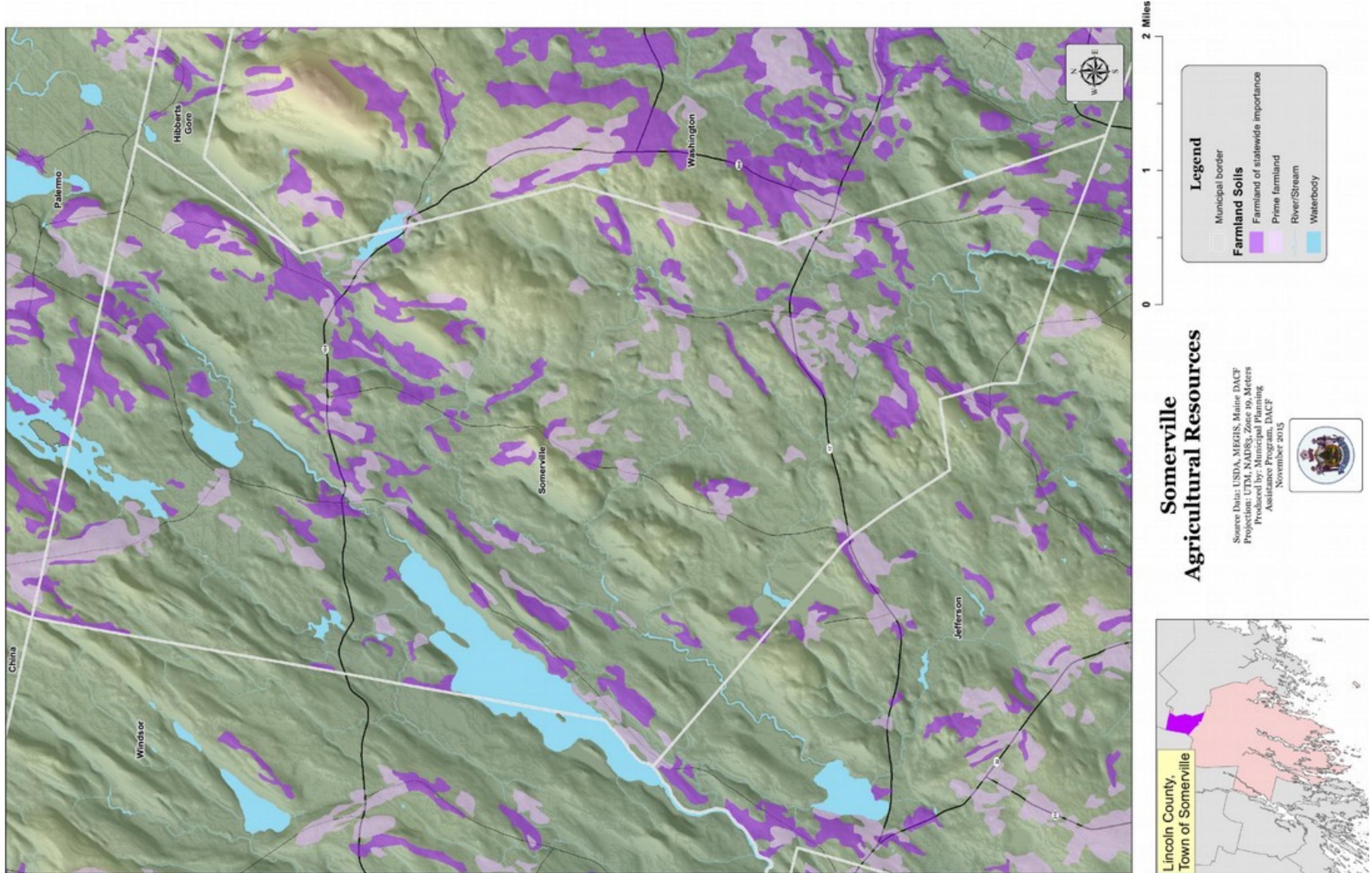


# Map 13 – Infrastructure

NOTE: Library at Turner Ridge Road intersection with Route 105 does not exist.



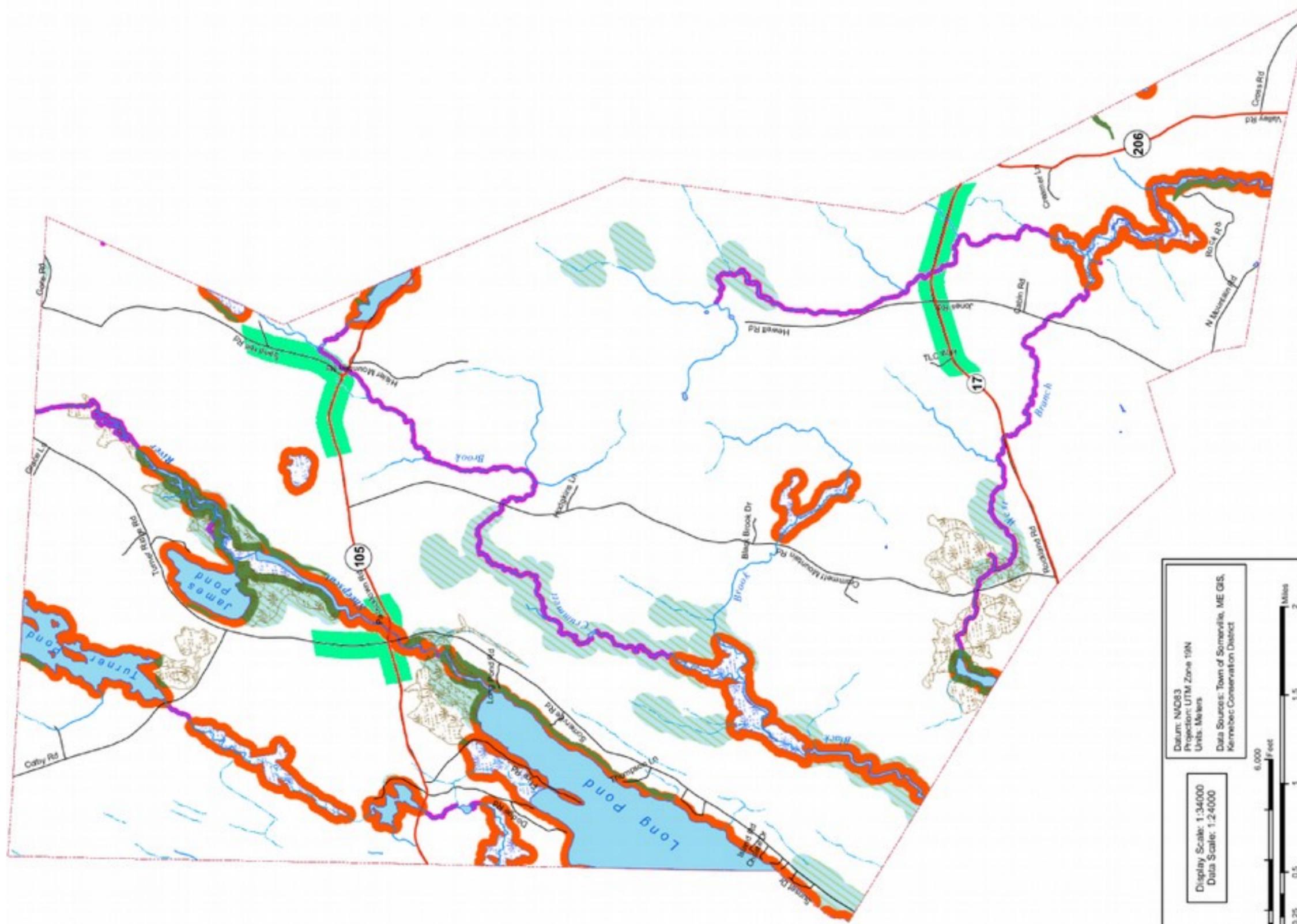
Map 14 – Agricultural Resources



Map 15 – Development Constraints



Map 16 – Shoreland and Development Zones (2012)



Datum: NAD83  
 Projection: UTM Zone 18N  
 Units: Meters  
 Data Sources: Town of Somerville, ME GIS,  
 Kennebec Conservation District

Display Scale: 1:34000  
 Data Scale: 1:24000

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles  
 0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Kilometers

**Map Legend**

**Zoning Districts**

- Resource Protection
- Limited Residential
- Stream Protection
- Development

**Other Features**

- Perennial Streams
- Intermittent Streams
- State Routes
- Local Roads
- Water Bodies
- Forested Wetlands
- Freshwater Wetlands
- Inland Wading Bird & Wildlife Habitat

NOTE: Management District includes all Land not included in the other four (4) districts.

Development District added by Chris Johnson in accordance with Somerville Land Use Ordinance adopted 11-9-2012

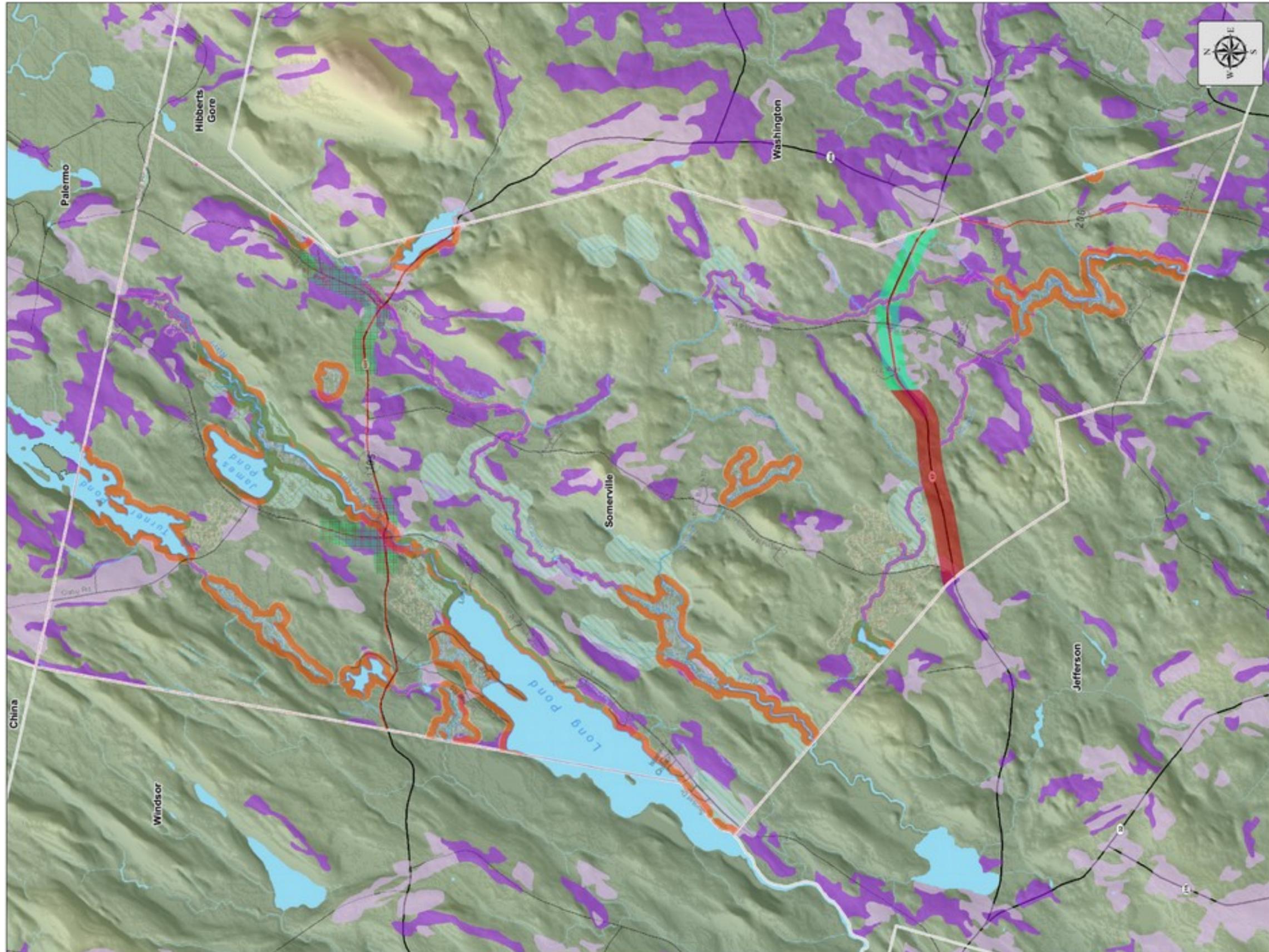
**Official Shoreland Zoning Map**  
**Town of Somerville**  
**Lincoln County, Maine**

Town Clerk \_\_\_\_\_ Date Adopted \_\_\_\_\_  
  
 Kennebec Soil & Water Conservation District  
 10372, A. Grindler

**Map 17 – New  
Construction and  
Mobile Homes**



Map 18 – Proposed Zoning



With Somerville current and proposed zones added.

**Zoning Legend**

**Development Zone**

- Existing Zone
- Additional Zone
- Discontinued Zone

**Shoreland Zones**

- Resource Protection
- Limited Residential
- Stream Protection

**Legend**

- Municipal border

**Farmland Soils**

- Farmland of statewide importance
- Prime farmland
- River/Stream
- Waterbody

**Somerville Agricultural Resources**

Source Data: USDA, MEGIS, Maine DACF  
 Projection: UTM, NAD83, Zone 19, Meters  
 Produced by: Municipal Planning Assistance Program, DACF  
 November 2015





## Appendix B – Glossary

### Acronyms

<b>BwH</b>	= Beginning with Habitat Program (MDIFW)
<b>MDEP</b>	= Maine Department of Environmental Protection
<b>MDMR</b>	= Maine Department of Marine Resources
<b>MDOC</b>	= Maine Department of Conservation
<b>MDIFW</b>	= Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
<b>MNAP</b>	= Maine Natural Areas Program (MDOC)
<b>M.R.S.A.</b>	= Maine Revised Statutes Annotated
<b>OPM</b>	= Maine Governor's Office of Policy and Management
<b>RSU</b>	= Regional School Unit
<b>RSU 12</b>	= Regional School Unit 12, A.K.A. Sheepscot Valley RSU
<b>SWOAM</b>	= Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine
<b>TCSWMO</b>	= Tri-County Solid Waste Management Organization

### Definitions

**Arterial:** “Arterial” means a highway providing long-distance connections as approved by the Federal Highway Administration pursuant to 23 Code of Federal Regulation, Section 470.105(b)(1999) and as so designated by MaineDOT pursuant to the Maine Highway Driveway and Entrance regulations, 17-229 CMR 299.

**Capital Investment:** “Capital Investment” means expending municipal funds of \$20,000 or more to purchase assets of land, machinery, equipment, or buildings.

**Capital Investment Plan:** “Capital Investment Plan” (CInP) means a summary list of municipal capital investments anticipated during the planning period in order to implement the strategies in the comprehensive plan.

**Commercial development:** “Commercial development” means for-profit business operations that provide goods, services, or commodities. For the purposes of this Chapter, home occupations are not considered commercial development.

**Community:** “Community” means any municipality or multi-municipal region.

**Comprehensive Planning Data Set:** “Comprehensive Planning Data Set” means data provided upon request by the Office or its designee for the preparation of a comprehensive plan.

Though additional data may be provided, only the minimum data components needed to meet the minimum requirements of this Chapter are considered the “Comprehensive Planning Data Set”.

**Critical natural resource:** “Critical natural resources” means the following natural resources which under federal and/or state law warrant protection from the negative impacts of development:

1. Resource Protection District areas as set forth in MDEP Guidelines for Municipal Shoreland Zoning Ordinances (Chapter 1000 § 13.A) pursuant to the *Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act* (38 M.R.S.A. §438-A, subsection 1);
2. Wetlands of special significance as defined in MDEP Wetlands and Waterbodies Protection Rules (Chapter 310 § 4);
3. Significant wildlife habitat as defined in the *Natural Resources Protection Act* (38 M.R.S.A. §480-B(10));
4. Threatened, endangered and special concern animal species habitat as identified and mapped by MDIFW pursuant to the *Maine Endangered Species Act* (12 M.R.S.A., Chapter 925);
5. Significant freshwater fisheries spawning habitat as identified and mapped by MDIFW or MDMR;
6. Natural communities that are critically imperiled (S1), imperiled (S2) or rare (S3) as defined and mapped by MNAP;
7. Areas containing plant species declared to be threatened or endangered by the MDOC;
8. Coastal sand dune systems as defined in the *Natural Resources Protection Act* (38 M.R.S.A. §480-B(1));
9. Fragile mountain areas as defined in the *Natural Resources Protection Act* (38 M.R.S.A. §480-B(3)); or
10. National Natural Landmarks designated by the National Park Service pursuant to its National Natural Landmark Program (36 Code of Federal Regulation, Section 62).

**Critical rural area:** "Critical rural area" means a rural area that is specifically identified and designated by a community's comprehensive plan as deserving maximum protection from development to preserve natural resources and related economic activities that may include, but are not limited to, significant farmland, forest land or mineral resources; high-value wildlife or fisheries habitat; scenic areas; public water supplies; scarce or especially vulnerable natural resources; and open lands functionally necessary to support a vibrant rural economy.

**Critical waterfront area:** "Critical waterfront area" means a shorefront area characterized by functionally water-dependent uses, as defined in M.R.S.A. 38 §436-A(6), and specifically identified and designated by a community's comprehensive plan as deserving maximum protection from incompatible development.

**Floor area:** "Floor area" means the total area covered by all floors in a building, typically measured in square feet or acres.

**Growth area:** "Growth area" means an area that is designated in a community's comprehensive plan as suitable for orderly residential, commercial, or industrial development, or any combinations of those types of development and related infrastructure, and into which most development projected over 10 years is directed.

**Growth management program:** "Growth management program" means a set of interrelated documents that comprise a comprehensive plan and implementation program, including zoning ordinances, as described in 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326.

**Habitat connections:** "Habitat connections" means those areas that link large habitat blocks based on a prioritized habitat analysis prepared by Beginning with Habitat.

**Important Natural Resources:** "Important Natural Resources" means those areas in the community important for strategic conservation planning purposes, and not classified as Critical Natural Resources, comprised of one or more of the following:

1. Large habitat blocks as identified by the BwH;
2. Habitat connections as identified by the BwH;
3. Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance as identified in Maine's Wildlife Action Plan, prepared by the MDIFW;
4. Exemplary Natural Community locations as defined by the MNAP.

**Industrial development:** "Industrial development" means business operations that manufacture, process, or store goods or commodities. For the purposes of this Chapter, home occupations are not considered industrial development.

**Institutional development:** "Institutional development" means establishments such as governmental facilities, colleges, vocational schools, hospitals, or health care facilities.

**Large habitat blocks:** "Large habitat blocks" means contiguous, undeveloped areas of 500 acres or more as identified and mapped by BwH.

**Low impact development:** "Low impact development" means a process of developing land that combines site design strategies and best management practices to limit the volume and flows of runoff from a developed site and treat and infiltrate precipitation on the site in a way that mimics its natural hydrology.

**Managed forest lands:** “managed forest lands” means lands managed for any of the following purposes: timber stand improvement, timber or other forest products harvesting, regeneration of forest stands, habitat management, aesthetics, recreation, or water quality protection.

**Marine transportation facilities:** “Marine transportation facilities” means public and private facilities used for cargo and/or passenger transport that rely on water access, including infrastructure and support facilities such as buildings, piers, docks, parking, and storage.

**Minimal commercial/institutional development:** “Minimal commercial development” means that there has been less than a ten (10) percent increase in the floor area devoted to commercial and institutional development in the community over the previous ten (10) years.

**Minimal industrial development:** “Minimal industrial development” means that there has been less than a ten (10) percent increase in the floor area devoted to industrial development in the community over previous ten (10) years.

**Minimal residential development:** “Minimal residential development” means that residential development in the community is characterized by:

1. Less than five (5) percent population growth over the previous ten (10) years; and
2. Less than fifty (50) units of residential housing, including apartment, condominium, and seasonal units, constructed over previous ten (10) years.

**Municipal growth-related capital investment:** “Municipal growth-related capital investment” means investment by the municipality in the following projects, even if privately-owned, using municipal, county, state, federal, or other public funds, in the form of a purchase, lease, grant, loan, loan guarantee, credit, tax credit, or other financial assistance:

1. Construction of new transportation infrastructure or capacity;
2. Construction or acquisition of newly constructed multifamily rental or affordable housing;
3. Development of industrial or business parks;
4. Construction or extension of sewer, water, or other utility lines;
5. Construction of public, quasi-public, or private service infrastructure, facilities, and community buildings; or
6. Construction or expansion of municipal office buildings, municipal educational facilities, and other quasi-public facilities and other civic buildings that serve public clients and customers.

Municipal growth-related capital investment does not include investment in the following: mobile equipment, the operation or maintenance of a municipal facility or program; maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure without significantly expanding capacity; or municipal revenue sharing.

**Non-point sources of pollution.** “Nonpoint sources of pollution” means facilities, activities, or any circumstance that cause rainfall, snowmelt, or irrigation water, running over land or through the ground, to pick up pollutants and to deposit them into rivers, lakes, coastal waters, or ground water.

**Planning committee:** "Planning committee" means the committee established by the municipal officers of a municipality, or combination of municipalities, in accord with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4324(2), which has general responsibility for the comprehensive plan.

**Planning period:** “Planning period” means a minimum of ten (10) years.

**Regional council:** "Regional council" means the council of governments, established under 30-A M.R.S.A. §§ 2311-2316, or regional planning commission, established under 30-A M.R.S.A. §§ 2321-2326, that is the authorized review agency for the regional planning and development district or subdistrict, designated under 30-A M.R.S.A. §§ 2341-2342.

**Rural area:** "Rural area" means a geographic area that is identified and designated in a community's comprehensive plan as an area that is deserving of some level of regulatory protection from unrestricted development for purposes that may include, but are not limited to, supporting agriculture, forestry, mining, open space, wildlife habitat, fisheries habitat, and scenic lands, and away from which most development projected over 10 years is diverted.

**Shoreland zone:** “Shoreland zone” means the same as “Shoreland Area” in the *Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act* (38 M.R.S.A. §§ 435 - 449 ).

**Should:** As used within the Plan, “should” is used to indicate a non-mandatory expectation, meaning it is a recommendation not a requirement.

**Significant freshwater fisheries habitat:** “Significant freshwater fisheries habitat” means any freshwater river, stream, brook, lake, or pond that is identified as:

1. a brook trout habitat as depicted on maps developed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife; or
2. rare, native fish habitat as depicted on maps developed by the MDIFW; or
3. diadromous fisheries habitat as depicted on maps developed by the Maine Department of Marine Resources.

**Stream:** “Stream” means the same as “Stream” in the *Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act* (38 M.R.S.A. §436-A (12)): A free-flowing body of water from the outlet of a great pond or the confluence of 2 perennial streams as depicted on the most recent, highest resolution version of the national hydrography dataset available from the United States Geological Survey on the website of the United States Geological Survey or the national map to the point where the stream becomes a river or where the stream meets the shoreland zone of another water body or wetland. When a stream meets the shoreland zone of a water body or wetland and a channel forms downstream of the water body or wetland as an outlet, that channel is also a stream.

**Transitional area:** "Transitional area" means an area that is designated in a community’s comprehensive plan as suitable for a share of projected residential, commercial, or industrial development but that is neither intended to accept the amount or density of development appropriate for a growth area nor intended to provide the level of protection for rural resources afforded in a rural area or critical rural area.

**Wetlands:** "Wetlands" means any coastal wetlands or freshwater wetlands as defined below:

1. Coastal wetlands means all tidal and subtidal lands; all lands with vegetation present that is tolerant of salt water and occurs primarily in a salt water or estuarine habitat; and any swamp, marsh, bog, beach, flat or other contiguous low land that is subject to tidal action during the highest tide level for the year in which an activity is proposed as identified in tide tables published by the National Ocean Service. Coastal wetlands may include portions of coastal sand dunes.
2. Freshwater wetlands include freshwater swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas (other than areas considered part of a great pond, coastal wetland, river, stream, or brook) that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and for a duration sufficient to support, and which under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of wetland vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soils. Freshwater wetlands may contain small stream channels or inclusions of land that do not conform to the above defining criteria.

**Zoning ordinance:** "Zoning ordinance" means a municipal land use ordinance that:

1. Divides a community into zoning districts and prescribes the reasonable application of different regulations in each district to encourage orderly growth and development and implement a community's designation of growth and rural areas in its comprehensive plan; and
2. Has been developed by the community in accordance with the procedural provisions and the substantive requirements of 30-A M.R.S.A. §§ 4324, 4326, and 4352.

## **Appendix C – Certification**

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
FOR THE  
TOWN OF SOMERVILLE, MAINE

ENACTED: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

EFFECTIVE: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

CERTIFIED BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

CERTIFIED BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME  
\_\_\_\_\_  
TITLE

Affix Seal