

COMPREHENSIVE TOWN PLAN

FOR THE

TOWN OF BENSON, VERMONT

www.bensonvt.com

**Benson Selectboard
Benson Planning Commission**

Adopted April 1, 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In 1972 the Selectboard of the Town of Benson ("Benson" or the "Town") established the Benson Planning Commission (the "Commission"). The Commission consists of seven members appointed by the Selectboard. The Commission was directed to develop a comprehensive plan to help direct the future growth and development of Benson (the "Plan").

In June of 1988, the Commission drafted its first Town Plan, which was adopted by the Selectboard. That Plan represented substantial effort by the Commission and substantial involvement by the community. At that time, the Town wanted to encourage certain types of growth, at an appropriate rate, such as single family homes, vacation homes, agricultural activities, small business, light industry, and professional educational and health services. The 1998 Town Plan was built on the work done to develop that first Plan. The 1998 plan was adopted by the Selectboard and was amended in 1999 in order for the Town to obtain Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) approval. In 2004, the Town Plan was revised by the Planning Commission; the new Plan was adopted by the Selectboard and approved by the RRPC. The Plan was revised again in 2008, adopted by the Selectboard and approved by the RRPC.

Statutory Authority and Requirements

Implementation of the Municipal Plan is a local responsibility and can only be accomplished by following the provisions for adoption, maintenance and implementation as provided for in the Vermont Planning and Development Act: Chapter 117 of Title 24, Vermont Statutes Annotated (the Act). This section of law specifies not only what a Plan may or must contain, it also specifies how a Plan must be adopted.

It is important to understand that a Town Plan is not a zoning ordinance. The Town Plan has many uses, such as outlining areas of community concern and priorities requiring attention. It also can help the Town or other organizations in the Town attain funding and support for activities that the Plan has listed as having support in the community. A Town Plan also allows the Town to express its voice in state land use permitting proceedings. The Town Plan is the basis for the zoning and subdivision ordinance and other land use ordinances. Any such ordinances are based on the goals set forth in the Plan. The 2008 Plan made minor adjustments to the 2004 Plan for consistency with recently adopted zoning and subdivision bylaws and to update data and statistics. This 2013 Plan is an update of the 2008 Plan and includes 2010 Census Data. The goals and objectives of the previous Plan are consistent with this new Plan.

Preparation of the Plan

In preparation of this revision to the Town Plan, the Planning Commission has consulted the Act, the relevant census data, Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) information, the Vermont Statute's revised requirements for Town Plans, and Town land records and maps. The State Statutes have listed 11 elements that must be addressed in a Town plan to obtain approval by RRPC. They are: a statement of the objectives, policies and programs; a land use plan and map; a transportation plan and map; a utility and facility plan and map; a statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources; an

educational facilities plan and map; a recommended program for the implementation of the objectives; a statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities, areas, and the region; an energy plan; an economic development element, and a housing element including a program for addressing low and moderate income persons' housing needs. State statutes also list 13 statewide planning goals that this plan should address.

Hearings and Public Participation

The process of adopting the Town Plan has several steps: The Planning Commission warns and holds a public hearing, followed by a vote after incorporating any changes to the plan. Then the plan is sent to the Selectboard. The Selectboard warns a hearing, and after the hearing, adopts the Town Plan after making any required changes.

This is an update of a previously approved Town Plan without significant changes in goals or objectives. It is primarily an update of data and information. There was extensive citizen participation in developing the 2004 plan and the land use regulations which involved numerous public meetings and newsletter articles. Public participation in the update has been invited through the newsletter, planning commission meetings and the hearings.

BENSON: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Location

Benson is a small Town in the northwestern corner of Rutland County. It is bounded on the west by Lake Champlain, which separates Vermont from New York. It is bounded on the North by Orwell, which is the Addison-Rutland county line; bounded on the east by Sudbury, Hubbardton, and Castleton; and on the South by West Haven and Fair Haven. The Town covers an area of 45.6 square miles (29,210 acres).

History of Benson

Historically, Benson was a farming community. Our Town Charter was signed on May 5, 1780 and by 1790 the village was a prospering market center. The Town was supported in part by traffic and trade that traveled on the Whitehall to Vergennes Stage Road (Stage Road) and the road to the lake and Benson Landing (Lake Road).

The importance of Benson Landing increased after the completion of the Champlain Canal. The canal connects Lake Champlain with the Hudson River. Benson Landing served as an access to the lake and connected the Town to lucrative markets that used Champlain as a way to transport goods. Farmers were close to the source of transportation and their goods didn't have to travel as far by land thus putting them at an advantage. In the early nineteenth century, Benson was home to many profitable sheep farms. Wool traveled by way of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River to the markets of New York.

Traffic was diverted from the Village and the Stage Road when the Fair Haven Turnpike, now Route 22A, was completed in 1810. By the 1840's sheep farming had reached its peak of prosperity. Lowering of tariffs for Australian wool at this time was a decisive factor for the decline in sheep farming.

In the 1850's, railroads were created within the State resulting in a decline in lake traffic and trading patterns. Town merchants and local farmers adjusted to the change by diversifying their economic activities. Herds of dairy cows became more common and eventually replaced the flocks of sheep as the primary agricultural activity.

For most of its history, Benson was a community of small hamlets that sustained as many as eleven elementary school districts and one two-year high school. With the improvement of roads and modes of transportation Benson became more centralized.

The Village has maintained its integrity and the buildings look very much as they did during the Civil War era. Benson is honored to be included in the National Register of Historic Places. To this day, the Town still has residents who are descendants of early settlers of Benson. In 1980, Benson celebrated its 200th birthday and at that time our museum was founded. The museum is located in the Town Office Building.

Present Community Profile

Population and Growth Projections

Benson's population grew at a rate of 1.8% a year over the past 50 years, but the rate during the last 10 years was only 0.2% a year. A reasonable projection for the next 10 years is .5% and 0% for Rutland County, based on the data for the last 10 years..

Table 1: Population Growth							
	Population				Projected Population		
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Benson	549	583	739	867	1,039	1056	1107
Rutland Region	46,465	52,388	57,951	62,448	63,400	61,642	61,642
Vermont	389,881	444,732	511,456	566,615	608,827	625,412	
Growth Rate (% increase)							
	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90	1990-2000	2000-2010	1960-2010	
Benson	6.19	26.76	17.32	19.84	1.66	92	
Rutland Region	12.74	10.60	7.70	1.52	-2.77	33	
Vermont	14.07	15.00	10.78	7.45	2.72	60	
Sources: U.S. Census & Rutland Regional Planning Commission							

* Projections based on rate of increase method

Age Distribution

Estimates of age distribution are useful for anticipating the level of municipal services demanded by different age groups in Benson's population, particularly school children and the elderly.

Trends by age group: The number of children under 5 and percentage of children under 5 have significantly decreased in the last 10 years. The number of children in the 5 to 19 age group – those children most likely to be in the Town's schools system – has increased and the percentage of the population in this age group has increased. In the 20-64 age group, both numbers and percentage of the population have decreased. In the 65 and over group, numbers and the percentage have increased. In-migration can alter the age-distribution of the population, making it important to conduct regularly a census of pre-school age children in the Town to track school-age populations. The median age of Benson's population has been steadily increasing.

Table 2: Population by Age						
Benson						
	1990		2000		2010	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
under 5	62	7.3%	81	7.8%	33	3.1%
5 to 19	210	24.8%	233	22.4%	286	27.1%
20 to 64	483	57.0%	603	58.0%	584	55.3%
65 and over	92	10.9%	122	11.7%	153	14.5%
Total	847		1,039		1,056	
Rutland Region						
	1990		2000		2010	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
under 5	4,355	7.0%	3,273	5.2%	2,832	4.6%
5 to 19	12,713	20.5%	13,251	20.9%	11,006	17.9%
20 to 64	36,524	58.8%	37,396	59.0%	37,547	60.8%
65 and over	8,550	13.7%	9,480	14.9%	10,257	16.6%
Total	62,142		63,400		61,642	
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>						

Table 3: Median Age			
Year	Benson	Rutland	Vermont
1990	33.3	34.3	33.0
2000	35.5	39.5	37.7
2010	41.9	44.3	41.5
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>			

These numbers are significant because the priority for services required by Benson residents will change due to the increased age of the population.

Households and Household Size

Table 4: Number of Households			
	1990	2000	2010
Benson	312	391	420
Rutland Region	23,525	25,678	25,984
% Change	1980-90	1990-00	2000-2010
Benson	40.54%	25.32%	7.4%
Rutland Region	15.01%	9.15%	1.2%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>			

Table 5: Average Household Size				
	1990	2000	2010	<i>2020 Projection</i>
Benson	2.71	2.57	2.46	2.35
Rutland Region	2.71	2.39	2.28	2.17
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>				

Average household size in Benson was 2.46 in 2010, slightly above the regional average. Household size is expected to continue to decline over the next 10 years. This, in combination with continued population growth, will result in an increasing number of households and housing units. The population of Benson is projected to increase minimally over the next 10 years, but the number of households is projected to rise by a greater percentage.

Goals of the Town of Benson

Given this history and current trends, the future will require careful planning. To further the needs of the community identified by the Commission, the Plan has been drafted to.

- Preserve the Town's rural character.
- Protect and promote traditional and diversified agricultural uses and activities.
- Protect the Town's natural resources and environment.
- Protect and improve water quality.
- Protect the Town from sprawl.
- Protect the Town from development that puts undue burden on the capacity of Town roads, water, sewer and other infrastructure and the capacity of the environment to support these developments.
- Promote only development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Encourage the wise use of energy resources.
- Promote a healthy economy.
- Promote safe and decent housing for current and future residents.
- Sustain the Town's heritage.

These Plan Goals are consistent with the planning efforts of adjacent communities and can only be accomplished through the coordinated use of our human and natural resources and the commitment of the Town and other affected governmental agencies and authorities. The goals of adjacent Towns also support maintaining the rural character of their communities that are comparable to Benson. Accordingly, the Town adopted unified zoning and subdivision regulations in 2006 to further the goals of this Plan. These regulations have been amended three times, most recently in 2011.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Benson Town Office

Benson's Town Office is located in the historic old school house on Stage Road in the Village center. It was renovated in the early 1990s to house the Town Clerk and Selectboard's office, the Town's records vault, and the Town Museum. The Planning Commission, Listers, and other committees also use these facilities.

Adjacent to the Town Office is the site of an old Benson School classroom building. While not currently developed, the site is home to many Town events and presents the Town an asset, the public use of which should be the subject of further consideration of the Town and the Planning Commission. There is a playground adjacent to the Town office

Benson Free Library

The Library is housed in the Community Hall and is open to the public twice a week for a total of 7 hours a week. The library has two (2) laptop computers and two (2) desktop computers with 24/7 wifi connections for public use. There are also two (2) copiers available at a small cost per page. The library collection includes adult, children and reference sections plus books on tape and CDs. The library is a member of the inter-library loan program. The Reading Group meets monthly.

Goals:

- Encourage expansion of the Library collection and hours.
- Support improving computer and internet access for public and educational use.

Community Hall

The Community Hall serves as a Municipal Building where meetings, social functions, sports and physical education events are held. Town Meetings are also held in the Community Hall.

Goal:

- Encourage improvements and further planning of additional uses.

Post Office

Benson's post office is located in the Benson Village Store. The post office services in Benson are limited.

Goals:

- Encourage the expansion of postal services in Benson, while keeping the Post Office located in the Village area.
- Encourage the addition of more postal boxes.

Child Care

The availability of child care for our residents is a factor related to the affordability of living in Benson. Parents of young children need to have safe, accessible, and affordable child care options; otherwise, choices have to be made about choices of housing locations, and employment.

Ensuring accessible and affordable child care is an integral community need based on the number of children under the age of five years old (33 in 2010). Investments in the child care infrastructure, like investments in the infrastructure of transportation, public works, affordable housing and education, can have positive effects on the growth and vitality of a community.

The private sector provides child care in Benson and currently there is one registered and one licensed day care on record. It can be assumed that there is a demand for child care facilities which exceeds in-Town availability. Also, there is likely a need for before and after school child care. It may be difficult to assess the exact need for child care facilities in Benson because some adults commute to other communities to work, and choose to have their children near their places of work, thus potentially reducing the need for facilities in Benson.

Parents and child care providers in Benson should be asked to provide input on the need for additional child care facilities.

Goals:

- Assess the need for additional child-care capacity in Town.
- Utilize zoning to permit the use of single family homes in Benson for small-scale family child care facilities.
- Ensure that the planning and development review process does not place unreasonable zoning limitations on child care facilities for example by permitting child care centers as accessory uses for educational institutions, churches and places of employment.

Health Services

Benson has a Town Health Officer. Sewage and water questions should be directed to the Health Officer. Benson has no doctor or medical clinics. Several nearby health organizations and services are available to Benson residents. . The Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and the Rutland County Home Health and Hospice provide service to Benson residents.

Goals:

- Encourage a general practitioner to set up an office in Benson.
- Work with regional institutions to assure continued access to adequate health care and enhance the number and variety of physicians and clinics in or near Benson.

Rescue Services

Benson First Response is a Basic Life Support service that works in conjunction with Fair Haven Rescue Squad to provide emergency response services to Town residents. First Response is staffed by volunteers and is looking to expand its roll of volunteers from the community. The key necessity for Benson First Response is to expand the volunteer membership. Community members are encouraged to contact Benson First Response to arrange for training and to join as a volunteer.

Emergency Management

The Town of Benson has a Hazard Mitigation Plan as well as a Basic Emergency Operations Plan updated May 9, 2011. The Hazard Mitigation Plan was last updated in 2011 and will be updated again in 5 years. The Basic Emergency Operations Plan is updated on a yearly basis.

Some factors that should be addressed in these plans include:

- A source for generators for the school, Community Hall and Town Office so that the school and Community Hall and Town Office can serve as emergency shelters during prolonged electricity power outages. (The Community Hall and Town Office have generator hookups.) The Fire Department has a vehicle with a portable generator that can be used for one building.
- The possibility of a prolonged electricity power outage, such as during the ice storm of January 1998.
- An evacuation plan that considers the possibility of a hazardous materials spill on Route 22A. (The most serious hazard that could affect Benson would be an accident on Rt. 22A, which is traveled by many trucks at great speed carrying potentially dangerous chemicals.)
- Training of Town officials on emergency and response procedures
- A sufficient quantity of basic medical supplies and food at each shelter location.
- Major elements of the hazard mitigation plan should address; (1) corrective action to minimize damage to roads, bridges and culverts by heavy rains and flooding, and (2) improvements to Route 22A to reduce accidents and the possibility of hazardous materials spills.

Updates and implementation of the plans should be a Town priority.

Public Safety & Police

Benson has an elected Constable. Vermont State Police and the Fair Haven Police Department also provide service to Benson. The Animal Control Officer is appointed by the Selectboard.

Goal:

- Enhance law enforcement by increasing the presence of law enforcement in Town and by providing training for elected officers.

Fire Protection

Benson is serviced by a municipal Fire Department. The Fire Department is always looking for new members, especially during daytime hours. In addition, Benson is party to the Rutland County mutual aid agreement. Hubbardton, Orwell, West Haven and Fair Haven Fire Departments most frequently assist the Town of Benson when assistance is needed. Several dry hydrants have been installed in Town. The Town has investigated, with a Municipal Planning Grant, the options for improving the buildings housing the Fire Department.

Goals:

- Install more dry hydrants. The fire rating of the Town is directly related to the fire protection services of the Town, including dry hydrants.
- Prepare a plan to improve the housing for the Fire Department and First Response.

Benson Highway Department Building (Discussion of services under transportation)

Goals:

- Make improvements to the Town Highway Facilities, which house most of the highway equipment.
- Prepare a plan to address the facility needs of the highway department and to comply with stormwater runoff rules.

Telephone and Television Services

Telephone services are furnished by OTT Communications. Benson is now serviced by DSL and satellite for internet access. Wireless (cellular and PCS) telephone services are available in some areas of the Town. Benson currently does not have other utilities such as cable television, though satellite television (both C band and digital) service is available. Moreover, a variety of dial-up providers make Internet access available within the Town, as well as DSL service provided by OTT Communications, and satellite internet access provided by Hughes.

Wireless Telecommunications Facilities

There are currently no wireless communications towers in Benson. However, plans for two towers are being finalized which may be used for cellular and internet connectivity which will greatly improve such service to Benson.

Goals:

- Encourage service providers to install the necessary infrastructure to provide cell phone service and high speed internet service to all areas of Town in compliance with the land use regulations and goals of this plan.

Wastewater Treatment Facility

Benson has a municipal waste treatment facility located on Stage Road, south of Benson Village. Sewer lines feeding the facility are limited, running along Stage Road and Lake Road within the Village only. The permitted flow of the Plant is 17,700 gallons per day. Presently the plant is operating at capacity. There is a fee for sewer service for connected dwellings. The remainder of Benson residences (outside the Village area) depends upon on-site treatment systems, for which the State has enacted wastewater treatment rules and has jurisdiction over all permits.

The stream, into which the municipal waste treatment facility discharges, has been listed as impaired for E-Coli by the Agency of Natural Resources. As the village grows, it may be necessary to expand the Town's waste treatment facility; a plan for expansion should be developed.

Goals:

- Ensure that the Town's wastewater treatment facility does not contribute to degradation of water quality.
- Encourage the efficient use of the Town's wastewater treatment facility by encouraging such things as more compact development in the village area rather than elsewhere in the Town.
- Encourage water savings devices in homes and businesses.
- Discourage development that would create excessive traffic through the village, or overwhelm the municipal wastewater system and other services.
- Investigate as needed the expansion of wastewater treatment facilities to meet current and future needs of the Village. Major expansion of the Town Wastewater Treatment Facility's Collection District should be at the builder's or developer's expense.

Water Supply

Presently, Benson Village does not have a municipal water system. Water is obtained from wells and springs located on residents' properties throughout the Town.. The density of the Village area, combined with shallow soil and ledge has created water problems that result in summertime water shortages for some residents and businesses, and year round shortages for a few.

State permits are required for all water supply systems. The quality and quantity of water obtained from these sources vary greatly.

Goals:

- As warranted, investigate options and develop a plan to improve the water supply to the Village. (A municipal water supply serving all village homes and businesses could solve the quantity issue in the village.)

Solid Waste Disposal

At this time, Benson participates with other Towns in the Solid Waste Alternatives Committee (SWAC), which annually provides a day for hazardous waste collection. Benson currently contracts with Spaulding Refuse Inc. to transport and dispose of our solid waste and to haul recyclables from the Town's transfer station located on Old North Lake Road. There is a metal dumpster, a cardboard dumpster and a single stream recyclables dumpster at the transfer station plus electronics may be dropped off at no charge. Spaulding Refuse Inc. owns the trash dumpster and the cardboard recycling

dumpster. Residents are required to purchase a permit to use the facility and a sticker for each bag of trash; recyclables on the list maintained at the Town Office and transfer station may be disposed of free in the proper dumpster. Maintaining compliance with State requirements for the facility is a priority of the Town.

Each spring, Benson participates in Vermont's "Green Up Day" program, where volunteers pick up roadside trash and are able to dispose of it for free at the Transfer Station. This program has been successful at controlling litter and building community.

Goals:

- To make the transfer station financially viable using reasonable per trash bag and permit fees.
- Encourage recycling and expand the types of items to be recycled.
- Investigate the possibility of developing a community compost to reduce our dependence on waste removal, and also provide useful organic matter to community gardens and for Town residents' use.
- Consider developing a drop-off area for unwanted but still useful items that other Town residents could pick up for free.
- Create a community education/information campaign including all Town facilities (the Town Office and Highway Department) and school to further minimize the Town's waste stream.
- Promote participation in the "Green-Up Day" program.

Facility Needs and Improvements

The Town is continually evaluating the needs for new facilities, upgrading existing facilities and maintenance and repair needs.

The Town recently completed a study using Municipal Planning Grant funds to evaluate options for new facilities for the Fire Department and Town Garage. It is planned to select an option and recommend a funding plan to the voters within the next two years.

In addition, the Town recently funded maintenance improvements for the Book Shed/Fire Department buildings and repainting of the Community Hall plus improvements to the library space.

Improvements have been made to the Community Hall and Town Office to reduce energy consumption following building energy audits.

And several years ago the Town appropriated \$10,000 to be set aside for future salt/sand storage facilities. In addition, the Town annually appropriates money for replacement of highway and fire equipment.

ENERGY

The electricity provided to Benson comes from a combination of nuclear, hydropower, and a small percentage of fossil fuels.

Heat is primarily provided by wood, oil and propane. It is important to consider and encourage other forms of energy, where cost effective. It is also important to ensure that energy use and development does not produce any negative impact to the Town, the environment, and natural resources in Benson.

The Town recognizes the relationship between energy, transportation and land use and that transportation is a significant user of energy in Town. However, Benson is a rural community with minimal services, no public transportation and minimal employment opportunities. There is no pattern of land use appropriate for the Town that would have a significant impact on transportation energy use.

Electrical Utility Service

Green Mountain Power provides electrical service to the Town.

Wind Power

Many areas of Benson are suitable for erecting wind turbines to produce electricity. The zoning and subdivision bylaw requires conditional approval for small wind towers. Of particular concern is the fact that the guy wires that support the tower are a great hazard to birds that fly at night. With little extra effort, towers can be constructed such that these wires are unnecessary, or greatly reduced in number.

In addition, the concern of the visual appearance of industrial scale wind towers should be addressed so as not to destroy the natural beauty of the Town. This means limiting the erection of towers on ridges and in areas of historic or environmental significance. Wind towers tied to the grid require a state permit and those off the grid are regulated through zoning. Wind towers should fit into the natural landscape as much as possible.

Solar

Solar power is under utilized in Benson. Solar gain is used effectively in this climate in the winter to heat homes and to provide hot water, both with fossil fuel back up. In addition, most of the year, it is feasible to utilize solar electric panels to generate electricity. The power produced by solar panels will meet a greater part of the home electricity needs if energy efficiency measures are taken first. Unlike wind and hydro, the collection of solar radiation does not pose environmental concerns. The Town encourages the use of solar energy and encourages energy efficient appliances, as well as insulation and weather stripping.

Hydro

There are many sites in Benson that could be considered for generating electricity from running water using a micro hydro turbine. There is, however, an environmental concern. Construction in streams requires state permits and a conditional use permit under the zoning and subdivision bylaw.

Other

Fossil fuels are provided by competitive suppliers; and alternative fuels, such as wood, are widely available locally. Benson currently does not have other utilities such as natural gas. A net metering program exists in Vermont for residential and farm properties. Further information is available from the Public Service Board.

Methane Digestion

Farmers have the potential to develop farm energy systems that utilize the anaerobic digestion of agricultural products, byproducts or wastes to produce electricity or produce electricity from other renewable sources. The use of such technologies not only provides a source for renewable electricity, it also helps to improve environmental quality through better waste utilization while promoting local economic activity that helps to diversify farm operations.

Energy Efficiency

There are cost-effective ways to reduce energy use in homes and businesses. Energy efficiency investments will pay off now and in the future, by reducing energy costs and protecting our environment. Energy efficiency programs and services are available from Efficiency Vermont, the statewide certified energy efficiency utility. Bennington Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC) and Neighborworks of West Rutland have programs to assist residents of Benson with energy conservation and weatherization measures to reduce energy costs.

Energy Goals, Policies and Programs

- Encourage individual, non-profit, and governmental efforts to conserve energy supplies such as by the use of energy efficient appliances, and insulation and weatherization of residential, commercial and Town buildings.
- Encourage the development and use of renewable energy (including but not limited to wind, solar, micro-hydro, and methane generation) where such installations will not adversely affect the environment or scenic beauty in Benson.
- Provide information to residents about programs and means to reduce energy consumption.
- The Town should investigate funding opportunities for cost effective energy efficiency, alternative energy and renewable energy programs.

EDUCATION

To meet growing demands for elementary education, and to resolve building code and accreditation issues, the Town opened its new Village School on School Street in 1993. High school students from Benson attend Fair Haven Union High School (FHUHS) in Fair Haven. The Town provides transportation to and from FHUHS. Residents from Benson have access to Stafford Technical Center in Rutland as well.

Benson Village School is an approximately 10,000 square foot wood-frame building. A bond of \$600,000.00 will be paid off in 2013. The school building currently contains 10 classrooms for

Early Essential Education (EEE) through eighth grade students. Other rooms include a library, an art/music room, a kitchen, mezzanine area and a multi-purpose room. The multi-purpose room is used for physical education, lunch and other educational programs as well as miscellaneous community activities. An outdoor playground area includes a baseball field, basketball court, and playground equipment. One other Town building, the Community Hall is used occasionally for educational programs and is part of the school's emergency evacuation plan.

In the 2011-12 school year, 130 children were enrolled in the Benson Village School (EEE through eighth grade), and 51 students were enrolled in the Fair Haven Union High School.

Benson has a relatively large special education population. Although special education is supported through Federal and State programs, these funding sources do not fully fund the cost of special education, and it remains significant in our school's budget. This cost is unpredictable from year to year.

Benson has a few families who have chosen to teach their children at home. A healthy acceptance and cooperation exists between home-schoolers, the School and the local community.

Because the street leading to the School is not safe for children to walk, all children are either bused or driven to school by their parents. The Benson Village School contracts two buses with Student Transportation of Vermont. There has been some discussion about creating a walking path from the school to the village area, and the possibility of participation in VTrans' Safe Routes to School Program to help fund such a path.

The Benson Village School is a large employer in Benson, with the full-time equivalent of approximately 30 people. The Village School has an annual budget of \$1,714,725.

The Fair Haven Union High School provides for the needs of Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Orwell, and West Haven. The school has a total budget of \$7,602,575. The school meets the requirements of the Vermont Standards, and is planning to implement the newly adopted Common Core State Standards beginning in the 2012-13 school year.

Benson's educational facilities are limited to the Benson Elementary School. However, educational opportunities exist for high school age children and adults in Rutland County. These include Castleton State College, Green Mountain College, College of St. Joseph and College of Vermont plus the Stafford Technical Center. As elsewhere, with the greater availability of high speed internet, more Benson residents have access to internet-based educational opportunities.

Education Goals, Policies and Programs

- Provide focus on literacy, mathematics and science in an effort to have students meet and exceed state standards.
- Provide the latest education and tools in technology.
- Continue to build school, home and community relations.
- Recruit and maintain highly qualified staff.
- Provide education in social skills and healthy decision-making in an effort to promote an environment conducive to learning and promoting resiliency in our students.
- Create a pedestrian sidewalk or path from the School to the Village.
- Improve the safety of ingress and egress to school property.

NATURAL RESOURCES

(see Natural Resources Map)

The Town of Benson has a wealth of naturally occurring resources that enrich our lives. These natural resources include a broad spectrum of everything around us, such as, water, soil, trees, wildlife and the beauty of the area. It is our responsibility to identify these resources and maintain and create an environment that doesn't interrupt the balance of their existence.

In the past, there was a unique woodland in Benson as well as in other Towns in the Champlain Valley. The remnants of this natural community have been called Clayplain Forest. This forest is identified by its history of having once been an ancient lake bed, its soils, the local climate, the types of vegetation and the animal populations supported.

The fertile clay soil and the warmth of the Champlain Valley allow this area to support several tree and shrub species which exist at the northern extent of their range. Four different oak species, as well as hickory, beech, maples, and a host of other trees and shrubs make this the most diverse woodland in the Northern Hardwood Forest. This was a very productive forest that supported a large population of animals.

Since this area of Vermont has fertile, clay-based soil, it was and is prized for agriculture. Forest clearing was completed in the 1850s, and today we have no examples of old growth forest in the Champlain Valley. What remains today are rare examples of natural regeneration in a highly altered and fragmented landscape. The majority of the fragments of this forest type are limited to areas that are less than 100 acres. This fragmentation limits the long standing viability of this forest.

Within Benson, restoration efforts are taking place to bring this forest back. The Southern Lake Champlain Valley Program of The Nature Conservancy and the Poultney-Mettowee Watershed Partnership have been working together to supply native plants grown from local seed sources for local ecological restoration and vegetative buffer plantings. Several landowners in Benson have signed up for federal cost-share programs to address natural resource concerns by restoring riparian areas to the natural vegetative condition. These federally funded stream bank protection programs include the Partners For Fish and Wildlife and Conservation Reserve Program.

The goal of this restoration project is to mitigate the adverse impacts of adjacent land uses on fish and wildlife habitat, which also results in improved water quality. At the same time, we have the opportunity to work at restoring clay plain forests in some of the areas where it once existed. The restoration effort will also expand the wooded corridor along our local rivers, stabilize the riverbanks, help decrease erosion, and help reduce sedimentation that is adversely impacting our water quality. Game and non-game animal species will benefit from these efforts, sustaining and increasing their populations.

The Nature Conservancy and the State have identified several significant natural and fragile areas in Benson. The Nature Conservancy has conserved several parcels and the State either owns or has participated in conservation efforts. The Town for the most part relies on The Nature Conservancy and the State to identify those areas that meet significant criteria and should be conserved. In addition, Benson has been identified as an important corridor for wildlife between the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks. While our plan does not specifically protect specific areas, our policy of supporting The Nature Conservancy, Land Trust and State conservation efforts, our 20 acre density requirement to preserve open lands and forest and our publicizing the importance of maintaining wildlife corridors has this effect.

Some of the significant areas protected include Shaw Mountain, parts of Mill Pond shoreline and marsh, Pond Woods Wildlife Recreation Area, and Benson lands in Bomoseen State Park. Efforts are underway with Town support to conserve additional significant lands along the Lake Champlain shoreline and Sunset Lake shoreline.

Climate, Topography, & Geology

Benson has a favorable growing season (according to the State of Vermont, Fish and Wildlife Department's Nongame and Natural Heritage Program), though it gets very cold in winter due to air drainage from the surrounding higher areas. Benson has slightly less rainfall than much of the state, and is well suited to agriculture. Maps are attached depicting agricultural soil and wetlands. Benson has great biodiversity, both diversity of species, as well as genetic diversity of individuals within species, due to the unique climate and soil types that exist here. For these reasons, conservation is very important to this area.

Agriculture, Forestry and Mineral Resources

Benson's forestland is vital to the Town in many ways. Commercial timber production has been operating for many years. This timberland has also served as a source of habitat for wildlife, recreation, aesthetics and watershed protection. The wealth of wild game that has supported hunting in this area is due largely to this forestland. . There are several operating sawmills in Town.

There are several active gravel pits and areas where shale is mined on the surface as well as other mineral deposits. They have been very important in supplying material for Town roadwork as well as for private driveways.

The soil on which our farming industry is based has been mapped and areas that are classified as prime agricultural land have been identified. Relatively recently Benson has transformed from a community of many small dairy farms to only seven (7) operating dairy farms. Some remaining open lands are utilized by active farms, but we have seen the loss of agricultural land to primary and secondary residences on subdivided lots, which was land that historically was farmed.

We are now seeing diversified agricultural use of our land. There are beef raising enterprises, horse farms, vegetable farms, sheep operations, hay growing enterprises, farm food stands, honey production enterprises, and maple syrup production operations. The economic value of the forest products and agricultural products produced in Town are a major portion of our economic base. The emphasis of our land use regulations and Town Plan in maintaining the Benson landscape is our primary method of ensuring a continuing agricultural and forestry industry in Benson.

Water Resources

Lakes, ponds, streams and wetlands have been placed on topographic maps and there has been renewed interest in their importance since they support a great diversity of plants and wildlife and provide recreation and other opportunities. The various waterway flood plains are critical areas that also need attention. These are locations along streams and rivers that, due to low elevation, can flood easily which have also been mapped (see maps).

Watersheds

Watersheds are geographic areas bounded by topographic features that cause water to drain to a single destination. Not only does a watershed drain, it also captures precipitation, filters and stores water, and determines its release. A watershed, therefore, is a drainage basin that divides the landscape into hydrologically defined areas. Within the watershed, there are many distinctive biotic and abiotic components, whose functioning is interrelated. It is essential to protect watershed areas in Benson in order to preserve water quality. Proper management of a watershed controls the quality and quantity of water flow, whether it is from roads and their maintenance, septic systems or other human activity within the watershed. Since water travels downhill, any activity that affects water quality, quantity, or rate of movement at one location, can change the characteristics of the watershed at locations downstream. Thus, it is important for everyone living or working within a watershed to cooperate to assure good conditions.

Surface Water

Benson is home to many lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. Ultimately these all flow into Lake Champlain. The Hubbardton River grows from a small stream to a good sized river in Benson, and passes many fragments of Clayplain Forest. In the very northern part of Benson most streams flow into the East Creek watershed. Lake Champlain is the western border of Benson and of Vermont. The quality of Lake Champlain is affected by many Towns, both in Vermont and New York. See the attached maps of surface waters in Benson.

Ground Water

Ground water is used by nearly all Benson residents for potable water and other household uses. The quantity and quality vary throughout the Town and many residents experience either quantity or quality issues or both. Most homeowners obtain their water from wells but there are also many natural springs located in Benson. There has been no mapping or quantification of the ground water resource. Protection of the ground water resource is very important to Benson's future.

Threats to Water Quality

There are many threats to water quality in Benson. Agricultural practices are one of the non-site-specific sources of pollution and sedimentation of streams, rivers, ponds and lakes. By educating farmers and the public about the threats to water quality, they can be encouraged to create buffer strips between areas that are plowed, grazed and treated with pesticides and/or herbicides. Buffer strips will slow the speed of the water running off the agricultural areas and filter contaminants before the water reaches waterways. Research has been done on the effects of agricultural chemicals, indicating the need for their responsible use. The state of Vermont has tested wells in Benson (*Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Pesticide Monitoring Division, Plant Industry Division d*) and discovered persistent herbicides; thus, the control of this kind of pollution is an important priority. Further information about water testing is available from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets.

Benson's wastewater treatment facility flows into a stream, which has been listed as impaired for E-Coli by the Agency of Natural Resources. The stream eventually flows into the Hubbardton River. Upgrades have been made to remedy the situation but efforts should continue to ensure that the Town's facility is not responsible for the degradation of the stream.

The effects on water quality in Lake Champlain come from many sources. It is important to consider how lake pollution may be affecting not only the water supply of Benson's households on its shore, but also the possible effects on the health of Town residents who use the lake and who eat fish from the lake. The water quality issues may even affect expansion of tourism attractions in Benson, as the waterfront area could be developed into a vibrant social and community gathering place.

Wetlands

Benson's wetlands support a diversity of wildlife. Wetlands are defined as those areas that are inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support plants and animals that depend on saturated or seasonal saturated soil conditions for growth or reproduction. These areas are commonly known as ponds, bogs, fens, marshes, wet meadows, shrub swamps, and wooded swamps. Wetlands in Benson need to be protected because they provide many valuable and irreplaceable functions that benefit the public. Some functions and values that wetlands provide include surface and ground water quality maintenance, flood water storage, fish and wildlife habitat, erosion control, threatened and endangered species habitat, open space and aesthetics, recreation, and education. The preservation of Benson's wetlands is vital to water quality and a healthy ecosystem.

Water Resource Protection

Significant surface waters are specifically identified in the Land Use section and protected in a separate Land Use District. The major stream, the Hubbardton River, is likewise protected in the Land Use Regulations. The Town relies on State regulations for protection of other resources such as wetlands, ground water and small streams. The Town has no outstanding wetlands, streams or aquifers and our surface water by their very nature of clean, unpolluted recreational bodies of water are outstanding.

Flood Hazard Areas

There are many flood hazard areas in Benson. Flood hazard locations are shown on the Town Flood Hazard Maps (Flood Insurance Rate Maps – FIRM) that were updated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2008. The Town adopted updated Flood Hazard Regulations in 2008. Based on 9-1-1 data, there were 11 camps or residences located in mapped flood hazard areas and an additional 97 structures within 100 feet. There was one camp or residence with a flood insurance policy. The Town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Wildlife Habitats and Fragile Areas

The Vermont Heritage Foundation, a department of the Agency of Natural Resources, has identified habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species, critical wildlife habitat and unique natural areas in Benson. Shaw Mountain is one of these unique areas that has received national recognition due to the existence of endangered species found there. The site is now a preserve under the management of the Nature Conservancy. Some species worthy of mention in Benson include the timber rattler, five banded skink and rat snakes.

Open Space and Scenic Resources

Protecting Benson's open spaces and scenic resources for the enjoyment of present and future generations is a priority where consistent with efficient highway maintenance and safety considerations. Benson's diverse landscape includes rich agricultural lands, scenic ridges and wooded hills, unique wildlife habitats, streams and lakes, historic areas, and tree lined roads. A prime goal is to preserve and enhance Benson's uniqueness.

The Town has chosen not to specifically identify specific scenic roads, waterways and views but rather to consider the totality of the Town as such. These sites are far too numerous in Benson. Rather the Town has chosen to protect these sites by the 20 acres density requirement in the Land Use Regulations, the policy of no new roads and the restrictions on any major development. In addition, infrastructure limitations also protect these resources. Benson is a Town with tight clay soils and the cost of community water and waste facilities is prohibitive which discourages development

The Use Value Program was established by the legislature "to encourage and assist in the maintenance of Vermont's productive agricultural and forest land." Other stated anticipated outcomes include conservation, preservation, and protection of land and prevention of accelerated conversion to more intensive use.

The Vermont Land Trust has conserved many farms in Benson. Similarly, The Nature Conservancy has purchased land in Benson, and bought the conservation easements on land in Benson. The Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District is protecting and replanting the clayplain forest in Benson. The Town should continue to support such efforts, especially when they protect water quality, watersheds, wetlands, and ecosystems.

Conservation Commission

State statute enables Towns to establish Conservation Commissions of 3-9 members. Conservation Commissions are advisory not regulatory in nature. The Town of Benson has opted not to establish a Conservation Commission.

Natural Resources Goals, Policies and Programs

1. Agriculture and Forestry

- Support small and family farms and encourage development of additional small and family farms.
- Encourage farming that provides a local food source to Town residents.
- Support the conservation of land for agricultural usage.
- Support clayplain forest restoration.
- Encourage landowners to preserve trees and other vegetation in existing clay plain forest fragments.
- Encourage the expansion of a "wooded corridor" that connects clayplain forest fragments along the edges of streams and rivers.

2. Water Resources

- Encourage the protection of the quality of ground water and water of our lakes, natural ponds, streams and rivers to protect drinking water, swimming, recreation, wildlife habitat, and fish consumption.
- Support the Partners For Fish and Wildlife project to protect stream and river banks.
- Encourage landowners to create buffer zones between waterways and agricultural and silvicultural land.
- Limit development along waterways, lakes and ponds.
- Discourage the use of pesticides and herbicides that contaminate water (both ground and surface waters).
- Protect wetlands from degradation.

3. Flood Hazard Areas

- Control development within the flood plain zones and enforce Town Flood Hazard Regulations.

4. Fragile, Unique Habitats and Open Space and Scenic Resources

- Preserve and enhance Benson's uniqueness.
- Encourage the identification and protection of ecosystems for rare, threatened and endangered species, environmentally fragile areas, critical wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors and unique natural areas in Benson, with the cooperation of landowners.
- Support efforts for ecological restoration.

5. Additional Goals

- Promote proper habitat for wild game and maintenance of naturally occurring plants and animals.
- Promote the preservation of lands and resources for recreational purposes.
- Support State efforts for compliance with State and Federal air quality regulations.

RECREATION

Recreation Facilities

Benson residents and visitors alike are provided a variety of indoor and outdoor, passive and active, organized and individualized recreational opportunities for all age groups. In addition to the natural (trails and lakes) and man-made facilities (fields and playgrounds), Benson is also home to several recreational organizations. There is a need for improvement in its recreational offerings.

Recreational facilities include, but are not limited to:

- Playground at the Town Office and on Benson Village School grounds
- Indoor gymnasiums at the Community Hall and Benson Village School
- Basketball courts behind the Community Hall and Benson Village School
- Baseball fields and athletic field located at the Benson Village School, with limited accessibility to Town residents.
- Nature trail and hiking trails on the Shaw Mountain preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy
- Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area, a 2,100-acre natural area managed by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, offers managed hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing
- Picnic Area off Rt. 22A, which is 6-acres, includes a trail access point into the Pond Woods
- Camp Sunrise Scout Camp, a summer camp for Boy Scouts located on Sunrise Lake
- Benson Landing Access, a state-owned access point located off Lake Road
- Small area of East Creek Wildlife Management Area
- Bomoseen State Park/Glen Lake – Although not accessible from Benson, this park extends into the southeast corner of the Town
- Lakes' recreational accesses (see below)

Lake Recreational Accesses

Benson's inherent asset is its location, bordering Lake Champlain and encompassing some of the cleanest lakes in Vermont: Lake Sunset, Lake Sunrise, and Perch Pond. These lakes contribute a major source of income to the Town through vacation homes and other tourist activities. However, Benson residents have limited access to these lakes.

- Public access to Lake Champlain, including a boat launch, is primarily a fishing access and swimming is not permitted. Launching boats for non-fishing recreation and parking for these non-fishing users is permitted.
- Public access to Sunset Lake, legally defined as state waters, has historically occurred near the outlet into Lake Sunrise. Maintaining and improving public access to Sunset Lake is a priority. Approximately 1,200 feet of Sunset Lake shoreline is located within the right-of-way

of Sunset Lake Road. Although parking is a problem, the Town's Traffic Ordinance currently allows for parking a limited number of vehicles on the road when authorized by the Selectboard and posted.

- Lake Sunrise currently has no public access and access to Perch Pond is limited to a public fishing access. Both are legally defined as state waters.

Recreational Organizations

Include, but are not limited to:

- The Fish and Game Club, has a skeet range located on Route 22A and is active with several Town activities.
- Ethan Allen Snow Travelers, a snow mobile club re-organized in 1997 and part of Vermont Area Snow Travelers (VAST), with approximately 180 members from Benson and surrounding Towns of Orwell, West Haven and Shoreham. This club maintains 50 miles of snowmobile trails, of which 12-14 miles are in Benson.
- Benson ATV Club, which has a network of trails combined with marked gravel roads and a section of paved roads mostly on the westerly side of Route 22A. These are available for use by club members and the Town traffic ordinance allows ATV use on Town gravel roads and some sections of paved roads when properly posted.

Both the Snow Mobile and ATV club have successfully negotiated permission to use private lands, greatly enhancing their trails. The safe use of both private and public land is essential to continued permission.

Benson Village Center Recreation Facilities

The Town received a 2007 Municipal Planning Grant to develop a plan for recreational facilities near the village center. The priority recreational facilities identified for the village area include in order of priority; picnic tables, walking or biking trails, open grassy area, picnic shelter, gazebo or bandstand, sports fields (baseball, football, soccer, etc.), skating rink, sports courts (basketball, tennis, etc.), and a skateboard park.

According to the recreation plan, there would likely be public support for projects to improve or expand upon existing facilities located on community lands. If existing facilities and lands were fully utilized and well managed, there may be support for acquisition of additional lands for public recreation in the future.

Recreation Plan recommendations include:

- Fully utilize school and Town office site lands for new facilities.
- Link the school and Town office sites with a trail or path.
- Seek and develop land within ½ mile of the village center for a Town park.

Recommended facilities and alternative site plans are included in the recreation plan in addition to cost estimates and possible funding sources. (See the Benson Village Center Recreation Plan for additional information and details).

Recreation Goals, Policies and Programs

- Establish sidewalks in the village area to encourage pedestrian traffic.
- Creation of a path along Lake Road from Benson Landing to the Village center.
- Creation of a path somewhere near the edge of Lake Champlain.
- Expansion of the public access to the waterfront at Lake Champlain (perhaps a swimming area or picnic area or park).
- Creation of a public access points to lakes and ponds in Town.
- Development of snow mobile trails, ATV trails, biking trails, hiking and pedestrian trails, horse trails, and trails for other forms of recreation.
- Implement Recreation Plan recommendations.
- Pursue opportunities for funding the enhancement of recreational facilities and activities according to the recommendations of the recreation plan.
- Encourage maintenance and enhancement of recreation facilities.
- Explore opportunities for funding the improvement of existing recreational facilities.
- Continue efforts to improve the quality of lake water.
- Encourage maintenance and improvement of public access areas and facilities on lakes.
- Provide improved access to Sunset Lake.
- Provide access to Perch Pond, Lake Sunrise, and expand access to Lake Champlain for uses beyond those permitted by Fish & Wildlife at the Benson Landing access point.
- Explore opportunities for the development of other more individualized public recreation uses including hiking, pedestrian, horse and biking trails.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic Resources

The lower Champlain Valley played an important part in the early history of the nation, and the area surrounding Benson abounds in historical sites and facilities, including Fort Ticonderoga, Mount Independence, Crown Point, Hubbardton Battlefield and the Skenesborough Museum. The Military Road from Mount Independence to Hubbardton passed through Benson. Other important aspects of local history, such as the birth of several important religious sects, and the once-flourishing commercial life of the Champlain waterway, are less conspicuous, but still form a part of the ambience of the region. Benson's role in this rich and tumultuous history has left us with few historic sites or conspicuous landmarks other than the story told by its surviving architecture. Parts of the Town remain much as they did during the time of the Civil War. Benson Village is included in the National Register of Historic Places, and a number of structures elsewhere in the Town are listed

individually as historic places. The Historic Architecture of Rutland County, published by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, describes these sites and their locations in detail.

The Town has decided not to provide specific protections to any of the historic sites or buildings in Town because the Town does not have the administrative capability to enforce historic preservation standards and there is no public support for such a program. Protection and preservation is encouraged through publicizing the importance of our cultural heritage through the Town newsletter, website and museum. Some protection is also provided through Act 250 regulations and the Conditional Use Approvals required by the Land Use Regulations.

Historic Commission

Currently Benson does not have an Historic Commission. The Town should consider creating a Commission to identify and help preserve historically important sites, protect historic buildings, cemeteries, monuments, sites and other historic places throughout the entire geographical area of the Town, as well as the adjacent area of Lake Champlain.

Benson has an active group of volunteers whose most visible effort is seen in the Benson Historical Museum, located in the Town Office Building. The museum contains historical archives and records, as well as numerous artifacts relating to Benson's history and the role of its citizens in world affairs.

A Town history "Remembering Benson" was recently published by a group of volunteers, a three year project. In addition, the Selectboard has established a History Project Fund to fund worthy history projects.

Cultural Resources

In recent years, Benson's village center has begun to see a return of small businesses, and the Town is now home to a variety of artists, artisans and musicians, craft and antique shops and a book store. The Community Hall provides facilities for musical and other events. The Benson Free Library, also housed in the Community Hall, provides another valuable resource, and plans are now underway to expand both its collection and other services. Each August, the Town hosts Benson Family Day. There is a parade based on some appropriate and timely theme. In the afternoon, the Fire Department and Rescue Squad have hosted a luncheon to raise money for their organizations. The Fire Department also sponsors a haunted hayride in October.

Monument to Veterans

There is a permanent monument honoring Benson's Veterans from the Revolutionary War onward, located on the green in front of the Town Office building. Names of the veterans are inscribed on the granite monument. This monument was recently constructed utilizing Town and donated funds. Current plans are to add a stone bench near the monument with additional donated funds. Future veterans' names may be inscribed on the monument when requested and privately funded.

Churches

There are two churches in the Town; the United Church of Benson and a Roman Catholic Church, Christ Sun of Justice.

Cemeteries

Benson maintains four cemeteries. Two are located in the village center and two are in outlying areas, and have not been actively used for many years. The two in outlying areas are historic cemeteries from the time when the Town was a collection of hamlets. Of the two in the village area, one is historic and the other is being actively used for interment. There are many private cemeteries located throughout the Town.

Historic and Cultural Resources Goals, Policies and Programs

Although the Town Plan contains little information specific to historical issues, our goal is that the other parts of the Plan will provide for the continued preservation of Benson's historical resources, both those which have been identified and those which have not. While planning for Benson's future, we must remain mindful that the character of the Town, which though intangible, remains one of its most important historical features, needs to be preserved. We hope also that with appropriate planning, the village will continue to attract artists, craftspeople and other small businesses, and that the existing facilities for cultural events will continue to be used to their fullest.

To preserve the Town's rural character and sustain its heritage, the following recommendations are established:

- Identify and preserve historic sites in Benson and educate the public about these sites.
- Encourage maintenance and repair of the Town cemeteries, especially the two historic cemeteries in outlying areas, which have been somewhat neglected.
- Implement a program, in conjunction with the tree warden to plant trees in appropriate locations along roads with the approval of the landowners abutting the roads. Road side plantings should be accomplished in such a manner so as to provide adequate room for snow removal, utility services, and adequate view corridors for safety.
- Manage growth and development within Benson through land use regulations.
- Encourage the use of land for agriculture and forestry.
- Protect surface waters and waterways from development by planting buffers and conserving areas near water and waterways.
- Discourage large developments that are inconsistent with the Town's rural character or exceed the capabilities of municipal services.
- Encourage the preservation of historical structures and places within the Town.
- Encourage public and private efforts to record the Town's history and ensure a continuity of knowledge about the Town.
- Encourage maintenance of Town buildings and land.

HOUSING

Existing Conditions

Current information on the grand list and tax rate is available from the Town Clerk.

Table 6: 2012 Grand List					
	1990	2002	1990-2002 % Change	2012	2002-2012 % Change
Residential parcels* under 6 acres	89	115	29.2%	140	21.7%
Residential parcels on 6 acres or more	58	132	127.6%	160	21.2%
Mobile Homes without land	31	40	29.0%	18	-55%
Mobile Homes with land	24	58	141.6%	71	12.24%
Vacation Parcels under 6 acres	111	84	-24.3%	67	-20.24%
Vacation Parcels on 6 acres or more	35	28	-20.0%	28	0.0%
Commercial Properties	8	10	25.0%	16	60%
Commercial Apartments	0	3	N/A	1	-66.7%
Farms**	46	20	-56.5%	22	10.0%
Woodland	11	15	36.4%	14	-6.67%
Miscellaneous***	126	131	4.0%	97	-26.68%

Table 7: 2012 Grand List Assessed Values		
	2002 Average	2012 Average
Residential parcels under 6 acres	74,020	155,209
Residential parcels on 6 acres or more	139,652	234,319
Mobile Homes without land	11,240	15,639
Mobile Homes with land	64,746	90,879
Vacation Parcels under 6 acres	56,379	152,534
Vacation Parcels on 6 acres or more	81,868	200,918
Commercial Properties	154,740	411,694
Commercial Apartments	195,467	745,100
Farms	260,087	1,140,365
Woodland	28,388	71,229
Miscellaneous	33,001	64,025

*A parcel of land is contiguous land that is owned by a single person or entity. Residential, vacation and farm parcels may have more than one dwelling.

**Farms are properties where income is derived from growing crops or raising animals, or from selling animals or animal products.

***A miscellaneous parcel is land with no dwelling that is not categorized as woodland.

Table 8: Housing Units by Type, Occupancy and Tenure							
	Total Units		Seasonal Units		Year-Round Units		
	#	% Change	#	% Change	#	% Change	
Benson							
1990	490	36.11%	157	18.05%	333	46.70%	
2000	519	5.92%	117	-25.48%	391	17.42%	
2010	583	12.3%	136	16.2%	420	7.4%	
Rutland Region							
1990	31,054	21.88%	5,519	51.37%	25,535	16.95%	
2000	32,311	4.05%	5,293	-4.09%	25,678	0.56%	
2010	33,768	4.5%	5787	9.3%	25,984	1.2%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 5: Average Household Size				
	1990	2000	2010	2020 Projection
Benson	2.71	2.57	2.46	2.35
Rutland Region	2.71	2.39	2.28	2.17

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 9: Housing Units by Owner / Renter Occupied				
	Owner-Occupied Units		Renter-Occupied Units	
	#	% Change	#	% Change
Benson				
1990	219	27.32%	93	84.00%
2000	278	26.94%	113	21.51%
2012	325	17.1%	95	15.9%
Rutland Region				
1990	16,111	15.04%	7,414	14.95%
2000	17,901	11.11%	7,777	4.90%
2012	18,147	1.36%	7837	0.76%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Housing Affordability

Benson has a wide range of residential buildings. There are many options for low and moderate income households, and the Town has annually voted money for affordable housing through our contributions to BROCC and the Vermont Council on the Aging. Some of the affordable housing is in the form of trailers in rural areas of the Town. Many of these need rehabilitation to provide safe, sanitary housing. Benson also has affordable single family houses in the Village area, as well as a large multi-family building for senior housing.

At Benson Heights, subsidized rents allow seniors to live within walking distance of the post office, store, a restaurant, a bookstore, the library, the Town Office and other amenities. Other forms of affordable housing permitted in Benson include accessory dwelling units attached to or contained within existing housing or in accessory structures. Affordable housing is a statewide and regional responsibility. Benson's current inventory of residential buildings contains a large proportion of existing affordable structures. Benson should encourage a balance between affordable and other residential structures. The Town should encourage the Rutland Regional Planning Commission to develop a region-wide affordable housing plan .

Future Housing Needs

In Benson, the growth of housing outpaces the growth of the population resulting in a smaller average household size. There are many 2nd homes, vacation homes and seasonal homes. The growth rate of housing and population in Benson exceeds that of Rutland County.

Housing Goals, Policies and Programs

- Identify and preserve historically important housing structures in Benson.
- Investigate what types of housing would best suit the Town's future needs.
- Preserve property values and Town character by discouraging substandard housing.
- Support affordable housing in the region.
- Support energy efficiency in housing.

TRANSPORTATION

The principal means of transportation within and through Benson is the private motor vehicle. To facilitate this type of transportation, Benson is served by two types of highways: a Vermont State Highway and Benson Town Highways (classes 2, 3 and 4). Given Benson's present traffic conditions, the existing highway system is generally adequate to serve Benson's transportation needs. Should Benson experience population growth, some additional highways and highway improvements may be required. However, as there is no clear pattern of growth, which would indicate that any particular highway is inadequate, no new highways are proposed. Should any developments be proposed in Benson requiring new roads, the construction and maintenance of said roads should be the responsibility of the project's developer.

It is the Selectboard's policy not to accept or encourage new roads in Town. The Town has adopted State standards for access management of the Town's roads and the Town's land use regulations include restrictions on access to Route 22A; however, the State controls Route 22A access. The Town policy of restricting the construction of new roads and the implementation of several roadside ditching projects in recent years is reducing the negative impact of our road system on the environment.

A road classification system primarily based on types and volumes of traffic and connections to other roads and communities is used to group similar types of roads and allocate resources. Benson has no Class 1 roads; 14.960 miles of Class 2 roads; 36.61 miles of Class 3 roads; 4.18 of Class 4 roads; and 6.276 miles of State highway (Route 22A) for a total of 62.026 miles of highways.

In 2008, the Town discontinued all roads not included on the Town Highway map. Benson's transportation system is shown on the attached Community Facilities, Transportation and Education map.

The surface conditions of Benson's roads vary. Benson has mostly gravel roads, and a few paved roads. The paved roads are: Route 22A, Route 144, Hulett Hill Road, a portion of East Road, a portion of Lake Road, a portion of Sunset Lake Road and Stage Road in the Village area. The condition of these roads is good to excellent. The condition of gravel roads in Benson is largely dependent upon the weather conditions and season. Generally the roads are considered acceptable, and the Selectboard has created and updated a highway infrastructure report indicating conditions and areas for improvement. The report covers road surfaces, ditches, roadside trees, culverts, bridges and the 2000 foot storm drain in Benson Village. The Selectboard is responsible for the maintenance of the Town highways.

Generally, Benson is a rural Town and the highways are scenic rural roads. Many are tree lined with full or partial tree canopies. Vistas and long views of Benson's rolling landscape help to enhance the Town's charm and character. Roadside trees and vegetation have a role in erosion control as well as protecting the quality of our surface waters from road runoff. Protection of roadside vegetation is a consideration as well as maintaining safe visibility on Town Highways when doing highway maintenance projects.

Parking facilities in Benson are generally adequate at this time, except for the lack of parking in the village and in public access areas, such as along Sunset Lake and at Benson Landing and at the school. As the population increases, parking solutions need to be studied and recommendations considered for implementation. The Recreation Plan includes specific recommendations for additional parking in the area adjacent to the Town office and at the school. On road parking is authorized by the Traffic Ordinance at Sunset Lake when implemented by the Selectboard

Benson's Highway System

Minor Arterial Highways

VT 22A is the only arterial highway in the Town of Benson. A part of the National Highway System, VT 22A bisects Benson connecting Vergennes, to the north, with Fair Haven, to the south. Route 22A is the most important route for entering and exiting the Town, and is a heavily trafficked highway which is frequented by both light and heavy trucks, passenger vehicles and farm machinery. Traffic counts in 2002, 2004 and 2006 show adjusted average daily traffic (AADT) volumes ranging from 4,500 vehicles on the northern section to 3,400 to the south, with little or no change over that 4-

year period. However, over the years, Route 22A has seen significant increases in traffic raising safety concerns. The accident rate on Route 22A has alarmed many Benson residents. In 2011 and 2012, a Route 22A Corridor Study was completed for Route 22A between the New York State line and the intersection of Route 73 with Route 22A in Orwell. The report indicates average daily traffic of 3,900 in 2008 on Route 22A at the intersection of East Road. The Study report recommends a number of improvements to Route 22A in Benson which include:

- Make Route 22A a minimum of 36 feet wide from West Haven to Orwell with adequate shoulders.
- Reduce the speed limit to 40 mph between the southbound approach to Route 144 and the northbound approach to Lake Road.
- Install flashing beacons at the intersection of Route 144 with Route 22A as well as the intersection of Lake Road/Mill Pond with Route 22A.
- Install left and right turn lanes at the intersection of Lake Road/Mill Pond with Route 22A when warranted by traffic volume.
- Additional intersection improvements at Benson intersections.

The Town encourages the State to improve safety conditions on Route 22A and to implement the study recommendations as soon as possible.

Collectors

Due to Benson's rural nature, Benson highways are utilized by a combination of farm machinery, trucks, passenger vehicles and horse traffic. Many of Benson's secondary roads serve to connect the Town's outlying areas to the village, and may also serve as connectors to the neighboring Towns of Orwell, Hubbardton and West Haven. Primary east-west connections are afforded via State Highway 144, Benson Landing/Lake Road and north-south via Stage Road and East Road.

These are classified as Class II and III roads. Traffic counts on these roads are generally low. The most recent AADT counts in 2004 were 230 vehicles recorded on Lake Road in 2003 and 590 and 340 vehicles on VT 144, 1000 feet east of VT22A and .5 mile north of East Road, respectively. In 2003, 150 vehicles were recorded on Stage Road and 70 vehicles on East Road.

Other Town Roads

These roads serve residential, and commercial uses. The majority of roads in the Town's inventory are classified as class III and class IV roads. There is a mix of paved and unpaved roads typical of community networks in Vermont.

Private Roads

Some of the Town's roads are privately owned and provide access to residences. These are permitted by the Town and required to be built to Town standards.

Other Modes of Transportation

Benson is not directly served by any railroads or airport facilities. Rail transportation is available in Fair Haven, Whitehall NY, and Rutland, and air transportation is available from Burlington, Rutland, and Albany, NY. The Public Transportation Program for Elderly and Persons with Disabilities is available to provide transportation for such individuals primarily for medical services. This is provided by "The Bus" and the One-to-One Program of volunteer drivers.

Benson has historically been served by water transportation on Lake Champlain, and while this service has been reduced significantly, Lake Champlain remains a minor transportation route.

Benson has an abundance of snowmobile and all terrain vehicle (ATV) trails on private and public land, which is used as a minor form of transportation, but is primarily used for recreation. The Town Traffic Ordinance authorizes the use of many sections of the public roads for ATV use when posted in accordance with the Ordinance.

In 2002, the Benson Selectboard was approached by a private group wishing to create a bike route the length of Lake Champlain. The Selectboard approved of the proposed route on Stage Road from Orwell to West Haven. Signs have been erected identifying the route. Most Benson roads are well-suited for recreational biking and walking.

There is a need for recreational paths and a path from the Benson Village School to the Village area as a form of bicycle and pedestrian transportation. The recreation plan identified possible routes for this path. Additional areas should also be considered for such paths in the Town.

Highway Department

Benson's Highway Department is located in the Village area. The Town has the following equipment: 3 Trucks (2008, 2004, 2002), Grader (1999), Loader (2010), Backhoe (1984), Excavator (2001) Pickup (2001). Benson is considering infrastructure improvements to handle salt and sand.

Funding

The federal and state governments pay for all of the costs of maintaining federal and state highways (VT 22A). The Town, with some federal and state financial assistance, is responsible for the repair and maintenance of Class 2 and 3 Town roads and any Selectboard or voter approved repair and maintenance of Class 4 Town roads. Local funds can be extended by applying for State grants that are annually available through the Agency of Transportation. The Town can also apply to the Better Backroads program for funds. By maintaining a capital budget and active transportation planning program, in conjunction with neighboring Towns, the Town can anticipate highway needs and plan for them in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Infrastructure Inventory

Benson has a complete inventory of the culverts - the size, material, condition and location in graphic information system format. For capital budgeting this is important to keep up-to-date.

Transportation Goals, Policies and Programs

To preserve the Town's scenic rural character and maintain public services the following recommendations are established:

- Update the Infrastructure Report as needed and implement identified needed improvements as funds become available.
- Assure that Town roads are kept in good repair and open for safe driving.
- Investigate and support options to improve safety conditions on Route 22A through local, county and State action.
- Support the construction of a path between the Town Office and the school when funding sources are identified.
- Encourage the elimination of dead road side trees, obstructive brush and grass. Road side plantings should be accomplished in such a manner so as to provide adequate room for snow removal, utility services, and adequate view corridors for safety.
- Discourage the development of industries and developments whose transportation and trucking requirements will impose undue burdens upon and impair the useful lives of Benson's roads and highways.
- Consider methods to allow a developer to mitigate costs to the Town for improvement and maintenance of affected roads.
- Encourage the development of screening to mask structures which would be highly visible from roads and highways, which are inconsistent with the Town's scenic rural character.
- Manage the development of snow mobile, ATV, biking, hiking and pedestrian, horse and other forms of transportation, balancing their use for recreation and transportation against noise, environmental and safety concerns.
- Establish sidewalks in the village area to encourage pedestrian traffic.
- Creation of a path along Lake Road from Benson Landing to the Village center.
- Creation of a path somewhere near the edge of Lake Champlain.
- Explore opportunities for the development of other more individualized public recreation uses including hiking, pedestrian, horse and biking trails.
- Development of snow mobile trails, ATV trails, biking trails, hiking and pedestrian trails, horse trails, and trails for other forms of recreation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economy of the Town of Benson is predominately a component of the Rutland and Addison Counties' economies. It is both an agricultural and rural economy. Local employment is generally related to agriculture, forest products, and commercial and service industry sectors. A substantial number of residents commute to service sector jobs outside of the Town.

Village Area

The Village area is the social center of the Town because of the many activities that occur there. The Town Office, Museum, Community Hall, Fire Department, Library, and the United Church of Benson are in the village district, as well as a playground and several diverse businesses.

The Town applied for and received Village Center Designation from the state in 2004 in order to be recognized by the state as an area in which the traditional village character is protected and enhanced. The benefits of village center designation include tax-incentives to maintain and enhance buildings as well as priority consideration for various state grants and programs such as Municipal Planning Grants and the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). The village center delineation is depicted on the Community Facilities and Utilities map.

Commercial and Employment Activity in Benson

Benson is home to agricultural and silvi-cultural operations, several small industries and commercial establishments, as well as many home-based businesses. Small industries are generally located at resident's homes or on other parcels where they do not have adverse effects on the community's development. Benson is not home to any large industrial or commercial developments. Benson Village School is the largest employer in Benson, although not considered a traditional economic activity.

Trends in Employment and Economic Development

Table 11: Place of Work				
	Total # Employed	People Working in Benson %	People Working Outside Benson %	People Working Outside USA %
Benson				
1980	280	n/a	n/a	n/a
1990	410	26.1 %	73.9%	11.46%
2000	537	18.8%	81.2%	0.60%
2010*	535	26.2%	73.8%	n/a
Rutland Region		In County	Outside County	
1980	25,688	n/a	n/a	
1990	30,870	n/a	10.1%	
2000	33,237	86.4%	13.6%	
2010**	34,250	65.0%	35.0%	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau *2010 ACS 5-year estimates **LEHD On the Map estimates				

Table 12:2010 Income Table		
Income	Number	%
Households Total.....	432	100%
Less than \$10,000	27	6%
\$10,000 - \$24,999	83	19%
\$25,000 – \$34,999	46	11%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	69	16%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	88	20%
\$75,000 or More	119	27%
Median Household Income	\$46,667	
Source: 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census		

Unemployment Rate

Year	Unemployment Rate		
	<i>Benson</i>	<i>Rutland County</i>	<i>Vermont</i>
2000	2.6%	3.0%	2.7%
2001	2.8%	3.5%	3.3%
2002	3.8%	4.1%	4.0%
2003	3.5%	4.9%	4.5%
2004	2.8%	4.1%	3.7%
2005	2.4%	3.7%	3.5%
2006	2.6%	4.0%	3.7%
2007	2.4%	4.3%	3.9%
2008	3.2%	5.3%	4.5%
2009	6.8%	8.3%	6.9%
2010	6.6%	7.4%	6.4%
2011	5.9%	6.7%	5.6%
Source: VT Department of Labor			

According to the 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, of the approximately 821 residents in Benson over 16 years of age, 535 were in the labor force. Forty were unemployed, which represented 4.9% of the civilian labor force. There were 286 people in Benson over the age of 16 who were not in the labor force.

Economic Development Goals, Policies and Programs

Tourism and agriculture are of importance to Benson's economy. Tourism brings customers to many of the Town's businesses; and for this reason, the Town's rural and scenic character and the well preserved ambiance of its village should be a consideration in land use decisions. There are 22 farms according to the most recent Listers' data and 14 woodland properties in the Town of Benson.

While Benson is a farming community, the Town also supports a range of other businesses and pursuits. There are 16 commercial properties and one commercial apartment in the Town of Benson according to the most recent Listers' data. The number of commercial properties has increased by 60% during the last 10 years. Business growth over the last decade has been steady, and additional businesses may move to the Town in the future. The most promising and undeveloped aspect of the local economy relates to tourism and recreation. The Town recognizes that tourism and agriculture are closely linked; and that the number of tourists will not increase if Benson's open and beautiful scenery is not maintained. The Town's economic goals are consistent with maintaining Benson's current landscape and maintaining environmental standards.

To improve Benson's economic base:

- Encourage the development of home occupations and cottage industries.
- Encourage the expansion of local businesses.
- Maintain the village core, the character of the Town, and the landscape and natural resources.

- Conditionally permit future small commercial and light industrial developments that are consistent with the Town's rural character and complementary to its agricultural heritage.
- Discourage future large commercial and heavy industrial developments that are inconsistent with the Town's rural and agricultural character.
- Protect, preserve and conserve available agricultural lands and forests, encouraging land conservation efforts by Vermont Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy.
- Permit additional agricultural and forestry land uses and activities within the Town.

Green Mountain Council Exemption from Taxation

In 1967 the Vermont Legislature exempted property owned by the Boy Scouts of America from local property taxes. Green Mountain Council owns 193.8 acres of waterfront property in Benson. This exemption has resulted in a loss of property tax revenues to Benson in excess of \$500,000 between 1967 and 2007. Benson believes it is inequitable for the State to require a few Towns to carry the burden of this tax exemption for the entire state. The Selectboard supports the possibility of amending the PILOT program during the appropriation process to compensate the few impacted Vermont Towns.

LAND USE AND GROWTH

In order to incorporate the goals, objectives and recommendations set forth within this Plan, attached to this Plan are a collection of land use maps which identify current agricultural areas, public investments (including Town highways and Public Facilities), residential, recreational, forest, and commercial land uses. These maps also indicate flood plains, soils, topography, wetlands, critical wildlife habitat, conservation areas, designated village center, sewer district, and a future land use map. The future land use map shows the intended land uses, which are consistent with the designated zoning districts.

The Plan anticipates the use of the above maps as aids to guide the development of land within Benson. Consistent with the Plan, land uses are encouraged that will conform with the goals set forth below.

Existing Conditions

The Town consists of rural agricultural land and natural areas. The Village area is a mix of closely spaced commercial and residential uses. There are clusters of closely spaced residential structures in several other areas of Benson, including around Sunset Lake, and Perch Pond, as well as along areas of Route 144, Howard Hill Road, and at Benson Landing.

Benson has adopted a zoning and subdivision bylaw, last amended November 21, 2011. In addition, there are ordinances pertaining to driveway installations, road standards, placement of junk motor vehicles, floodplain regulations, traffic, and mobile home and trailer coach parks. Additional State land use regulations exist, though the Town does not have the authority to enforce these laws; the Town has opted to be a 1-acre Town for the purpose of commercial development under Act 250.

Table 6: 2012 Grand List

	1990	2002	1990-2002 % Change	2012	2002-2012% Change
Residential parcels* under 6 acres	89	115	29.2%	140	21.7%
Residential parcels on 6 acres or more	58	132	127.6%	160	21.2%
Mobile Homes without land	31	40	29.0%	18	-55%
Mobile Homes with land	24	58	141.6%	71	12.24%
Vacation Parcels under 6 acres	111	84	-24.3%	67	-20.24%
Vacation Parcels on 6 acres or more	35	28	-20.0%	28	0.0%
Commercial Properties	8	10	25.0%	16	60%
Commercial Apartments	0	3	N/A	1	-66.7%
Farms**	46	20	-56.5%	22	10.0%
Woodland	11	15	36.4%	14	-6.67%
Miscellaneous***	126	131	4.0%	97	-26.68%

Conserved Land

There are conserved agricultural land and natural areas in Benson. For information on conserved land and trusts that conserve land, contact the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. These trusts hold development rights of agricultural land, forest land and other land, and sometimes ownership of ecologically sensitive areas. The natural resources map indicates the land with restrictions, specifically conserved land and its ownership, State owned land and the Boy Scout camp in Benson.

The State's Current Use Program is used in Benson. In the 2012 Grand List, 44 of the 623 parcels, representing 8,813 acres of the approximately 29,000 acres in Benson, are enrolled in this program for a total of \$5,436,00 (the total Grand List has a value of \$107,000,00).

Future Direction of Benson Land Uses

The Planning Commission will periodically review and update the existing land use regulations and ordinances as appropriate to accomplish the goals of this Plan. It is hoped that this effort will protect water quality, limit the loss of agricultural land, protect natural areas, protect forests and forestry, and encourage development in a way that preserves the Town's rural character and natural beauty. For this reason, five land use districts have been established, with differing objectives in each. It is not the goal to prevent development, but to direct development such that the unique social, environmental and historical characteristics of Benson are preserved.

It is the goal of the Planning Commission that there will be expanded opportunities for employment in Benson. Entrepreneurship is encouraged along with home businesses and cottage industries. It is not intended to specifically exclude any types of development from any district except as detailed under the district description below or in the zoning and subdivision bylaw.

Land Use Districts

- **Agricultural and Rural Residential District (ARR District)**

To preserve the community's rural character and to provide a mechanism for viable agricultural, residential and commercial uses with minimal adverse impact.

ARR is intended to provide land area for low-density residential development, farming, forestry, recreation, commercial and other rural land uses. Any such growth should be consistent with the rural character of the area and site conditions.

Conservation of a working landscape of open space and natural resources should be a high priority to maintain Benson's rural atmosphere. The Town encourages traditional and diversified agricultural uses and activities in this district and supports the right to farm for family farms. The Town should promote activities that preserve scenic and agricultural lands. The goal of this district is an attractive functional countryside.

- **Village District**

To provide for mixed residential, commercial and public uses in the area generally served by the municipal waste treatment facility.

The purpose of the Village District is to allow residential housing and commercial enterprises of a scale that will blend well with existing residences and complement the "village" atmosphere preferred by Benson's residents. All development in this district is to have adequate parking, suitable landscaping, screening, lighting, and signage and be designed to minimize traffic impacts in order to protect the character of the neighborhood. Low traffic flow businesses are to be encouraged. It is important to preserve and promote the historic nature of the village district.

- **Lake Shore District**

To conserve and protect those lands adjacent to the ten lakes and ponds as indicated on the Lake Shore District on the proposed land use map, excluding Lake Champlain.

The purpose of this district is to protect water quality, public access, and natural ecosystems. The land in this district is within 500 feet of the mean water level of lakes in the sections indicated on the land use map. The purpose of this district is to protect water quality, while balancing the desire for development with the need for protecting public access, the shoreline and wildlife habitat. The names of the lakes and ponds in this district are: Lake Sunrise, Sunset Lake, Perch Pond, Doughty Pond, Parsons Mill Pond, Glen Lake, Mud Pond, Bullhead Pond, Beaver Meadow, and Root Pond (including the two unnamed lakes nearby).

- **Lake Champlain Shoreline District**

This district should promote similar goals as the Lake Shore District except it must recognize the special circumstances and opportunities presented by Lake Champlain.

•Flood Hazard Area Overlay District

To promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to prevent increases in flooding caused by the uncontrolled development of lands in areas of special flood hazard, and to minimize losses due to flooding. Benson has existing regulations that regulate flood hazard areas.

Land Use and Growth Goals, Policies and Programs

- Encourage compact development in the Village district.
- Encourage improved professional, educational and medical services in Benson.
- Encourage traditional and diversified agricultural and forestry land uses.
- Encourage commercial, residential and industrial developments that are consistent with Benson's rural and village character.
- Encourage the efficient use of the Town's wastewater treatment facility by encouraging such things as more compact development in the village area than elsewhere in the Town, and water savings devices in homes and businesses.
- Discourage development that would create excessive traffic through the village, or overwhelm the municipal wastewater system and other services.
- Establish standards for developments along Town streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes.
- Encourage development that is integrated into the rest of the community.

Through the administration of this Plan, the Town desires to continue orderly growth and development which protects community resources and provides for the appropriate use of all lands while preserving open spaces, forest, conservation areas and agricultural lands within the Town. In short, this Plan recommends that Benson take steps to preserve its rural character and permit such growth and development as would benefit the general good of the Town.

MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL COORDINATION

The Planning Commission has attempted to coordinate the elements contained within this Plan with the plans of surrounding Towns and with the Rutland Regional Plan. Benson has goals similar to those neighboring Towns for the continuance of a working landscape in the Lake Champlain basin.

The Towns most impacted by development in Benson are the Towns of West Haven and Orwell. These Towns have landscapes similar to Benson and lengthy borders of rural developed property with the Town of Benson. There is minimal interaction with the Towns of Fair Haven, Castleton, Hubbardton and Sudbury. The Sudbury-Benson border length is minimal and the borders with the other three Towns are forested areas. We do coordinate and cooperate with the surrounding Towns. The Route 22A Corridor Study was a cooperative effort of the Towns of Orwell, Benson, West Haven and Fair Haven. Orwell and Benson share road equipment and assist each other with

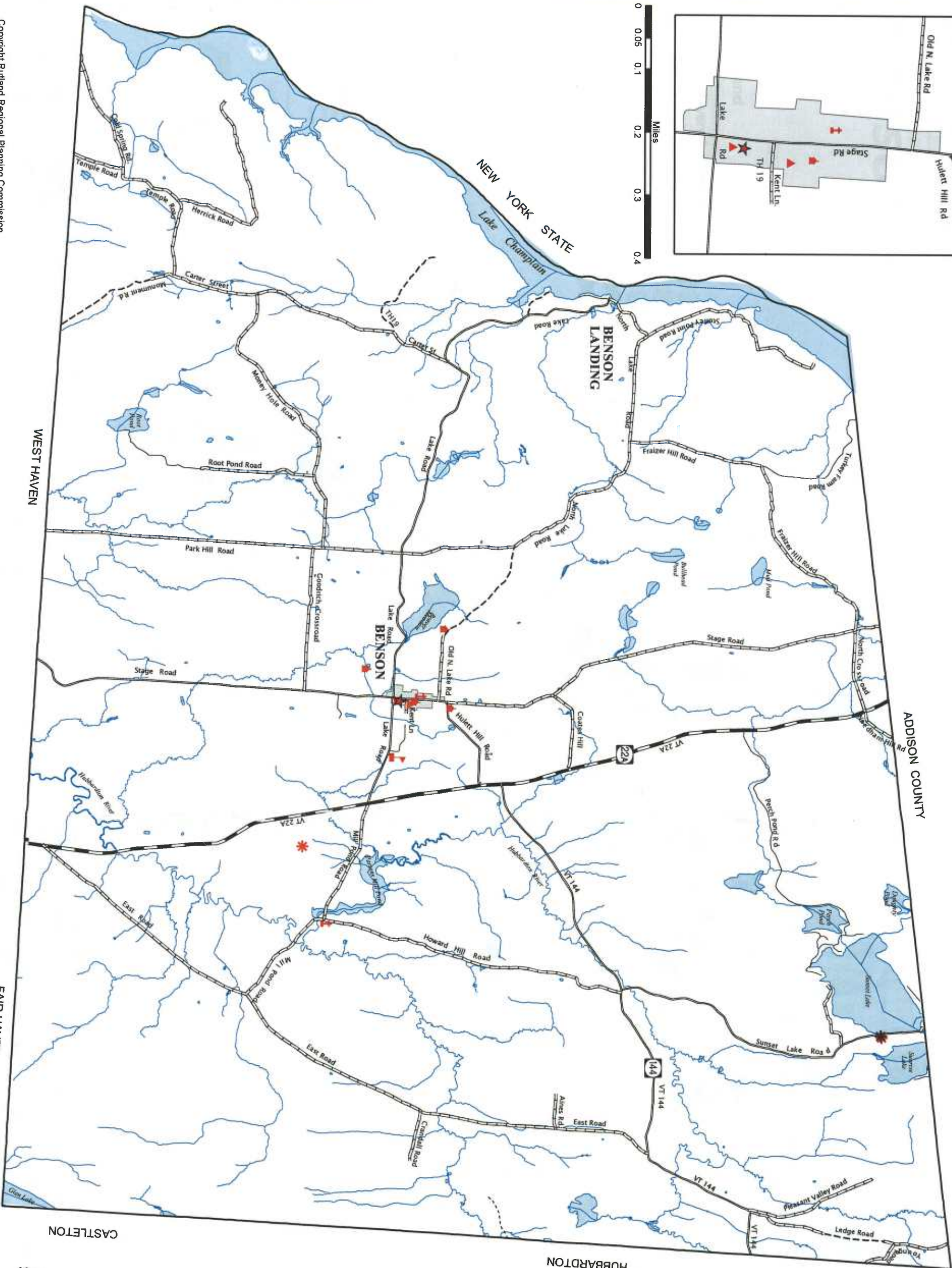
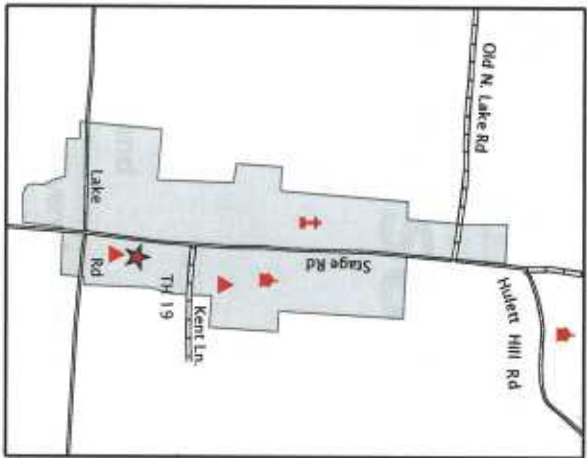
highway maintenance. All the Towns work together for fire protection and emergency response services. Orwell and Benson share school programs.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

In order to give meaning to the goals and recommendations contained within this Plan, the Town, State agencies and regional and local authorities are strongly encouraged to abide by the Plan's goals, policies and programs. The Plan should be interpreted to the strongest extent possible to promote the Town goals contained herein. The Benson Planning Commission certifies that this Plan promotes the best interest of Benson and its Townspeople. It is the goal of the Planning Commission to review and update the existing land use regulations and other land use related ordinances to accomplish the goals of this plan and to have Benson enforce the Town's ordinances and regulations.

Benson, VT

Community Facilities Transportion and Education



Legend

- State Highway
- Class 2 Town Road
- Class 3 Town Road
- Class 4 Town Road
- Other
- Private Road
- Rivers & Streams
- Lakes & Ponds
- Town Building
- Cultural Site
- Fire Department
- School
- Church
- Public Gathering Site
- Benson Village Designation




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This is the most current Data available at time of map production. Please refer to Data Source for most up to date information.





Natural Resources


Benson Map 1 of 2



- Legend**
-  Rivers & Streams


 Lakes & Ponds


 Rare Plant/Animal Sites


 Deer Wintering Areas


 Flood Hazard Areas

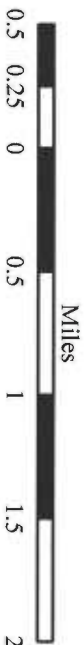
 VSWI Wetland Areas
-  Slopes 6 - 10 %

 Slopes 10 - 14 %

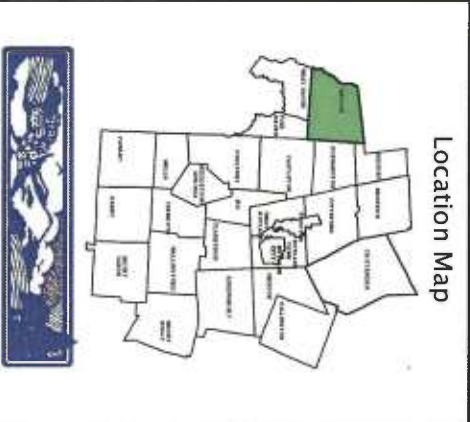
 Slopes 14 - 20 %

 Slopes 20 - 24 %

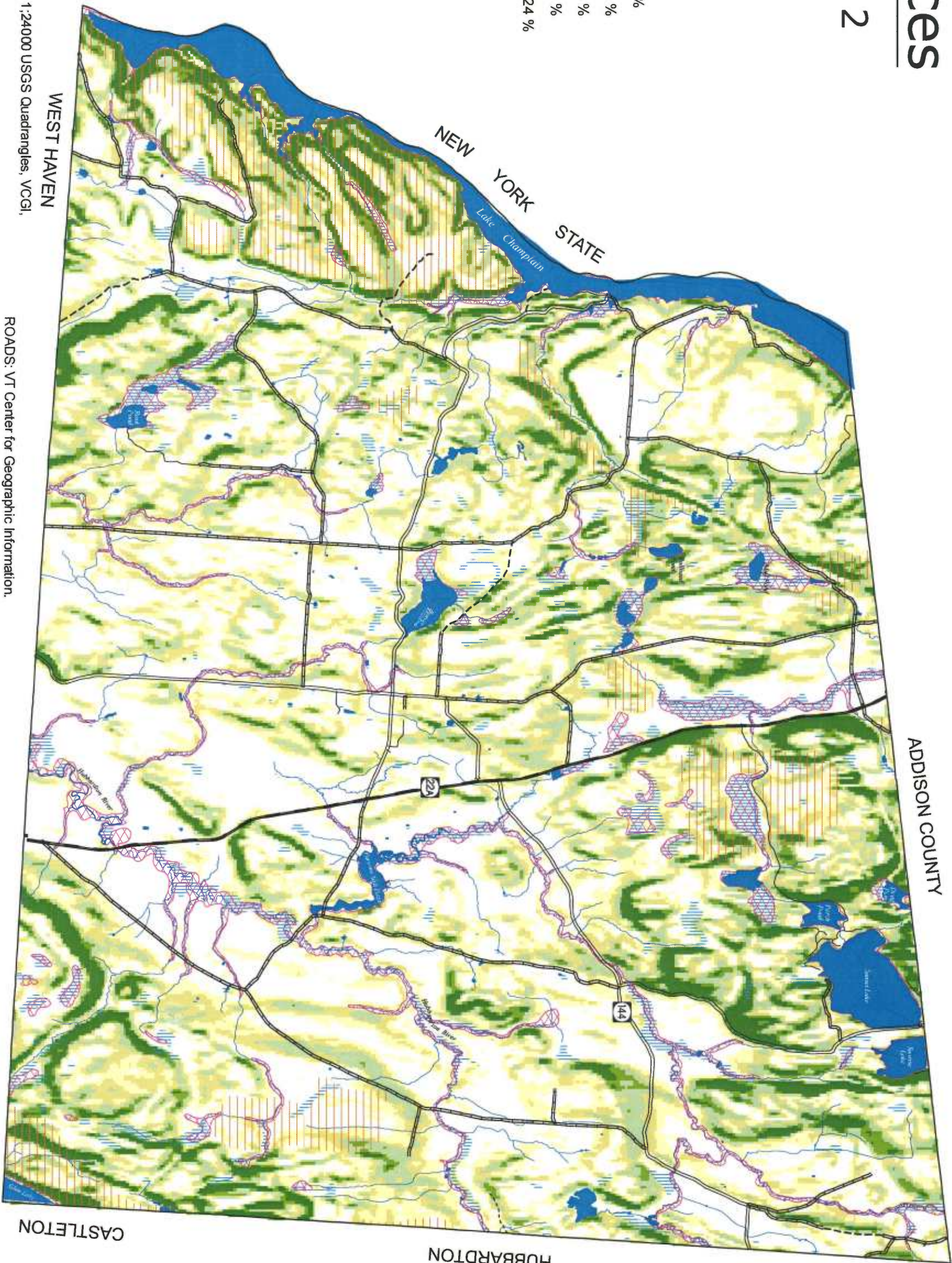
 Slopes Above 24 %



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Map intended for planning purposes only.
For more information, please contact:
Rutland Regional Planning Commission
PO Box 965, The Opera House, Third Floor
Rutland, VT 05702 (802)775-087



POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: 1:24000 USGS Quadrangles, VCGI, 1991-2008.

RARE PLANT/ANIMAL SITES: Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species & Significant Communities, 1:24000, Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program, VANR, 1997.

FLOOD PLAIN: DFIRM data from FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Floodplains for planning purposes only. Refer to the VANR_DEC, Water Quality Division, Floodplain coordinator for official floodplain determinations. (802) 241-3759.

ROADS: VT Center for Geographic Information.

SURFACE WATER: Vermont Hydrography Dataset using 1:5,000 digital orthophotos, USGS 7 1/2 quadrangles and 1:20,000 color infrared aerial photography and other data sources.

WETLANDS: boundaries are derived from National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and the Vermont Significant Wetland Inventory (VSWI) and are approximate. Wetlands less than three acres in size may not be shown. The wetlands depicted are those regarded as regulatory by the VT Water Resources Board.

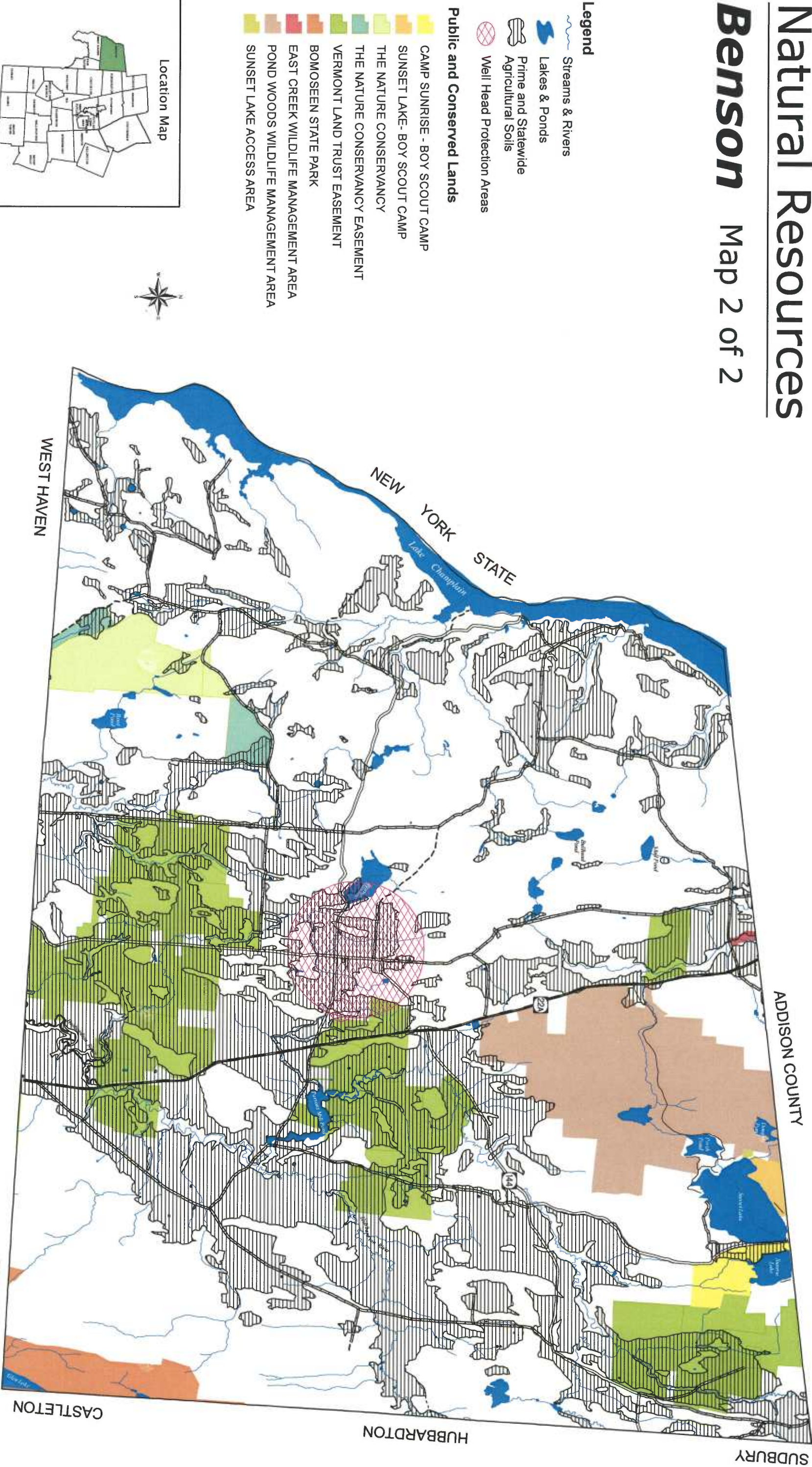
ELECTRIC LINES: VT Electric Power Company.

SLOPE: Slopes generated from USGS NED based 7.5' DEM24 data, 2002

DEER WINTERING AREAS: Ecologi-d habitat_DEERWV, taken from 1:24000 and 1:25000 USGS topographic quads, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, 2006.

Natural Resources

Benson Map 2 of 2



Map intended for planning purposes only.
For more information, please contact:
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Rutland, VT 05702 (802)775-087

SURFACE WATER: Data is from the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, Inc. Vermont Hydrography Data set. The VHD data is a subset of the National Hydrography Data set.

ROADS: VT Center for Geographic Information

WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREAS: SPAs for groundwater sources (wells, springs), 1:24,000 USGS QUADRANGLES, VANR- DEC- Water Supply Division and VT Department of Health, 1998.

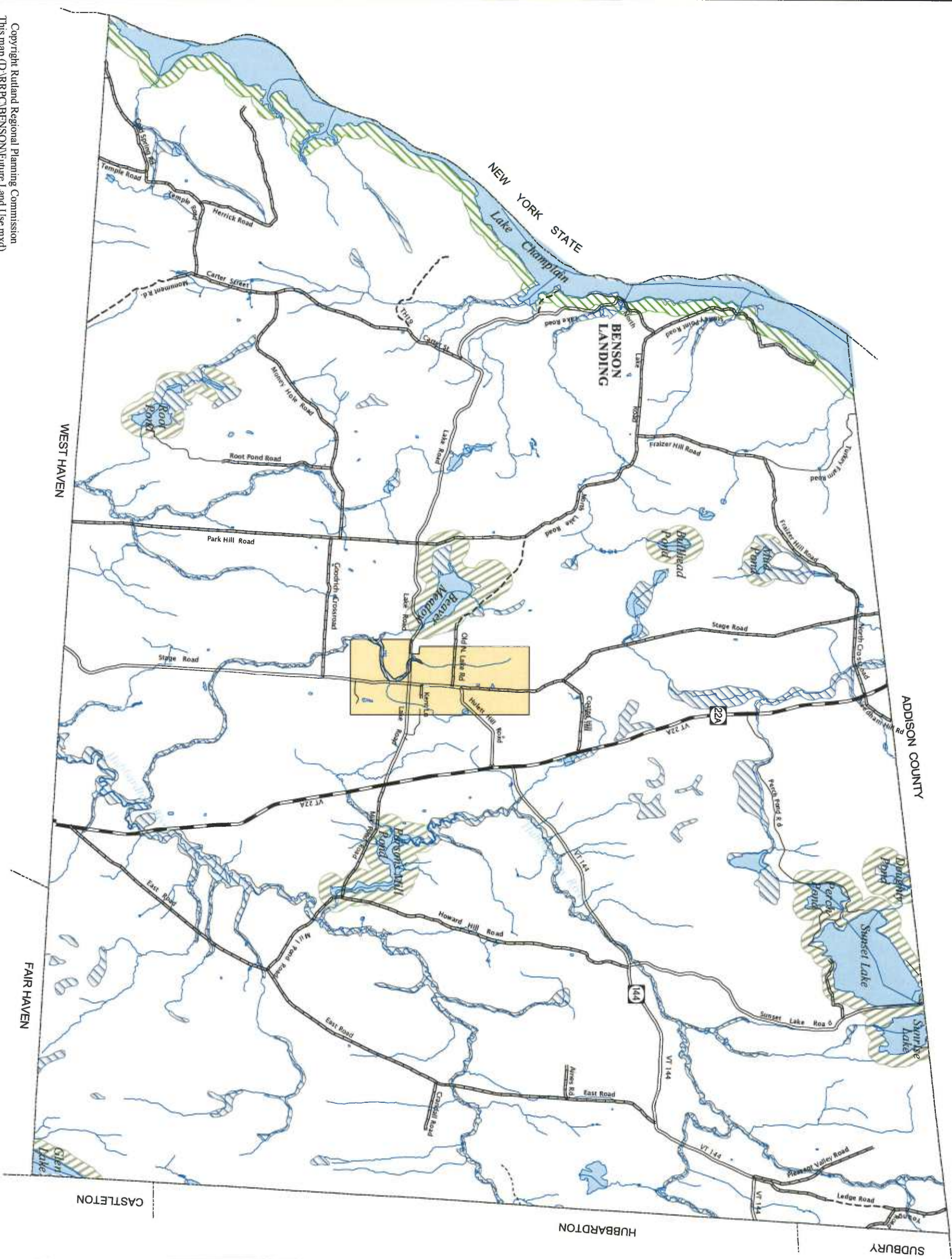
AGRICULTURAL SOILS: Prime, statewide and local are VT primary agricultural soils for Town and Act 250 planning. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Soil data are accurate to a resolution of three acres, unmapped "inclusions" up to three acres may exist in some areas. This information is generalized. It should not be used for the evaluation of individual sites. Soils shown are based on national USDA-NRCS criteria and have good potential for sand and gravel deposits.

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: 1:24,000 USGS Quadrangles, VCGI, 1991.

PUBLIC LANDS: VCGI/PRIVATE CONSERVED LANDS - land in full or partial ownership by 501(c)(3) conservation organizations (VLT, TNC, GMC, and others)

Benson, VT

Future Land Use



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This is the most current data available at time of map production. Please refer to Data Source for most up to date information.

Legend

- State Highway
- Class 2 Town Road
- Class 3 Town Road
- Class 4 Town Road
- Other Road
- Private Road
- Surface Water
- Lakes & Ponds

DISTRICT

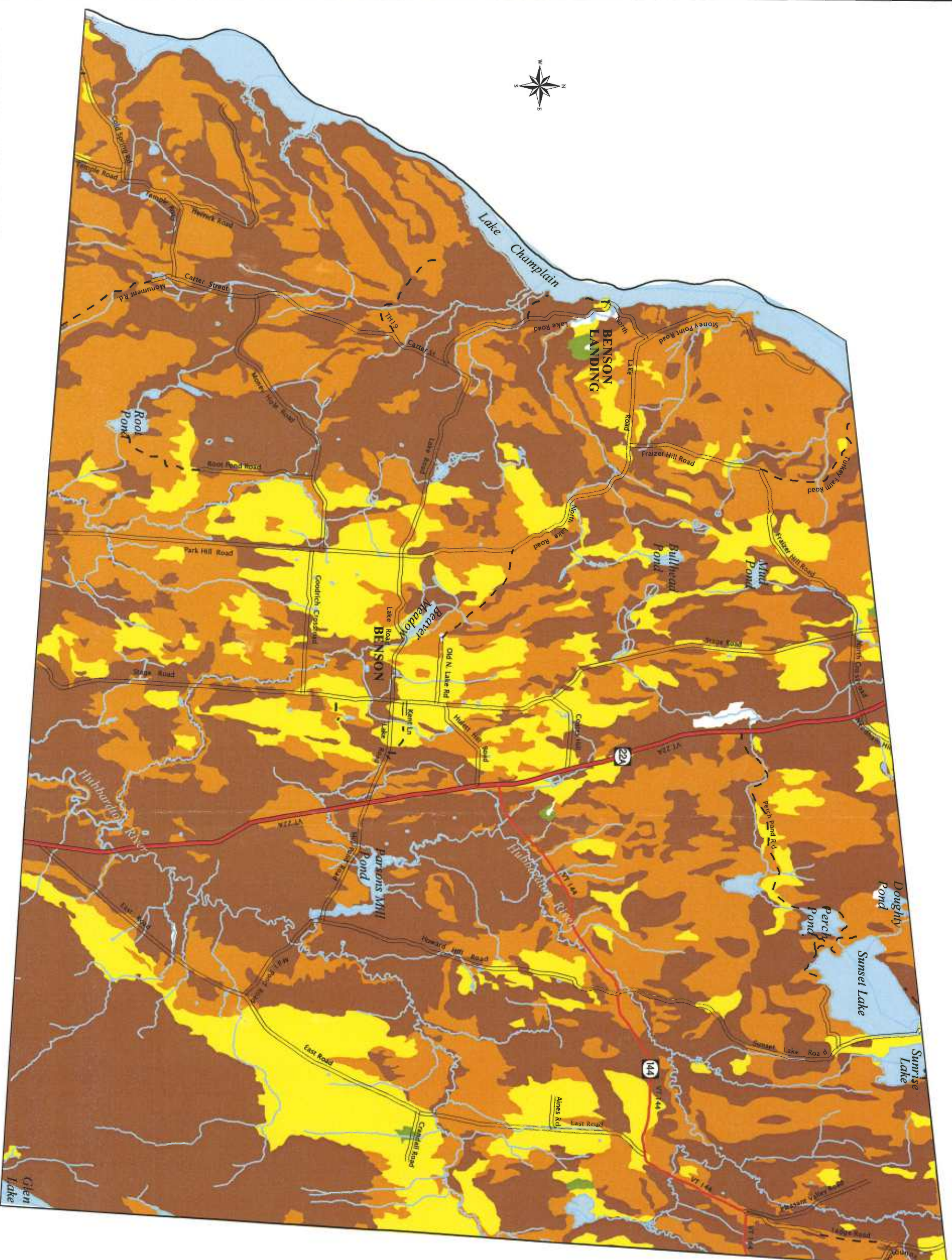
- Agricultural Rural Residential
- Flood Hazard Overlay District
- Lake Champlain Lake Shore
- Lake Shore
- Village

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles


RUTLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Benson, VT

On Site Septic Suitability



Legend

- 
- Well Suited (Class 1)
- Moderately Suited (Class 2)
- Marginally Suited; (Class 3)
- Not Suited (Class 4 and 5)

Notes:

Well suited – composed of coarse textured, sandy and gravelly glacial outwash slopes generally less than twenty percent.

moderately suited – composed of several distinct soil types: slow permeability, moderate depth to bedrock, slopes greater than twenty percent, flooding limitations and those with a seasonal high water table.

marginally suited – composed of soil units that have a greater degree of variability than soils in class 2. May require more sophisticated design work or intensive onsite investigations.

not suited – composed of soils that are generally too wet, rocky, steep or otherwise unsuitable for on-site waste disposal.

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This is the most current Data available at time of map production. Please refer to Data Source for most up to date information.

