

## Conservation Commission Principles

Through thoughtful planning and design, every land development project holds the potential to protect, conserve, restore, and sustain a healthy environment and ecosystem in Scarborough. Conserving land has positive economic benefits: preservation of habitat, open space, trails, and parks creates jobs, enhances property values, expands local businesses, attracts new or relocating businesses, increases local tax revenues, increases the accessibility of recreation, improves the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors, provides health care cost savings to residents, improves water quality, prevents and controls flooding, and promotes a sense of local community. Conserving natural lands and working harbors, farms, and forests can generate financial returns, both to the Town and its residents, and create significant cost savings as well.

These five conservation principles guide the Conservation Commission's work:

1. **Protect large, contiguous, undisturbed natural areas wherever possible.** Design developments to create open space linkages to adjacent and regional natural areas so that nature exists not as islands but as connected habitat. Preserve permanent open space as an integral part of new development to both protect critical natural areas and to provide opportunities for recreation and environmental education. Larger contiguous habitat areas, especially proximal to the Scarborough Marsh or its tributaries, are better able to serve as buffers from development and natural hazards such as floods, and connected habitats help wildlife to move safely across the landscape. The State of Maine has designated the Scarborough Marsh as a Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance based on its unusually rich convergence of rare plant and animal occurrences, high value habitat, and relatively intact natural landscape. The protection of the Scarborough Marsh and its tributaries is a high priority of both the State of Maine and the Town of Scarborough.
2. **Maintain, create, or restore broad buffer zones between natural areas and human-dominated land uses, including development and agriculture.** Buffer areas minimize adverse impacts of human activity on highly sensitive natural resource areas. Impervious areas—principally roads, roofs, and parking lots—should be minimized, wherever feasible. Buffers of natural vegetation along streams, around water bodies and wetlands, and at the perimeter of sensitive natural areas are important for clean water, healthy habitats, and flood damage prevention.

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3. **Locate and plan new development in ways that protect natural areas;** direct human uses toward the least sensitive natural areas; and provide buffers between sensitive natural areas and intensive use areas. Where possible, encourage development of altered land instead of breaking new ground. Avoid and minimize disturbance to natural areas before, during, and after construction.
4. **Minimize disruption to storage and movement of water** across and through the landscape to protect water quality and quantity, reduce flooding, recharge ground water, and preserve habitat for fish and other aquatic life.
5. **Encourage the use of green infrastructure to manage stormwater in developed areas,** utilizing practices such as rain gardens, bioswales, street trees, permeable pavement, and green roofs that allow runoff to infiltrate into the soil. Green infrastructure reduces runoff, improves water quality, provides natural cooling, and beautifies neighborhoods.