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Final Report-RPC Buffer Project

Rockingham Planning Commission

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Final Report - RPC Buffer Project

Submitted to the New Hampshire Estuaries Project By the Rockingham Planning Commission For the RPC Buffer Project

For the period January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2007, staff from the Rockingham Planning Commission completed the following tasks:

General Overview

- Met with the Planning Boards and Conservation Commission in the Town of Kensington, Brentwood, Hampton Falls, and Fremont to review the NHEP shoreland buffer maps;
- Reviewed existing land use regulations in each of these communities relative to protection of shoreland buffers;
- Reviewed land use regulations proposed in the Land Conservation Plan for NH's Coastal Watersheds;
- Discussed local concerns about protecting buffers;
- Provided draft local land use regulations to increase protection of shoreland buffers.

Detailed Overview

- Met with members of the Planning Board and Conservation Commission in the Town of Kensington to review the NHEP Shoreland Buffer maps and discuss Kensington's existing buffer regulations. Discussion over the four month period focused on the Conservation Commission's interest in using recommendations in Kensington's 2005 Master Plan, citing the need to protect vegetated buffers along wetlands and surface waters, to stimulate the Planning Board to update buffer regulation. Staff from NHEP presented buffer information to the Planning Board to support the Conservation Commission's efforts. The group decided to address this issue by proposing a Conservation Overlay District at 2008 Town Meeting. In addition, the Shoreland Buffer maps were used to identify focus areas in the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watershed, primarily the Great Meadow, and discuss how stronger buffer regulations would protect this critical water resource.
- Met with members of the Fremont Planning Board and Conservation Commission to review the NHEP Shoreland Buffer maps and discuss Fremont's critical water resources, which include the Exeter River and Spruce Swamp, the largest wetland complex in Rockingham County. The Conservation Commission will incorporate the shoreland buffers map and information on buffers from NHEP into the Town's soon to be completed Natural Resources Inventory. The

Conservation Commission would also like to increase vegetated buffer requirements along the Exeter River and tributaries to at least 200 feet.

- Met with members of the Brentwood Planning Board and Conservation Commission to review the NHEP Shoreland Buffer maps and discuss Brentwood's priorities for protecting surface water resources. The Conservation Commission has been very successful protecting land directly along the Exeter River, Little River, and Dudley Brook. The Town is currently having prime wetlands identified and mapped and recommendations from this work will be used to identify areas in Town where shoreland buffer regulations could be strengthened. The Town would also like to make regulations along tributaries the same as along the mainstem of the Exeter River.
- Met with members of the Hampton Falls Planning Board and Conservation Commission to review the NHEP Shoreland Buffer maps and compare these maps with focus areas identified in the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds. The Conservation Commission and Planning Board would like to propose land use regulations at 2008 Town Meeting that would establish a Conservation Overlay District which would require vegetated buffers of 300 feet from both fresh and tidal rivers.
- Submitted a Final Report to NHEP.

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Appendix

- I. Coastal Land Conservation Overlay District
- II. Water Resource and Aquifer Protection Model Ordinance
- III. Habitat Protection Model Ordinance
- IV. Buffer Protection Presentation for Surface Water Supplies
- V. Erosion and Sediment Control During Construction Ordinance