

A Vision for Tomorrow





Protect the Village & Rural Way of Life

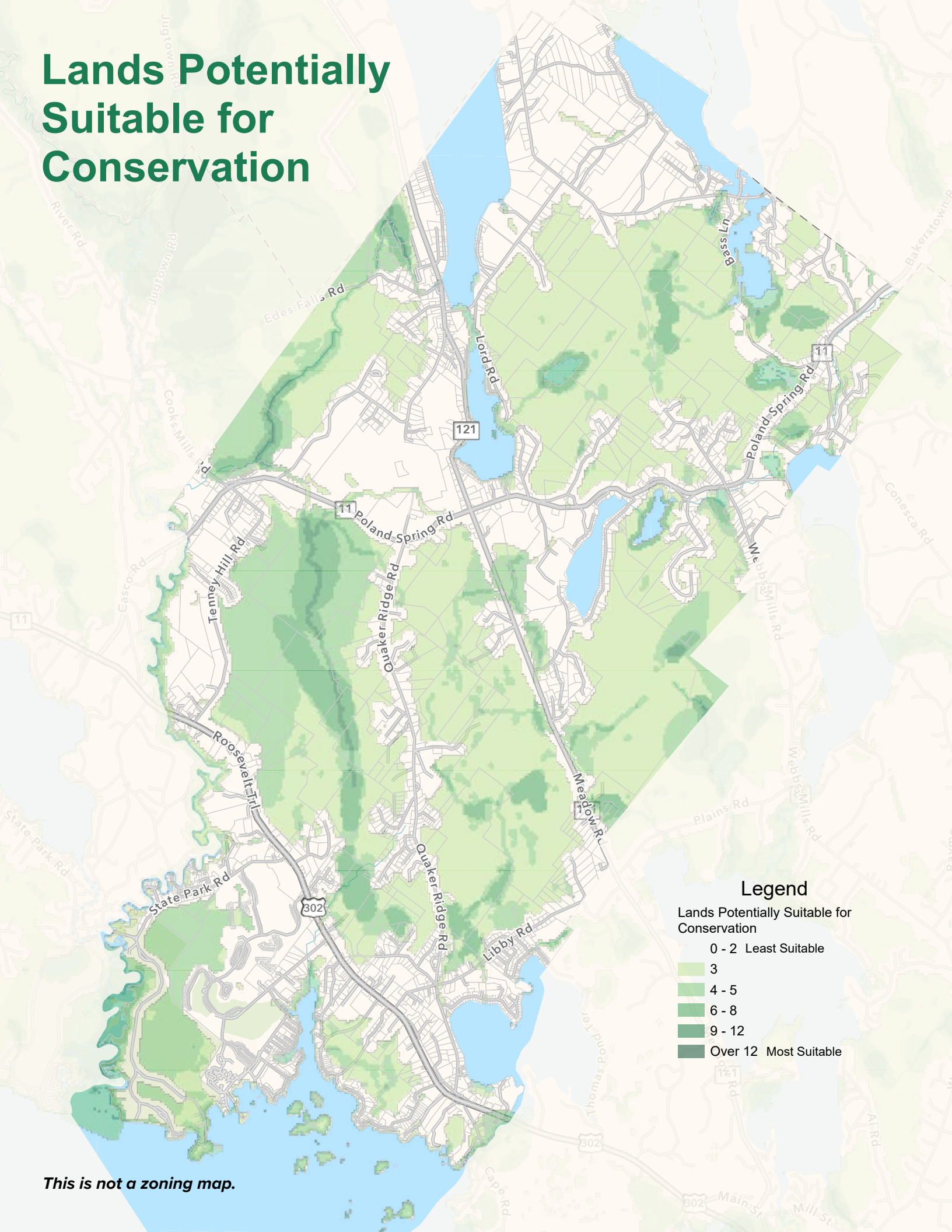
Residents of Casco agree that the ongoing and future protection of their villages, woods and waters is of highest importance. The potential for future development is acknowledged given Casco's place in Cumberland County and the in-migration that is happening to the State of Maine. The ethos of this plan carries forward much of the direction expressed in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan: preserve what makes Casco, Casco. Direct intentionally-designed growth to places where multiple community goals can be achieved.

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KEY LAND USE INITIATIVES SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNITY

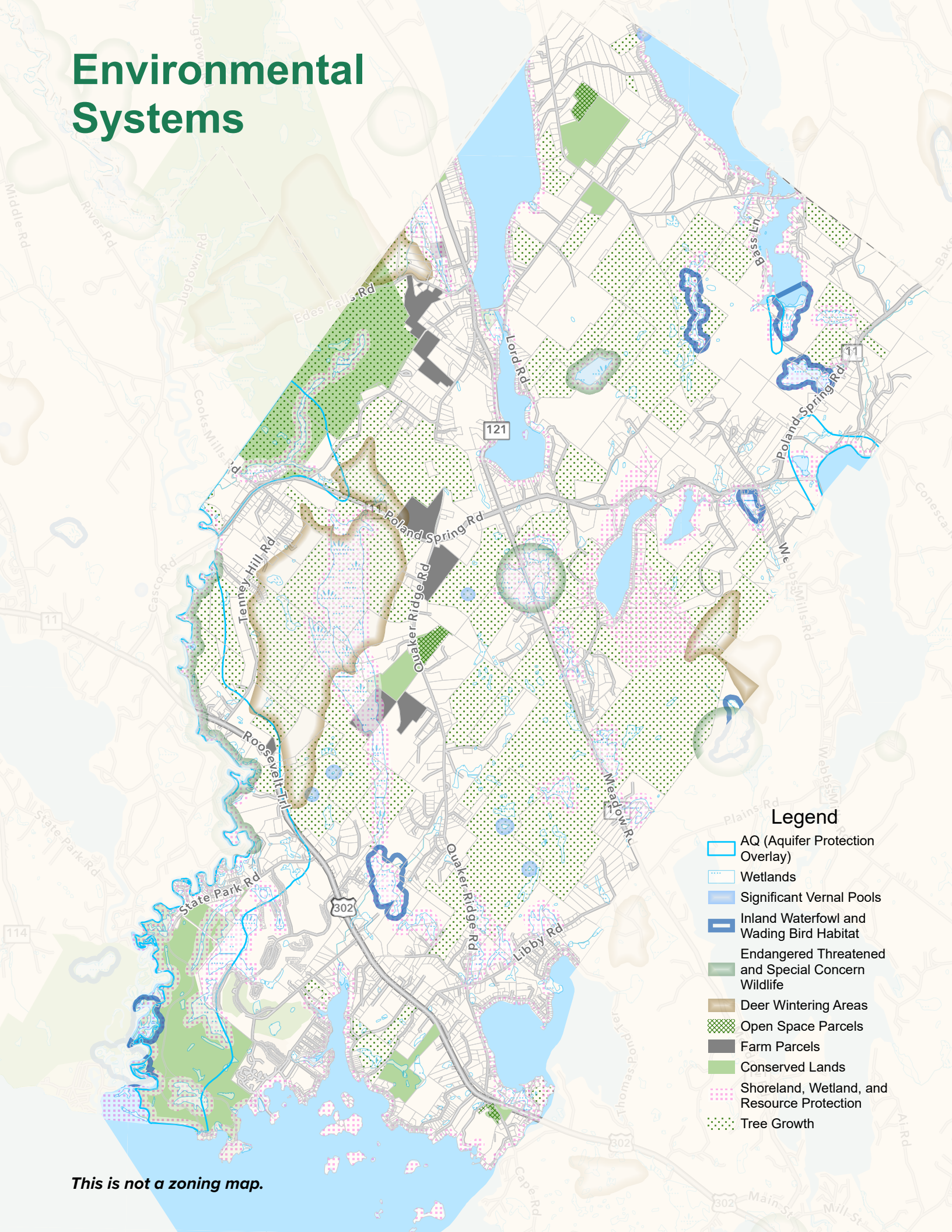
- 1 The villages of Casco should be protected, but limited, small-scaled development should be allowed to provide local neighborhood amenities:** coffee shops, small stores, multi-generational gathering spaces to meet neighborhoods and engage in social/recreational activities. The emphasis should be on replicating — not exceeding — the size and scale of buildings and the architectural vernacular that is here today. Contemporary, placeless architecture, large retailers and strip development that is found in neighboring towns along Rt. 302 should be strictly prohibited, and zoning standards should ensure the physical patterns of what is here today remains tomorrow.
- 2 Pike's Corner and Cooks Mills, historically considered as villages, have an opportunity to evolve into walkable, mixed-use village neighborhoods with new houses and some limited businesses.** The form of development here should replicate the same pattern of historic settlement found in the other villages, aesthetically controlled through new form-based zoning standards.
- 3 The water quality health of the lakes and ponds is of critical importance to residents.** People recognize that the stability of the town's tourist-based economy is dependent on good water quality, and a combination of continued Shoreland Zoning enforcement, education, monitoring and other programmatic activities is needed. People also recognize that long term permanent protections of forested lands, which comprises much of Casco's land area today, will ensure watershed health.
- 4 The businesses that call Casco home should be supported and valued for their contribution to the local economy.** Additional economic development and the attraction of business that creates demand for skilled labor and higher paying jobs is much desired for the Rt 302 corridor. Allowing more intense, concentrated development in some areas of Rt 302 will incentivize growth to focus on one area rather than sprawl out along the corridor in ways that residents strongly oppose.
- 5 Lands enrolled in tree growth are owned predominantly by two private landowners.** Residents expressed gratitude and appreciation for the (mostly) informal public access they enjoy to these privately held parcels. Residents are concerned that, over time, this relationship could change. With so much of Casco's land being held in Tree Growth, residents feel vulnerable they could lose this one great thing that makes up their identity and way of life.

Lands Potentially Suitable for Conservation



This is not a zoning map.

Environmental Systems



This is not a zoning map.

LANDS POTENTIALLY SUITABLE FOR CONSERVATION

The Lands Potentially Suitable for Conservation map is provided by MDIFW Beginning with Habitat Program. This is a natural resources co-occurrence map, “its purpose is to highlight a given area’s relative conservation values to aid in planning.” Data layers represent the concentration of environmental assets including rare and exemplary natural communities, threatened and endangered species, significant wildlife habitats and riparian zones and water resources, and undeveloped habitat blocks.

Residents can access an interactive data viewer at:

www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/beginning-with-habitat

ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

An Environmental Systems map was created and used during the public engagement process to lead the community through a conversation about where to protect historic settlements, farms, woods, waters and habitats. The Environmental Systems map communicates the protective policies that the town has implemented to date and contrasts this with the vast amount of land that is privately held, much of which is enrolled in Tree Growth and not secured in terms of future public access or land protection.

During Casco Planning Days, residents confirmed conservation priorities. People engaged in a hands-on mapping workshop to identify places people thought should be prioritized for protection and places where growth and development felt appropriate. Participants worked with a base map including wetlands, waterbodies, conserved lands, significant/natural habitat, water protection, recreational access, elevation, and current development. Participants also had access to the Lands Potentially Suitable for Conservation map. The visioning and mapping exercise showed that open space and forest preservation for recreational access and aesthetic purposes remain a top priority to Casco residents.

The Environmental Systems map uses the following combination of data layers from both town GIS sources and IFW Beginning with Habitat:

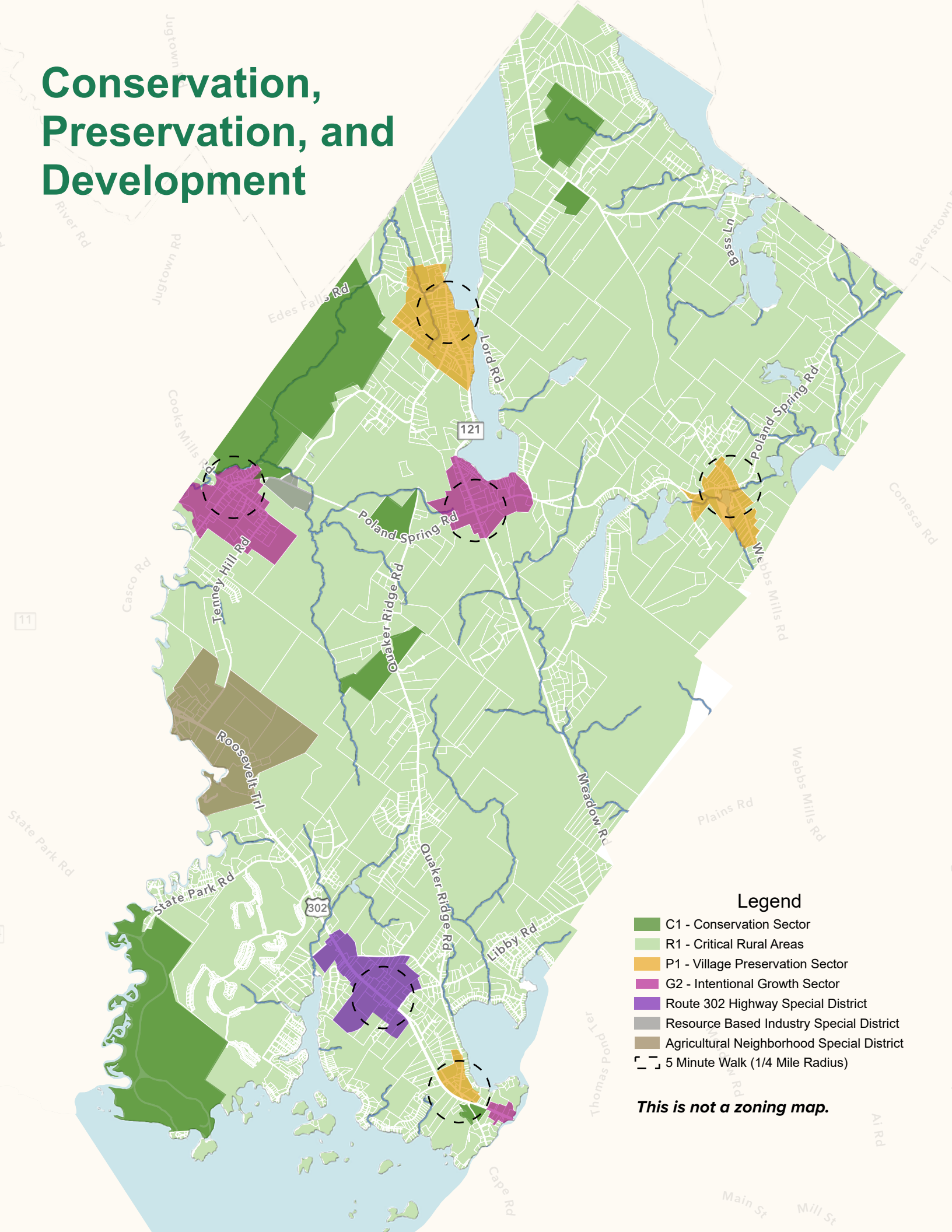
- Aquifer Protection Overlay District, Shoreland Zoning District, Streams and Wetlands Protection District
- Shoreland, Wetland, and Resource Protection Overlay Zones
- Significant Vernal Pools
- Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
- Endangered Threatened and Special Concern Wildlife
- Deer Wintering Areas
- Conserved Lands, Open Space, Farm and Tree Growth Parcels

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

A number of environmental protection policies are in place to protect groundwater, water bodies, drinking water supplies and water quality. For a thorough inventory of existing zoning policies, see data chapter, “Water and Natural Resources”. Having prepared the last comprehensive plan under this same review criteria, a number of the recommended minimum policies for protection of land and water, and land use development have been put into place. The town’s land use ordinances have been reviewed for consistency with current state laws.

The Big Idea, “ Be Leaders of Resiliency”, and, “Protect Woods, Waters, and Open Space” identify a number of policy-related action strategies to further protect critical resources. Strategic partnerships for implementation are also identified, such as the local land trusts, lakes associations, and regional planning agency.

Conservation, Preservation, and Development



CONSERVATION, PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT MAP

The Conservation, Preservation and Development map of Casco has been created through a balanced and considered process of community engagement, identifying community values, studying historic settlement patterns and exploring important environmental data. For a town located so close to Portland, and in a county where people are migrating within the county to seek more affordable housing, Casco understands now is the time to implement zoning policies that will direct development and investment to the areas of town already settled.

This map reflects places in Casco that are conserved, places that should be preserved, and places that have development investment opportunities. Future development and land use activities are being directed into strategic locations and at a scale and level that aligns with the future vision for each place: portions of the Route 302 priority corridor, and five villages. In most cases, these areas already had some degree of human settlement or past investment in municipal buildings, lands and infrastructure. In some cases, such as the Watkins Flats area, current commercial zoning rights combined with regional growth pressures will sway what happens here. So while it may have some critical resources, future growth can be shaped to mitigate impacts.

Next, whereas the previous plan identified a number of sprawling residential transitional areas, this plan intentionally eliminates that designation, instead identifying land as rural or as a place type — a place for protection, enhancement or transformational development. The plan and recommended land use policy amendments directs development away from critical resources and environmental systems.



SECTORS



C1 - Conservation | NO GROWTH

This is a No Growth area. It contains land that has been protected from development in perpetuity, by way of acquisition, easement, covenant or agreement. The legal instrument for each parcel explicitly calls out how the property can be used, but generally a limited amount of development is accommodated. As new lands are secured for conservation or preservation, those lands would be added to this sector and map.



R1 - Critical Rural Areas | LIMITED GROWTH

The R1 area identifies critical rural lands comprising of forests and timber resources, significant farms and farmlands, open space, lakes and ponds, scenic areas and views, high-value wildlife and fisheries habitat, aquifers, flood buffer and floodprone areas, and open lands functionally necessary to support a vibrant rural economy. Lands located here are deserving of the maximum protection from development. While this area currently has a range of regulatory protections in place, new development should continue to be subjected to environmental regulations, and stronger site design standards should be considered to further protect the town's rural assets and minimize negative impacts to land and water, flora and fauna. Further, it is hoped that a combination of voluntary rural, form-based code tools can encourage development to organize in the least-impactful way on the land.



P1 - Village I | PRESERVATION, LIMITED GROWTH

The Villages designated for Preservation recognize that build-out has predominantly occurred and some infill of new buildings, renovation of existing buildings - including civic buildings should be allowed. The presence of civic buildings (including churches), public spaces and other municipal amenities here serve as social gathering centers and recreational outlets. There is a desire to continue to invest municipal dollars into buildings, land and infrastructure despite the fact that limited future growth will occur in these historic settlements. These areas should be rezoned from simply one Village District into two - three districts, reflecting the predominantly residential nature of the buildings, yet recognizing the dimensional pattern of what is here and allowing for some limited commercial uses and a variety of residential building types. The villages designated P1 include: Casco, Webbs Mills, and South Casco Village.



G2 - Village I | ENHANCE, LIMITED GROWTH

The villages designated for enhancement through limited growth provide places for new housing and mix of neighborhood businesses and services to help support the neighborhood and town's tax base. In the Cooks Mills area, the town recently invested money renovating the Crooked River School, and there's an opportunity to build out a new village neighborhood center here in a pattern similar to the historic villages. In Pike's Corner, the town has created a municipal campus with town office, fire station, recently improved park, and acquired lands for water access to Parker Pond. Currently a rural crossroads (but known historically as a village), this area has the potential to transform into a handful of walkable, mixed use blocks of neighborhood with limited commercial activities and a variety of residential building types. The "Water's Edge," along the southeastern-most portion of Route 302 in Casco, a former antique mall, metalsmith, and fabrication site, is also an opportunity for reinvestment. Allowing places for new villages with smaller lots will incentivize development to locate here rather than in areas requiring big lots and longer roads to serve them.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS

The following Special Districts identify additional areas of town for designated growth and development. Many of these areas are currently zoned to allow land use activities and development in alignment with the land uses and activities that are happening here today. Assigning special districts allows the town to be more nuanced in its approach to how future development will occur here, recognizing the unique characteristics of the land, existing development, and desired future use for each.



Route 302 Highway Special District I DESIGNATED GROWTH AREA

This special district would allow a portion of Rt 302 to have increased development rights allowing the area to develop into a high quality, attractive, dense commercial mixed use district. The intended pattern of development here would place smaller footprint buildings of higher quality design and construction towards the front of the lots, with larger footprint, simpler buildings such as fabrication buildings, hotels, inns, and multi-unit apartment buildings towards the back of lots. Development would organize around connected, walkable street blocks rather than individual driveways, dead end streets and parking lots serving individual buildings. New frontage created by a street network would serve as frontage for new buildings. Local trips between buildings would occur on this internal connected street network rather than on Rt 302. Properties with buildings today could fill in with new buildings in front of existing ones, improving the aesthetic along Rt 302. Storage and warehouse buildings could be screened by these new buildings. The town could actively attract new employers to this area of town, and permit supportive workforce housing here.



Resource-Based Industry Special District

DESIGNATED GROWTH AREA

This special district includes Hancock Lumber’s mill and retail outlet. It reinforces the land use activities that occur here today and make it easy for expanded operations to happen should businesses want to do so. Special performance standards could address any potential concerns like noise, dust, traffic, and stormwater runoff.



Agricultural Neighborhood Special District

This special district allows development to emerge as a complete neighborhood of village scaled lots, blocks and streets oriented around agriculture and continues to allow commercial activities. The Watkins Flats area at Rt 302 and Tenney Hill could develop as an agricultural neighborhood where the much loved farming, agricultural buildings (farmstand), and scenic views are preserved and integrated into a new neighborhood. The building of workforce and farm worker housing should be encouraged, as should tourist-based agricultural supportive commercial business such as inns, retail stores, farm-to-table restaurants, farmers markets, artisan and makerspaces, food production, and wellness-oriented services and activities. A portion of this property is zoned Aquifer Protection District, and development that occurs here should be designed to minimize and avoid impacts to the aquifer, such as limiting impervious surfaces and using current Maine DEP stormwater best management practices to guide site design.