



Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Project



BACKGROUND

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM), with financial support from the National Park Service and the Providence Water Supply Board, coordinated the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Project.

The purpose of this project was to assist the watershed communities of Cranston, Foster, Glocester, Johnston and Scituate to protect the water quality of the Scituate Reservoir, while advancing their individual goals for protection of natural resources and cultural heritage.

- To identify areas with multiple resource values and promote conservation of community character.
- To demonstrate the use of impervious cover as a tool to support rural zoning densities and protect water quality.
- To clarify priorities of key stakeholders and foster partnerships to achieve shared goals.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project had the following objectives:

- To assist watershed communities to inventory, map and prioritize their important natural, cultural and recreational resources.
- To demonstrate how the preservation of naturally vegetated riparian buffers can protect water quality and habitat and serve as links to connect local greenspace priorities.
- To provide a basis for each town to implement Conservation Development to protect important community assets, in perpetuity, as land is developed.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The following information and maps were developed for each watershed community:

- Natural Resource Inventory
- Updated GIS map coverage for protected open space
- GIS map coverage for unprotected and undeveloped parcels
- GIS maps of development constraints
- Biodiversity
- Recreational and Cultural Inventory
- Town-wide map of potential conservation lands
- Impervious cover map and low impact development strategies
- Technical and financial assistance to adopt Conservation Development

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

A Scituate Watershed Greenspace Plan was developed that contains the following recommendations for watershed communities:

- Update comprehensive plans to include the greenspace maps and information to help guide future growth to protect important community assets.
- Use the Greenspace Maps to separate resource areas which should be preserved by acquisition from those where growth could continue with the use of Conservation Development .
- Include a policy in comprehensive plans to stay below a 10% watershed impervious cover to protect water quality and to further support rural watershed zoning densities.
- Adopt Conservation Development to guide growth away from areas that should not be developed to protect water quality and community character. (Glocester has adopted Conservation Development and ordinances are pending in Scituate and Foster.)
- Encourage Land Trusts to work with regional partners to pursue common goals and joint projects. Land Trusts in each community are starting to think about joint project along their borders. The Greenspace plan identified a number of critical areas that are ideal subjects for such shared efforts.
- Focus attention on those areas of the region with a high concentration of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. These places embody the watershed historic character and quality of life.
- Pursue conservation of the historic cultural resources of the region, with a focus on areas that are most affected by changing land uses. The “quality of place” that these resources represent is a critical economic resource for communities that hope to attract new businesses.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT

Scott Millar at RIDEM 401.222.4700 x4419

scott.millar@dem.ri.gov