

Wayne Conservation Commission

# Wilson Pond Lot

Economic, Conservation and Recreational Values

A report for the Wayne Select Board  
3/4/2019

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## **Executive Summary**

**The Wayne Conservation Commission (WCC) strongly supports open space designation and permanent protection of the Wilson Pond Lot, a town-owned property bordering the northwest arm of Wilson Pond. WCC further advises the Select Board to appoint an Open Space Committee, which will be tasked with the development and implementation of an Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Wayne Comprehensive Plan, passed by voters in 2016, identifies the appointment of an Open Space Committee, development of an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan, and conservation of 15% of remaining developable land in town as goals.**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The Wayne Comprehensive Plan, adopted without controversy at Town Meeting in 2016, recommends appointment of an “Open Space Committee” to develop an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan (OSP). It also targets retention of 15% (or approximately 1000 acres) of the remaining developable land in town as open space. Elements identified in the Comprehensive Plan supply criteria for implementing the 15% open space goal (pages 2, 39, 42, 90 and other sections). The Comprehensive Plan supplies criteria for assessing property but does not clearly rank sometimes competing values. However, the Plan clearly identifies protecting unbroken forest tracts as a priority. Protecting the Wilson Pond Lot as Open Space is an important step for the Town towards achieving the Plan’s 15% goal.

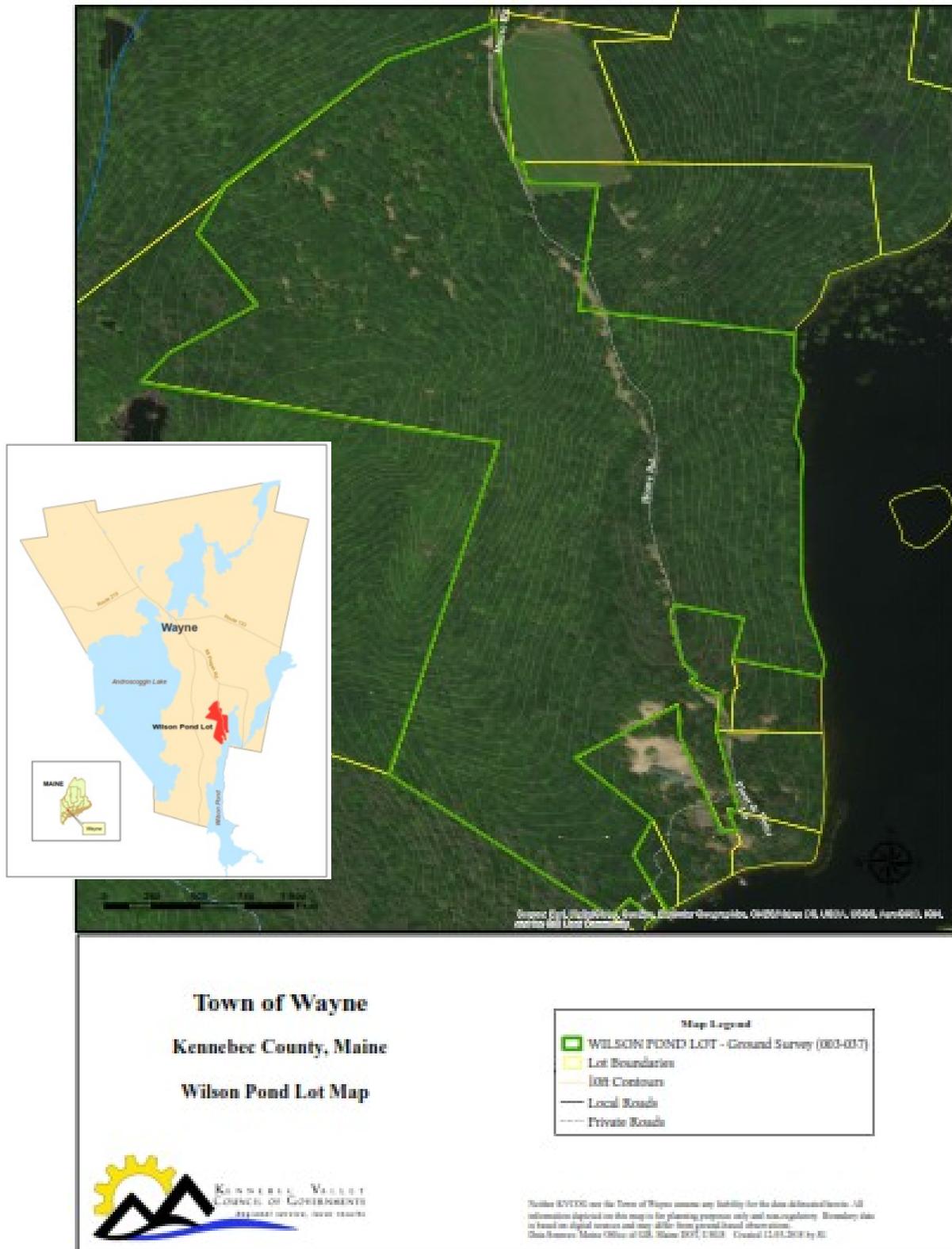
In 2013, the Select Board asked the WCC to evaluate the benefits of conserving the Wilson Pond Lot. The WCC responded with a strong endorsement of conservation. Later, in 2015, the Board asked the WCC for its views on the costs that would be involved in Town ownership and management. The commission reported on its estimates in some detail at that time.

This report reviews community benefits and conservation justifications for open space protection of the Wilson Pond Lot.

## **2.0 Wilson Pond Lot**

### **2.1 Property Description**

The Wilson Pond Lot encompasses approximately 1000 ft. of shore frontage on Wilson Pond and extends up slope toward Morrison Heights. Access is primarily gained from House Rd, which intersects Mt. Pisgah Rd. At approximately 118 acres, the Wilson Pond Lot is one of 13 remaining parcels over 100 acres in Wayne. The property does not extend to the top of the Morrison Heights ridge line (Hill 664 on USGS topo sheet) but does include much of the very steeply sloped eastern watershed draining into Wilson Pond. The combination of water frontage, mixed forests, multiple habitats and most importantly, steep slopes draining into a fragile pond means that careful consideration should be given to its future. Opportunities exist for development of lakeside trails extending beyond the limits of this property.



**Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the Wilson Pond Lot.**  
Inset maps show the locations of the town of Wayne and the Wilson Pond Lot.

## **2.2 Economic Value**

It is difficult to place a dollar value on the benefits of conservation of open space especially since these “values” extend far into the future. Balancing future value to the community against potential short term benefits of sale and/or development is challenging. We cannot predict what Wayne will look like or what recreational activities will be valuable 100 years from now. We can assume, however, that there will be more development and more posting of private property. If we do not act now to protect public access to significant parcels of open space within Wayne the opportunities for future residents to visit undeveloped land will only decline.

The economic value of open space now and in the future, is subjective and varies depending on individual preferences and location. There is no “market” trading in these values. Most research on valuation of open space has been done in urban areas because that is where development is most concentrated; as people become more crowded they begin to recognize what has been lost. It is time consuming and expensive to have such a formal economic analysis prepared although tools are available.

We do know, however, that property adjoining open space is more valuable and even more so if it occurs near population centers. We also know that young families consider opportunity for trails and other local recreation when deciding where to settle. The Wilson Pond Lot is within minutes of town by car and in easy walking or biking distance.

The town currently holds title to this property which is an advantage given that most open space proposals require funding for purchase of the land. The short term benefits of selling the property must be balanced against potential long term costs of development which could increase demand for taxpayer funded services and could over time actually exceed revenue. Other long term costs of development include loss of conservation and public recreation values.

Maintaining good water quality of the lakes and ponds of Wayne is critical to the economic vitality and the tax base of our Town. Conservation of this parcel as open space is important for protecting the water quality of our most endangered water, Wilson Pond.

The Wilson Pond Lot provides breeding habitat for forty species of birds. This number increases to 100 species during migration (letter from Jeff Wells, page 18). Birding has the potential to draw in dollars for local businesses, particularly during off-peak months in spring and fall when bird migration is in full swing. Birding is a past-time popular with Maine residents and non-residents alike. Nationwide, in 2011, over 7.5 billion dollars was spent by birders on food and lodging. In Maine, 689,000 people identified themselves as bird-watchers. Thirty-eight percent of these were state residents and 63% were non-residents.

Information on the economic value of open space, birding, water quality and related issues is referenced in the Further Reading section of this report (page 14).

## **2.3 Conservation Value**

The Wilson Pond land is environmentally sensitive (see below). It may have unique potential as an educational demonstration area which could drive fund raising for trail development to facilitate recreational use. Its size, location and topography make it a parcel the like of which may never be available in Wayne again. Of the potentially developable property in Wayne, this parcel stands out as one that should not be disturbed by residential or additional private road development.

### **2.3.1 Water Quality**

In terms of protecting water quality, the defining characteristic of this property is steep slopes. The map on page 22 of the Comprehensive Plan shows that the average slope of much of this property is over 20%. These are some of the longest sustained slopes in Wayne. The watershed divide is at the top of Morrison Heights where the elevation is between 690' and 700' above sea level. The approximate elevation of the overlook on private property above the Wilson Pond Lot is 500'. The elevation of Wilson Pond is 242'. The streams on the property are intermittent with little opportunity for ponding so in addition to sheet runoff, there is potential for significant nutrient laden runoff into Wilson Pond during the spring thaw and storm events. Additional disturbance of the hillside may worsen existing water quality problems in the pond. As it is, the forest cover and mostly undisturbed forest floor on the hillsides slow runoff, enhance rainfall absorption

and limit nutrient loading in Wilson Pond.



**Figure 2. Contours (10 ft. interval) of the Wilson Pond Lot showing greater than 20% slope.**

Wilson Pond is currently on the DEP 303(e) priority list of impaired Maine lakes and is a focus of remediation efforts. The Cobbossee Watershed District has obtained hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants, including contributions from the Town of Wayne, to assist and encourage landowners to be more responsible for protecting the Pond. In spite of significant efforts on the part of many landowners, the Pond's water quality is not improving. Trails constructed using marked examples of Best Management Practices (BMPs) which minimize environmental disruption especially on steep slopes and in the shoreland zone could educate local landowners about options they might wish to consider on their own property.

Camp roads contribute the bulk of nutrient loading in Central Maine lakes, more so than agricultural fields, buildings, lawns and flower beds. The road bisecting the Wilson Pond Lot is private, bordered by very steep slopes and was constructed

before relevant ordinances were adopted. The level of maintenance of “camp roads” in Wayne appears to be voluntary with few enforceable standards. Construction of additional roads is *slightly* more restricted in the 250' shoreland zone. Standards for private roads outside the shoreland zone are limited unless these roads are proposed for acceptance as public roads. Thus, additional residential and road development on this property will not improve water quality in Wilson Pond and could very well damage it.

Land use ordinances and statutes do not provide maximum protections even if enforced. Nor do they generally apply to what happened before adoption of the ordinances and, in many cases, they do not apply or are not enforced after construction is completed. Land use laws and regulations are by necessity compromises. BMPs may be more protective but are generally optional and not required. Even the best implemented BMPs may not ensure adequate protection of water quality in Wilson Pond. Limited recreational development with careful consideration of impacts is the best choice for Wilson Pond.

### **2.3.2 Forest Management**

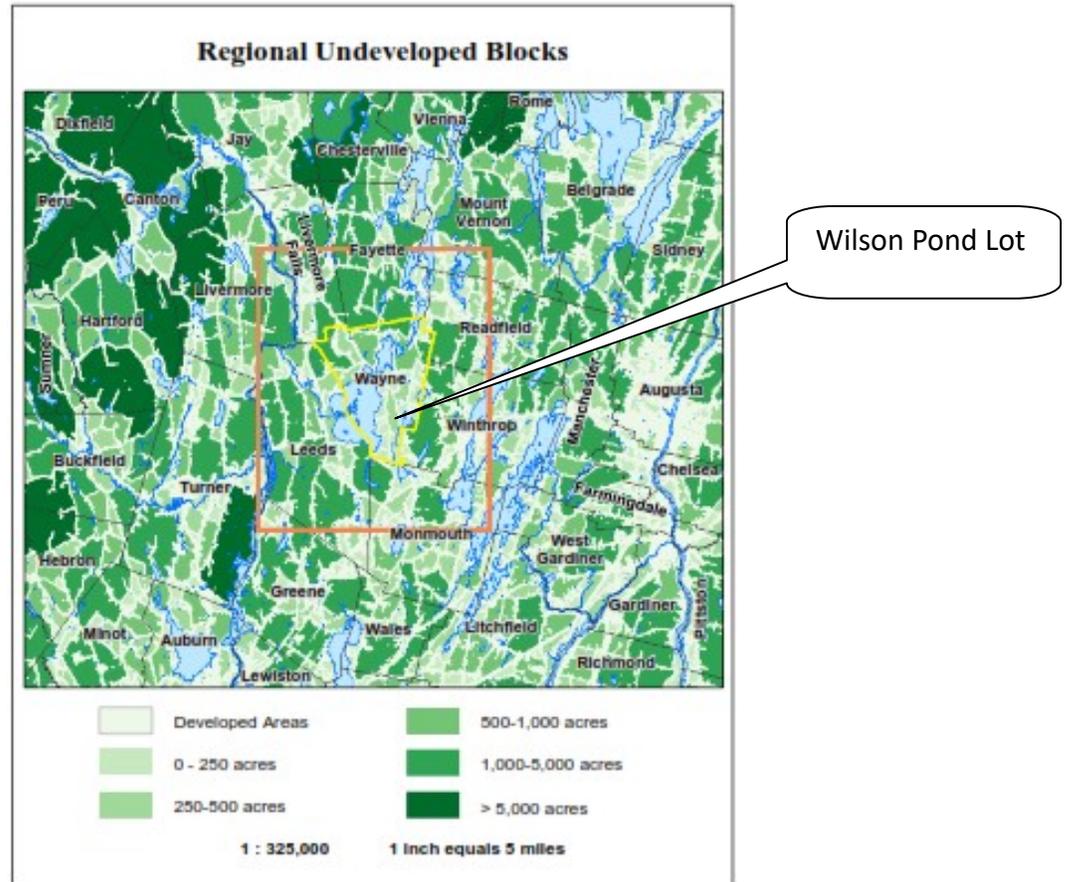
The Comprehensive Plan includes a list of benefits from forested areas (page 36). That list includes timber harvest, carbon storage, various recreational benefits, wildlife habitat, aesthetic appeal, and protection of water bodies.

Steep and rocky slopes make timber harvest difficult on much of the property. Most of the higher value timber in the harvestable areas has been cut fairly recently. Analysis indicates that there is currently little marketable timber on most of the property. If suitable areas were managed for a high value product, however, opportunity exists for future limited harvests. A demonstration forest, including sustainable harvest, could be managed for educational purposes.

### **2.3.3 Wildlife Habitat and Animal Movement Corridors**

The Wilson Pond Lot is part of a largely unbroken forest abutted by properties that have differing levels of private protection: trust protected conservation family lands to the south and a tree farm to the north. Unbroken forest blocks, especially those with access to both water and high ground, provide important wildlife

habitat and offer travel corridors for animal movement. Beginning with Habitat (<https://www.beginningwithhabitat.org/index.html>) models the habitat block that encompasses the Wilson Pond Lot as a connecting block between large blocks on the west side of Morrison Heights to blocks north of Mt. Pisgah Rd. that, after crossing Route 133, join unfragmented land southeast of Pickerel Pond.



**Figure 3. Regional undeveloped blocks (Beginning with Habitat).**

Wilson Pond Lot is indicated by arrow.

In this part of Central Maine few areas remain where wildlife has uninterrupted movement from high ground to water. Hard and softwood forests, water access and elevation change make the Wilson Pond Lot valuable for wildlife year round. The Beginning with Habitat map included in the Comprehensive Plan on page 30 (and visible on the BwH and town websites) indicates good winter terrain for deer in the large softwood stands south of the property. Mapped inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat is present at the head of the cove on Wilson Pond. There is at least one pair of loons nesting in the pond nearby. An eagle hunts from the

shorefront. Wildlife potentially using the land includes moose, deer, black bear, coyote, fox, bobcat, beaver, otter, fisher, weasel, mink, porcupine, muskrat, raccoon, chipmunk, squirrel, partridge, and herons. Local hunters use the property during hunting season.

## **2.4 Recreational and Health Values**

The Wilson Pond Lot enhances recreational opportunities in Wayne especially those which might attract young families and those for senior citizens. Because of its proximity to the Village area (a four-minute drive from the village center) and to Wilson Pond, and given its varied terrain, the property is attractive for hiking, biking, and even handicapped accessible trails. Demand continues to grow for Mt. Pisgah trails. If trails are developed at the Wilson Pond Lot it is likely they will also be well-used.

Walking is the most common form of exercise. Much of the walking in Wayne is done on roads without sidewalks. Forest trails provide a safer and more aesthetically pleasing option and will likely increase the amount of exercise of our citizens and, therefore, provide for a more healthy community. Hospitals with available land build trails as a means of promoting health.

The land upon which trails are built and the ecosystems through which they pass are an important determinant of the amount of use they will get. Most communities that build trails do not have properties with the abundance of features of this land. The Wilson Pond property includes different forest types, plants, ecosystems, terrain, shore frontage and historical ruins.

### **2.4.1 Multi-use trails**

The WCC believes the Wilson Pond Lot provides an excellent opportunity to develop a wheelchair accessible trail that would be unique in the region and an asset to the town. Similar trails exist at Range Pond State Park in Poland, Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park in Freeport and on the Bethel Pathway. Given our state's aging population, the development of a wheelchair accessible trail in Wayne could attract new residents. It is now possible in many states for physicians to write

prescriptions for patients to engage in active outdoor activities.

Winter trails for skiing and snowshoeing are also attractive options. There are few areas locally where safe parking allows access to such trails. This tract is classic cross-country and snowshoeing country with better views in winter than summer (and fewer bugs). These activities can also use most hiking trails. Skate skiing requires wider groomed trails and probably would not be appropriate here.

It may also be possible to develop an environmentally conscious bike trail. The “fat tire bike” is becoming popular as a four-season activity. Woodland bike trails have waterbars and gradual corners but are otherwise enjoyed by hikers, bikers and skiers. There are companies in Vermont specializing in this type of trail development. This is yet another educational opportunity.

The property may not be large enough to include trails for motorized vehicles especially since most of the abutters do not allow motorized access and there are no existing trails.

Interest is rising nationally in the role of outdoor activity for physical and mental health. Across the state, local communities are boosting trail networks. For example, a 47-mile trail now connects Unity to Belfast, spurring economic growth in host towns and expanding healthy recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. It is time for Wayne to join this movement.

#### **2.4.2 Waterfront trails**

There is no beach on the Wilson Pond Lot, and swimming is marginal. However, it may be possible to construct a pull out for boaters and a trail just back from the water for birders and hikers. A picnic area (carry in, carry out) accessible by foot or boat could provide a pleasant lunch break for recreationists.

### **2.5 Rural Character**

A goal stated in the Comprehensive Plan (p. 39; p. 106, section 4.1) is to maintain

the rural character of the town including protection of viewsapes visible from roads entering town. The Mt. Pisgah Road is a “road entering town” with a fine view from the Tempy Bridge looking across Wilson Pond to the undeveloped shore frontage and the hill. The properties viewing the Wilson Pond Lot slope from the shore will likely be more valuable if it remains undeveloped open space. This view provides an important marker letting people know they are in a special place – Wayne.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

The Conservation Commission believes that this is a unique opportunity to protect a major property, the Wilson Pond Lot, which meets many criteria noted in the Comprehensive Plan. Further, we know of no single tract of land of similar size in Wayne that combines the environmental benefits, potential for protecting habitat and water quality, and potential for recreational activities as this property.

## **Further Reading**

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**Photographs of the Wilson Pond Lot**



View of the Wilson Pond Lot from Mt. Pisgah Rd.



View of the Wilson Pond Lot shorefront.

*Wilson Pond Lot: Economic, Conservation and Recreational Values*



The steep eastern slope of the Wilson Pond Lot (left).  
An intermittent stream flowing downhill toward Wilson Pond (right).



Old farmstead on the Wilson Pond Lot.

## **Selected Letters of Support**

Hunter, M. W. Jr. Libra Professor of Conservation Biology. University of Maine. Letter to Wayne Conservation Commission on the broad natural values of the Wilson Pond Lot. August 2018.

Hurley, Fred. Wildlife Biologist, retired. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Letter to Wayne Select Board concerning wildlife values of the Wilson Pond Lot. August 2018.

Monagle, Bill. Executive Director. Cobbossee Watershed District. Letter to Wayne Conservation Commission. August 2018.

Pakulski, Stefan. Former Town Manager, Readfield Maine. Letter to Wayne Select Board. The value of a Town Forest: Readfield's Experience. 2015.

Wells, Jeff. Research Associate. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Letter to Wayne Conservation Commission: The bird community of the Wilson Pond Lot. Aug. 2018.

August 9, 2018

To: Members of the Wayne Conservation Commission  
Re: Notes on Broad Ecological Values of the Wilson Pond Lot

I am writing to add my "two cents" to discussions about the Wilson Pond Lot. Although I have not visited the property I have reviewed descriptive material and maps and can comment on general issues that would apply to land like this in central Maine. I do this based on a nearly 50- year career addressing ecology and conservation issues in Maine, including writing many books and articles on these issues in a global context. Obviously, land use decisions like those regarding this property will compel the Town of Wayne to weigh a number of considerations. I will focus on what I know best -- wildlife and ecological matters.

#### **Size**

Being adjacent to an undeveloped tract that is already reserved in trust, this tract offers a special opportunity to create a sizable area of undeveloped open land, which is increasingly uncommon in central Maine. As ownerships fragment further in the future, opportunities like this will only become scarcer. Many bird and mammal species require large tracts of habitat to meet their needs for cover, breeding sites, and food sources.

#### **Shorelines and High Ground to Water Continuity**

Another key principle of land conservation is that it is particularly valuable to protect shorelines because in these areas a wide variety of species find habitat. Upland species come to the shores for food and water, aquatic species come for food and cover, and some species are particularly tied to these interfaces. This site is unusual in that it connects all the way from the shore up to a fairly significant ridge, thus providing substantial connectivity for species that move widely. Even small species like frogs move across the landscape to a degree that is often underappreciated, and it is important to have places where they can make these movements without encountering development along the way.

#### **Brooks and wetlands**

This property holds some minor brooks with seasonal tributaries and these are flanked by wet, marshy areas. Small aquatic features like these are far more important ecologically than you would ever guess from their footprint on the landscape and retaining this land as open space is the best way to protect them from roads or driveways that, almost inevitably, lead to erosion and sedimentation issues. In this case the consequences of sedimentation would be experienced on both the specific site and potentially throughout Wilson Pond.

Good luck with your deliberations and please let me know if you have questions I might address.

Sincerely yours



Malcolm L. Hunter, Jr.  
Libra Professor of Conservation Biology

August 16, 2018

To: Town of Wayne  
Wayne Open Space Committee  
Conservation Commission  
Town Select Board  
Subject: Wilson Pond Lot

My name is Fred Hurley. I have been a resident of Wayne for nearly fifty years and have traversed much of the town's forest and wetlands, and became very familiar with the lay of the land, its fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend. I am a certified wildlife biologist and retired from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife after 33 years of service.

I was made aware of the Conservation Commission's interim draft report to the Wayne Open Space Committee regarding the Natural Values of the Wilson Pond Lot on August 14 at the public meeting to consider options for town owned property on the House Road and Wilson Pond. Unfortunately, the Commission's findings were not presented to the public along with the Committee's presentation of options, and I have since had the opportunity to review the report. There is little I can add and strongly agree with the assessment of the areas physical characteristics, natural values, recreational potentials, and associated vulnerabilities. The below findings, some of which may be overshadowed by the public input at the meeting, deserve your strong consideration in these deliberations.

The land is currently owned by the Town,

The land is over 100 acres, and contains over 1000 ft. of Wilson Pond shoreline,

The land is only one of 13 remaining parcels over 100 acres in Wayne,

The town has adopted a goal of the retention of 15% of developable land as open space.

Future opportunities to protect a large track of land such as this is highly unlikely,

Many of the large tracks of private land in Wayne are not available for public use,

This land is surrounded by large tracks of privately owned open space,

Large unbroken blocks of open space are very important wildlife habitat,

The shore front has high value as wildlife habitat, and the uplands support a wide variety of wildlife species,

Much of the area is very steep and rocky,

The land has a variety of recreational opportunities currently lacking in Wayne,

This is a unique opportunity to protect a major property which meets many criteria in the Comp Plan,

There is no single track of property of similar size in Wayne that combines the environmental, potential habitat, and potential for recreational activities as this one does.

In my estimation, this all boils down to the fact that this town owned land has an unusual array of natural and potential recreation values, many of which, simply do not exist in Wayne. It currently provides a significant contribution to the towns open space goal, and is an important part of a much larger corridor of privately owned lands that together provide a major contribution to Wayne open spaces and associated natural values.

Large unbroken blocks of forest and wetland habitats protect water quality, and are vital, and in many cases, essential to many species of wildlife and provide both habitat, and important wildlife travel corridors. Wildlife simply does not fair well in isolated blocks of fragmented habitat, and Wilson Pond is not fairing well because of the development that has occurred in its shore land. At the same time, this land has many potential recreational opportunities not currently available on other large tracks of privately owned land in Wayne (most of which are posted against trespass).

To sell or otherwise fragment this land will jeopardize the linkage it provides to these other lands, its significant natural values, including its diverse wildlife habitats, and its recreational potentials. To relinquish any or all of it for short term financial gain, en lieu of its importance as open space, will be something the future citizens of Wayne will quickly come to regret.

Fred Hurley  
Resident of the Town of Wayne

# COBBOSSEE WATERSHED DISTRICT

P.O. Box 418, Winthrop, Maine 04364

Telephone (207) 377-2234



WILLIAM J. MONAGLE  
Executive Director

*Maine's first regional lake management district*

August 8, 2018

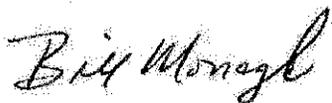
Leslie Latt, Chair, Wayne Conservation Committee  
c/o Lloyd C. Irland  
174 Lord Road  
Wayne, ME 04284

Dear Ms. Latt,

I am writing to express the Cobbossee Watershed District's (CWD) support for the proposed Wayne Town Forest located along House Road and positioned upon rather steeply sloped land immediately adjacent to Wilson Pond. I have reviewed the *PowerPoint* presentation (2015) that was recently provided to me that outlined the proposed uses and associated community benefits and we believe that at this time (or any time for that matter) this proposed use represents the most environmentally sound approach to protecting Wilson Pond water quality (CWD's main concern) and at the same offers great opportunities for recreational and aesthetic appreciation of Wayne's natural resources.

The CWD has monitored Wilson Pond for over forty years, and based on our extensive water quality data, the Maine DEP has placed Wilson Pond the Nonpoint Source Priority Watershed List based upon marginal water quality and sensitivity to change. The listing, and concern, is due in large part to increases in total phosphorus concentration, reduced water clarity, and depletion of dissolved oxygen in bottom waters. Beginning in the early 1990's Wilson Pond began exhibiting an abrupt and chronic reduction in water clarity of between 15 and 20 percent and although it has recently become somewhat stable, water clarity has not recovered to earlier levels. Due to the declining trend in trophic state, Wilson Pond was listed on Maine's section 303(d) (TMDL) list in 2006, designating it as a lake that fails to meet State water quality standards. Since that time, the CWD has implemented two major projects over the past decade, Wilson Pond NPS Watershed Restoration Projects, Phases I & II, both of which were supported by DEP and USEPA grants, and designed to address watershed-based nutrient loading to the pond. Much more work is needed, however. It is our position that the successful recovery of Wilson Pond would be greatly enhanced by the conservation of the 118-acre parcel as the Wayne Town Forest, protected from any future intense development.

Sincerely,



Bill Monagle, CLM  
Executive Director

May 18, 2015

To the Wayne Select Board:

***The value of a Town Forest: Readfield's Experience***

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Board through this public hearing on a ballot question. I would like to request that my letter be entered into the record for the hearing. As the former Town Manager in Readfield, I would like to share my thoughts about the value of a Town Forest there, and why I would urge the Select Board and voters here to consider the current opportunity to create a Wayne Town Forest.

Readfield has managed about 100 acres of Town Forest for many years. The parcel originally was part of the old Town Farm, designated in the 1800's as the location for destitute residents to live and support themselves. In the past 100 years, the farm went out of existence and most of the land reverted to mixed forest. Eventually the Town voted to retain this parcel for historic and conservation purposes, and appointed the Conservation Commission as steward. The Commission developed a management plan that included periodic logging, preserving wildlife habitat, and making the forest available for a variety of recreational purposes such as hiking and running on trails, bird watching, hunting, cross-country skiing, biking and snowmobiling. Later, a professional forester refined the management plan. This included identifying, scheduling, and managing three 20-acre sections for logging - one section to be harvested every seven years. The Town uses all funds received from these timber sales to support the management costs of all conservation properties in Readfield. In the past ten years, there have been two harvests and the most recent one netted the Town about \$19,000 in timber sales revenue.

Readfield's Town Forest is a great wildlife habitat and abuts another large KLT conservation property, the MacDonald Woods, making a total of over 200 contiguous conservation acres. A goshawk has nested in the forest for many years. Deer and turkey are plentiful, and the area is open for hunting. The Town's Trail Committee maintains a network of trails through the forest which is well-used by residents and many out-of-town visitors. The terrain includes varying grades, a stream and boggy areas with good trail bridges. The Conservation Commission also has worked to preserve historical evidence of the original Town Farm, and to remove invasive plant species from the property. The Town Forest trails are featured on the Maine Trail Finder website ([www.maine-trailfinder.com](http://www.maine-trailfinder.com)), along with the rest of Readfield's public recreation trails. Access to the Town Forest is by a public road and an easement on private property with a gated entrance to prevent unauthorized vehicles from entering. Some parking is available at the trailhead and gated entrance. A small portion of Readfield's Town Forest is in the Town of Wayne, and Readfield annually pays a bit over a \$100 in property taxes to Wayne. The majority of the forest is tax-exempt as a Town-owned property.

In addition to providing direct on-site conservation and recreational opportunities, through timber sales the Town Forest supports all of Readfield's conservation efforts and has contributed significantly to recreational trail development throughout the town. This network of conservation properties and trails has become a much-loved and valuable asset, frequently noted as one of the reasons people come to Readfield to live and visit. The Trails Committee continues to expand and improve the trails network, creating more recreational opportunities for more people, and recognizing the economic development impact of this as well. Readfield's trails are now a destination for many people who also visit local

stores, restaurants, cafes, and shops; and who may seek to develop their own homes and vacation properties in this desirable community.

Wayne probably could create a similarly valuable Town Forest. Although the proposed property in Wayne differs in some respects from Readfield's forest, a Wayne forest could serve many of the same purposes. Creating access to the forest over a network of trails through beautifully varying terrain with great habitat would add to Wayne's attraction for residents, visitors, and people who want to move to or stay in the community. The forest would be an important asset for conservation, environmental education, local quality of life and economic development. It appears that creating a Town Forest also would be consistent with Wayne's recently updated Comprehensive Plan.

There are important questions about costs for the proposed Wayne Town Forest. Although the Town already has acquired the property through a foreclosed tax lien, the Town would have to pay to settle the title, and the property would no longer provide any property tax—creating an effective annual tax. There also would be initial development costs and on-going maintenance costs to a Town Forest. A Wayne Town Forest at this site would not have the same level of self-funding as Readfield's forest through timber sales, although perhaps a fifth of the proposed Wayne parcel could be managed for timber. The value of having a Town Forest has to be compared realistically to what it will cost taxpayers to develop and manage the site from now on. Members of the Conservation Commission have started to define the costs in more detail.

Readfield's example and the experiences of many other Maine towns show that there are plenty of long-term benefits (economic, environmental, educational, and quality of life) to having a Town Forest that more than balance the costs. The chance to designate such a significant property as a Town Forest in Wayne might not occur again soon, if ever. It really is an historic opportunity to create a conservation legacy for many future Wayne generations.

I therefore urge the Select Board and Town voters to consider settling the title on the tax-acquired property and retaining the property as a Town Forest for wildlife and habitat conservation, limited timber production, and varied recreational uses.

Thank you,



Stefan Pakulski  
139 Morrison Height Road  
Wayne, ME. 04284

## **Bird Community of Wilson Pond Lot**

Based on my recent visit to the site and the week-long deployment of an automated recording unit at the site, I can say unequivocally that the bird community of the parcel formerly known as the “Wilson Pond Lot” is an excellent example of a characteristic temperate mixed deciduous-coniferous forest with a well-developed understory. Species detected during the summer breeding season or expected to breed at the site include Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Pine Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Northern Parula, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Veery, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Winter Wren, Broad-winged Hawk, Barred Owl, Ruffed Grouse, Wood Duck, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Black-capped Chickadee among others. The 118-acre site is expected to support hundreds of individual breeding birds each summer of at least 40 species. Throughout the fall and spring migration and winter seasons there are undoubtedly thousands of birds that use the site for finding food and shelter. On an annual basis approximately 100 bird species could be expected to be tallied from the site.

Partners In Flight regional Bird Conservation Plans highlight the importance of protecting large, intact areas of this type of intact mixed wood forest in this region in order to ensure the long-term health of the suite of bird species associated with this type of forest (BCR 14- Atlantic Northern Forest Plan - <http://acjv.org/planning/bird-conservation-regions/bcr-14/>). The list of Focal Species identified in the Bird Conservation Plan for this region includes many of the species that are known or expected to breed on this site including American Redstart, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Veery, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. All of these species except Black-throated Blue Warbler are experiencing significant declines in our region and all efforts to retain and protect habitats for them will be important in stabilizing these population declines.

At the broadest levels of bird conservation planning, identifying and protecting the last and largest remaining habitat blocks within any region is considered a top priority for conservation (see attached). This habitat parcel is a core of one of the largest mixed wood habitat blocks in the town and its protection should be a high priority in terms of contributing to the conservation of our region’s bird populations.

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Author, Birder’s Conservation Handbook (Princeton 2007); Maine’s Favorite Birds (Tilbury House 2012)