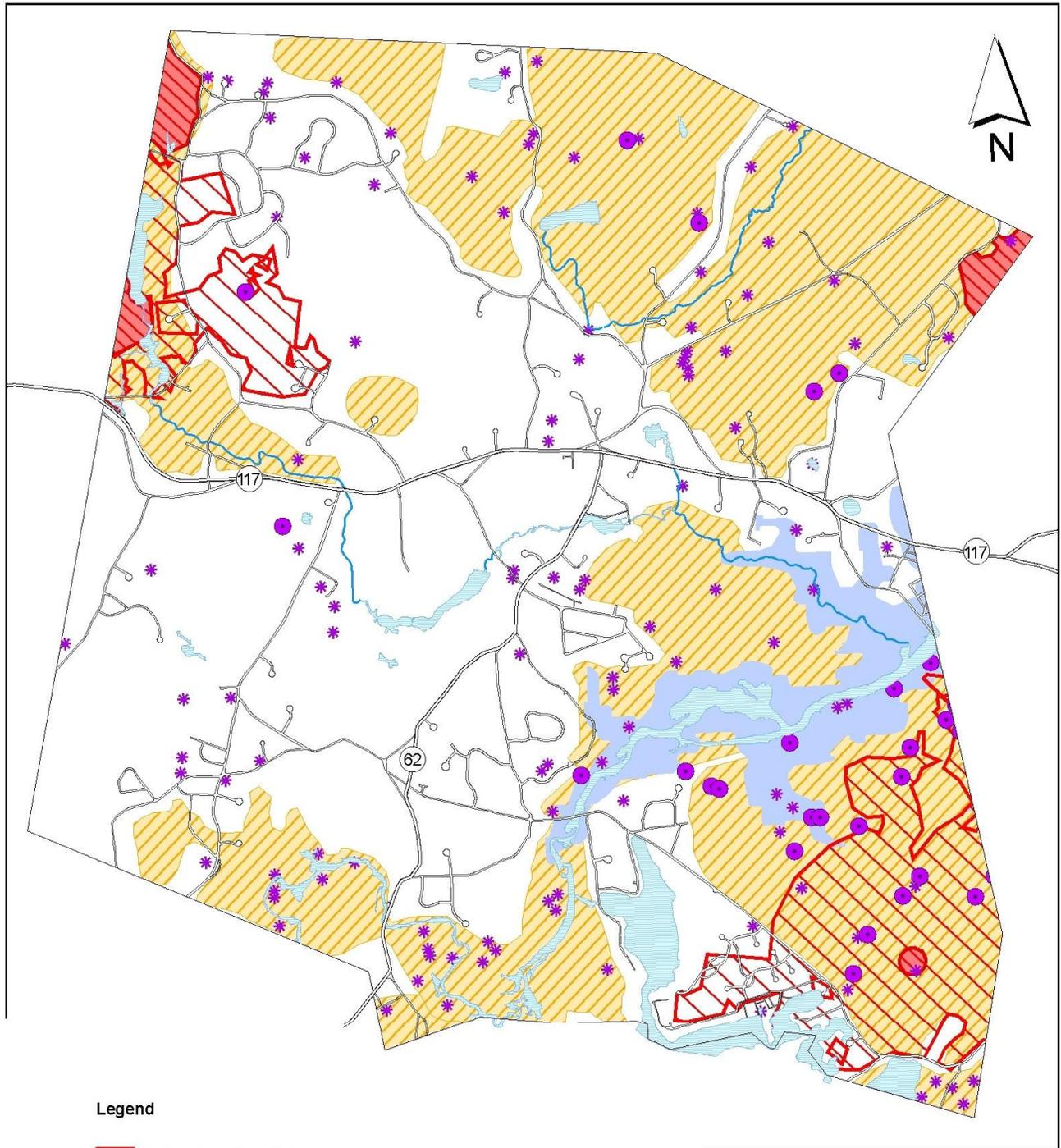


Stow - Areas of Habitat Significance



Legend

-  BioMap Core (NHESP)
-  BioMap Supporting Natural Landscape (NHESP)
-  Living Waters Supporting Watershed (NHESP)
-  Sites with Biodiversity Significance (SVT)

-  Certified Vernal Pools
-  Potential Vernal Pools

-  Water Bodies

NHESP = Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program

SVT = Sudbury Valley Trustees



Habitat data provided by Mass. NHESP, MassGIS, and SVT.

Map produced March 2008.

Vernal Pools

There are a number of certified vernal pools in Stow and a large number of uncertified vernal pools. The Stow Wetlands Bylaw provides additional protection for vernal pools beyond what is contained in the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. When development is proposed near a potential vernal pool, the Conservation Commission requires the applicant to research the area to determine whether it actually functions as a vernal pool. This process recently resulted in the certification of several vernal pools near the Villages at Stow site. The map on the next page depicts certified and potential vernal pools (as identified by aerial photography). Efforts should be undertaken to ensure that unprotected areas that function as vernal pools are certified to increase their protection. In particular, it is important to document, certify and protect clusters of vernal pools located within proximity to each other and large vernal pools as these provide the most viable habitat for species that depend on vernal pools for the breeding portion of their life cycle.

Wildlife Migration Corridors

Stow has extensive protected lands, totaling more than 2000 acres, that serve as important waterfowl migration corridors including, the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Assabet Wildlife Refuge, the Delaney Project, and the Assabet River. These areas provide large, rich relatively undisturbed locations for wildlife migration, feeding and breeding. The existence of other extensive wetland areas in Stow also provides feeding areas for migrating waterfowl.

4F. Scenic resources and Unique Environments

Scenic landscapes

Although there are many scenic spots in Stow the most dramatic include the following: Pilot Grove Hill and Farm, the McCassey/Perkins drumlin in Gleasondale, Honey Pot Hill Orchard, Shelburne Farm Orchard, and the Delaney Flood Control Project. The Assabet River and the Elizabeth Brook (sometimes known as Assabet Brook) are among the most scenic rivers and streams in the area.

Pilot Grove Hill and Farm is centrally located in Town, and thereby is a major contributor to the rural character of Stow. The farm is an active sheep farm with rolling hay fields and forested borders and fence rows, all of which are highly visible from public roadways. The farm is important in the history of the Town, and has been run by the same family for over 200 years. Pilot Grove Hill, despite the development of its slopes still offers a commanding view for passers-by.



Pilot Grove Farm from Pilot Grove Hill

The McCassey/Perkins drumlin offers a windswept open hill that juts out into the Assabet River forcing the river to bend sharply as it wends its way through Gleasondale. Although the view is partially obstructed by the homes along Route 62, it peeks out from behind the houses. If one stops to walk down to the river's edge or explores this area of the river by canoe, the drumlin makes a distinctive impression with its grazing livestock roaming its treeless but grassy slopes. This drumlin/esker feature is so significant that it is highlighted in the popular book "Roadside Geology of Massachusetts."

Honey Pot Hill Farm, an orchard located in the southern portion of Stow, is divided by Sudbury Road and Boon Road. The drive down either road is very scenic. During spring the fragrance of apple blossoms is quite noticeable. In fall, the sweet odor of ripe apples assaults the senses – and also attracts large numbers of visitors from Boston and surrounding areas for apple picking.

Shelburne Farm is adjacent to the Pilot Grove Farm near the center of town and has been permanently protected. This is a thriving orchard with rolling hills covered with apple trees that are prominently displayed to the public roadways. This orchard also attracts a clientele from a wide area.

Spindle Hill, a drumlin near the center of Stow, has been used for recreational purposes for many years. At one time there was a small ski tow on the hill. It presents an attractive view towards the north from Wheeler pond on the Elizabeth Brook. This unspoiled view, considered a valuable scenic resource, supports a cell tower located atop the hill – although efforts were made to minimize the visual impact of this structure through its design as a monopole.



One of the town's many scenic golf course views

water bordered by tall pines, some grassy ridges and fields, a large number of wildlife frequent the area. The open expanse of the area makes it a very attractive site for hiking, horseback riding, fishing and cycling. It is also widely used for dog walking as well as dog training classes. Portions of this area are also located in the adjacent towns of Bolton and Harvard.

The Assabet River and Elizabeth Brook were working streams in the early history of the town, with mills located along both. Since the mills generally owned the banks of the rivers well upstream in order to be able to control the level of the water, the banks were not developed and so these two streams still retain large undeveloped stretches which enhance the attractiveness for river activities. Significant stretches of the river have almost no development visible from the banks and are extremely beautiful especially in fall. In winter the river has been known to freeze enough to allow

The McDonald Farm is located on Route 62 near the Stow Acres golf course. The farm is operated part time and is under a 25-year conservation restriction. The pastures represent a significant portion of the visible open space along Route 62 in Stow.

The Delaney Project is a flood control area in the northwestern sector of Town. Because of its large area of

cross country skiers to pass from one sector of Town to the other. The Elizabeth Brook Association is a group that was formed initially to enjoy the brook's charms, but has developed into a group which also maintains the stream by annual spring cleanup expeditions. In an effort to enhance environmental awareness, a local teacher and the third grade have "adopted" the Elizabeth Brook as a project. The Organization for the Assabet River (OAR) is active in trying to clean up the river and enhance the natural beauty while also encouraging responsible recreational use.

Although the inventory section of this Plan identifies parcels that contribute to the scenic character of the Town, there is no formal scenic inventory that identifies those parcels – both large and small – that contribute to the rural character of Stow, as well as key cultural and historical landscape attributes such as stone walls, granite hitching posts and historic structures. Completion of such an inventory is identified as a priority in this plan so that important aspects of the town's character are not inadvertently lost to development. The Stow Historical Commission and others have worked with the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory to develop the "Stow Reconnaissance Report" for the Freedom's Way Landscape Inventory that identifies many of these important scenic attributes. A map of the areas identified can be found on the following page, with the full list in the Appendix.

Another initiative which should be considered by the town is the designation of scenic roads to prevent the loss of large trees and stone walls that contribute so significantly to the town's rural character. At this time, the town has no designated scenic roads, although many roadways are considered scenic by the community such as Whitman Road, Sudbury Road, Red Acre Road, and Walcott Street. This is also identified as a need in the action section of the Plan.