Welcome



Cornish Conservation Commission

Community Input Forum - 2025/26 Conservation Plan Project

21 May 2025

Tonight's Goals

- To celebrate the highlights of the 2025 Natural Resources Inventory
- To introduce the Commission's next initiative - a Cornish Conservation Plan - and give Cornish residents a clear understanding of what the Cornish Conservation Plan Project is all about.
- To gather input from Cornish residents about Cornish's natural resources and open spaces, what makes them special, and concerns residents may have about these areas.

Our Why -

Cornish Conservation Commission Mission:

The Cornish Conservation Commission is dedicated to the protection of the Town of Cornish's rural character, natural environment, and working landscape by encouraging and supporting land conservation efforts, public education, and careful Town planning.

- We also manage conservation funds from the town budget and land use change tax—public dollars that should be spent in a manner that reflects community values.
- Developing a Conservation Plan for Cornish will guide data-driven decisions in how these funds should be invested to support willing landowners, and help protect the places that matter most—now and for the future.

Tonight's Agenda

1. **Welcome and Goals for Tonight (Glenn)** (5 mins)
2. **Why - CCC Motivation for doing this project (Reyer)** (5 mins)
3. **How - Project Background & Launch (Robin)** (5 mins)
4. **Who - Moosewood Ecological Team (M.E.)** (5 mins)
5. **CCC NRI & Conservation Project Overview (M.E.)** (30 mins)
6. **Community Input (M.E.)** (60 mins)

   ~Natural Resources & Open Spaces Reflection and Small Group Breakout Workshop

7. **Closing Thoughts and Next Steps (Jeff / Robin)** (10 mins)

Our How

- **After spending 2+ years updating the Natural Resources Inventory, the Commission sought expert help to develop a full Conservation Plan**
- We invited 11 regional ecological consulting firms; 5 responded, and 3 presented. We chose Moosewood Ecological for their commitment to conservation, experience with small towns and community-focused approach.
- Moosewood has worked with nearby towns like Claremont, Newport, and Plainfield, and we're excited to partner with them here in Cornish.
- We are looking forward to spending the next 11 months working closely with Moosewood on this project.

Cornish Conservation Plan Project



Jeffry Littleton, Principal Ecologist, Moosewood Ecological LLC

Steven Lamonde, Project Manager and Ecologist, Moosewood Ecological LLC

Jaime McGuigan, Ecologist, Moosewood Ecological LLC

Moosewood Ecological

Innovative Conservation Solutions for New England

Mission

To facilitate the conservation and stewardship of biological diversity and ecological integrity throughout the New England landscape.

Moosewood Ecological LLC

Innovative Conservation Solutions for New England

2025 Cornish NRI Highlights

- 22,297 acres of Current Use open space (82% of Cornish)

- Attributes of these lands:
  - High-quality groundwater
  - >5,000 acres of productive farmland soils
  - More than 200 years of farming tradition
  - >10,000 acres of forests suitable for forest management
  - 12 major wildlife habitat types, including rare peatlands and talus slopes
  - Statewide priority wildlife habitats along the Connecticut River, Yatsevitch Forest, and elsewhere
  - 23 endangered or threatened plants
  - 8 endangered or threatened wildlife

Conservation Planning and Open Space

What is Open Space?









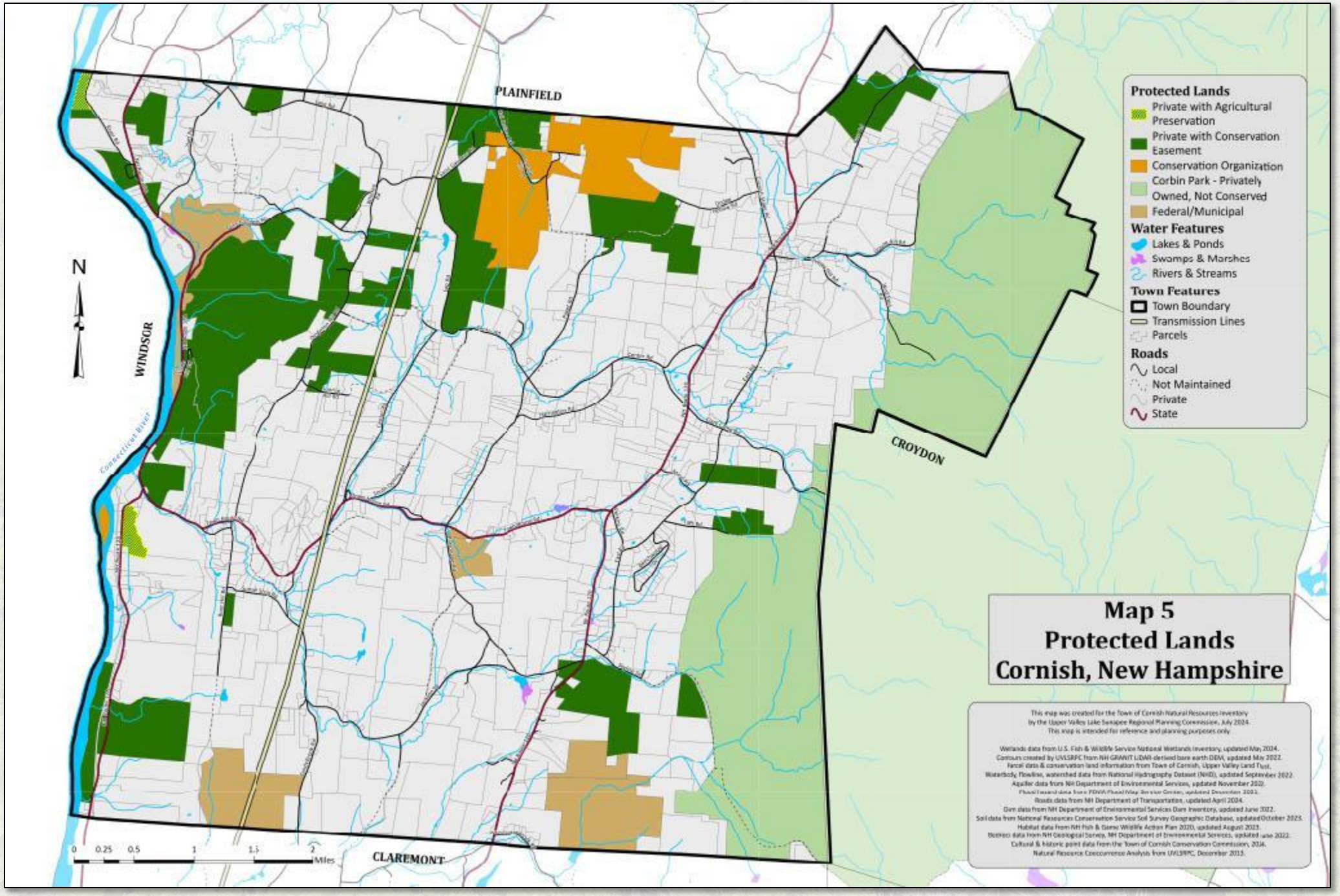
Open Space

- Commonly refers to undeveloped land in a natural state, such as forests, wetlands and farmlands
- Generally excludes areas extensively developed for recreation such as ball fields
- Some open space areas are legally protected from development, others lack formal protection

Cornish's Open Space

- 3,480 acres (13%)
- Conservation Easements, Agricultural Preservation, Federal and Town Lands
  - Protecting critical forest, wetland, agricultural resources
  - Integral part of open space planning




PLAINFIELD
WINDSOR
CROYDON
CLAREMONT
Connecticut River
N
0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
Protected Lands
Private with Agricultural Preservation
Private with Conservation Easement
Conservation Organization
Corbin Park - Privately Owned, Not Conserved
Federal/Municipal
Water Features
Lakes & Ponds
Swamps & Marshes
Rivers & Streams
Town Features
Town Boundary
Transmission Lines
Parcels
Roads
Local
Not Maintained
Private
State
Map 5
Protected Lands
Cornish, New Hampshire
This map was created for the Town of Cornish Natural Resources Inventory by the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, July 2024.
This map is intended for reference and planning purposes only.
Wetlands data from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory, updated May 2024.
Contours created by UVLSRPC from NH GRANIT LiDAR derived bare earth DEM, updated May 2022.
Parcel data & conservation land information from Town of Cornish, Upper Valley Land Trust.
Waterbody, flowline, watershed data from National Hydrography Dataset (NHD), updated September 2022.
Aquifer data from NH Department of Environmental Services, updated November 2022.
Roads data from NH Department of Transportation, updated April 2024.
Dam data from NH Department of Environmental Services Dam Inventory, updated June 2022.
Soil data from National Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey Geographic Database, updated October 2023.
Habitat data from NH Fish & Game Wildlife Action Plan 2020, updated August 2023.
Bedrock data from NH Geological Survey, NH Department of Environmental Services, updated June 2022.
Cultural & historic point data from the Town of Cornish Conservation Commission, 2024.
Natural Resource Cooccurrence Analysis from UVLSRPC, December 2015.

Open Space Benefits

- Outdoor recreation
- Production of food and forest products
- Protection of wildlife diversity and habitat
- Protect water supplies
- Mitigate natural hazards
- Protect scenic beauty, cultural and historical value
- Green infrastructure for growth



Conservation Planning and Open Space

- What is Open Space?
- How is Open Space Protected?



Open Space Protection

- **Fee acquisition** of lands for conservation by municipality or State/Federal government
- **Conservation easements** on private land held by land trust or governmental entity
- **Acquisition by Town** using a dedicated conservation fund
- **Municipal forest lands** designated as official Town Forests
- Municipal lands protected with State funds that include **conservation restrictions** in the agreement

Conservation Planning and Open Space

- What is Open Space?
- How is Open Space Protected?
- The Cornish Conservation Plan?

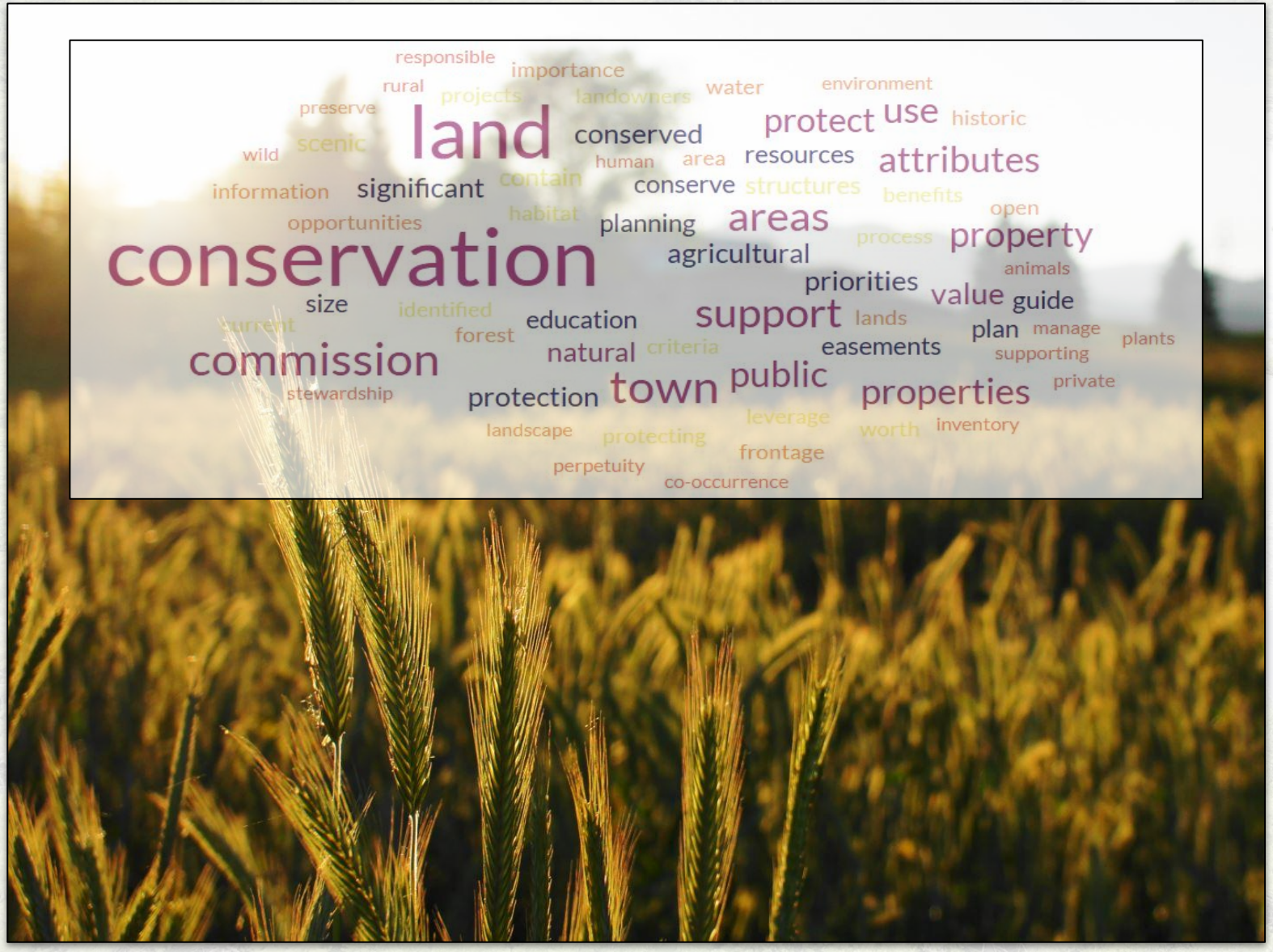


Cornish Conservation Plan

Provides a **blueprint** for the Town's future conservation efforts



Cornish Conservation Plan



Land Conservation Criteria

- Keystone property
- Ecological significance
- Public benefit
- Agricultural use/value
- Property size
- Scenic value
- Historic importance

Cornish Conservation Plan

Benefits of the Plan

- Identifies areas of high natural resource values in Cornish
- Informs and guides Cornish in decisions to protect open space
- Assists with grant funding requests for open space protection
- Helps promote appreciation and use of protected open space areas



Cornish Conservation Plan



Preliminary Plan Goals

- Build upon the 2025 NRI data and reflect the priorities outlined in the Statement of Intentions for Land Conservation.
- Develop a co-occurrence spatial analysis that prioritizes conservation efforts, working towards a goal of 20-25% conserved
- Provide a framework for prioritizing properties for conservation.
- Outline strategies for public education and collaboration with other conservation organizations.
- Recommend processes to provide landowners with financial assistance to assist landowners and steward conserved properties.
- Integrate conservation efforts into the Master Plan and Zoning ordinances.

Project Timeline

Timeframe	Task
April	Review existing information
Summer	Field surveys and site visits
Summer-Fall	Mapping and co-occurrence modeling
Fall	Community forum
Fall - Winter	Draft conservation plan
Winter	Community forum
Spring 2026	Publish conservation plan

Community Input



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Natural Resources & Open Spaces Reflection Workshop

1. Group Setup (5 mins)

- *Divide attendees into small groups (count off 1 to 6)*
- *Each group will be facilitated by either a M.E. staff person or Conservation Commissioner*
- *Assign a group leader to each group (commissioner)*
- *Every attendee should have a map, reflection worksheet, clipboard and pen*

2. M.E. to Provide a Brief Map Orientation (5 mins)

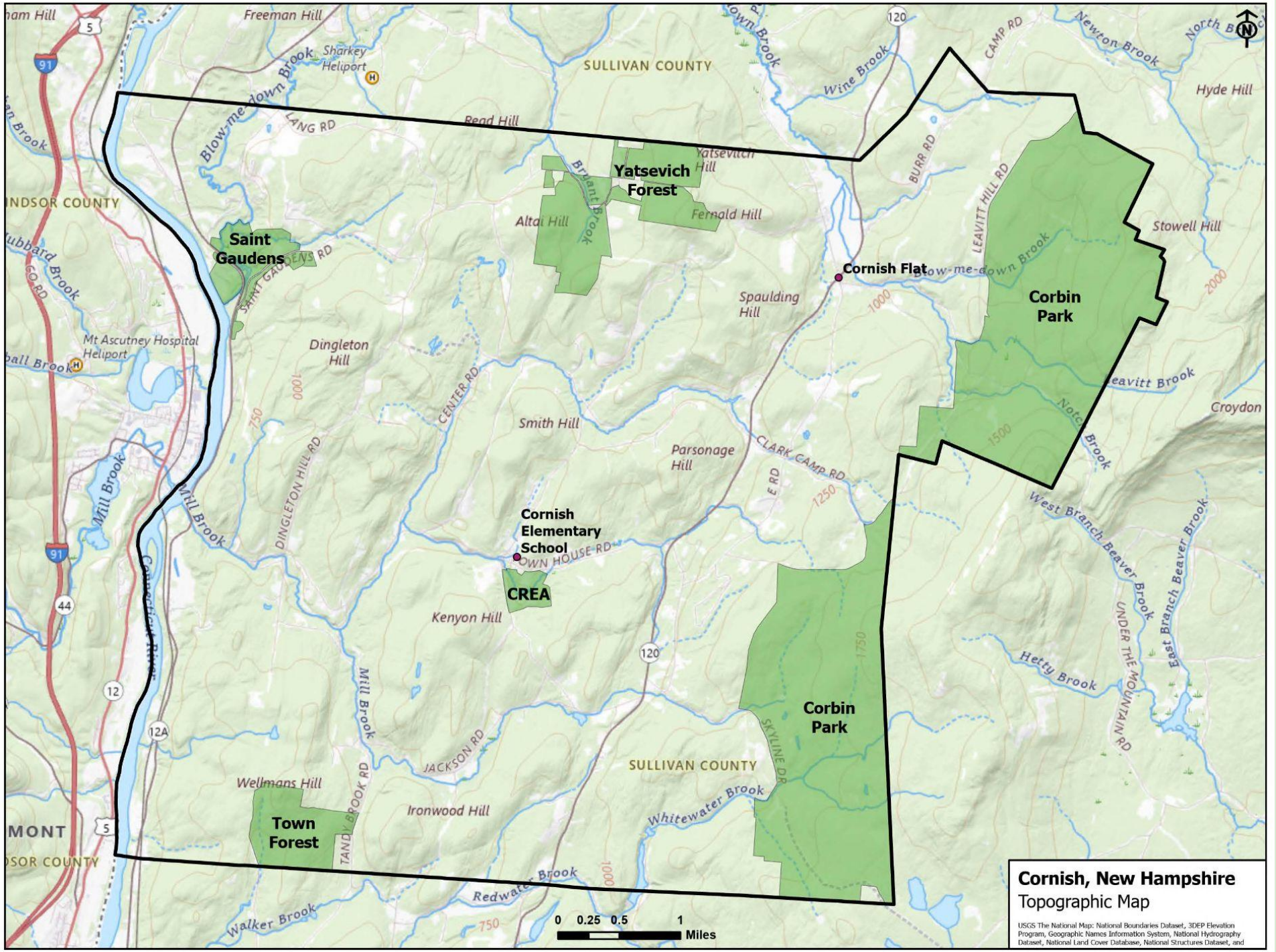
3. Discussion Focus (30 mins)

- *Each attendee will be given 5–10 minutes on his/her own to study the map and complete the worksheet:*
  - *List what you believe are Cornish's most significant natural resources and open spaces?*
  - *What makes these spaces special?*
  - *What concerns do you have about these areas?*
- *After individual reflection, the group leader will facilitate a 20-minute discussion, asking participants to share their thoughts*
- *The group leader will capture 2–3 key observations to share with the full room during report-outs*

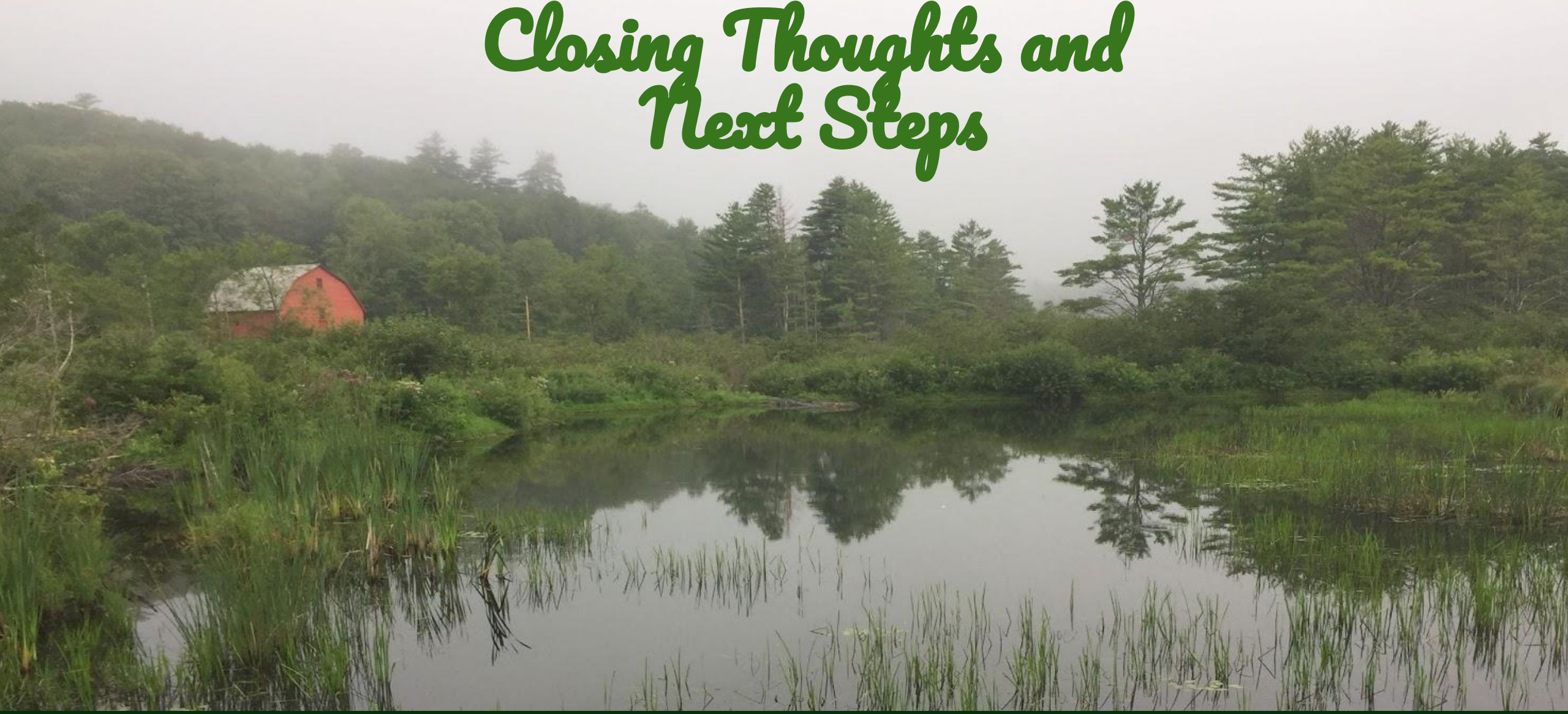
4. Group Reporting (20 mins)

- *Each group leader will present 2–3 key observations from their group's discussion*
- *Reports should be kept to 1–2 minutes each*

Map Orientation



Closing Thoughts and Next Steps



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Questions



How to Stay Involved

- Upcoming community forums
- Stay engaged
- Talk to your neighbors
- Reach out to the Conservation Commission

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Upcoming Events

- May 28 - Monthly CCC meeting (at 7pm Town Offices)
- June 7 - Beaver Presentation with Skip Lisle at 3 pm in the Town Hall.



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