Chapter 3: Habitats and Other Critical Natural Resources

Goal: To protect Clinton's other critical natural resources including wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitats, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural resources.

Purpose: To identify habitats and critical natural resources which need to be protected that are classified as essential or significant habitat?

Analysis: At the writing of this document, Clinton's natural resources are adequately protected. The town has a shoreland zoning ordinance which meets shoreland zoning standards.

Essential and Significant Habitat: It is important to know if the habitat meets the definitions of essential or significant. Essential Habitats are areas that currently or historically provide physical or biological features essential to the conservation of an endangered or threatened species in Maine, and which may require special management considerations. Significant Habitats describe habitats to the extent they were mapped by the Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department. The existence of wildlife habitat must be considered a constraint to development. See Map 3-1.

Wetlands: Wetlands are broadly defined as a transitional area terrestrial and aquatic environments where the water table is at or near the surface or land is covered by shallow water. In Clinton, wetlands include but are not limited to swamps, bogs, and vernal pools. The only significant wetlands in Clinton are the vernal pools as identified on Map 3-1, Critical Natural Resources. The importances of wetlands in recent studies have proven they provide an important function. The State Planning Office study identifies the following features:

1. **Ground water recharge.** Wetlands may serve to replenish and cleanse aquifers which the town uses for water supply.
2. **Ground water discharge.** Ground water may discharge into wetland, providing public water supply, wildlife habitat, and a means of maintaining lake and river quality.
3. **Flood flow alterations.** Wetlands serve as temporary storage areas during high water flows, thus reducing peak flows and potentially damaging floods.
4. **Sediment and toxicant retention.** In agricultural areas, wetlands can retain and stabilize sediments and toxic materials.
5. **Nutrient retention and removal.** Wetlands can retain or transform inorganic phosphorus and/or nitrogen into their organic form and may save downstream lakes and ponds from eutrophication.
6. **Productivity export.** Wetlands flush out dead plant and animal life, thereby providing nutrients for a new generation of plant and animal life.
7. **Aquatic diversity.** Certain wetlands provide habitat, including breeding grounds and nurseries for fish.
8. **Wildlife diversity and abundance.** Wetlands serve as habitat and a food source for birds, deer, and other animals.

9. **Uniqueness.** A number of rare plant and animal species can be found in Wetlands. Approximately 43% of the 230 rare plants which occur in Maine are found exclusively in wetlands.

Shoreland Areas: The State of Maine in protection and improvement of waters passed Shoreland Protection Laws. Title 38, Chapter 3, subchapter 1, Article 2-B, Paragraph 435 states "Shoreland areas include those areas within 250 feet of the normal high-water line of any great pond, river, or salt water body…or within 75 feet of the high water line of a stream." The Town of Clinton maintains a current Shoreland zoning map and ordinance which can be found at the Town Office.

Finfish Habitat: There are five major rivers/streams in Clinton which are rated as high value for fisheries by the Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department. They are the Kennebec River, the Sebasticook River, Fifteen Mile Stream, Johnson Brook, and Carrabassett Stream. Twelve Mile Brook and another unnamed brook are of medium value, and there are seven other unnamed brooks of undetermined value.

Wildlife Resources: The Town of Clinton has a number of important wildlife resources including deer wintering yards, sites for inland wading birds and bird species of special concern. Located in the center of town is the yellow lampmussel considered a threatened species. Also threatened species are the upland sandpiper in the northwestern quadrant of Clinton and the brook floater mussel on the Carrabassett Stream. Species of special concern include the bald eagle along the southern border. See Map 3-1.

Plant Habitat: Clinton has some rare, threatened, or endangered plants. One threatened species is the Narrow-leaf Arrowhead which grows in the Clinton Village Area. Wild Garlic found along the Sebasticook River is considered imperiled in Maine. Invasive plants such as Morrow's honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, Japanese knot weed and multiflora rose are abundant in the Town of Clinton.

Natural Communities: There are the following areas in Clinton along the Sebasticook River: Silver Maple Floodplain Forest, Swamp White Forest Oak, and MacGregor's Rye.

Issues:

Invasive plants such as Morrow's honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, Japanese knot weed and multiflora rose could impact forestry and road maintenance.

Clinton needs cooperation and coordination with neighboring municipalities to advance resource protection.

Policies: Minimum policies required to address state goals:

(1) To conserve critical natural resources in the community.

(2) To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.

Strategies: Minimum strategies required to address state goals:

(1) Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.

(2) Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.

(3) Through local land use ordinances, require subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.

(4) Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent Beginning with Habitat (BwH) Program maps and information regarding critical natural resources.

(5) Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.

(6) Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.

(7) Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical or important natural resources about current use tax programs and applicable local, state, or federal regulations.

Chapter 3, Habitats and Other Critical Natural Resources
Issues identified by the Comprehensive Planning Committee with Strategies:

Issue	Strategy	Responsibility	Action Party	Coordinator	Implementation
Issue 3-1 Clinton will review the Beginning with Habitat (BwH) Program	The Town Manager will determine if they want to include Beginning with Habitat (BwH) Program, a non-profit for natural resources	Selectmen	Town Manager	State of Maine Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Department	Start 2025
Issue 3-2 Clinton will consider a plan to combat invasive plants	The Selectmen will determine if they want to remove invasive plants from town right-of-ways	Selectmen	Selectmen	State of Maine	Start 2024
Issue 3-3 Initiate interlocal efforts for shared responsibilities for critical natural resources	Educate public and surrounding towns on the need for interlocal cooperation for shared natural resources	Selectmen	Town Manager	University of Maine's Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit	Start 2024