

WESTMORE TOWN PLAN
Adopted
April 08, 2013

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1. PURPOSE OF THE TOWN PLAN

This plan will be effective only to the degree the community wishes to work together to make it so. Westmore is a very unique and special place. This belief gives rise to a sense of identity, affection, loyalty, and shared commitment to the town's welfare. These feelings are among Westmore's greatest resources and important assets.

The plan serves several functions. It helps define the community by laying out the general vision or direction for future development in the town. It identifies local needs and desires which are then written into an "implementation plan" which guides the actions and priorities of public officials. It clearly defines the Town's position on certain issues which leads to increased standing in Act 250 hearings and offers suggestions for improving local land use regulations. The plan also plays a role in Public Service Board (PSB) (Section 248) hearings. Before issuing a Certificate of Public Good, for most projects, the PSB must find that the "purchase, investment, or construction, with respect to an in-state facility, will not unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region with due consideration having been given to the recommendations of the municipal and regional planning commissions, the recommendations of the municipal legislative bodies, and the land conservation measures contained in the plan of any affected municipality." (30 V.S.A., §248(b)(1) Finally, an approved town plan is necessary for certain grant applications, including Municipal Planning Grant, and Community Development Block Grants. The plan itself has no regulatory power but it can help influence future decisions by setting a framework for the discussion, identifying issues and recommending actions.

The desire of the Planning Commission (PC) is to pull together the information we have received throughout the planning process into a document that reflects the vision and goals of the people who live in Westmore. Adoption of a plan represents a community decision about the town's future character, its priorities for land use, conservation of physical resources, and the encouragement of well considered, responsible development. Westmore does not exist in isolation from the region and will be affected by what happens in other municipalities.

The residents of Westmore are custodians of a town with unquestioned natural beauty and significant resources which require diligent attention. Through adoption and implementation of the Plan, the Town and its residents are exercising their best stewardship for those resources which nature, history, and geography have so abundantly endowed.

2. OVERALL VISION

The unique and special character of Westmore is derived from a combination of two principal factors: the historic, rural, seasonal character of the community and the infinite magnificence of Westmore's Willoughby Lake along with its other pond, mountain and farm settings. The Town's existing rural and seasonal character is partially an outgrowth of its agrarian and tourist/recreational past and is apparent today in its seasonally dynamic but tranquil community. The diversity of scenery, geographic location, natural beauty, natural resources and people of the Town of Westmore create an essence of the town. These qualities can be found, and maintained, only in a community that continues to cultivate a close association with the land, and to nourish

an appreciation and respect for both the productivity and physical limitations on the natural environment.

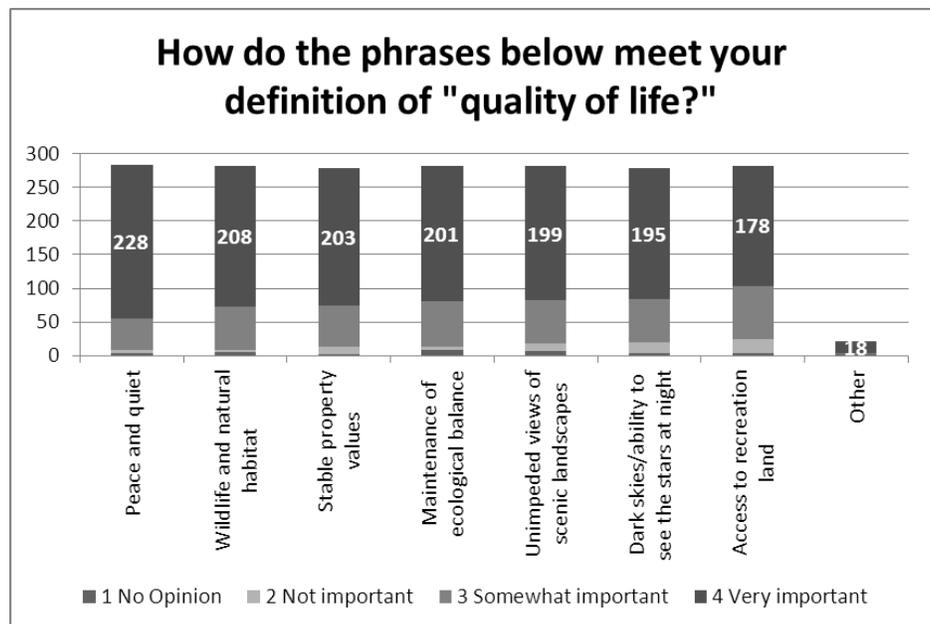
We recognize that although there may be general agreement on the need to maintain the natural and cultural quality of life in Westmore, people have different ideas on how to accomplish this. Therefore, the Town should provide information to landowners of the various options available to them and let them decide. In general, the Town should encourage actions through knowledge and the landowner’s desire to enhance her/his position and quality of life. Land use regulations should be kept to a minimum and be enacted only on those areas critically important to maintaining the quality of life in Westmore and to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

The community should strive to reach a sustainable balance in using our natural resources. With the underlying goals of maintaining water quality, scenic resources, and critical habitat, the town’s natural resources should be used to support the local economy in forestry, farming and tourism. Westmore’s economy should focus on local self-sufficiency and creating jobs from within the community. Industries that produce “value added” products from local natural and cultural resources should be encouraged. It is through greater self-reliance that our economy and future will be self-sustaining.

Westmore’s rich array of natural resources has long been considered an integral part of the community’s cultural heritage, and this has been reflected in the town plan. Unless updated and readopted, the town plan expires every five years, creating an opportunity to reassess long-held beliefs and identify new and emerging concerns. In the summer of 2012, the Westmore Planning Commission conducted a community survey to reassess views on natural resources and gain insights into how the town plan may better reflect community values. The survey asked respondents to rank the significance of natural areas and means to protect them. The survey also sought feedback on a variety of strategies for protecting the town’s scenic resources and for defining quality of life in Westmore. The Planning Commission received nearly 300 responses, representing a 44% return rate.

Rural Ambiance

Not surprisingly, survey respondents cherished the rural ambiance of the community. “Peace and quiet” was the most defining attribute of quality of life, yet all other factors ranked high as well. One of the important features of living on a rural lake is the opportunity to be able to enjoy the moon from a



canoe, to look out from your dock and see the stars and night sky, to feel like you live in a quiet remote area. As more people have built homes, walkways and docks, the amount of outside lighting has increased. There are more street lights, walkways are lit-up, and flood lights illuminate the night woods. The traditional lights flickering in the warm windows have been changed by bright deck lights and lighted stairways. The qualities of a rural lake have been diminished. The rural ambiance has been decreased. And as more people move to the area, the problem may get worse. The lake residents should be aware that the lights on their stairway illuminate more than just the stairs themselves.

Our community's rural character, is seen by many to be in peril. A number of respondents had much to say regarding impacts from existing wind developments in nearby towns of Sheffield and Lowell, both of which can be seen heading west from Hinton Hill toward Lake Willoughby, and both of which add flashing red lights to Westmore's otherwise dark night skyline. Other threats to Willoughby's rural ambiance include runoff and loss of active farming and its associated working landscape.

Willoughby as a National Natural Landmark

The Lake Willoughby area was designated as a National Natural Landmark (NNL) in 1967, just five years after the NNL program was created. This designation is permanent and should factor prominently into any local, state, or federal land use policies. Here is why the designation is so important to Westmore and the Northeast Kingdom.

To be designated, NNL sites must demonstrate the best remaining examples of specific biological and/or geological features. Today there are fewer than 600 sites that have earned this designation through the U.S. and U.S. territories, and there are only 12 sites in Vermont. Here is how the Lake Willoughby Area is described in the National Natural Landmarks Directory (2009).

“Lake Willoughby, a deep, cold-water lake within Lake Willoughby Natural Area lies in a u-shaped trough cut into granite by glacial scouring. Mountains and 1,500-foot cliffs rise abruptly from the lake's east and west shores. It is the deepest lake in Vermont and one of the most significant and scenic examples of glacial erosion in the northeast.”

The NNL program regulations require the National Park Service to monitor the condition of each designation site in order to ensure that they still contain the values and conditions that qualified them for designation in the first place. A guiding principle for monitoring is to ensure that the resource remains unimpaired or in a natural condition, and that the site's “natural integrity has not been diminished.” (<http://www.nature.nps.gov>) The designation also impacts any development that requires federal permits (such as National Environmental Protection Act). Finally, although the designation is permanent, it may be removed if the resources for which the site was designated are lost or destroyed.

NNL designation can include public and/or private lands, and the designation is not tied to any administrative boundary. Although the Willoughby designation area is identified as “state-

owned” land, it is impossible to evaluate the significance of the Willoughby Lake and Cliffs area without considering its dramatic backdrop of forested high elevation areas that rise from every point on the horizon surrounding it. The lake area and the village are at the bottom of a unique topographical bowl configuration that creates a spectacular 360-degree viewshed.

While scenic natural beauty is a hallmark of life in the Northeast Kingdom, Westmore’s iconic viewshed of Willoughby defines the community both culturally and economically. Westmore’s identity is tied to a landscape that has served as inspiration for artists and writers and has made the community a destination for more than a century. The lake area draws visitors worldwide, who spend on recreation, dining, and entertainment establishments all over the Northeast Kingdom. While the NNL designation can and should be taken into account for all federal permitting process, it should be a critical factor in local land use decisions as well, including Act 250 and Section 248. Given the significance of this designation, the Westmore Town Plan asserts that any development of 100 feet or higher that can be viewed from any point in the NNL designation area be considered a development of substantial regional impact.

3. POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Land use regulations should be kept to a minimum and be enacted only on those areas critically important to maintaining the quality of life in Westmore and to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community. (throughout plan)
2. Protecting water quality, scenic landscapes and views, wildlife habitat, forested areas, and ridgelines is a high priority. (–Overall Vision; Water Quality; Forests; Natural Areas, Wetlands and Wildlife; Scenic Features, Historic Features, Recreation, Economic Development, Water Supply)
3. Retaining the quality of life, scenic attributes, diversity of wildlife, and environmental harmony and beauty that are the products of responsible farming and forestry is a priority. (Overall Vision; –Water Quality; Agriculture; Forests)
4. Any development 100 feet or higher that can be viewed from any point in the National Natural Landmark designation area should be considered a development of substantial regional impact. (Overall Vision)
5. Retain or increase the number of working family farms while encouraging acceptable agriculture practices. (–Overall Vision, Agriculture)
6. Maintaining a healthy and vibrant forest and forestry industry in Westmore through long term forest stewardship is important. (Overall Vision, Forests)
7. Maintaining the diversity of habitat and species that exist in Westmore is a priority. (–Overall Vision; Natural Areas, Wetlands and Wildlife)
8. Maintain and enhance the important role that public lands play in Westmore. (State Lands)

9. The important economic and social role recreation plays in Westmore is recognized and should be enhanced. (–Overall Vision; Forests; State Lands; Recreation, Economic Development)
10. Enhance the historic and cultural features in town. (Historic Features)
11. Maintaining the high quality of education for Westmore’s young people and providing ongoing educational opportunities for all ages is important. (Education)
12. Maintaining and enhancing a diversity of housing in Westmore is important. (–Housing)
13. Maintaining and improving the existing road network is important. (Transportation)
14. Promote a reduction in local dependence upon costly non-renewable energy resources by encouraging conservation and the development of local, residential-scale renewable energy resources. (Energy)
15. Businesses and services which will enhance the economic potential of our renewable natural resources, recognizing that tourism and recreation resources are important to the economy, are a priority. (–Overall Vision; Forests; Recreation; Economic Development)

4. HISTORY

Westmore was incorporated with the name of Westford on August 17, 1781 with a Land Grant Charter signed by then Governor Thomas Chittenden. The town was to be six miles squared.

As with all Land Grant Charters, each proprietor had to fulfill certain conditions to retain land ownership. Each family must clear, plant and cultivate at least five acres of land, and build a house of at least 18 square feet. A family must be settled on the parcel within three years after it became safe to do so due to the war. All pine timber suitable for naval use was reserved for the government.

The charter also recognized the overall needs of community development because lots were left for the support of the worship of God (Church lot), minister’s lot, school and seminary.

On October 26, 1787 the General Assembly of Vermont acted to change the name of the town from Westford to Westmore. This was due to the fact that there was another town named Westford in Vermont.

On November 15, 1821 the General Assembly changed the county lines so that Westmore, which had been in Essex County, ended up in Orleans County where it is today.

At the time of the War of 1812, the town was abandoned due to fears they would not be able to protect themselves from possible attack from the north, and yet were too far removed from others and too few in number to be able to be safe. The town was re-settled in the 1830’s.

In 1838 Peter Gilman, with two others, petitioned the legislature for the right to levy a four cent per acre municipal tax to complete the lake road. This was granted by the legislature and is probably the first “municipal” property tax to be assessed in Westmore. It was a “single” issue

tax and there is no record that it was continued at this time.

The seasonal, resort character of Westmore began to develop after the Lake Road was completed.

The population peak of Westmore appears to have been 480 in 1889. The present population (year round) is 350.

At one time Westmore had six one-room schools and a school census of 119 pupils; today's is 40. This figure is derived from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (2006-2010). The ACS reports that there are 50 residents aged three and older who are enrolled in school. Of this number, 10 are enrolled in college or graduate school.

5. TOWN PROFILE

Physical Attributes

The town of Westmore occupies 22,193 acres, five percent of the landmass of Orleans County. Westmore has several lakes and ponds, including Willoughby Lake (1,653 acres) which lies in the dramatic Willoughby Gap. The town is also home to Sentinel Rock State Park (387 acres) and the 215 acres of the Bald Hill Wildlife Management Area, which also contains land in Newark. The southwestern corner of the town contains 2,177 acres of the Willoughby State Forest, which extends into Sutton and includes the 950-acre area composed of the cliffs of Mount Pisgah and Mount Hor. This section is known as the "Willoughby Cliffs Natural Area" which is part of the National Natural Landmark designation.

Population

Westmore has the smallest population of any town in Orleans County with 350 persons (2010 Census). This represents practically a 14% change from the 2000 census population of 306, in comparison to a 3.6% increase in the Orleans County population and a 2.8% statewide increase over the same period.

Westmore's 350 persons represent just a little over 1% of the county's population, and the town's population density is lowest in Orleans County at 8.8 persons per square mile. (The vast majority of Orleans County has fewer than 30 persons per square mile and the statewide average is 67.9).

Age Distribution

Westmore's population is getting older, following the national trend of the aging of "baby-boomers". The table below shows a comparison of the breakdown of the 1990, 2000 and 2010 populations into age groups, and also illustrates the percent change from 1990 to 2010 in each age group.

TABLE 1 Percent Changes in Age Groups 1990 - 2010

| Ages | Under age 5 | 5-19 | 20-44 | 45-64 | 65 and over |
|--------|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------------|
| 1990 | 10 | 78 | 108 | 53 | 56 |
| 2000 | 13 | 46 | 85 | 111 | 51 |
| 2010 | 12 | 43 | 75 | 139 | 81 |
| Change | +20% | -45% | -31% | +162% | 45% |

Source: U.S. Census 1990-2010.

The above shows a 162 % increase in the 45-64 age group, a 45% increase in 65 and older. While there is a modest increase in the 0 -4 age group, there is a significant decline in the other groups, aged 5-44. This skewed age distribution may have an effect upon the type of public services and housing opportunities which will be in demand over the coming years.

In 2010 Westmore had a population of 350. Of that population 12 were under 5 years old, 257 were between 5 and 65, and 81 were over 65 years old. The median age was 53.1(up from 45.9 years in the 2000 Census) , compared to the current statewide median of 40.4 years.

Household Types

According to the Census, the 2010 population of Westmore lived in 165 households, which can be broken down into the following categories:

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Total households | 165 |
| Family households | 105 |
| with own children under 18 years | 29 |
| Husband-wife family | 89 |
| with own children under 18 years | 17 |
| Single householder, no spouse present, with own children under 18 year | 12 |
| Nonfamily households | 60 |
| Householder living alone | 51 |

The total number of households in town increased by 11.8. % between 1990 and 2000, from 119 to 133 and by 24.1% between 2000 and 2010, to a total of 165. In 1990, there were 11 households with children under 18 which were headed by a single parent; in 2010 there were 12.

Income

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates 2006-2010 the median household income in Westmore is \$53,889, which is 34% higher than the county-wide median household income of \$40,202.

Where People Work

Two hundred and ninety-one people over the age of sixteen, according to ACS 5-Year Estimates 2006-2010 (U. S.), reside in Westmore. Of this population, 201 are in the labor force, . There are 178workers who drive to work, with an average commute of 27.1 minutes. Seven walk to work or use other means, and eight work at home.

Regional Employment

In 2011 the average wage for all covered employment (private and government employment covered by Vermont unemployment insurance) in Westmore was \$19,704, 40.1% below that of \$32,898 for the county and 51.1% below that of the state's \$40284.

The three dominant categories of covered employment in Orleans County during 2011 were: services (annual average of 5,813 covered employees), goods producing (2,035 employees), and government (2,047 employees, working at the federal, state, or local level. The services category included leisure and hospitality (1,119 employees); education and health services (1,789 employees), trade, transportation and utilities (1,900 employees), and retail trade (1,333 employees). Goods producing included manufacturing (1226 employees), construction (620 employees), and natural resources and mining (188 employees); Agriculture, forestry and fishing had a negligible number employees and the data was therefore suppressed. However, many people in these fields are self-employed and are not covered by unemployment insurance. (Source: Vermont Dept. of Employment & Training, Labor Market Information [NAICS].

Employment activity in Westmore is covered in greater detail in Section 18 Economic Development.

6. WATER QUALITY

Protecting water quality is a high priority in the Town of Westmore. Activities such as logging on steep slopes or down to the water's edge, building houses close to the water, run-off from gravel roads, and cutting vegetation along the shore all affect the quality of water.

Due to the steep topography which increases the likelihood of run-off, the lakes and ponds in Westmore are especially vulnerable. Long Pond has a small watershed and drains directly into Willoughby Lake. Therefore, precautions in this area of town are especially important.

Westmore's forest cover provides stability to Westmore's lakes, ponds, and streams. Westmore's forest cover – which is largely located on higher and steep terrains -- intercepts precipitation, which then gets percolated into subsurface water systems. Loss of the tree cover, however, can mean a loss of ability to intercept precipitation and slow down surface runoff. The result can be non-point source contamination and flash flooding.

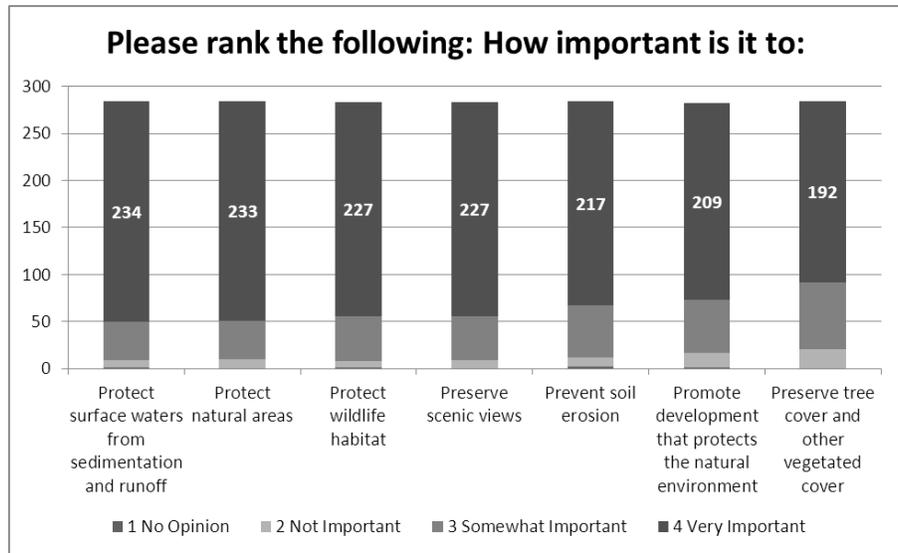
Non-Point Run-Off

Non-point pollution comes from a variety of sources such as erosion due to house construction, deforestation, failing septic systems, grass clippings from lawns, manure spread on fields, gravel washing off the roads, improper or excessive application of lawn fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, etc. By definition non-point pollution tends to be dispersed and diluted. However, all these activities combined contribute to downgrade the water quality. Nutrient inputs such as phosphorous, nitrogen and organic matter lead to eutrophication (the increase in the amount of nutrients available for water plants such as algae) which increases the growth of these plants thus leading to a decrease in the amount of oxygen available for fish and other life in the water. Increased nutrients reduce water transparency resulting in increased water temperature. Undesirable chemical products like pesticides and heavy metals threaten human health and the

survival of the aquatic ecosystem.

In 1990-93 the governments of Vermont and Quebec set up a task force to look into water quality issues in the Lake Memphremagog watershed. The Quebec/Vermont Working Group on Managing Lake Memphremagog and Its Environment Report states the nutrient content of run-off from various land uses. It found water coming from agricultural land contained four times more phosphorus than water running off undisturbed forest land. Run-off from urban/built-up land contained twelve times more phosphorus than run-off from forested land. (Source:

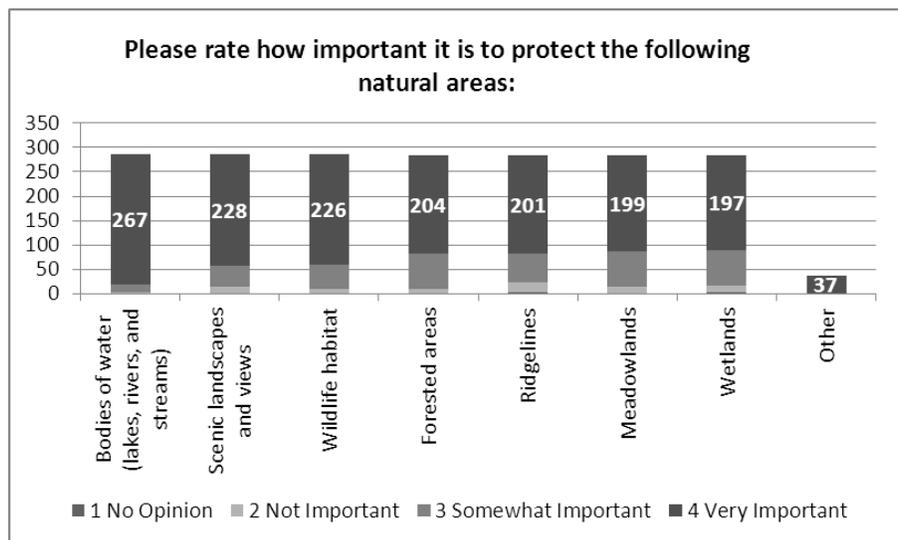
Quebec/Vermont Working Group on Managing Lake Memphremagog and Its Environment, Final Report, 1993, page 24. Available from Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Water Quality Division, Lakes and Ponds Unit in Waterbury.)



Non-point runoff due to deforestation of an acre or

more in high elevation areas is a key concern to Westmore, where the unique topography places the developed core of the community in a “bowl” surrounded by ridgelines and a network of rivers and streams that drain into Westmore’s lakes and ponds. Impacts from the storms of 2011 in neighboring communities only reinforce this concern. Subsequent microbursts and storms from deforested ridgelines are likely to produce flooding and damage to downstream properties and siltage in Westmore’s most cherished bodies of water, including Lake Willoughby.

Many of the same problems and corrective measure apply to other surface waters in Westmore as well. The town has a real opportunity to develop these lands in a way to prevent problems in the future and maintain the water quality in town. If the town of Westmore is serious about maintaining and improving water quality, the question of



non-point pollution must be addressed.

When asked to rank the protection of Westmore's natural resources, survey respondents identified protection of Westmore's bodies of water as being most important (267 responses). Protecting surface waters from sedimentation and runoff was also ranked as most important.

Lakes and Ponds

Lake front development has traditionally had second homes that add taxes to the community while not requiring a lot of public services. Even though this trend has begun to change somewhat the Planning Commission generally supports the development of lakeshore property, keeping in mind that increased impervious coverage decreases the ability of the land to absorb run-off.

Traditionally camps were built close to the water's edge to afford the best view from the living room and front porch. The camps were used only two or three weeks a year and the number of people staying at a camp were usually few. The dishes were done by hand, laundry done in the sink and taking a bath meant jumping in the lake. The toilet consisted of an outhouse set back from the water's edge.

Life around some of Westmore's bodies of water is different today. People use their camps for much longer periods and some have been converted to year round homes. Many camps now have showers, dishwashers, washing machines, and flush toilets. Where does all this "gray water" go? When these camps were built, they had such infrequent use that people were not very concerned about their impact on water quality. But today things have changed - perhaps significantly. Since most of these camps are built on wet soils and close to the lake, when dish water is drained out of the sink it ends up in the lake. Granted, the gray water may initially drain into a sand filter or "dry well" but this treatment is superficial at best. The "black water" may go to a sealed holding tank. If properly managed and cleaned out this system could be very effective. Ensuring that this happens is an administrative nightmare.

The question is "so what if this gray and black water enters the lake?" The answer has several parts. As the use of the lake has increased, so has the amount of gray water and other pollution. A lake can naturally treat a certain amount of pollution but, if the amount surpasses the lake's natural ability to treat the waste, it starts to accumulate in the sediments and water column. Willoughby Lake is a cold water lake, which means it has a much harder time breaking down soap and other pollution. Once a particular concentration of pollution is reached, large algae blooms will occur and the overall water quality will diminish rapidly. This is already occurring on the back side of Willoughby. And since it takes a long time to build up, it will also take a long time to correct the problem once it has occurred. Run-off contributes to increased phosphorus levels which allows the establishment of Eurasian Milfoil, a problem already experienced in Willoughby Lake. When the water quality goes down, so may tourism and associated revenues.

Large amounts of algae, a small plant which needs phosphorus to grow, in the water decreases the oxygen available for fish, warms the temperature and is an indicator of possible other

pollution. Contaminating the lake with untreated septage is not only distasteful it may add dangerous virus and pathogens to the water -- a real public health concern.

There are ways to prevent the degradation of water quality. It is clear that if strict measures are not adopted and enforced the bodies of water may end up polluted and containing a significant algae bloom, Eurasian Milfoil, or other nuisance aquatic growth.

Preventative measures include ensuring that no black water and very little gray water enter the lakes, use of biodegradable soaps, establishing and/or maintaining vegetative buffer strips along the shore to help prevent run-off and erosion, setting the camps back from the water's edge to allow a greater filtering distance before any pollution that does occur enters the lake, and requiring that all year round or enlarged camps have properly designed and installed septic systems.

Buffer Strips

Buffer strips are areas of natural, undisturbed vegetation along the shoreline of lakes, ponds, and streams. They provide many functions including providing wildlife habitat, a visual screen from the water, and reducing the run-off and nutrients that enter the water. This works by slowing down run-off, allowing time for water to soak into the ground and the nutrients to be absorbed into the soil and plants.

The size of the buffer strip is determined by its intended function and the topography of the shoreline. Any sized buffer strip, even a few feet, is better than no buffer at all. Certain wildlife species such as black bear need large strips (perhaps as large as 1 mile), other species such as most birds need only 25 to 50 feet. The size of the buffer strip required to effectively eliminate nutrients from run-off is debated. Most sources suggest 50 - 350 feet. The Vermont guidelines for acceptable logging practices (AMPs) suggest a minimum of 50 feet on areas with slopes less than ten percent and an additional 20 feet for each additional 10 percent slope. (Source: Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, "Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont".) In 2000, Westmore amended its zoning bylaw to require natural vegetation buffers for lots on Lake Willoughby, Bald Hill Pond, Long Pond, Job's Pond, and all other ponds, lakes, rivers, and year-round streams.

Undeveloped Lakeshore

In 1992 the Northeastern Vermont Development Association completed a resource inventory of the undeveloped lakeshore in northern Vermont. The study identified undeveloped tracts of lakeshore on lakes over 10 acres. An "undeveloped tract" was defined as having a minimum of 1000 feet of shore frontage with a depth of 250 horizontal feet with no human structures or 2-wheel drive roads.

Six lakes and ponds are in the Town of Westmore. They have 97,649 feet of shoreline of which 46.6% (45,552 feet) is undeveloped. Westmore ranks second in Orleans County (after Newport City) for the amount of shoreline and third for having the most undeveloped lake shoreline (after Derby and Morgan). See the attached map for location of the undeveloped portions.

Undeveloped shoreline contains many valuable attributes including critical wildlife habitat, it helps maintain high water quality and enhances recreation opportunities.

| Lake/Pond Name | Total Shore Length (ft) | Undeveloped Length (ft) | Percent Undeveloped | Public Ownership |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Willoughby | 57,795 | 19,853 | 34% | Partial |
| Long | 12,250 | 5,912 | 48% | Access Only |
| Bald Hill | 10,232 | 7,143 | 70% | Partial |
| Jobs | 7,111 | 4,468 | 63% | Access Only |
| Brown | 6,742 | 4,657 | 69% | Access Only |
| Mud | 3,519 | 3,519 | 100% | No |

Ice Fishing

As more people use the lakes in the wintertime for ice fishing, skiing and snowmobiling, there is growing concern over the impact on water quality due to human waste, trash, and oil/gas pollution.

Flash Floods

Westmore has many areas with steep slopes in upper watershed areas where minimal alteration of vegetative cover through logging or changing drainage patterns through building roads or other large-scale development and deforestation may significantly increase the likelihood of flash floods. Although flash floods may not seem like a large problem, their potential should be recognized and monitored.

Flood Hazards

Westmore has flood hazards maps of areas at risk of inundation. The town’s zoning bylaws regulate development in these areas. Unfortunately, the town of Westmore did not apply for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which would allow property owners to purchase flood hazard insurance at more affordable rates. Because the flood hazard regulations were adopted more than a decade ago, it is unlikely that they would be approved for inclusion in the NFIP. If the town wishes to join the NFIP, the planning commission may have to adopt new flood hazard regulations.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. In order to decrease the amount of siltation caused by building construction, logging, and farming, erosion control standards were included in the 2000 revision to the Westmore

Zoning Bylaw and should continue to be enforced.

2. The lakes and ponds should be treated in two categories: one to remain essentially unchanged (Bald Hill, Brown, Mud, Jobs and Long Ponds) and the other to address concerns caused by development around the shore (Willoughby Lake).
3. In order to protect the water quality, wilderness character, wildlife habitat, and rare plant species, undisturbed buffer strips should be maintained or/established around the undeveloped ponds and streams. The Lake Association and Planning Commission should work together to encourage reestablishment of native vegetation along the lakes and ponds.
4. In order to alleviate unnecessary burdens on the camp owners, protect the water quality, and streamline the permit process, revisions to the zoning by-law were adopted in 2000. Revisions include:
 - a. requiring a properly engineered and installed septic system before a camp can be significantly enlarged or used for year-round occupancy
 - b. restricting additions or expansion of existing structures from getting closer to the water's edge than where they already are
 - c. enacting appropriate setbacks from the water for all new structures
 - d. creating vegetative buffer strips along the lakes and streams
5. Logging and agricultural practices in Vermont are addressed in the Acceptable Management Practices guidelines defined by the Commissioner of Forests and Parks and the Commissioner of Agriculture. Presently local municipalities are not authorized to enact any stricter regulations on logging or agricultural practices. However, they can adopt regulations that reflect the same standards that are contained within the AMP guidelines. Due to increasing concerns about the effect of logging and agriculture on water quality, the AMPs should be carefully reviewed and considered.
6. The people who own camps around a lake have a vested interest in maintaining the high level of water quality in the lake. The Town works to ensure the proper installation and monitoring of septic tanks, buffer strips and the like.
7. When natural land cover is removed (i.e. clear-cuts and logging), or roads are built with improper drainage, there is an increased threat of flash floods which might destroy property, increase erosion, and reduce the amount of water being "recharged" into the ground water.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Erosion control standards should continue to be enforced.
2. Comply with the current zoning by-law to address the stated concerns about the protection of water quality.
3. Refer to the standards set forth in the Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs and Acceptable Agricultural Practice Regulations.
4. Work closely with the lake associations to encourage the maintenance of water quality in the lakes.

5. The Lake Association and Planning Commission should work together to encourage native vegetation along the lakes and ponds.
6. Areas with great potential for flash floods should be identified and residents be made aware of the potential hazards.
7. Assemble and have available information on existing laws regarding use of the lakes in the winter.
8. Inform the Water Resources Board about the growing concern over the use of the lakes in the winter.
9. Development that would significantly contribute to runoff should be prohibited.
10. Commercial and residential development with a density greater than one single-family dwelling per 10 acres should be prohibited in high elevation areas.

7. AGRICULTURE

Westmore's active farms are concentrated in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the town. These farms total approximately 2,644 acres, with active dairy farms consisting of approximately 1,497 acres. Less than half the land is in use as pasture and cropland, with the remainder consisting of woodland. In addition, these farms borrow or lease land from others for hay or pasture in Westmore. These 2,644 acres represent 11.9% of Westmore's total land area of 22,092.8 acres. For comparison, Westmore's lakes and ponds occupy 1,926 acres. Occasionally farmers also use farmland in Barton and Brownington.

Three of the local farms are participants in the Vermont Current Use Tax Abatement Program. In 2011, Westmore had a total of 10,237 acres in the Current Use Program, however, only 1,810 acres were enrolled as farmland. The town was reimbursed \$26,301 dollars in taxes on all land in the Program in 2011.

Several of Westmore's farmers are the third generation on their farms. They all see themselves remaining in farming, but want to retain their option to sell land as needed for capitalizing their operations or for retirement. Some farm owners expressed their intent to sell residential lots. Some also are interested in selling their development rights to ensure that their land remains in agricultural use.

Westmore is fortunate to support two farmers markets, which operate from June through September. The Westmore Farmers Market takes place weekly in the parking lot of the Westmore Community Church, and the Willoughby Lake Farmers Market and Artisans Market is held weekly at the intersection of Route 5A and Long Pond Road.

All counties in the Northeast Kingdom have more farms per capita than the Vermont average, and significantly more than the national average. (Source: Northeast Kingdom Food Systems Plan). According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Orleans County remains the most agricultural county in the Northeast Kingdom, and one of the most agricultural counties in the state (sixth in terms of number of farm operations, fourth in terms of total acreage). As of the

most recent Census of Agriculture, there are 635 farm operations, totalling an estimated 130,308 acres, or 10.6% of the farm acreage in the state. Total farm operations are up from the 2002 Census, which showed 583 farms, while total acreage is down slightly from 132,240 acres. On a whole, the average acreage of a farm operation has decreased in recent years, possibly because dairy farming increasingly accounts for a smaller percentage of the total number of farms. In 2007, the farms in Orleans County produced 12% of the state's agricultural output (as measured in terms of market value of all agricultural products sold), representing a very slight decrease from the previous Census in 2002. The average age of the principal farm operator in Orleans County as of the 2007 is 55.4, which is significantly higher than the county median age of 43.7. The Northeast Kingdom has seen a renaissance in agriculture in recent years, and the viability of farming may have been enhanced by the growth in agricultural and value-added processing opportunities in the region. In 2011, Northeastern Vermont Development Association created and published a Regional Food Systems Plan for the Northeast Kingdom. The purpose of this plan is to drive the development of new and more diverse agricultural activity within the region's economy and to develop a more comprehensive strategy to stimulate the food system sector for the Northeast Kingdom. The plan contains multiple indices for tracking progress and development is updated annually. The Northeast Kingdom Food Systems group, a cross-cutting team of stakeholders in the agricultural and value-added sector, meet regularly four times a year.

While agriculture is an important part of Westmore's cultural heritage, and it also accounts for employment activity in the region. An independent report commissioned by NVDA found that the region's agricultural processing sector accounts for 700 jobs in the Northeast Kingdom, which pay, on average, more than \$30,000 a year.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. In general, Westmore has soil conditions that support sound agricultural practices.
2. Retain the quality of life, scenic attributes, diversity of wildlife, and the environmental harmony and beauty that are the products of responsible farming and forestry.
3. Refer property owners to the appropriate agencies for information on various options for subdividing and developing land, estate planning, the Current Use Program, etc.
4. Listing land at its current use instead of its "highest and best use" is important for farmers and would help reduce high property taxes which make farming more difficult and jeopardizes the long term viability of family farms.
5. Many farmers depend on leased land to sustain their farms. Changing access and fees for using this land make it difficult for the farmers to do long term financial planning or investments into the land.
6. Farmers and owners of agricultural lands need to learn about the different conservation options for their land.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Actively support and encourage the maintenance of the State of Vermont Use Value Appraisal Program (Current Use).

2. Assist and support landowners seeking ways to keep land open while remaining economically viable.
3. Explore local tax alternatives that would help farmers afford to maintain their productive, open land. A committee should be established to look into a local tax stabilization program for the farming community.
4. Follow closely the alternatives brought forward in the Legislature regarding property tax reform; monitor the impact they might have on the town.
5. Recommendations might be developed for applicants seeking to convert active farmland to non-agricultural uses. The process could encourage the siting of buildings, roads and other structures to have the least significant impact to agriculture. An example might be to locate a proposed house along the edge of a field instead of in the middle thus preserving the field's agricultural potential.
6. Sponsor workshops and buy written materials on land conservation techniques and creative ways to subdivide and/or develop land that minimize the impact on the agricultural resources, estate planning, the Current Use program, etc.
7. Work with non-agricultural landowners to stabilize lease agreements and conserve their lands which are vital to the farming community.
8. In order to work on conservation projects that are important at the local level, residents should consider establishing a local land trust such as the Newark Trust Fund or becoming actively involved with a regional land trust such as the Passumpsic Valley Land Trust in St. Johnsbury.
9. The Town should consider setting up a conservation trust fund so the mechanism would exist to raise money through a bond vote or by individual gifts to be used for local conservation projects.
10. Encourage ongoing education about diversifying farming.

8. FORESTS

Forest land plays a critical role in supporting the local and regional timber economy, recreation, and hunting.

Timber harvesting is a traditional way of life in Westmore. Most of the land in town is owned by large landowners and harvesting timber has gone on for several hundred years.

Forests also play an important role in maintaining a healthy local and global environment. They enhance air and water quality, provide important habitat for wildlife, and supply quiet places to walk. Forests are also critically important in maintaining the biosphere and helping to slow down the trend toward global climate change. Westmore's forests play an important role both locally and globally. They are more than trees growing in the woods.

Mountaintops/Ridgelines

Due to their unique ecosystems and the potential for detrimental visual impacts by development,

the ridgelines and mountaintops are considered important areas of town and should be protected from future development.

The Lake Willoughby Area has been designated a Registered Natural Landmark under provisions of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. According to the US Department of the Interior, this site possesses “exceptional value in illustrating the natural history of the United States.” The area, which includes the Willoughby Cliffs, is also surrounded by unique topography, which makes maintaining the integrity of Westmore’s ridgelines especially important. The core of the town –including the Willoughby Lake Area – are virtually enclosed on all sides by ridgelines, effectively placing the center of the community in a “bowl”. All of these ridgelines, which are depicted on the attached Viewshed Map and accompanying photos, are highly visible from the lower elevations, leaving the town particularly vulnerable to adverse impacts of ridgeline development. Westmore maintains a vast network of recreational and hiking trails that traverse these ridgelines and afford access to a multitude of spectacular views. This asset is at the core of the community’s identity as a tourism destination and is critical to the long-term economic health of the community. The community’s ridgelines therefore must be treated as a whole, rather than a series of viewsheds.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. The rate of clear-cutting seems to have accelerated. There is concern about the natural and social implications of such a practice.
2. There is also concern about the rate at which the forest is being harvested especially using whole tree chippers. There is a perceived detrimental impact on water quality, biological diversity, soil erosion and the visual quality of the area. To ensure sustainable forest harvesting techniques are used, individual landowners should be encouraged to work with a knowledgeable forester to draw up a forestry plan.
3. In order to stabilize the tax burden on town residents by reducing the need for future town services and maintain large tracts of forest land required by the timber industry, new development would be encouraged to take place along existing town roads.
4. There are creative ways to develop land with minimal impact on forest land such as encouraging creative development ideas, encouraging sensible land subdivision, and placing year-round homes on town roads.
5. Westmore has unique topography with many beautiful ridgelines contrasting with the valleys, lakes, and ponds. These attributes are often not fully recognized until they are altered. The ridgelines in town must be preserved and protected when planning any new development. Any development on the ridgelines should not
 - a. Create a visual intrusion into the viewshed as viewed from any public right of way, body of water, or from any vantage point in the National Natural Landmark designation area.
 - b. Result in clear-cutting of core habitat forested area, migratory routes and wildlife travel corridors as mapped by the state or the municipality or fragment large tracts of forested land. Trees of 10” to 12” in diameter shall be preserved.
 - c. Create a threat to Westmore wildlife and natural communities, including, but not

limited to plants, birds, reptiles, and aquatic life.

- d. Traverse or impede travel along known hiking trails or create visual intrusion along hiking trails.
6. Any development on or near ridgelines should employ landscaping screening techniques to prevent undue adverse impact to Westmore's scenic ridgelines, as viewed from any public right of way, body of water, known hiking trails, or any vantage point in the National Natural Landmark Area.
7. Westmore should work with neighboring municipalities to help protect their ridgelines that would a significant environmental or visual impact on Westmore.
8. As with agricultural lands, taxes on forest land often exceed the ability of that land to generate income. Therefore a statewide Use Value Appraisal Program was set up to assist landowners maintain large tracts of forest land.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. The Planning Commission encourages individual landowners to consider working with a knowledgeable forester to draw up a forestry plan. Such plans should consider sustainable harvesting techniques, timber stand mix, and continuous renewal of the forest resource.
2. Encourage new development to use creative ways to develop land with the least impact on the resource such as encouraging creative land development.
3. Sponsor workshops and buy written materials on land conservation techniques and creative ways to subdivide and/or develop land that minimize the impact on the forest resources, explain estate planning and the Current Use program, etc.
4. Actively support and encourage the maintenance of the State of Vermont Use Value Appraisal Program (Current Use).
5. Assist and support landowners seeking ways to keep land open while remaining economically viable.
6. Amend bylaws with regard to development on the ridgelines.

9. NATURAL AREAS, WETLANDS AND WILDLIFE

Natural Heritage Sites

The Vermont Natural Heritage Program completed an inventory of the natural heritage sites within Westmore. Although the study was not necessarily all inclusive, meaning there may be sites still not identified, it does supply a good first step at locating areas with special natural features such as rare and endangered plants and special wildlife habitat. The intent of the inventory is for educational purposes so landowners are aware of what they have on their land and may take actions to preserve it. Working with the landowners to protect these sites is a priority for the Commission. Map 2 gives a general idea of the location of the sites.

Identifying areas that are important to wildlife (ie. deer yards, beech stands, spruce/fir forests) is

needed. This information would be used to encourage landowners to maintain the areas most important to wildlife. It could also be used in an advisory fashion by the Zoning Administrator and Zoning board of Adjustment.

Wetlands

Based on the National Wetland Inventory Maps, Westmore has 262 acres of wetlands mostly of 2-3 acres in size or larger. These maps are not conclusive, however, and there are many smaller areas that have not been mapped by either the federal government or the state. Wetlands perform a variety of functions, which vary from one wetland to another, but which together combine to form an integrated system of environmental benefits. These include, but are not limited to, water quality protection, flood control, shoreline stabilization, contributions to groundwater and streamflows, and wildlife and fisheries habitat. In recognition of the importance wetlands play in the environment, they are protected by the State of Vermont Wetland Rules, which include substantial penalties to towns that do not adequately protect wetlands through application of zoning and planning rules. They are an important part of Westmore and should be preserved and enhanced.

Maintaining critical wetland areas is important to the town, and must be diligently pursued to avoid destruction of or damage to wetlands and the imposition of penalties by the state.

Deer Yards

Deer in Vermont live near the northern limit of white-tail deer range in eastern North America. This forces deer to use very specific winter habitat when severe climatic conditions become a threat to the animals' survival. Areas which are used year after year by deer seeking winter shelter are called "wintering areas" or deer yards. These areas consist of two basic habitat components. The "core range" is often characterized by concentrations of relatively tall, dense softwoods. This reduces the snow depth, protects from the wind and increases the average temperature and relative humidity. South facing slopes are often preferred due to increased solar gain. The second component consists of mixed hardwood and softwood adjacent to or within the core range which provides accessible browse.

The availability of quality wintering areas is the limiting factor for whitetail deer in most of Vermont. Since only 6 percent of Vermont is considered deer wintering areas, the State of Vermont has made protection of these areas a priority. Considering the economic contribution and the important place that deer hunting has in Vermonters' traditional lifestyle, the priority is state-wide understandable. These lands receive more scrutiny by State agencies when development is proposed on them. The State goal of protecting deer yards may be good, but State agencies should consider the overall impact on the local towns and landowners before making any decisions.

According to the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife maps, Westmore has two significant deer yards. One is at the northeast end of Willoughby Lake behind Route 5A . The other deer yard is between the Mill Brook and the Town Hall Road.

Habitat Blocks and Connectivity

A recent inventory of the region's wildlife habitat connections demonstrates interdependence with neighboring towns, the Northeast Kingdom, and beyond. Coordinated conservation efforts in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine are working to identify important areas within the larger northern forest region that provide a wildlife corridor from the Adirondacks in New York through the northern forest of Maine and beyond. A "wildlife corridor" at this larger, regional scale is composed of blocks of forest and connecting lands that many animals need for sufficient food, cover, and access to mates. The forest blocks provide prime wildlife habitat while the connecting lands—often small forest and woodland patches, wetlands and river corridors—allow wildlife movement across the landscape between larger forested blocks.

A key component of this work involved the identification and mapping of large unfragmented habitat blocks by the Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Vermont Land Trust. Habitat blocks of less than 20 acres were excluded from this study. Although these smaller areas may support some biological diversity and connectivity, such areas provide little interior forest habitat. Habitat blocks were then evaluated and weighted for their statewide importance based on a number of factors. The resulting ranking identified a high concentration of statewide "priority" habitat blocks encompassing most of Essex County and the eastern edges of Caledonia, including Kirby, Burke, and Newark. Westmore contains a significant concentration of critical habitat blocks, providing connectivity to the east toward Essex County, through Newark, Charleston, and Morgan,

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. A local pool of money could be considered to be used as a local match when trying to obtain public conservation money.
2. The availability of resources on proper land management and conservation planning should be increased for residents.
3. Areas important to wildlife (ie. deer yards, beech stands, spruce/fir forests) need to be identified and mapped.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Encourage a local conservation fund which can be used for conservation projects. The fund could accept donations or municipal funds.
2. Hold workshops on natural resources management, estate planning, woodlot management, and land conservation techniques.
3. Contact local sports clubs to assist in identifying areas important to wildlife such as deer yards, beech stands, and spruce/fir forests.
4. Identify, with the assistance of the state, all protected wetlands in Westmore, and notify all landowners of the locations of wetlands on their properties, as well as restrictions that may apply to their use of the wetlands.
5. Prohibit commercial and large-scale residential development that would have undue

adverse impact on wildlife.

10. STATE LANDS

The State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources manages approximately 3,000 acres within the Town of Westmore. This is about 11% of the town.

The State Forest is one of the crown jewels among State owned lands. It draws thousands of people to the town and supplies a steady flow of wood-fiber for the timber industry. As the regional economy turns more toward recreation/tourism and people see the loss of public access to private lands in other areas of the state, Willoughby State Forest will become even more important. The public lands provide a steady flow of wood fiber which employs loggers and can be used for manufacturing wood products and paper.

Enhancing tourism is another important contribution the public lands can do for the local economy. The recreation opportunities that the State provides should continue to be rustic and less developed allowing private sector to develop the more lucrative “developed” recreational opportunities such as cabins, RV parks, etc.

The District Office in St. Johnsbury revises the management plan for the State lands in Westmore every few years. This gives Westmore residents an opportunity to influence how these lands are managed.

The State lands are managed by the office in St. Johnsbury.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Remain involved with writing the long term management plan for the State lands to ensure Westmore’s interests are addressed.
2. Encourage frequent contact with the State officials to make our interests known.
3. Encourage the State officials to come to town and meet with local residents so our issues can be known.
4. Encourage the State to come up with a solution to the mooring problem at the south end of Lake Willoughby.

11. SCENIC FEATURES

Landscape Forms

Westmore’s uniqueness and appeal to visitors is in great part due to the beauty and serenity of the physical surroundings.

Visual contrasts in land forms provide some of the most beautiful landscapes. Westmore is endowed with many such visual pleasures such as the rolling countryside, farmland surrounding Lake Willoughby, the steep rocky cliffs of Hor, Pisgah, Wheeler, etc.

All “entrances” to Westmore are spectacular whether it be coming around the corner going east

on Route 16, and suddenly being on the shores of Willoughby or coming in over the heights of the other roads.

Westmore also has several ponds which give a similar landscape contrast as Lake Willoughby but on a smaller scale. These are less visible to the general public due to the remote location, but nonetheless, important to recognize.

The importance of scenic views in Westmore should not be underestimated as an important part of the overall character of the town.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. The visual impact of proposed commercial or large residential developments must be considered prior to construction or granting the necessary permits.
2. The importance of the ridgelines in Westmore must be considered in the evaluating the appropriateness of any commercial or large residential development.

12. HISTORIC FEATURES

The unique character of a community comes from both its natural and built environments. Westmore is blessed with rolling topography and fertile soils that provide for a variety of land uses. The community is also fortunate to have many historic and interesting buildings. These add to the “specialness” of the community as much as the scenery.

This plan’s intent is to work toward protecting both the natural and built environments. In order to do that, a comprehensive inventory and plan needs to be developed. The inventory should identify those areas with historic or cultural qualities such as cemeteries, monuments, buildings, old cellar holes, spiritual grounds, and the like. A partial list includes Balance Rock, Sliding Falls, the Long Pond Area, Sentinel Rock, Boulders, the School House, Cheney House and Fox Hall.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. A comprehensive inventory and preservation plan needs to be developed to identify and protect historic and cultural features in town.
2. The Schoolhouse is a historic building and has been upgraded to serve as a new municipal building.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Develop an inventory and preservation plan for the historic and cultural features in town.
2. Encourage and assist property owners to list their structures on the historic registers.

13. EDUCATION

Although Westmore does not have a school it does have a committed school board that makes every attempt to participate in district meetings and respond to citizen questions and concerns. Our elementary students may elect to attend a school of their choice. Westmore tuitions students

to Barton, Charleston, Orleans, Lyndonville, Newark, and West Burke. The Town of Westmore is responsible for tuition rates established by the school(s) chosen but no higher than district tuition.

Westmore, with three hundred fifty (350) full-time residents, spends over one million seven-hundred forty-five thousand (\$1.745M) dollars on education for our thirty-four (34) students K-12. This includes, but is not limited to, tuition payments(s) of approximately eight-thousand eight hundred-fifty (\$8,850.00) dollars per student and our contribution to the “sharing pool”. Under Act 60, Westmore was designated a “Gold Town”. As a “Gold Town” we were mandated, based on the Act 60 formula, to send tax dollars to support “receiving towns”. Westmore’s school tax obligation, before Act 60, was approximately three hundred twenty thousand (\$320,000.00) dollars. At present our school tax obligation has significantly increased, with \$1,297,000 going to support for receiving towns. This impacts all property owners. The legislature continues to study this issue and Westmore participates in the process.

Westmore, as a member of Orleans Central Supervisory Union, sends its students to Lake Region Union High School. We are most pleased with the high quality educational experience our students receive within the district.

Home schooling is supported through financial assistance voted at Westmore’s Annual School Meeting. On average we have not had more than two or three home school students.

Westmore has been approached, informally, by other schools in the district requesting that Westmore consider tuitioning students to their respective schools. There has been some discussion (reduced tuition as an incentive) regarding sending students to a different school. This option will, we suspect, be the subject of more serious consideration as Act 60 further impacts Town taxpayers.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Encourage the parents of the town to be active in school decisions and to reconsider periodically, the possibilities of having a town school or forming an elementary union district with one of the two main schools our students attend, thus giving representation on said school board.
2. The Planning Commission will supply the School Board with information about population projections and other items as requested.

14. HOUSING

Westmore has a dichotomy of housing available. The homes along the shoreline of the lakes are considerably more expensive and abundant than those in other parts of town. This impacts the Grand List but it makes the number of units available for lower income people more limited. Having a diversity of housing available is important to maintaining the character of the town.

What is Affordable?

National and state housing policies agree that renters and homeowners should expend no more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs. Lenders typically will not issue loans which

require borrowers to expend more than 28% of their gross income for mortgage or rent payments, insurance, and taxes. Affordable housing is defined as housing costs (gross rent or mortgage plus taxes and insurance) that are below 30% of the median household income for the area.

“Affordability” is defined by statute. It is either

(A) Housing that is owned by its inhabitants whose gross annual household income does not exceed 80 percent of the county median income, or 80 percent of the standard metropolitan statistical area income if the municipality is located in such an area, as defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the total annual cost of the housing, including principal, interest, taxes, insurance, and condominium association fees is not more than 30 percent of the household's gross annual income.

OR

(B) Housing that is rented by its inhabitants whose gross annual household income does not exceed 80 percent of the county median income, or 80 percent of the standard metropolitan statistical area income if the municipality is located in such an area, as defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the total annual cost of the housing, including rent, utilities, and condominium association fees, is not more than 30 percent of the household's gross annual income.

According to the ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2006-2010, the median household income for Orleans County is \$40,202, and \$53,889 for Westmore. The standard method for calculating affordability is using 80% of the county-wide median income as a low- to moderate guideline, or \$32,162. Of that amount, no more than 30% should be spent on housing -- \$9,648 annually \$804 monthly. Households with less than 50% of the county median are defined as very low income (\$20,101 or less), and those with less than 30 % are defined as very, very low income (\$12,061 or less).

In addition to monthly payments, the home buyer must have the savings necessary to cover the down payment plus purchase costs.

Renting

Accessory dwelling units, which by law are treated as a permitted use of a single family owner-occupied dwelling, are one form of affordable housing in Westmore, and probably the most feasible solution for renters in Westmore. According to the 2010 Census, 17 (10.3%) of Westmore's 165 occupied housing units are occupied by renters. This represents an decrease in the proportion of renter-occupied units from 21% in 2000. Median gross rent the ACS 5-Year Estimate, 2006-2010 is \$1,063. Assuming a household is paying the median rent, then a household income of more than \$3,500 a month would be necessary for the rent to be affordable. This jump in median gross rent, however, is a huge increase from only \$325 from the 1990 Census. It's possible that this figure has been inflated by Westmore's strong seasonal rental market.

Number of Households

The way the population groups itself into households affects the demand for housing. Nationwide and within Vermont household size declined dramatically during the 1970s, and has continued to decline more slowly since. This trend is partly due to families having fewer children. However, the decrease in the number of individuals living together is also due to the breakup of extended family households, an increasing number of single-parent households, and the larger number of elderly who are choosing to remain in their own homes.

In Orleans County, average household size decreased from 2.66 in 1990 to 2.45 in 2000, and to 2.33 in 2010. Westmore’s average household size was 2.07 in 2010, down from 2.30 at the 2000 Census, and down from 2.56 in 1990.

Number of Units

TABLE 3: Number, Occupancy, & Use of Housing Units, Town of Westmore

| | Total Units | Vacant | Owner Occupied | Renter Occupied | Seasonal |
|------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1980 | 481 | 386 | 87 | 8 | Not available |
| 1990 | 542 | 9 | 103 | 16 | 414 |
| 2000 | 530 | 34 | 105 | 28 | 363 |
| 2010 | 598 | 27 | 148 | 17 | 406 |

Source U.S. Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010

Some of these Census figures, particularly the total units in 1990, seem to have some inconsistency which is assumed to be due to differences in definition and counting methods.

TABLE 4: Population and Number of Households, –1980-2010 - Westmore

| Number of Household % Increase | | | Population % Increase | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1980-1990 | 1990-2000 | 2000-2010 | 1980-1990 | 1990-2000 | 2000-2010 |
| 20% | 12% | 24.1% | 19% | .3% | 14.4% |

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010

Age of Units

Like the rest of the region, a substantial portion (37%) of Westmore’s year-round housing stock was built before 1940. (This figure comes from ACS 5-Year Estimates) Another 10 % was constructed pre-1950. There was a building boom between 1960 and 1975, and the 1990 Census figures show another active building cycle emerged during the 1980’s. Local sources suggest that recent building involves remodeling and/or replacement of older structures and limited amounts of new construction.

The number of households in Westmore is increasing more rapidly than its population. The number of households in Westmore increased from 119 in 1990 to 133 in 2000, and to 165 in 2010. (U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010).

Land Prices

The cost of land is an important factor in the price of housing. The sale price of open land in Westmore, according to property transfer tax reports during 2011 was an average \$1,646/acre for 15 parcels with a median acreage of 4.9 acres.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. The household income figures indicate that there is a need for more affordable housing throughout the county and in Westmore. Given Westmore's small size this might be addressed with very few units.
2. The increase in house prices has outpaced increases in income, exacerbating the previous affordability gap.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Study the feasibility of adopting a Transfer of Development Rights program within the Zoning Ordinance to encourage development in some parts of town while preserving open space and agriculture in other parts of towns.
2. Many seasonal homes have in the past become year-round homes without improving their septic system to handle the increased use. State law now requires adequate septic systems prior to the conversion of use.
3. Study whether it might be helpful to have subdivision regulation for the purpose of promoting orderly growth and the provision of municipal services at an affordable cost to the community.
4. Inform residents about federal and state programs for weatherizing, rehabilitation and home financing by making the information available through the town clerk and zoning administrator.
5. Ensure the current zoning by-law does not needlessly discriminate against affordable housing through requiring excessive lot sizes or building standards.
6. A survey of the retired and elderly of the town should be conducted to establish whether or not their current and future housing needs are being met in the town.
7. Conduct an annual review of the number of mobile homes on rented lots within the town because a disproportionate increase in this type of housing may indicate a lack of alternative affordable housing in the community.

15. TRANSPORTATION

Westmore's geography dictates that travel within its boundaries, and to and from neighboring towns, be primarily by individual conveyance over the existing road system. State Route 5A and Town Road 16 provide year round access to the Lake Willoughby part of town, and to the secondary roads that serve the remote areas.

Westmore residents are dependent upon a well-maintained road system. The road network within Westmore consists of:

- 7.22 miles of State highways (Route 5 A)
- 1.50 miles of Class II town highways. These are designated by the selectboard and approved by the Vermont State Highway Board.
- 24.89 miles of Class III town highways. These are certified as Class III after consultation with the district highway engineer. Minimum requirements are that Class III highways be negotiable under normal conditions, all seasons of the year, by standard manufactured pleasure cars, and thus such highways must have sufficient surface and base, adequate drainage, and enough width to allow winter maintenance.
- 3.77 miles of Class IV town highways. These highways are maintained for summer service only; persons erecting dwellings served by these roads cannot expect winter service.

Highways

In addition to State Route 5 and Town Road 16, the town maintains 24.89 miles of Class III roads which serve the part of town west of the lake abutting Sutton and Barton, and areas to the east abutting Charleston, Brighton and Newark. Only the roads serving year round residents are kept open in winter, and are posted to exclude travel by heavy vehicles during spring thaw when travel by any type vehicle may be impractical. There are also 3.77 miles of Class IV roads which provide access to seasonal homes and receive minimal maintenance from the town. There is also a system of trails which provide recreational access to remote and scenic areas with special natural characteristics. Some of these are on state land and others are on private holdings, but have been traditionally open to public use. The snowmobile trail system uses private trails, as permitted by landowners, and public roads as authorized by the town.

Northeast Kingdom Byway

Early in 2013 the Vermont Byways Council and the Vermont Agency of Transportation approved the designation of the **Northeast Kingdom Scenic Byway**, a 51-mile corridor that includes Route 5A in Westmore. The route terminates in St. Johnsbury and Newport, and also passes through Lyndonville, East Burke, West Burke, Charleston, and Derby.

To earn Byway designation, a proposed route must possess intrinsic historic, cultural, archeological, natural, recreational, or scenic values. Although the designation is not a regulatory program (no special zoning is required, for example), the Byway must have a Corridor Management Program (CMP) that assesses the intrinsic qualities of the byway and presents strategies for protecting and promoting them. The Byway designation is expected to increase tourism, create new jobs, and foster economic development. The CMP must therefore propose a marketing strategy. The Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) and the Northeast Kingdom Travel and Tourism Association (NEKTTA) are partnering to establish a more formal Byway committee that can raise awareness of the Byway assets. Important next steps will include developing signage for the route and training for regional tourism personnel. Key leaders from each community in the Byway shall be active on this committee.

Rail, Bus and Air Facilities.

No scheduled public transportation facilities or service are available in Westmore. A subsidized

commuter bus service, connecting Lyndonville and Newport, existed for a while but did not prove to be economically viable. The nearest rail service is in Barton with potential for future passenger service. Starting in 2007, an Agency on Aging grant has provided a bus service for seniors twice a month, for a three hour stopover, from Westmore to Barton.

Water Transportation.

Navigation is feasible only on the lakes and ponds within Westmore. Boat launching facilities are available at the fishing accesses maintained by the state fish and wildlife department. Many private landowners maintain docks and launching facilities for their private use. Commercial use of bodies of water is regulated by the town and state.

Parking Facilities.

Space for parking vehicles is provided by the activities which attract the occupants. The town provides parking for north beach users, and the fellowship hall provides space for church, community hall and town clerk's office patrons. The town clerk's office has recently upgraded its parking area, which also provides overflow parking, especially for the church and fellowship hall activities. The state owned fishing accesses include parking space for the vehicles used to launch and recover fishing boats, and trail heads within Willoughby State Forest provide parking space for hikers. All private residences make provision for off-road parking for the vehicles of the occupants and their guests.

Sidewalks and Bicycle Paths.

Sidewalks and bicycle paths are extremely limited in Westmore, and existing construction along 5A complicates the construction of bicycle paths or sidewalks paralleling it. Thus on road cycling and walking can be hazardous in areas of relatively heavy vehicular traffic. The potential exists for the development of better pedestrian and bicycle pathways within the town.

Traffic

Traffic in Westmore is generated by transients using Route 5A and Town Road 16, by residents commuting on local errands, and by tourists enjoying the unique scenery. The areas of most concern are the north beach of Lake Willoughby along Town Road 16, from the cemetery to the Willoughvale, the stretch of 5A from the Northern Exposure General Store to the Willoughby Lake Store and the portion of 5A adjacent to the south beach. The existing road system provides adequate access to the remote areas of town and its rugged condition limits speed and frequency of travel to safe levels. The State has been approached to do a traffic study of Route 5A and a study of the idea of dual traffic regulations for the section of Route 16 along the north beach is currently underway.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. The Town shall cooperate with other agencies in maintaining an efficient infrastructure supporting travel required by residents to use facilities and services within the town and in other localities.
2. Westmore shall maintain the town highway system in safe and usable condition. Extension of the town road system shall be made entirely at the expense of potential users of the extensions, and with prior approval of the planning commission and selectboard who will establish minimum standards for the road extensions. Land owners should be

encouraged to allow access to existing trails unless users abuse the private property traversed. Approval of extension, or deletion, of the existing road and trail systems will take into consideration the preservation of natural remote areas which give the town its basic character.

3. Westmore shall cooperate with other communities within the area to encourage the availability of public transportation in that area. Provision of transportation for the handicapped and aged will be encouraged along with energy saving systems.
4. Each individual, agency or activity shall be responsible for providing adequate parking for vehicles using its services or facilities, to the number of people whose vehicles can be safely accommodated within the available parking space. Permits for new development shall be contingent upon demonstrating that adequate parking will be available.
5. Westmore shall encourage the development of better bicycle-pedestrian pathways within the developed areas of town, and the construction of bicycle-pedestrian lanes to relieve congestion along the main traffic arteries. Development and maintenance of trails in remote areas by public or private sector, shall be encouraged to provide opportunity for serious hiking.

16. ENERGY

There is a growing awareness of the long-term costs - economic, environmental and social - of our energy choices. The use of energy is an important consideration in local decisions about municipal services and facilities, land use, building standards, and our local economy. Our consumption of energy also adds to the build-up of carbon dioxide which is causing global warming known as the green-house effect.

Most of the money Vermonters spend on fossil fuels leaves the state and local economy. Only 20 percent of the dollars spent on non-renewable fuels stays in the state, while 80 percent of that spent on wood remains in Vermont. Replacing fossil fuel systems with wood energy systems would keep the energy dollar within our local economy. Through the use of local, residential scale renewable energy resources, residents decrease the money they spend on energy while increasing the local economy. The Town of Westmore actively encourages the use of local, residential scale renewable energy, provided that it does not adversely impact the town's natural resources. Large scale commercial wind development, including test towers is incompatible with our community's rural character and land use values.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. The public buildings may not be energy efficient and meet contemporary building standards.
2. Many people commute long distances to work each day.
3. Use of local, residential-scale renewable energy resources and energy efficient techniques should be encouraged.
4. As more people are lighting their walkways at night, the amount of light pollution and energy consumption is going up. Not only does it use energy, it detracts from the rural

character of the town.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. An energy audit for the Westmore Town Clerk's Office was completed in 2011. Energy audits should be completed on other public buildings in town, and audits of private buildings should be encouraged.
2. Energy efficiency should be encouraged through green and efficient building techniques, use of Energy Star appliances, efficient lightbulbs.
3. Encourage car and van pooling by providing a parking area for commuters.
4. Establish a town policy that when new roads are built or existing roads are reconstructed, provisions are considered for a bike lane and/or walking path along the road.
5. Promote small woodlot management practices which would supply locally grown wood fuel.
6. Encourage residents and commercial establishments to use the least number of outside lights required to ensure safety.

17. RECREATION

Westmore is one of the recreation meccas of Vermont. Traditionally recreation has been an important part of the local economy beginning in the 1800s when people traveled long distances to relax near Willoughby Lake. This tradition continues to play an important part in the town today as the majority of the local taxes are generated from summer camps and recreation property.

Westmore is very fortunate to possess many recreation attributes with numerous clean lakes, Willoughby State Forest, Sentinel Rock State Park, mountains with an extensive trail network, a town park, and of course Willoughby Lake with its boat access site and several swimming beaches. All of these attributes combined, make Westmore a very special recreation community - perhaps the core to Westmore's economic future.

The town attracts tourism due to the fact that it has Willoughby Lake, Long Pond, Jobs Pond, Bald Hill Pond, Willoughby State Forest, and the many mountains and ridgelines in public and private ownership with spectacular vistas and hiking trails. Westmore's trail network consists of more than 20 linear miles, and includes the "Westmore Challenge," an east-west trail across the town, the Long Pond Trail to the summit of Bald Mountain, trails to Mount Pisgah, Mount Hor, Haystack Mountain, Wheeler and Moose, and even trails that go into neighboring communities. Therefore, the town's concerns include maintenance of the water quality of these bodies of water, and the accessibility of the mountains for hiking. However, all recreation opportunities do not come without some challenges which need to be addressed.

Willoughby Lake

- Grant money could be sought to construct adequate bath houses.

- The south end swimming area is part of Willoughby State Forest. Following public hearings, the master plan calls for low impact recreation and little development. However, in order to maintain the high quality of the area, parking, trails, sanitary facilities and long term maintenance need to be addressed.
- The State boat launch site allows a limited number of large boats to access Willoughby Lake. Although the planning commission does not endorse enlarging the access site or creating new sites, it does recognize a growing problem with traffic and parking safety at the boat launch site.
- As more boats are being moored on Willoughby Lake, especially at the south end, greater involvement between Westmore and appropriate state agencies would be desirable.

Throughout Town

- There are over ten miles of trails on private land and 12 miles on public land. In order to ensure the protection of the resource, they need constant maintenance. This can be accomplished by supporting the trail committee of the Westmore Association and the Conservation Commission.
- Undeveloped lakeshore, forest, and undeveloped ridgelines provide important wildlife habitat, a peaceful place to reflect on life, and protection of water quality. Westmore has many opportunities to protect these areas.
- Hiking, fishing, horseback riding and hunting are enjoyed on public lands and on much of the privately owned land in Westmore. However posting of private land against public recreation has been on the increase and may further increase unless users are careful to respect the rights of property owners.
- Infestation of eurasian milfoil and zebra mussels into Vermont lakes is an ever growing concern. Boaters should be encouraged to check their boats and motors for eurasian milfoil before using Westmore's lakes and ponds.
- Many of the mountain peaks do not have permanent public access through rights of way. The Conservation Commission should work to secure permanent public access to the mountain peaks.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. The town should continue involvement in promoting a mooring management plan for the lake.
2. The Recreation Committee and North Beach Committee should be encouraged to work specifically on recreation issues.
3. Notify the State of Vermont agencies that the planning commission should be included when corresponding with the Town of Westmore on issues concerning the lakes, ponds, and any other environmental or developmental issues in the town.
4. The Town of Westmore should actively support strengthening the liability laws protecting landowners for allowing public access to their private lands.
5. The importance of the ridgelines must be considered in evaluating the appropriateness of

any commercial or large residential development.

18. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of planning for orderly development is to encourage and promote the kind of community growth which preserves the town's physical beauty, unique character, quality of life, and economic welfare of its citizens. In recent years, nearly all of Westmore's development has been residential, both year-round and seasonal. This trend will probably continue and can be compatible with a working agricultural and silvicultural (science of forestry) landscape when planning techniques are effectively applied.

Westmore has only four covered employment establishments in town. ("Covered" employment refers to those employers who fall under the coverage of the state and federal unemployment insurance programs and pay unemployment taxes on their workers.) Two of those establishments fall under the leisure and hospitality category. Because Westmore is a small rural community its economic development strategies are best evaluated against a regional context. In 2011, Northeastern Vermont Development Association provided this context when it commissioned an analysis of "Strategic Industries in the Northeast Kingdom."

The first part of the analysis provided an economic overview. The Northeast Kingdom's labor market is undergoing fundamental changes. Services, trade, transportation, and finance and insurance combined now employ about three in every four workers in the region. While employers in the Northeast Kingdom have not added much employment in recent years, there has been a marked increase in self-employment. The study reports that in 2008, there were 6,391 self-employed (considered "non-employers") in the Northeast Kingdom, amounting to \$2.42 million in revenues. Self-employed workers in the Northeast Kingdom account for a third of total employment.

The second part of the study provides an industry cluster analysis of the Northeast Kingdom. The process of identifying the Northeast Kingdom's industry clusters entailed analyzing detailed sector data, including employment concentration, wage performance and stability, growth and change, and supply chain interrelationships. Clusters were ranked as "mature, challenge, opportunity, or star." Clusters identified as "stars" had high levels of employment concentration and solid recent performances.

One such "star" cluster for the Northeast Kingdom was found to be "visitor and tourism," a sector that showed solid growth during the study period of 2001-2009. The study also indicated that significant investments would help make the region a year-round destination and would continue to add jobs to its solid base of nearly 1,000 workers. Arts, entertainment and recreation (NAICS category 71) experienced a 10.6% growth rate during this study period, compared to a 7.7% change nationwide. Interestingly, this study preceded the announcement of massive investments in the Northeast Kingdom's two ski resorts - \$108 million in Burke Mountain and \$170 million in Jay Peak.

Westmore is located between the Burke and Jay areas and stands to benefit from the recent investments – but can only do so if its natural assets are maintained. In 2006, the Northeast Kingdom was one of only a handful of destinations selected by National Geographic to participate in its Geotourism program. This concept embraces “sustainable tourism” – enhancing the local economy while minimizing the negative impacts on the environment and the local culture. Westmore and the Lake Willoughby area, which has been designated as Registered Natural Area under the Historic Site Act epitomizes the values and assets of geotourism. Among Westmore’s most marketable assets are its abundant natural resources and dramatic viewsheds . The lake and the core of the community are virtually encircled by forested ridgelines, lending to the beauty of its landscape and creating a visitor experience that is altogether unique and authentic.

Willoughby State Forest and other forested land in Westmore can play a major role in the town’s economic future. A Northeastern Forest Alliance study states that, on the average, each thousand acres of Vermont forest land produces 4.2 forest tourism jobs and 1.1 forest manufacturing jobs. Forests support wood-using industries vital to continuing the economic viability of rural economies. Forests provide the environment for a host of non-timber forest activities ranging from hunting, fishing, and viewing fall foliage to camping and water storage. Westmore’s lakes, the scenic roads, recreational opportunities, and the unspoiled rural landscape attract visitors who come to enjoy our natural resources.

Residents of the Northeast Kingdom are coming to realize that their economic future may lie more in “geotourism,” the wise use of our abundant natural resources rather than attracting manufacturing or industrial development. Seasonal and vacation visitors make a substantial and growing contribution to the local and regional economy.

The economic future of Westmore lies substantially in the wise stewardship of our natural resources: the water and the land. Sustainable development in Westmore should be based on providing recreation opportunities and related services for visitors which are compatible with our active agricultural and forestry traditions. The underlying strategy of a development plan is to plan for orderly growth which maintains a sound tax base and anticipates the potential tax burdens for current and future needs.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Create an inventory of the existing and potential recreational opportunities in the town.
2. Encourage a diversity of sustainable uses which would allow a variety of low-impact commercial and recreational uses in different districts.
3. Inform local entrepreneurs about the availability of small business development services and funds.
4. Encourage a diversity of local commercial and service enterprises which use local labor as much as possible.

19. HEALTH FACILITIES

Health services are provided at North Country Community Hospital in Newport and the Northern Vermont Regional Hospital in St. Johnsbury. Barton and Orleans ambulance services respond to

calls from Westmore. Barton responds to the west side of Willoughby, and Orleans to the east side. A First Response Team has been organized in the Town of Westmore.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Due to the rural setting of Westmore, home health care should be encouraged.
2. Periodically, Westmore and the surrounding towns should consider whether to establish a local health care center.

20. SECURITY SERVICES

Police protection is provided by the State Police dispatched from Newport and St. Johnsbury and the Orleans County Sheriff.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Due to the rural setting of Westmore, a Neighborhood Watch program should be encouraged.

21. FIRE PROTECTION

Fire protection is provided by the Westmore Fireman’s Association, with assistance, when needed, through Westmore’s participation as part of Northeast Mutual Aid. The Town contributes annually to the Westmore Firemen’s Association..

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Consult with the local fire departments to ensure their needs are adequately met.
2. Maintain existing dry hydrants.
3. Encourage Westmore residents to become involved with the existing fire association and to become trained in fighting fires.

22. SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Westmore is a member of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District. Since the situation with solid waste in Vermont is so dynamic, the Selectboard should continue to stay informed and involved with this issue.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Westmore will cooperate and participate in the state and regional solid waste disposal activities including such efforts as the reduction of disposables, recycling of as much material as is feasible, enforcement of strict littering laws, and the operation of an efficient waste collection system.

23. WATER SUPPLY

There is no public water supply in Westmore. Numerous free flowing springs, ground water from wells, and reasonably pure lakes, ponds and streams make it possible for residents to depend exclusively upon private sources of water. State and federal regulations of community water systems discourage the creation and expansion of water systems serving relatively

congested areas. During periods of extended drought, or severe cold, some residences and farms have experienced water shortage and have been forced to transport water from off-premise sources. In spite of some inconvenience and occasional hardship, there exists a general appreciation of the fact that installation and maintenance of a public water system is impractical from economic and technical view points.

When water is drawn from a well in the ground, it creates a “cone of depression” as the water is removed. New water will fill in the cone as the existing water is drawn out. As many camps on small lots have shallow surface water wells, there is a growing concern about the separation distance of septic systems, leach fields and wells. It is very possible that some wells are drawing inadequately treated waste water. Not only is this practice distasteful, it presents real public health concerns.

In general, water which is located deep in the ground (ground water) is travelling in underground rivers or aquifers. The water originates from “recharge areas” of surface water such as wetlands, ponds, and areas with gravel soils. The recharge areas which restore the water may be a long way from where people pump the water from the ground into a house or barn. Protecting these recharge areas from inappropriate development and pollution is vital to people who drink the water, and assume it is pure.

Availability of water for fire fighting is a problem, particularly in the winter, in many locations. Residents are aware of this problem and many have taken extra precautions, or developed convenient water sources, to compensate for the lack of fire hydrants. The town does now have some dry hydrants in central locations.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Westmore shall encourage enforcement of federal, state and local regulations to ensure the highest possible ground and surface water quality standards. In general, protection of Westmore’s high quality waters will be a primary consideration in the approval of any future developments.
2. Groundwater recharge areas should be identified and protected from inappropriate development.
3. Prohibit large-scale development that would lead to runoff and ultimately degrade water quality.

24. SEWAGE DISPOSAL

Individual owners have always been responsible for the installation and maintenance of sewage disposal systems that meet existing standards in order to ensure the sanitary protection of the community. In 2007, the State of Vermont took delegation of all enforcement of local potable water and wastewater systems. Systems that were previously considered exempt from state regulation may now require a permit. (*Environmental Protection Rules, Chapter 1, Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules, Effective Sept. 29, 2007*) Some activities that may now require a permit include: construction of single-family residences; construction or modification of a wastewater system or potable water supply; new connections to an existing wastewater system or potable water supply, subdivisions of land; and repair and replacement of a failed

wastewater system or potable water supply. Inspection of these systems has only been on the basis of complaints registered by offended parties or by state agencies involved in licensing or approval functions. No public sewer system has ever been considered for essentially the same reasons that a public water system has never been an issue. These two factors are inherent in Westmore's character of being a rural community without the problems associated with high density development.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Every effort will be made to ensure that private systems are effective. Enactment and enforcement of state and local standards will be promoted to ensure minimal environmental damage attributable to sewage disposal.
2. Look into ways to assist home-owners in monitoring and updating their septic systems, especially in sensitive areas.
3. If homes are significantly enlarged or the use changes from seasonal to year round, the septic systems must be adequately functioning prior to any local permits being issued.

25. UTILITIES

The only public utilities available to Westmore are electricity and telephone. Installation of natural gas lines is not economically feasible resulting in a dependence on propane, fuel oil or wood for heating. Barton Village Electric Department supplies power to most of the town with the southern and eastern fringe areas supplied by Lyndonville Electric Department. Constant attention is required to ensure that existing equipment is maintained and upgraded so that the power available keeps up with the increasing demand. Telephone service is provided by Fairpoint through its Barton exchange for most of the town, with fringe areas covered by the West Burke, Charleston, or Island Pond exchanges.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Individual and collective efforts to ensure reliable high quality utility service is provided to all residents should be encouraged. The environmental impact of providing such service will be minimized, and the cost of extending such service will be borne by the beneficiaries of that extended service.

26. MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

The Town of Westmore owns several public buildings including the Old Schoolhouse, recently converted into new municipal offices, the old Town Clerk's Office, the Town Garage and Fire Station, and the transfer station. Public meetings are held in the church's community building, the new municipal building, and the old Town Clerk's Office.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. The Town depends on using the church's hall for community meetings. Therefore the relationship between the Church and Town is a very important one to maintain.

27. ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Westmore has relied upon the town clerk, selectboard, school board members, road commissioner or road foreman, listers and auditors for the performance of all town administrative and management functions. With the increase in the scope and number of tasks mandated by increasing governmental regulations, a growing population, real estate transfers and other activities, the requirements for expanded administrative and management services have resulted. This expanded workload has been absorbed by increasing the time and effort expended by the elected officials and by volunteers. Also, advantage has been taken of available advisory services provided by such organizations as the Vermont League of Cities & Towns and the Northeastern Vermont Development Association. However, there is a very high likelihood that the administrative and management workloads will continue to grow and that consideration will have to be given to ways of handling it. Possibilities include the hiring of additional part-time staff, and purchase of additional computerized office equipment.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Westmore shall provide the administrative and management services needed for the efficient operation of the town.
2. The Town of Westmore should encourage the discussion of municipal issues ie. creative educational possibilities, lake quality, and economic development.

28. ADJACENT COMMUNITIES

Westmore depends on the adjacent communities for many services. The Town depends on a mutual aid agreement for fire fighting, children go out of town for their education, and many jobs that residents rely on are in another community. Westmore has always maintained an excellent relationship with our neighbors, a relationship that should continue.

Westmore is surrounded by six communities: Sutton, Newark, Brighton, Charleston, Brownington, and Barton. Of those communities, only Sutton, Barton, and Brighton have adopted zoning bylaws. Charleston has no town plan, and Brownington's plan has recently expired. Without current plans, these communities may have a limited say in developments that are subject to Act 250 and Section 248 even though such developments may have an impact on Westmore's viewsheds recreation opportunities, environmental integrity, and economic livelihood.

Newark, while it has no zoning, recently adopted a plan that recommends special consideration to the following areas:

- The ridgeline historically known as Hogback Mountain, which consists of Walker Mountain, Hawk Rock, and Packer Mountain
- The high-elevation areas along Newark Street, Abbott Hill Road, Pinnacle Road, Spruce Ridge Road, Maple Ridge Road, and Kinney Hill Road
- The town's ponds including Newark Pond, Center Pond, Beck Pond, Walker Pond, Sawdust Pond, and Brown Pond

- The towns rivers and streams including the East and West Branch of the Passumpsic, Bean Brook, Sleeper Brook as well as the smaller tributaries, wetlands, and vernal pools.

The plan also states that “commercial and industrial development at elevations greater than 1,700 should be strictly avoided.”

Sutton’s plan also voices concern over development in high elevation areas. Norris Mountain and adjacent summits, and the higher elevation summits and ridgelines in the Willoughby State Forest, are not seen as areas that are appropriate for wind energy development due to “their visual impact, their accompanying noise, their potential impact on wildlife and the environment, and their impact on property values”. The plan also recommends that any development above 2,000 feet in elevation not exceed 100 feet in height. Finally, the plan discourages the erection of wind towers on lands above 2,000 feet.

29. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The plan recommends many different actions to work toward our vision for the future. The implementation plan lists each recommendation and suggests a time frame in which it will be accomplished. Since planning is a dynamic process, the priorities may change somewhat over time.

The priorities are: 1=2012, 2=2013, 3=2014, 4=2015, 5=ongoing.

PC= Planning Commission, S=Selectboard, L=Listers, CC=Conservation Commission, RC=Recreation Committee, LA= Lake Association, ZA=Zoning Administrator, ZBA=Zoning Board of Adjustment, HO=Health Officer

Note: These are abbreviated versions of the recommendations. For the full text, please refer to the section within the plan.

| ACTION | WHEN | WHO |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------|
| WATER QUALITY | | |
| 1. Erosion control standards should continue to be enforced. | 5 | ZA |
| 2. Work closely with the lake associations to encourage the maintenance of water quality in the lakes. | 5 | PC/S/CC |
| 3. Work together to encourage reestablishment of native vegetation along the lakes and ponds. | 5 | PC/LA/ZA |
| 4. Areas with great potential for flash floods should be identified and residents be made aware of the potential hazards. | 5 | S |
| 5. Assemble and have available information on existing laws regarding use of the lakes in the winter. | 5 | PC |
| 6. Inform the Water Resources Board about the growing concern over the use of the lakes in the winter. | 5 | PC, HO |
| 7. Monitor water quality. | 5 | LA/HO |
| 8. Monitor and control aquatic nuisance weeds. | 5 | LA/SB |
| 9. Prohibit development that would significantly contribute to | 2 | PC |

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| runoff. | | |
| 10. Prohibit commercial and residential development with a density greater than one single-family dwelling per 10 acres in high elevation areas. | 2 | PC |
| AGRICULTURE | | |
| 1. Actively support and encourage the maintenance of the State of Vermont Use Value Appraisal Program (Current Use). | 5 | L/S/CC/PC |
| 2. Assist and support landowners seeking ways to keep land open while remaining economically viable. | 5 | CC/PC |
| 3. Follow closely the alternatives brought forward in the Legislature regarding property tax reform; monitor the impact they might have on the town. | 5 | L/S/PC/CC |
| 4. Recommendations should be developed for applicants seeking to convert active farmland to non-agricultural uses. | 5 | PC |
| 5. Promote workshops and buy written materials on land conservation techniques and creative ways to subdivide and/or develop land that minimize the impact on the agricultural resources, estate planning, and the Current Use Program. | 5 | CC |
| 6. Work with non-agricultural landowners to stabilize lease agreements and conserve their lands which are vital to the farming community. | 5 | CC/PC |
| 7. Consider establishing a local land trust. | 5 | PC/CC/LA |
| 8. Consider setting up a conservation trust fund. | 5 | PC/CC/LA |
| 9. Encourage ongoing education about diversifying farming. | 5 | CC/PC |
| FORESTS | | |
| 1. Encourage individual landowners to consider working with a knowledgeable forester to draw up a forestry plan, such plans should consider sustainable harvesting techniques, timber stand mix, and continuous renewal of the forest resource. | 5 | PC/CC |
| 2. Encourage new development to use creative ways to develop land with the least impact on the resource such as encouraging creative development. | 5 | PC |
| 3. Promote workshops and buy written materials on land conservation techniques and creative ways to subdivide and/or develop land. | 5 | PC/CC |
| 4. Actively support and encourage the maintenance of the State of Vermont Use Value Appraisal Program (Current Use). | 5 | S/L/CC/PC |
| 5. Assist and support landowners seeking ways to keep land open while remaining economically viable. | 5 | CC/PC |
| 6. Amend bylaw with regard to development on ridgelines. | 2 | PC |
| NATURAL AREAS, WETLANDS, WILDLIFE | | |
| 1. Encourage a local conservation fund which can be used for conservation projects. | 5 | PC/CC |
| 2. Promote workshops on natural resources management, estate planning, woodlot management, and land conservation | 5 | PC/CC |

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| techniques. | | |
| 3. Contact local sports clubs to assist in identifying areas important to wildlife such as deer yards, beech stands, and spruce/fir forests. | 3 | PC/CC |
| 4. Provide information and education about the function of wetlands and the Vermont wetland Rules. Work on identifying wetlands in Westmore and notifying landowners of the location of wetlands to avoid problems at a later date. | 5 | PC/CC |
| 5. Prohibit commercial and large scale residential development that would have undue adverse impact on wildlife. | 2 | PC |
| STATE LANDS | | |
| 1. Remain involved with writing the long term management plan for the State lands. | 5 | PC/S/CC |
| 2. Encourage frequent contact with the State officials to make our interests known. | 5 | PC/S/CC |
| 3. Encourage the State officials to come to town and meet with local residents. | 5 | PC/S/CC |
| 4. Work with the State to come up with a solution to the mooring problem at the south end of Lake Willoughby. | 1 | PC |
| SCENIC FEATURES | | |
| 1. The visual impact of proposed commercial or large residential developments must be considered prior to construction or granting the necessary permits. | 5 | PC/ZBA |
| 2. The importance of the ridgelines in Westmore must be considered in evaluating the appropriateness of any commercial or large residential development. | 5 | PC/ZBA |
| HISTORIC FEATURES | | |
| 1. Maintain an inventory and consider a preservation plan for the historic and cultural features. | 4 | PC |
| 2. Encourage and assist property owners to list their structures on the historic registers. | 5 | PC |
| EDUCATION | | |
| 1. Encourage the parents of the town to be active in school decisions and to reconsider periodically, the possibilities of having a town school or forming an elementary union district with one of the two main schools our students attend, thus giving representation on said school board. | 5 | SB |
| 2. Planning Commission will supply the School Board with information about population projections and other items as requested. | 5 | PC |
| HOUSING | | |
| 1. Study the feasibility of adopting a Transfer of Development Rights program within the Zoning Ordinance. | 3 | PC |
| 2. Study state and local subdivision regulations. | 5 | PC/ZA/ZBA |
| 3. Inform residents about federal and state programs for weatherizing, rehabilitation and home financing by making the | 5 | PC/CC |

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| information available through the town clerk zoning administrator. | | |
| 4. Ensure the current zoning bylaw does not needlessly discriminate against affordable housing through requiring excessive lot sizes or building standards. | 5 | PC |
| 5. Be aware of the current and future housing needs of the retired and elderly. | 5 | PC |
| 6. Conduct periodic reviews of the number of mobile homes on rented lots within the town because a disproportionate increase in this type of housing may indicate a lack of alternative affordable housing in the community. | 5 | L |
| TRANSPORTATION | | |
| 1. The Town shall cooperate with other agencies in maintaining an efficient infrastructure supporting travel required by residents to use facilities and services within the town and in other localities. | 5 | S |
| 2. Westmore shall maintain the town highway system in safe and usable condition. Extension of the town road system shall be made entirely at the expense of potential users of the extensions. | 5 | S |
| 3. Westmore shall cooperate with other communities to encourage the availability of public transportation in the area. | 5 | PC |
| 4. Permits for new development shall be contingent upon demonstrating that adequate parking will be available. | 5 | PC |
| 5. Westmore shall encourage the development of better bicycle-pedestrian pathways. | 5 | PC |
| ENERGY | | |
| 1. Periodic energy audits on the public buildings in town and audits of private buildings should be encouraged. Reduced energy consumption through a range of efficiency measures should be encouraged. | 5 | PC/S |
| 2. Evaluate the possibility of car and van pooling and consider providing a parking area for commuters. | 5 | CC |
| 3. Establish a town policy that when new roads are built or existing roads are reconstructed, that provisions are considered for a bike lane and/or walking path. | 5 | S |
| 4. Promote small woodlot management practices which would supply locally grown fuel wood. | 5 | PC/CC |
| 5. Encourage residents and commercial establishments to use the least number of outside lights required to ensure safety. | 5 | PC/CC |
| RECREATION | | |
| 1. The town should continue involvement in promoting a mooring management plan for the lake. | 5 | PC |
| 2. The Recreation committee and North Beach committee should be encouraged to work specifically on recreation issues. | 5 | S |
| 3. Notify the State of Vermont agencies that the planning commission should be included when corresponding with the | 5 | S |

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| town of Westmore on issues concerning the lakes, ponds, and any other environmental or developmental issues in the town. | | |
| 4. The Town of Westmore should actively support strengthening the liability laws protecting landowners for allowing public access to their private lands. | 5 | S/PC |
| 5. Amendment bylaw with regard to development on the ridgelines. | 2 | PC |
| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | | |
| 1. Create an inventory of the existing and potential recreational opportunities. | 4 | PC |
| 2. Encourage a diversity of sustainable uses which would allow variety of low-impact commercial and recreational uses in different areas. | 1 | PC |
| 3. Inform local entrepreneurs about the availability of small business development services and funds. | 5 | PC |
| 4. Encourage a diversity of local commercial and service enterprises which use local labor. | 5 | PC |
| HEALTH FACILITIES | | |
| 1. Home health care should be encouraged. | 5 | PC |
| 2. Periodically Westmore and surrounding towns should consider whether to establish a local health care center. | 5 | PC/S |
| SECURITY SERVICES | | |
| 1. Neighborhood Watch program should be encouraged. | 5 | LA |
| FIRE PROTECTION | | |
| 1. Consult with the Westmore Fireman's Association and other fire departments to ensure their needs are adequately met. | 5 | S |
| 2. Maintain existing dry hydrants in ponds. | 5 | S |
| 3. Encourage Westmore residents to become involved with the existing fire association and to be trained in fighting fires. | 5 | PC/S |
| SOLID WASTE | | |
| 1. Cooperate and participate in the state and regional solid waste disposal activities. | 5 | S |
| WATER SUPPLY | | |
| 1. Encourage enforcement of federal, state and local regulations to ensure the highest possible ground and surface water quality standards. | 5 | CC/PC, HO |
| 2. Groundwater recharge areas should be identified and protected from inappropriate development. | 5 | PC |
| SEWAGE DISPOSAL | | |
| 1. Every effort will be made to ensure that private systems are effective. Enactment and enforcement of state and local standards will be promoted to ensure minimal environmental damage attributable to sewage disposal. | 5 | PC, HO |
| 2. Look into ways to assist home owners in monitoring and updating their septic systems. | 5 | PC, HO |

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| 3. If homes are significantly enlarged or the use changes from seasonal to year round the septic systems must be adequately functioning prior to any local permits being issued. | 5 | ZA/PC, HO |
| 4. Prohibit large-scale development that would lead to runoff and ultimately degrade water quality. | 5 | PC |
| UTILITIES | | |
| 1. Individual and collective efforts should be encouraged to ensure that reliable high quality utility service is provided to all residents. | 5 | PC |
| MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS | | |
| 1. The Town depends on using the Church's hall for community meetings. Therefore the relationship between the Church and the Town is a very important one to maintain. | 5 | S |
| ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT SERVICE | | |
| 1. Provide the administrative and management services needed for the efficient operation of the town. | 5 | S |
| 2. The Town of Westmore should encourage the discussion of municipal issues, i.e. creative educational possibilities, lake quality, and economic development. | 5 | S/PC/LA |

APPENDIX 1 ELEVEN ELEMENTS OF CHAPTER 117

Vermont Statute Title 24, Chapter 117 (the enabling legislation for local land use planning and regulation in Vermont) requires the eleven elements in Section 4382 be addressed in a municipal plan. Each has been addressed within the plan; the following list gives its location.

- (1) A statement of objectives, policies and programs
 - * entire document presents policies and objectives
- (2) A land use plan, consisting of a map and statement
 - * pages 2, 4, 12, 15 - 18, 19
- (3) A transportation plan
 - * pages 2, 6 - 8, -28-31
- (4) A utility and facility plan
 - * pages 2, 12, -20-38
- (5) Policies on the preservation of natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources
 - * pages 3 - 7, -18- 24
- (6) An educational facilities plan
 - * pages 24-25
- (7) An implementation program
 - * pages 23 - 40-45
- (8) Adjacent municipalities
 - * pages 39-40
- (9) An energy plan
 - * pages 31-32
- (10) A housing element
 - * pages 25-28
- (11) An economic development element that describes the present economic conditions and the location, type and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, programs, and projects necessary to foster economic growth.
 - * pages 34-35