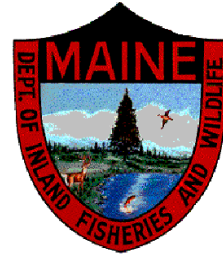




**Maine Department of Inland
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John Elias Baldacci,
Governor

Roland D. Martin,
Commissioner

Date: October 4, 2010
To: Phil Carey
From: Steve Walker
Re: Town of Cooper 2010 Comprehensive Plan Review

On behalf of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), the Beginning with Habitat program (BwH), and the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP), I have reviewed the Town of Cooper 2010 Comprehensive Plan and have provided the following comments.

As you are aware, MDIFW's mission is focused on the protection and enhancement of the State's freshwater fisheries and wildlife. MNAP has a commitment to conserving lands in Maine that support rare, threatened, and endangered plants, and rare or exemplary natural communities. The BwH program provides objective and comprehensive habitat information to equip local decision-makers with the necessary tools to make informed and responsible land use decisions that mesh plant and animal habitat conservation with future town growth needs. The comments submitted below are based on the Maine State Planning Office's (SPO) instructions for agency comments.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this information.

- **Appropriate use of data provided by MDIFW & MNAP**

The Town of Cooper has done an outstanding job of utilizing BwH data in plan maps, narratives and strategies. We do recommend that Map 7 be revised to update and clarify inland wadingbird and waterfowl habitat and rare and exemplary natural community data.

- **Relation of plan's policies and implementation strategies to MDIFW & MNAP principal objectives and directives**

The Town of Cooper’s 2010 Comprehensive Plan is well aligned with MDIF&W and MNAP objectives.

- **Consistency of plan with MDIFW & MNAP programs and policies**

The Town of Cooper’s 2010 Comprehensive Plan is consistent with our program policies. We commend the town for considering the adoption of a critical natural area that would provide greater protection for the Meddybemps Focus Area. Our staff is available to assist the town with future implementation of plan elements.

Specific plan comments and recommendations follow in the checklist below.

Completed by: Steve Walker, MDIFW.

Transportation (cont.)	✓	N/A	Page	MDIF&W Review
Analysis and Key Issues (cont.)				
<i>Environmental and cultural considerations</i>				
1. What, if any, environmental degradation caused by state or local transportation facilities or operations (i.e. wildlife mortality, habitat fragmentation, erosion, groundwater contamination, non-point source pollution) is occurring? The problems are lack of funding for maintenance.		N/A		SW-1
2. What are community’s objectives for preserving or protecting important identified scenic, historic, or cultural resources adjacent to transportation facilities?		N/A		
3. How does the community address any transportation-related noise concerns?		N/A		
4. What steps can the community take to encourage development to occur in a manner that minimizes transportation-related environmental impacts such as habitat fragmentation and/or vehicular CO ₂ emissions?	✓		J-6 to J-9; M-4	
Comments: SW-1 This analysis question is applicable to the Town of Cooper especially given the amount of cold-water fish habitat likely impacted by existing transportation infrastructure. A leading cause in the decline of eastern brook trout, Atlantic salmon and other diadromous fish is the loss of aquatic habitat connectivity resulting from poorly-sized or installed culverts and other road crossing structures. We recommend that the plan be revised to identify this concern and suggest strategies to work with state resource agencies to inventory existing crossings in order to identify priority restoration opportunities that could attract outside funding sources for necessary repairs.				
Conditions and Trends (cont.)				
2. Known locations with opportunities to restore habitat connections disrupted by a transportation facility owned and maintained by the community.		N/A		SW-2
3. Identify current local land use management strategies (such as access management, zoning, density, minimum lot size standards) that enhance or detract from the safety and		N/A		

efficiency of the transportation system (including highway, air, bus, bike, pedestrian, marine, and rail services.)				
Comments: SW-2 Efforts are underway to identify priority stream barriers resulting from poorly installed culverts and other crossing structures within the Town of Cooper. We recommend that the Town work with BwH to obtain existing stream barrier data and incorporate it into this plan. Highlighting restoration opportunities will put the town in a favorable position to receive funding to restore fish passage thereby improving local habitat and economic opportunities associated with healthy fisheries.				

Recreation	✓	N/A	Page	MDIF&W Review
Conditions and Trends				
1. The community's Comprehensive Planning Recreation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Conservation and the State Planning Office, or their designees. None of the data provided in the recreation data set was of any use in the preparation of the plan.		N/A		
2. A description of important public and private active recreation programs, land and water areas (including hunting and fishing areas), and facilities in the community and region, including regional recreational opportunities as appropriate, and identification of unmet needs.	✓		H-4 to H-7	
3. An inventory of any fresh or salt water bodies in the community determined locally to have inadequate public access.	✓		H-7	
4. A description of trail systems, trail management organizations, and conservation organizations that provide trails for all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiling, skiing, mountain biking or hiking. Include mapped information as available.	✓		H-7	
5. A map or list of important publicly-used open spaces and associated facilities, such as parking and toilet facilities.	✓		Map 2	
6. A list of local and regional land trusts in the area. If the town or a private landowner needs a Land Trust they can look them up on-line or in a phone book.		N/A		SW-3
Comments: SW-3 A primary function of a municipal comprehensive plan is to inform residents of land use options available to them. Land trust play a key role in conservation and recreation planning especially in rural towns with limited professional capacity. We recommend that a listing of current easement holders and other land trusts active in the region be included in this plan. Known easement holders in Cooper include the Nature Conservancy, and New England Forestry Foundation. Downeast Lakes Land Trust is active in the region.				

Critical Natural Resources	✓	N/A	Page	MDIF&W Review
Conditions and Trends				
1. The community's Comprehensive Planning Critical Natural Resources Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Office or their designees.	✓		D-13 to D-15	SW-4
2. A map or description of significant scenic areas and scenic views of local importance, and regional or statewide importance if available.	✓		Map 7	
<p>Comments:</p> <p>SW-4 The plan narrative adequately discusses known significant, rare, and exemplary features in the town. However, we recommend that Map 7: Critical Habitat be updated to identify the locations of the town's two mapped rare and exemplary ecosystems. These include the Domed Bog Eco-system associated with the Meddybemps Heath and the Stream Shore Ecosystem associated with the Dennys River. Additionally, the map does not appear to include the most up-to-date Inland Wadingbird and Waterfowl Habitat data. Prior to any subsequent zoning changes, or use of BwH maps for local environmental review purposes, we encourage the town to acquire updated maps and data.</p>				