

Appendix 6 Scenic Resources in Harpswell

History of the Scenic Areas Map

In 1987, the Town of Harpswell Comprehensive Plan outlined the following in relationship to the preservation of scenic areas in the town:

- Protect the scenic qualities of the Town along shorefronts and main roads (Section V)
- Retain the visual qualities of the shorefront and along major highways in Town (Section IX)

As a result of this mandate, the Town produced a Critical and Scenic Areas Map in 1987 to serve as a working tool for the members of the Town Planning Board. (See **Map 1 in Part 1**) See **Appendix 10** for places identified as scenic by participants in the Open Space Workshops in 2007)

In 2005, the Updated Comprehensive Plan was approved by the residents of the Town and outlined the following goals and objectives in relationship to scenic areas of the Town:

- Maintain rural views of the roads, and protect our scenic vistas¹
- Scenic corridors are defined as either undeveloped open spaces and forests, or areas that have been developed in a manner whereby structures are set back from the road and are screened by natural vegetation².
- Scenic village areas, such as Harpswell Center or Cundy's Harbor, are identified by a concentration of historical buildings.
- Scenic views include the Town's topographic features and the ocean.
- Identify scenic water vistas and adopt measures to preserve their contribution to our community character³.
- Protect the rural wooded land that provides a sense of separation between the settled village areas.

Preparation of a New Scenic Areas Map

In 2005, The Harpswell Conservation Commission (HCC) was charged with updating the 1987 Critical and Scenic Areas Map as part of its task to formulate an Open Space Plan for the Town. In order to do this, the HCC held two forums to determine what open space the residents of Harpswell valued. Among other things, the citizens identified the following list of scenic places in Harpswell.

¹ 2007 Updated Harpswell Comprehensive Plan, Policies, page 21

² 2007 Updated Harpswell Comprehensive Plan, Scenic Resources, page 154

³ 2007 Updated Harpswell Comprehensive Plan, Implementation, page 72

List of Scenic Places Identified in Open Space Forums

- Mark Island
- Giant Stairs
- Mackerel Cove
- Pott's Point
- Cribstone Bridge
- Lowell Cove
- West Cundy's Point
- Flash Island
- Sandy Cove
- Mitchell Field
- Holbrook's Wharf
- Bethel Point Town Landing
- Devil's Back
- Ewing Narrows Bridge
- Harpswell Cove
- Truffant Farm
- Bowdoin Property
- Skolfield Historic Shipyard
- Stover's Point Preserve
- Lookout Point
- Cundy's Harbor
- Merriconeag Farm
- Bowdoin Sailing Club

In addition, members of the HCC visited all of the roads listed on the 1987 scenic map to determine if they were still scenic or if they had changed as a result of development. Based on this assessment and the suggestions in the two Open Space Forums the HCC prepared a new scenic areas map. (See **Map 7 in Part 1**) The new map reflects:

- Updates to vistas which have been reduced over the past twenty years
- Expansion to include the corridors along Rte. 24 and Mountain Rd
- Locations of water views along these corridors and from bridges

This updated map should be used by the Planning Board instead of the 1987 Scenic Map.

Need for a New Scenic Rating System

Although the new scenic areas map is an update of the 1987 map, vistas on the new map continue to be from the road and, as a result, will not help the Planning Board to define the scenic impact of potential developments on a site-by-site basis. Also, the map does not aid the Board in considering landscape compatibility, spatial dominance, or scale and contrast factors. As a result, a rating system that evaluates differing qualities is required.

A system has recently been published by the Maine State Planning Office in its publication called *Protecting Local Scenic Resources, 2007*. The Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC), a Maine state agency, is presently including this system in the draft update of its Comprehensive Plan 2007. Listed below is a schematic outline of what such a rating system entails.

The Evaluation System is based on the following **seven key factors**:

- Water – adds movement to a scene, with value increasing with dominance.
- Landform – interest increases with steepness, scale and rarity of form
- Vegetation – increases with variety and type (ground cover, shrubs, trees)
- Color – seasonally and times of day
- Adjacent scenery – depending on topography, and degree of vegetative cover
- Scarcity – relative uniqueness or rarity
- Cultural modification – landform, water, vegetation and addition of structures

Each of these key factors provides a ranking number on a comparative basis with similar features within the area. Areas with the most variety and most harmonious composition have the greatest scenic value. The highest influence of quality of a given landscape, however, is the presence of water, and Harpswell has lots of it!

The scenic values for bodies of water have an additional set of factors with higher values placed on complexity. These are:

- Relief - topography
- Physical features
- Shoreline configuration
- Vegetation diversity
- Special features

On the other hand, inharmonious development results when there is greater contrast between a project built upon the land, and its surrounding landscape. This effect can be ameliorated by utilizing the following design elements:

- Color compatibility
- Form which complies with surrounding dimension and shape
- Line which respects silhouette and edges within the scene
- Texture which respects density and compatibility of pattern
- Scale which is in keeping within a confined setting, and at a distance

These design factors, as well as such environmental variants as the presence of haze, fog, rain, cloud, snow, leaf drop, and lighting (front, side and back), follow the dictates of good design and convey added interest to the Harpswell landscape. More importantly, such a scenic evaluation system would prevent the whittling away of our treasured views and sun rights by intrusive future development.

Recommendations Related to a New Scenic Rating System and Protection Strategy

The HCC recommends that a new rating system be developed for Harpswell, using the LURC Evaluating System and the guidelines outlined in the Maine State Planning Office's publication called *Protecting Local Scenic Resources, 2007*. These guidelines will need to be adapted to the scenic characteristics of Harpswell. Once a rating system is in place, a plan of how to protect these scenic areas will need to be developed by the Open Space Implementation Committee.

References: Land Use Regulation Commission, ME

www.state.me.us/doc/lurc/

Maine State Planning Office

www.maine.gov/spo/

Publication: *Protecting Local Scenic Resources, 2007*.