

TOWN OF WATSON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

December 4, 2020



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Town of Watson, NY



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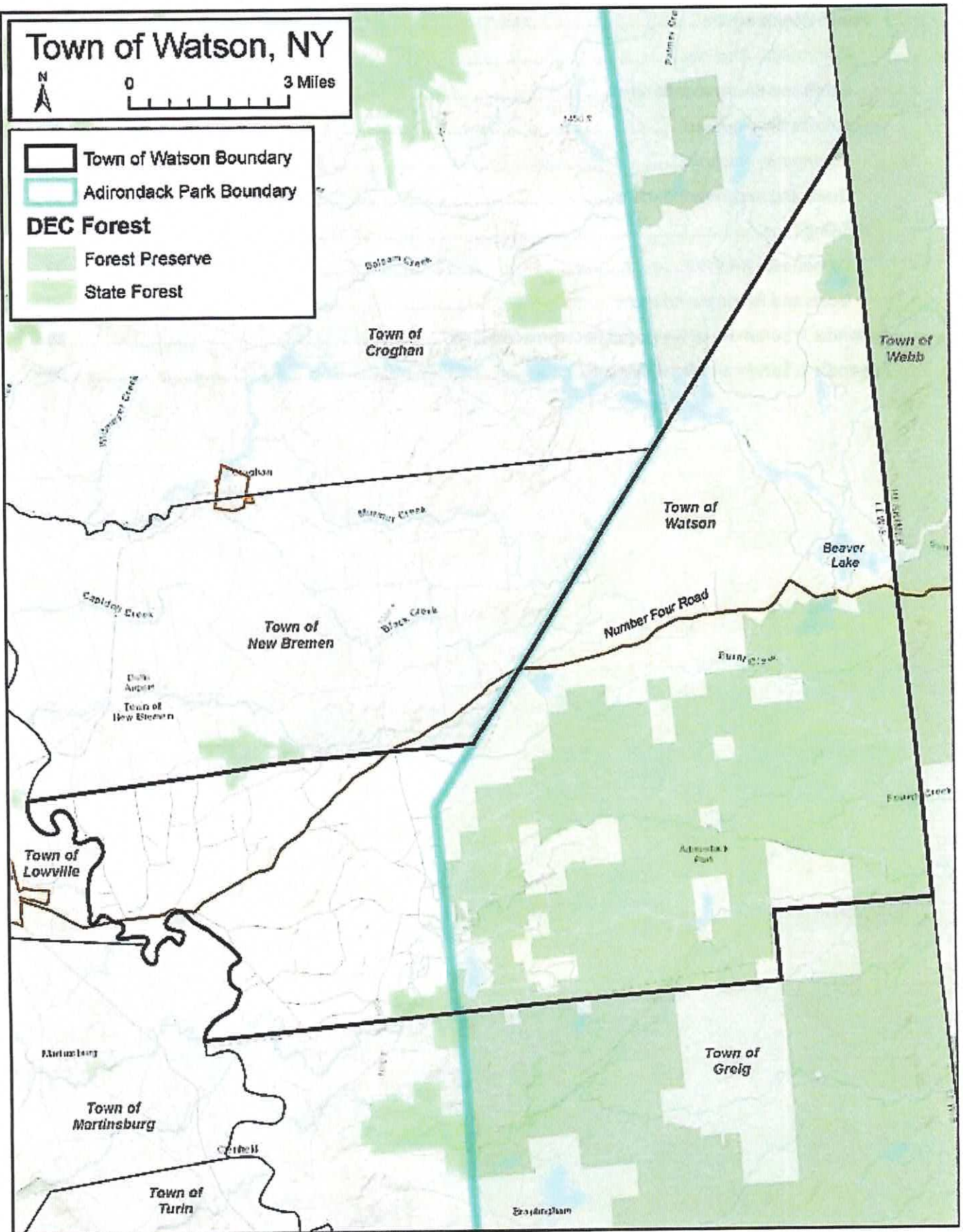
Town of Watson Boundary

Adirondack Park Boundary

DEC Forest

Forest Preserve

State Forest



Introduction

Watson is a community with a rich history and a wealth of natural amenities. However, like many communities in Lewis County and across New York State, Watson is faced with a number of challenges. The State of New York has recommended municipalities create comprehensive plans to help communities better prepare for the changes that time inevitably brings.

This Comprehensive Plan, prepared for the municipality of Watson, is meant as a guide for future development. The plan will provide a framework for the existing zoning and land subdivision controls. It will help assure that the growth of the area will be in accordance with existing plans for any future large scale or infrastructure development. The plan will also help the Town prioritize capital investments.

Finally, it is hoped that other levels of government (state, county, and other local governments) will find the plan useful in shaping their future development activities. It is the purpose of this plan to help others to plan and develop in accord with the desires of the citizens of the area.

Typically, comprehensive plans are designed to serve a community for 20 years. However, to serve the needs of a changing community, they must be continually monitored and updated, usually at five and ten year intervals.

The Town of Watson developed this plan with assistance from the Development Authority of the North Country and from survey work completed by the Jefferson Community College Center for Community Studies, in the fall of 2020.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is a written document formally adopted by the local legislature that contains goals, objectives, and strategies for the future development and conservation of the community. New York State statutes does not require localities to follow a fixed format in developing plans for the future.

New York State Town Law defines a comprehensive plan as: “The materials, written and/or graphic, including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other descriptive material that identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the town, village or city.”

How is a Comprehensive Plan developed?

Step 1: The municipal board appoints a planning committee

Step 2: Profile and inventory the municipality, focusing on six areas of study: business and commerce; community and culture; housing; infrastructure; and institutions. A community profile that addresses the community’s history, demographics, natural features and land use provides context for the action items in the Plan. This step typically involves community surveys, SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), visual surveys and other public meetings.

Step 3: Develop a Vision Statement and Goals based on the results of Step 2.

Step 4: Develop strategies, actions, policies and programs that can be implemented to reach the municipality's vision for the future.

Step 5: The Planning Board produces a draft of the plan as well as the SEQR and the Town Board holds a public hearing. When ready, the draft plan is forwarded to the County Planning Board for review. When the final step is completed, the municipal board may adopt the plan through resolution.

Next Steps

Under Town Law, Section 272-formally adopts a comprehensive plan, requires certain compliance with established municipal land use regulations, specifically:

1. Effect of adoption of the town comprehensive plan.

(a) All town land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan adopted pursuant to this section.

(b) All plans for capital projects of another governmental agency on land included in the town comprehensive plan adopted pursuant to this section shall consider such plan.

How this Comprehensive Plan can be used

The following two scenarios describe how this comprehensive plan can be used. In order for a comprehensive plan to be an effective tool in guiding the desires of Watson residents, it must be reviewed on a regular basis. Ideas and attitudes change over time. Five years from now a goal that is in the current plan may be met and a different goal may have taken its place. It is recommended that a comprehensive plan be re-examined every five years to ensure that its content is still relevant.

Scenario 1:

In a few years' time, a developer proposes a large-scale commercial development on a piece of property that is near, but not in, the water district. The development is contingent on municipal infrastructure, but the water treatment facility is reaching capacity.

What should the Town do?

The Town will need to weigh the positive and negative impacts of such a development.

As part of its deliberation, the Town should also review its adopted Comprehensive Plan. One of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan speaks to the need to encourage additional commercial development in the Town. Ensuring that the water infrastructure is used as efficiently and effectively as possible has also been identified as a goal. Having these two activities written down will remind the Town to budget and plan accordingly to ensure such a development can occur.

Scenario 2:

Sometime in the future, additional funding from the State is released to assist communities with creating more senior housing. Local government entities can apply for these funds through a competitive grant application process. The funds are available but difficult to obtain because of the high application rate. One of the conditions of the application is that the community applying has identified senior housing as a key goal in its community.

What should the Town do?

Town officials consulted the Watson Comprehensive Plan and reviewed the chapter on Housing. In that chapter, one of the stated goals is to diversify its housing stock by creating more affordable and senior living dwellings. With this goal, and the supporting documentation that makes up the Housing section of the plan, the Town has a solid background from which to draft the application.

Vision Statement

A Vision Statement is an important part of a comprehensive plan. It sets the overall tone for the defined goals and strategies, and sets the direction for the community. The Vision Statement reflects the ultimate picture of what a community desires to become in the future. This statement was developed through a visioning process that involved the public in a variety of ways and established a shared purpose and set of community values.

Community Profile

Regional Setting

The Town of Watson is majority located in the Adirondack Park in Central Lewis County on its border with Herkimer County. The Black River forms the town's western border. Surrounding towns include Lowville, Martinsburg, New Bremen, Croghan, and Greig.

The Town of Watson is at the east border of Lewis County, New York, United States. The eastern Watson town line is the border of Herkimer County, and the west town line is partly defined by the Black River. The Beaver River, a tributary of the Black River, flows through the north part of the town. 75% of the Town of Watson is located within the Adirondack Park Boundary.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the town has a total area of 115.8 square miles, of which 112.7 square miles is land and 3.0 square miles is water.

There are 60.04 total centerline miles of road, and 17.79 miles are "County-Maintained" roads. There are no State Highways located in the Township.

About 40% of the land in the Town of Watson is publicly owned, either by the Village of Lowville, the Town of Watson, Lewis County, or New York State.

Geographic Inventory

The Town of Watson boasts numerous publically accessible lands for recreating.

Portions of the Croghan Tract Conservation Easement, the Independence River State Forest and the Indian Pipe State Forest are all located in the Town of Watson.

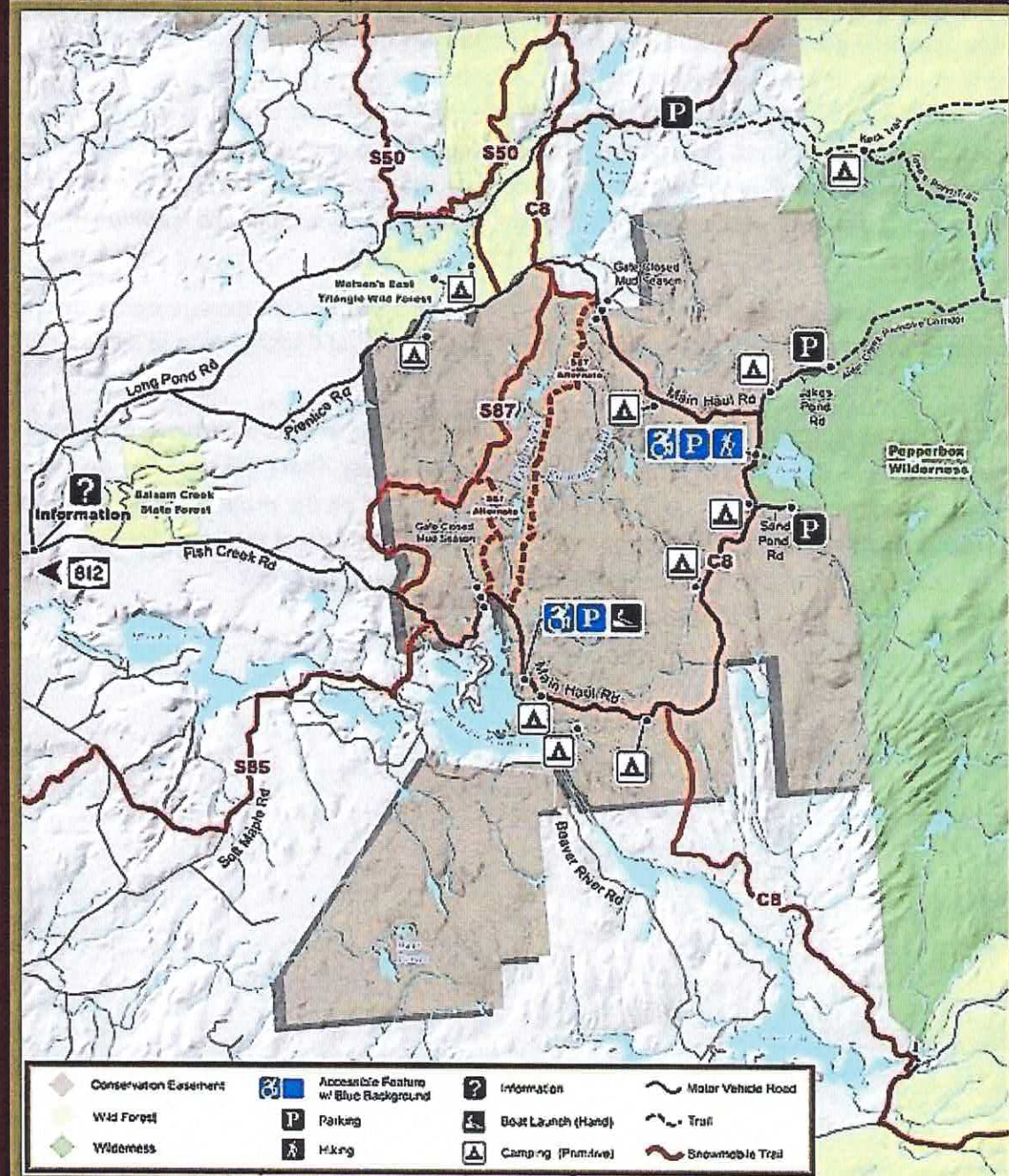


Croghan Tract Conservation Easement

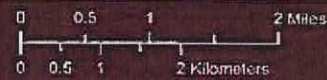
New York's Conservation Easements

Champion Easement - Croghan Tract

Public Recreation Map



Lowville Office: (315)376-3521



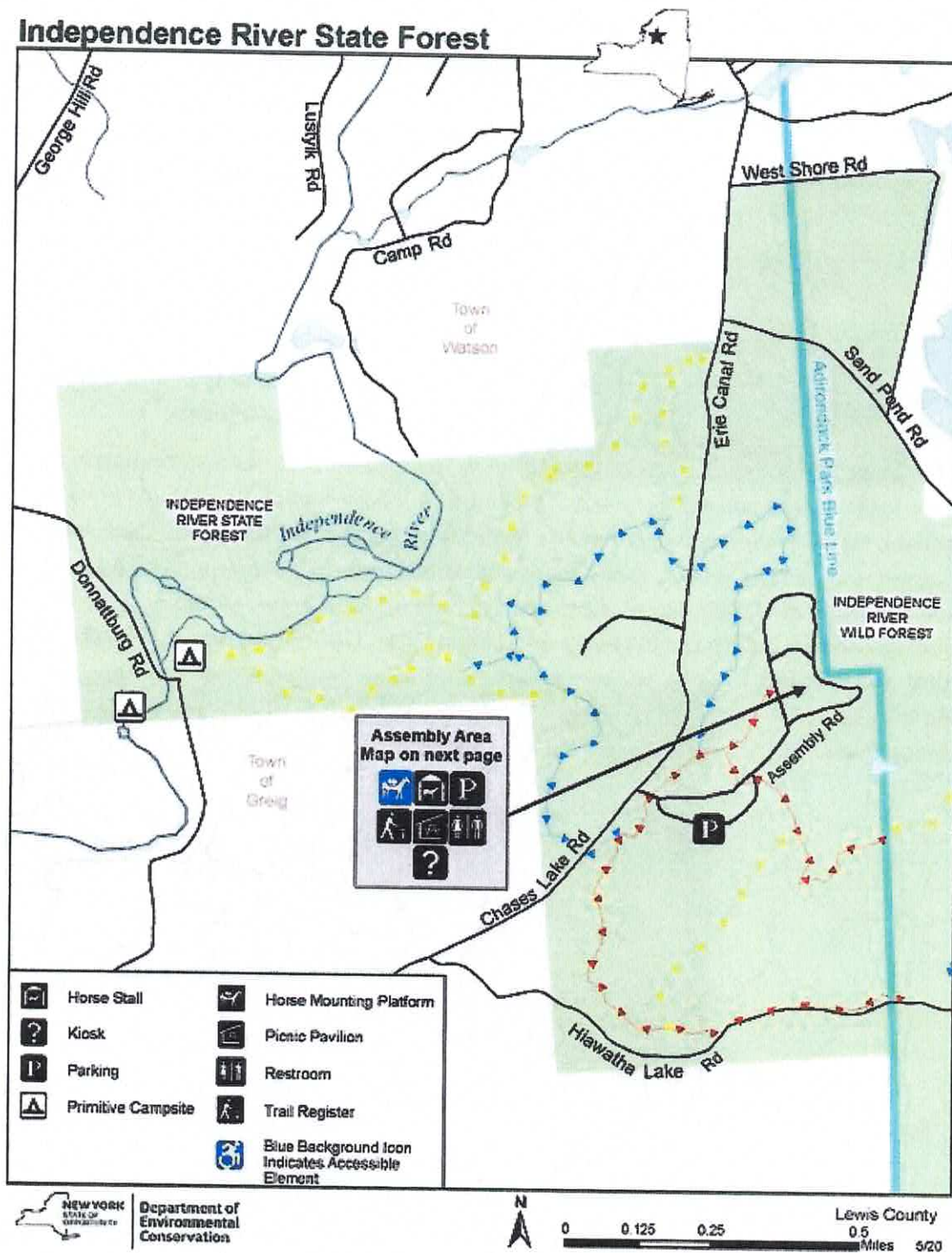
The 13,054-acre Croghan Tract Conservation Easement (CTCE) is private property in the Adirondacks with a conservation easement which allows the forests be used for timber production while providing limited public recreation opportunities. This tract is currently owned by Jackson Timberlands Opportunities. Conservation easements are used widely across the United States by government and non-profit land conservation organizations to protect a variety of properties with important natural resources and other landscape values such as water quality, wildlife habitat, sensitive ecosystems, wetlands, riparian areas, scenic areas such as meadows and ridgelines, agricultural land, working forests, and historic sites. The primary function of conservation easements is to limit or eliminate future development and undesirable land uses on a property, while allowing for continued private ownership and traditional management.

The CTCE was purchased by New York State in 1999, and a Recreation Management Plan was completed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in September 2020.

The CTCE is commercially managed forestland, comprised primarily of a northern hardwood forest, with lowland pockets of pine-hemlock-hardwood forest. There are seven named streams and ponds and approximately 3,002 acres of wetland located on the property. The terrain of the tract is generally rolling, with hardwood forests covering much of the area. Several major streams are located on the tract including, Fish Creek and Roaring Brook.

Independence River State Forest

Independence River State Forest



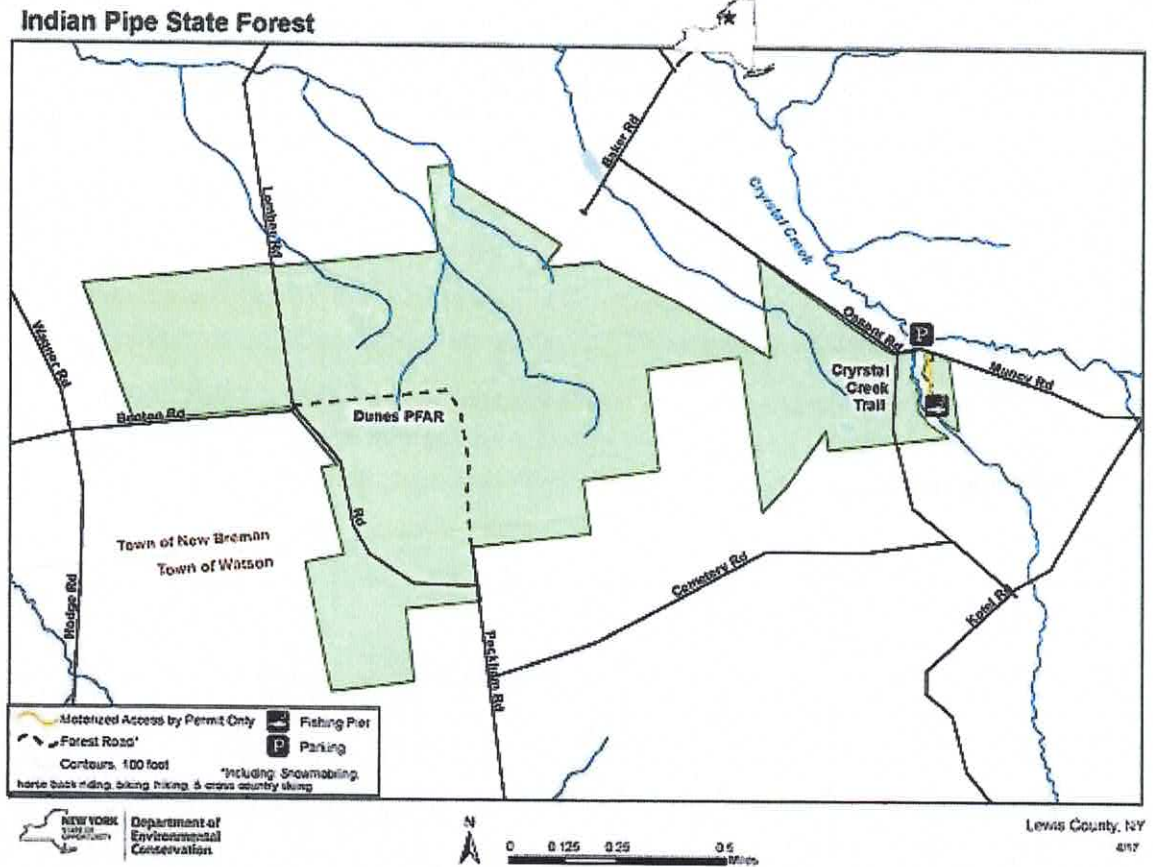
The 673-acre Independence River State Forest is named for the swift moving trout stream that cascades through the northern sector of the property.

The Otter Creek Trail System is the single largest developed recreational opportunity in the Independence River State Forest, which is a popular destination for horseback riders. The Otter Creek Horse Trail System was inaugurated in the 1980s and has been continually improved and expanded since that time. The trail system's Assembly Area includes roofed tie stalls, parking areas, a picnic pavilion, grills, roofed stud stalls, potable water system for the horses, and a bathroom with sink and toilets.

The trail system includes approximately 65 miles of interlocking trails and roads, which are located on Independence River Wild Forest, of the Adirondack Forest Preserve, Independence River State Forest and Otter Creek State Forest. The trail system uses a series of old, sandy roads and woods trails to traverse a diverse area of wilderness. The trails wind their way along spirea flats and wooded areas, accessing picturesque Adirondack ponds and following or crossing Otter, Little Otter, Beaver Meadow, Chase, Burnt and Crooked Creeks and the Independence River.



Indian Pipe State Forest



The Indian Pipe State Forest 597-acre state forest is named for Iroquois Indian artifacts including pipe fragments that have been discovered in the area. Access through the central section of this forest is provided by the 0.7-mile long Dunes Public Forest Access Road. The property also contains an accessible fishing pier on the bank of Crystal Creek.

History

Before the end of the 1700s, the land now comprising the Town of Watson was occupied by Native Americans.

In 1792, Alexander Macomb purchased nearly 4,000,000 acres in northern New York, comprising present day Lewis, Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties, and portions of Herkimer and Oswego Counties (Macomb's Purchase).

In 1821 the Town of Watson was formed. The town was first settled around 1815 with the Town being formed from the Town of Leyden in 1821 with parts of Watson being later taken to form the Towns of Greig (1828), Watson (1830), Croghan (1841), and New Bremen (1848).

The town is named after early landowner James Watson. He formed the Town of Watson from the Town of Leyden in 1821. The first town meeting was held in home of John Beach, a surveyor. Beach had a toll bridge at the site for river crossings, hence the name Beach's Bridge.



In 1822 a settlement was begun in the eastern border of the town, on No. 4, Brown's Tract. In 1826, Orrin Fenton settled, and was for years the only settler living in that part of the town. The station is highly convenient to parties hunting in winter, and fishing in summer.

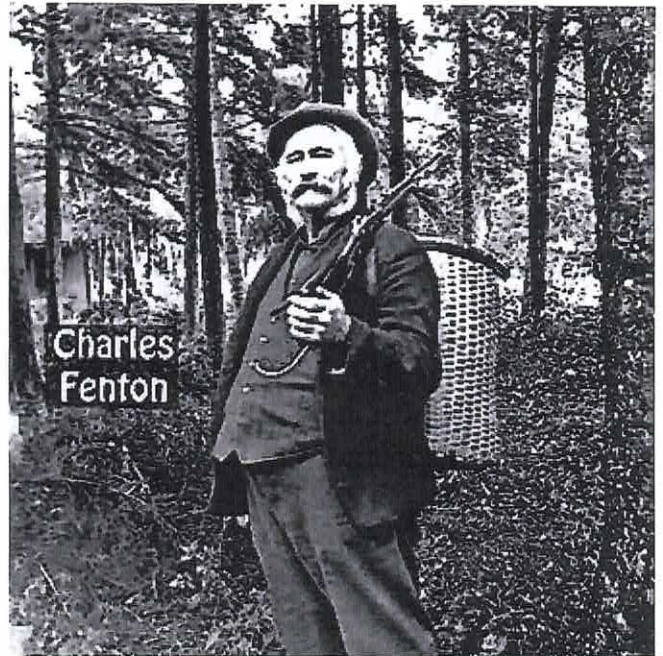
Orrin Fenton died March 9th 1870, aged 87. His location upon "Number Four" of Brown's Tract, and about 18 miles from Lowville, has within the last twenty years grown into a place somewhat noted as a summer resort, and the entrance of parties into the wilderness by the Beaver River route. In 1870, a large three-story hotel was built by Charles Fenton.

A post office named "Number Four," was established at this place.

Historically, the main industries of Watson have been logging, farming, and sand.

The Independence River assisted the logging industry in Watson. It is hard to say when the first Adirondack river drives began. Historical records indicate that logs had been rafted down the Hudson River to Albany as early as 1758.

These river runs revolutionized the logging industry. New York State became a major exporter of structural lumber due, in no small part to the logs from Adirondack forests that were fed down tributary rivers to the Hudson River. According to the records of the Hudson River Boom Association, logging in the upper Hudson watershed peaked in 1872.



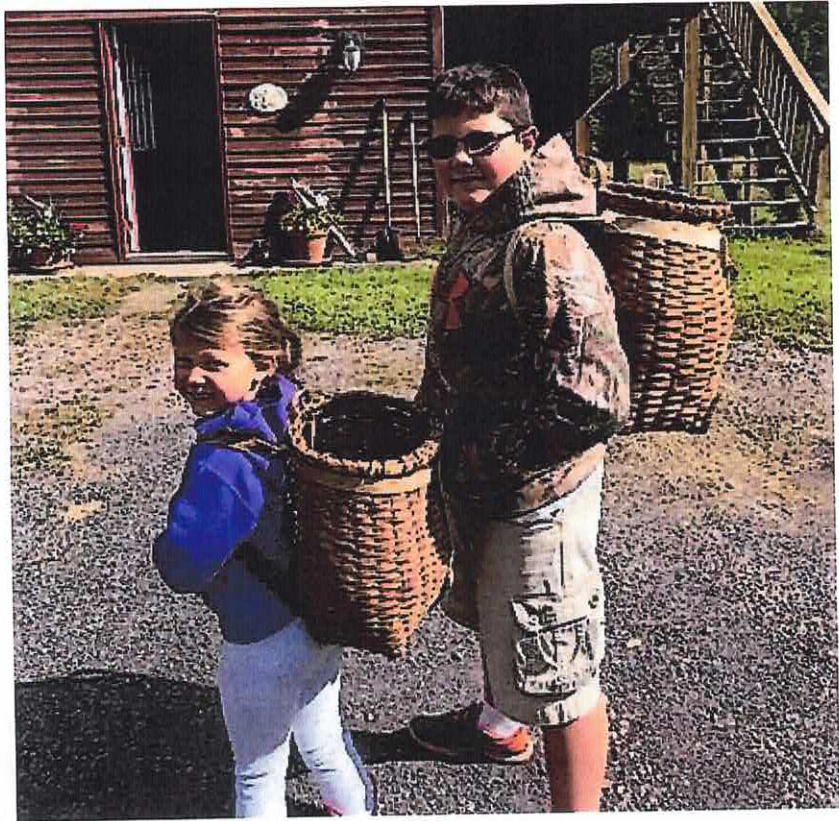
In the northern half of Watson, sawmills were prevalent. A great deal of the timber was cut to produce lumber. Hemlock was cut to harvest its bark for tanning. Cedar was harvested from low wetlands for fence posts, shingles and other products. This

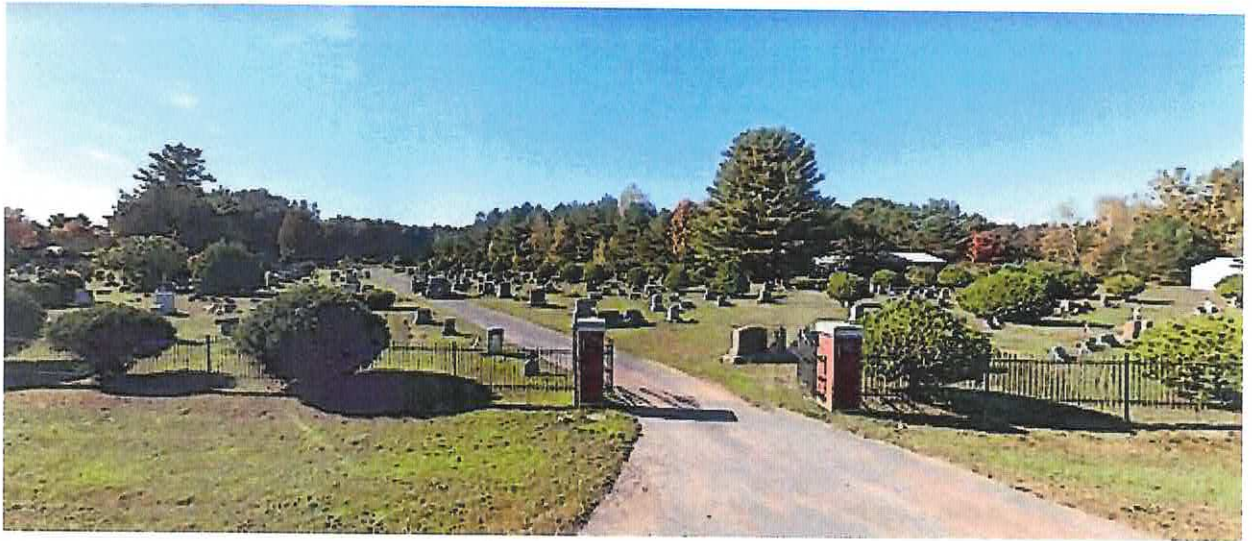
has created a huge habitat shift over the last 50 years. The state planted softwoods on the abandoned farm land as it was acquired, creating even aged plantation forests. Over time, these plantations have matured from early-successional forest to midsuccessional forest.

The soils in southwestern portion of Watson are comprised of sand, especially in the Sand Flats and Indian Pipe State Forest. These lands were farmed until soil nutrients were depleted and

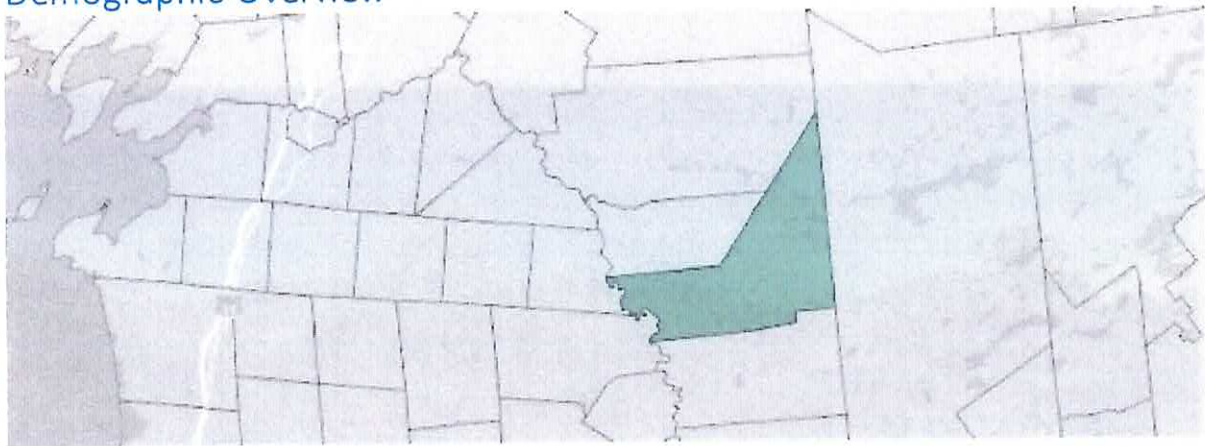
then abandoned. In some areas the vegetation was so scarce, the wind made sand dunes. In the late 1800s, residents in the Town began selling the sand for commercial uses, and Watson became well known for its quality sand. In an homage to this history, Miller's Meat Market sells a seasoning rub they call "Watson Sand".

A member of the Seneca people, Native American Adirondack guide Alton Draper (1901-1992) — known colloquially as "Spike" — spent much of his life living along the Independence River. Along with his wife Delores, or Dody, Spike crafted all sorts of things, from pack baskets to bows to buckskin jackets. He was most known for his moccasins. It a real treat to be taken to "Spike's Wigwam" to get a pair of moccasins for running about in the summers.





Demographic Overview



The Town of Watson is consistently a small, homogenous, relatively wealthy older community in Lewis County.

The data used in this Comprehensive Plan comes from the 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The ACS replaced the decennial census long form in 2010. The ACS is a nationwide, continuous survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, housing, social, and economic data every year. The ACS delivers similar to data from previous census long forms, but updated every year instead of every 10 years. The ACS provides several advantages over the information that has been collected in the past through the decennial census long-form samples. The main benefits of the ACS are timeliness and access to annual data for states, local areas, and small population subgroups. But in exchange for this benefit, the sample size of the ACS needs to be smaller than that of the Census long form data, which may at times lead to higher sampling errors.

People and population

The total town population is 1,826. This is almost the exact same as it was in 2010, when the population was 1,881.

The median age is 44.3, which is slightly older than the median age in Lewis County and significantly higher than the national median of 37.9. The Town has a largely adult population, with 78.4% of the residents older than 18, and of that, 18.8% are older than 65.

With 10.3% of its residents considered veterans, Watson has a higher percentage of veterans than Lewis County's, which is 8.4%. The majority of these veterans are considered Vietnam era vets, with smaller portions being either Gulf War (either 1990-2001 or 2001-present) veterans.

Race and ethnicity

Similar to the rest of Lewis County, Watson is mostly white, with 99.1% of the population listing themselves as "white alone", a Census term to delineate between those of multiple ethnicities.

97.2% Speak English only at home, and the remaining speaking other Indo-European languages. The most common ancestry is German, followed by Irish.

Health

14.1% of the population is in some way disabled, which is in line with both the County and the national percentages, which vary between 13 and 15%. This means that individuals may have difficulty hearing, seeing, cognitive issues, ambulatory issues, or have challenges living independently.

Education

Beaver River, Lowville Academy and, South Lewis School Districts all serve portions of the Town of Watson. 91.2% of Watson residents have a high school diploma or higher. This is slightly higher than what Lewis County has. 43% have a high school or equivalent degree, 16.9% have some college, and 21.7% have either an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Employment and Income

58.4% of Town residents are in the labor force. The remaining portion of the population are either retired or under 16, as the unemployment rate for those in the labor force is very low, at 3.5%.

The median household income is \$60,682, which is significantly higher than the average for Lewis County, which is \$52,380. The median earnings for fulltime, year-round male workers is \$51,726, which for females workers it is \$36,786. The poverty rate is low, at 7.8%.

The average work commute time for Watson residents is 26.2 minutes, implying that the majority of workers work outside of the Town. 80% of workers drove alone.

Housing

There are 1,449 housing units in the Town, with 49.3% occupied, and 50.7% considered vacant. Of that 50.7%, 93.8% of those units are actually classified as "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use".

2% of vacant homes are for sale, and the remaining 5% are considered "other vacant". According to Census definitions, included in this category are year-round units which were vacant for reasons such as it is a foreclosed property, it is being held for settlement of an estate, held for personal reasons, or held for repairs.

Almost all homes in Watson are single family units. There are also 220 mobile homes, which is 22% of the total housing units. The bulk of the housing in the Town was built during the twentieth century, although there was a slight bump in housing development during the first decade of the 21st century. The median value of a home in Watson is \$129,600.

There are very few rental properties in the Town, but for the estimated 48 units paying monthly rent, 16.7% are paying less than \$500, 58.3% are paying between \$500 and \$900, and 25% are paying between \$1,000 and \$1,499.

Land Use

There are many ways to measure what land is for and how it is used. Three ways that are shown here are zoning, property class codes, and land cover. Comparing these three metrics can help a community better understand what their community is comprised of, and how best to manage its land.

Zoning

Zoning is a method of urban planning in which a municipality or other tier of government divides land into areas called zones, each of which has a set of regulations for new development that differs from other zones. Zones may be defined for a single use (for example residential, industrial), they may combine several compatible activities by use, or in the case of form-based zoning, and the differing regulations may govern the density, size and shape of allowed buildings whatever their use. The planning rules for each zone, determine whether planning permission for a given development may be granted. Zoning may specify a variety of outright and conditional uses of land. It may indicate the size and dimensions of lots that land may be subdivided into, or the form and scale of buildings. These guidelines are set in order to guide urban growth and development.

The Town of Watson has two zones: Hamlet and Rural Residential.

Property Type Classification Codes

Property Type Classification Codes were originally developed to describe the primary use of each parcel of real property on an assessment roll.

Classification allows states to tax different types of property in a non-uniform manner. The most common form of classification taxes different types of property at different percentages of value. These classes are generally based on use or ownership. The New York State Office of Real Property Services has developed a simple and uniform classification system to be used in assessment administration in New York State.

The system of classification consists of numeric codes in nine categories. Each category is composed of divisions, indicated by the second digit, and subdivisions (where required), indicated by a third digit. The nine categories are:

- 100 - Agricultural - Property used for the production of crops or livestock.
- 200 - Residential - Property used for human habitation. Living accommodations such as hotels, motels, and apartments are in the Commercial category - 400.
- 300 - Vacant Land - Property that is not in use, is in temporary use, or lacks permanent improvement.
- 400 - Commercial - Property used for the sale of goods and/or services.

- 500 - Recreation & Entertainment - Property used by groups for recreation, amusement, or entertainment.
- 600 - Community Services - Property used for the well-being of the community.
- 700 - Industrial - Property used for the production and fabrication of durable and nondurable man-made goods.
- 800 - Public Services - Property used to provide services to the general public.
- 900 - Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks - Reforested lands, preserves, and private hunting and fishing clubs

The majority of Watson is forestland, with some agricultural areas closer to Lowville, and some areas of public services.

Land Cover

Land cover data can help us better understand the landscape and how humans are using it. The National Land Cover Database (NLCD) is updated every five years and The National Land Cover Database (NLCD) provides nationwide land cover data. It stands as the definitive land cover database for the United States. The land cover data supports a wide variety of Federal, State, local, and nongovernmental applications that seek to assess ecosystem status and health, understand the spatial patterns of biodiversity, predict effects of climate change, and develop land management policy. NLCD products are created by the Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics (MRLC) Consortium, a partnership of Federal agencies led by the U.S. Geological Survey.

The database is designed to provide cyclical updates of United States land cover and associated changes. Systematically aligned over time, the data provides the ability to understand both current and historical land cover and land cover change, and enables monitoring and trend assessments. The latest evolution of NLCD products are designed for widespread application in biology, climate, education, land management, hydrology, environmental planning, risk and disease analysis, telecommunications and visualization. The latest iteration is NCLD 2016.

NLCD is used for a vast array of topical applications such as the assessment of ecosystem status and health, understanding spatial patterns of biodiversity, understanding climate change, and developing land management policy. It is a critical data layer in national assessments of biological carbon sequestration, water-quality monitoring, and wildfire monitoring and modeling.

Community Characteristics, Goals, and Recommendations



Environment

The Town of Watson deeply values its environmental assets and they provide the many recreational, social and economic benefits valued by its residents.

Management of the environment is crucial to its preservation. Management decisions regarding these many natural features have included development of hiking trails, creating access to water bodies and unique areas, construction of scenic public forest access roads, development of scenic vistas, creation and maintenance of forest openings, mowing of field areas to encourage various forms of wildlife, preservation of historic structures and carefully planned harvest operations.

Additionally, the protection of natural resources and opening of public recreation opportunities is likely to draw additional visitors to the area to enjoy the natural setting and recreate, expanding tourism and general spending in the vicinity of the property.

Community Analysis

According to the survey, 70.5% of residents choose to live in the Town of Watson because of its rural atmosphere, and 58.5% live in Watson because of the access to local lakes, rivers, and ponds. So it makes sense that the primary concerns of most residents largely fell around issues of environmental protection and conservation, with 50.6% of individuals concerned about stream and lake quality, 31.7% terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, and 29.7% on environmental protection.

Goals and Recommendations

Protect the current ecosystem health.

- Be aware of suburban sprawl, and work to stop the fragmentation of privately held forest cover habitats that connect publicly managed open space. Gradually, losses of connections between habitat patches will impact future plant and animal populations. Isolated patches will reduce the movement of plant and animal species and stress ecosystems. Therefore, keeping patches of open space connected by naturally vegetated corridors along such features as wetlands, hedgerows, streams and rivers is an important key to future forest ecosystem sustainability.

Cluster development to limit fragmentation of existing landscape connections.

- Large scale electric utility, natural gas pipelines and major highways can break up important natural habitats. Watson should work to keep as many large blocks of core forest as possible, potentially by clustering development.

Protect and enhance water quality.

- Work with farmers to ensure that they have the resources they need to prevent pollution and ensure the health and safety of residents. Consider working with Lewis County's Soil and Water Conservation District to apply for funds through the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program. The program serves to award projects that assist with environmental planning or implementing best management practice systems, such as nutrient management through manure storage, vegetative buffers along streams, conservation cover crops and other soil conservation measures.
- On-site wastewater treatment systems, or septic systems, are another primary source of water quality problems. As civilization expands further into the wilderness, things like hunting camps are increasing in number and quality. This can exert more human-induced stress on natural systems. The Town of Watson should work to ensure that all residents are following the NYS DEC's On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems Best Management Practices, which can be found here:
https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/onsitewastewater.pdf

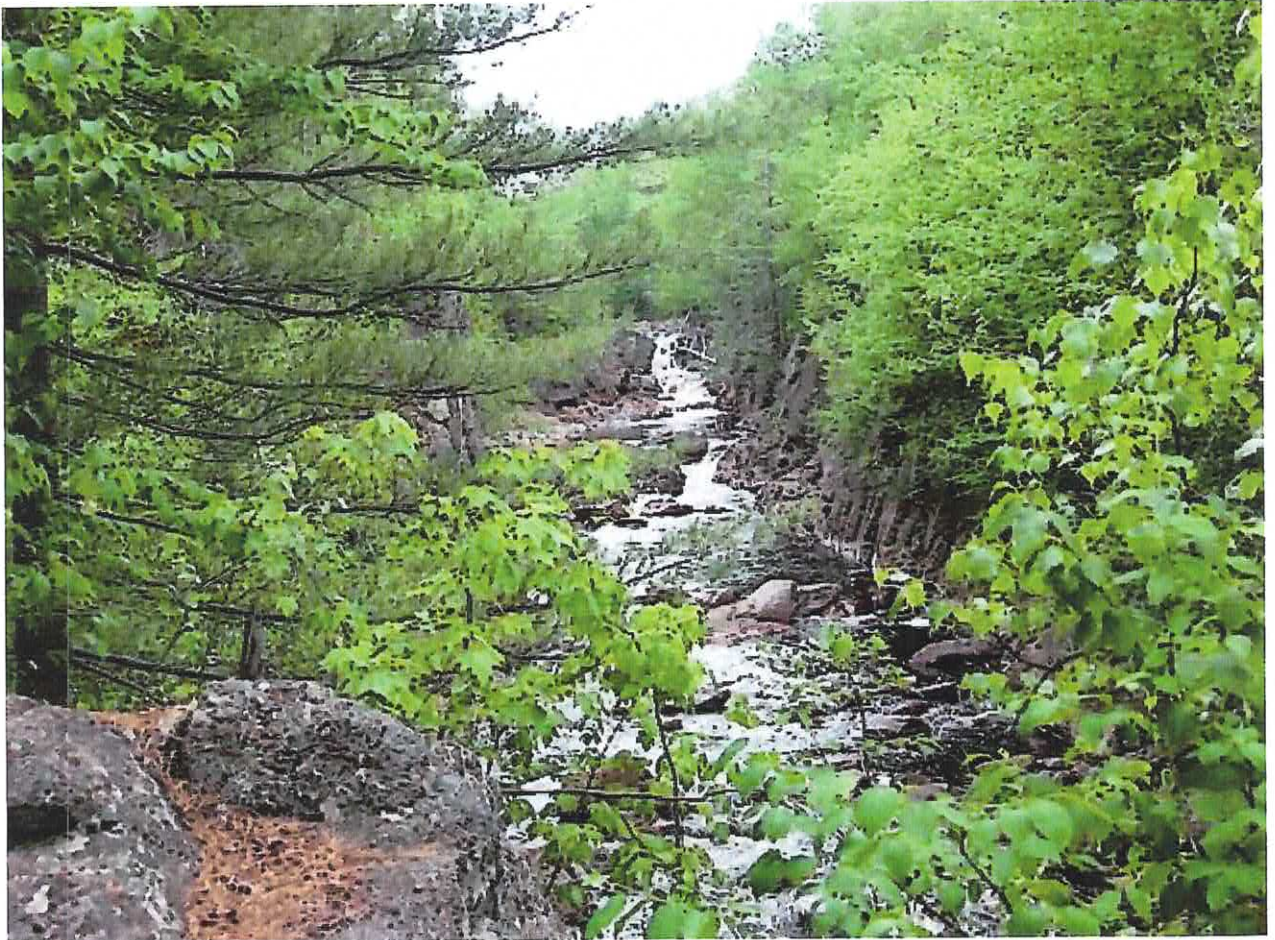
Protect the viewshed of scenic vistas.

- Consider drafting land use regulations that limit the height of new development structures and provide for generous setbacks to protect privacy and the rural character of the land.

➤

Outdoor recreation

There has been a significant increase in the desire for recreational opportunities across the Adirondack Park, and the Town of Watson has not been immune to this growth. The Town has seen the economic benefit of the tourism, and seeks to continue growth while also protecting the very resources that attract people to the region. If not managed properly, outdoor recreation can put the natural resources, visitor safety, and the promise of a wilderness experience at risk.



Recreational trails are another important component of many State Forests. Equine, mountain bike, hiking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing, and accessible trails are some of the trails found in the Town of Watson. It is imperative that the Town of Watson should continue to work to strike a balance between all outdoor recreational activities.

Community Analysis

83.1% of the residents of the Town of Watson feel that the streams, lakes, ponds, and rivers of the Town are special and worthy of protection in the future, and most people cite these resources as the reason they chose to live and own property in the Town. 33.1% are concerned

about ATV usage in the town. 7% of respondents to the survey listed their primary reason to living in the Town of Watson was because of the horse trails.

Overwhelmingly, residents of Watson want more outdoor recreational business and tourism related to the natural environment. The Town of Watson should continue to research trail options that would allow for a variety of uses.

Goals and Recommendations

Protect the environmental resources of the Town.

- Work to ensure that environmental impacts from recreational use do not cause disturbance to wildlife and their habitats, damage to vegetation, and soil erosion. This can be accomplished by working with Lewis County, New York State, and private clubs to focus on preventing and controlling erosion and rutting by educating trail users and possibly funding trail maintenance projects.
- Create new trails. The DEC will consider proposals for development of additional trails or the use of undesignated trails to accommodate local use of State Forests on a case-by-case basis. These issues must be addressed to ensure healthy state forests with quality recreational opportunities in the future.
- Consider a discussion regarding snowmobile/ATV trails with Lewis County Trail Coordinator to see if there are any creative solutions available.

Work to avoid potential conflicts across recreationalists.

- The lands in Watson are suitable for a wide variety of outdoor recreational pursuits; some are compatible with one another, while others are best kept apart. Public input to DEC has indicated that people using foot trails prefer trails be restricted to pedestrian use only because they have a variety of conflicts with other recreationists, especially with motorized use, mountain bikers and horse riders. A properly sited, maintained and restricted ATV trail system could provide for appropriate ATV use. However, there are significant maintenance, noise, and environmental impacts to doing this, so there must be careful thought put into implementation.

Provide recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities.

- While not all people will be able to have the experience they desire on every State Forest, DEC will endeavor to provide recreational opportunities to all who wish to experience the outdoors in a relatively undeveloped setting. Off road vehicles can also provide a means of access for recreationists who have impaired mobility.

- Encourage and promote the use of the horse mounting platforms in the Otter Creek Trail System as a means for greater accessibility to the trails.

Pursue grant opportunities to create new recreational sites and expand existing ones.

- Focus on creating more amenities, such as comfort stations, and greater accessibility to bolster existing recreational areas in an environmentally friendly way.

Maintain human-made assets.

- Human-made assets include structures, boundary lines, trails, roads and any other infrastructure or objects that exist because they were put there by people. Many of these items need no more than a periodic check to make sure they are still in working order. Others need regular maintenance to counteract the wear of regular use.

Public infrastructure

Assets such as road and rail networks, sewer and water systems, and energy systems are critical components to the health of our people and our economy. Within comprehensive planning, infrastructure extensions can serve as a mechanism to guide development into appropriate areas, protect sensitive land uses, and improve opportunities for compatibility between community land uses and military missions.



Residents supply their own septic sewer systems in accordance to local, county and state codes. There is limited public water with plans for limited expansion by 2021.

The majority of residents have their own water supply again governed by code, and state regulation. There is currently no natural gas service in the town.

Electrical service is through National Grid. Police coverage in the town is provided by the Lewis County Sheriff's Department and the New York State Police. Fire and emergency protection is provided by several volunteer fire and ambulance districts.

Garbage collection is provided by private contract with each resident. Residents may provide their own garbage service at the Lewis County Solid Waste Facility in Lowville.

Community Analysis

50.3% of respondents to the community survey said that they were happy with the current services the Town was providing. That said, there was some interest in semi-annual trash pick-up (with 27.3% of the respondents supporting that) and 19.8% in favor of semi-annual brush pick-up.

Goals and Recommendations

Use the water supply as efficiently and effectively as possible.

- Ensure that water wells and water supply lines are maintained by carrying out regular inspections and controlling access to the water supply.

Promote Watson as a solar development friendly community.

- Implement the recently drafted solar law.
- Consult with local NYSERDA representatives and land owners to market solar friendly developable land to potential solar development companies.

Economic development

A gateway community to the Adirondacks, Watson provides visitors with opportunities to shop in small, locally owned businesses for local art works, products, and services.

Community Analysis

32.3% of year round residents and 46.4% of seasonal residents feel that tourism related businesses are one of the most important types of development for the Town of Watson.



Goals and Recommendations

Maintain the business presence that currently exists in Watson.

- Encourage all small business owners to participate in any tax relief initiatives, and business management training offered through the Small Business Development Center.

Continue to enhance recreational opportunities in the Town and promote outdoor tourism as a means to expand employment opportunities.

- Work to promote the use of a DEC Temporary Revocable Permit for special events, group events and planned activities in the forestlands. These events can include snowmobile, bicycle, horse and orienteering races and events, runs, rides or

competitions (eg. biathlons and triathlons), archery and fishing tournaments, along with re-enactments, encampments and sponsored hikes. Consider having the Town assist in facilitating these types of functions.

- Work to market the Town as a destination for recreation and recreational businesses. Consider working with local development and tourism offices such as Naturally Lewis to attract niche tourism markets that are congruent to the type of recreational opportunities available in the Town, such as llama walking farms.

Housing

The availability of safe, affordable housing is important to the Town's future. Decent housing is not only a key contributor to the quality of life of current residents, but is also necessary if the community is to attract new business and industry. While factors that contribute to the cost of housing are largely outside the control of local government, there are measures the Town can take to keep costs appropriate.

Community Analysis

Watson residents overwhelmingly support single family housing in the Town, with 76% feeling that it was a compatible land use development. 36.6% of respondents felt that senior housing should be encouraged in the Town. 32.6% of respondents were also supportive of affordable housing.

22.7% felt that manufactured homes on single lots were compatible, and that number falls significantly when asked about manufactured home parks, which only 7.2% of the respondents felt was compatible.

Goals and Recommendations

Support the creation of senior housing.

- Encourage quality housing opportunities for the elderly and those with disabilities, that will allow residents to remain in the community despite their changing housing and care requirements.

Continue to provide opportunities for affordable housing.

- Continue to work with partner agencies such as Snowbelt Housing to apply for housing grants to generate more units.

Consider drafting regulations to restrict manufactured homes.

Appendix 1: Summary of Goals and Recommendations

Environmental

- Protect the current ecosystem health.
- Cluster development to limit fragmentation of existing landscape connections.
- Protect and enhance water quality.
- Protect the viewshed of scenic vistas.

Outdoor recreation

- Protect the environmental resources of the Town.
- Work to avoid potential conflicts across recreationalists.
- Provide recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities.
- Pursue grant opportunities to create new recreational sites and expand existing ones.
- Maintain human-made assets.

Public infrastructure

- Use the water supply as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- Promote Watson as a solar development friendly community.

Economic development

- Maintain the business presence that currently exists in Watson.
- Continue to enhance recreational opportunities in the Town and promote outdoor tourism as a means to expand employment opportunities.

- Maintain and enhance our working relationship with the Chamber of Commerce as well as Naturally Lewis.

Housing

- Support the creation of senior housing.
- Continue to provide opportunities for affordable housing.
- Consider drafting regulations to restrict manufactured homes.

Appendix 2: Survey and Survey Results

