

WESTMORE TOWN PLAN

Lake Willoughby Natural Area has been designated a Registered Natural Landmark under the provisions of the Historic sites Act of August 21, 1935. This site possesses exceptional value in illustrating the natural history of the United States.

**U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service 1967**

Adopted by the Selectboard on June 9, 2008

***Copy presented to the Selectboard following the planning commission hearing of April 17, 2008**

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. An approved town plan is necessary for grant applications. 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 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.

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 is a high priority. (pages 4 - 7)
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. (pages 1, 8 - 12, 16, 18, 23 - 25)
4. Retain or increase the number of working family farms while encouraging acceptable agriculture practices. (pages 1, 8 - 9)
5. Maintaining a healthy and vibrant forest and forestry industry in Westmore through long term forest stewardship is important. (pages 1, 10)
6. Maintaining the diversity of habitat and species that exist in Westmore is a priority. (pages 1, 11 - 12)
7. Maintain and enhance the important role that public lands play in Westmore. (page 12)
8. The important economic and social role recreation plays in Westmore is recognized and should be enhanced. (pages 6A, 9, 11, 16, 18 - 19)
9. Enhance the historic and cultural features in town. (page 13)
10. Maintaining the high quality of education for Westmore's young people and providing ongoing educational opportunities for all ages is important. (pages 9, 10, 11A, 13 - 14, 22)
11. Maintaining and enhancing a diversity of housing in Westmore is important. (pages 9, 14 - 16)
12. Maintaining and improving the existing road network is important. (pages 4, 6, 9, 10, 16 -18)
13. Promote a reduction in local dependence upon costly non-renewable energy resources by encouraging conservation and the development of local, renewable energy resources. (page 18)
14. 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. (pages 1, 9, 11A, 11, 18 - 20)

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 306.

At one time Westmore had six one-room schools and a school census of 119 pupils; today's is 36.

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 southwestern corner of the town is in the Willoughby State Forest.

Population

Westmore has the smallest population of any town in Orleans County with 306 persons (2000 Census). This represents practically no change from the 1990 census population of 305 in comparison to a 9.2% increase in the Orleans County population and a 8.2% statewide increase over the same period.

Westmore's 306 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. (Orleans County has 37.6 persons per square mile and the statewide average is 65.8).

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 and 2000 population into age groups, and also illustrates the percent change from 1990 to 2000 in each age group.

TABLE 1 Percent Changes in Age Groups 1990 - 2000

Ages	0-4	5-18	19-44	45-64	65 and over
1990	10	78	108	53	56
2000	13	46	85	111	51

Change +30% -41% -21% +109% -9%

Source: U.S. Census 1990-2000.

The above shows a 109 % increase in the 45-64 age group and a 30% increase in the 0 -4 age group, with a decline in the other groups. 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 2000 Westmore had a population of 306. Of that population 13 were under 5 years old, 242 were between 5 and 65, and 51 were over 65 years old. The median age was 45.9 years , compared to a statewide median of 37.7 years.

Household Types

According to the Census, the 2000 population of Westmore lived in 133 households, which can be broken down into the following categories:

Married Couples with Children	27
Married Couples with no Children	50
Female with Children	4
Single Persons	35
Other types	17
Total Households	133

The total number of households in town increased by 11.8. % between 1990 and 2000, from 119 to 133. In 1990, there were 11 households with children under 18 which were headed by a single parent; in 2000 there were 4.

Income

According to Census 2000 (U. S.), the median household income in Westmore is \$27,375.

Where People Work

Two hundred and eighty-two people over the age of sixteen, according to Census 2000 (U. S.), reside in Westmore. There are one hundred fifty workers with an average commute of 23.4 minutes. Of these one hundred twenty-two drive to work, seven walk to work, and twenty-one work at home.

Regional Employment

In 2001 the average wage for all covered employment (employment covered by Vermont unemployment insurance) in Westmore was \$14,722, 39% below that of \$23,971 for the county and 51% below that of the state's \$30,239.

The four dominant categories of covered employment in Orleans County during 2001 were: manufacturing (1858 employees); services: education and health services (1665 employees), and leisure and hospitality (830 employees)); wholesale and retail trade (1479 employees); and government (1842 employees). Agriculture, forestry and fishing had only 123 covered employees, but this figure is not representative since 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 based).

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.

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 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. (1)

1 Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, "Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont".

Rural Ambiance

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.

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
Hedgehog	3,519	3,519	100%	No

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. (2)

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.

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 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.

ISSUES/CONCERNS

1. In order to decrease the amount of siltation caused by building construction, logging, and farming, erosion control standards should be considered.
2. The lakes and ponds should be treated in two categories: one to remain essentially unchanged (Bald Hill, Brown, Hedgehog, 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 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:
 - * requiring a properly engineered and installed septic system before a camp can be significantly enlarged or used for year-round occupancy
 - * restricting additions or expansion of existing structures from getting closer to the water's edge than where they already are
 - * enacting appropriate setbacks from the water for all new structures
 - * 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.

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

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 be considered.
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 Practice for Logging Practices in Vermont.
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.

7. AGRICULTURE

Westmore’s active dairy farms are concentrated in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the town. These farms total approximately 2, 402 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 2,402 acres represent 10.8% of Westmore’s total land area of 22, 193 acres. For comparison, Westmore’s lakes and ponds occupy 1,926 acres. Occasionally farmers also use farmland in Barton and Brownington.

A study done in 1991 of the farmland in Westmore, gave the following observations. Three of the farm operations get extra income from timber harvesting, one to a considerable degree. Five farms tap their maples for sap, and four make syrup for sale. One farm receives income from renting tourist cottages. Two have full-time off-farm income, two have someone working part-time off the farm.

Three of the local farms are participants in the Vermont Current Use Tax Abatement Program. In 2002, Westmore had a total of 8, 280 acres in the Current Use Program, however, only 1,642 acres were enrolled as farmland. The town was reimbursed \$12,377 dollars in taxes on all land in the Program in 2001.

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.

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Orleans County is the most agricultural county in the region with 569 farms totalling an estimated 144,154 acres, or 11.42% of the farm acreage in the state.* In 1997, the farms in Orleans county produced 12.5% of the state’s agricultural output as compared to 13% in 1987. The average age of farm operators in Orleans County was 52.7 as compared to 48.5 in 1987..

* This figure is down from the 1987 Census which showed 616 farms totalling 168,200 acres in Orleans County

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.
11. Petition the USDA Soil Conservation Service to give priority to completing Westmore’s soil maps.

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 taken into consideration for future development.

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 most scenic and significant ridgelines in town should be identified and the property owners encouraged to take these into consideration when planning any new development.
6. 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.

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.

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. Contact Soil Conservation Service to encourage them to finish mapping the soils of the Town of Westmore.

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 should be considered prior to construction or granting the necessary permits.
2. Encourage landowners to consider the importance of the ridgelines in Westmore.

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, Sunset 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 six (306) full-time residents, spends over nine hundred thousand (\$900,000.00) dollars on education for our thirty-six (36) students K-12. This includes, but is not limited to, tuition payments(s) of approximately seven thousand (\$7,000.00) dollars per student and our contribution to the “sharing pool”. Under Act 60, approximately ten year ago, 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 and 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.

The median household income for Orleans County was estimated to be \$29,184 in 1997, and \$27,375 for Westmore. Using the county figure to calculate the limit of affordability, gives an acceptable housing cost of \$8,755 yearly or \$729 monthly, while using the town figure gives an acceptable housing cost of \$8,212 yearly or \$684 monthly. Households with less than 50% of the county median are defined as very low income (\$14,592 or less), and those with less than 30% are defined as very, very low income (\$8,755 or less).

In addition to monthly payments, the home buyer must have the savings necessary to cover the down payment plus purchase costs. Given that incomes have increased only slightly since 1999, the monthly payments, as well as the down payment on recently sold homes are much more out of the median household's reach than they were in 1999.

Renting

According to the 2000 Census, 28 of Westmore's 133 occupied housing units are occupied by renters. This represents an increase in the proportion of occupied units filled by renters from 13% in 1990 to 21% in 2000. Median gross rent from Westmore's 1990 Census data was \$325. Assuming a household is paying the median rent, then a household income of \$13,000 would be necessary for the rent to be affordable. Thus, the median rental is affordable to the median household, while the median home is not. (Although some Census 2000 information is available and has been utilized, much of this information is not scheduled for release until 2003 and beyond).

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 by 2000. Westmore’s average household size was 2.30 at the 2000 Census 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	unavailable
1990	542	9	103	16	414
2000	530	34	105	28	363

Source U.S. Census 1980, 1990, 2000

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, 1990 - 2000 - Westmore

Number of Households		Population	
% Increase		% Increase	
1980 - 1990	1990 - 2000	1980-1990	1990-2000
20%	12%	19%	.3%

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000

Age of Units. Like the rest of the region, a substantial portion of Westmore’s year-round housing stock was built before 1940 . 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. (U.S. Census 1990, 2000).

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 2000 was approximately \$2,200/acre for parcels of 10 acres or less.

ISSUES/CONCERN

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. Zoning by-laws now require 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.
- * 24.39 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 24.39 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.

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 community church provides space for church, community hall and town clerk's office patrons. 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 development of renewable energy resources, residents decrease the money they spend on energy while increasing the local economy.

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 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 should be completed on the public buildings in town and audits of private buildings should be encouraged.
2. Encourage car and van pooling by providing a parking area for commuters.
3. 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.
4. Promote small woodlot management practices which would supply locally grown wood fuel.
5. 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, 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 in public and private ownership with hiking trails. 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 southend 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 provides important wildlife habitat, a peaceful place to reflect on life, and protection of water quality. Westmore has many opportunities to protect large sections of undeveloped shoreline.
- * 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 protectinating landowners for allowing public access to their private lands.

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 silvacultural (science of forestry) landscape when planning techniques are effectively applied.

Westmore's primary economic assets are its abundant natural resources and the beauty of its landscape. Willoughby State Forest 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 "eco-tourism," 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 use of our renewable 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, the Orleans County Sheriff and local constables.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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

21. FIRE PROTECTION

Westmore is protected by the Westmore Fireman's Association, the Barton, Orleans, West Burke, Charleston, and Island Pond Fire Departments. The town contributes to the Barton and Orleans fire departments, as well as to the Westmore Fireman's Association. The relationship with these fire departments has always been very good.

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 Solid Waste 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 more camps on small lots are installing 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.

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. 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 Verizon through its Barton exchange for most of the town, with fringe areas covered by the West Burke, Charleston, or Island Pond exchanges.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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 nearly all the jobs that residents rely on are in another community. Westmore has always maintained an excellent relationship with our neighbors, a relationship that should continue.

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=2008, 2=2009, 3=2010, 4=2011, 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.

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHO</u>
WATER QUALITY		
1. Erosion control standards should be considered.	5	PC
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
7. Monitor water quality.	5	LA/HO
8. Monitor and control aquatic nuisance weeds.	5	LA/SB
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	5	CC/PC

while remaining economically viable.

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|---|---|-----------|
| 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 |
| 10. Petition the USDA Soil Conservation Service to give priority to completing Westmore's soil maps. | 2 | PC |

FORESTS

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| 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 |

NATURAL AREAS, WETLANDS, WILDLIFE

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|--|---|-------|
| 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 techniques. | 5 | PC/CC |
| 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 | 5 | PC/CC |

wetland Rules. Work on identifying wetlands in Westmore and notifying landowners of the location of wetlands to avoid problems at a later date.

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| 5. Contact Soil Conservation Service to encourage them to finish mapping the soils of the Town of Westmore. | 2 | PC |
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STATE LANDS

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|---|---|---------|
| 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.
PC/S/CC | 5 | |
| 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

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|---|---|--------|
| 1. The visual impact of proposed commercial or large residential developments should be considered prior to construction or granting the necessary permits. | 5 | PC/ZBA |
| 2. Encourage landowners to preserve the integrity of the ridgelines. | 5 | PC/ZA |

HISTORIC FEATURES

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|---|---|----|
| 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

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|--|---|----|
| 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 information available through the town clerk zoning administrator. | 5 | PC/CC |
| 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 |

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| 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 |
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TRANSPORTATION

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| 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

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| 1. Periodic energy audits on the public buildings in town and audits of private buildings should be encouraged. | 5 | 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

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| 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 town of Westmore on issues concerning the lakes, ponds, and any other environmental or developmental issues in the town. | 5 | S |
| 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 |

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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|--|---|----|
| 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 | 1 | PC |

low-impact commercial and recreational uses in different areas.

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|--|---|----|
| 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

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| 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

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| 1. Neighborhood Watch program should be encouraged. | 5 | LA |
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FIRE PROTECTION

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| 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

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|---|---|---|
| 1. Cooperate and participate in the state and regional solid waste disposal activities. | 5 | S |
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WATER SUPPLY

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| 1. Encourage enforcement of federal, state and local regulations to ensure the highest possible ground and surface water quality standards. | 5 | CC/PC |
| 2. Groundwater recharge areas should be identified and protected from inappropriate development. | 5 | PC |

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

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| 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 |
| 2. Look into ways to assist home owners in monitoring and updating their septic systems. | 5 | PC |
| 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 |

UTILITIES

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| 1. Individual and collective efforts should be encouraged to ensure that reliable high quality utility service is provided to all residents. | 5 | PC |
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MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

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| 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 |
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ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT SERVICE

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|---|---|---------|
| 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 TEN ELEMENTS OF CHAPTER 117

Vermont Statute Title 24, Chapter 117 (the enabling legislation for local land use planning and regulation in Vermont) requires the ten 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 1 - 2, 4, 12, 15 - 18, 19
- (3) A transportation plan
 - * pages 2, 4, 6, 8, 16 - 18
- (4) A utility and facility plan
 - * pages 2, 12, 19 - 22
- (5) Policies on the preservation of natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources
 - * pages 1, 2, 4 - 6, 9 - 13
- (6) An educational facilities plan
 - * pages 1, 13
- (7) An implementation program
 - * pages 23 - 28
- (8) Adjacent municipalities
 - * page 23
- (9) An energy plan
 - * pages 1, 18
- (10) A housing element
 - * pages 1, 14 - 16