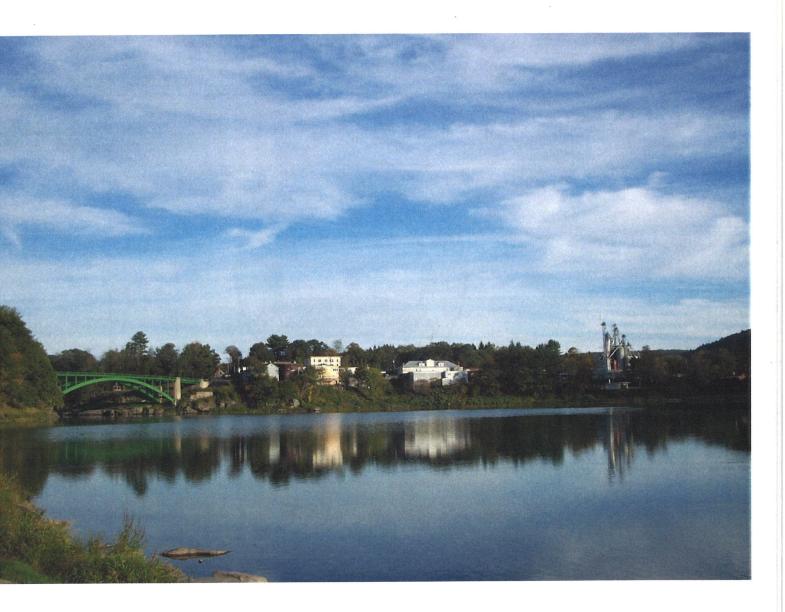
# Town of Tusten



Natural Resources & Open Space Inventory

2011

# This project was assisted by a grant from the Upper Delaware Council, Narrowsburg, NY 12764

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## Town of Tusten Conservation Council

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A defining characteristic of our age is the realization that our planet's resources are finite, and that our culture is still struggling with this realization. We should also recognize that the limited resources of our physical world in no way curtail our ability to integrate sound principles of sustainability as we plan our communities and enhance our understanding of the earth's resources and ecological systems.

To this end and under the statutory provisions set forth in New York State Municipal Law, Article 12-F Conservation Advisory Councils and Conservation Boards, Section 239-x Creation of Conservation Advisory Council, The Town Board of the Town of Tusten created a Conservation Council in early 2008. An advertisement for volunteers to serve on the Conservation Council was released by the Town in October 2007. Prospective board members submitted letters of interest and credentials in November 2007 and a nine member board was confirmed at the Town Board meeting on December 10, 2007. The first meeting of the Town of Tusten Conservation Council was held on February 4th, 2008 at the Town Hall in Narrowsburg, NY.

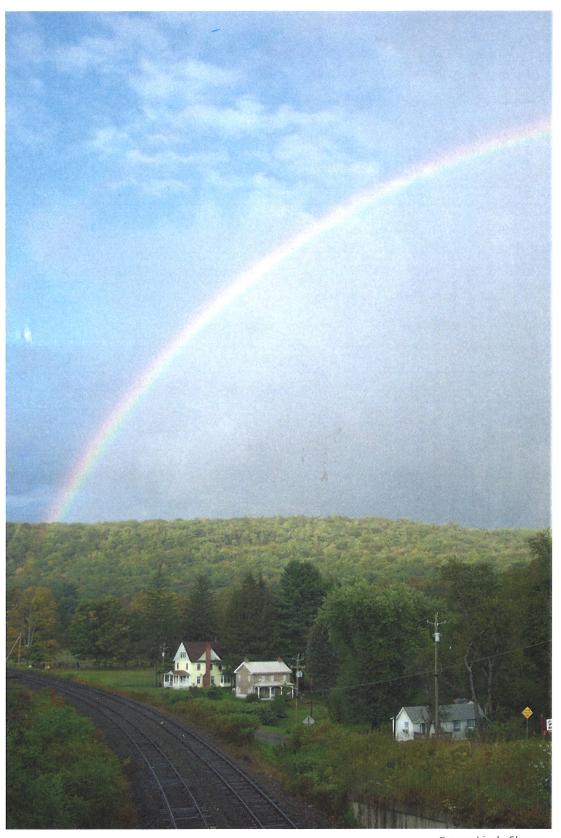
Dr. William Pammer and Heather Jacksey of the Sullivan County Department of Planning provided planning assistance and counsel to the Town of Tusten during the creation of the Conservation Council. They also participated in the initial Council meetings to help define the role and responsibilities of the Council within the guidelines provided in the New York State General Municipal Law. The County Planning Office can provide continued technical assistance to the Conservation Council as the Council fulfills its mission and tasks as assigned by the Town Board.

The Town of Tusten Conservation Council is subordinate to the Town Board and is intended to play a supporting advisory role to the Town Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board. The Conservation Council has no jurisdictional authority as to development proposals submitted to the Town of Tusten for approval. It is intended that the Conservation Council will support the efforts and recommendations of the 2007 Town of Tusten Comprehensive Plan.

It is anticipated that he Town of Tusten Conservation Council will inventory and map the Town's significant natural and cultural resources, identify significant environmental assets and make recommendations to the Town Board on their protection and conservation. The council can provide direction and counsel on open space planning, water quality and conservation, as well as, the protection and preservation of the Towns' wetlands and wildlife.

The Town of Tusten Conservation Council is guided by the vision statement and recommendations of the 2007 Town of Tusten Comprehensive Plan as repeated here:

"We see our community growing in a balanced, diverse manner that protects its rural character by building on our strengths and historic roots."

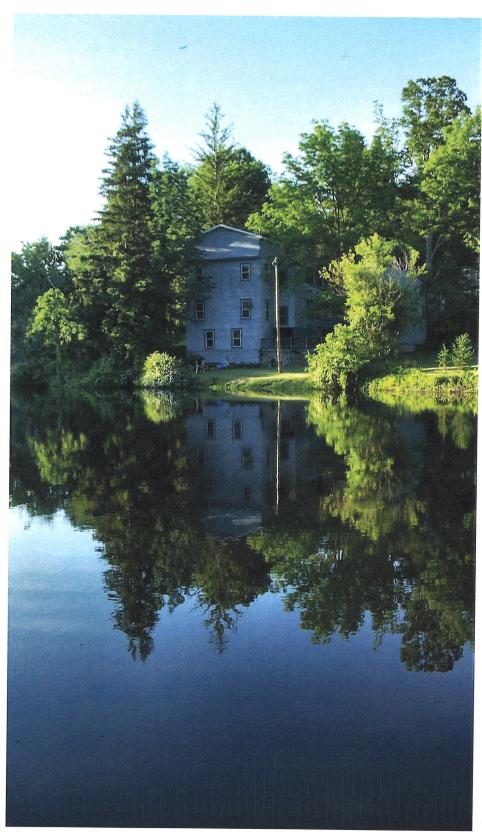


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#### PURPOSE OF OPEN SPACE & NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

The purpose of this inventory is to identify the natural resources, open space, the cultural resources and historic sites that make up the Town of Tusten. Environmentally fragile and sensitive areas will be designated and unique plant an animal habitats will be identified. The protection and conservation of the Town's water and hydrologic resources is of prime concern and will be a focus of the inventory.

These resources will then be documented through a series of inventory base maps and other means to provide a useful data base for the Town of Tusten to be used as a resource and guidance for local planning, future sustainable growth and the conservation of important natural resources.



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#### TOWN OF TUSTEN PROFILE

Defining Characteristics of the Town of Tusten

The Town of Tusten's history has been, and still is, strongly influenced by its proximity to the Delaware River and the Erie Lackawana Railroad. In 1835 the Delaware Division of the railway was changed to enter Pennsylvania just north of Sparrowbush and return to New York at Tusten, which resulted in the hamlet of Narrowsburg being on the line.

With a population grown in the hamlet, the Sullivan County Board of Supervisors met in 1853 to pass legislation that created the townships of Tusten and Highland from neighboring Lumberland. 1966 brought the last train with passenger service through Narrowsburg. By 1980 the National Park Service was brought to Narrowsburg as a result of the 1978 Congressional Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the designation of the Upper Delaware as a National Scenic and Recreational River.

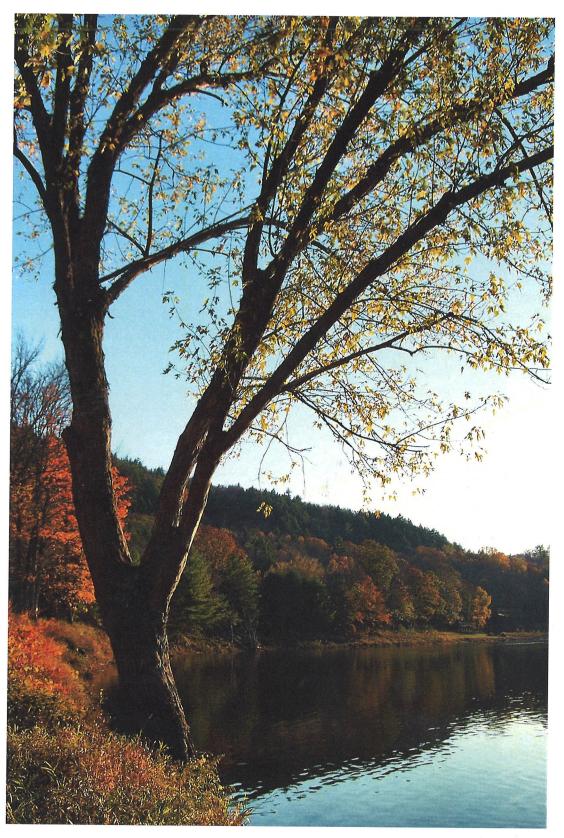
The Town of Tusten contains significant open space and natural resources. Its Western border is defined by approximately 14 miles of shoreline along the Delaware River and shares this border with Pennsylvania. In many ways, this proximity to the Delaware River, a nationally designated Wild and Scenic River, and the fact that a section of the town is within the designated River Corridor is the very element that defines the Town. The River's importance as an economic and recreational force cannot be underestimated. Each year thousands of visitors and outdoor enthusiasts are attracted to the Town. These characteristics are what also what attract a large number of second-homeowners to the area.

Tusten's economic base revolves around tourism, single owner or family businesses, the second home industry and small agri-businesses. Current businesses fall into four primary categories: service, recreation and entertainment, and building and agribusiness. Many home businesses, owned by artists, designers, writers, filmmakers, etc. have also emerged in Tusten in recent years.

Town Setting and Composition of Urban and Rural Space

The Town if Tusten is a rural community, located in western Sullivan County, New York. There is a generous amount of forests, fields, with some steep terrain forming the Delaware River Valley. A 14 mile section of the Delaware River forms the Town's western border and the Interstate Bridge that links New York State and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, make Tusten's hamlet of Narrowsburg a crossroads.

As one moves away from the Delaware, the landscape is mostly wooded, with some areas of open fields, lakes, and small rivers and streams that flow into the Delaware. These traditional open spaces and natural resources have, up to now, been protected, in part by zoning, and in part by the economics of the Sullivan County area. Zoning has preserved the urban/rural distinction in the Town. In recent years, there have been increasing development pressures due to proximity to the New York metropolitan area (2.5 hours), changing demographics, and increased home prices in surrounding areas.

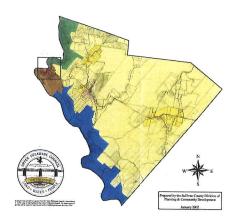


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The Town of Tusten Zoning Map shows areas of high density residential development, business districts, and areas of low density rural residential settlement.

Scenic River District - SR
Recreational River District - RR
Rural Residential District - R1
Rural Development District - R2
(Hamlet of Lava, Hamlet of Beaverbrook)
General Residential District - GR
Roadside Business District - RB

Downtown Business District - DB



As is evident from the above table, the majority of the acreage in the Town of Tusten is in the R1 Rural Residential District. The separation between high density General Residential, the commercial/business areas, the open fields and forests, the larger land parcels that comprise the Scenic River District, the Recreational River District, and the Rural Residential District are well defined at present, but lack formal protections, such as Conservation Easements, or designations as State Parks. For the purpose of this document, a large parcel is one of 50 acres or more, of primarily open space. Since the floods of 2005 and 2006, portions of the Scenic River and Recreational River Districts fall within newly defined flood plains (see FEMA maps). Such Federal designation offers this ecologically sensitive area some measure of protection.

#### Statistics on Population Trends, Jobs and Housing

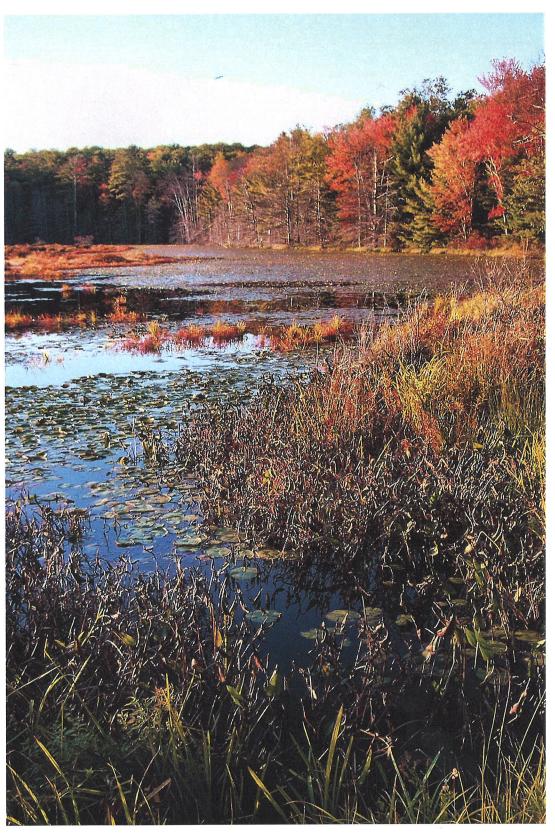
According to the 2000 Census the total population of the Town of Tusten was 1,415 persons. The population in the Hamlet of Narrowsburg was recorded as 414, 29.3% of the total town population. The total number of housing units was recorded at 1,008 for the Town of Tusten. Seventy nine percent of total housing units are owner occupied. Sixty-three percent of the Town population is in the labor force and the median household income for the Town was \$38,824.

(This topic should be filled out relative to the information available from the 2010 Census figures as they become available. The focus should be on the population growth in the decade since 9/11and the relevance to planned sustainable development in the Town of Tusten)

#### Summary of the Town of Tusten Comprehensive Plan 2007

In 2007 the town completed an in-depth Comprehensive Plan. Focus group and survey results showed that the town residents felt that a high priority must be placed on the town's open space and natural resources. When asked about specifics in the protection of the town's open space, residents believed that the protection of the River Corridor and the Town's ridgelines were of high importance.

When asked in the study what the top reasons for living in the Town of Tusten were, many



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felt it was the small town atmosphere, open space and scenery, clean water and air along with the town's proximity to the Delaware River. When the residents were asked to prioritize town initiatives, preserving the forestland, minimizing the sprawl, creating hiking/biking/walking trails, preserving farms and open space and creating renewable energy were all categorized as high priority.

Recommendations from the Town of Tusten Comprehensive Plan 2007

In order to protect the Town's rural character, open space and natural resources, the following recommendations were made:

- 1. CREATE AN OPEN SPACE PLAN
- 2. Active Integration of Conservation Subdivisions into Town Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances
- 3. Energy and Energy Efficiency and Reduce Environmental Impact of New Development
- 4. Revisit the Ridgeline Preservation Report and Recommendations Created for the Town by Shepstone Management Company
- 5. Promote Awareness and Enforcement of the Local Burn Barrel Law
- 6. Regulate Outdoor furnaces

This Natural Resources and Open Space Inventory is being conducted to address Item 1 above specifically and to assist and support The Town Board and the community with the other recommendations of the Town of Tusten comprehensive Plan 2007.



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#### PRIORITY ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE AREAS

The Town of Tusten is located in the Delaware River Valley and, although a geographically small area is very rich in biodiversity, scenic and recreational opportunities and habitat suitable for propagation of many endangered and threatened species.

The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Corridor, which forms the western border of Tusten, is a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Protection and management of the Corridor is shared by the National Park Service (NPS), and private landowners. Cooperation between the Towns bordering the River and the NPS is facilitated by the Upper Delaware Council (UDC), and guided by the River Management Plan, which was implemented in 1986. This is a unique arrangement. It represents a compromise between the goals of environmental protection, and recreational opportunity, and respect for the rights of private landowners. This also provides the basis for the orderly and balanced growth of the Town of Tusten with a focus on sound principles of conservation and sustainability.

#### Town of Tusten Land Use and Cultural Resources - Land Use

Outside the borders of the Hamlet of Narrowsburg and the River Corridor, the remaining acreage in the Town of Tusten is primarily in private ownership.

The current land use in the Town of Tusten consists mainly of large parcels open field and forested land, "rural residential" homes, many of which are old farmhouses, large vacant parcels, concentrated hamlet populations, and some suburban-style residential development. Large parcels are owned by hunting and fishing clubs, and summer camps, along with acreage used for forestry and agriculture that belong to private individuals. Agricultural and forest exemptions are noted for some large acreage landowners. Most of these large parcels of land provide important open space benefits. Three residential subdivisions have been created in recent years; Weiden Lake Estates, Perry Pond, and Eagles Nest. These home sites range from 5 to 10 acres, with some larger parcels. Development within these communities is guided by deed restrictions. There is one property protected by conservation easement, comprised of 98 acres in the hamlet of Lava.

The largest parcel of private land is owned by The Boy Scouts of America (BSA), Greater New York Council, and consists of approximately 12,000 acres of undeveloped land in the Town of Tusten. Because of the very low impact of its use as a Boy Scout Camp, and its large size, it provides an important habitat for threatened and endangered species, including the bald eagle, and timber rattlesnake. See Map 4: Significant Bird Habitat Map and Map 5: Significant Reptile & Amphibian Map.

The original Tusten Settlement, dating back to the 1700's, is located on Boy Scouts of America property, and includes many historic sites and artifacts, including the Tusten Settlement Church and graveyard, Church and Stone Arch Bridge built in the 1850 across the Ten Mile River, which is an important tributary to the main stream of the Delaware. The Boy Scouts of America property also includes approximately 10 miles of The Lenape Trail, which is the



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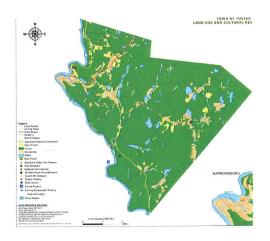
only hiking trail open to the public in the Town of Tusten. The Lenape Trail follows the Delaware River shoreline into challenging hiking terrain past old stone quarries to a spectacular view of Delaware River valley.

The Norfolk and Southern Railroad Company runs north to south and parallels the Delaware River on the west and Route 97 on the east. The railroad is used only to carry freight as the rail bed is old, in poor shape and regarded as unsafe for passenger travel.

#### **Cultural Resources**

State Route 97, which runs north to south through the Town, parallels the River and offers residents and visitors spectacular views. It is a federally designated Scenic Byway, and State Scenic Bike Route, with approximately 12 miles extending through the Town of Tusten.

Fort Delaware, the Museum of Colonial History, is located adjacent to Tusten's Roadside Business District and managed by Sullivan County. It is on Route 97 and thus on the Scenic Byway. There is a plan underway to house

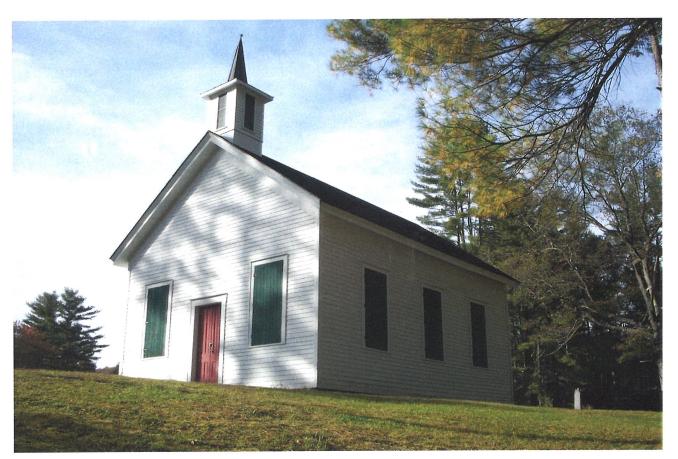


a Sullivan County Visitors Center on this site. Other public spaces that are either owned or leased by Federal, State, County or local governments include; DEC Fishing Access, Town Park and Ball Fields, Veterans Memorial Park and Gazebo located in the Downtown Business District overlooking the Delaware River, The Deck on Main Street and a planned Riverwalk which will make the shoreline more accessible to the public and enhance the Downtown Business District.

In addition to the area's unique geography and natural beauty, the Town of Tusten has historic areas and buildings that date from the 1700's. The site of the old Tusten Village off Route 97 was a logging and bluestone quarrying area. It was a thriving area that included amongst other commercial enterprises, the Hankins Store - located a right turn onto Crawford Road at foot of the hill - the first building. However, in 1763 the local Native Americans, most likely a sub tribe of the Leni-Lanape (Delaware), attacked and destroyed the village.

There are two buildings within the town that are listed on the National Historic Register. One is the Tusten Baptist Church located off Route 97 near the old Tusten Village. It had its beginnings about 1840 as a place of worship and in 1856 the church building itself was built on lands donated by the Bross family. The church thrived for approximately two decades; but, when the demand for (quarry) stone declined, the bulk of the congregation moved on looking for work. In 1968, the Tusten Settlement Association was founded and the historic church was restored.

The Kirk House is also listed in the National Historic Register. It was originally built in 1840 and moved in approximately 1874. In 1875 a second story was added to the house. The house is located off Kirk Road near the Maple Grove Cemetery.



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The home of Commodore C. Murray was built in 1839 and in the 1980's and part of the 1990's was a bed and breakfast. Commodore was his first name and had no bearing on naval rank. In the 1800's, Mr. Murray owned nearly all of the "Flats" section of Narrowsburg.

Near the site of Lake Erie (located within the hamlet of Narrowsburg) there is a small building which served as an ice house from the mid 1800's.

Stranahan's store located on Main Street in Narrowsburg was built in 1839 and served the community as a general store and for a time a town clerk's office. The store was in operation until the 1990's and is now a vacant building.

The original U.S. Post Office was located on Main Street (year of erection unclear) and the building is now home to a retail store.

The railroad came to town in 1848 and with it came first, a thriving commercial logging industry and eventually in the early 1900's a tourist trade. The town was a busy and lively place during the mid to late 1800's with a number of buildings being erected during that period.

The Narrowsburg Inn was built in 1840 and is still in operation as an Inn. The Arlington Hotel was built in 1873 and was destroyed in a disastrous fire in December 1893, which destroyed almost all of the buildings on Main Street. The Delaware Arts Alliance, housed on Main Street, purchased the building from Eugene and Elizabeth Kelly in 1981 and still owns the building.

Some other buildings of cultural interest in the Town of Tusten are:

The United Methodist Church - circa 1856

St. Paul's Lutheran Church - circa 1869

Odd Fellows Hall, now a private home, was used by the Sons of Liberty; circa 1891

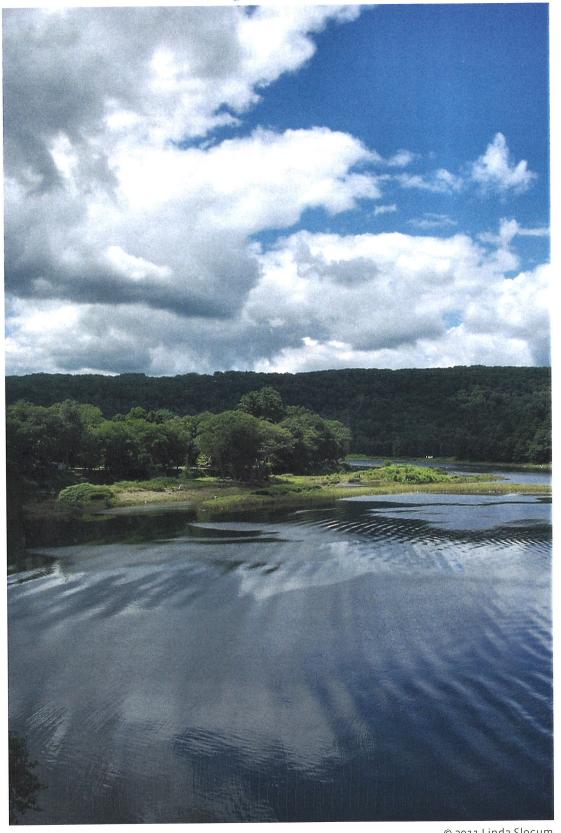
J.S. Anderson Building (near Main Street Cafe) - circa 1904

Corner building on Main Street was a mill, Alan H. Decker was the owner - circa 1893

Two more buildings of note are St. Francis Xavier R. C. Church - circa 1925

Tusten Town Hall - circa 1920's.

The current Tusten Theater housed a movie theater and is now used partially for town offices and a theater for various forms of entertainment including the Delaware Valley Opera Company.



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Other points of interest are the various cemeteries in the town:

Glen Cove Cemetery (off Kirk Road) has several sections; namely, the Old School District Burying Grounds, Old Narrowsburg Burying Grounds, Glen Cove 3rd Section, Maple Grove Section and Maple Grove Partridge Section
Tusten Cemetery, off U. S. Route 97, next to the Tusten Baptist Church
Lava Cemetery, off State Route 52
Beaver Brook Cemetery, off County Route 23
St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, off Bridge Street
Mapes Cemetery, a private family cemetery in the Luxton Lake area.

Because of its forested land, lakes, streams and the Delaware River, the town has excellent fishing, canoeing, rafting, hiking, biking and hunting opportunities that offer year round recreational enjoyment.

Town of Tusten Significant Hydrologic Features

Several stream systems within Tusten are native brook trout spawning streams. The Department of Environmental Conservation(DEC) prohibits activities that would disrupt the streams during the spawning season. These streams also have healthy wood turtle populations. The wood turtle is declining in its range due to habitat loss and is considered a Species of Special Concern. These streams include the tributaries to and the Ten Mile River extending from neighboring Cochecton Center through Tusten Station, Tylertown through Tusten Station, Clarks Pond through Narrowsburg, Beaverbrook and several of the streams through the BSA property.

There are unique ancient bog habitats located in Tusten. A notable bog at Grassy Swamp Pond contains a unique plant community that includes tamarack carnivorous plant rare orchids and cranberries. There are probably others in the interior of the large wetlands of the BSA property; however they are not readily accessible.

The Delaware River Valley has well pronounced and scenic ridgelines which should be preserved for the scenic and recreational value of Tusten. The steep slopes should remain wooded to protect from erosion and increased flooding in the river valley, which results in habitat degradation and loss of personal property.





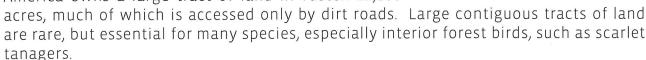


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#### Town of Tusten Significant Bird Habitats

An Important Bird Area (IBA) as designated by New York State encompasses a corridor approximately a half mile wide on both sides of the Delaware River. There are 6 known bald eagle nests, five of which are located in the river corridor. The other is located at Perry Pond in the northwest corner of Tusten.

The Greater New York Council of the Boy Scouts of America owns a large tract of land in Tusten 12,000





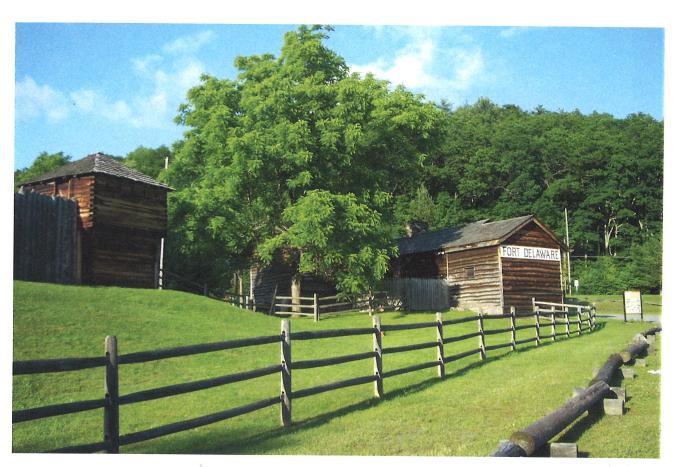
#### Town of Tusten Significant Reptile and Amphibian Habitats

The Delaware River valley is one of the last strongholds in New York for the timber rattle-snake, a Threatened Species. There are four dens located in the Town of Tusten two in the western part and two in the southern part. Since timber rattlesnakes have used the same

familial dens since the recession of the last glacier, these locations are critical to their survival. The New York State DEC recognizes movement corridors and areas of genetic interchange as critical to the populations. Routes 97, Cochecton Turnpike and Royal Oakes Estates transect some of these corridors. Increased truck traffic on Routet 97, in particular, could have a significant impact of the ability for a rattlesnake to cross.

TOTAL OF TOT

The New York State Reptile and Amphibian Atlas, a 10 year project, showed only two locations in Sullivan County with the highest category of different species (31-40); Tusten and the Bashakill State Land. These include uncommon spies such as northern red salamanders which have a healthy colony in the stream along Routet 97 in the southern part of Tusten. Just to the north is a population of another uncommon species, the marbled salamander, which is located along Route 97 also. The Ten Mile River near Tusten Station was found to be a breeding area for the highest number of species of amphibians found in Tusten. Any increase in traffic along this corridor would have a negative impact on the survival of these species because of their spring and fall migrations across the roadway between breeding grounds and summer foraging habitat.



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#### LAND CONSERVATION TOOLS

There are a wide array of land conservation tools and strategies available to the Township to actively conserve some of the important natural and scenic resources within the Town of Tusten. To successfully do so, the Town must develop clear goals, utilize some or all of the tools available and ensure that resources and man power is made available to implement the goals. The goals can range in size and scope and can include projects such as providing increased access to recreation; protecting the viewscape of a scenic road or heritage area; or protecting sensitive wildlife habitat. Whatever the goals, it is often most effectively reached by a combination of local planning strategies, working with local, state and national agencies and/or non-profit organizations, and identifying outside funding sources such as private grants and government funding programs.

The following describes a variety of tools and strategies that the Town can adopt to proactively increase conservation of its natural and scenic resources. A number of these tools require little or no financial investment and once in place will keep on paying dividends in the form of increased quality of life, scenic beauty, and well functioning natural systems such as clean drinking water, flood water retention, cleaner air, increased recreation opportunities and healthy wildlife populations.

#### Local Planning Strategies

Local planning strategies include provisions in the local zoning and subdivision laws that encourages or support natural or scenic resource conservation. Such provisions include but are not limited to open space incentive zoning (also known as conservation subdivisions), timbering and clear cut ordinances, erosion and drainage ordinances for commercial and residential development, and agricultural security areas. Other strategies include working with neighboring townships on conservation plans or projects which minimizes cost and increases conservation impact by potentially incorporating a larger land mass and actively working with local land trusts and interested landowners to protect land that has natural or cultural significance with permanent conservation easements.

#### Local Conservation Program

The township can also choose to set up a local program to support the townships goals of natural or scenic resource conservation. Such a program can range in scale from a project specific program where the township may set aside a small amount of money to hire a consultant to apply for conservation related grants on its behalf. A somewhat larger and longer term commitment would be for the Town to decide to create a fund that can act as a local match for state or federal conservation funding programs, which provides more leverage and often gives access to larger funding amounts with a relatively small investment on the part of the Town. These options are examples and any short or long term program can be tailored to fit the needs and goals of the town.



#### Working with Other Agencies and Organizations

Working with other townships, government agencies and non-profit organizations that share a common goal can be a very effective way for the township to maximize its resources and work toward one or several conservation goals. This can take shape on a town wide scale or can simply consist of protecting a specific piece of property or a specific natural feature such as a wetland. An example might be that the Town could identify an important scenic valley that encompasses land that extends into a neighboring township and then work with that township on a plan to protect the scenic view in the valley. Another example might be that the Town may identify a specific parcel of land that has a particular high conservation value and work with the local land trust and the landowner to protect the land with a conservation easement. Another goal could be to minimize new or current development in flood prone areas and work with county, state and federal agencies to obtain funding to reduce or eliminate such development. Government agencies and non-profit organizations can bring a large amount of knowledge, staff resources, and sometimes funding to the table and partnering can often make a project more manageable both in terms of cost and scope.

#### **Identify Outside Funding Sources**

Both private organizations and government agencies offer a multitude of grants and funding programs to support a broad spectrum of natural resource conservation and recreation opportunities, as well as local planning initiatives. These programs include farmland or forest preservation programs, park or trail development, greenways protection, the protection of threatened or endangered species, wetland or floodplain protection and overall land conservation and planning. Some of these grant programs and funding sources include the Federal Land and Conservation Fund, the USDA Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program, the NY State Environmental Protection Fund and the NY State Quality Communities Grant Program. Many private foundations as well as some corporate entities also provide grants and funding for projects that support natural resources conservation, recreational opportunities or historic preservation.

Finding and applying for these public and private funding sources can be time consuming and the help of professionals or semi-professionals is often necessary when dealing with larger projects. However, local volunteers who either take a personal interest in a particular project or who have expertise within a specific project scope can also be utilized.



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#### CONCLUSION

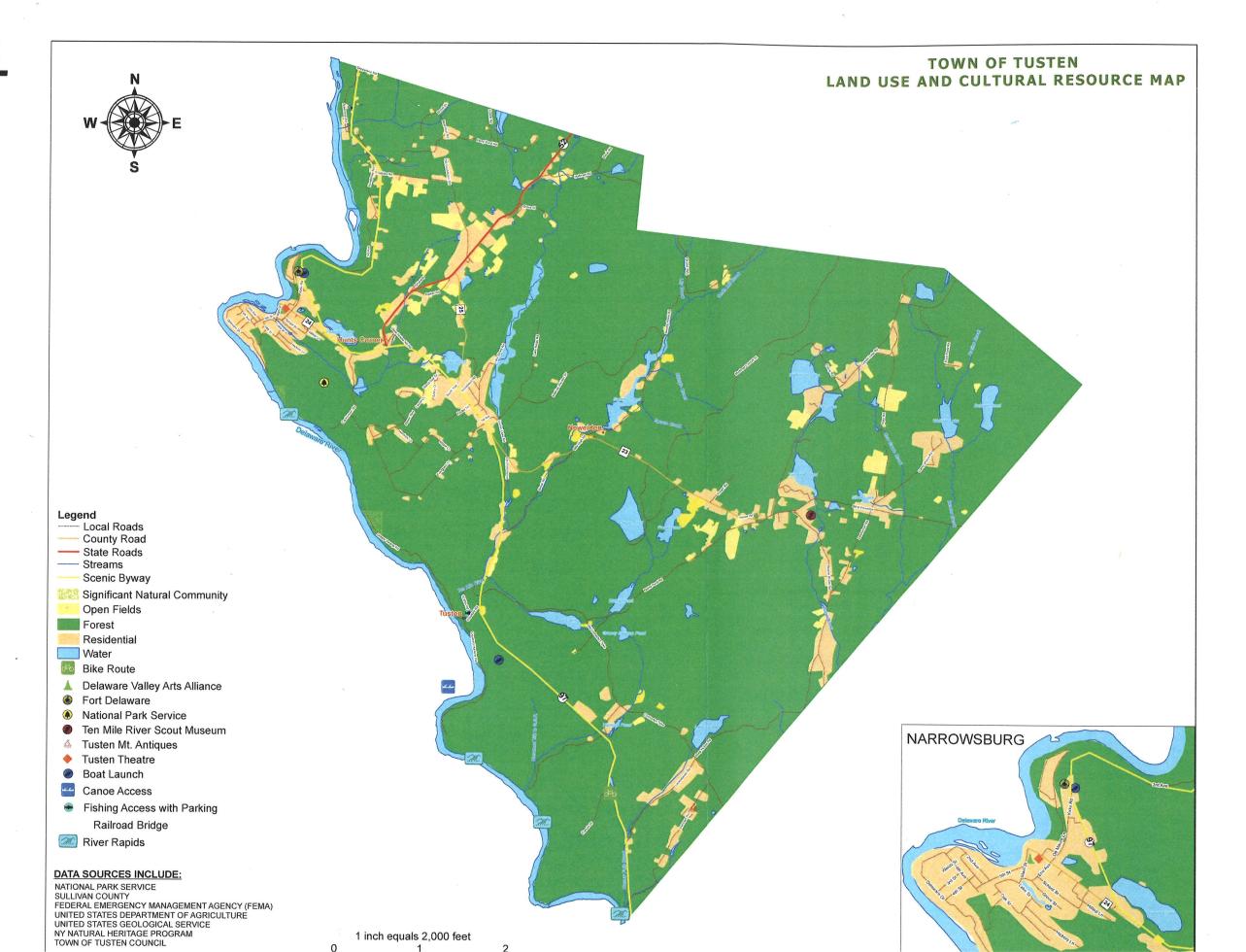
This Natural Resource and Open space inventory is intended to be a 'living 'document. It is the strong desire of the Conservation Council that this inventory not be seen as a static report but rather a snapshot and quantification of our Town's natural and cultural resources at this moment in 2011. With diligence on the conservation Council's part and the support of the Town Board this inventory can be updated regularly. It would then remain a current and useful tool for the Town and the community to use as a part of the sustainable growth and development of the Town of Tusten well into the future.

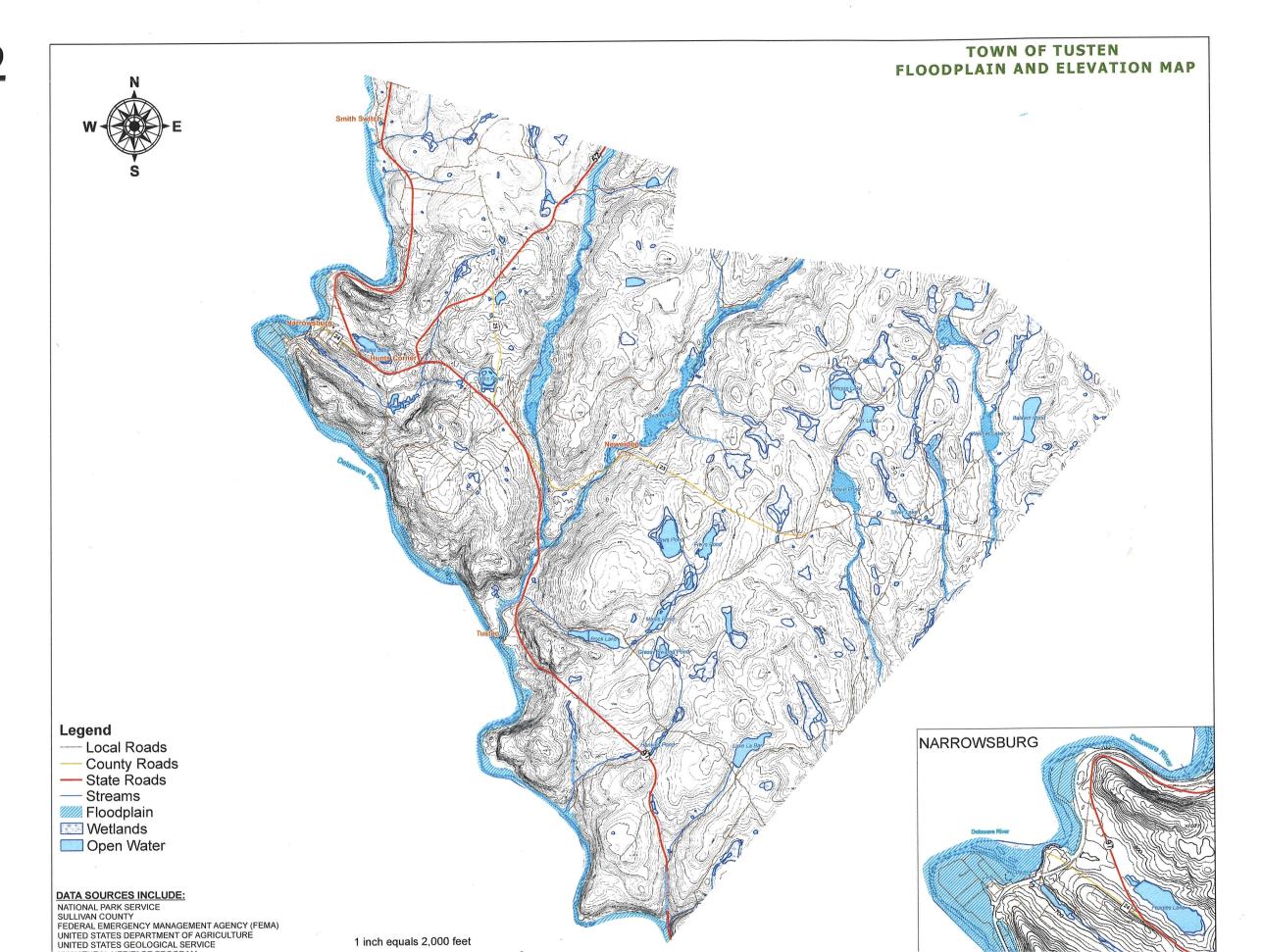
#### APPENDIX

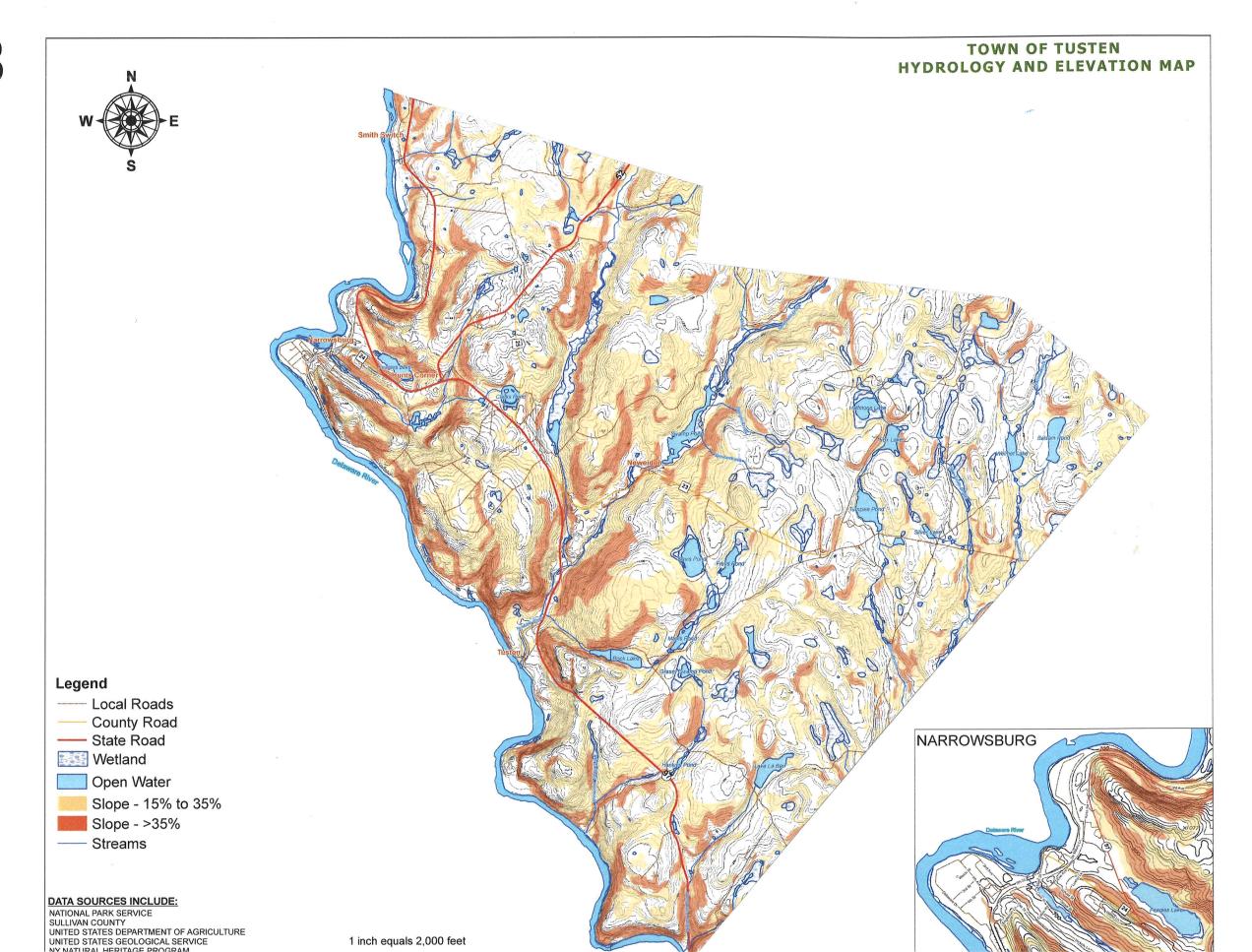
### Natural Resource Inventory Maps

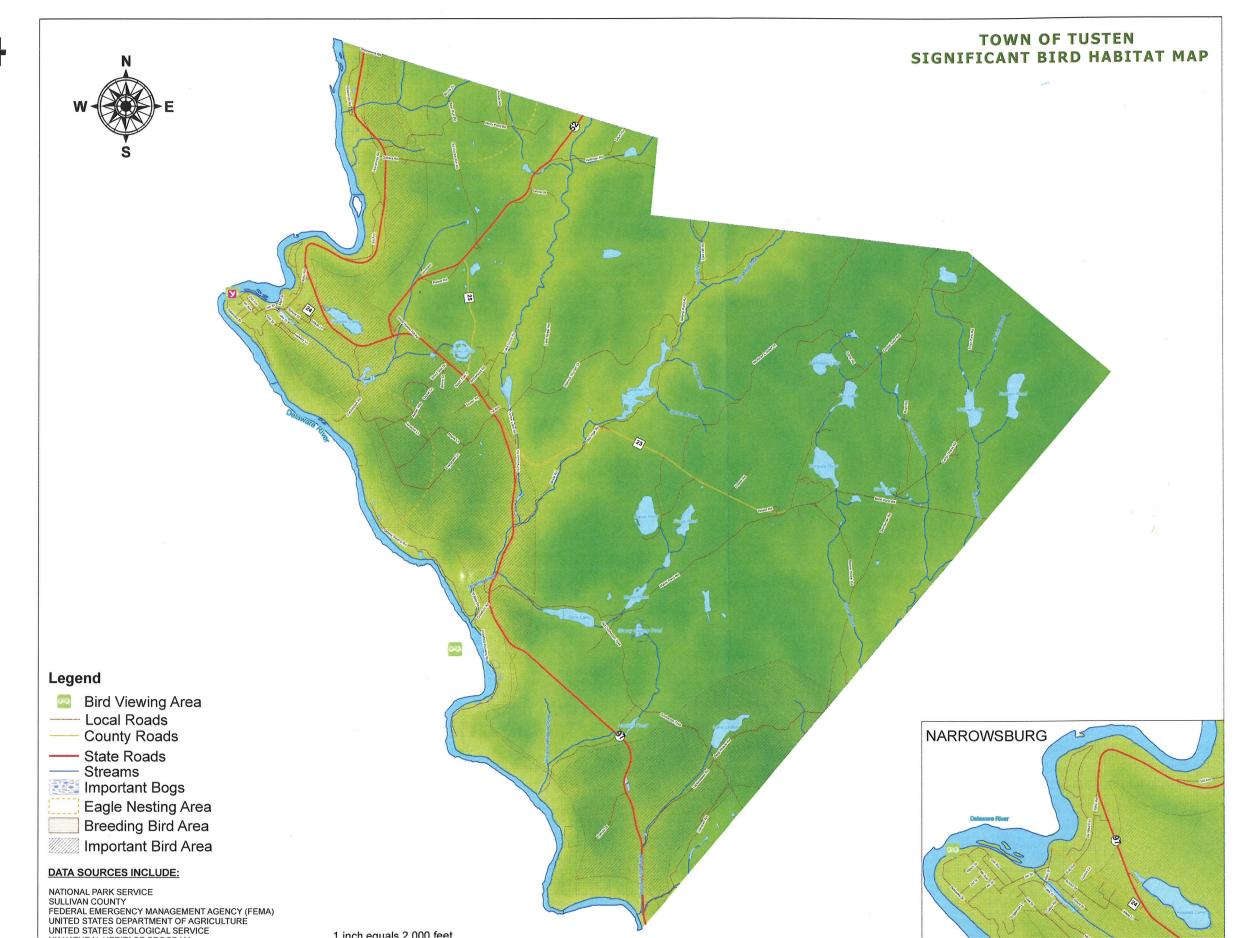
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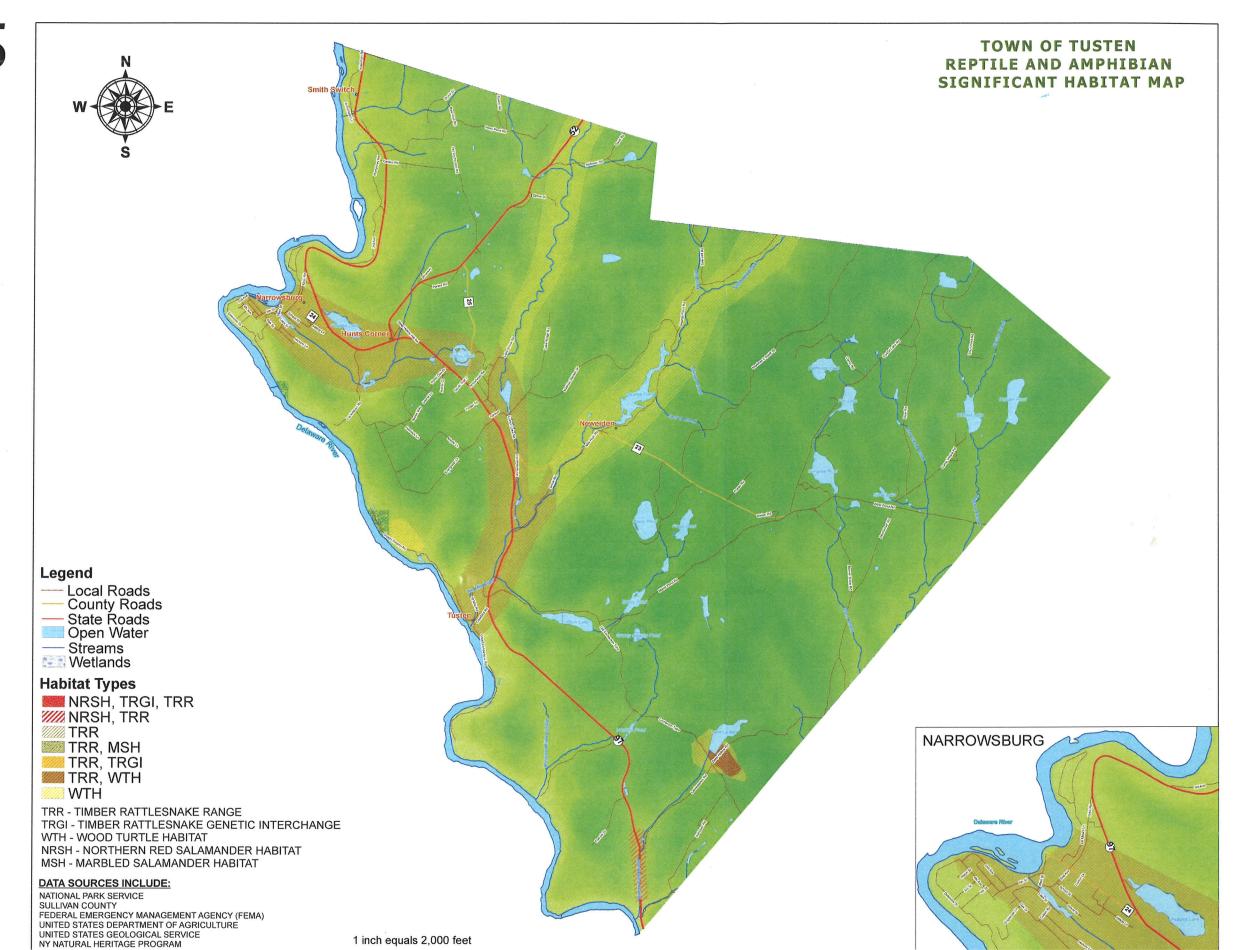
Town of Tusten - Zoning Map











# Town of Tusten Zoning Map

### Legend

SR Scenic River District

RR Recreational River District

R-1 Rural Residential District

R-2 Rural Development District

GR General Residential District

RB Roadside Business District

DB Downtown Business District

**Tax Parcel Lines** 

