SOMERSET RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

TAUNTON RIVER LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PROGRAM

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Taunton River Wild & Scenic Study Committee

Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage landscapes are places that are created by human interaction with the natural environment. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the history of the community and provide a sense of place; they show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. This wealth of landscapes is central to each community's character; yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first steps towards their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by the community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive neighborhood or mill village, a unique natural feature, or the Taunton River corridor.

To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) and the Taunton Wild & Scenic River Study Committee have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program (HLI) to communities along the Taunton River. The primary goal of the program is to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected. The focus is on landscapes that have not been identified in previous survey efforts in a given community. Another important goal of the program is to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The methodology for the Heritage Landscape Inventory program was developed in a Pilot Project including 15 communities in three southeast Massachusetts watersheds in 2002. This project is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land*. Experience from the pilot project provided guidance for a similar program in 24 Essex County municipalities. Now the program is extended to six communities along the Taunton River: Berkley, Fall River, Freetown, Raynham, Somerset and Taunton.

Each participating community appoints a Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the DCR-SRPEDD consulting team. The LPC organizes a heritage landscape identification meeting at which interested residents and town officials offer community input by identifying potential heritage landscapes. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, usually accompanied by other community members. This group visits the priority landscapes identified in the meeting and gathers information about the community. The final product is the Reconnaissance Report, prepared for each participating community. It outlines the history of the community; identifies the resources and documentation that provide background information; provides a short description of the priority heritage landscapes visited; discusses planning issues identified by the community; and concludes with a brief discussion of survey and planning recommendations. A list of all of the heritage landscapes identified by the community is included in the Appendix.

SOMERSET HISTORY

Somerset was known as Shawomet, meaning Out Lot, when occupied by the Pocassets who were members of the Wampanoag tribe. Colonial settlement of Swansea including Somerset territory occurred in 1677. The land apportionment of one, two and three acre lots was approved by King Charles II in 1680 and divided into 31 shares in 1683. Each share had a portion of shoreline and farmland, thus the land was divided into east-west strips, a land use pattern still visible today in Somerset and in Dighton to the north. Somerset was incorporated in 1790. As the town grew, three distinct villages emerged: South Somerset known as Brayton Point which was primarily agricultural; Egypt, where early trading was centered and which became known as Pottersville in the 19th century as the center for pottery making; and Bower's Shore or Somerset Village which was a center for shipbuilding and later iron manufacturing.

The early local economy was sustained through agriculture, shipbuilding and trading well into the 19th century. The harbor on Mt. Hope Bay and the shipyards on the Taunton River in the early 1700s brought the whaling industry to Somerset; however, it was short lived due to the high cost of land which drove the whalers to New Bedford by the mid 1700s. Somerset's location made it a chief distribution port for foreign goods. A major industry of the mid 19th century was the Mt. Hope Iron Works, which was established in 1855 from the 1853 Somerset Iron Works which manufactured anchors. Eventually the Iron Works also produced nails. The other important industry was pottery making which began in Somerset Village in the early 1700s and moved to the village of Egypt (later known as Pottersville) by 1805.

After World War I the dominant industry in Somerset was power generation, first by Montaup Electric Company which opened in 1923 and later at Brayton Point by New England Power Company in 1963. Now the town is primarily residential and the 15 miles of waterfront are mostly used for recreation rather than industrial purposes.

Early transportation routes besides the Taunton and the Lee Rivers were trails along the rivers' edge. Ferries crossed the Taunton River from the late 17th century with one of the best known located in Somerset– Slade's Ferry. In 1866 the first railroad in the area was the Fall River, Warren & Providence Railroad that crossed the Taunton River near Slade's Ferry. In 1872 the Old Colony & Newport Railroad, a branch of the New York-New Haven Railroad, connected to the coal docks at Somerset Village. Roads were improved throughout the 19th century particularly north-south routes along the river and inland. By 1930, County Street was designated Route 138 and the east-west Route 6 was the Grand Army Highway.

At the time of incorporation in 1790 Somerset's population was 1,151. By 1860 it had increased to 1,791. About 10% were immigrants, mostly Irish who had come to work at the Mt. Hope Iron Works beginning in 1855. Between the Civil War and World War I the population increased to approximately 3,300. Many of

the new immigrants of the late 1800s were Portuguese who settled here in the late 1800s for employment locally and in nearby Fall River. From 1920 to 1980 there was unprecedented growth in the population to nearly 19,000. The largest changes occurred from 1950 to 1970. Since 1980 the population has decreased slightly to 18,234.

RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION

This section of the Reconnaissance Report identifies planning documents and tools that provide information relevant to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program. Somerset's position on the Taunton River, its rich farmland, and its industrial uses of the Taunton River and Mount Hope Bay from trading, ship building, and iron works, to electrical power generation are all parts of its rich history worthy of preservation.

Inventory of Historic Assets

The Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets is a statewide list that identifies significant historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. In order to be included in the inventory, a property must be documented on an MHC inventory form, which is then entered into the MHC database. This searchable database, known as MACRIS, is now available online at http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc.

According to the MHC, Somerset's inventory documents 207 resources that date between 1675 and 1981. Most of the inventory has been recorded on traditional single building B-forms. Survey forms were completed in 1983 and 1984 by a professional preservation consultant under the guidance of the Somerset Historical Commission.

State and National Registers of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. All National Register properties are automatically listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Somerset's only National Register (NR) listing is the Borden Flats Light Station which was listed in 1987 as part of the Lighthouses of Massachusetts thematic nomination. One archaeological site, the Montaup Site, was determined eligible for listing in 1978. The determination was made by the Keeper of the National Register; therefore there is a Determination of Eligibility (DOE) listing in the State Register, rather than the actual listing.

Planning Documents

Somerset recently has embarked on developing a Master Plan. At the visioning session held in April attendees were asked to identify the assets and liabilities of the community

The 2004 *Somerset Conservation, Recreation and Open Space Plan* provides an Action Plan with four broad goals and several objectives for each goal including the action, the responsible party and the time frame in which it is to be implemented. All four goals relate to heritage landscapes including protection of Somerset's natural and water resources; prevention of loss of cultural and historical qualities; improvement and expansion of outdoor recreational opportunities; and promotion of responsible land use management and planning. Objectives for each goal include forming partnerships as a way to promote interest in preservation of these important qualities of the town.

In 1986 the Somerset Historical Commission produced a preservation plan titled: *Historic Somerset: A Plan for the Preservation of Community Character*. The plan presents an historical analysis of Somerset's development, preservation activities in the past and makes recommendations for preservation of the Village, Egypt and Pottersville, farmsteads, industrial sites, prehistoric sites, stone walls, burial grounds, and the rich late 19th century vernacular architecture.

The 2004 *Taunton River Stewardship Plan* is an important regional document prepared by the Taunton Wild & Scenic River Study Committee to substantiate the need for designation of the Taunton River as a National Wild & Scenic River, and to form partnerships among the watershed communities to work towards the important goal of preserving and restoring the Taunton River corridor. Specific information about cultural resources, natural and scenic qualities and environmental issues in Somerset is included.

Planning Bylaws and Other Tools

Somerset adopted a demolition delay bylaw in 2004. It provides a six-month delay of demolition. Any property slated for demolition that is over 75 years old must be reviewed for historical and architectural significance.

Somerset has a cluster subdivision bylaw which allows for clustered residential development by means of a special permit. In addition there is a watershed protection district bylaw which requires a special permit for residential development in the Somerset Reservoir drainage area. There also is a water resources protection district bylaw which requires a special permit for any construction in water protection districts, prohibits septic systems and basements, and requires that run-off be the same or less than prior to development.

PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

The Somerset Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by about 10 residents, some representing town boards and local non-profit organizations, was held on April 25, 2005. During the meeting residents identified a lengthy list of Somerset's heritage landscapes, which is included in the Appendix. Once the comprehensive list was created, attendees were asked to articulate the value of and the issues relating to the preservation of each heritage landscape on the list.

Based on the information gathered, community members identified a group of high priority heritage landscapes to be visited by the consulting team during the fieldwork. Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved.

The following text describes the priority heritage landscapes that are the focus of the reconnaissance work in Somerset. In most instances intensive survey work will be needed to fully document the physical characteristics and the historical development of the landscape. These heritage landscapes, which are listed in alphabetical order, represent a range of scale from a single property to a river corridor.

Brayton Farm

Brayton Farm on Wilbur Avenue recently was purchased by the town. Relatively flat agricultural fields on the north side of the road are divided by stone walls that run in a north-south direction. The stone wall across the front of the property along Wilbur Avenue is slightly deteriorated in places. Rows of deciduous trees that canopy over the stone walls also form borders between the fields. Much of the property is overgrown; however some of the land has been leased to a farmer who is reclaiming one of the fields to be planted this year. There is no long range maintenance or use plan; however, a committee has been formed to develop a plan for the property.

Brightman Street Bridge and Piers

The historic Brightman Street Bridge is an important site as there has been a crossing there since the late 1600s. It was the location of the Slade-Brightman Ferry (more commonly referred to as the Slades Ferry), which crossed the Taunton River for approximately 200 years prior to the construction of the Slades Ferry Bridge, which handled train and highway traffic when opened in 1876. When built in 1907-08, the Brightman Street Bridge was thought to be "a thousand times the beauty of the Slades Ferry Bridge." The 975.5 foot long Brightman Street Bridge is the main connection between Somerset and Fall River. It is a drawbridge which opens when needed, a process that is disruptive causing major traffic congestion. The bridge will be replaced in the near future. The granite and wood pilings and piers are often used for fishing and there is every indication that the piers at the shore end of the bridge will remain when the bridge is dismantled in order to be used for fishing and as seating from which to view the river.

Cemeteries

Somerset's many cemeteries range from family burial grounds to large town and parish cemeteries. For the purposes of this project the town named three cemeteries that are vulnerable or deteriorated or not well known: Brayton Cemetery, Hathaway-Chace Cemetery and the Quaker Cemetery. The first two are discussed here and the third is discussed below with the Friends' Meetinghouse.

Brayton Cemetery, while seemingly well maintained with its neat high stone wall enclosing the square lot, is at the end of a subdivision road (Caroline Avenue) tucked back behind a residential property. The area is wooded on the north and west sides of the stone wall and residential lawn on the east and south sides. An easement across the land at the end of the subdivision road provides access; however, it appears to be in a residential backyard. The enclosure is a four foot high dry laid fieldstone wall with an iron gate, set between tall granite posts in the southeast corner of the wall. One oak and one cedar tree are near the center with several headstones clustered near the trees. Gravestones vary from simple slate markers to cut granite stones mounted on rectangular bases. Several of these have rounded molded tops. In the northwest corner there are small fieldstones that are used as head and foot markers. These may date to before the American Revolution. There are several damaged stones as well.

The Hathaway-Chace Cemetery on Marble Street is in extremely poor condition – overgrown with many broken and missing stones. It is situated on a plateau above the road with a dry-laid stone retaining wall at the road edge. A sign between two poles identifies the cemetery and to the left of the sign there is a clump of cedar trees. Stone walls mark the east and west boundaries of the cemetery. The entire lot is overgrown with weeds and vines covering most of the stones. Near the front are a few polished granite markers from the mid 20th century, one broken obelisk monument from 1861, and scattered marble stones many of which are tilted or broken. Near the back of the cemetery, there are a number of slate and red sandstone markers. Many of these are covered with fungi as well as being tilted or broken.

Friends' Meetinghouse and Cemetery

The earliest part of the Friends' Meetinghouse is reported to have been constructed in 1746 and enlarged in 1872 and 1889. The Quakers were the dominant religious group in the area in the 18th century. The Friends' Meeting in Somerset was organized in 1732. Patience Brayton was the minister from 1768 to 1794 and is buried in the Friends' burial ground where a monument was installed in 1976 to honor her contributions, particularly to the anti-slavery movement. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register.

The four-bay, side gabled building with enclosed entrance porch is situated close to the road on a large relatively flat lot on Prospect Street. A small semi-circular dirt and gravel drive is in front of the meeting house. Large mature primarily deciduous trees are scattered on the site. A three to four foot high wall borders the L-shaped cemetery that wraps behind the meetinghouse. The dry-laid field stone wall is capped with large stone slabs. The markers are uniform: all modest marble stones with oval tops. The cast iron fence surrounding the monument is made from pieces of the old Boston Common fence that had been erected in 1876 in celebration of the centennial of our country.

High Street Trees

High Street in Somerset Village is lined with mature trees, mostly ash, which form a canopy over the sidewalks and street edge. They are a significant element in the streetscape character. However, the roots of some have broken through the surface uprooting parts of the road and sidewalk. There is some talk of removal due to upheaval of the road and sidewalk caused by the tree roots. This would alter the streetscape significantly.

The Marsh, Labor-in-Vain Brook, Somerset Reservoir

All three water resources are intimately interconnected. The Somerset Reservoir is northwest of the Indian Springs Plaza. Drainage from development on the northwest affects the Reservoir which in turn affects the Brook and then finally the Marsh. There is a need for retention ponds to collect this drainage before it flows freely through the ecosystem. The Labor-in-Vain Brook flows through the Reservoir in a southeasterly direction to the Taunton River. The Marsh is just west of Somerset Village and north of Pierce Beach. When the Marsh is flooded in the winter it has been used as a skating area for the last 100 years. A large stone-based parking lot provides access for the skating. This parking lot which is slightly raised above the elevation of the marsh has stopped the flow of salt water into Labor-in-Vain Brook. Phragmites growing in the Marsh is a major environmental problem.

Mount Hope Iron Works – Linden Trees

The historic Mount Hope Iron Works building marks one of the most important industries of Somerset's 19th century development. This site had been the James Hood Shipyard from which James M. Hood launched 29 clipper ships in 1849. In 1854 most of the shipyard was destroyed by fire, except for one stone building, which remains as evidence of the shipyard. The nearby Somerset Iron Works, an anchor manufactory, established in 1853 was purchased by Job Leonard in 1855 and converted to the Mount Hope Iron Works. In 1874 Job Leonard built a rolling mill and nail works, where a more efficient method of manufacturing nails was developed. Its two mill sites – Upper and Lower Works – became the Old Colony Iron Works in 1881. Mount Hope Iron Works also produced shovel plates for the Ames Shovel company in North Easton and the Somerset shovel plates are what were used to build the Union Pacific Railroad.

Only two buildings remain at the Upper Works – the former James Hood Shipyard: the Mount Hope Iron Works Office and the stone building in which frames for clipper ships were constructed. The Office is a modest brick cottage with a mansard roof that sits above the River close to Main Street.

In front of the Iron Works Office building are two linden trees that are reported to have grown from saplings that were planted by Hood in 1854. They form a canopy over the sidewalk in front of the office. The long gabled-roof stone

building, the only remnant of the Hood Shipyard, is close to the water adjacent to the boat ramp. The grounds now are the Village Waterfront Park, established in 1983. Granite steps traverse the rolling hill leading from the Office down to the parking lot at the river's edge.

Nunes Farm

The Nunes Farm includes 26 acres stretching easterly from County Street to the end of Billy's Lane. Fields near County Street are low and wet with some phragmites, scattered orchard trees and cedar trees, some large puddingstone rocks and forested edges. The northern edge of the farm is bordered by a new North Farm Senior Estates development. A cartpath from Billy's Lane leads into planted fields that are lined with low fieldstone walls. Large slabs of stone form a bridge over a small creek that runs from the Labor-in-Vain Brook. Similar stone slab bridges are found on a farm in nearby Dighton. A cart path also runs northerly perpendicular to the extension of Billy's Lane. This uniformly wide path is bordered by a stone wall on one side and a forested wetland on the other. Large piles of rocks and stones in the field are evidence of the fieldstone that has been taken out of these fields when preparing them for cultivation. The land continues to be cultivated.

Somerset Village

The village center, once known as Bower's Shore is a 19th century linear village along Main and High Streets, both north-south streets. Along the Taunton River's edge the village is framed by Mallard Point to the north and Pierce Beach and the Bluffs to the south. Remnants of wharves jut out into the river in several locations. A public works project on Main Street comprised brick sidewalks on the east side and concrete with wide brick edging on the west side where new replica historic lighting mounted on fluted black standards have been installed. Residences line the west side of Main Street with modest 19th century dwellings on the upper part and larger shipyard and iron works owners houses on the lower

part. The setbacks as well as the scale and elaboration differ considerably. There are many houses that are noteworthy with a rich history and fine architectural elaboration. The east side of Main Street was once lined with the industries that sustained this village – shipyards and iron works in particular.

High Street, which is farther inland than Main Street, has Mt. Hope Iron Works housing of the late 19th century, some institutional buildings such as the First Baptist Church and the Village School, and mixed late 19th century and mid 20th century modest housing. It is a broad street with a notable ash tree canopy.

Taunton River and Buffinton Brook

Buffinton Brook flows into the Taunton River at Pottersville where 19th century potters had their shops. Next to the Pump Station at the junction of the two is evidence of old raceways and the banks of Buffinton Brook are lined with stone. Presently there is a moratorium which prevents any new properties to be hooked up to this pump station.

The Taunton River, which forms the eastern boundary of Somerset, provided prime locations for shipyards, iron manufactories and potters works. Evidence of wharves jutting out into the river is extant in Pottersville and Somerset Village. This tidal river's width, depth and free flowing water due to lack of dams, as well as Somerset's close proximity to the Mount Hope Bay, have made it one of the most important factors in the town's development. The associated estuary provides significant fish habitats and freshwater and saltwater marshes. Cultural resources that depended upon the river such as farms, wharves and the associated industrial sites all contribute to the historical character as well as the scenic quality of the Taunton River.

PLANNING

Preservation Strategies

Somerset has many vital heritage landscapes worthy of recognition and preservation. Its rivers and vast watershed make much of the area extremely vulnerable to change. Through the Heritage Landscape Inventory program, Somerset is looking beyond the traditional historic resources to the landscapes, neighborhoods and other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most southeastern Massachusetts communities, Somerset is under intense pressure for development. Special places within the community such as the Marsh which is flooded by the town for skating, Pottersville at Buffinton Brook, Broad Cove and Brayton Point, which may be taken for granted, now are more vulnerable than ever to change.

Planning Issues

At the Heritage Landscape Identification meeting attendees expressed concerns about the changing character of the community, which is directly related to the rich heritage landscapes that were discussed. Each of the critical planning issues affects at least one of the priority landscapes. These issues are arranged in alphabetical order.

Development throughout Somerset

As in most communities in southeast Massachusetts development pressures in Somerset are unprecedented. The condition of this fragile watershed makes the effects of development a matter of serious concern. About 83% of Somerset's land lies within the Lower Taunton Watershed which means that development of the land affects the overall eco-system throughout the town and region. Furthermore, as most of the upland area has already been developed, much of today's development is on land that is more sensitive. It often means loss of one of the few remaining farms in Somerset.

Loss of Significant Trees

Mature trees contribute to the historic and scenic character of rural roads and village streets. Loss of significant trees changes the character of the road or street for generations to come. Modern infrastructure often is incompatible with large well established trees; however there are methods of protecting the trees as well as the improvements such as sidewalks and roads around them.

Maintenance of Cemeteries

Somerset has about 30 private and public cemeteries of varying sizes. While some are well maintained others are nearly forgotten. Maintenance of cemeteries is costly and funding is one part of a municipal budget that often is reduced;

however deferred maintenance leads to more expensive repairs in the long run. In addition to lack of funds is the issue of lack of awareness, particularly about small family burial grounds that are tucked away from main thoroughfares.

River Preservation

The Taunton and Lee Rivers frame Somerset and are one of the town's most important assets – the engine for the local economy historically and an important feature in the quality of life now. The broad tidal Taunton River forms the eastern boundary of the town and today is used for recreational activity on the Somerset side. Opposite Somerset in Fall River there is a fair amount of industry on the river, particularly the controversial LNG facility that is slated for construction directly opposite Somerset. The Taunton Wild & Scenic River Study Committee and the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) have developed a Taunton River Stewardship Plan which requires coordination and partnerships among all communities in the watershed. The preservation of this vital asset was voiced as a major concern.

Reuse of Mt. Hope Iron Works Building

The 1865 Mt. Hope Iron Works Office is owned by the Town of Somerset, and until recently housed the Somerset Historical Society. Presently it is being used by the Somerset Access Television, Inc.; however, there is controversy about a conflict between the expanded needs of the television station and the building's historic value, which will undoubtedly be compromised by proposed changes for the station. The Somerset Historical Society, housed in the Village School (at High and School Streets), is an advocate for preservation of the Mt. Hope Iron Works Office.

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation planning is a three-step process involving identification, evaluation and protection. Four useful documents to consult before beginning to implement preservation strategies are the Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Survey Manual* and *Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances;* the Department of Conservation and Recreation's *Reading the Land;* and the Taunton Wild & Scenic River Study Committee's *Taunton River Stewardship Plan.* Each publication provides necessary information for the identification, evaluation and preservation of the rich cultural heritage of a community. General recommendations are listed first, followed by more specific recommendations.

Somerset will have to determine the best way to implement the recommendations presented here. One approach that might help Somerset begin the process is to form a Heritage Landscape Committee, as described in *Reading the Land*.

General Recommendations

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below. These general recommendations are listed in an order in which they are most logically addressed when applying the three-step preservation planning process as described above. Thus the goal will be to (1) identify, (2) evaluate and (3) protect.

Inventory of Heritage Landscapes and other Historic Assets

The vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record information about the resources. It is important to know what the features of an agricultural landscape are and which features the community treasures in order to make a case for preservation of these settings. New procedures that are more comprehensive and link properties in a more coherent way than in the past may enhance Somerset's survey, most of which was completed over 20 years ago. Thus, using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology, record Somerset's heritage landscapes, beginning with the priority landscapes listed in this report:

- Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not sufficiently documented, beginning with heritage landscapes – particularly the farms, village centers and streetscapes such as Read Street, Riverside Avenue and Washington Avenue. Update forms or redo old forms for Somerset Village.

- Document unprotected resources first, beginning with threatened areas.

- Make sure to document secondary features on residential properties, such as outbuildings and stone walls.

National Register Program

The Preservation Plan of 1984 recommended a National Register listing program including a list of properties that were likely to be eligible. New survey work will require National Register evaluation. This will provide new information about the eligibility of properties that can be listed in the National Register. Thus to develop Somerset's National Register program:

- Develop a National Register listing plan, taking into consideration a property's integrity and vulnerability. Properties that are in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority.

- Consider completing a National Register district nomination for Somerset Village, Egypt/Pottersville and some eligible farms.

Agricultural Landscapes

Preservation of agricultural landscapes means preservation of the farming activities; otherwise, it simply is the preservation of land as open space. It is important to know what the features of an agricultural landscape are and which features the community treasures in order to make a case for preservation of these settings. Some preservation tools are available that can assist communities in preserving the actual farming activities. While two of Somerset's farms – Brayton Farm and Mello Farm – are owned by the town, some of the following strategies may be worthwhile for the few remaining farms. Consider the following options.

- Form an agricultural commission to address farm preservation in Somerset.

- Adopt a right-to-farm bylaw which allows farmers to carry on farming activities that may be considered a nuisance to neighbors.

- Review the town's cluster bylaw for refinement of buffers, particularly between development and farmland.

- Raise funds to purchase development rights on farms or to assist farmers in the restoration of historic farm buildings for which the farmer would be required to donate a preservation restriction.

- Continue public-private partnerships to preserve farmland through purchase of farms or purchase of conservation restrictions on farms.

Burial Grounds and Cemeteries

Somerset has about 30 small burial grounds, many of which were family owned and are off the main roads. Some documentation has been done. Concerns are long term stone maintenance issues and general burial ground care that needs

improvement. The DCR publication *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries* provides guidance on developing preservation plans for burial grounds including identification and evaluation of the resources as well as preservation strategies. Using this guide Somerset should:

- Update existing or prepare new survey forms for all burial grounds and cemeteries that have been in use for more than 50 years.

- Develop a preservation and management plan for each cemetery taking into consideration repair of stone markers, stone walls and stone fencing related to cemeteries, repair of iron work, removal of invasive growth, and on-going maintenance of plant material.

Neighborhood Character

Nearly all preservation strategies address neighborhood or village character in some manner. As described above, thorough documentation on MHC inventory forms is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. There are three traditional preservation tools: demolition delay, local historic district designation (MGL Chapter 40C) and neighborhood conservation district designation. A demolition delay bylaw which provides a time period in which the town can consider alternatives to demolition recently was adopted by Somerset. Both types of districts may be appropriate in Somerset. Districts recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. Each type of district is a local initiative, adopted by a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting and administered by a district commission, appointed by the Selectmen. Local historic districting is the strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources, while neighborhood conservation districts are less restrictive but still embrace neighborhood character.

- Amend the demolition delay bylaw to give the Somerset Historical Commission authority to invoke a delay of demolition of up to one year, rather than just six months. Publication of demolition requests reminds residents of historic resources and reinforces the value of local historic resources; therefore include a publication requirement in the bylaw.

- Determine whether historic neighborhoods such as Somerset Village, Pottersville, and Brayton Point would be appropriate local historic or neighborhood conservation districts. Areas with a high level of historical significance and integrity should be considered as potential local historic districts, while neighborhood conservation districts would be more appropriate for residential neighborhoods that may have less integrity and where more flexibility may be appropriate.

- Adopt a local historic district bylaw and designate historically significant neighborhoods as local historic districts to preserve

individual properties as well as neighborhood character. In a local historic district, any proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public right-of-way are reviewed by the locally appointed historic district commission.

- Alternatively, pass a neighborhood conservation district bylaw. Neighborhood conservation districts are special areas that are preserved by regulating scale, massing and materials of additions and new construction. Such districts may be the most appropriate way to preserve the land use pattern of an area where there are changes in materials but the overall size, scale and orientation of structures within the heritage landscape are retained.

Scenic Roads and Gateways

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of the community. They are highly valued by Somerset residents and visitors alike. Yet roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel requirements as the only consideration. Under the Scenic Roads Act (MGL Chapter 40-15C) Somerset can adopt a scenic roads bylaw that addresses the removal of trees and stone walls that are within the right-of-way. In addition to roadway issues, much of what we value about scenic roads – the stone walls, views across open fields – is not within the public right-of-way. Furthermore, numbered routes which are the gateways to Somerset cannot be designated scenic roads under this bylaw. The preservation and protection of scenic roads therefore requires more than one approach.

- Complete an inventory with descriptions and photo documentation of each of the roads in Somerset including the character defining features that should be retained.

- Review and amend zoning measures that minimize the impact of commercial and residential development along gateway roads by considering setbacks, screening and height requirements.

- Adopt a scenic roads bylaw and add design criteria to consider when reviewing removal of trees and stone walls and other criteria such as a provision allowing only one driveway cut per property on scenic roads. Designate rural and village roads that are scenic such as those that have significant trees. Coordinate procedures between Highway Department and Planning Board.

- Develop policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstructions, which address the scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public process in which the town may have to accept responsibility for certain costs to implement certain standards that are not acceptable to projects funded by Mass. Highway Department. Such standards should have a section addressing the

way in which the local Highway Department maintains roads, for example requiring a public hearing if any additional pavement is to be added to a town road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads, or can be adopted at Town Meeting through a bylaw. In developing policies consider factors such as road width, clearing of shoulders, walking paths, posted speeds. A delicate balance is required.

- Consider a scenic overlay district to preserve certain vistas on properties along the roadways.

Water Resources –River, Reservoir and Estuary

The goals are to control pollution and provide access to these fine resources. The coalition that has been established to advocate for the designation of the Taunton River as a National Wild & Scenic River already knows the important strategies for preservation of this rich resource. Continue to work towards solutions in the following ways.

- Define ownership of each segment of the waterfront including beaches, wetlands, and marshes.

- Define public ways and parking areas for access to the river and the landings.

- Form public-private partnerships with neighborhood groups and Boy Scouts (or similar community groups) to develop stewardship programs for access points.

- Develop a public landings brochure to remind abutters and town residents of the public access to these landings, particularly the town-owned landings.

- Adopt and enforce strict conservation and zoning bylaws that regulate pollution. These may be strategies such as waste water treatment and storm water run off that is more restrictive than is minimally acceptable under Title V.

Funding of Preservation Projects

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. Both the MHC and the DCR have had funding programs to assist communities in preservation related issues including:

- Survey and Planning Grants administered by the MHC support survey, National Register and preservation planning work.

- The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) administered by the MHC funds restoration and rehabilitation projects.

- The Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program (HLPGP) administered by DCR funds planning, rehabilitation, education and stewardship projects focused on historic landscapes, including cemeteries.

Funding for these programs varies from year to year. When planning Somerset's heritage landscape inventory program, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding currently is available.

Towns that have adopted the Community Preservation Act find it to be an excellent funding source for many heritage landscape projects; however Somerset first would have to adopt the Act. While tricky to pass in lean economic times, the number and types of projects that are benefiting across the Commonwealth is worthy of consideration. The CPA establishes a mechanism by which towns can develop a fund dedicated to historic preservation, open space and affordable housing. Funds are collected through a .5% to 3% surcharge on each annual real estate tax bill. The Commonwealth has established a dedicated fund which is used to match the municipality's collections under the CPA.

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act, by a majority vote on a ballot question, fosters partnerships among historic preservationists, conservationists and affordable housing advocates. At least 10% of the funds must be used to preserve historic resources; at least 10% must be used to protect open space; and at least 10% must be used to advance affordable housing. The remaining 70% must be used for one of these three uses as well as recreational needs and can be distributed in varying proportions depending upon the projects that the town believes are appropriate and beneficial to the municipality.

Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered for specific resources or areas that were either priority heritage landscapes or discussed as critical issues.

Brayton Farm

- Identify key features by completing MHC inventory forms using the heritage landscape methodology.

- Develop a master plan for the property that includes retaining some farming.

Brightman Bridge and Piers

The bridge is slated for removal once construction of the new bridge farther north has been completed. Mass Highway has agreed to leave the piers for fishing. This is an important condition to mitigate loss of this historic structure and should be re-emphasized by all interested and concerned parties.

Historic Trees

Some of the roadside trees are highly valued by the community. In order to preserve them:

- Document large trees or trees with special significance.
- Establish a tree preservation bylaw.
- Establish a scenic roads bylaw.
- Pursue some of the grant programs offered for tree stewardship and care through DCR's Urban and Community Forestry Program, which can be found through their website: http://www.mass/gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/urban/index.htm.

Somerset Village

The character of Somerset Village is worthy of preservation. For this reason the highest level of protection should be pursued. In most instances the Somerset Historical Commission will take the lead on initiating such recommendations.

- Update inventory of resources using heritage landscape methodology combined with traditional MHC survey methodology.
- Complete National Register nomination for the Village which already has been determined eligible for such listing.
- Form a local historic district study committee to potentially recommend a bylaw and adoption of a local historic district with design review guidelines that specifically address the resources in this village.
- Amend zoning bylaw to reflect preservation strategies particularly for a village district.
- Engage the Somerset Historical Society and other preservation organizations in developing up-to-date tours, brochures, power point presentations and website information to draw interested residents and visitors to Somerset.

CONCLUSION

The Somerset Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the rich and diverse heritage landscapes in Somerset and in beginning to think about preservation strategies. However, it is only the first step in the planning process. Landscapes identified in this report, especially the priority landscapes, will

typically need further documentation on MHC inventory forms. The documentation in turn can be used in publicity efforts to build consensus and gather public support for their preservation. Implementation of recommendations will require a concerted effort of and partnerships with municipal boards and agencies, local non-profits, and state agencies and commissions.

Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to town land use boards and commissions will assist in making this one of the planning documents that guides Somerset in preserving important features of the community's character. The tasks that are recommended will require cooperation and coordination among boards and commissions, particularly Somerset's Historical Commission, the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee. It also is advisable to present this information to the Board of Selectmen, the applicant to the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program on behalf of the town. Finally distribution of the Report to the Somerset Historical Society, neighborhood associations and other preservation minded organizations will enhance Somerset's heritage landscapes.

APPENDIX: HERITAGE LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY

This list is a summary of all landscapes discussed at the Heritage Landscape Identification Meeting held in Somerset on April 25 and the follow-up fieldwork on April 29, 2005. This is a working list and can be updated by the community. **There may be other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** Landscapes are grouped by type. The chart has two columns – the name of the resource and the location are in the first and notes about the resource are in the second.

APR = Agricultural Preservation Restriction
LHD = Local Historic District
PR = Preservation Restriction
CR = Conservation Restriction
NR = National Register
* = Priority Landscape

Agriculture	
Brayton Farm* Wilbur Avenue	Recently purchased by town. Part is still farmed; however there is not a long-range plan in place yet. Most of it is overgrown. Fine stone walls outlining fields. One field is being reclaimed for farming.
Fisher's Farm Riverside Ave. & South St.	Near Pierce's Beach and Bluffs with some land extending to the Taunton River. The owners grow and sell flowers, vegetables and herbs. Recently they began selling baked goods as well. In the past they have leased some of the fields; however some recently have been sold for development.
Marsden Nursery Palmer St.	Stone walls mark the property of the nursery which is situated just east of the North Farm Senior Housing complex. Greenhouses are used to cultivate plants.
Mello Farm Elm St.	Between County and Pleasant Sts. About 9 acres of conservation land that are town owned. Agricultural use continues with only limited public access which is leased to the farmer. View of the Somerset Reservoir.
***Nunes Farm** *** Rt. 138 – County St.	26.14 acres. Active vegetable farm – corn and squash. Abuts the Marsh as well as North Farm Senior Housing. Vulnerable.
Stone Walls	Stone walls marked property boundaries on old farms running east to west. Some of the walls retain the same delineating patterns that they did at the time of the Shawomet Purchase when they were legal boundaries.
Burial Grounds and Cemeteries	
Bourn Cemetery County St. at Bourn Ave.	About 47 stones marking burials from 1810 to 1907. Enclosed by a fieldstone wall. Granite arch with family name marks the entrance.
Bower's Cemetery South and Riverside Sts.	Burials from 1750 to 1839. A small rectangular lot surrounded by stone walls. Family burial ground for Bowers who made their money in shipping, particularly livestock to the West Indies, and owned a shipyard in Somerset. This small burial ground is opposite Labor-in-Vain brook. Historic horse trough.
Brayton Cemetery Cornhill Rd. & Caroline Ave.	About 32 stones representing burials from 1799 to 1872. Small fieldstone markers used as head and foot stones. Possibly pre-Revolutionary. A high fieldstone wall surrounds the small family burial ground. The entrance is marked by an iron gate set between granite piers. Clusters of cedar trees

	are found within the bounds of the burial ground, which is well maintained. The Braytons were seamen and also industrial bankers.
Congregational Church Cemetery County St.	Located behind the Congregational Church, this cemetery has about 15 stones ranging from 1843 to 1900. There are slate, marble, and red and brown stone markers.
Hathaway Chace Cemetery Marble St.	More than 120 stones ranging from 1728 to 1946 are located in this cemetery set above the road. It is not well maintained and markers are hidden by overgrowth.
Nathan Slade Cemetery Prospect St.	The 3.88 acre cemetery is opposite the Friends' Meetinghouse. About 530 stones dating from 1817 to the present. The oldest found stone marks the grave of Sarah Mason (d. 1817). Nathan Slade (1843-1924) is buried here and memorialized by a white marble marker. A grass covered dirt burial mound is centered in the older section and has a granite door frame with a cast iron door set into the side of the mound.
Palmer Street Cemetery Palmer St.	One of the largest cemeteries is this 4.74 acre well maintained cemetery enclosed by a stone wall. Burials range from 1797 to the present. Over 1000 stones.
Quaker Cemetery * Prospect St.	A large L-shaped lot behind the Society of Friends' meetinghouse with about 30 stones that are of one design – white marble with oval tops. Cemetery was active from 1830 to 1894. A monument to Patience Brayton was erected in 1976. The cast iron fence surrounding the monument is made from pieces of the old Boston Common fence.
Industrial	
Fortier Boats Riverside Ave.	Crowninshield boat builders original location.
Gladding-Hearn Boatyard Riverside Ave.	Crowninshield boat builders original location, also.
Mt. Hope Iron Works 300 Main St.	Former James Hood Shipyard and Somerset Iron Works of 1853 which manufactured anchors at the site of the 17th and early 18th century Jonathan Bowers Shipyard. Purchased by Job Leonard who turned it into the Mt. Hope Iron Works with the Upper Works employing 150 workers to make nails and the Lower Works employing 500. Leonard sold the Iron Works to Parker Mills in 1866 and bought it back in 1881 as the Old Colony Iron Works. The Town purchased the Upper Works with old Iron Works Office building (ca. 1865) to be preserved for meeting space. Historical Commission had some grant funds to do interior and exterior work on building; however it is unclear how the money was spent.
Stone Wharves Riverside Avenue	Wharves jut into the Taunton River.

Institutional	
Churches Various Locations	Federated Church (formerly the First Baptist Church of Christ – 363 High St., 1804), First Christian Church (1415 County St., 1841, 1855, 1872, 1935), Somerset United Methodist Church (Read St – was the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1889), Quaker Meetinghouse (now Swansea Friends, 1746), St. Patrick's Church (310 South St., 1873)
Fire Barn 318 Main St.	Constructed in 1888 next to the Upper Works of Mt. Hope Iron Works which now is Village Waterfront Park. Now it is the Somerset Firefighting Museum.
Friend's Meetinghouse Prospect St.	According to MHC survey form the meetinghouse was built in 1746 with additions in 1872 and 1889. The Friends of Somerset was organized in 1732 and was a dominant religion in this area in the 18th century. Wood clapboard, four-bay building with an enclosed centered entrance porch, 6/6 sash in most windows. Meetinghouse has an associated cemetery (see Burial Grounds and Cemeteries section.).
Hood Library 265 High St.	1910. Colonial Revival. The first public library in Somerset was constructed in 1897. Plans to purchase the Jerathmel Bowers mansion for a library failed at which point Alfred H. Hood, son of William P. Hood, gave the library in memory of his father. In 1939 the building was enlarged by extending the G. Borden Davis Reading Room and adding a new stack room.
Village School High St.	1925-26. Colonial Revival building was the second school built in Somerset after the Pottersville School. Now Bradbury Museum and Somerset Historical Society.
Natural Features	
Beech Trees Center Street	These European beech trees at the corner of Center Street and Riverside Avenue, opposite the cannons.
Breeds Brook Cove	The cove is formed by Breeds Brook emptying into the Taunton River at Rt. 138 and Riverside Avenue.
Broad Cove	Town-owned conservation land. Broad Cove is on Dighton border and was a priority landscape in Dighton due to private ownership of bordering lands. In Somerset approximately 26 acres are owned by the town. Excellent bird-watching. Was site of good saltmarsh hay. Town is seeking funds to construct a boardwalk over parts of the marshland.
Buffinton Brook *	Flows into the Taunton River at Pottersville. Major drainage channel for Somerset. Potters works were on its banks.
Council Oak Luther Avenue	St. Thomas More Church parking lot. A 1976 commemorative granite plaque states: "This is the Council Oak under which the Wampanoag Indians met. It is the legendary center of Somerset. Presented by the Women's Guild of St. Thomas More Church in the Bicentennial Year of 1976." However, the Somerset Historical Commission reports that Charles Hathaway planted the tree to mark the center of Somerset.
Fox Hill Cove	North of Brayton Point on the Lee River. No road access.
Labor-in-Vain Brook *	From the Somerset Reservoir southeasterly to the Taunton River through the Marsh.
Linden Trees*	In front of ca. 1865 Mt. Hope Iron Works Office. Planted as saplings in 1854.

The Marsh *	On the edge of Labor-in-Vain Brook. SRPEDD is involved in a project to do some restoration work. Some salt marsh included in this Marsh.
Taunton River *	The eastern town boundary with coves and wharves and the mouth of the River where it empties into Mount Hope Bay. The Lower Taunton is tidal with 97 acres of salt marsh in Somerset. The Lower Taunton Watershed comprises over 4,000 acres which is about 83% of Somerset's land area.
Open Space /Parks	
Brayton Point - East End	Beyond town picnic area the land is privately owned.
Buffinton Park Linden Dr.	37.78 acres that are centrally located park which has a playground, picnic areas, and open field for passive recreation and wooded walking trails.
Chace Preserve Hawthorne St.	Five acres of woodland trails with footbridge over Buffinton Brook. There is an entrance on Luther Avenue also.
Elm Street Acres Elm St.	54-acre parcel with woods, stream and pond on the west side of Elm Street. Good hiking and biking trails with picnicking areas. Large rock formations.
Mallard Point Pilot Drive	Seaside vista. Approximately 3 acres on the Taunton River with views up and down the river due to the point jutting out into the River. Bird watching and fishing access.
Morris Preserve Whetstone Hill Rd.	Town-owned 10-acre preserve that is monitored by the Conservation Commission. Limited access with no trails and only a small parking area. Wildflower garden maintained by the Somerset Garden Club.
Pierce Beach and The Bluffs Riverside Ave.	All park land that currently is not threatened. Half of this area was redeveloped. Had some archaeological survey done and found Native American tunnels and artifacts. The bluffs are high over the river with nature trails on top of the 50' bluffs with views of the Taunton River. The area is used for cross-country skiing, and sledding in the winter and in the summer residents enjoy the beach and picnic area.
Somerset Reservoir*	This entry includes the Reservoir and abutting land most of which is privately owned. Important drinking water source. That is linked to Labor-in-Vain Brook and the Marsh farther south and is an integrated priority landscape with the Brook and Marsh.
Village Waterfront Park Main St.	3.4 acre town-owned park on former Mt. Hope Iron Works site. Views along the River looking north and south. There is a playground, boat ramp and parking for boat trailers. Stone building in park is the former Hood clipper ship frame building. Purchased with money raised by Conservation Commission.
Residential (Neighborhoods, Village)	
Brayton Point	Also known as South Village and also referred to as Old Shoreman area. Weetamoo established a permanent village or camp on the Quequechan River in Fall River; however these Native Americans seasonally camped in many parts of this area especially at Sowams, Touisset and Sewammock, which today is Brayton Point and Somerset.

Oldest house 2457 Riverside Ave.	Ca. 1720. The John Bourne House is next to the Fire Barn in Egypt. The Cape is reported to be the oldest house in Somerset.
Pottersville Riverside Ave.	Also known as Egypt. Between Buffinton and Center Streets along the shore. Stone wharves jut out into the Taunton River. A World War I memorial is situated in Pottersville. 19th century manufacturing of pottery and much merchandizing on the Taunton River.
Somerset Village Main & Pleasant Sts.	First village center of Somerset where the earliest historic resources are. Formerly known as Bower's Point. Collection of former ship builders and captains houses, some with notable gardens.
South End	Portuguese neighborhood. Poor farm, no longer extant, was in this neighborhood. Gypsy hill.
Transportation (Bridges, Landing, Roads)	
Brightman Street Bridge Brightman St.	1907-1908. Piers on Somerset side. Bridge to be taken down and piers to be saved for fishing. Need to reaffirm this.
High Street Trees High St.	The ash trees lining High Street in Somerset Village are highly vulnerable and are important defining features of the streetscape.
Railroad line	At Mallard Point. Carried Old Colony line across the Taunton River.
Slade's Ferry and Slade's Ferry Bridge Site	No longer extant. Was near the location of the Brightman Street Bridge and was the first crossing of the Taunton River to Somerset. The Slade's Ferry Bridge, constructed in 1876 was a vehicular as well as a railroad crossing.