



Heritage Landscape Atlas Instructional Overview

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Welcome to a video demonstration of the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Heritage Landscape Atlas. The Atlas is an online viewer for landscapes identified through DCR's Heritage Landscape Inventory Program. For more information about the program click on the link to the program on the left of the page.

After you have reviewed this tutorial you can click on the "Enter the Atlas" button to launch the map.

This is the way the Atlas looks when you first arrive on the webpage. The map loads in your browser as a normal web page without the need for any additional software. You can see the map in the middle, navigation tools on the left part of the map, and legends and layer tools on the right.

Down below the map, if we scroll down, we can see what we call the "Town Notecard," which will hold town-level information. Below that is the help section.

I am going to walk you through the main features of the Atlas - the tools you see on the right and the town notecard. Then we will zoom into the landscape-level view to see what the Atlas can do.

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The towns are initially colored in by their participation status in the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program with the priority landscapes colored in red. Not all towns have participated in the program, so data are only available for select communities.

There's a legend on the right that shows what the different town colors mean. We can change the way the towns are symbolized by using this dropdown menu. There are a number of choices including a variety of demographic information, town bylaw status, and landscape statistics.

For instance, if we choose “% protected open space” we can see the towns colored by how much of each town is permanently protected open space. A legend appears on the right showing what the shades of green mean.

Choosing “Community Preservation Act” will tell us which towns have enacted the CPA, which is a piece of legislation that allows towns to fund affordable housing, open space and historic preservation through a local property tax surcharge.

And choosing “# of Agricultural landscapes” will show us how many agricultural landscapes were identified by each town during the HLI process. Not all of these were designated as priority landscapes. We'll get to those in a minute.

If you want to see information about a particular town, you can choose that town from the dropdown list at the upper right. I'm choosing Hopedale.

You'll see the map zoom to Hopedale, and if we scroll down, we can see detailed town-level information about Hopedale in the "Town Notecard." We have demographic and bylaw information, statistics about the number of total landscapes and priority landscapes by type, and contact information for the town, the Partner organization that worked with DCR on this project, and the Regional Planning Agency.

And at the top, there is a link to the town's Reconnaissance Report, which is a PDF document containing detailed information about the town and its landscapes.

You'll notice that lots of the terms on the web page are underlined. These are clickable links that will take you to the glossary. For instance, if you don't know what "Priority Landscapes" are, you can click it and its glossary entry will come up, in some cases including links to more information on the web. The glossary will pop up in a new window or tab. Just close the window or tab to return to the Atlas.

Now that you are familiar with the Atlas, let's see how we can use it to relate heritage landscapes to other community resources.

To the right of the map you will see checkboxes that turn on additional background map layers. These layers will only show up at certain zoom levels, so if you're zoomed far out you may not see a layer on the map. Let's turn them all on. When you turn the layers on, their legend will appear below.

And remember, if you don't know what a layer is, simply click on the term to see the glossary entry.

You can zoom and pan using the navigation tools on the left, which are similar to Google Maps or Mapquest navigation tools. The slider lets you control zooming in and out, and the arrows let you pan from side to side or up and down.

You can also click-and-drag your mouse on the map to pan it around, and you can zoom to a particular area by holding down the Shift key on your keyboard and dragging a box on the map. Finally, if you want to zoom back to the whole state, click the button on the upper right.

As we zoom in further, more detail will appear. At a scale of 1:12k or greater, the orthophoto will appear.

Looking at Hopedale at this level (1:18k) we can see the relationships among the heritage landscapes, the red shapes, and connections to water resources, habitat and other open space.

Now we can really see the priority landscapes in context. For details on an individual landscape, click it. A popup bubble will appear, showing information about the landscape. There are two tabs of information, and many of the terms are clickable with links to the glossary. The second tab contains information about actions that are recommended for preserving the landscape. The Actions Taken field will be periodically updated to track actions that are implemented. You can click the photograph on the left side of the bubble to enlarge it, again in a new browser window or tab. Close that window or tab to return to the map.

This data may help you strategize on protecting this landscape. It is municipally owned and in a National Register District, so the property may not be in danger of development. But, one of the recommendations is to form a Friends group. Since a large part of the Parklands abuts water and also overlaps with priority habitat, that Friends group might engage a diverse group of people. Building these connections and inspiring new, cooperative strategies is one of the benefits of the Heritage Landscape Inventory program.

You can close the bubble by clicking the red X.

That's it for an overview of the Heritage Landscape Atlas. Now have fun exploring these landscapes!