



# 15-YEAR STATUS REPORT (2001-2016)

## MATTAPOISETT RIVER VALLEY LAND PROTECTION PARTNERSHIP

BUZZARDS BAY COALITION • MATTAPOISETT RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE • TOWNS OF MARION, ROCHESTER, MATTAPOISETT AND FAIRHAVEN

### THE CHALLENGE

## Protecting our drinking water in the Mattapoisett River Valley

The Mattapoisett River Valley, spanning from Snipatuit Pond in Rochester to the Harbor in Mattapoisett, is one of southeastern Massachusetts most important water resources. The river itself supports outdoor recreation, an historically active herring run and a number of rare and threatened plants and animals. But the river valley is just as important for what you can't see – the underlying aquifer that is the regional drinking water supply for more than 24,000 people living in the towns of Fairhaven, Mattapoisett, Marion and Rochester. Over the past 15 years, the Buzzards Bay Coalition has worked in close partnership with these towns to proactively preserve the forests and wetlands along the Mattapoisett forever.

The towns of Fairhaven and Mattapoisett get all of their public drinking water from a series of wells within the Mattapoisett River Valley. The towns manage this water supply along with the towns of Marion (60% of town water) and Rochester who also withdraw water from the valley. It is a clean, dependable source of drinking water, but protections for the area from inappropriate land development are limited.

The most critical portion of this river valley is the 6,000 acres of land closest to the wells from which we withdraw water – the recharge area designated by the MA Department of Environmental Protection as the “Zone II”. Protection of undeveloped lands within the Zone II is one of the best and most cost effective ways to preserve the quality of drinking water. Yet, 72% of land within the critical Zone II area around the wells, remains unprotected from uses that might pollute the water supply.

### OUR STRATEGY

Back in 2000, the status of open space protection within the Mattapoisett River Valley was exceptionally weak for such an important public water supply. Despite some early land purchases by the Fairhaven, Mattapoisett and Marion Water Departments immediately around their well sites, only 8% of the land within the Mattapoisett River Valley watershed was permanently protected from residential development which could harm the water supply.

Nevertheless, land protection opportunities in the Mattapoisett River Valley were strong. Much of the remaining undeveloped land exists in large parcels that have been passed down for generations within local families with solid land ethics and community ties. Forests and wetlands continued to define the landscape and held the promise of a water supply that could continue to safely supply these growing communities for generations to come. The work ahead was in how best to get these lands into permanent conservation.

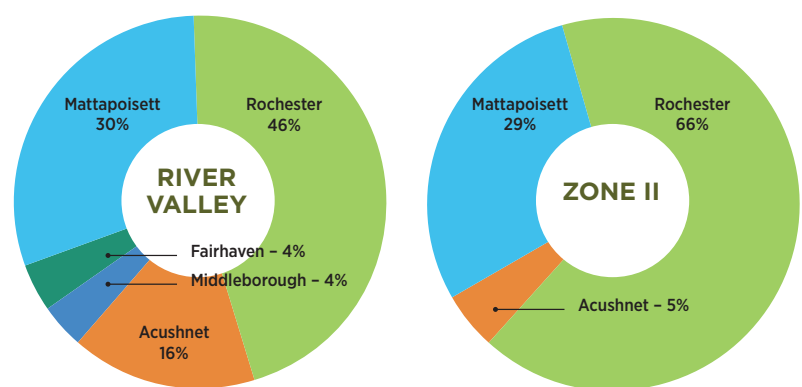
Having already organized into the Mattapoisett River Valley Drinking Water Supply Protection Advisory Committee with representatives from each of the four communities withdrawing water from the valley, the towns joined forces with the nonprofit Buzzards Bay Coalition which had already begun work to protect land in the area for water resource protection. Together the Coalition, the Advisory Committee and town water officials began strategizing how to accelerate the pace and amount of land being protected each year in the valley.

Fifteen years later, this report documents the outstanding success of this partnership model. Since negotiating our first deals in 2001, the Partnership has completed 27 separate real estate transactions resulting in the permanent protection of 1,468 acres of Mattapoisett River Valley Water Supply lands – a rate of nearly 100 acres each year.

### THE MATTAPOISETT RIVER VALLEY & ZONE II DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AREAS



### RIVER VALLEY STATS



The Mattapoisett River Valley (also called its Drainage Basin or Watershed) contains 18,381 acres in five communities. The Mattapoisett River Zone II (6,000 acres) lies entirely within the River Valley. While all activities on the land within the valley have the potential to harm our drinking water, those occurring within the MA DEP-designated Zone II are most critical to protect. This is the primary area where rainwater soaks into the ground to recharge the underlying aquifer from which we draw our drinking water.

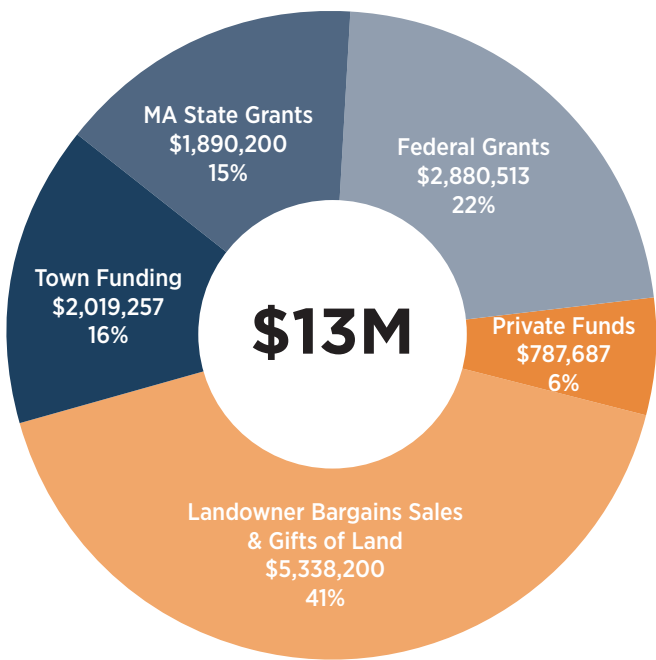
# 1,468 ACRES PROTECTED

BETWEEN 2001-2016

**98 ACRES PER YEAR – Doubled The Amount Of Protected Land  
AS A RESULT, TODAY: 28% OF ZONE II PROTECTED  
17% OF RIVER VALLEY PROTECTED**

THE RESULTS

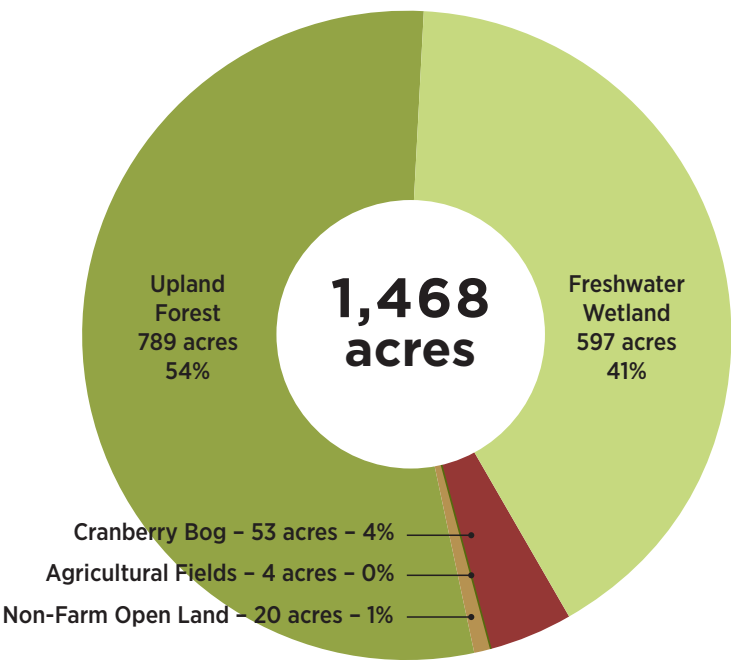
Between 2001-2016, the Mattapoissett River Valley Land Protection Partnership permanently protected 1,468 acres of land to maintain the quality and quantity of our region’s drinking water supply. Four charts tell the story best.



Funding to acquire the lands and Conservation Restrictions featured in this 15-year report was split nearly equally between government grant (53%) and private (47%) sources. The largest source of support came from generous local landowners who agreed to sell their land for less than its Fair Market Value in order to see the land protected. These ‘bargain sales’ of land totaled \$5,338,000 in donated value. The Buzzards Bay Coalition also raised \$787,687 in gifts from individuals, families and foundations concerned about clean water.

On the government side, funding was divided almost equally between local, state and federal sources. Town funding primarily came in the form of contributions from the Mattapoissett River “Water Supply Protection Fund” which collects approximately \$75,000 each year as a user fee of one penny per one hundred gallons used. Since 2010, these local funds have been supplemented with Community Preservation Funds in the towns of Fairhaven, Mattapoissett and Marion.

The Buzzards Bay Coalition coordinated State and Federal Grant applications, usually in close partnership with a municipal applicant. Most notable among these programs were MA DEP Drinking Water Supply Protection Grants and the US Department of Agriculture’s Wetland Reserve Program.

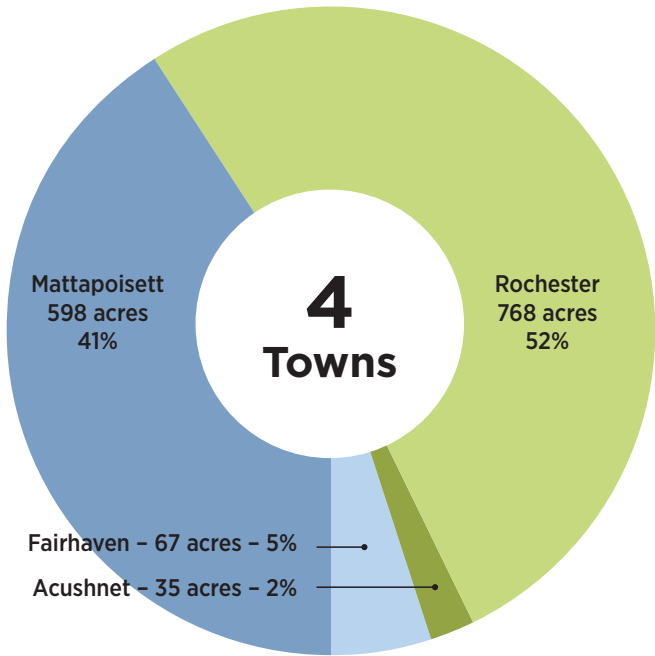


In selecting lands for protection, first priority was placed on properties within the Zone II Recharge Area for the Mattapoissett River Valley municipal wells system. These areas have been determined to most directly recharge the groundwater around the wells so their protection is most important to maintaining both water quality and quantity. Second priority was granted to forest and wetlands. These areas are powerful pollution filters, help maintain soil and water temperatures, reduce stormwater runoff and encourage groundwater recharge, and provide wildlife habitat. The cranberry bogs acquired are immediately adjacent to two important wells and were removed from cultivation in order to prevent potential pollution from fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides and restore natural water flows both of which further support the maintenance of healthy drinking water.



Between 2001-2016, the Mattapoissett River Valley Land Protection Partnership completed 27 separate real estate transactions with landowners willing to sell or donate their land for conservation. All participation by landowners was entirely voluntary.

In selecting deals to pursue, land immediately adjacent to wells was considered a priority for outright acquisition to allow for the highest level of protection of the water supply. Adjacent lands were considered suitable for protection through Conservation Restrictions (CR). A CR is a permanent agreement between a conservation nonprofit like the Buzzards Bay Coalition or a town conservation commission or water department which prevents development of land while allowing it to remain in private ownership.



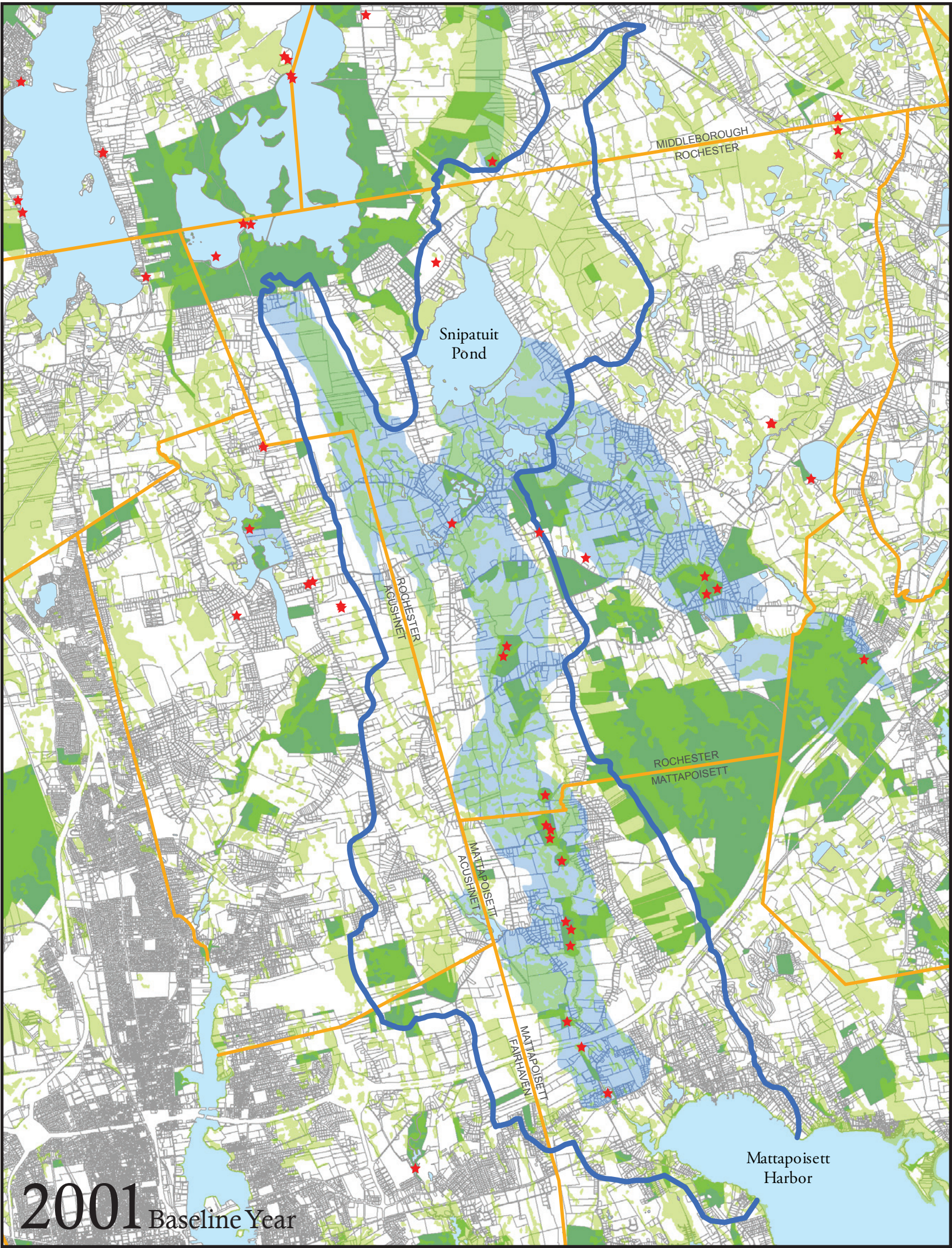
The Mattapoissett River Valley straddles five communities – Mattapoissett, Rochester, Fairhaven, Acushnet and Middleborough – but the vast majority of the Valley and its critical Zone II lies in Rochester and Mattapoissett. Therefore, the lands protected over the past fifteen years have mirrored this distribution. As a regional water resource, what town boundary a parcel of land might fall within matters much less than how that land contributes to the overall protection of the water supply. As a result, many deals saw voters in Marion, Mattapoissett and Fairhaven voting to spend their own town funds on lands in other communities – a testament to the strength of this truly regional water supply.

THE DEALS

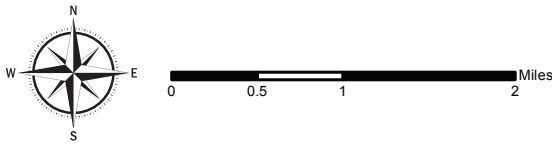
Beyond the planning and fundraising, the day-to-day work of the Mattapoissett River Valley Land Protection Partnership has been with the landowners and families of this landscape – many of whom have owned these lands for generations. The maps on the following pages show how these deals unfolded between 2001-2016. Behind the labels and colors on the map are many of the foundation families of Old Rochester – the Rounsevilles, Churches, and Tinkhams – and relative “newcomers” like the Decas Cranberry Company, and the McIntire and Keeler families. It has been our privilege to work with all of them to preserve not only the waters but the rural character and beauty of the Mattapoissett River Valley.

2001

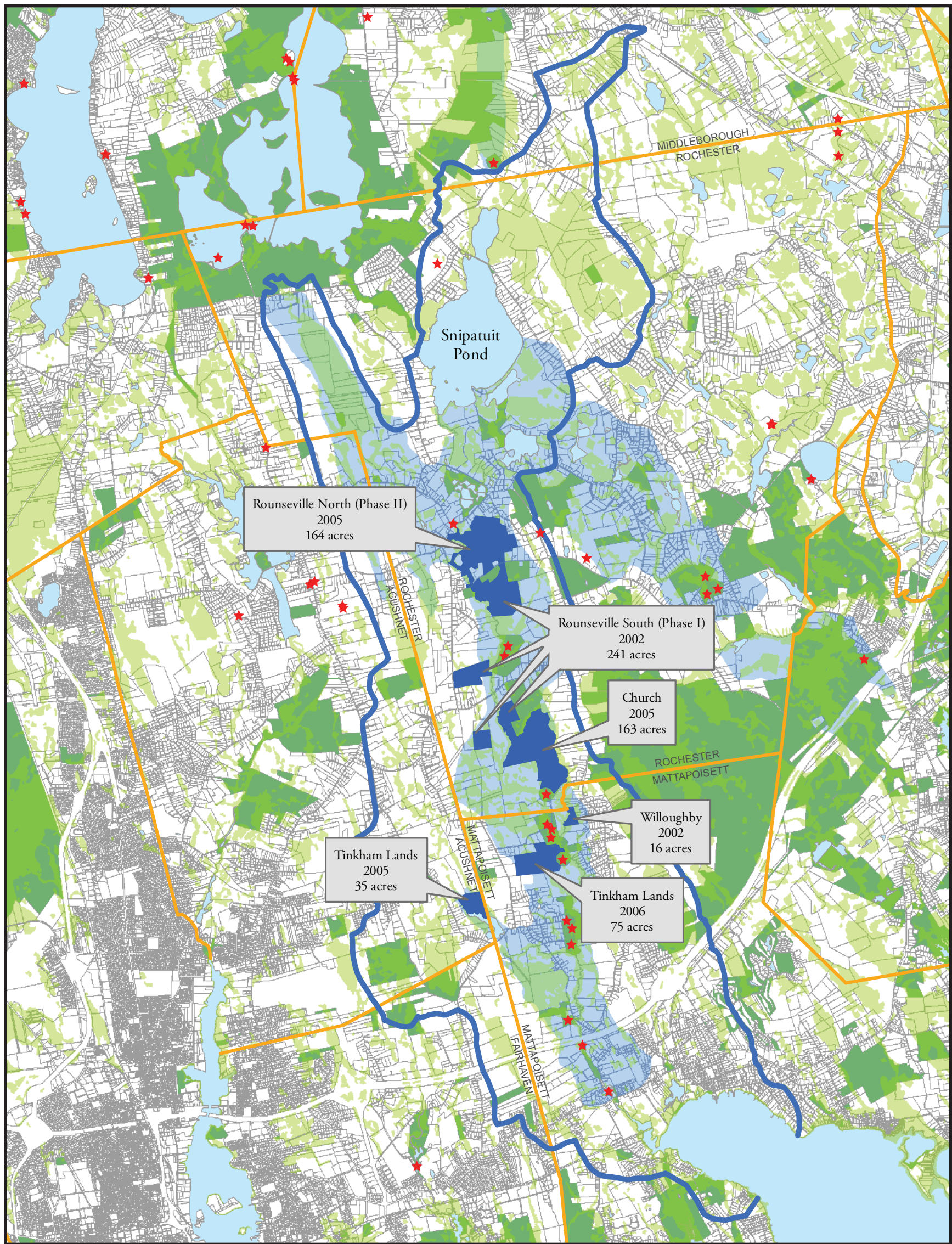
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MATTAPOISETT RIVER VALLEY LAND PROTECTION PARTNERSHIP  
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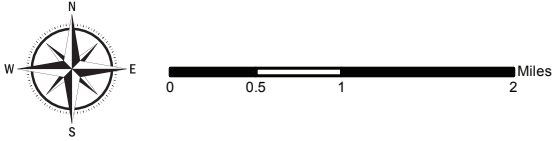
- ★ DEP-Approved Public Water Supply Wells
- Mattapoisett River Valley Watershed
- Municipal Boundaries
- DEP Core Wetland Resources
- Existing Protected Lands
- DEP Drinking Water Zone II
- Assessors' Parcels

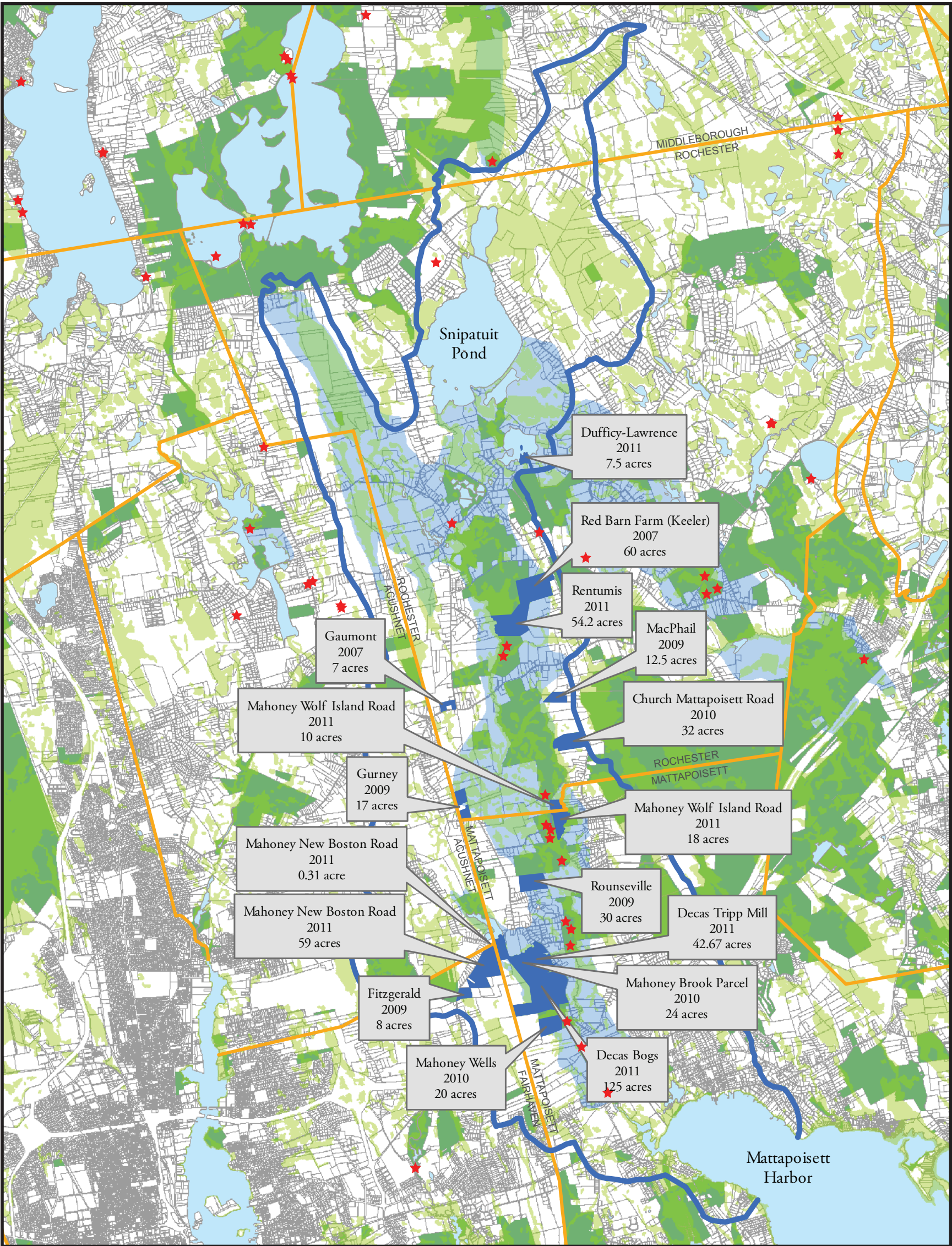


Data Sources: MassGIS & Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program

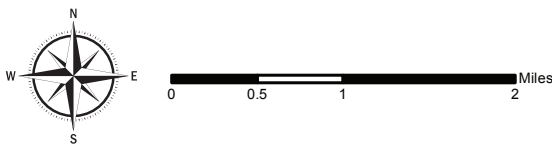


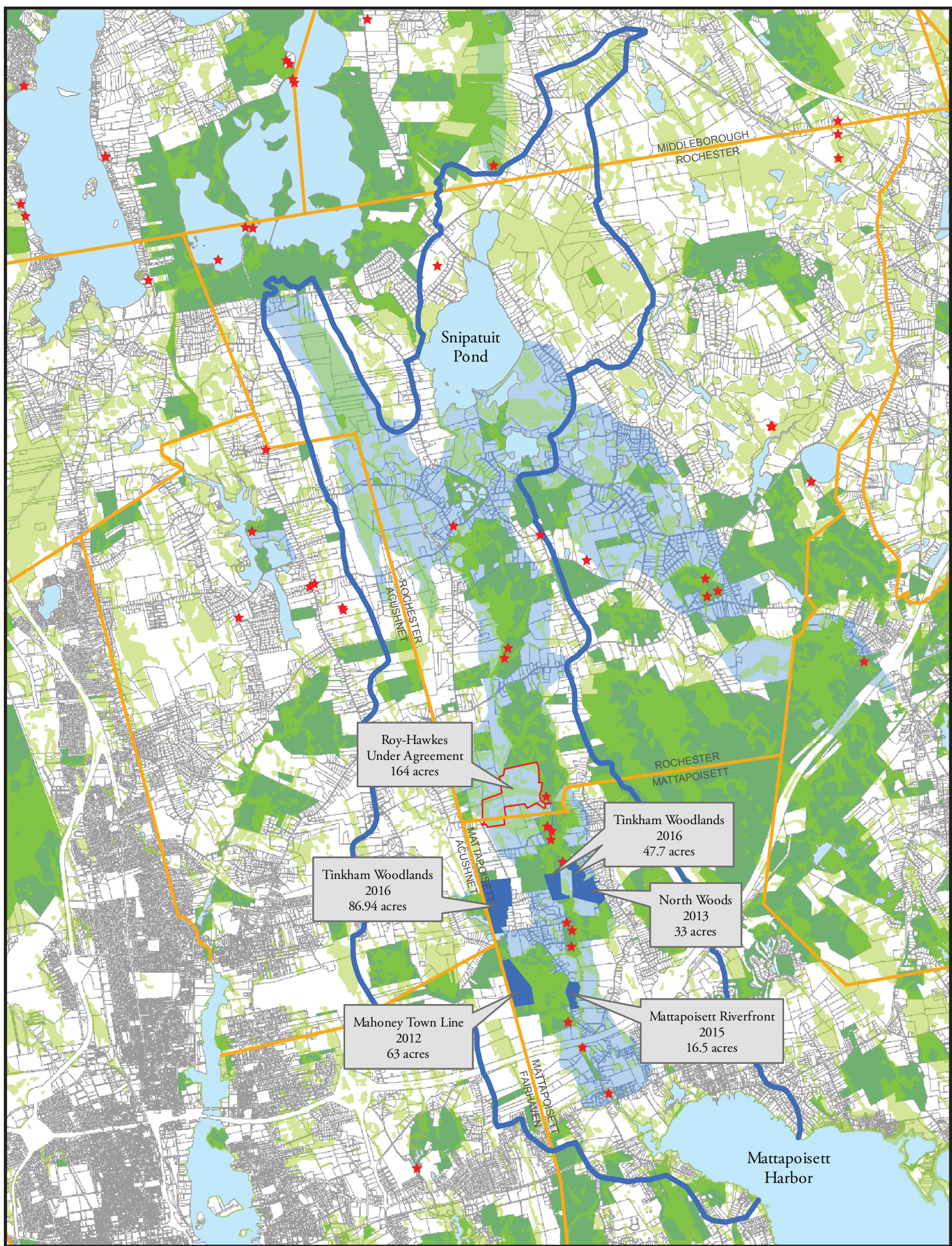
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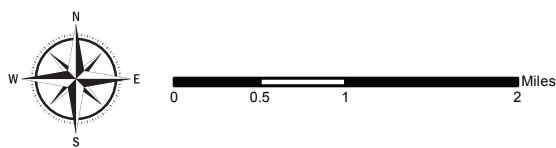


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THE PROJECTS

YEAR	PROJECT NAME	TOWN	TOTAL ACRES	LAND PROTECTION OUTCOME	
				OWNERSHIP	CONSERVATION RESTRICTION HOLDER(S)
2002	Willoughby	Mattapoisett	16	Mattapoisett Conservation Commission	
2002	Rounseville Homestead South	Rochester	241	Private	Rochester Land Trust & Marion Water Department
2005	Tinkham Pond lands	Acushnet	35	Fairhaven-Acushnet Land Preservation Trust	
2005	Rounseville Homestead North	Rochester	164	Private	Wildlands Trust & Rochester Conservation Commission
2005	Church Homestead	Rochester	163	MA Division of Fish & Game	
2006	Tinkham Lands	Mattapoisett	75	Mattapoisett Water Department	
2007	Gaumont Farm	Rochester	7	Private	Buzzards Bay Coalition & Rochester Land Trust
2007	Red Barn Farm	Rochester	60	Private	Buzzards Bay Coalition & Rochester Land Trust
2009	Fitzgerald	Fairhaven	8	Fairhaven Conservation Commission	Buzzards Bay Coalition
2009	Rounseville woodlot	Mattapoisett	30	Mattapoisett Water Department	
2009	MacPhail	Rochester	12.5	Private	Buzzards Bay Coalition & Rochester Land Trust
2009	Gurney	Rochester/Mattapoisett	17	Private	Buzzards Bay Coalition & Rochester Land Trust
2010	Mahoney Brook Parcel	Mattapoisett	24	Buzzards Bay Coalition	Mattapoisett Conservation Commission CR
2010	Mahoney Wells	Mattapoisett	20	Mattapoisett Water Department	
2010	Church Mattapoisett Road	Rochester	32	Rochester Land Trust	
2011	Mahoney New Boston Road	Acushnet	0.31	Buzzards Bay Coalition	
2011	Mahoney New Boston Road	Fairhaven	59	Fairhaven Conservation Commission	Buzzards Bay Coalition
2011	Mahoney Wolf Island Road	Mattapoisett	18	Mattapoisett Water Department	Fairhaven Water Department
2011	Decas Tripps Mill	Mattapoisett	42.67	Mattapoisett Conservation Commission	Buzzards Bay Coalition
2011	Decas Bogs	Mattapoisett	125	Buzzards Bay Coalition	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
2011	Rentumis	Rochester	54.2	Marion Water Department	Buzzards Bay Coalition
2011	Mahoney Wolf Island Road	Rochester	10	Rochester Conservation Commission	Fairhaven Water Department
2011	Dufficy-Lawrence	Rochester	7.5	Private	Buzzards Bay Coalition & Rochester Land Trust
2012	Town Line Lots	Mattapoisett	63	Buzzards Bay Coalition	Mattapoisett Conservation Commission
2013	North Woods	Mattapoisett	33	Mattapoisett Conservation Commission	Buzzards Bay Coalition
2015	Mattapoisett Riverfront	Mattapoisett	16.6	Mattapoisett Conservation Commission	Buzzards Bay Coalition
2016	Tinkhamtown Woodlands I	Mattapoisett	115.3	Mattapoisett Water Department	Buzzards Bay Coalition, Fairhaven Water and Marion Water Depts
2016	Tinkhamtown Woodlands II	Mattapoisett	19.3	Buzzards Bay Coalition	
			1,468		

Depending on the characteristics of the land, wishes of landowners, and available funding sources, each deal resulted in slightly different land protection outcomes. Lands destined for walking trail networks, hunting and fishing, and canoe access were prioritized for ownership by the Buzzards Bay Coalition who committed to manage the land for responsible public use into the future. Lands close to wells were acquired by town Water Departments, and private lands were protected with Conservation Restrictions (CRs). This flexible approach to each individual deal has been one of the hallmarks of this partnership and will continue in the years ahead. What is common to every transaction, however, is that the land is protected from development forever – usually through multiple reinforcing land ownership and CR agreements.

THE BENEFITS

Protecting Water Quality

The forests and wetlands of Mattapoisett River Valley work together to shield the river and the valley aquifer from excess nitrogen and other pollutants. When development and urbanization threaten the natural spaces that filter out pollutants and prevent them from entering the water supply, the overall quality of the water in the valley can be degraded. This manifests through an increase in contaminants entering the watershed, which can include wastewater from residential septic systems, pesticides and fertilizers from lawns and gardens, road salts, and heavy metals. Permanent protection of this land sustains the essential natural areas that protect against contamination, safeguarding clean drinking water for more than 24,000 people and ensuring that the Mattapoisett River Valley drinking water supply will remain healthy for generations to come.

Maintaining Water Quantity

In the Mattapoisett River Valley, the aquifer is maintained as water soaks into the ground after rainfall. The area in which this occurs is known as the recharge area, or Zone II (See map on page 1). However, 72% of land in Zone II is not currently protected from development, which threatens the pervious surfaces that allow water to soak into the ground in the recharge area. Housing developments, driveways and roads are all examples of impervious surfaces resulting from development that decrease the base flow reaching the aquifer. Protecting land around the Mattapoisett River Valley recharge area safeguards against the construction of impervious surfaces, ensuring that the base flow sustaining the aquifer will be protected and that there will be an adequate supply of clean water for all.

Expanding Outdoor Recreation

Protecting land in the Mattapoisett River Valley does more than safeguard against ecological threats—it also provides additional recreational spaces and opportunities for local residents. On much of the land that has been protected in the valley, the public is welcome to explore the preserved areas and engage in passive recreation opportunities. Depending on the site, visitors can enjoy miles of walking trails, fish, birdwatch, cross-country ski, hunt, and more. Preserving land around the Mattapoisett River Valley affords residents the chance to get outdoors and enjoy the natural beauty of the South Coast—just steps from their homes, offices, and schools. It also ensures that their children and grandchildren will be able to experience the unspoiled magnificence of the area.

Preserving Fish and Wildlife

Preserving open space also benefits the animals and plants that call the Mattapoisett River Valley home. Much is at stake—the Mattapoisett River has historically been home to one of the largest herring populations on Buzzards Bay with thousands of herring migrating up the river to spawn each year. Other species, such as shad, sturgeon, and Atlantic salmon are entirely gone from the region. On land, the valley is home to a number of rare and threatened species of plants and animals with much of the area mapped by the state as Priority Habitat. Therefore, it is imperative to preserve large, contiguous areas of open space in the Mattapoisett River Valley to protect the well-being of keystone species threatened by habitat degradation and fragmentation.

