



# Comprehensive Plans Revisited - Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

Informational Presentation

Land and Water Conservation Summit

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**MA** MASON & ASSOCIATES, INC.  
*Environmental Consulting & Projects*

RHODE ISLAND  
STATEWIDE  
PLANNING  
PROGRAM



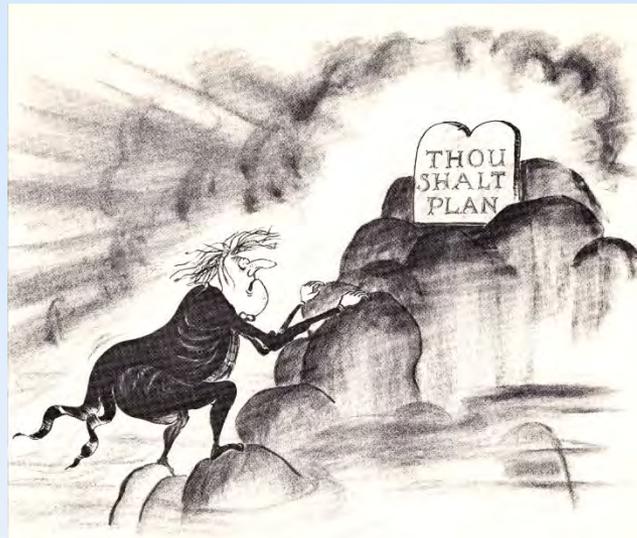
# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## Background & History

1988 Comprehensive Planning and Land Use  
Regulation Act

R.I. General Law 45-22.2

A.K.A “The Comp Plan Act”





## Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

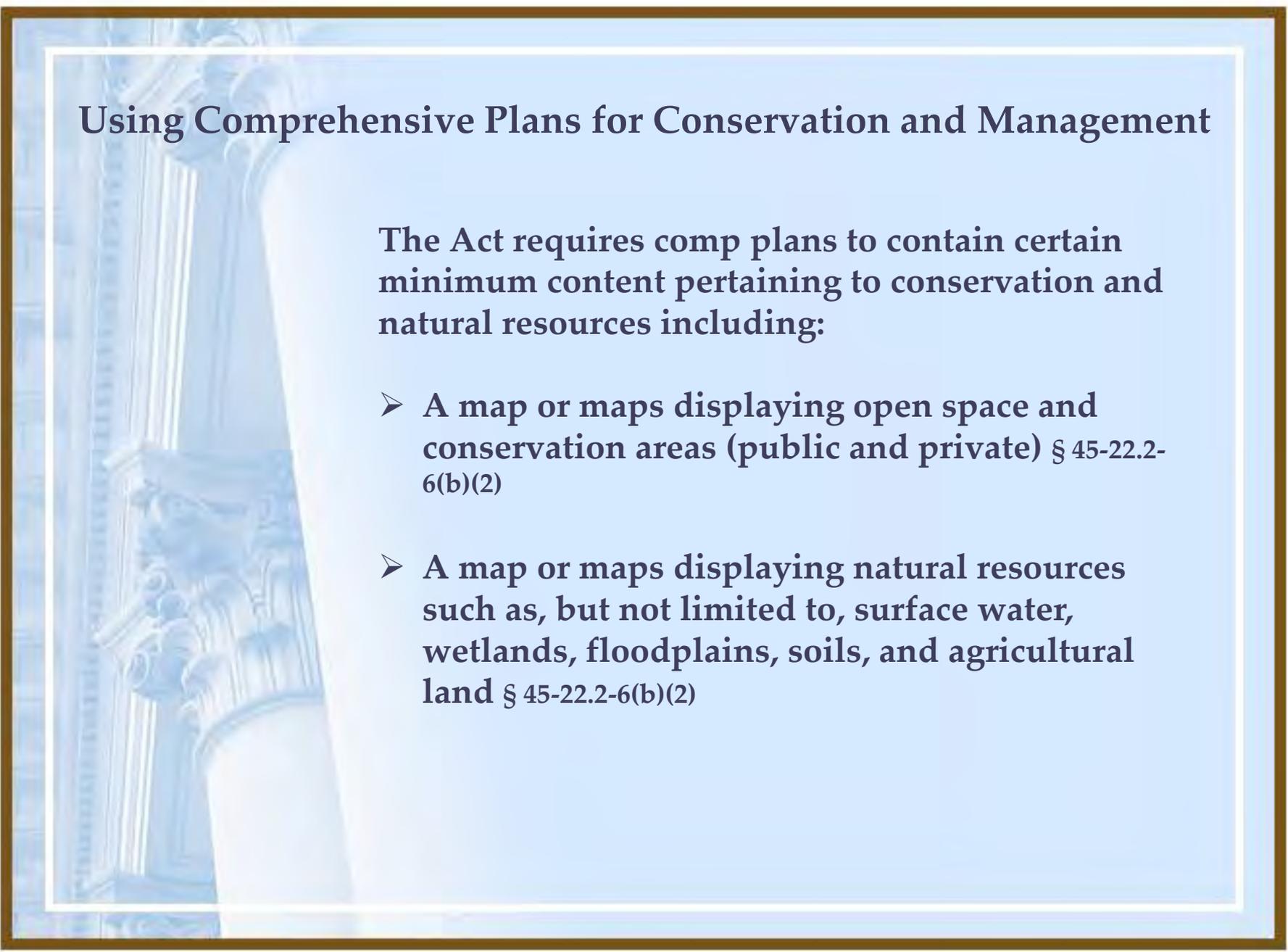
- ❖ The Act creates a reciprocal state/local system where local plans must embody the goals of the State and the State agrees to act consistent with State-approved local plans.
- ❖ With regard to Natural Resources, the Act states:  
“Land, water, and air are finite natural resources. Comprehensive planning is needed to provide for protection, development, use, and management of our land and natural resources.” § 45-22.2-3(a)(3)



## Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

The Act specifically states that the General Assembly “hereby establishes a series of goals” including:

- To promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land...and the need to protect public health, including drinking water supply, drinking water safety, and environmental quality § 45-22.2-3(c)(1)
- To promote the protection of the natural, historic, and cultural resources of each municipality and the state § 45-22.2-3(c)(4)
- To promote the preservation of the open space and recreational resources of each municipality and the state § 45-22.2-3(c)(5)

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## Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

The Act requires comp plans to contain certain minimum content pertaining to conservation and natural resources including:

- A map or maps displaying open space and conservation areas (public and private) § 45-22.2-6(b)(2)
- A map or maps displaying natural resources such as, but not limited to, surface water, wetlands, floodplains, soils, and agricultural land § 45-22.2-6(b)(2)

## Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

### Minimum content (con't):

- **an inventory of significant natural resource areas such as, but not limited to, water, soils, prime agricultural lands, forests, wildlife, wetlands, aquifers, coastal features, and floodplains § 45-22.2-6(b)(3)**
- **an inventory of outdoor recreational resources, open space areas, and recorded access to these resources and areas. The plan must contain an analysis of forecasted needs, policies for the management and protection of existing resources and areas, and identification of areas for potential expansion § 45-22.2-6(b)(4)**



## Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

Based on the maps, inventories, and assessments, the comp plan must:

- “identify the goals and policies of the municipality for its future growth and development and for the conservation of its natural and cultural resources”
- “include goals, policies and implementation techniques for the protection and management of [natural resources and conservation areas]”
- “include goals, policies, and implementation techniques for the protection and management of existing [open space and outdoor recreation] resources and acquisition of additional resources if appropriate”

# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## The Comprehensive Planning Standards Manual

- ❖ Provides the standards used by Statewide Planning in determining whether a comp plan receives State approval
- ❖ Standards related to conservation include:
  - Planning for Natural Resources
  - Planning for Agriculture
  - Planning for Water Supply
  - Planning for Recreation
  - Planning for Natural Hazards and Climate Change
  - Planning for Land Use

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# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## The Comprehensive Planning Guidance Handbook Series

- ❖ **16 Guidance Handbooks covering comp plan topics and processes**
  
- ❖ **Guidance Handbooks covering specific topics are organized in three sections:**
  - **General information on the topic**
  - **How to fulfill the standards**
  - **Crafting a better plan - offering suggestions and technical assistance to go beyond the minimum standards**

# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## Standards for Natural Resources

- Identify natural resources and natural resource areas on one or more maps
- Identify existing permanently protected conservation areas (both public and private) on a map
- Illustrate the effects of sea level rise on saltwater marshes, including potential losses and migration areas, by including maps showing 1', 3', and 5' of sea level rise and areas within the community to which marsh is likely to migrate
- Identify and discuss any prominent issues facing the municipality's significant natural resources

# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## Standards for Natural Resources (con't)

- Discuss the municipality's priorities for land conservation
- Discuss the techniques that are in place for minimizing the negative impacts of development on significant natural resources
- Include goals that embody the State's goals for natural resources and policies to support each goal
- Include implementation actions within the Implementation Program that address the protection and management of natural resources

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# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## Getting things done: The Implementation Program

The Implementation Program “defines and schedules the specific public actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the goals and objectives of each component of the comprehensive plan”. It includes:

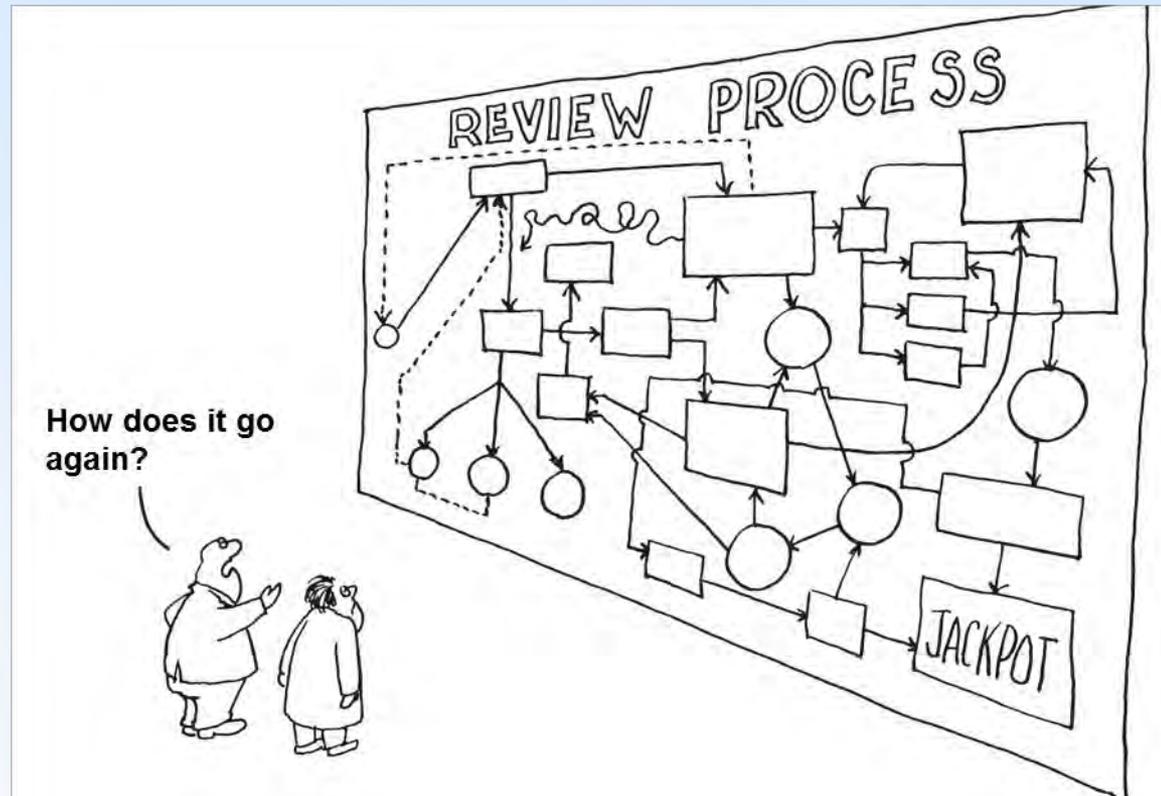
- Action description
- Responsible parties
- Timeframe

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## Obtaining State Approval

- ❖ **Locally approved comp plans are reviewed by Statewide Planning and various State Agencies**
- ❖ **Comp plans meeting the standards receive a 10-year State approval**
- ❖ **Comp plans not receiving State approval are still valid for all local purposes**

# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management



# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## As a Key Stakeholder Get Involved

### Annual Work Plan (Be a source of information)

- Descriptions of natural resource areas and natural resource values being protected
- Complete inventory of permanently protected conservation areas (both public and private)
- Publish educational materials on prominent issues facing natural resources
- Communicate the 'science' of natural resource protection to local decision makers on a regular basis.

# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## As a Key Stakeholder Get Involved

### During Comprehensive Plan Preparation

- Attend Work Sessions (public meetings)
- Participate on any advisory committee
- Offer any inventory, management plan ideas
- Discuss with the municipality your priorities for land conservation
- Give a constructive assessment of the municipality's efforts to minimize the negative impacts of development on significant natural resources

# Points of View



# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## Typical Natural Resource Chapter

### Existing Conditions

Physical Geography – Soil, Topography and Geology

Water Resources – Coastal,

Freshwater and

Estuarine

Wetlands, Groundwater

### Focus

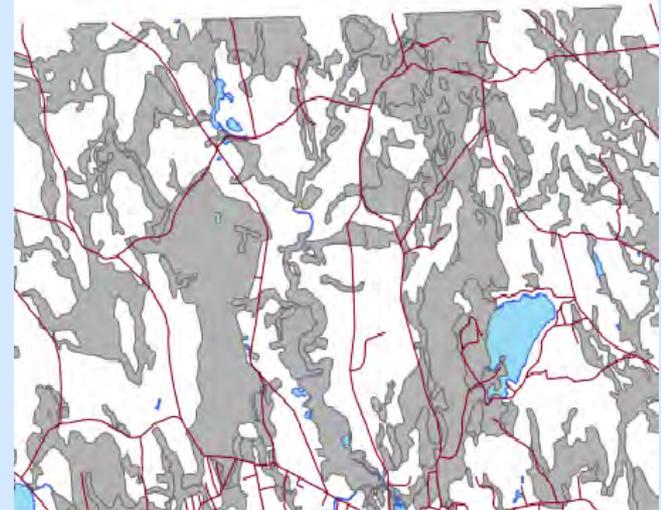
Conservation

Water Quality Protection

Risk from Flood and

Natural Hazards

Major Wetlands and Severe Constraints Soils



# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

## Areas not successfully addressed:

**Vegetation & Wildlife**

**Forests & Farms**



**Natural Resource Management**

**Visual & Aesthetic Considerations**

## **Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management**

**Long-range planning is an opportunity to consider the intersection of more intense land uses with conservation and management of natural resources.**



# Be a Planner ....



# Be a Planner ...





# Using Comprehensive Plans for Conservation and Management

**For more information**

**Check our website at:**

**[www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/compplanning/handbook.php](http://www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/compplanning/handbook.php)**

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