

SECTION 4. NATURAL RESOURCE BASE

“Wilmington lies at a junction of valleys in the rough shape of a cross, a picturesque village of homey wooden houses in the miscellany of domestic building with many second-story porches overhanging the streets and four church spires above the shingled roofs” (Bears 1996).

Wilmington, one town north of the Massachusetts border, four east of the New York State line, and three towns west of the Connecticut, lies centered in the Deerfield River valley. A square town, Wilmington is blessed with a diversity of terrain; at least ten mountains over 2000 feet and three potable bodies of water, the most significant of which is the Harriman Reservoir, an enhancement of the Deerfield river created during the depression with significant federal input (see *Wilmington Infrastructure* map on 3rd page). The reservoir created Lake Whitingham, and the area affords access to the artificial lake. Nearby, Molly Stark State Park contains 158 acres and the 2,438-foot Mt. Olga.

Table 4.1- Natural Resources and Geographical Features

Land Area (acres)	26,023
Land Area (square miles)	39.9
Water Area (square miles)	1.9
Percent Conserved Lands, 1999	9.1%
Change in Forest Land to Developed Land, 1970-90 (acres)	122.5
Change in Forest Land to Non-Forested Land, 1970-90 (acres)	12.0
Change in Non-Forested Land to Developed Land, 1970-90 (acres)	3.8

source: crs.uvm.edu

Protection Efforts in Wilmington

The Forest Service cannot buy or sell land but is capable of swapping. The agency exchanged 6 parcels during 1986-87 and has probably done much more since then. The largest parcel swap through 1989 was the exchange of 700 acres of the former Martin farm in Rochester for 231 acres at Haystack Ski Area in Wilmington. The other five parcels exchanged in 1986-87 amounted to about 200 acres. Also see Peru for a description of another pending deal.

The Deerfield River conservation easement involves nearly 16,000 acres of land around the Somerset and Harriman reservoirs, which will be protected under an agreement among the state, an electric utility, and the Vermont Land Trust. This is an effort to respond to tremendous pressure to develop the state's lakefront property. Harriman Reservoir has one home on its shore and Somerset Reservoir has none. The deal will allow the Pacific Gas and Electric Generating Co. to keep generating hydroelectricity on the Deerfield River. The land will continue to be used for logging and for recreation, but the conservation easement will prevent development of the land. It is the third-largest acquisition in the Vermont Land Trust's 23-year history. The

agreement allows for clean energy generation while protecting habitat for black bears, loons, peregrine falcons and plants in the area.

Other Places...

The above constitute nothing more than a sampling of the significant natural resource characteristics of Wilmington. Other areas of interest throughout the town include Lake Raconda, Sylvan Lake, Haystack Pond, Crystal Lake, and Haystack Mountain. Haystack Pond and Lake Raconda are shown on the *Wilmington Infrastructure* map on the 3rd page.

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