



**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2025 - 5:30 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
LEBANONNH.GOV/LIVE**

1. Call to Order

- A. To participate in this meeting, please [join live via Microsoft Teams](#) or call 929-229-5356 (access code: 855 736 938#). If you have trouble accessing this meeting, please [email Mark Goodwin](#)

2. Study Items

- A. **Review & Comment on Proposed Zoning Amendment** - Route 120 Environmental Overlay District. [Link to May 8, 2025 agenda materials](#)

3. Adjournment

The order of agenda items is subject to change.

Meetings are open for in-person and remote attendance. Members of the public that wish to attend remotely may do so by going to [LebanonNH.gov/Live](#) where you will find instructions on how to enter the meeting. Members of the public will be able to participate and ask questions through the City's virtual platform or by phone. Please note: Should technical difficulties occur during the meeting that disrupts virtual or phone connection(s), the meeting will continue without remote access capabilities.

DRAFT FOR CONSERVATION COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Prepared by Bruce James, Vice Chair

File name: "Cons. Comm. Response to Environmental Overlay District v. 1 May 13, 2025"

MEMORANDUM

To: Lebanon City Council

From: Lebanon Conservation Commission

RE: Northern Lebanon Environmental Overlay District Proposal

Date: May 22, 2025

A proposed **Northern Lebanon Environmental Overlay District** was included in a May 1, 2025 memorandum from the Lebanon Planning and Development Department staff to the Lebanon Zoning Board of Adjustment. In this memo, the Lebanon Conservation Commission was asked to comment on this Environmental Overlay District, and their comments are to be brought to the City Council when they consider proposed zoning changes and this overlay on June 18. The Conservation Commission comments are presented below.

Purposes of the Overlay (quoted from the draft overlay)

SECTION 411 Northern Lebanon Environmental Overlay District

11.1 Purposes.

The purposes of the Northern Lebanon Environmental Overlay District are to:

*A. In the face of increasing interaction with humans and human development in Northern Lebanon, **preserve the watershed and wetlands of the Northern Lebanon ecosystem**, including the flow of water from upland to wetland, and encourage the protection of high-quality wetlands located in the Northern Lebanon ecosystem, which require naturally vegetated buffers for the integrity of their ecosystems. These provide flood protection and mitigation, recharge groundwater supply, augment stream flow*

during dry periods, provide wildlife habitat, and enhance water quality, all of which are either important or essential for human well-being and economic stability.

B. Preserve and protect the integrity of the wildlife corridor and crossings that connect otherwise fragmented habitats in the Northern Lebanon ecosystem, as well as preserving and maintaining interconnected wildlife habitats for native flora and fauna more generally. Doing so is vital for enabling wildlife movement, promoting genetic diversity in wildlife populations, and maintaining the biodiversity and ecological health of the region, and furthermore prevents the need for investment in expensive restoration measures in the future.

C. Preserve and protect the integrity of the steep slopes in Northern Lebanon. Development on such slopes disturbs vital and fragile ecosystems and causes expensive negative impacts such as soil erosion and stream sedimentation; unnecessary loss of vegetative ground cover and destruction of trees; on-site waste disposal problems; difficult street construction; and frequent street maintenance.

D. Preserve, protect, and enhance scenic, scientific, and educational values associated with the conservation lands within Northern Lebanon. Conservation lands are a vital part of the character of the City of Lebanon and should be preserved for the present and future generations.

Topics that were considered by the Conservation Commission

1. **Overlay Map** – The Overlay Map is designed to contain environmental enhancements that will apply to unique environmental, natural resource and topographic features of the Northern Lebanon area.

The Conservation Commission finds that the environmental overlay is well-designed to work effectively to protect the natural resources of the Mascoma River watershed and its wetlands flowing to the south from the height-of-land where the Northern Lebanon/Centerra development will take place. This proposed development in an upland zone of the city is unique and different from where the central business districts and residential neighborhoods of Lebanon and West Lebanon were initially settled developed in the valleys of the Mascoma and Connecticut Rivers for access to the power of flowing water in the rivers for industrial production and transport. The upland position of the Northern Lebanon development requires watershed protections downslope. In the 21st century, such protections are related to flooding associated with climate disruption and major weather events, contemporary wetland values linked to water quality and retention, and wildlife habitats and movement within the forested ecosystems of the region. Without this overlay, such protections will be absent as development proceeds at higher elevations of the new Northern Lebanon city center.

2. **Wildlife Crossing Corridor** – The Overlay shall provide enhanced protections for maintaining the integrity of the Wildlife Crossing Corridor that has been identified in previous studies. Specific recommendations are under development.

The wildlife habitats, corridors, and road crossings require protection between the conservation lands to the southeast of Mt. Support on the east side of Rt. 120 and west of Rix Ledges. This forest ecosystem has natural links with those of the Landmark Lands and Boston Lot to the west, but are truncated by Route 120 and Mt. Support Rd. The proposed 1000-foot wide corridor should be effective in protecting migrating wildlife species from the smallest amphibians to large mammals moving between wetland and upland zones of the ecosystems of the region.

3. **Steep Slopes** – Enhancing the steep slopes protections to include all lands within the overlay irrespective of current zoning. Steep slopes currently protect areas with a grade greater than 25% only within the RL-3 Zoning District.

The steep slopes and outcropping ledges associated with some of them between Rix Ledges and Mt. Support (as well as on the east side of Rix Ledges) will be adequately protected by this overlay, along with their importance as sources of small streams and wetlands of the district.

4. **Wetlands** – Potential enhancements to the already protected wetlands in the proposed map are included in the discussion. There are various levels of wetlands in the overlay: “High Value Wetlands” already enjoy a heightened level of protection that eliminates nearly all development or improvements within a buffer around them. All wetlands are currently protected with permitting requirements at the local level and the state level depending on the nature of the proposed work. The largest area of wetlands in the area are considered low quality wetlands and were not granted additional protections in the 2012 action that protected High and Very High-quality wetlands.

Although many of the wetlands of the district are mapped as “low quality” from an ecological perspective, their interconnectedness hydrologically makes them all important for flood protection downslope to the Mascoma River, I-89 exit 18, and downtown Lebanon. Also, overland flow retention will be provided during major rain events by protected, contiguous forests on the slopes, with or without wetlands.

Summary of Conservation Commission's Comments

In summary, this Environmental Overlay District provides adequate protection of wetlands/hydrology, wildlife, and steep slopes of this part of Lebanon which is quite unique relative to other developed areas of the City. We encourage the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and the City Council to support and adopt this Environmental Overlay District as an essential planning tool when considering proposed zoning changes and site plans as the Northern Lebanon development proceeds.