

# Demographic and Growth Assessment

## Newfound Lake Watershed Master Plan



The Newfound Lake Watershed is a rural area located in central New Hampshire's Lakes Region. Its 63,000 acres encompasses all, or parts, of nine towns. **Five of the Watershed communities (Alexandria, Bridgewater, Bristol, Groton, and Hebron) account for 93% of the Watershed's area and 99% of its population.** The Watershed has a year-round population of more than 4,500, distributed throughout the rural areas surrounding Newfound Lake. The arrival of the seasonal population during the summer months results in a doubling of the population for that portion of the year. **If the year-round population growth continues without the appropriate tools in place, the impacts on the Watershed resources could be significant.**

The following are observations related to population and housing issues in the Watershed:

- In the 35 years from 1970 to 2005 the nine town region the Newfound Watershed is located within nearly doubled in year-round population, and as of 2007 likely exceeds 15,000 persons.
- From 1970 to 2005 the Watershed's year-round population increased by 132%. This is an even greater rate of growth than the region and the state.
- Households in the Watershed are now smaller, and the number of single parent households and non-family households have increased.
- The housing situation in the Watershed is fairly complex because of the high percentage of seasonal units (45%), and their conversion to year-round units.
- From 1990 to 2000 the Watershed experienced a reduction in seasonal housing units overall, and an increase in year-round units.
- From 2005 to 2030 the Watershed population is expected to increase by 19%.

### ***Land Use Implications:***

Year-round and seasonal population growth create increasing pressure on the community and natural resources within the Watershed. However, increasing population also creates opportunities for increased economic opportunity. There is a need to balance these and other issues to protect the long-term health and sustainability of the Watershed for generations to come.

***Planning Implications:***

Many of the sites that are being converted from seasonal to year-round units in the Watershed are located in some of the more sensitive areas, adjacent to important natural resources. The conversion of units in these areas can increase the potential for long-term impacts by introducing year-round activity, but can create opportunities to address existing threats by upgrading waste treatment and other systems.

***Planning Implications:***

The diversity of housing unit types and levels of affordability are a concern within the Watershed as we look into the future. The location and pattern of residential development within the Watershed also has the potential to impact both the communities and the natural resources in negative ways.

***Planning Implications:***

The location and design of development is more important to the health of the Watershed than the rate of growth alone.

It is clear from this demographic and growth assessment for the Watershed that the area is changing. This does not mean that the population is simply growing, which it is, but that **the composition of this population is changing and will pose new challenges in the future.** Overall, the population is aging, living together in smaller numbers, and shifting toward more year-round residency. The majority of the population and housing exists in the five communities of Alexandria, Bridgewater, Bristol, Groton and Hebron, but the four other Watershed communities contribute important upland areas. The majority of development within the Watershed is residential in nature, and this requires residents to travel outside of the Watershed for most services and employment opportunities.