

D. VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

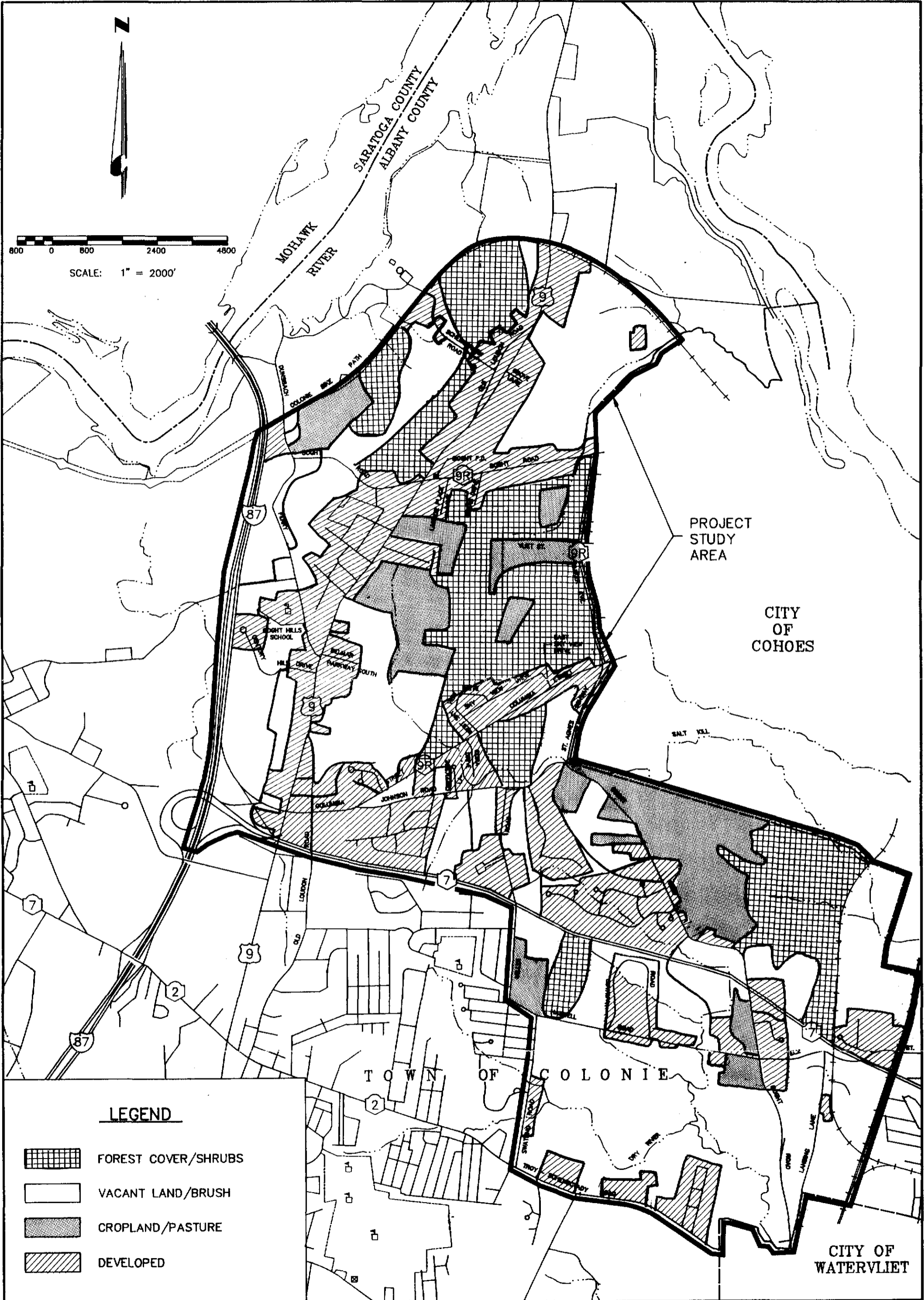
Vegetation in the undeveloped portions of the study area is a mix of cropland and pasture, grassland and brush, and to a lesser extent, deciduous forests, (Exhibit II-D-1). Cropland and pasture is the largest existing undeveloped land use. These lands are found on the east side of Route 9 beyond the strip-type commercial development adjacent to the highway. To the west of Route 9, beyond the highway development, a large area of cropland and pasture is located between Boght Road and Schemerhorn Road. Additional cropland and pasture is located on both sides of Boght Road south of St. Agnes Highway. Cropland east of Boght Road extends as far south as Route 7. Several other areas are south of Route 7 in the vicinity of Haswell Road.

Another significant vegetative type is grassland and brush. Many of these areas are abandoned agricultural lands. The majority of this vegetative cover is found adjacent to, or in, the vicinity of Route 7. The Dry River area, which is considered environmentally sensitive, is the largest tract of grassland and brush.


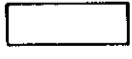

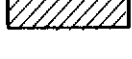
The third vegetative cover is forest land, both coniferous and deciduous forests with brush and shrubs. Forested lands within the project study area are predominantly deciduous, consisting of typical second growth eastern hardwood species. Areas classified as such generally consist of trees twenty (20) feet or taller. The forested areas are located near the bikepath west of Route 9, north and south of Route 9R, Columbia Street, and north and south of Route 7. Several areas of brush and shrubs less than twenty (20) feet tall have been identified adjacent to the deciduous forests near the bikepath north of Route 9R and north of Route 7.



SCALE: 1" = 2000'



LEGEND

-  FOREST COVER/SHRUBS
-  VACANT LAND/BRUSH
-  CROPLAND/PASTURE
-  DEVELOPED

CHA CLOUGH, HARBOUR & ASSOCIATES
ENGINEERS & PLANNERS

VEGETATIVE COVER

The study area represents fairly diverse habitat due to such factors as vegetation, topography, surface water and human uses. These factors combine to form the diverse natural communities necessary to support a variety of wildlife types.

Vegetation types include cropland and pasture, vacant meadows and brush and deciduous forest cover and shrubs. This range of vegetative types, provides food and shelter capable of supporting a variety of wildlife. Forest and field edges provide excellent food and cover for a number of species. Vegetation associated with wetlands is limited in the project study area as there is only one (1) small area identified on the Town of Colonic Inventory Maps as a wetland. This wetland is not regulated by the NYSDEC under NYCRR Article 662 and 663.

Although wetlands are limited, several stream systems including the Dry River and Salt Kill provide an important element of habitat to aquatic species as well as providing an important water source for all wildlife.

Topography is flat to rolling including many small hills and valleys. Steeper grades are generally associated with streams in the eastern and southern portions of the project study area. Several other areas with varying elevations are located south of the bikepath and west of Route 9. The topography is an important factor in the type of vegetative cover that exists on the site. In addition, rolling topography provides both a buffer between land uses and protection from the elements for wildlife.

Existing land use also affects the quality and type of habitat. The project study area is relatively undeveloped, however, its proximity to more intensive suburban uses, generally limits wildlife that are less tolerant of man and his activities. The existing development patterns occur primarily adjacent to

roadways with large interior parcels of farm or undeveloped lands. These interior parcels both wooded and open, provide food and cover suitable to wildlife habitat.

Several sources of information were utilized to develop a list of potential wildlife that may inhabit the project study area. Information gathered from the Town of Colonie Environmental Inventory Maps, the NYSDEC Wildlife Resources Center, a comparison of species habitat requirements with existing habitat and other studies completed in the region were all compiled to identify potential wildlife species. A list of mammals, amphibians and reptiles which potentially inhabit the site is included in Table II-D-1.

In order to identify potential rare or endangered plant or animal species and significant habitat, the NYSDEC Wildlife Resources Center reviewed their Significant Habitat Program and Natural Heritage Program files. In regards to wildlife, no potential impacts on endangered, threatened or special concern species, rare animal or natural community occurrences, or other significant habitats were identified in the study area. This information should be used as a guide and should not preclude the requirement for an on-site survey when a specific development proposal is under consideration.

One (1) rare plant, last sited within a one and one half (1 1/2) mile radius of the project site in 1960, was identified in the Natural Heritage Program Files. This plant, *Arabis Missouriensis* or Green Rock Cress prefers open, grassy, rocky, dry areas.

Due to the migratory patterns and ability to utilize a large range, it is difficult to identify bird species that inhabit the site. For this reason, a list of birds has not been compiled.

TABLE II-D-1

POTENTIAL REPTILES INHABITING PROJECT STUDY AREA

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Species Name</u>
Box Turtle	<u>Terrapene carolina</u>
Wood Turtle	<u>Clemmys insculpta</u>
Spotted Turtle	<u>Clemmys guttata</u>
Common Water Snake	<u>Natrix sipedon</u>
Brown Snake	<u>Storeria dekayi</u>
Common Garter Snake	<u>Thamnophis sirtalis</u>
Eastern Ringneck Snake	<u>Diadophis punctatus</u>
Red-Bellied Snake	<u>Storeria occipitomaculata</u>
Eastern Hognose Snake	<u>Heterodon platyrhinus</u>
Racer	<u>Coluber constrictor</u>
Black Rat Snake	<u>Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta</u>
Stinkpot	<u>Sternotherus odoratus</u>

TABLE II-D-1

POTENTIAL AMPHIBIANS INHABITING PROJECT STUDY AREA

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Species Name</u>
Spotted Salamander	<u>Ambystoma maculatum</u>
Jefferson Salamander	<u>Ambystoma jeffersonianum</u>
Red-Backed Salamander	<u>Plethodon cinereus</u>
Two-Lined Salamander	<u>Eurycea bislineata</u>
Slimy Salamander	<u>Plethodon glutinosus</u>
Newt	<u>Diemictylus viridescens</u>
Bull Frog	<u>Rana catesbeiana</u>
Wood Frog	<u>R. sylvatica</u>
Green Frog	<u>R. pipiens</u>
Spring Peeper	<u>Hyla crucifer</u>
Common American Toad	<u>Bufo terrestris</u>
Pickeral Frog	<u>R. palustris</u>
Gray Treefrog	<u>H. versicolor</u>

TABLE II-D-1

POTENTIAL MAMMALS INHABITING PROJECT STUDY AREA

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Species Name</u>
Eastern Cottontail	<u>Sylvilagus floridanus</u>
Woodchuck	<u>Marmota monax</u>
Eastern Chipmunk	<u>Tamias striatus</u>
Eastern Gray Squirrel	<u>Sciurus carolinensis</u>
Red Squirrel	<u>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</u>
Beaver	<u>Castor canadensis</u>
White Footed Mouse	<u>Peromyscus leucopus</u>
Deer Mouse	<u>P. maniculatus</u>
Meadow Vole	<u>Microtus pennsylvanicus</u>
Eastern Mole	<u>Scalopus aquaticus</u>
Short-Tailed Shrew	<u>Blarina brevicauda</u>
Long-Tailed Weasel	<u>S. dispar</u>
Big Brown Bat	<u>Eptesicus fuscus</u>
Red Bat	<u>Lasiurus borealis</u>
Red Fox	<u>Vulpes fulva</u>
Gray Fox	<u>Urocyon cinerevargentus</u>
Raccoon	<u>Procyon lotor</u>
Striped Skunk	<u>Erethizon dorsatum</u>
Porcupine	<u>Didelphis marsupialis</u>
Opossum	<u>Didelphis marsupialis</u>
White-Tailed Deer	<u>Odocoileus virginianus</u>

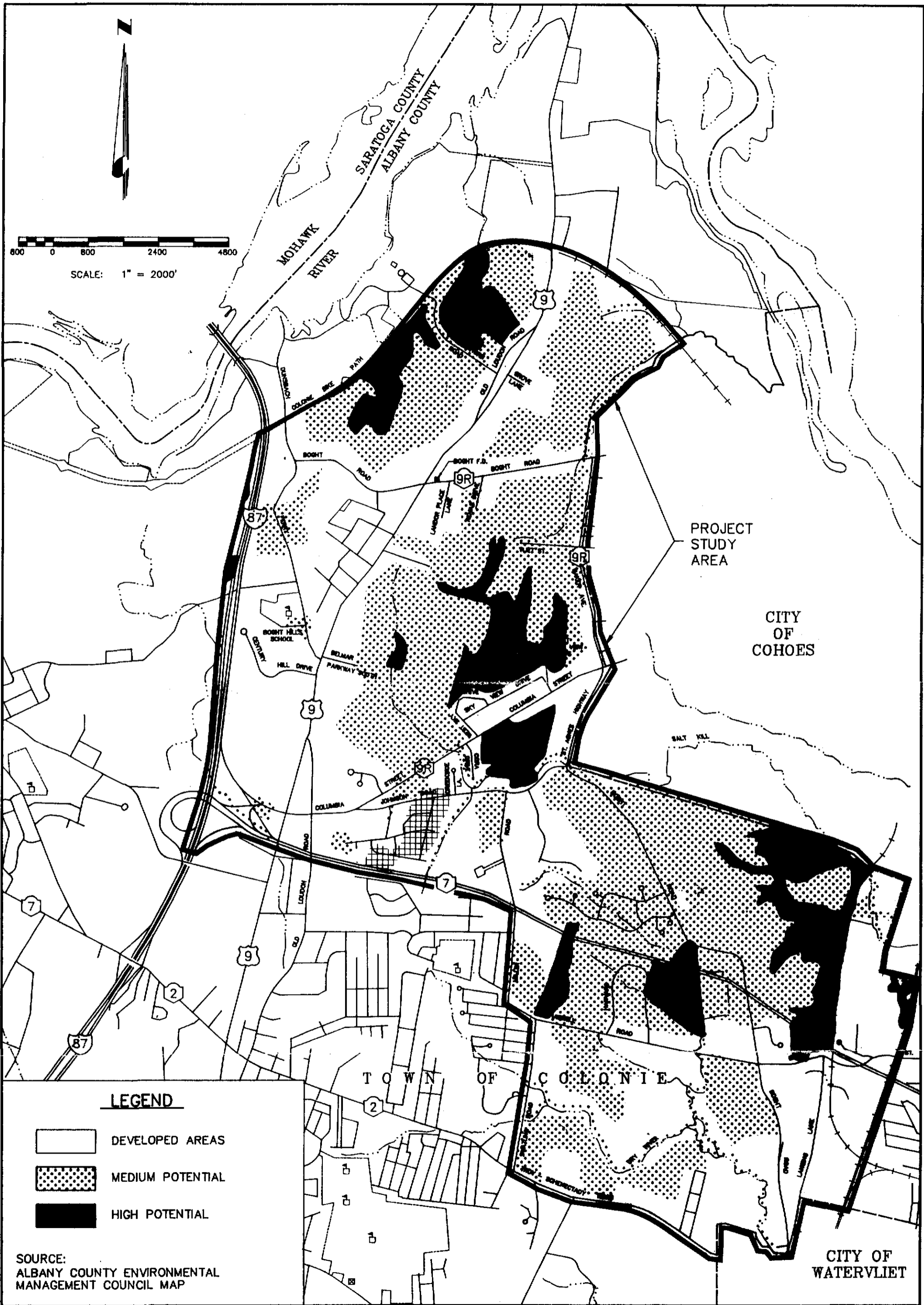
Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Development of any type will have an impact to varying degrees, on both vegetation and wildlife. The removal of natural vegetation and replacement with buildings, roads and landscaped areas will reduce the habitat available for wildlife. These impacts can be mitigated in several ways and are discussed below.

The Town of Colonie Conservation Council has prepared a map which ranks the wildlife potential of the Town (Exhibit II-D-2). The factors considered included the following:

1. Habitat of a unique or endangered species or species rare in New York State (Karner Blue Butterfly, Bog Turtle).
2. Concentrated migration routes (streams used in spawning, migratory waterfowl concentrated areas, ridges used heavily by raptors (birds of prey) in migration).
3. Uncommon landform likely to support unusual fish and wildlife (pine barrens, wilderness areas).

The NYSDEC Wildlife Resources Center has indicated that no rare or endangered animal have been identified in the project study area and based on a review of existing vegetation no unusual habitats have been identified. However, an on-site survey has not been completed within the project study area and the NYSDEC has indicated that these studies may be necessary for the purpose of completing environmental assessments (Appendix 1). As a result in areas the Town deems as having a high wildlife potential according to Exhibit II-D-2, an on-site rare and endangered species study should be required as part of the Town review process.



There has been one (1) reported sighting of the Green Rock Cress, a rare plant identified in the Natural Heritage Program Files. Habitat requirements of the Green Rock Cress, which includes dry areas with bedrock outcroppings and the sighting which occurred nearly thirty (30) years ago make it unlikely that this plant inhabits any portion of the study area. A comparison of the existing land use map with the soils map and aerial photographs indicates that most of the areas that may contain conditions necessary for this plant to survive have been disturbed through present or past agricultural activities.

Methods of protecting and providing for wildlife habitat include Town acquisition of certain parcels, lower density developments along with clustering and other unique site designs in order to maintain as much natural vegetation and topography as possible. Protection can also be given to certain large parcels of land in private ownership in order to maintain open space and wildlife habitat. This may include tax incentives for reduced development rights or transfer of development rights by allowing higher density development in one area and reducing the allowable density in another.

Due to the fact that no rare or endangered plant, animal species or significant habitat aside from the Green Rock Cress discussed above, have been identified in the study area and the requirement for additional studies in sensitive areas, it is unlikely that there will be a significant impact to rare or endangered species. The large amount of development that is expected over the next twenty (20) years will result in reduced availability of habitat and thus reduced wildlife populations. Proper stormwater management, erosion control techniques and the maintenance of as much natural vegetation as practical will mitigate potential problems resulting from removing vegetative cover.