

SCENIC UPLAND PROTECTION



View of the Holyoke Range from Interstate-91

What are the objectives of Scenic Upland Protection?

To protect scenic areas, such as prominent ridge lines, or exceptional vistas, as important resources which contribute to the character and quality of life in a community. To avoid problems of erosion, sedimentation, septic tank failures, flooding, water pollution, and the destruction of scenic qualities or natural resources.

Why do we need Scenic Upland Protection?

The Pioneer Valley is home to the Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke Ranges, the Berkshire Hills, and many other upland areas which contribute significantly to the unique character of the region. These upland areas have outstanding scenic qualities, outdoor recreational opportunities, wildlife resources, unique geologic features, forest resources, biodiversity, historic features, and unique natural and cultural characteristics. These same areas are also commonly the most fragile areas with the least carrying capacity for development due to steep slopes, unstable or poor soils, and inadequate public infrastructure. To avoid problems of erosion, sedimentation, septic tank failures, flooding, water pollution, and the destruction of scenic qualities or natural resources, development must be done with a particular sensitivity to the land in scenic upland areas.

How does Scenic Upland Protection work?

Scenic upland protection zoning bylaws can protect these important resources by regulating alterations to the land which may have significant effects on these natural resources. Scenic district regulations function in a similar manner to site plan review or design review bylaws. All proposed development is scrutinized for potential negative effects on the environment, and on the scenic amenities of the district. The following issues can be addressed in scenic area regulations: 1) alterations to the environment, 2) new residential or commercial development, and 3) incentives for land uses which maintain scenic qualities.

DID YOU KNOW...

Scenic Upland Protection Bylaws have two major objectives: the protection of views and the protection of natural features associated with hillside ecosystems.

("Aesthetics, Community Character, and the Law", American Planning Association)

EXAMPLES FROM THE PIONEER VALLEY



Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke Ranges

In addition to scenic upland protection zoning bylaws, an intergovernmental compact is another way to protect these resources. The Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke Ranges' unique attributes and vital natural resources are key components in defining the region's character and quality of life especially in the Towns of Amherst, Belchertown, Granby, Hadley, and South Hadley, and the Cities of Easthampton and Holyoke. On April 21, 2001, the "Summit on the Range" was held and included participants from throughout the

Pioneer Valley. Participants agreed to work cooperatively toward the protection of the Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke Ranges. Through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the Towns of Amherst, Granby, Hadley, and South Hadley, the cities of Easthampton and Holyoke, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, as well as other signatories to the agreement agreed to work cooperatively to seek protection of the Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke Ranges and their scenic, natural, recreational and historic attributes.

[MODEL RIDGELINE AND HILLSIDE PROTECTION BYLAW](#)