

# Town of Peru, Vermont

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## Inventory of Scenic Resources



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## Scenic Resources of Peru, Vermont

### Introduction

Peru is located high in Vermont's Green Mountains where a unique combination of mountains, streams, forests, meadows, historic buildings, meandering country roads, and sweeping vistas produces a stunning visual landscape. The Town Plan notes that the "clean mountain environment with natural beauty" is a major contributing factor to the quality of life enjoyed by full and part-time residents. A section of the Town Plan is devoted to a discussion of scenic roads, views, and the need to protect important vistas; it goes on to recommend that an inventory and assessment of Peru's scenic resources be completed. The resources identified and illustrated in this report represent an effort to provide such documentation as well as a basis for preserving the scenic values most cherished by townspeople.

A comprehensive inventory of Peru's scenic resources would appear to be an exceptionally difficult undertaking because it is hard to find a part of the town that would not be considered "scenic" by most people. Just as it is not possible to specifically document all of the town's scenery in one report, neither is it possible to capture the beauty of the landscape in every season and in every lighting condition. For that reason, this report will simply provide a context for describing the town's scenic character and will then identify the types of features, or "critical scenic elements," that render the landscape unique and valuable. Photographs of those scenic elements, including familiar vistas as well as more subtle views, will help illustrate those important resources.

Guidelines used in the development of this report were taken largely from Vermont's Scenic Landscapes: A Guide for Growth and Protection, published in 1991 by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Those guidelines provide some common ground for evaluating scenic characteristics and also offer strategies for protecting those resources through effective land use planning and specific non-regulatory approaches. This inventory will assist the town in developing effective regulations, reviewing development proposals, and identifying areas and specific resources that should be the focus of conservation efforts.



Peru is known for its mountain scenery. The view from the summit of Bromley Mountain is enjoyed by hikers and skiers throughout the year.

## Overall Landscape Context

Peru always has been a mountain town, its natural landscapes and pattern of development defined by high elevation, rugged terrain, and deep forests. The first settlers of the town (originally known as Bromley - the name was changed to Peru early in the 19th century), established their homesteads along what is today Hapgood Pond Road, where a combination of gentler terrain, a longer growing season (due to the lower elevation on the east side of town), and access to streams and water power made the area more attractive for farming and commerce.

Because of the limited availability of land suitable for agricultural cultivation, relatively little clearing of forests for cropland occurred, but trees were harvested for charcoal production and the resulting openings used to pasture sheep. The town's remaining cleared meadows, pastures, and fields are among its most valued scenic assets, as they offer some diversity from the predominantly forested landscape and provide access to many outstanding distant views.

Although the population center, and the town's first church, were located near the North Road/Hapgood Pond intersection, by the mid-1840s the focus of activity had shifted to the present day village area where a new church was built across from the Hapgood Store. The main road across southern Vermont passed through Peru Village at this time, and this "turnpike" led many travelers to the town. A prosperous inn and tavern was built along Main Street and it operated well into the 20th Century as the Bromley House. A fire destroyed the structure in 1974, but the foundation and grounds have been preserved as a park, which makes an important contribution to the scenic and historic character of the community.

The turnpike that brought so many travelers through the heart of Peru Village was eventually relocated a short distance to the south; this bypass, completed in 1948, limits traffic volume and truck trips through the village, allowing the Main Street to remain a quiet, narrow roadway, in keeping with the historic character of the area. All of the town and state roads in Peru are important public places, where much of the appreciation of the town's scenic resources occurs. The Town Plan recognizes the importance of maintaining the visual qualities that make the roads and surrounding features, such as stone walls and mature trees, appealing to people passing by, whether on foot, on a bicycle, or in a car.

The Green Mountain National Forest was established in the 1930's, originally consisting of just a couple thousand acres of land in Peru. Over time, this public forest has been greatly expanded and now includes almost three-quarters of the total land area of the town. In addition to preserving the town's forested landscape and helping to safeguard the quality of the area's natural resources, the National Forest has provided additional opportunities for recreation and scenic appreciation through development of the Hapgood Pond Recreation



Peru's landscape is primarily forested; old farm meadows such as this one provide visual diversity, access to views, and a link to the past.





Peru Village is a very important scenic and historic resource as demonstrated by the view toward the crossroads from the site of the old Bromley House.

Area and several hiking trails.

The mountainous landscape of the town always has provided opportunities for recreation, and in the 1930s, a major new recreational activity - alpine skiing - came to the slopes of Bromley Mountain. Lying along the spine of the Green Mountains and with a south-face that slopes from the summit to the base along easily accessible Vermont Route 11, Bromley has become a very popular ski area and the town's most substantial business. Bromley also has dramatically affected the scenic landscape of the town. The cleared ski trails are a distinctive feature from many vantage points in

Peru and in nearby towns, the trails themselves provide clearings that afford spectacular views to skiers and for people who hike or take a chair lift ride up the mountain in the summer and fall months, and development associated with the mountain has affected the visual character of a large area along the Route 11 corridor.

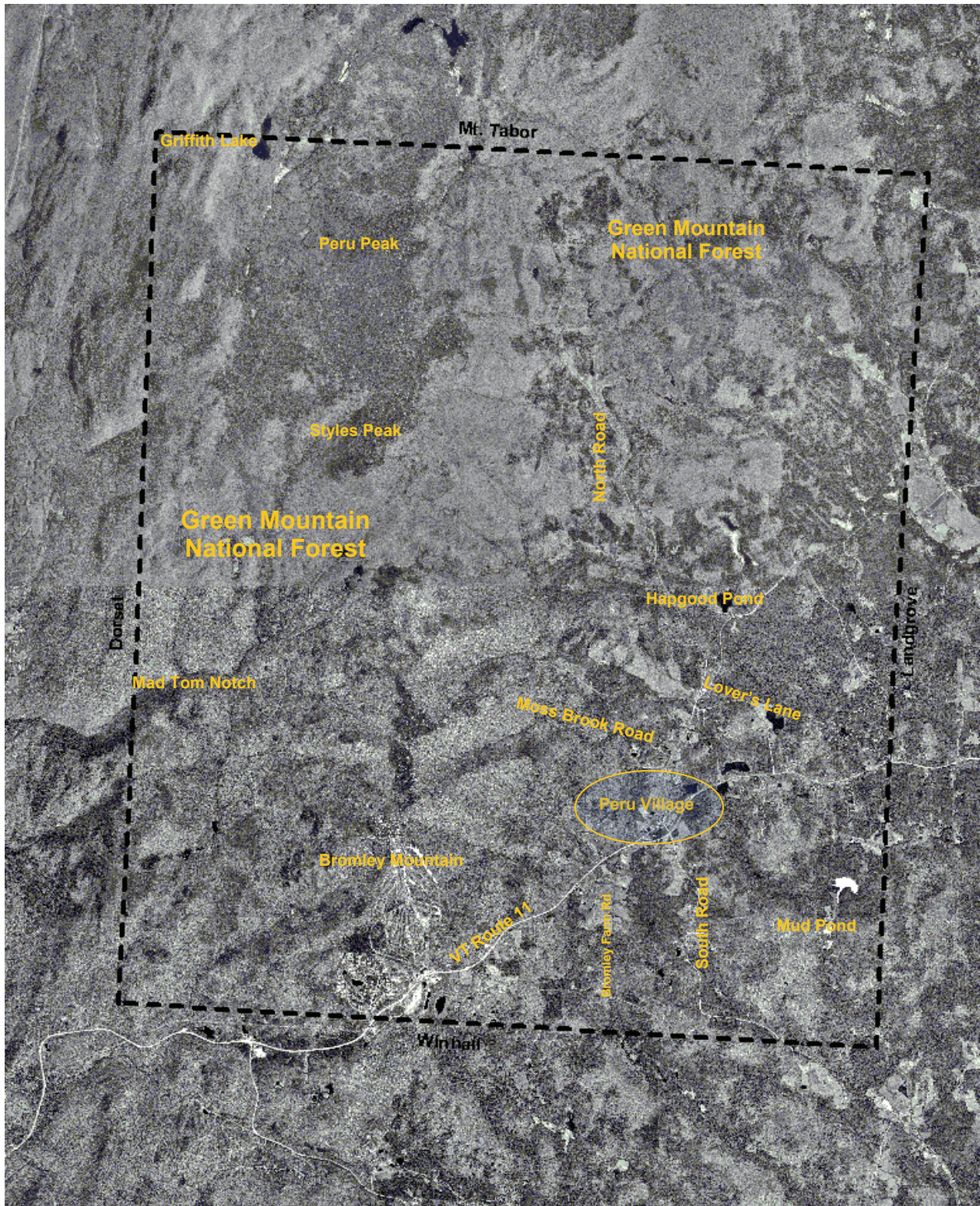
The aerial photo on page 4 shows clearly that the vast majority of Peru is heavily forested. The most substantial clearings are near the base of Bromley Mountain, along Bromley Farm Road, Lover's Lane, South Road, Moss Brook Road, and near Peru Village. The landscape of the town is dominated by the main ridge of the Green Mountains that connects the summits of Bromley Mountain, Styles Peak, and Peru Peak. Most of the mountain flanks are covered by deciduous forest, with conifers more prevalent at higher elevations near the ridge lines. Areas of coniferous forest also are found in the eastern and southern parts of town where soil conditions are more suitable for such species.

With much of the town draped over the crest of a mountain range, streams and waterbodies tend to be rather small, but are important historically to the quality of the environment and the rural landscape. Many headwater streams originate in Peru, those flowing to the west enter the Hudson River drainage and those flowing east the Connecticut River drainage. A number of small ponds and impoundments add a great deal of interest to the landscape; most notable are Griffith Lake, Mud Pond, Hapgood Pond, and a series of small ponds east of the Village along Route 11 and Lover's Lane.



Bromley Mountain is one of Peru's iconic landmarks; the ski trails on the mountain provide a scenic backdrop to this view from Winhall.





Peru's scenic character is shaped by its unique geography. It lies high in the Green Mountains, with the main ridge of that range running north-south through the eastern third of the town. The high elevation and steep slopes have limited development and agricultural uses while supporting a northern mixed hardwood-softwood forest, many small streams and ponds, and pockets of clearing and building that provide open views and interest to the pristine natural setting. The mountainous landscape also attracted recreational development, including the prominent ski area on the south-facing slope of Bromley Mountain.



## Critical Scenic Elements

Many individual factors come together to create Peru's unique and special visual landscapes. An appreciation of those scenic elements provides an improved understanding of each view and helps determine how to best protect those resources.

From its mountains to its historic village center, Peru contains such a rich variety of natural and cultural landscapes that efforts to distill them into specific elements can seem all but impossible. Scenic views that are widely appreciated do have a number of common elements, however, although not all may be present in every view and some many dominate more in some views than in others.



Distinct scenic elements combine to produce Peru's unique landscapes, such as the pond, fence, meadow, and wooded backdrop in this view from South Road.

The Town Plan identifies some of the scenic elements that are particularly important to residents. Those resources include open fields, distant vistas, historic sites, and scenic roads. Because of the mountain ridge and summits that dominate the town's eastern side, and the importance of mountains to so many viewsheds, this report includes a section dedicated to those landscape features. The forests that cover much of the town may seem visually monotonous, but they are the context in which almost every view in Peru exists, and also contain endless fascinating views when traversed on roads or trails. The Appalachian/Long Trail (AT/LT) as well as the Catamount Trail and several maintained trails in the Green Mountain National Forest are also discussed in that section. The views from the ski trails on Bromley Mountain and from the summit of the mountain are included as a special element in the section on Open Fields and Vistas. Finally, the streams, ponds, and wetlands in Peru offer special visual interest as well as access to more expansive views of complementary scenic elements such as forests, mountains, and features of the built environment.

A section on aspects of "visual quality" will illustrate how the various individual scenic elements work together to enhance scenery by providing contrast, order and harmony, focal points, and overall spatial quality and intactness.



The rugged topography of the southern Green Mountains provides the framework for Peru's scenic landscapes. The mountains form an unbroken high ridgeline that runs north to south through the entire eastern part of the town. This feature forms a dramatic backdrop for many of the scenic views in Peru, including those from the Route 11 corridor and from the isolated valleys found along the streams that flow eastward out of the mountains. There also are many lofty viewpoints on the

mountains, accessible by trail or ski lift, that provide dramatic panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. Even the more developed areas of Peru are at relatively high elevations on the lower slopes of the mountain range.

This mountainous landscape affects the climate and the types of vegetation that are predominant in the area. Many plant species that are more common in lowland areas hundreds of miles to the north are abundant in Peru, especially on the mountain slopes and around unique habitats surrounding wetlands, bogs, and headwater streams.

From south to north, the prominent mountain summits in Peru are: Bromley Mountain, Styles Peak, and Peru Peak. Bromley Mountain and Styles Peak are separated by Mad Tom Notch, while Styles Peak and Peru Peak are distinct summits rising from a single uninterrupted ridge. Because of its distinctive shape and its location relative to many of the valleys in the northern half of town, Styles Peak is a particularly significant landmark and a key component of Peru's mountain landscape. Both Styles Peak and Peru Peak lie entirely within the Green Mountain National Forest and are completely covered by trees. The views presented by the mountains are far from static, however, changing from season to season and appearing very different from morning to afternoon. The mountainsides are light green as the first leaf buds appear in spring, a deep verdant green in the summer, a blaze of reds, oranges, and yellows in the fall, and finally white when winter snows blanket their slopes.

Many people identify Peru with Bromley Mountain which rises dramatically from the north side of Route 11 near the town's southern boundary. Bromley is also notable, of course, for the ski area that sits at its base and the network of alpine trails that crisscross the southern face of the mountain. Views of the mountain itself are somewhat limited from Peru because it is located so near the southern edge of the town and because a series of hills and forestland block views to it from the valleys to the north and east.



Bromley Mountain an important scenic, recreational, and economic asset. Its icy slopes reflect the late winter sun in this view from the adjacent condominium development.

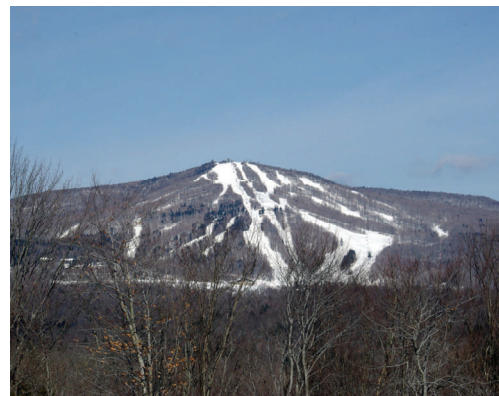


There are a number of important views of the mountain from Route 11, the slope side residential development above Route 11, and from some of the roads and open fields south of the highway. The summit also can be viewed from several locations in Manchester, across the valley on and near Route 30 in Winhall, and from the nearby ski slopes on Stratton Mountain and Magic Mountain.

A broad forested valley separates Bromley Mountain in Peru, Stratton Mountain in Winhall, and Magic Mountain in Londonderry. Stunning views across this valley can be obtained from numerous points in Peru, with Magic or Stratton the most prominent landscape feature in a sweeping vista of forests and mountains. Views of these distant peaks are an important aspect of the town's mountain character and the ski slopes visible from Peru, and from the Bromley Ski Area, contribute strongly to the sense of the area as a beautiful winter resort.



Styles Peak is an important background element in many of Peru's rural landscapes.



The Bromley Ski Area is prominently visible when approaching Peru from the east on Route 30.



The view from the summit of Styles Peak opens to the east, over the town of Landgrove and to the eastern peaks in the Green Mountains. Trees have begun to grow up and obscure the view to the valley; some clearing by the US Forest Service would enhance this view.





Three views of Magic Mountain, clockwise from top left: as seen from the ski slopes on Bromley Mountain, from a field on Bradford Road, and from the end of Priest Lane.



The view north from the summit of Bromley Mountain includes Styles Peak (center) and distant peaks of the Green Mountain Range.





The Stratton Mountain ski area is prominent from many locations both on Bromley Mountain and from Route 11 and town roads south of that highway.





The view of Mount Equinox, the Taconic Mountain Range, and the Valley of Vermont from the summit of Bromley make it a popular hiking destination and is appreciated by skiers in the winter.



People have been modifying the landscape, and thus the scenery, of Peru for well over 200 years. The houses, barns, churches, stores, stone walls, and other structures that have been built complement the town's natural beauty and add historical character and scenic contrast to the community.

Peru Village is an especially important component of the town's scenic and historic character. A number of designated historic buildings are found in the village center, including a church, store,

houses, and associated structures. The architecture reflects styles and patterns dating back over 150 years and the tight clustering of buildings around the crossroads, combined with attractive street trees and landscaping, gives a feeling of a traditional New England village. Route 11 bypasses the village to the south, so the streetscape remains quiet and at a human scale. The site where the Bromley House tavern stood until it burned in the 1970s has been preserved by the town and serves as an important green space at the east end of the Main Street. This small park incorporates portions of the foundation of the original building, preserving a special part of the town's heritage. Attractive residences and the town hall sit at the west end of the village.

Houses, barns, and other evidence of human habitation and use are found throughout the town, lying primarily along the narrow roads that follow stream channels into the many small valleys that reach toward the base of the mountains. The stone walls and fields (featured in a separate section of this report) in these areas are evidence of past and current agricultural use. Many of the old farmhouses that were built near these areas still stand, often having been enlarged and refurbished several times over the years. Other parts of the built environment that are significant in Peru include cemeteries, old roadbeds, dams and ponds, and the many newer homes that have been built in scenic locations. Of course, the growth of the Bromley Ski Area has had a dramatic impact on the scenic character of a wide area. That development includes both the buildings on and around the mountain as well as the ski trails themselves.



Peru Village contains a number of important historic and cultural sites including a church and historic homes (top of page), the town hall, a marker commemorating a Revolutionary war encampment, and the Hapgood Store.





This historic house and barn sit high on a clearing north of Moss Brook Road.



Curving stone walls line many roads and fields around Peru.



Several historic cemeteries exist in Peru, including this one behind the town hall.



Barns and other agricultural outbuildings are part of the past, and present, working landscape of the town.



The birch and apple trees in this field are part of a the town's human-influenced rural character.





Clockwise from top: Site of the former Bromley House tavern, roadside wild-flower plantings enhance many rural streetscapes, construction of new homes leads to an evolution of the landscape throughout town, the Bromley Ski Area has created unique views of the mountain and from the mountain.







This green space in the village center is an important scenic and historic part of Peru.





### Forests and Trails

Virtually every scenic view in Peru includes, in whole or in part, a large area of forest. The town's rugged topography always has been more suited for growing trees than anything else, and the Green Mountain National Forest has expanded from a few hundred acres near Hapgood Pond to cover over 400,000 acres in Vermont - and well over half of the land area of Peru. Although it is the forested mountainsides and the colorful lowland woodlots that are appreciated every day by passersby on local roadways, a number of trails lead deep into the forests to

allow a more intimate view of this wild landscape. A variety of forest types present themselves depending on one's elevation and aspect, some dominated by northern hardwood species such as sugar maple, black and yellow birch, and beech, other areas by white pine, spruce, or eastern hemlock. As interesting as the trees are the diversity of flowers, mosses, ferns, and other herbaceous plants that live in their shadows, the animals that thrive among them, and the small natural clearings along streams, ponds, and wetlands.

Principal trails include the Appalachian/Long Trail (AT/LT), the Catamount cross country ski trail, the Griffith Lake Trail, the Little Michigan and Utley Brook Trails, and the network of trails maintained by the Wild Wings cross country ski center. The AT/LT climbs to the summit of Bromley Mountain from a trailhead off Route 11 in Winhall, then drops into Mad Tom Notch before ascending to the summit of Styles Peak and continuing on over Peru Peak to Griffith Lake, where it meets the Griffith Lake trail (and old road bed offering a fairly level access to this remote lake in the town's northwest corner). Like the Long Trail, the Catamount ski trail runs the length of Vermont, traversing the southeastern corner of Peru and providing access to the unique ecological area around Mud Pond. The Little Michigan and Utley Brook trails are maintained by the United States Forest Service and, together with the Wild Wings trail system, provide an expansive network of footpaths between Styles Peak and the neighboring town of Landgrove.

Whether a roadside vista across the valley toward Stratton and Magic, the panoramas seen from the summits of Bromley or Styles, or a pristine view of a stand of black spruce trees at the edge of a remote wetland, the forests are a fundamental part of Peru's scenic appeal. Moreover, the town's early history is connected to its forests, with many early settlers engaged in logging and charcoal production. This historical connection to the forest continues today with the multiple use management of the Green Mountain National Forest providing opportunities for recreation, wildlife habitat enhancement, and timber management.



The Peru Peak shelter is located on the AT/LT near Griffith Lake.





A beaver lodge sits at the edge of Mud Pond in a heavily forested area of Peru accessed from the Catamount Trail.



Colorful foliage against a bright blue sky adds vibrancy to the landscape every fall.





A hike along one of Peru's many forest trails provides access to an endless variety of plants and micro-landscapes that can only be appreciated from this intimate perspective.





This wetland creates an opening in the forest along the Griffith Lake Trail.





The summit view from Bromley is pleasant, even on a foggy day.



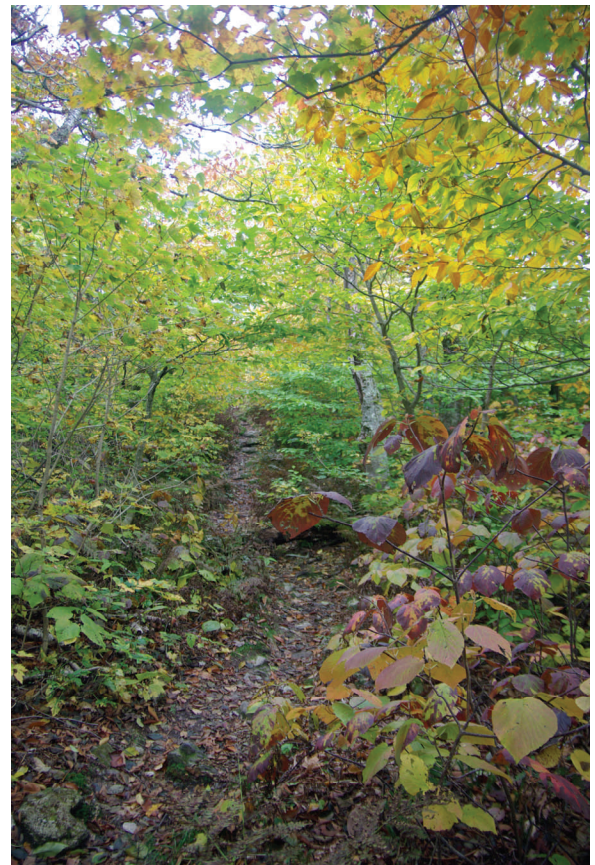
The Catamount trail runs the length of Vermont and provides access to Mud Pond in Peru.



Long boardwalk on the AT/LT near Griffith Lake.



Old stone walls deep in the forest tell of days when the surrounding land was cleared for pasture.



Cool fall days are ideal for enjoying a hike along the AT/LT; this portion is located on the north side of Bromley Mountain.



The Town Plan specifically identifies Peru's fields, meadows, and pastures as important resources and recommends that they be inventoried and their scenic assets protected. Although Peru's land cover always has been primarily forest, in earlier days considerable land was cleared for raising crops, grazing, and to provide wood for fuel, charcoal, and building. Most openings in the forest cover today are found in the valley areas east of Bromley and Styles and adjacent to and south of the Route 11 corridor.



Of course, the ski trails on Bromley Mountain and the recreational areas at Hapgood Pond are maintained for different purposes, but provide many of the same aesthetic benefits. All of these open areas have an intrinsic appeal and open breaks in the predominant forest cover yield access to other scenic elements.

The area's agricultural heritage is important to both residents and tourists. As a mountain town, the small farms, scattered fields, and barns are especially striking set amidst the dense forests and steep hillsides. These open areas offer a strong visual reminder of this aspect of the working landscape while at the same time providing visual diversity and affording access from public roadways to views of mountains, valleys, settlements, and other important features that would otherwise lie concealed behind forests.

Some of the fields seen in Peru today are part of active farming operations and others are maintained by residential landowners. They may be cultivated, grazed, or just regularly mowed to keep them open.

The nature of a scenic view that includes a field is determined by factors such as the size of the opening and how closely it relates to nearby or distant landscape features. A field may be small and closely integrated with surrounding features such as woods, wildflowers, stone walls, and farmsteads. Some large fields, on the other hand, may provide a broad open foreground for a view that draws the observer's eyes to distant hills, mountains, or valleys.



Several large fields south of Route 11 offer expansive views such as this winter scene on South Road and the rolling greenery on Bromley Farm Road.



The town has afforded some special recognition and protection to the corridor along Route 11. The scenery in this part of town includes views across fields that are adjacent to the state highway as well as views of and over fields that lie along the town roads that intersect it. Particularly notable are the sweeping vistas across the large fields along Bromley Farm Road, the stunning view toward Stratton Mountain from Old Manchester Road, the pastoral fields on either side of South Road, the distant view of Magic Mountain from a field on Bradford Road, and the varied views from Route 11 itself.

The old farm fields around the Batchelder Farm in the Moss Brook Valley are impressive when viewed from Hapgood Pond Road or from Moss Brook Road. This quintessential Vermont scene incorporates a rushing mountain stream in the foreground and the old farmstead near the top of grass and wildflower covered rolling hills, all set against the backdrop of Styles Peak. Other maintained fields further up the valley offer outstanding views to the north and east.

Some of the best views in the northern part of Peru are obtained from fields lying on high ground along North Road and Priest Lane. A small clearing maintained by the Forest Service along Griffith Lake Road in the northwestern part of Peru allows travelers on that remote road some outstanding views over the Valley of Vermont from the steep western edge of the Green Mountain Range.

Bromley Mountain operates as a summer and winter recreation area, and the views obtained from the alpine ski trails that rise dramatically from the base along Route 11 are breathtaking. The view southward from the lower slopes is excellent and as one moves up toward the summit, the views east and west begin to become more and more exposed. The 360 degree views from the exposed summit and the viewing platform there are among the best in southern Vermont. The other large recreation site in town is at Hapgood Pond, maintained by the Green Mountain National Forest. The open area at and around the pond provides a lovely setting throughout the year.



Open fields on high ground in the northern part of town offer distant views to the south.





Several large fields (top four photos) are located along Moss Brook Road, between Hapgood Pond Road and the base of the mountains. The Hapgood Pond Recreation Area is located further north and east along the road; it is shown looking over the frozen pond and snow-covered fields in the quiet of winter.





Open fields and pastures along North Road and Priest Lane look out over nearby forested hillsides and distant mountain peaks.



The panoramic views from the Bromley ski trails can be enjoyed year-round.





This vista is seen from a maintained clearing along Griffith Lake Road.

Stratton Mountain can be seen over this field along Old Manchester Road.



Open fields along Route 11 provide variety to the forested landscape and reveal many striking views.





Late afternoon at a quiet field along South Road.



Looking northwest from the clearing at the summit of Bromley Mountain.





There is no single large body of water in Peru that is a dominant landscape feature, but streams, ponds, and wetlands are found throughout the town and play a key role in defining its scenic character. Like most scenic resources in Peru, water features tend to be primarily part of rural or even wild forest landscapes. Because waterways historically guided and influenced development, however, these features also are critical elements in views of the built environment as well.

Most surface water in Peru originates high in the Green Mountains, flowing in a series of cascading mountain streams to and through progressively wider valleys. Although several of the streams intersect in the low-lying land north and south of the village center, no principal stream corridor ever appears in Peru. The West River is closest such stream; it is formed from tributary streams in Peru and surrounding towns and is generally recognized as beginning in Londonderry.

Mad Tom Brook and Little Mad Tom Brook drain the west side of Bromley Mountain and Styles Peak and flow through Mad Tom Notch toward East Dorset and the Batten Kill, a part of the Hudson River drainage basin. Several small streams flow from the west side of Peru Peak and slowly flow northward through a complex of connected wetlands to Griffith Lake in the extreme northwest corner of the town. All of the other streams in town flow east and south to join Utley Brook and the West River on its way to the Connecticut River. Some of the larger of these east-flowing streams are Jones Brook, Styles Brook, Flood Brook, Farnum Brook, and Cook Brook.

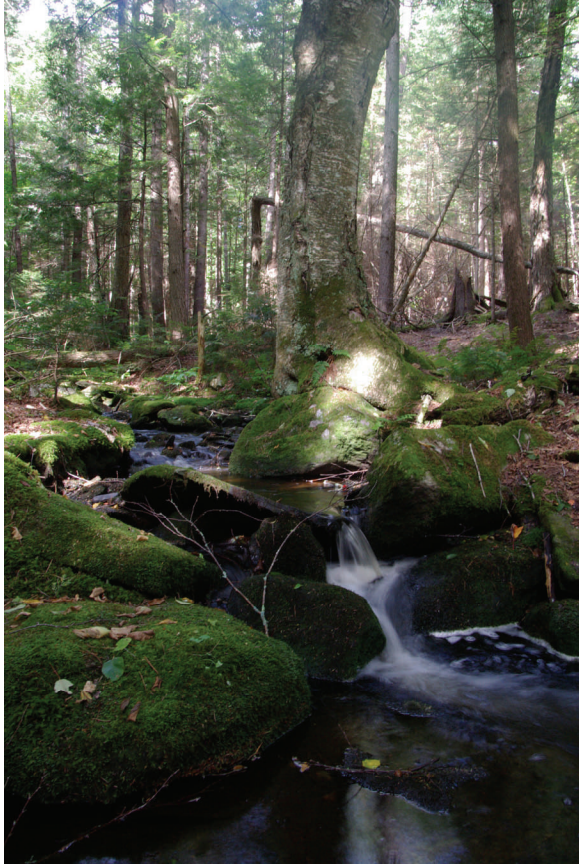
Several of the streams flow into natural or man-made ponds that present some of the finest scenery in Peru. These small ponds nestled into the rolling hills near the center of town can be viewed from locations along public roads and from private homes and lawns that look over them. Three such ponds are prominently visible from Route 11 east of the center of town and a particularly large and scenic pond is located just east of Lover's Lane. Many smaller ponds are found throughout the town, along roads, deep in the woods, and in residential yards.

Three large and important waterbodies are located in the Green Mountain National Forest. Hapgood Pond is formed by a dam on Flood Brook and is at the center of a camping and picnic area maintained by the Green Mountain National Forest. Because it is so easily accessible and a popular summer camping and recreation site, the views of the pond and surrounding mountains are enjoyed by a large number of people. Griffith Lake is a relatively large waterbody, crossing the town line into Mount Tabor, and located at the junction of



Cattails on the shore of a pond near Lover's Lane.





The Catamount Trail crosses this small stream just below Mud Pond.

the AT/LT and the Griffith Lake trail. It is located at an elevation of approximately 2500 feet above sea level and, consequently, sits at the center of a typically northern ecosystem. Mud Pond is Peru's other large waterbody located within the Green Mountain National Forest. It can be accessed from the Catamount Trail and sits in a bowl surrounded by low ridges and hills. The southern part of the pond is shallow and contains a variety of northern wetland and bog species such as sphagnum moss, pitcher plants, and cotton grass. Beaver, waterfowl, deer, moose, and many other animals are often viewed in and around the pond.

The wetlands that lie along Lake Brook near Griffith Lake and the typically wetland portion of Mud Pond have been noted, and there are numerous other small and large wetlands around Peru. These areas are important for their scenic attributes as well as for the wildlife habitat and water quality benefits they provide. A particularly scenic wetland is located north of Hapgood Pond Road, just west of the Landgrove town line, and another is located along the Little Michigan Trail in Peru's northeastern corner.



In the southeastern corner of Peru, Mud Pond supports unique aquatic and related terrestrial ecosystems.



Overlooking one of several scenic ponds from Route 11.





One of the principal streams draining the western slopes of the Green Mountains in Peru.



Griffith Lake is a high elevation lake located in Peru's northwest corner.



Wetlands provide water quality and wildlife benefits in addition to their scenic values.



This small waterfall is located along the AT/LT near the Peru Peak Shelter.





One of several large ponds near the village center.



A large wetland along Hapgood Pond Road; note Styles Peak in the distance.



Open fields and wooded hillsides surround this large pond located off Lover's Lane.



A small pond at a residence on Moss Brook Road.



Attractive pond behind a residence near the Town Hall.





Styles Brook (top), Flood Brook (lower right), and an unnamed stream along North Road all flow eastward from the slopes of Styles Peak.





Aquatic plants in the shallow waters of Mud Pond, along the Catamount Trail.





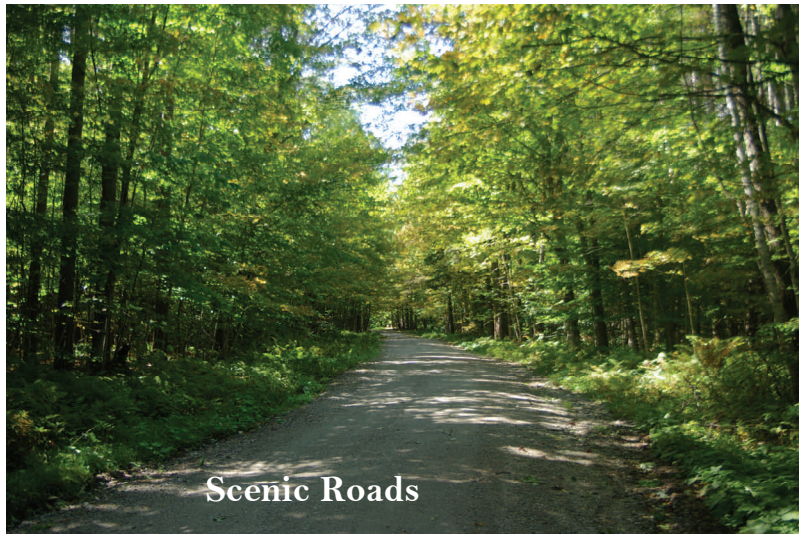
Pitcher plants and sphagnum moss grow along the shore of Mud Pond.



A winter scene at Hapgood Pond.



A town is most often viewed from its public places, and the most visited public places in a community are its roads. As such, public highways are extremely important to a town's overall scenic character. Roads can be scenic features in and of themselves. A winding country lane lined by a stone wall or a village street running under a canopy of trees are distinctive scenic elements. Roadways also provide visual access to scenic views; indeed, many of the photographs displayed in this report were taken from the side of a public road. It can be argued that most roads in Peru have significant scenic qualities. Instead of attempting to list all of the scenic roads or road segments, however, this section will provide examples of elements that contribute to a road's scenic qualities.



Roadways that are not overly wide and which blend harmoniously with the surrounding countryside are more scenic than wide roads that don't follow natural or historic features of the landscape. Most segments of roads in Peru fit this description. Landscape features that are adjacent to a roadway become a part of the road corridor; without stone walls, fence lines, trees, and similar elements the overall scenic value of a road can be significantly diminished. Some scenic roads also draw the traveler's eye along the centerline of the road to a unique view or distinctive landscape feature in the distance.

Of course, the views from roadsides are just as important as the scenic character of the road itself. Some local roads offer delightful forays into deep forests while others bring motorists, bicyclists, and other travelers to views of fields, farms, mountains, or historic buildings. In these instances, scenic viewpoints should be open to the principal view and not blocked or disrupted by incompatible structures or other objects in the foreground. At the same time, attractive foreground structures can greatly enhance roadside views.

The importance of the viewshed along Route 11 is emphasized in the Town Plan and elsewhere in this report. This roadway is the only state highway in Peru, and approximates the alignment of one of the earliest roads running across the Green Mountains. The Plan and Zoning Bylaws contain provisions that control the appearance of new development along the highway to protect the quality of the scenic resources. It also is important to ensure that state funded highway projects maintain scenic quality by limiting the extent of vegetation clearing and by utilizing appropriate guardrails, signs, and other features.



Vista from Route 11 near the base of Bromley Mountain.

Hapgood Pond Road and the village Main Street are the only paved roads in town, and those are relatively





Hapgood Pond Road is the most heavily traveled local roadway in Peru, providing access to local residences, a National Forest recreation area, and to adjacent towns. The road is bordered by attractive trees, lawns, and views.



narrow, winding, and rural in character. Main Street, for example, blends very nicely with the mature trees and historic buildings in the village center. The entry points to Main Street from near Route 11 also serve as important “gateways,” visually signaling that the traveler is entering a distinctly different and important place. Hapgood Pond Road serves as a significant connecting highway between Route 11, the Hapgood Pond Recreation Area, and the towns of Landgrove and Weston. As such it is fairly heavily traveled, but retains its rural character as it passes by historic homes, groves of trees, and occasional distant views.

The remaining roads in Peru are narrow gravel and dirt highways that often lead past old farmsteads or settlements along streams in isolated valleys or climb along a hillside or low ridgeline. Nearly all of these roads come to a dead end in the forest; only Lover’s Lane provides a connection between two other roads: Route 11 and Hapgood Pond Road. Each of these roads, therefore, has its own unique character as it provides access to a relatively small and distinct area.



Fall foliage along Lover’s Lane, east of the village center.





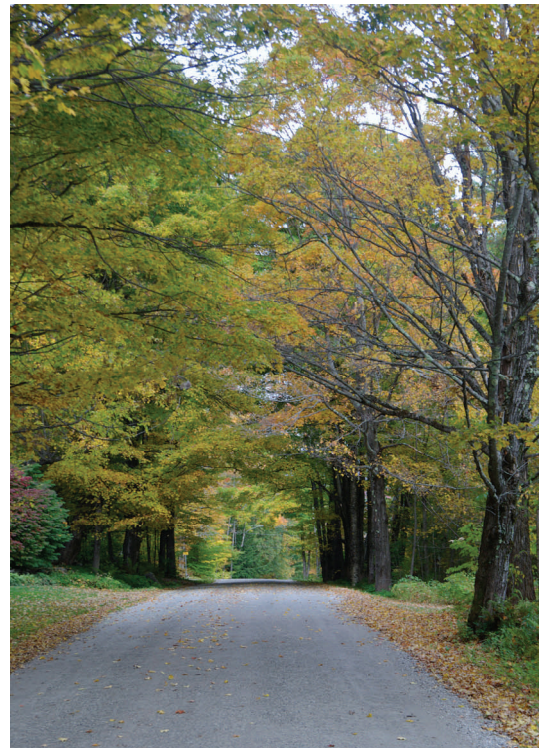
Doc Farnum road is one of several short local roads that pass through old farmland on their approach to the base of the Green Mountains.



This view from Savage Road is typical of the distant views that can be obtained from relatively high ground along many local roads.



Griffith Lake Road is maintained by the Forest Service; it provides access to a trailhead near the westernmost ridgeline of the Green Mountains.



North Road is at the heart of the minor network of local roads leading north from the center of town; it is covered by a canopy of trees for most of its length.





Landscape features such as stone walls and mature trees are important components of a road's scenic character.



Small signs mark the entry points, or "gateways," to Peru village. These locations are important in that they give the traveler a sense of arrival at a unique destination.





Understanding the visual qualities that make one view more attractive than others will help in subsequent efforts to preserve and enhance the town's scenic resources. The publication, Vermont's Scenic Landscapes: A Guide for Growth and Protection, identifies several specific attributes that make landscapes distinctive and appealing. Many of those features are displayed earlier in this report. In this section, scenic views will be presented that illustrate those qualities in the context of Peru's overall scenic character.

**Landscape contrast** refers to the natural visual contrast between different elements in a view. Many rural and undeveloped areas of town have contrasting types of vegetation or a mix of distinct foreground, middle distance, and background landscape features. Water creates a vivid contrast in any landscape, as do other natural features such as rock outcrops, wildflowers, or stands of a single tree species. In areas with man-made features the contrast between structures and natural features, either in the background or as integrated landscape elements, can create pleasing visual effects.

While contrasting elements add interest to many scenes, it is important that the built environment retain a certain **order and harmony**. A clear distinction between developed areas and open countryside helps promote this sense and is a defining characteristic of Vermont. Scenic qualities are enhanced in built environments when structures and other introduced elements are sited in an orderly fashion, with architecturally related structures organized in traditional development patterns. Rural buildings, structures, and planned landscaping are more pleasing to look at when they are sited in a manner that subtly complements the surrounding natural environment.

Visual **focal points** can add meaning and even dramatic effect to a scene. Important buildings or prominent natural features can serve as focal points, drawing attention through a wider scene to that particular point. In a rural setting, a distant mountain peak or a distinctive structure can add important context to a scene that is otherwise quite ordinary.

Scenic views are enhanced by **spatial quality** that includes contrasting elements which frame or define a view. An open space such as field or a view over a valley is more attractive when framed by contrasting elements such as a stonewall, wildflowers, or mature trees. Distant landforms such as mountains also can serve to frame a scene. Buildings or mature trees can enhance spatial quality in village settings.

A landscape that has preserved its natural pattern and/or traditional architectural forms can be considered to be visually **intact**. A historic farmstead set against a background of hills and fields, with no intrusive modern buildings, has retained its character and is visually pleasing. A new building or clearing set on a hillside or ridgeline in a manner that dramatically alters the natural character of the viewshed would significantly diminish its scenic quality.





Snow-covered fields and a bright sky contrast with the dark tree line in this view of Bromley Mountain from South Road.



A variety of landscape elements: grass, water, mixed forest cover, and sky create pleasing contrast for travelers along Lover's Lane.



Remnants of a stone wall in a pasture provides a dramatic contrast with deep green grass and trees and a vivid blue sky.



The sharp well-defined edges of buildings and distinctive paint colors can create strong contrast in rural landscapes.



The still waters of Mud Pond create and enhance contrast by reflecting the sky and surrounding vegetation.





A rustic barn set into the edge of this open area along Hapgood Pond Road adds a sense of order and harmony to the scene.



The landscaped portion of the Hapgood Pond Recreation Area includes trees and lawns that blend harmoniously with the surrounding natural environment.



Linear stone walls and rows of tombstones present a sense of order at the cemetery alongside North Road.



The historic church, general store, and other buildings in the village center contribute a strong sense of order and harmony to Peru's civic center.



Many homes in Peru, like this one in the village center area, complement the natural environment .





The pond, trees, and house draw the viewer's eye toward Styles Peak, which serves as a natural focal point.



Magic Mountain is a broad focal point for many views, especially along and near Route 11.



A single prominent tree can focus a view across an open field.



This fence line draws attention along its linear course, serving to focus the view along the length of the field.



Stratton Mountain's conical shape is an important focal point for many vistas in Peru.



An important civic building such as the church in the village center can be a focal point for scenes such as this one.





Contrasting types of vegetation provide spatial quality to this view.



Water framed by white birch trees enhance this view in the Moss Brook valley.



Spatial quality is promoted through the juxtaposition of stones, trees, and the distant mountain and sky.





The character of Peru's rural and mountain landscape has remained largely intact.



With the exception of Bromley Mountain's classic ski slopes, the forests and mountain scenery of Peru remain largely undisturbed when seen from important viewpoints (left photo). The photo on the right (not in Peru) shows how a poorly planned new house lot on a hillside can destroy the intactness of a scene and degrade visual quality.



## Protecting Scenic Resources

The scenic quality of a landscape can be affected, positively or negatively, by change. Removing an architecturally incompatible building from a historic district, adding attractive landscaping to a property, or clearing a view to an important focal point are examples of actions that can enhance the visual quality of a landscape. On the other hand, construction of an incompatible building in the center of a natural or historic landscape or erection of a new power line across a scenic vista can adversely affect an important resource. A number of land use planning tools are available that can help the town protect and enhance its scenic resources.

Prior to reviewing these planning tools, it is important to note the features that render some existing scenic resources vulnerable to negative change. Attributes that make a landscape especially sensitive to change include:

- Views across open fields, especially when those fields form an important foreground.
- Prominent ridgelines or hillsides that can be seen from many public vantage points and thus form a natural backdrop for many landscapes.
- Historic buildings and districts and gateways to historic districts.
- Scenes that include important contrasting elements such as water.

The town should consider the presence of identified critical elements and the overall visual quality of any landscape when assessing appropriate protection strategies.

Peru's **comprehensive plan and zoning regulations** limit development in outlying areas and encourage development near the village center and the ski area at the base of Bromley Mountain. The effect of such land use planning will be retention of a rural landscape surrounding these historic and relatively densely developed areas. This development pattern enhances scenic character by defining a clear line between village and rural areas, thus reducing the adverse consequences of unsightly sprawl and promoting natural gateways to the town's center.

The town's zoning regulations also contain a provision requiring **planned residential development** in certain outlying rural zones. New subdivisions in these areas must be planned with building locations and infrastructure sited so as to minimize the loss of open meadows and degradation of scenic values. Locating buildings and paved surfaces at the edge of fields or in wooded areas can protect important vistas for the public and for owners of the newly developed property. The regulations are flexible enough to allow creative lot layouts to ensure protection of these important resources.

The town also has designated prominent hilltops and ridgelines to receive special protection under the zoning bylaw's **ridgeline protection** provisions. In these particularly sensitive areas (some municipalities also include prominently visible hillsides) developers can be required to site buildings and roads in a manner that minimizes the disruption of the natural appearance of that landform. Peru's regulations don't allow disturbance of the natural appearance of these ridgeline areas, and places limits on removal of natural vegetation and the location and appearance of structures.

Peru also has established **historic district regulations** to maintain and enhance the character of the village center. Historic preservation and community development grants can be accessed to help maintain and re-use historic structures.

Particular attention should be paid to important **scenic highway corridors**, and Peru has adopted regulations that control the appearance of new development along Route 11 by restricting driveway access locations, mandating front yard greenbelts, and by encouraging



land conservation. The town also utilizes **sign standards** to control the number, size, and lighting of signs in commercial areas along the highway.

Local and state **environmental regulations** limit encroachment on rivers, streams, and wetlands. Protecting these valuable waters from incompatible development also preserves visual access to the resources.

Of course, it is neither possible nor appropriate to rely on local and state regulations to protect all of a town's scenic resources. In many areas, it may be necessary to acquire **conservation easements** to prevent or strictly control development of an area. These easements are purchased from, or donated by, the landowner and are usually held by a conservation organization such as the Vermont Land Trust. Land also can be **purchased in fee simple**; of course, this is how most of the land has been added to the Green Mountain National Forest.

**Scenic easements** can be acquired, much like conservation easements, but are designed specifically to protect a particular view. Development may be precluded from land covered by a scenic easement or the location and size of buildings may be clearly delineated to ensure that incompatible development does not intrude on an important view. The Transportation Enhancements program, administered by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, provides funding for many types of projects, including acquisition of scenic easements for critically important views from public highways.

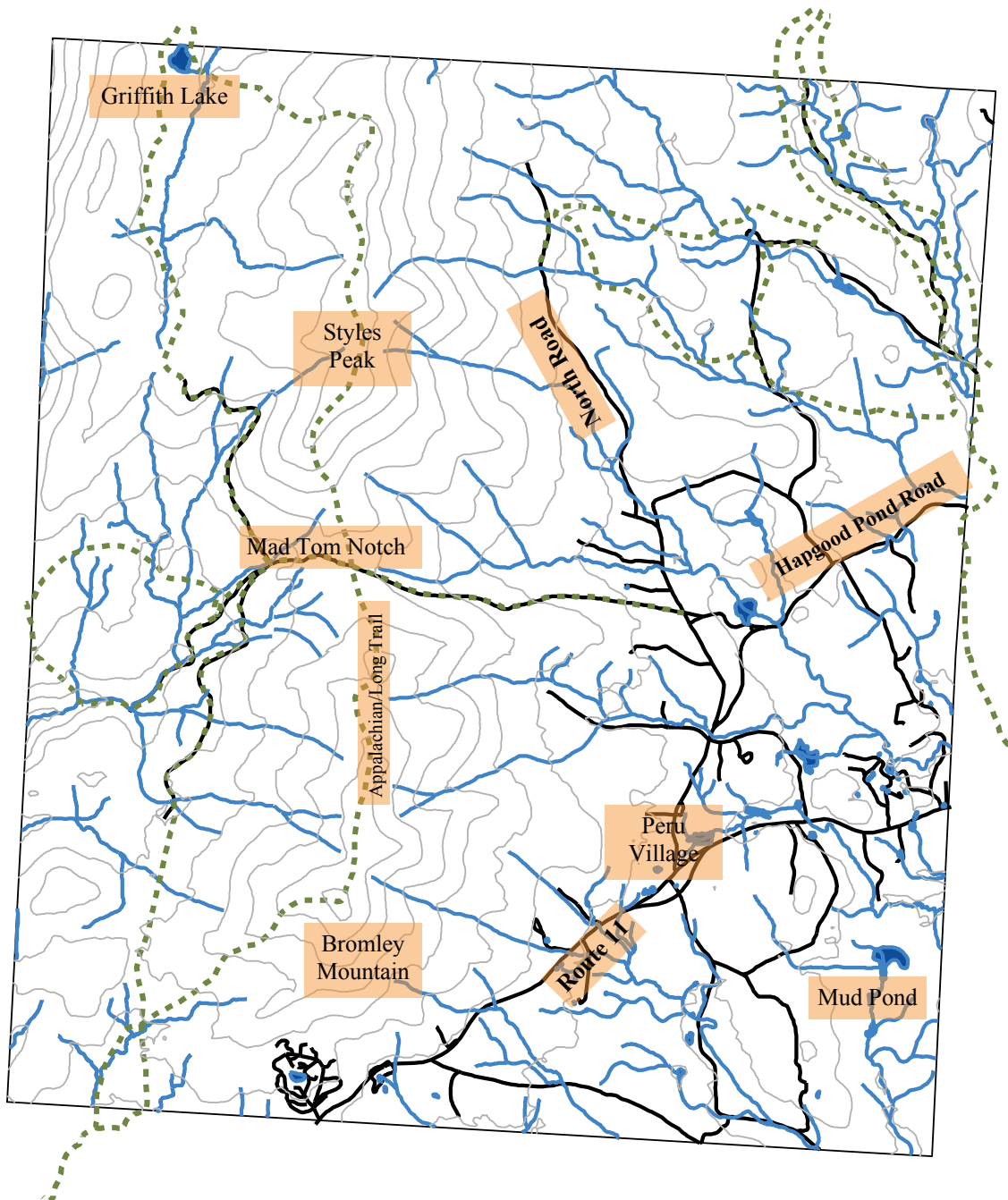
Towns also can identify **scenic roads**. Locally designated scenic roads cannot be substantially altered in a way that would damage their scenic character without a significant level of public review. In addition, a state and federal **scenic byway program** has been established to help communities identify ways to protect and promote important scenic or historic highway corridors.

**Roadway projects** can and should include features that promote visual quality. It may be possible to construct features that reinforce or create visual gateways at appropriate locations or to add landscaping, scenic pull-offs, or other streetscape elements that complement the visual environment that the road passes through. The town should carefully review all new state and local highway projects - road reconstruction, paving, bridge replacement, and intersection redesign - and request appropriate treatments.

Peru's scenic resources define the town's character, create a sense of place for residents, and attract visitors. The town should periodically review this inventory to determine if the important elements that form the basis of its scenic character are being preserved and to assess whether protection measures are maintaining the visual quality of important landscapes throughout the community.







**Peru, Vermont**

- 200 foot contour interval
- Trails
- Streams
- Roads
- Lakes and Ponds