



# KEY TAKEAWAYS • NATURAL RESOURCES •

## WHY NATURAL RESOURCES MATTER

Natural resources provide a variety of environmental, health, and public safety benefits. They support wildlife and fish habitat, improve air and water quality, minimize flood damage, and provide spaces for people to recreate or simply interact with nature. Ensuring the maintenance and protection of these resources is beneficial to both the community and the local ecosystem, now and into the future. In particular, conservation of natural resources is one of the least expensive and most direct ways to mitigate the anticipated regional impacts of climate change.

### CONSERVATION

The City of Chicopee has approximately 1,261 acres of conservation and recreational open space. A total of 80% of this land is permanently protected, 14% has limited protection, and 6% has no protection. Lands that are unprotected may be developed and are subject only to zoning restrictions.



The Chapter 61 Tax Program is a special designation tax status that offers a property tax break for landowners willing to commit to keeping some or all their land undeveloped and in use for forestry, agriculture, or recreation for a specified period. Currently there are 15 properties (98.3 acres) participating in Chapter 61A (agriculture) and one property (56.6 acres) participating in Chapter 61B (recreation).

### SOILS

Of the many soil types found in Chicopee, Terrace escarpment soils are of the most concern, this soil is easily disturbed and found on many steep slopes throughout the City. Such soils erode easily and can be a danger to people and property. Human activity like construction, discharges, and recreational activities can speed up the erosion process. Chicopee's Conservation Commission has adopted strict regulations to protect terrace escarpment soils from further impact by prohibiting discharges across these soils and disturbances to these soils on steep slopes.



## WATER RESOURCES



Water is one of Chicopee's greatest resources. The Connecticut and Chicopee rivers are highly important natural resources, offering habitat, recreation, and a sense of identity for Chicopee residents. Protecting Chicopee's water resources ensures residents have access to clean source water for drinking and recreation. Chicopee residents depend primarily on water from the Quabbin Reservoir, with supplemental water coming to the City from the Ware River.

*Connecticut River*

## FLOODPLAIN

Undeveloped floodplains are important in controlling erosion, buffering against catastrophic flooding, and serving as a significant habitat for wildlife. Much of Chicopee's flood plains are developed with actively used residential, commercial, and industrial properties or defunct Brownfields. It will be important for the City to continue working to clean these Brownfields and restore as much floodplain area as possible to a more natural state, both for ecological and recreational purposes.



*Floodplain of Connecticut River from I-90 bridge looking north*