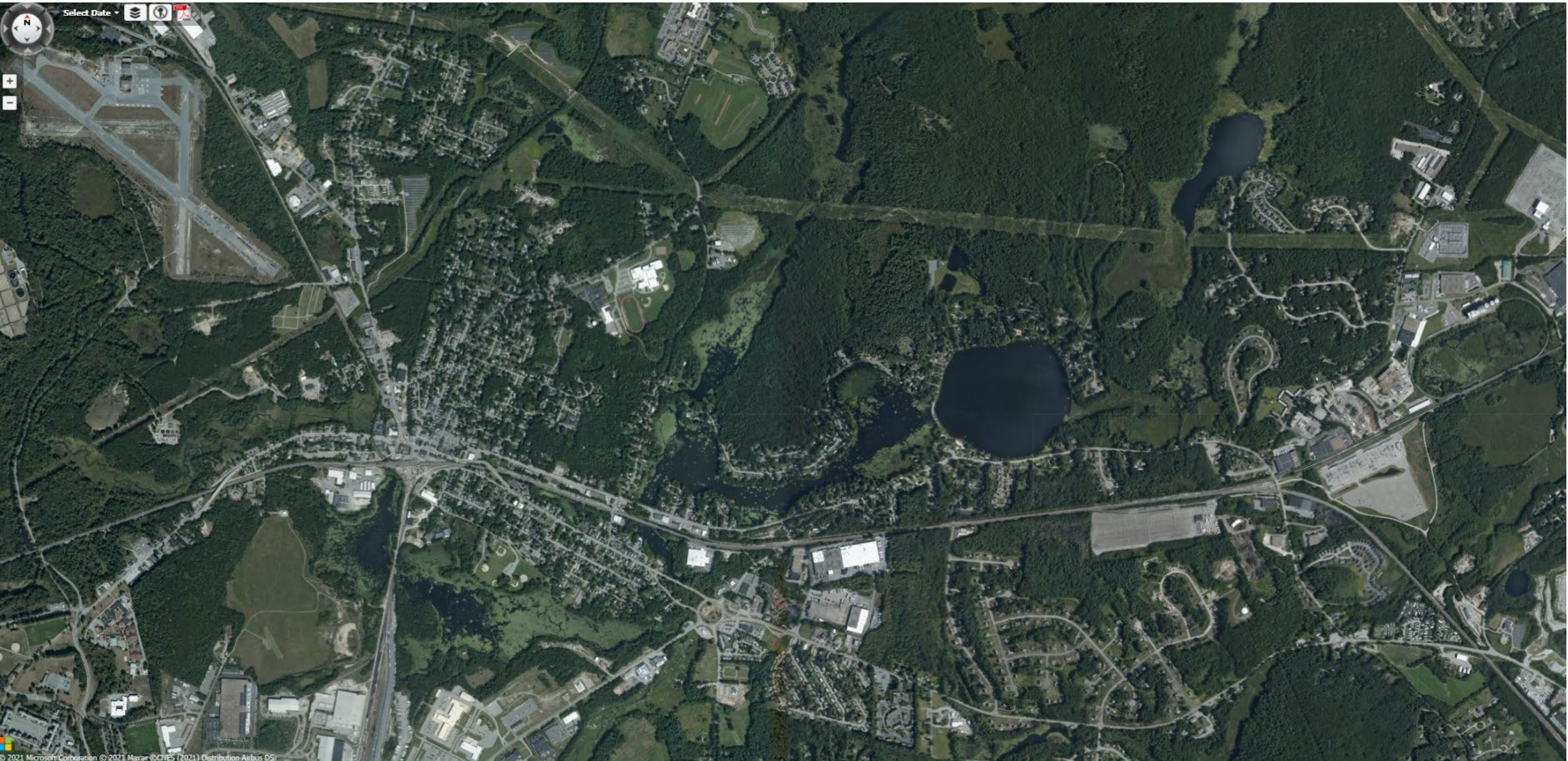
An aerial photograph of a rural area in Ayer, Massachusetts. The image shows a winding river or stream flowing through a densely forested landscape. Several small ponds are visible, including a large, dark, irregularly shaped pond on the right side. Residential houses and some commercial buildings are scattered throughout the area, particularly along the riverbanks and near the bottom of the frame. A road or railway line runs horizontally across the lower portion of the image. In the top left corner, there are small icons for map navigation: a plus sign, a minus sign, and a square.

Ayer Conservation Commission Fertilizer Use Bylaw

Fall Town Meeting
Monday, October 25, 2021

Over 13.5% of Ayer's topography is comprised of open water and diverse wetlands. In addition, three important underground aquifers are located within Ayer's boundaries, two of which supply drinking water to town residents and businesses.





Because fertilizer use is a more controllable source of excessive nutrient runoff, and because there are reasonable alternatives, this bylaw is an effort to encourage our community to do what we can to minimize and/or mitigate these negative effects and better protect our valuable water resources.

Steps You Can Take for a Healthy, Beautiful, Sustainable Organic Lawn

1. Take a soil test. The UMass Soil Testing Lab can be reached at (413) 545-2311. The test is inexpensive and the results will explain what your soil needs (ex. lime, compost) so you can address its specific soil parameters.

2. Fertilize naturally. Use compost from your own heap, well-aged manure or slow-release organic fertilizers to feed the soil. Topdress with 1/4 inch of compost in fall and spring.

3. Mow high (3" is best) and sharpen your mower blades annually. Cleaning the mower after each use can also help prevent the spread of disease.

4. Leave grass clippings on the lawn. These will decompose and put valuable organic matter back into your soil, thus reducing fertilizer needs.

5. Water wisely with conservation in mind. Water only when your grass shows signs of drought stress and then water deeply. (Put a cup in your sprinkler zone and give your grass about 1 inch of water.)

6. Overseed bare spots in spring and fall. For a new lawn, or a lawn with significant bare patches, add a good quality seed mixture which includes creeping fescue, bluegrass and perennial ryegrass. A small amount of white Dutch clover should be added to the seed mix, or spread over the existing lawn.

7. Visit the NOFA Organic Land Care Program website (www.organiclandcare.net) for helpful homeowner resources: an interactive forum, a homeowners' survey, fact sheets, informative articles, organic lawn tips and a workshop calendar.



A healthy, beautiful, organic lawn is all about the health of the soil.

Photo by Deborah Alexander, AOLCP