

## **SECTION I: PLAN SUMMARY**

The 2012 Town of Townsend, MA Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) represents the fourth revision of this plan; the most recent was completed in 1999. The plan presents a course of action to guide the town in achieving its vision for resource protection and recreation opportunity. The revision builds upon the work previously done and makes adjustments that reflect changes that have occurred over the last twelve years. Public opinion as expressed through the Resident Survey and as gathered at the Public Form supports the work presented in this plan.

The 2012 OSRP Committee reaffirmed the critical needs of the 1999 report and added a few others. In summary, the critical needs are:

- 1. To maintain water quality of both surface waters, especially the Squannacook River, and subsurface waters, i.e. the aquifer for both public and private water supply.**
- 2. To protect Wildlife Habitat especially those which are currently underrepresented, i.e. unforested agricultural land.**
- 3. To improve access to protected lands and to communicate the opportunities for passive recreation in these areas to the residents.**
- 4. To improve our three historic districts.**
- 5. To provide links specifically for pedestrians and bicycles but also for strategic purchases of land to complete green connections.**
- 6. To improve the quality, quantity and diversity of locations for recreation facilities.**
- 7. To provide for maintenance of protected lands.**

The report suggests these actions to implement the Plan:

- 1. Strengthen and enforce Rules and Regulations that protect our water and waterways.**
- 2. Increase communication and outreach through brochures, trail maps, and web sites. Encourage the hiring of a volunteer coordinator to organize the citizen volunteers.**
- 3. Support regional planning efforts and the work of non-profits in the protection of resources and new or improved recreation facilities.**
- 4. Pursue grants for purchase of strategic parcels, to provide physical improvements to increase access to protected lands, for needed recreational facilities, and to maintain existing protected land especially for large scale improvements, such as the removal of invasive exotics from our ponds.**

## **SECTION II: INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The residents of Townsend have long recognized the need to effectively balance the competing demands associated with growth and economic development with those for preservation of the natural and historic environment. The goal is to ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy the benefits and quality of life uniquely characteristic to the town's residents, agricultural interests and business community.

Maintaining that delicate balance into the future requires not only the commitment of resources, but a framework to guide the town's planning and implementation efforts. Recognizing the evolving demands placed on Townsend's natural resources and environment over time, this update represents

the fourth revision of the Townsend Open Space and Recreation Plan. Major components of this update continue to focus on the central elements and themes expressed by residents and the business community throughout the Master Planning process, and demonstrated through town meeting vote.

The Open Space and Recreation Planning Components are premised on the following elements:

- Townsend will continue to rely on groundwater resources to satisfy future water supply demands. In addition, on-lot subsurface disposal systems will continue to be used for wastewater management. Given the above, effective planning and management are necessary to satisfy the long-range water supply needs for the Town.
- Preservation of wetlands and wildlife habitat is central to the preservation of Townsend's diverse wildlife community as well as Townsend's agricultural and rural past. This not only provides intangible benefits to residents, it offers a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities for hikers, hunters, anglers and naturalists. Townsend is fortunate to have a large amount of open space. These lands are primarily state forests, parks and wildlife management areas. While these significant areas are a vital addition to the open space in town, they are not accessible to the town for development of our active recreation needs.
- With the town's diversity of recreational needs, developing recreational facilities described in this report and setting aside areas for future recreational use and development is essential to maintaining the quality of life available to residents and visitors.
- Townsend must continue to actively work with neighboring communities to achieve regional goals of the protection of ground and surface water quality, preservation of wildlife habitat and expansion of recreational opportunities.
- The residents need to be more aware of the opportunities, recreational locations, and facilities the town already has available. The town needs to develop a program to make this information readily accessible.

Some local donations have been made to the inventory of town owned natural/open space areas of the town. These include nearly 18 acres behind the new highway garage and a gift of 2.5 acres off South Harbor Road. Considerable activity has occurred since the last plan, contributing to additional open space/natural areas in the town and an increase in recreational opportunities. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is actively acquiring additional Fish and Wildlife properties on Elm Street, and Townsend Hill and Greenville Roads during just the past year. Since 1998, 1,309 acres have been protected, with a large portion (546 acres) consisting of State acquisitions. The entire acreage consisted of 75 parcels. In addition, the following activities have taken place since the last plan revision:

**A. Regulations and Designations:**

- Groundwater Protection District Bylaw was passed in 1998
- Squannassit ACEC designated in 2002
- Vinton Pond was designated a Great Pond in 2006 under the Squannassit ACEC.

**B. Open Space Purchases and Protections:**

- The former Girl Scout Camp near Vinton Pond containing 76 acres was acquired by DCR in 2006 after nearly becoming a housing development.
- Witch Brook Water Company was purchased by the Town in 2008 and includes two drinking water wells.
- Harbor Trace Well was accepted by the Town from a developer in 2008.
- Since 2000, the Townsend Conservation Land Trust has acquired 143 acres for permanent protection.
- Since 2003, 195 acres of Open Space were given to the town under the Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) regulations.

**C. Recreation Activities:**

- The soccer fields at Squannacook Meadows Open Space were leased and reclaimed by the Townsend Ashby Youth Soccer Association.
- The Recreation Commission has added classes in volleyball, tennis, exercise and archery.
- A new playground was installed to replace an old one on town property behind the Spaulding Memorial School and a new picnic shelter was constructed by an Eagle Scout.
- Music and drama programs were added to the summer recreation programs.
- A toddler program, ABC Follow Me, has been added.
- Classes in Babysitting and CPR/First Aid have been added by the Recreation Commission.
- Trails have been developed and maintained by the Boy Scouts in Old Meetinghouse Park and the Basbanes properties, both owned by the Conservation Commission.

**D. Maintenance/Management of Open Space and Recreation lands**

- Forest Management Plan for Old Meetinghouse Park was completed by Bay State Forestry in 2007.
- The Boy Scouts spent over 100 hours in community service maintaining various open space properties.
- Landfill was capped in 2005, creating a possible area for recreation.

## **2.2 PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The foundation of this Open Space and Recreation Plan (the “Plan”) was prepared by the Open Space and Recreation Committee, having sought input from the town’s departments and boards, an on-line survey of the residents and a public forum. This committee began meetings in April 2010, developed the online survey to obtain residents’ input and released it to the public on October 1st until November 15<sup>th</sup>. Paper copies of the survey were available in the Library, Senior Center and Town Hall for those residents who did not have access to a computer. The survey link was sent out by email to town employees, boards, and commissions and the “Town Informational email List”. There was also a newspaper article about the survey. Paper copies were available at the Special Town Meeting on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The Selectmen announced the survey availability at their televised meetings and at the fall Town Meeting.

The Open Space Committee consists of the following individuals:

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|-----------------------|---|
| Michele Busler        | representing the Historic District Commission |
| Niles Busler          | representing the Water Commissioners          |
| Karen Clement         | citizen-at-large representative               |
| Rick Corsini          | representing the Recreation Commission        |
| Eileen McHugh (chair) | citizen-at-large representative               |

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| Sheila Murphy                          | representing the Board of Health         |
| Tom Nevins                             | representing the Planning Board          |
| Bill Rideout                           | citizen-at-large representative          |
| Mary Small                             | representing the Conservation Commission |
| Karen Chapman, Co-Land Use Coordinator | serving as support staff                 |

The following boards reviewed the survey prior to its implementation:

- Townsend Board of Health
- Townsend Board of Selectmen
- Townsend Conservation Commission
- Townsend Planning Board
- Townsend Historical District Commission
- Townsend Recreation Commission
- Townsend Board of Assessors
- Townsend Historical Society
- Townsend Water Department
- Townsend Cemetery and Parks

The survey was completed in mid-November 2010, with 226 residents participating. The results and comments are shown in Appendix A. The survey results and comments were reviewed by the members of the Open Space Committee and key points were highlighted for future reference and review.

A Public Forum was held on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and the progress and results thus far were presented. Some of the maps developed by Karen Chapman were also reviewed. Thirteen residents were in attendance. Some concerns were expressed such as protection of private water supplies. There were also questions regarding the areas presently available and access to them.