

NEEDS ANALYSIS

The following is a discussion of the primary open space and recreation needs in Walpole. It was derived from the first public meeting as well as meetings with Town Boards and Commissions and department heads. The needs are grouped into three categories: resource protection, community needs, and management needs and potential changes of use.

Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The major resource protection needs are as follows:

1. Protect water supply
2. Protect wildlife habitats/corridors
3. Continue to protect wetlands and surface waters
4. Develop criteria for evaluating land for acquisition and/or uses for donated or existing Town-owned land

As discussed in the Community Setting section, two of three aquifers in Walpole are completely developed for their water supply capacity. Presently planned increases in capacity are supposed to handle the projected maximum day demand in 2010. However, this is based on a projected population of 23,000. The Town is likely to reach this population level by 1999. This fact results in an urgent need to ensure protection of the existing supplies. It also necessitates a water conservation program that can be achieved through xeriscaping, better landscaping practices, incentives for existing homes to replace older toilets with water saving models, and other similar measures.

In order to maintain biodiversity as well as to protect resources, it is important to ensure that important wildlife habitats and migration corridors are protected. Walpole has several corridors that should be protected. The Cedar Swamp and School Meadow Brook areas (along with Department of Corrections land) form part of a corridor between Stony Brook in Norfolk and Moose Hill in Sharon. Similarly, the Cedar Swamp, Cedar Street, and Lincoln Road properties form a substantial corridor to Noon Hill in Medfield. School Meadow Brook and Mine Brook form an part of an additional corridor to Noon Hill.

Walpole had no net loss of wetlands from 1971 to 1985. Both the state Wetlands Protection Act and the local wetlands bylaw should continue to be enforced strictly to protect the wetlands as well the surface waters with which they are associated. Fertilizer, pesticide, and salt use should be discouraged near wetlands, surface waters or aquifers.

Due to limited resources, the Town can not purchase all properties that become available. Similarly, competing municipal needs make it difficult to allocate land that does become available. Therefore, there is a need for a set of criteria by which to evaluate land for possible acquisition as

well as for best potential uses.

Summary of Community Needs

The following are the primary conservation and recreation needs of the community:

1. Increased field space and recreation facilities
2. Additional conservation land.
3. Trails system to link existing areas and facilities.
4. Additional maintenance capability (High need).
5. Mylod Street facility (Tripartite agreement -- could this be model?)

Walpole is part of the Southeastern Region of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). That Plan was completed in 1988 (and is now in the process of being updated). It is amazing that Walpole's needs are so similar to the top five issues for the Southeastern Region identified in the SCORP, which are :Development and expansion of recreation facilities; Maintenance of recreation facilities; Acquisition and protection of water supply areas; Acquisition and protection of recreation areas; and Acquisition and protection of conservation areas.

Walpole has 1784.78 acres of conservation land and 181.95 acres of Town-owned active recreation lands (See Tables 13 and 15). This total of 1966.73 acres represents 15.3% of the total area of the Town, and 89.89 acres per 1000 population. This compares with other areas as follows:

| <u>Locality</u> | <u>Total Area</u> | <u>Open Space/Recreation</u> | <u>Percent</u> | <u>Acres/1000</u> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Massachusetts | 5,016,755 | 1,104,024 | 22.0% | 189.3 |
| Norfolk County | 256,090 | 47,965 | 18.7% | 79.6 |
| Southeastern Region of SCORP | 915,981 | 128,000 | 14.0% | 115.1 |
| Franklin | 17,286 | 3,014 | 17.4% | 120.1 |

As these figures indicate, Walpole has a far lower number of acres per 1000 population than all of these areas except Norfolk County. It also has a lower percentage of its area as conservation or recreation land than each of the other areas except the Southeastern Region of SCORP.

Perhaps more important than these statistics is the fact that the Town is limited in its ability to offer recreation opportunities by the lack of sufficient field space. A corresponding problem is the difficulty of maintaining additional fields if they were available. Locating additional fields in the vicinity of existing fields or in proximity to each other would simplify the maintenance task to some degree. In addition, more fields could reduce use on existing fields allowing recovery time for the grass. In any case, alternatives to improving the quality and level of maintenance need to be examined.

A tripartite agreement between the Town, a developer, and a youth soccer organization will

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result in the development of new soccer fields on Mylod Street. This agreement needs to be evaluated as a potential model that could be applied to other areas of Town to increase recreational opportunities.

Summary of Management Needs and Potential Changes of Use

The management needs and potential changes of use are listed below:

1. Open Space Committee to prioritize needs and follow up with implementation
2. DOC/MWRA land
3. Norfolk County Agricultural High School
4. Isaacs Land
5. Many planned subdivisions

There are many issues of a diverse nature associated with open space conservation and recreation. The numerous agencies, departments, boards and commissions identified in the Five-Year Action Plan as having a role in the various recommendations of this Plan attest to this fact. All of these organizations have multiple tasks and limited resources. Therefore, there is a need for an Open Space Committee, with membership representing a variety of interests, whose primary tasks will be to prioritize open space and recreation needs and to monitor and follow up on implementation.

The State of Massachusetts owns substantial acreage in Walpole. The Department of Corrections and MWRA land are both subject to changes of use in the future. While it is unlikely that the prison will close in the near term, it could be expanded or other uses located on either the DOC or MWRA site. The Town should work with the State to determine future uses for the site, and to obtain a commitment to ensure that a wildlife corridor through the property remain open. It should also explore the possibility of using portions for permanent or temporary municipal purposes (especially recreation space). This applies to the Norfolk County Agricultural High School property as well.

Similarly, other institutionally-owned land (New England Home for Little Wanderers, Westwood Gun Club, Walpole Sportsmen's Association, etc.) should be considered for more long-term preservation as conservation or recreation land.

The Isaacs land in north Walpole totals 425.3 acres in Chapter 61 and 61A. The Adams farm subdivision proposed for this site represents a major change of use and a substantial change of character in the Town. As is currently being done by the Isaacs Land Study Committee, serious consideration should be given to exercising the Town's option to purchase some or all of this property for future municipal needs. Figure 2 illustrates the subdivisions currently proposed in Town that will have a major impact by reducing land available for future municipal purposes and hosting development which further increase the need for additional municipal services.