

Section 1: Plan Summary

The Town of Sturbridge is a community with a healthy mix of housing, commercial and industrial development, and preserved open space. The Open Space Committee has been diligent in its efforts to review undeveloped parcels to determine their value, if any, for open space preservation, water supply protection and recreational opportunities. The town is very aware too that the many lakes and ponds within the bounds of this town provide an attractive area for seasonal use with its many cottages providing summer homes or family retreats. The lakes are a tremendous recreational asset but can provide a burden on the town in terms of making sure that these beautiful water bodies and scenic areas are protected to ensure water quality and appropriate access. Additionally, the town must consider potential future needs for open space that occurs when these second homes gradually become converted to year round residences.

The town has been very active in the implementation of the open space and recreation recommendations found in the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan. This 2011 plan highlights accomplishments and identifies areas where additional work may be necessary, and identifies new goals for the town to pursue in the future. It also incorporates existing goals of protecting natural resources, conserving open space and providing recreational opportunities for all, regardless of ability level. It is intended to meet the state's Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements (updated through 2008).

As with other plan updates, there is an emphasis on open space preservation through a variety of means such as updated zoning techniques, conservation restrictions and donations of land. Further, this plan reflects the continued belief that the use of Community Preservation Funds as a means of open space acquisition is critical to accomplishing open space goals and objectives. During this past plan period, several important parcels were preserved by using CPA funds and partnering with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, most notably, the acquisition of 826 acres from Old Sturbridge Village. This represented one of the largest land purchases in the State using CPA funds and with the cooperation of DFWELE.

TOWN OF STURBRIDGE OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN - 2011

Public participation is an important part of this plan. This update benefited from the ongoing work on the Sturbridge Master Plan. Town-wide surveys were used in this plan's preparation as were public forums and other meetings. This plan update reflects the input received throughout the update process and represents the combined efforts of several town committees and departments, including the Planning Board, Master Plan Steering Committee, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Trails Committee, Public Lands Advisory Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator's Office, Town Planner's Office and others.