
5 Summary of Natural Resources

5.1 Summary of Open Space and Recreation Plan 1999

The Town of Hudson applied for and received equivalency status for its Open Space and Recreation Plan from the EO-418 Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG). Hudson's Plan was originally completed in summer of 1999. In 1999, a dedicated group of Hudson citizens and Town employees prepared the plan which was then endorsed by the Hudson Board of Selectmen and the Hudson Conservation Commission. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs approved the plan in September 1999. Since that time the plan has undergone a number of revisions and updates. It is scheduled to be completely reviewed and re-submitted to EOE in the fall of 2004.

The following sections serve only as a summary of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. However, the entire plan is considered to be explicitly incorporated herein.

5.2 Analysis of Need

5.2.1 Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The majority of the development in Hudson has occurred in the western end of Town. This is due to the Assabet River and the resource it provided to industry in the 1800's. Protection of lands along the Assabet and the other three major drainage basins (Hog Brook, Danforth Brook and Fort Meadow Brook), are priorities. Additionally, three of these basins are in the western section of town, making acquisition of lands important for preserving open space in this densely populated section. Most open space lands are now scattered throughout Town, but linking open space with Town-owned or non-profit-agency property could create green spaces of 50 acres or more. Thus acquiring parcels that assist in creating such linkages should be a priority.

The eastern section of Town has protected lands, as well as many acres of Town-owned well protection property, and state and federal forests. The town should attempt to link parcels to encourage use as the use of these lands as nature trails. Presently, most are not connected and thus continuous trails limited. The potential future rail trail on the Mass. Central railroad line could provide an opportunity to connect the population with the open space resources in the eastern end of Town and the Assabet River Rail Trail currently under construction will link up several important natural and recreational areas.

Many acres are under Chapter 61 and 61A, which gives the Town first right to refusal. Unfortunately, in the past lands have not been acquired, due to time and financial constraints. The Town should vigorously pursue discussions with the present landowners, creating positive relationships, so that when they are considering the sale of property, we are contacted prior to an actual developer.

The Town should also work with the surrounding communities regarding their intentions of land use and development along our borders. This could greatly affect our actions on acquisition of properties, which they border. Coordinated efforts could result in regional projects.

The Town should strongly consider adopting conservation subdivision design regulations to promote the retention of land for recreation and open space purposes.

5.2.2 Summary of Community's Needs

The following are actions that should be taken over the next five years.

- ◆ Protect natural habitat areas for wildlife, since there is little land where this exists
- ◆ Deter development on slopes where erosion will become a problem
- ◆ Additional baseball diamond, football/soccer fields, tennis courts and basketball courts
- ◆ Maintenance programs, including plans to shut down fields for renovations purposes on a rotating basis; cleanup of conservation trails and properties on a regular basis
- ◆ Management programs for conservation properties to include forestry programs, which could generate funding for future conservation programs
- ◆ Weed and sedimentation control programs for ponds and streams
- ◆ Development of biking, hiking and walking trails throughout the Town
- ◆ Restrictions for motorboats on lakes and ponds for safety reasons
- ◆ Protect riverfront land through gifts, purchase or conservation restriction
- ◆ Improvement access to the river, particularly canoe access
- ◆ Permanently protect existing agricultural land by purchase or agricultural restriction
- ◆ Maintain a balance between recreation and open space lands, when acquiring and/or developing

5.2.3 Management Needs; Potential Change of Use

Ownership, management and protection of many town parcels is uncertain, as many individuals or agencies have conflicting roles. Deed research would be a time-consuming and unwieldy process. Eventually, this process will be inevitable.

There needs to be a process-in-place by which the various players can communicate and assign responsibility for the land management. In this way, a comprehensive strategy can be developed to protect open space and address recreational needs in the future. We should also seek, as with the rail trail projects, to communicate well with abutting towns.

Some parcels (such as the Fall Brook property/Mayo property, and much of the land at the eastern end of Hudson) have already been identified as priorities for protection. Others, such as parcels along the Assabet River, are in areas of particular interest to environmentalists and other who wish to preserve the natural beauty of the area. Many of the privately-held lands of interest abut town resources that are candidates for protection. Land taxed under Chapter 61 (forestry) and 61A (agriculture) is not permanently protected, although the town has the right of first refusal if it should come up for sale.

Hudson will, as we move forward, also give priority to optimizing use of current protected sites. By emphasizing new uses for existing properties, or by fine-tuning the use of a property for a specific population, the Town can continue to take pressure off acquisitions schedules. In

designing and renovating existing lands, we will continue to make decisions (such as fencing and landscaping) that insure the multi-use aspect of these properties.

5.3 Accomplishments from 1999 Study

5.3.1 Recreation

The single most important accomplishment from a recreation standpoint is the current development of the Assabet River Rail Trail. This will be a significant recreational resource for the Town of Hudson, affording residents a safe environment for biking, rollerblading, cross-country skiing to name only a few activities. The trail does link several recreation and conservation facilities over its 4 mile span.

Hudson has also made great strides in increasing the number of facilities through the development of the Sauta Property, which is a multi purpose athletic complex in the eastern end of Town, where there were no recreation opportunities before.

The improvements to existing facilities through the replacement of deteriorating fencing and backstops at 80% of the facilities as well as the installation of irrigation systems on our athletic areas contributes to the ease of maintenance and reduce costs for the Town.

5.3.2 Conservation

Over the past three years Hudson has been successful in saving three pieces of land from development. The Mayo Property at Danforth Falls is a 9-acre parcel that was purchased through private donations, and town appropriated funds. The Loureiro Property is located adjacent to two other Town parks, which creates a link for a larger green space, as well as protecting our most important natural resource, the Assabet River. This was acquired through grant funding from EOE/DCS Land and Water Conservation Funds and a town appropriation. Recently, the Warner family donated a one-acre parcel in the same location to the Town for conservation, and protection of the river.

From a management and financial standpoint, the Town did attempt to pass the Community Preservation Act, a tool that would give the town financial leverage in saving key parcels, but was unsuccessful in the first attempt. However, we have partnered over the last five years with private individuals, developers, local banks and businesses and state and federal grant agencies to acquire the three pieces of property identified above and will continue to work with these groups to achieve the Town's goals.

5.4 Ongoing Pursuits

5.4.1 Recreation and Conservation

The Town plans to continue expanding recreation, preserving natural resources and protecting water supplies by identifying additional properties for protection through conservation restrictions, gifts and purchases. We will make a concerted effort to work with developers, private foundations, state and federal grant agencies and conservation trust agencies to seek funding sources to carry out those goals. An important factor will be the passage of the Community Preservation Act and getting Board and Committees in Town on board to be proactive.

The Town will maintain a healthy balance between development and open space for our residents.

During the public visioning sessions held in support of the Town's Community Development Plan process, specific areas of town and parcels of land were identified for preservation. Many of these properties are located along the Assabet River and its tributaries, other lands are well-head protection areas, and still others link to existing Town owned properties. The parcels listed below are those identified as desirable for both Conservation and Recreation. The charted numbers correspond to the parcel numbers on the map.

Table 5-1 Land Preservation Chart:

| | Name | Ownership | Protection Status | Usage |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Crump Street | | | Passive |
| 2 | Central Street | Sukis | Charter 61A | Passive |
| 3 | River Road | Saristos | | Passive |
| 4 | Driving Range | Paul Davis | | Passive |
| 5 | | Quality Crafted Residences LLC | | Passive |
| 6 | | Hayes Development | | Passive |
| 7 | | | | Passive |
| 8 | River Street West | Jenkins | | active/passive |
| 9 | River Street East | Jenkins | | active/passive |
| 10 | HHS East | Fossile | | active/passive |
| 11 | Elks | Elks | quasi public | active |
| 12 | Danforth North | Davis Farms | | Passive |
| 13 | Rail Trail North | Private | | active |
| 14 | Transfer Stations | Rego | privately owned | active |
| 15 | Old North Road | SVT - Sudbury Valley Trustees | | Passive |
| 16 | Gospel Hill | Kane/Hovagimian/Gerwick | Chapter 61A | Passive |
| 17 | Ferjulian Farm | Ferjulians | Chapter 61A | Passive |
| 18 | Rod & Gun | Rod & Gun | quasi public | Active |
| 19 | Ferjulian Field | Ferjulians | Chapter 61A | Passive |
| 20 | Sauta | | | Active |
| 21 | Sauta Cornfield | | | Active |
| 22 | Goodale Forest | NE Forestry Foundation | | Forest |
| 23 | Goodale Forest Point | NE Forestry Foundation | | Forest |
| 24 | Stoney Brook Road | Fossile | | Forest |
| 25 | Clement Kane | Town Conservation | | Passive |
| 26 | Golf Course | Charter Oak | None | active/passive |
| 27 | State Forest | Commonwealth of MA | | active/passive |
| 28 | White Pond | Maynard Water Supply | | Water |
| 29 | Scoletti Swamp | | | Water |

In some instances the above listed parcels are not necessarily identified for acquisition by the town. It is evident that some parcels do not have any protection or the protection is unknown.

The task of investigating these parcels, although time consuming is necessary to see if there is any possibility of sale especially those owned by the state, federal government, foundations and quasi public organizations.

The highest priority parcels for acquisition by the Town are #10, #9 and #8, as those are currently earmarked for development, along the Assabet River.

The parcels depicted on the above chart have been identified through a collaborative planning process. Many of the properties are listed in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Other parcels were chosen through the Urban River Visions project and through the CD Plan public visioning meetings. Maps at that meeting were marked up and used to show the location of the parcels. The following map provides a consolidated visual summary of priority parcels identified through the planning work noted above.

Natural Resource Areas Map:

Also prepared as part of this planning process is a comprehensive Town owned property map that identifies the type of property and its use. Thus, conservation areas owned by the Town, recreational fields, municipal pumping stations, schools, and other types of uses are depicted on the map. It is inserted below to provide additional context.

Town Owned Property Map:

A Wetlands Protection Bylaw proposed by the Conservation Commission failed to pass at the May 2004 Town Meeting. The purpose of the bylaw was to provide additional protection for wetland resources beyond that provided by the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act and to provide additional tools for the Conservation Commission to utilize in carrying out its mandate. A revision of this bylaw should be considered and proposed at a future Town Meeting. However, the May 2004 Town Meeting did approve an appropriation for a part-time position to do administrative, advisory, technical, and clerical work assisting the Conservation Commission. This position, when filled, will give the Conservation additional resources and capacity.

5.4.2 Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater

To summarize all of the municipal activity relative to water, wastewater, and stormwater would be near impossible. In applying for the equivalency approval for the Town's Natural Resources component of the CD Plan, several documents were submitted and approved by the IAWG. Again, reference to those plans as specifically noted in Section 1.1 of this plan is essential to inform the reader's understanding of water, wastewater, and stormwater issues pertinent to Hudson. This plan explicitly incorporates the referenced plans and would be incomplete if not read together. Copies of those plans are on file in the Executive Assistant's Office.

The Sudbury, Assabet, Concord (SuAsCo) Watershed Community Council has undertaken a massive campaign, through posters, brochures and public hearings to inform the public of importance of "Keeping Stormwater Clean". The brochures give residents of the communities involved information on the do's and don'ts of lawn care, gardening, and car care, as well as the procedures that the town takes to curtail stormwater pollutants.

Intel has established a \$1.5 million dollar Assabet Watershed Groundwater Recharge Fund. The fund can support a variety of projects that capture, store, and recharge storm water into natural aquifers that supply a steady base flow to the Assabet River. The fund could also pay for projects that recharge aquifers with highly treated wastewater, or for small-scale projects that store storm water with cisterns or dry wells.

5.5 Natural Resource Action Items

N-1 Recreation Goals

- ◆ To expand and enhance existing recreation facilities and opportunities to accommodate the community's ever-growing need to engage in leisure time activities, whether they are organized sports, individual physical fitness or passive recreational activities. With a definite trend in society towards health and fitness, recreation opportunities in a community become a necessity and not a luxury. It has been known for many years that the eastern end of Hudson lacks recreation space and facilities, in light of the residential development in that area over the past ten years.

N-2 Conservation Goals

- ◆ To preserve natural features that lend Hudson its character, identity and link to a more pastoral past. Open space plays a vital role, providing a habitat for local and transient wildlife populations, defining neighborhoods, integrating land uses, or acting as a buffer between non-compatible land uses. Open space allows the natural environment to exist alongside the built environment. Passive recreational opportunities abound in conservation areas. Maintenance programs should be considered to make access easier, clean up dead and rotted trees, and make way for new plantings, where necessary.

N-3 Water Resources Goals

- ◆ To protect water supplies, wells and aquifers and land surrounding these areas. Our water bodies serve many different purposes from drinking to recreational swimming, boating, and fishing. Historically pollution of ponds and streams can be directly related to development of areas upstream, due to run off and improper drainage of developed areas, or overdevelopment. The town needs to limit these situations where possible through by-laws

or regulations and restrictions placed on developers. These areas make Hudson a unique community since we seem to have more water in drought seasons than other communities and we do not rely on other large bodies of water, such as Quabbin or Wachusett Reservoirs for our drinking water supply. Implementation of phosphate-reduction process at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in 1995 brought us into compliance with new NPDES permit for operation. Re-issue of the NPDES permits for the municipal Wastewater Treatment Plants on the Assabet River is being finalized. The new permits will require additional reduction of the phosphorous discharge into the Assabet River.

N-4 Improve Accessibility

- ◆ To continually assess facilities and lands for handicapped accessibility Hudson has recently formed an ADA Committee. The individuals involved have been extremely helpful with information regarding funding sources, inspection of recreation areas, and making suggestions for renovations to facilities for accessibility that would not be of too great a financial burden. The Town needs to work closely with these individuals in the management and maintenance of open space lands. Many conservation lands are undeveloped, but have cart-paths throughout, that should be made accessible, where financially feasible. All of Hudson's public buildings are now handicapped accessible. The Main Fire Station is not accessible to the second floor. There are several park fields or playgrounds that would benefit from ramps or signage, and those projects will be actively pursued. In the School Department, the administration building is scheduled for construction leading to complete access this year. All the schools have been addressed for handicapped issues. By and large, Hudson has done a superior job of addressing access issues.

N-5 Pursue Financial Strategies

- ◆ Seek funding sources for acquisition, renovation and development of areas. Over the past five years, the Town has approved several renovation projects through Town Meeting Capital Outlay Programs. Additionally, granted funding has been sought for the purpose of acquiring land for open space. A Youth Athletic Fundraising formed in 1994 has made great strides in raising money for the renovation and development of areas. This is not enough at this point, since lands that we reconsidered potentially valuable are being developed into residential housing. The Town must aggressively identify lands that are interest, meet with landowners and begin the process of acquisition.

N-6 Enhance Administrative Capacity

- ◆ Enact by-laws for controlling development and administrations of those laws. The Town does not have a full time Planner or a full time Conservation Agent. The Town should consider methods to increase administrative oversight ability. It may be worth considering expanded staffing hours dedicated to the Boards and Committees who are responsible for open space, recreation, and planning. It may also be helpful to seek out professional consultants to assist with particularly large projects and planning efforts. There may also be other, more routine planning and conservation efforts that could be handled through outsourcing. Board and Committee volunteers from specific boards are not always able to communicate adequately between one another as they meet at night and are often unaware of issues before other boards. It is important for the Town to continue looking for methods to improve communication and collaboration between boards.

- ◆ The maintenance, updating, and enforcement of existing by-laws and the writing additional regulations are also important in carrying out the goals outlined throughout the Open Space Plan.