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CONTRIBUTORS:

Bettina Abe
Acton Engineering
Department
Janet Adachi
Kristin Alexander
Tom Arnold
Peter Ashton
Dean Charter
Jim Colman
J. D. Head
Cathy Fochtman

Bill Froberg
Amy Green
Cathy Hatfield
Andy Magee
Terry Maitland
Susan Mitchel-Hardt
Matt Mostoller
Fran Portante
Jim Snyder-Grant
Martine Wong

CREATIVE

PRODUCTION:

Lynn Horsky
Heidi Wormser

SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

OVERVIEW OF FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

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Clockwise from top: Ice house pond; flowering crabapple trees, Acton Arboretum; Nagog Pond sunset; Acton Town Hall.

The overall aspirations of the citizens of Acton have not fundamentally changed since the last Open Space and Recreation Plan was in effect through 2007. As in 2007, Actonians remain steadfast in their desire to 1) preserve Acton's rural character, 2) protect the environment, and 3) improve recreational opportunities for everyone. Within those three main aspirations are ongoing efforts to protect our water resources, wildlife habitats and corridors. Concurrently, the recently ratified Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan reflects very similar goals and aspirations. In keeping with this consistent pattern, the

under a conservation restriction and continues to be farmed by a local farmer under a lease agreement with the town. There is a critical need for more funding and creative ways to acquire open space, since direct purchase of open spaces available for sale is typically cost-prohibitive. The Open Space Committee is concerned about fragmentation of landholdings, so it seeks parcels that are adjacent to existing town owned open space parcels, rather than isolated ones. The committee puts emphasis on parcels with diverse habitats to attract and sustain many species, lands that comprise combinations of upland, wetlands, and

Ongoing major issues are storm water run-off from excessive development, as well as the increased amount of paving. The Acton Conservation Commission meets twice monthly to process the steady pace of filings under the Wetlands Protection Act. The Commission requires proper storm water and erosion mitigation; reduction or elimination of silt and sediment flow into Acton's wetlands, streams, ponds, brooks and rivers; proper construction setbacks; and strict protection of vegetated buffer zones. The expanding practice of building rain gardens next to parking lots, as is listed in the Acton Arboretum future



Acton Natural Resources Department coordinates local volunteer efforts to hand-pull invasive water chestnuts from Ice House Pond.

current OSRP for 2012 – 2017 retains these three themes as the primary goals and objectives.

Acton's citizens recognize and respond to the critical need to preserve the remaining elements of Acton's rural character, such as fieldstone walls, ponds, streams, forests, meadows as well as historic buildings. Adopting the Community Preservation Act in 2002 has enabled Acton to purchase and protect valuable lands, preserve historic buildings and expand the town's recreational opportunities. The Acton Open Space Committee is comprised of knowledgeable members well-versed in potential open space resources that may become available for acquisition. In 2011, upon approval from Town Meeting, Community Preservation Funds were used to purchase over 15 acres of farmland in South Acton. Known as the Caouette-Simeone property, this land is now protected in perpetuity

forests, for example.

The Acton community remains steadfast in its desire to protect water resources. There are several key ways that the Town of Acton works to accomplish that goal. The Acton Water District continues to monitor supplies closely and provide clean, safe drinking water. In July 2012 the water commissioners approved a new \$12 million dollar water treatment plant for South Acton. The Water District's staff and Board of Water Commissioners work to develop new strategies to promote conservation; vigilantly safeguard water supplies by employing multiple barriers for protection; establish sustainable water use by working with developers and builders early in the process; provide ongoing monitoring and treatment; and adhere to the state mandated outdoor water use plan.

goals, is one way to recharge the groundwater and our aquifers.

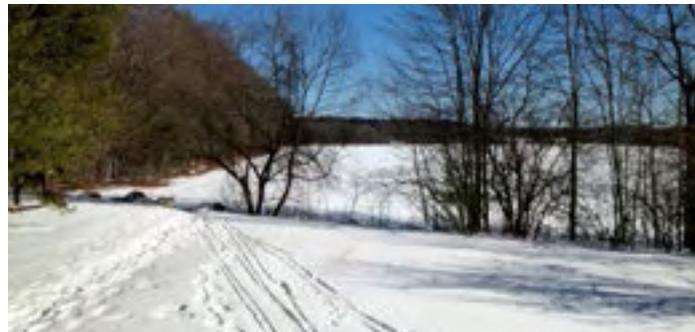
Another major issue affecting the protected conservation lands is the threat of invasive plant species. The Acton Land Stewardship Committee, the Natural Resources Department, and the Conservation Commission work to protect the environment from invasive plant species which threaten many of our resources. Ice House Pond and Robbins Mill Pond are both impounded portions of Nashoba Brook, and are being invaded by water chestnut plants (*Trapa natans*). The seeds flow downstream and ultimately end up in the Assabet River. Multiflora rose, garlic mustard and honeysuckle pervade the Acton Arboretum. European barberry, oriental bittersweet, Japanese knotweed and European buckthorn are all spreading within our forests

and meadows in conservation land parcels such as Nagog Hill and Wetherbee. Ongoing volunteer workdays serve to remove and reduce the spread of these nuisance plants. The Conservation Commission recently joined the SuAsCo CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) to band together with other volunteers in neighboring communities in our watershed to remove these invasive species from our land and waterways. In 2011 a Massachusetts Forest Management Plan was written for the Wetherbee parcel that would manage the woodland and remove the existing invasives. It is part of our ongoing

and cutting the meadows by Land Steward volunteers and by Natural Resources grounds crews.

Recreation has evolved today to encompass healthier means of transporting ourselves by walking and biking instead of driving; and by creating ways for persons with disabilities to be included, by providing access to town resources whenever possible. Recent paving in 2010 and 2011 of a portion of previously eroded and impassible trail at the Acton Arboretum has enabled many more people to enjoy the natural surroundings there. Adding benches along trail systems allows people more chance

“Miracle Field” at NARA Park. This facility, the first of its kind in Massachusetts, can be enjoyed by everyone in the community such as families, friends, town staff and volunteers, assisting people with disabilities while they play the great game of baseball. Recently completed at NARA and adjacent to the Miracle Field is a new permeable parking lot that allows rainwater to flow through the surface and recharge groundwater supplies, rather than run-off to storm drains. This parking lot will serve as extra parking for field sports spring through fall, and convert to an ice rink for winter recreation. Other major



Actonians both commemorate and utilize their natural resources and open spaces.

efforts to reach out, educate and mobilize the public to get involved in the control and prevention of the spread of invasive plants.

In 2012 the Natural Resources Department hired Oxbow Associates to investigate and create meadow management plans at several conservation lands (Heath Hen Meadow, Grassy Pond, Stonymeade, and Jenks); as well as at NARA park and at Morrison Farm. Each plan evaluates habitat conditions and makes recommendations on how to manage the meadow habitat on each property. The documents summarize management goals and procedures for sustaining and enhancing meadow habitat. Many promote selective removal of woody invasive plant species (such as oriental bittersweet, honeysuckle and multiflora rose) in order to promote desired herbaceous vegetation cover. The plans provide guidelines for mowing

to rest if necessary. Sidewalks are highly desirable and are expanding throughout the town as developers are often required to subsidize the construction of sidewalks. South Acton will be getting a new train station that will be located near the trail head of the Assabet River Rail Trail. The new station will have handicap accessible platforms, an amenity it has sorely lacked. Conservation land trail systems are being mapped and descriptions updated so that persons with disabilities can evaluate the appropriateness of a visit.

The Town of Acton Recreation Department continues to upgrade playgrounds, such as the Goward Playground at the Acton Memorial Library and a drainage improvement to the NARA Park playground, with the goal of rendering all playgrounds handicapped accessible. The newest major project and significant accomplishment is the

projects that the town hopes to accomplish in the next five years are new, improved handicap accessible boardwalks at the Acton Arboretum. One such, the Bog Boardwalk, will connect from the Minot Avenue sidewalk so that handicap folks, baby strollers and pedestrians can safely walk from the parking lot at Conant School.

The Board of Selectmen recently voted to name Acton's NARA Park after Nathaniel Allen, a Civil War hero who earned the Medal of Honor for his valor at the Battle of Gettysburg. We believe this will be an “enhancement of our Town character,” one of the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan's seven main goals, especially with regard to fostering an appreciation of Acton's history.

Reference: 2020 survey/census and most recent Open Space and Recreation survey questionnaire by Peter Ashton



SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

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From left: native American rock pile, Nashoba Brook; cross country skiing at Wetherbee Conservation land; redwood and azalea in spring, Acton Arboretum.

2.A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to identify and examine our current assets of conservation lands and recreational amenities and provide a course of action to optimize their benefits to the community. It was developed in conjunction with Acton's Comprehensive Community Master Plan referred to as "Acton 20/20".

The 2002-2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan emphasized the following needs:

1. Protecting water resources quantity and quality.
2. Protecting wildlife habitat and corridors.

The goals and objectives of the 2002-2007 OSRP were to:

1. **Preserve the remaining elements of Acton's rural character** by keeping apprised of highly-valued open space parcels' availability for purchase; preserving fields, woods, ponds, vistas, stone walls, etc; preserving and developing public open space and parks that border Fort Pond Brook, Nashoba Brook and the Assabet River; and protecting and maintaining remaining farmland..
2. **Protect the environment** by protecting the quality and quantity of Acton's water supply, protecting wildlife corridors, restoring polluted resources and strictly enforcing environmental laws.
3. **Improve recreational opportunities** by promoting the Assabet River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail; enhancing and expanding opportunities for other diverse types of recreation and communicating those opportunities to the public; adding athletic fields; ensuring handicapped accessibility for all recreation activities, maintaining and improving assets already owned.

This 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan re-examines and adopts the previous goals, **1) preserve Acton's rural character, 2) protect the environment, and 3) improve recreational opportunities for everyone**, but the current **objectives** reflect the

accomplishments and changes in the past five years, as well as the most critical current and future needs and issues facing the town.

2.B. PLANNING PROCESS

The current OSRP builds on prior OSRPs, and relies heavily on input from Tom Tidman, Director of Natural Resources, and Jim Snyder-Grant, Chairman of the Land Stewardship Committee as well as co-chair of the Acton 20/20 committee. Conservation Commissioners contributed much knowledge and expertise in developing the content of the report. Cathy Fochtman, Recreation

Department Director, shared the pressing recreational needs of the town and laid out the path to meet those needs. Open Space Committee, Community Preservation Committee and the Acton Water District were all invaluable contributors to this document, as well as numerous members of the town staff. In addition, information and trends obtained in the development of the recent Master Plan for the Town of Acton, Acton 20/20, as well as the Open Space and Recreation Survey conducted in the summer of 2007 contributed significantly in the development of this document.

Susan Mitchell-Hardt, president of The Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) assisted in research and compilation of open space data for this report. Founded in 1962, ACT can hold permanent conservation easements, accept gifts of land, accept tax-deductible gifts to be used for open space preservation, and purchase land for conservation purposes. ACT is one of more than 130 such organizations in Massachusetts, and is a member of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and the National Land Trust Alliance. Since 1998 ACT has participated in the protection of over 150 acres of open space in Acton, including two conservation restrictions held or co-held by ACT, and the purchase of land in the Heath Hen Meadow Brook area. Although not a government agency, ACT works actively on issues of land protection with Town Committees and Boards, such as the Community Preservation Committee and the Open Space Committee. (<http://www.actonconservationtrust.org>)

2.B.1. Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan

The recently approved twenty year master plan for Acton, called the "Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan," outlines seven high level goals and objectives that are aligned with those of the current Open Space and Recreation Plan. The extensive process of developing "Acton 2020" began in 2008 with Phase 1, the visioning phase, which was completed in 2009. Phase II, conducted from 2010 to 2012, included an inventory of existing conditions, prioritization and analysis of needs and finally



Photo courtesy of Theresa Ferraiolo

Acton-Boxborough Farmer's Market, West Acton.



approval and acceptance of the Plan at the April 2012 Acton Town Meeting. Phase III is the implementation phase and begins in 2013.

The goals and objectives of the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan, while much more expansive, encompass and overlap the goals and objectives of both the current and past OSRPs. These seven goals are as follows:

- I. Preserve and Enhance Town Character**
- II. Ensure Environmental Sustainability**
- III. Improve Connections**
- IV. Provide More Opportunities for Community Gathering and Recreation**
- V. Support Inclusion and Diversity**
- VI. Preserve and Enhance Town-Owned Assets**
- VII. Maintain and Improve Financial Well-being of the Town**

This OSRP was done in conjunction with Acton's 20/20. As part of the development of the plan, a survey was conducted that asked what the citizens of Acton considered the primary needs going forward. This survey lead to the development of the seven goals listed above. These goals, as they are relevant to open space and recreation planning, are echoed in this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

2.B.2. Open Space and Recreation Survey

In the summer of 2007, the Open Space Committee decided that a new survey was needed to gather input about Acton residents' open space and recreation needs. This survey was intended to be a follow-up to the survey that had been performed in 2001 which contributed to the OSRP published in 2002. A survey form was developed that was in many ways similar to the 2001 survey. This survey was mailed in the fall of 2007 to all of Acton's 6,700 households, and was also posted on the town's web site where it could be completed on-line. Over 1,200

surveys were completed either via on-line or by mail. The respondents' ages and residential locations reflected a good cross section of the town's demographics. Refer to Appendix 6A for a copy of the survey form and the compilation of the survey results. The results of the survey were utilized in developing the goals, objectives and action steps for this updated Open Space and Recreation Plan.

2. C. ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2002 – PRESENT

A great deal of progress has been made since the 2002 OSRP was created. Identification of open space opportunities, recognition of farming interests, enhanced recreational opportunities and appreciation and protection of the many resources that characterize the town of Acton, both natural and cultural, have been addressed to some degree or are in the planning stages.

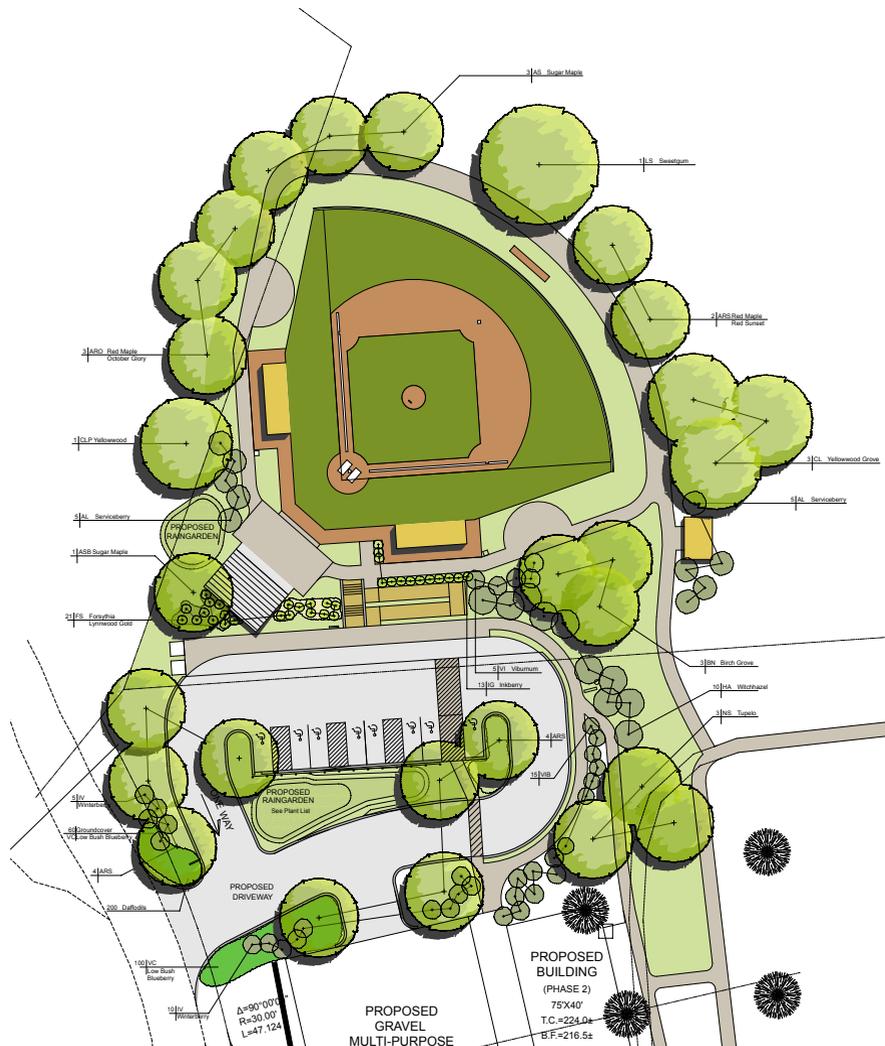
The Open Space Committee meets monthly to review and evaluate all privately owned unprotected land in Acton. Parcels are evaluated according to the following three criteria: 1. wildlife and environmental significance; 2. recreation potential; 3. rural character. Ratings of 1 to 10 were assigned for each of the three criteria for every parcel, with a 1 being least and 10 being most valuable. The most recent evaluation was completed in 2013 and has become a valuable tool for supporting requests to the town for protection of significant parcels undergoing change of use or becoming available for purchase.

The primary role of the Open Space Committee is to discuss parcels that are undergoing changes of use, and based on their value for open space, significance for wildlife or resource areas, to recommend some action by the town. This could mean a request for CPA funding or a direct request for town funds. To ensure the OSC is informed in a timely manner of potential changes of use of prioritized parcels, they work in close concert with Acton Conservation Trust and Sudbury Valley Trustees.

A greater focus on agriculture and farming interests has grown since 2002. This is demonstrated through a number of instances over the last several years including acquisition by the town of protected open space.

- The Caouette/Simeone farm property in South Acton was purchased in 2010. A conservation restriction has since been placed on the property, ensuring protection in perpetuity. The land is being leased and actively farmed by the owners of Stonefield Farm, the adjoining farm.
- Citizen interest in vegetable gardening has led to the addition of a community garden on the Morrison Farm property. Additional sites are being sought in other sections of town. Acton now has two actively maintained community gardens with a total of more than 70 productive gardens.
- The Morrison Farm reuse plan has been developed and is in the process of being rolled out. (see Section 8.A.3)
- In its fifth year, the Acton-Boxborough Farmers Market opens in June and runs through October. It supports local farmers and has become a popular gathering place for residents on Sunday mornings. See www.ABFarmersMarket.org.

One of the significant achievements in 2002 was voter approval of the Community Preservation Act, and these monies have become a major source of funding for



procuring open space parcels as opportunities arise. This continues to be a primary funding resource for open space needs as reflected in many of the objectives outlined in Section 8. With the recent approval of application of CPA funds for recreational facilities, playground enhancement and improvement projects which had been put on hold are now moving forward.

work since the last OSRP was to improve drainage, pave trails, plant gardens, and improve the pond area. In addition, scheduled year round activities have continued to expand and, as a result, NARA has become the recreational center for the town and region. The amphitheater is used for summer concerts and plays. A winter carnival is scheduled annually, summer events weekly, and are interspersed

The Land Steward Committee, the hands-on committee tasked to maintain and protect our open space resources, has continued to make progress in improving our conservation areas. New and improved trails have been blazed, markings improved, standard kiosks installed on all the public access points. They have undertaken a consistent effort to remove and control the spread of invasives; to certify vernal pools; groom trails and reopen those rendered impassible due to tree falls. An updated conservation guide was issued in 2003 and a new publication as well as an on-line version is underway. This is a tireless group who encompass the entire breadth of STEWARDSHIP in their contribution to our conservation properties.

A great deal of effort has been and continues to be applied to improving facilities at NARA, formerly North Acton Recreational Area, recently renamed the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area. Much of the

with intercultural events and seasonal festivals held either at the amphitheater or the bath house pavilion. Summer programs and a comprehensive summer camp are held for the youth and are well attended. In 2012, the Miracle Field was built on the NARA site (see Section 5.C.2.1). A number of enhancements are planned as listed in the detailed objectives for NARA listed in Sections 8 and 9.

In 2005, the T.J.O'Grady Skating park was opened. A memorial park in honor of a young boy killed in a tragic accident in 1998, this has become a magnet for many skateboarders from both Acton and Boxborough. Improvements are currently underway for the park as listed in sections 8 and 9. A full description of the facility is found in section 5.C.2.3.13.

Construction of the Acton segments of the ARRT and the BFRT have made little progress since the last OSRP, though advocacy efforts have continued. As of this printing, the state of Massachusetts, through Mass DOT, has approved funding for completion of these two bike trails, and construction is expected to commence in 2014. [(<http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/about/phase-two-acton-west-car.html>) and (<http://www.arrtinc.org/>)] See Section 5.C.5 for further information.

While little "new" space has been added for recreational use, a shift in focus has been to optimize the use of existing fields. Installing artificial turf and lighting extends the usability of the fields. The renovation of Leary Field in 2005, combined with the new artificial surface and lighting at the Lower Fields Project in 2012, have significantly reduced demand to develop new turf play surfaces. Providing irrigation for turf fields, better drainage, etc. has allowed the opportunities for more field-time opportunities for our athletic organizations. See Section 8.C.8 for more information.

Clearly many of the objectives laid out in the 2002-2007 OSRP have been met. More importantly, those accomplishments have laid the foundation to move forward with additions and improvements to our open space and recreational needs that will continue to enhance the life of the Acton Community.

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

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This Section focuses on Acton's setting, including a regional context, history, population and growth and development patterns. This information serves as a backdrop to Acton's open space and recreation goals and needs, describing how the town has evolved and the demands it faces in the future.

3.A REGIONAL CONTEXT

3.A.1 Background

Acton is an upper middle class suburban community, located approximately 25 miles west of Boston, between Routes 495 and 128. It is in the SuAsCo (Sudbury, Assabet and Concord rivers) Watershed. Route 2 bisects the town, and serves as a major commuting route into Boston for residents of Acton and towns located to the west and north. The area along Route 2A, which runs east to west, is a commercial, retail and residential zone. The stores, offices and services on Route 2A are used by residents of Acton, Boxborough, Westford, Littleton, Carlisle, Stow, Concord, Maynard and Harvard. The Route 2A corridor also contains a large residential component consisting of apartment buildings, condominium complexes, some single-family homes and several large subdivisions. A large percentage of Acton's affordable units are located along the Rt. 2A corridor. A significant part of the Route 2A corridor runs parallel to the Nashoba Brook, which provides both important wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. The M.B.T.A. commuter rail runs through West and South Acton. A train stop is located in South Acton where the town maintains a commuter parking facility. Renovations and improvements to the facility are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2013.

The socioeconomic class of the majority of Acton's residents, the historic use of the majority of Acton's land, and the patterns of development have all impacted the use of open space and recreation lands. Zoning laws played a major role as well, for instance in lot sizes, frontage requirements, etc. The older residents of Acton remember what the town was like when it was a farming community

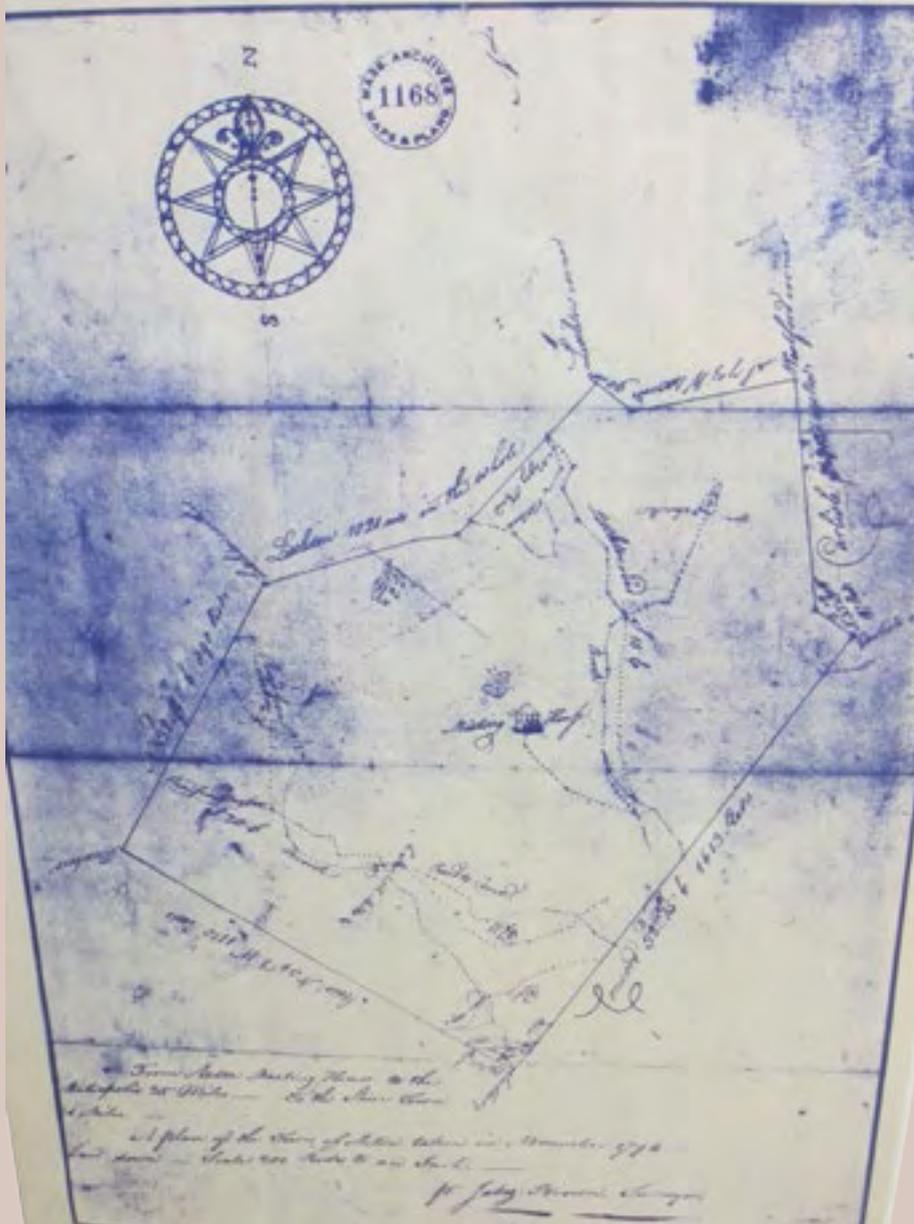
TABLE 3.1. OPEN SPACE LANDS ABUTTING ADJACENT TOWNS

Abutting Town	Acton Open Space	Abutting Town's Land	Comments
Boxborough	Guggins Brook Conservation Land	Half Moon Meadow	A short walk down Isaac Reed Farm Road
	Jenks Conservation Land	Private land	Popular trails used by many
	Whitcomb-Clapp Wellfield area	Hagar Land; Fort Pond Brook and Flagg Hill	
Carlisle	Camp Acton/Spring Hill/ Nashoba Brook Conservation Lands		Connects via newly donated land From Robbins Mill Pond
	Robbins Mill Pond Conservation Land	Benfield Lands: Ben's Woods	Owned and managed by the Carlisle Conservation Foundation
	Robbins Mill Pond trail easement	Valentine Property	From Carlisle Road, Acton, to future site of BFRT
Concord	Stonemead Conservation Lands	Annursnac Conservation Area	Annursnac Hill
	School Street Athletic Fields (323 School Street)	Mass.Dept. of Correction/MCI Concord 28A Union Turnpike	
	School St. and Assabet Wellfields	MCI, Concord	Ft. Pond Brook
Littleton	Nagog Hill Conservation Lands and Nagog Pond	Sarah Doublet Forest / Nashoba Orchards	
Maynard	High Street Woods: Canoe launch	Assabet Riverway	Canoe launch into Maynard
	McGloin and Steinman Lands	Maynard Country Club; Rockland Conservation Land	Assabet River Rail Trail
Stow	Heath Hen Meadow	Barbicki Land/Heath Hen Meadow	Private strip of land separating these parcels
	Acton Water Department	Flagg Hill	
Westford	Kennedy Marshall Land	Butter Brook	

and, along with newer residents, have supported some public purchases of land to provide open space, to protect the environment, and to help maintain property values. As a result, 1,700 acres of land have been protected since 1960. Some of this was procured through cluster development. In the last few years the Acton Conservation Trust (the local land trust) has pursued conservation restrictions to protect land. As forests and farmlands have been developed the public has exerted pressure to keep such areas open, and to place open space parcels adjacent to all major subdivisions. Consequently, there are conservation lands in nearly all parts of town.

Nevertheless, much of Acton's rural character has disappeared in the past 20 years, a change that many

residents noted with regret in a recent survey of open space and recreation needs taken for this update (see Section 2B). The economic upturn of the late 1990's has claimed more open space for residential construction. Since 2000 the number of new homes constructed in Acton has declined significantly, averaging about 40 per year compared with almost 90 per year during the 1990s. Much of the new housing stock has been in the form of 40B developments, the largest of which was constructed by Avalon in north Acton near Nagog.

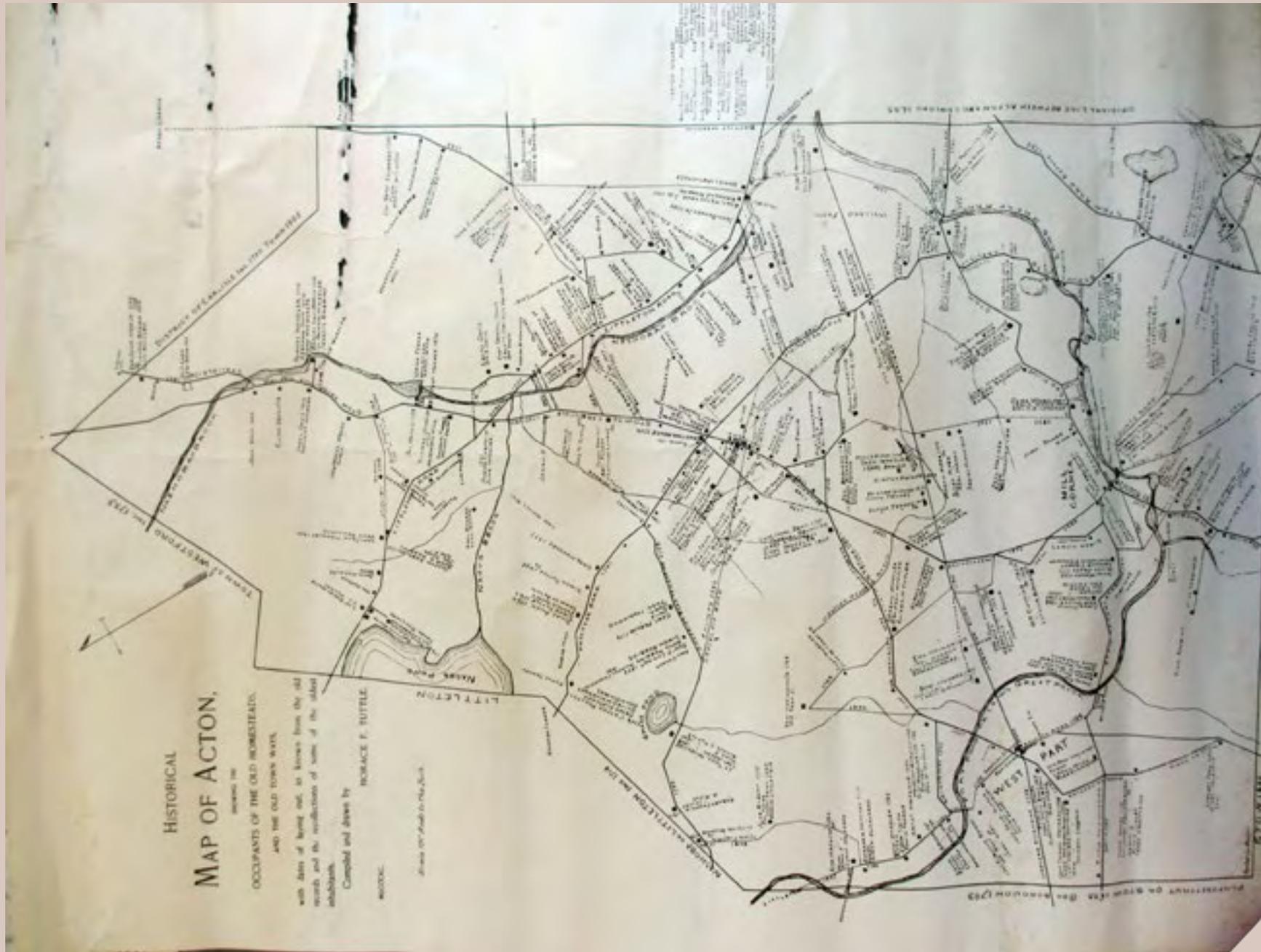


Acton map, 1794.



Acton map, 1830.





Acton map, 1890.

3.A.2 Communication Links with Conservation Areas in Contiguous Towns

Several parcels of conservation land in Acton either abut, or are close to, neighboring towns, offering the potential for regional trail systems. Each one of our neighboring communities lies close to one of Acton's conservation lands, as summarized in Table 3.1 and Map #1. As can be seen, there are several areas where conservation land in neighboring towns are adjoining, or close to adjoining.

The Land Stewardship Committee (LSCoM) has initiated talks with these towns to continue to develop inter-town links across the common boundaries so that hiking trails can be extended and connected to those existing in abutting towns. The Bay Circuit Trail connects Acton with Concord; Reed Farm Road in Boxborough now has a blazed trail connecting to the Jenks and Guggins lands in Acton and to the Half Moon Meadow land in Boxborough. Other possible trail connections include:

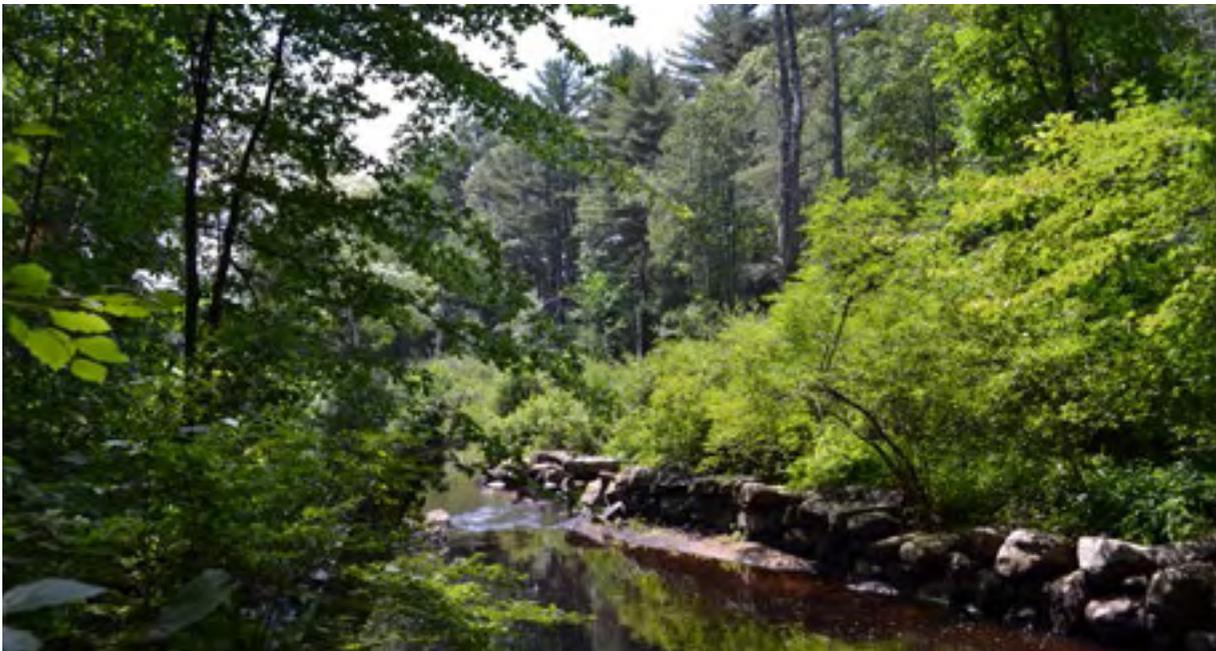
- LSCoM has already initiated a dialogue with the Littleton Conservation Trust to attempt to provide a permanent corridor between Acton's Nagog Hill property and Littleton's Sarah Doublet property. The intervening land runs along the shore of Nagog Pond across the Concord Water District property, where a fisherman's trail already exists. In order to utilize this trail, approval would be required from the Concord Water District.
- A connection between West Acton's Heath Hen Meadow and Stow's Captain Sargent Farm Conservation Area and Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) Conservation Restriction (CR) lands.
- A winter connection between the Whitcomb CR land (held by Acton Conservation Trust) and Stow's Heath Hen Meadow.
- A link from South Acton's McGloin and Steinman properties across the golf course to the Maynard Assabet Riverway property.
- A corridor or link from North Acton's Nashoba Brook Conservation Area via the Robbins Mill Pond land to the Carlisle Spencer Brook conservation land, and Valentine CR area. There is a new trail head on Carlisle Road in this area which could be used for this purpose, as well as for a bikeway connection.
- The rail spur behind Rex Lumber in North Acton could be part of an informal trail system linking up to Westford's lands near Powers Road.
- A path or link allowing access to Westford lands behind the Avalon development.

Each of these possibilities presents a different challenge. The simplest, posting a sign announcing the connection, will only require an agreement between towns. The most difficult, acquisition by both towns of one landlocked parcel on each side of the boundary will require funding to purchase the intervening land as well as to construct a long boardwalk through a beautiful wetland that is home to many species of birds and mammals. This latter project, between Acton and Stow, would require considerable cooperation between the two towns as well as local and, possibly, state funding. The resulting connection would represent a splendid achievement for both environmental protection and enjoyment, but also for inter-town cooperative effort.

3.A.3 Regional Facilities in Acton

3.A.3.1 NATHANIEL ALLEN RECREATION AREA

Acton's development of the recently renamed Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area, formerly North Acton Recreation Area, NARA, provides a regional recreation destination. A large 40 acre multi-use park, NARA has a beach and a 9-acre pond for swimming, fishing and boat rentals. Site amenities include playgrounds, athletic fields, a walking path encircling the property and a 2,000 seat amphitheater. NARA hosts recreation and cultural programs



Nashoba Brook.

throughout the year, including an evening summer concert series, and a summer camp.

In 2012, 284 out-of-town seasonal beach memberships were sold (over 478 resident memberships are sold each year). The Recreation Department estimates that approximately 7,000 people from other areas attended the July 4th 2012 celebration and about 800 non-residents partook in our summer evening concert series. Registration lists show that approximately 23% of the program participants were non-residents. Non-residents account for about 20% of field rentals at NARA. In 2012 Acton constructed a fully handicapped accessible baseball diamond at NARA called a "Miracle Field", the first of its kind in Massachusetts.

Approximately 70 children from other towns, or 22% of the participants, attend the NARA Youth Summer Program. For the youth sport leagues that use NARA, about 10% of the participants are non-residents.

3.A.3.2 CAMP ACTON

Camp Acton, formerly used by the Boy Scouts of America as a camping ground, was purchased by the town in 1995 and is still actively booked for campouts as well as evening campfires. Camp Acton is open to both residents and non-residents. Town records show that in the year 2012, Camp Acton was used by boy scouts from all over Massachusetts, and by a number of groups, both resident and non-resident that used the camping area for evening campfires. In 2012, 14 out-of-town groups, most

of them Cub Scouts, used Camp Acton, representing 61% of the reservations.

3.A.3.3 ACTON ARBORETUM

The Acton Arboretum is a cross-country ski destination in the winter. In the summer, the Arboretum's gardens are open to all, and can be rented for certain functions.

3.A.3.4 QUAIL RIDGE COUNTRY CLUB

Quail Ridge, a semiprivate 18-hole golf course, was built in 2007. The recent downturn in the economy resulted in the decision to restrict the course to 9 holes and convert the remaining area to senior housing. This area abuts Nagog Hill Conservation Land and Concord Water District open space along Nagog Pond, and in 2012 the Land Stewardship Committee negotiated with the developer to build a new footbridge over a wetland. There will be an easement for public access (and parking) to the Nagog Hill conservation land from Hazelnut Street utilizing the new boardwalk and trail.

3.A.4 Other Regional Issues and Activities

3.A.4.1 ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST (ACT)

ACT has stimulated regional efforts to protect open space and biodiversity. In 2001, ACT hosted a meeting of representatives from area land trusts (Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Littleton, Stow, Westford, Sudbury Valley Trustees and Mass. Audubon) to explore the ways they could share resources, as well as to discuss regional open space issues.

In 2005, at the request of the Town of Concord who was gifted the land, ACT became the backup holder to the Acton Water District of the Wagner Conservation Restriction. The CR totals 6+ acres at 49B Laws Brook Road, Concord and 66 Laws Brook Road, Acton. Should the Water Supply District of Acton no longer use the premises for water supply purposes or abandons or declares its land (immediately adjacent to this site)



Opening Day at the Joseph Lalli Miracle Field, September 15, 2012.

surplus, ACT will take over stewardship of the land and recreational use of the entire premises for walking and bicycle trails will be permitted.

In 2006, ACT purchased the 16 acre Whitcomb land adjacent to Heath Hen Meadow Brook at the Acton/Stow line. It is part of an ongoing effort to work with the Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Stow Conservation Trust to connect the Heath Hen Meadow Brook Conservation Area to the Flagg Hill Conservation Area in Stow.

In 2008, ACT worked with the Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Concord Conservation Land Trust to gain Commonwealth open space protection for these lands along Route 2. 107 acres in Acton were protected along with 108 acres in Concord. This would not have been possible without regional cooperation.

In 2012 ACT purchased 1 acre of land at 81 Wood Lane abutting the Arboretum. This land represent an important open space addition to the Arboretum.

ACT has met with the Littleton Conservation Trust in an effort to protect lands straddling both towns and continues to be optimistic that a joint land protection project can be achieved.

ACT's goal is to continue to pursue regional land protection opportunities that are consistent with ACT's mission of protecting natural areas including farmland, woodland, natural habitat for wildlife, etc. for the enjoyment and benefit of the general public.

3.A.4.2 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA)

The CPA allows communities to enact up to a 3% surcharge on local property taxes to establish a dedicated fund, to be matched by the Commonwealth, for open space acquisition, historic preservation and affordable housing. Acton's neighboring communities of Bedford, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Harvard, Stow and Westford have all passed the CPA. Acton adopted the CPA in 2002 at the 1.5% surcharge level. The town has successfully purchased several parcels of open space with CPA money including the Caouette farmland, as well as the Groener and Gaebel properties, most recently the Anderson

Concert at NARA Park.



Land off Arlington St. The town currently has over \$1.5 million of CPA funds in the open space set aside fund that is available for open space purchases. Each year, the Community Preservation Committee has allocated approximately \$400,000 to this fund.

3.A.4.3 BAY CIRCUIT TRAIL

Acton has dedicated its portion of the Bay Circuit Trail, a state recreation priority, which runs through the Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, Camp Acton and Stoneymeade conservation areas. Acton's LSCOM is maintaining the trail and signs within Acton's boundaries.

3.A.4.4 BICYCLE TRAILS

Acton is working to realize two regional bicycle trails, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) and the Assabet River Rail Trail (AART). The BFRT currently connects downtown Chelmsford to Lowell. The next phase will connect Westford, Carlisle, Acton, Concord and Sudbury. The AART will provide connection between several downtowns, such

as Hudson, Maynard and South Acton Village. Detailed discussion of these resources is provided in Section 5.C.5.

3.A.4.5 METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL (MAPC)

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the regional planning agency representing 101 cities and towns in the metropolitan Boston area. Created by an act of the Legislature in 1963, it serves as a forum for state and local officials to address issues of regional importance. Through eight sub-regional organizations, MAPC works with its 101 cities and towns. Each sub-region has members appointed by the chief elected officials and planning boards of the member communities and is coordinated by a MAPC staff planner. MAPC has been involved in a variety of activities that affect communities within the region. MAPC revised the current Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) structure, used in the regional transportation model, to improve future analysis of the effects of alternative zoning, open space, and development policies on the transportation system. MAPC growth projections for Acton are discussed in Section 3.C below.

3 A.4.6 MAGIC

The Minuteman Advisory Group on Inter-local Coordination (Acton, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Concord, Carlisle, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow and Sudbury) meets every other month to discuss and work on issues of inter-local concern. Focus is on transportation, the environment, energy, open space, affordable housing, economic and community development, and legislative issues. Current projects include subregional mapping of open space and green space and comprehensive agricultural planning,

3.B HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

The Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan provides a history of Acton, which is provided here.

"Prior to its settlement by farmers from Concord, present-day Acton was frequented by Nipmuck-related



Native Americans, who may have practiced some limited agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering. Many areas of Acton were good campsites especially areas along Nashoba and Fort Pond Brooks as well as Nagog Pond. Artifacts from early hunting and fishing villages have been found in Acton, especially in the area of Nagog Pond.

“Nearly all of present day Acton’s 12,990 acres is comprised of portions of four early land grants. The two largest were: Major Simon Willard’s Grant (known as Iron Work Farm), and the New Grant or Concord Village. Next to these grants was the Praying Indian Township of Nashoba Plantation, which lay entirely outside present day Acton.

“The early colonial landscape included large areas of meadows. These prime grazing lands were the reason Concord sought to annex these additional lands in 1655. The earliest European settler was John Law, Concord’s shepherd, who built his home in 1656 on School Street near Lawsbrook Road.

“By 1730 there were at least two-dozen settlers scattered across the town. In 1735 Acton was incorporated as a town. A meetinghouse was built in the center of town with roads coming from the

outlying farms. Although Acton was primarily an agricultural community in its early days, residents were involved in a range of other economic activities including sawmills, gristmills, the manufacture of barrels to store and ship foodstuffs, a pencil factory and even a woolen industry centered on the Faulkner Mills in South Acton; one of the first large-scale manufacturers of woolen cloth in this country. Remnants of that original mill still exist.

“Only with the arrival of the railroad did the villages really begin to grow, especially West Acton Village. It wasn’t until after the Civil War that the railroad finally went through East and North Acton. The rail beds remain today and are locations for the proposed Assabet River and Bruce Freeman Rail Trails.

“The 1890s brought a shift in population towards South and West Acton, which caused the precincts and school districts to be realigned. The North and East District Schools were combined into the Center District. Although the districts were officially changed the residents still thought of the villages as East and North Acton. The 1990 Master Plan proposed to revitalize these areas and rebuild their village character.

“At the turn of the century Acton was still an agricultural community, with five villages and a population of 2,120. Apples were Acton’s main agricultural export being shipped not only to Boston but to Europe. Before modern refrigeration, space in the cellar of the town hall was auctioned off for storage. Apples were stored in the center of West Acton into the 1950s. Improvements were coming however; a water district was formed in 1912 for West and South Acton; the Center was added later. A town fire department, starting in 1915 with West Acton, replaced the independent fire companies.

“1950 marks the shift from apples to houses, with most of that development in the southern half of the town. There were 3,500 people in Acton in 1950; by 1974 there would be 17,000. The orchards and open fields turned into subdivisions; although Acton still kept its agricultural ties with apples being a major crop into the 1960s. The town was then three villages; Acton Center, West Acton and South Acton. The form of government remains Board of Selectmen — Open Town Meeting form as at the time of its incorporation.”

—<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-4819>

3.C POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

3.C.1 Population

The total population of Acton according to the 2010 census was 21,924 versus 20,331 in 2000, reflecting growth of 7.8 percent or an annual growth rate of less than 1 percent. The town’s population has generally leveled off in recent years after considerable growth during the 1990s when total population grew 14 percent. The number of inhabitants per household has also been declining slightly from 2.69 persons per household in 2000 to 2.66 in 2010.

In 2000, 88 percent of Acton’s total population was Caucasian, 8.6 percent Asian, 1.8 percent Hispanic, and

0.7 percent African-American. The 2010 Census indicates a significant change in ethnicity. 77.3 percent of Acton's population is estimated to be Caucasian, 18.6 percent Asian, 3.0 percent Hispanic, and 1.1 percent African-American. Acton has experienced an extraordinary growth in the Asian population in the last fifteen years.

Acton's population growth has slowed in recent years as Table 3.2 indicates. Acton's population is growing about 0.50 percent per year, far less than the annual rate of 1.30% between 1990 and 2000. Acton's population has experienced several growth spurts – first in the 1950s and especially the 1960s, followed by another slower growth period in the 1970s and then another spurt in the 1990s. Projections developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in March 2011 indicated relatively slow growth through 2035. These figures are somewhat lower than the projections found in the last OSRP.

TABLE 3.2 - POPULATION AND DENSITY		
Date	Population	Population/square mile
1930	2482	124
1940	2710	135
1950	3510	174
1960	7238	359
1970	14,770	732
1980	17,544	875
1990	17,872	894
2000	20,331	1013
2006	20,586	1032
2010	21,924	1098
2020*	22,021	1103
2030*	23,278	1166

* MAPC Forecasts

School-age population and school enrollment increased markedly during the 1900's and 2000's, peaking in 2009. Since 2009 enrollment has begun a steady, slow decline which is projected to

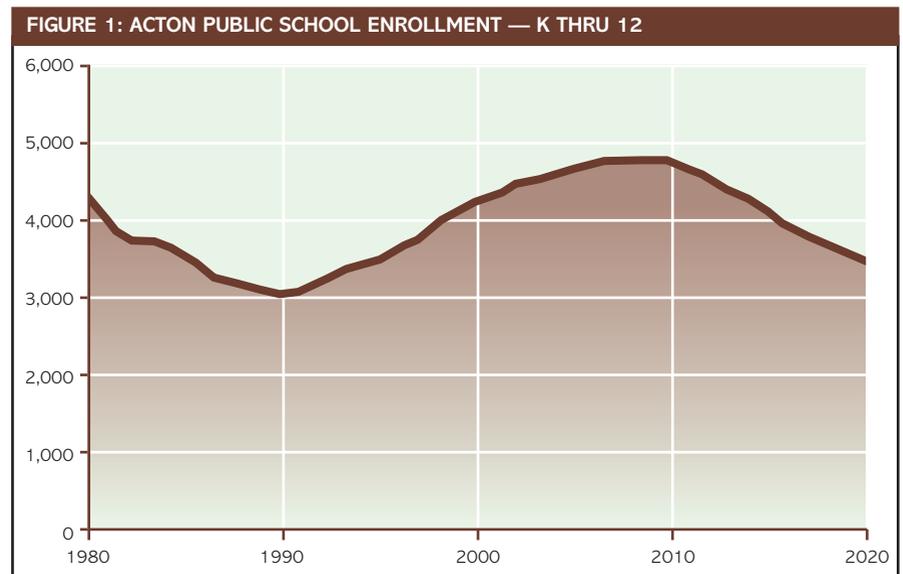
accelerate over the next ten years. A general aging of the population, including a lower birth rate, coupled with lower housing turnover rates and fewer new homes have contributed to this reversal in school-age population. Whereas in the 1990s the average annual number of new single family homes was 88, during the current decade that annual average has fallen to 40. Additional new housing construction in the form of 40B developments has replaced the single family construction, however the number of school-age children in such developments is significantly smaller than found in single family homes. In addition, the birth rate in Acton has declined significantly. During the 1990s, the annual number of births averaged 252; during the period 2005-2011, that number has declined to 188. As a result enrollment is expected to decline by 12 percent over the next ten years. This enrollment trend is shown below in Figure 1.

At the other end of the spectrum, Acton's senior population is the most rapidly growing segment of our population. Between 2000 and 2010, Acton's over-60 population grew at an annual average rate of 4.3 percent to over 3,900. Seniors now comprise over 17% of the town's total population compared to less than 12% in 2000. Seniors have stayed in Acton in part due to the construction of senior housing in town such as the Robbins Brook and Ellsworth Village projects; and there are other planned senior housing developments as well. Recent projections indicate that the senior population will continue to grow at an annual rate of 2-3% over the next twenty years, more than double the total population growth rate. Recent projections indicate that Acton's senior population will

top 6,000 by 2030. This places new emphasis on the need for additional recreation opportunities for the town's senior population, and the town is currently studying the construction of a new senior center.

The average assessed value of single-family homes rose significantly from \$292,642 in 2000 to \$542,140 in 2007. Since 2007, with the economic downturn, it dropped and in the last two years stabilized at \$500,000. The total valuation of the town has also risen significantly during this time period, from approximately \$2,034,000,000 in fiscal year 2000 to approximately \$3,948,000,000 in fiscal year 2007, and since then dropping to \$3,641,550,118 in 2012. The town's tax base is heavily oriented to residential, with over 87% of the total property valuation falling into the residential category.

Between 2000 and 2012, the average tax bill has increased at an annual average rate of 6.5 percent, whereas during the same period the average single family home has increased in value at an annual rate of slightly less than 6 percent per year, even including the effects of the recent economic downturn. Acton enjoys the highest





(AAA) bond rating having been upgraded in 2009 along with only 20 other municipalities in Massachusetts and 170 nationwide. The town currently has a very strong financial reserve position with total reserves in excess of 10% of its operating budget.

The demand to use undeveloped land for residential development has continued as more marginal parcels are being developed and greater “infill” takes place. The town is currently reviewing and updating its Master Plan as part of the development of a Comprehensive Community Plan. The “Acton Comprehensive Community Plan – Emerging Vision and Goals for Acton’s Future” was published in April 2009 and the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan was published in April 2012.

3.C.2 Employment

The unemployment rate in Acton was only 4.1 percent as of late 2011 compared with the state average of 6.4%. Acton and the Commonwealth have recovered significantly since the depths of the recession in 2009 when unemployment in Acton exceeded 5%. The Acton 2020 Plan recently did a detailed review of economic development in the Town, which is summarized here:

No single employer dominates Acton’s workforce. There are approximately 11,248 people employed in jobs within Acton. The major categories of employment are retail trade, public administration including public schools, health care and social assistance, computer systems design and related services, education services (not including public schools) and eating and drinking establishments. There are approximately 11,757 Acton residents in the labor force (working within or outside of Acton). The largest number of Acton residents are employed in the high wage/high education categories of management, computer/mathematical, educational training/library, sales related and office/administrative support. Nearly 90% of Acton’s residents commute to work via automobile and 4.5% use public transportation. With the rise in fuel prices, there is an increased, unmet demand for public transportation, particularly for commuters into Cambridge and Boston.

In 2008, the Haartz Corporation placed a conservation restriction on approximately 20 acres of forested uplands on its property. No other private employer supplies open space.

3.C.3 MAPC Build-Out

Most recently, MAPC’s build-out projections for Acton have identified a future water supply shortage. This OSRP update has made water supply and conservation one of its major goals for the next five years and addresses the means to accomplish that goal in Section 9.

From Acton 2020:

- All of Acton’s public water supply comes from groundwater wells.
- Water demand has been relatively constant over the past six years, approximately 600 million gallons per year (MGY), reflecting water conservation efforts. Acton’s state permit allows up to 708.1 MGY.
- Residential water demand is estimated by Acton Water District to be roughly 55 gallons per bedroom per day, substantially lower than the norm of 70.
- 80% of Acton’s homes have on-site septic systems, a high ratio for a town of Acton’s population. The other 20 percent use sewers or package treatment to dispose of wastewater.

The following is from the I495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan: (pages 57-61):

- Sustainable water practices will increasingly depend on conservation and innovation throughout the I495 corridor to ensure protection of both economic and environmental health.

The issue of water infrastructure in Massachusetts is of such importance that in 2010 the Legislature created the Water Infrastructure Finance Commission (WIFC). The Commission is charged with developing a comprehensive, long-range water infrastructure finance plan for the Commonwealth and its municipalities. Specifically, the Commission was charged to: “examine the technical and financial feasibility of sustaining, integrating and expanding public water systems, conservation and efficiency programs, wastewater systems and storm water systems

of municipalities and the Commonwealth, including regional or district systems.”

Water withdrawals are regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) under the authority of the Water Management Act. Thus, new or increased municipal water supplies require permits and the reporting of water use data to DEP. Overall, growth projections are for population expansion of approximately one percent per year, with an accompanying growth in employment population of one-half of one percent. This growth will put increasing pressure on local water systems. While water is a relatively abundant resource in Massachusetts, it is a limited natural resource nonetheless and an asset of the water supply system that is as important as pipes and pumps. Of the communities in the Compact Region, all but two are projected to increase their water use. In some cases, demand is projected to double.

Acton is listed as one of 22 towns (out of a total of 37 cities and towns in the MetroWest Region) in the 1495 MetroWest Development Compact Plan where water demand is projected to significantly exceed current authorizations.

Additionally, forecasted increases in water demand are likely to result in corresponding increases in wastewater demand. As of 2011, 19 out of 37 communities in the region had wastewater treatment facilities (Acton is one of these) and all were at or near their current discharge permit limits. Increased water use translates into direct impact on wastewater flow demand. Thus the need for expansion would present a serious challenge.

3.C.4 Land Use and Development Patterns

According to the Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan (Executive Summary p. 13) Acton’s land area is approximately 13,000 acres (20 square miles). There are about 2,200 acres of developable land (vacant and not wetland). 29% of Acton’s land area is open space (lower than five of the towns it touches *). Roughly 1/3 of this open space is not protected from development.

Based on 2008 land use data, approximately 1,800 additional housing units could be built on land now zoned residential, bringing the total at build-out to 10,300, or 22% more than today. This would take more than 30 years at projected growth rates.

* These are Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, Sudbury and Westford.

3.C.5 State Model Open Space Design (OSD) Bylaw

The OSD Bylaw is provided for in MGL c.40A section 9. To mitigate the effects of residential “sprawl,” OSD is a practical approach to residential subdivision design that promotes open space preservation based on environmental and social priorities. It features partnership in development design between municipal officials and developers that provides innovative flexible incentives for

highest marketability, mixed housing types and land uses, and minimal disturbance to the natural terrain. Sprawl contributes to a variety of problems for Massachusetts communities such as Acton including loss of community character, lack of housing, social isolation of residents, and threats to natural resources and water quality. It is an alternative to “cluster zoning” and provides for a more “resource-based” approach to address specific needs of a community. Approximately 20 Massachusetts towns have adopted their own OSD model by-law. Acton has its own OSD zoning by-law (Acton’s Zoning By-laws Section 4.2) as well as its own Planned Conservation Residential Community (PCRC) developments by-law, Section 9.1.

See www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth-toolkit/pages/mod-osrd.html and Town of Acton Zoning By-Laws: <http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/659>



Annual Fourth of July Celebration at NARA Park.

3.C.6 The 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan

The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development announced this plan in March, 2012. The 495/MetroWest Region is made up of 37 cities and towns along the I-495 corridor. The intent of the Plan is to plan for and promote future growth while ensuring that such growth is sustainable. At its core, the Compact Planning process was a locally driven effort built on the priorities identified by the communities in the region. The Plan identifies areas in the region that are considered Priority Development Areas (PDA's) and Priority Preservation Areas (PPA's) in each community, which are intended to guide future land use decisions. (url reference below)

The following is an excerpt from the 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan pages 4-6:

The 495 Compact Region grew at a pace of 6% between 2000 and 2010, compared to 3% for the state overall, gaining 40,400 new residents in that time period. The Region has also grown more culturally and ethnically diverse in the past decade, with minority populations increasing by at least 5% in each of the Region's community types (Figure 3). The Latino and Asian populations experienced the largest percentage increases, with the Latino community growing in Regional Urban Centers like Worcester, Framingham and Marlborough, and the Asian community growing in the suburbs Westborough, Shrewsbury and Acton. There is every indication that this growing diversity trend will continue both in the Compact Region and statewide.

Understanding the Region's demographic profile is critical to understanding and planning for our future economic profile. Demographic trends drive our labor force. There is a clear trend in declining school-age children in the Region overall (Figure 4). The working age population (defined as ages 18 – 64) grew by 7% over the past decade and, interestingly, this group grew faster in the Regional Urban Centers than it did in the Maturing and Developing suburbs. In contrast,

Wetlands restoration panel, NARA Park.



the suburbs experienced increases in their population of people aged 65 and over.

These changes have significant land use as well as fiscal, environmental and social implications. For example, growing suburban populations typically require expensive new infrastructure while population and job growth in older population centers could take advantage of existing networks like roads, sewers and rail lines.

—<http://www.495partnership.org/assets/Compact/FinalPlan/finalcompactplansmall2.pdf>

3.C.7 Executive Order 418: Affordable Housing and the Community Development Guide

Chapter 40B is a state statute, which enables local Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBAs) to approve affordable housing developments under flexible rules if at least 20-25% of the units have long-term affordability restrictions. The goal of Chapter 40B is to encourage the production of affordable housing in all cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. The standard is for communities to provide a minimum of 10% of their housing inventory as affordable. In 1988, only 2.1% of Acton's total housing stock was affordable. As of January

2011, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has Acton with 519 affordable housing units, or 6.1% of the total 7,645 housing stock. With projected growth expected to bring the housing stock to 9,176 by 2020, this would require that approximately one-half of the new homes would need to be affordable to achieve the 10% goal. The Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) owns or manages much of Acton's affordable housing, and will likely play a major role in the creation of new affordable housing.

The state has linked the environment and open space with its efforts to increase affordable housing in communities such as Acton that either have not met, or even demonstrated compliance with, the state's affordable housing goals. The state required such communities to prepare a Community Development Plan that will set forth a process to increase affordable housing while protecting open space and the environment.

3.D GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

3.D.1 Pattern and Trends

Acton started as a farming community with saw and grist mills centered around Nashoba and Fort Pond Brooks. For a review of Acton's early growth trends, refer back to the history write-up in Section 3B.

After World War II, Acton quickly grew into a suburban bedroom community due to its proximity to Boston and major commuting highways, as well as commuter rail. In 1960, approximately 20% of Acton's tax base was from the commercial and industrial sector. That same split, 80% residential/20% commercial remained relatively constant until the mid-1990s when it fell to approximately 85% residential/15% commercial, where it stands today.

The typical development pattern in the 1950s through 1970s consisted of single-family home subdivisions, with lot sizes ranging from half acre to two acres, depending upon the section of town. The early 1970s saw a few years of growth of apartment buildings, principally along Route 2A, but also in isolated areas of

West and South Acton. Many of these units have now been converted to condominiums, either investor-owned or owner-occupied. More recently, residential development has occurred in clustered developments in response to zoning that allows density bonuses (and condominiums) for such developments in return for preservation of open space. In recent years, the average new single-family home constructed in Acton has increased in size and in value. New homes in town now typically are valued in the \$500,000-\$750,000 range. The median sales price through September 2010 was \$498,750 for single family units (The Warren Group, Banker and Tradesman).

3.D.2 Infrastructure

Acton is bisected by Route 2, which provides a commuting route not only into Boston, but also to the industrial areas along Routes 128 and 495. Growth along the I-495 corridor has placed increasing demands on housing and other infrastructure in town. Route 2A (Great Road) serves as a significant regional retail and commercial corridor. Traffic along these major arteries has grown significantly in recent years, at an annual average rate of over 2 percent. Increasing commercial and residential development along Rt. 2A is placing greater traffic burdens on the road than it can handle. The town recently reached a compromise with the developer of a commercial development along Great Road reducing it in size due to concerns about traffic impacts. The town is also served by the MBTA commuter rail with service into Boston, and a stop in South Acton.

Public water is available in the majority of town and gas is available on about half the public roads. Electricity and telephone service exists on virtually all public roads. Acton completed construction of the Adams Street sewer treatment plant in February 2002. It serves approximately 10% of the town, and is at approximately 83% capacity, leaving 17% unused capacity for future use. The Board of Selectmen are developing a policy to determine how this extra capacity will be used, and it is part of their Five Year Action Plan to do so. See Map E.

Acton has approximately 120 miles of public roads: 10 miles consist of major state highways, approximately 50 miles consist of "historic" town roads, and around 60+ miles consist of subdivision roads built since the mid-1950s. The average household in Acton drives 76 miles per day, the lowest of the adjacent towns except Concord (Acton 2020 Executive Summary page 13).

According to the I-495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan, travel demand model results indicate that the Distributed Growth Scenario is projected to result in a 16% increase in the total number of trips being made over the next 20 -30 years and a 21% increase in vehicle miles travelled (VMT). As a result congestion is also likely to be more widespread throughout the region.

Acton initiated the Minute -Van and Dial-A-Ride service in 2010. This unique transportation service offered by the Town of Acton can be utilized by calling the dispatcher or going on-line to book a trip 24 hours in advance. The service covers anywhere in Acton or



Accessible Boardwalk, NARA Park.

within a 3.5 mile radius of Acton Town Hall on a space-available basis. Children under age 12 may ride with an adult. Children aged 12-18 may ride alone with parent permission. The service operates Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Cost is generally \$2/trip, \$1/ trip for Seniors/Disabled and the van is equipped with a wheelchair lift. Out of town locations served include: West Concord Center, Emerson Hospital, Maynard Center, Skating Rink and Food Pantry in Boxborough. The Minute-Van also provides Rail Shuttle service from two satellite parking lots, Mt. Calvary Church on Prospect Street and the West Acton Fire Station on Central Street to the South Acton MBTA Commuter Rail. <http://www.minutevan.net>

3.D.3 Build-Out Analysis

Acton's land area is approximately 13,000 acres (20 square miles) of which 29% is open space (less than that of five of the abutting towns). Roughly 1/3 of this open space is not protected from development. There are about 2,200 acres of developable buildable land, i.e. vacant and not wetland. Based on 2008 land use data, approximately 1,800 additional housing units could be built on land now zoned residential, bringing the total build-out to 10,300, or 22% more than today. This would take more than 30 years at the projected growth rates.*

3.D.4 Acton's Water Resources

The following information was obtained from the Annual Report of the Acton Water District for the year ending December 31, 2012 and the Acton Water District Winter 2012 Water Words Notice:

2012 marked the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of the Acton Water District by the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The capacity and quality of Acton's water resources has increased in size and distribution of the network to accommodate the needs of the Town's expanding population. Acton's population

*Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan Executive Summary, page 13.

is currently increasing at a rate of about 1% per year. Ronald R. Parenti, Chairman of the Acton Water District, attests that conservation efforts have been very effective in reducing the average per person water usage (Annual Report Acton Water District for the year ending December 31, 2012). Sophisticated water filtration has become an important aspect of the District's operation. The North Acton Plant became operational in 2009 at a cost of approximately \$6,000,000. Construction of a similar facility in South Acton will be initiated in 2013 to treat the two Assabet wells and the School Street well field, which represents the District's most productive water resource. The district strictly enforces water restrictions during the summer.

The Acton Water District supplied 95% of the residents of the Town in 2012. The piping network of the

water distribution system has grown to 130 miles of pipes buried beneath the town. The District reports that they must continue a regimen of infrastructure replacement to maintain sustainability. As a result, ground breaking on a major new treatment plant in South Acton is expected to occur in the fall of 2013 and subsequent commissioning by December of 2014.

In 2011-2012 the Water District contracted with Wright-Pierce Environmental Engineers to create a 10-year system wide Master Plan. The document evaluates existing conditions. Additionally, the ability to supply water and capacity are assessed using population and projected growth. Acton's water system is ever expanding to support new building. The Water District intends to begin a process of new source exploration to find additional sources of water to meet additional demand.

Water Conservation is crucial to meeting increased demand. Water rebates were offered on a rolling basis in 2012 for customers replacing older toilets and washing machines with EPA WaterSense toilets and Consortium of Energy Efficiency Tier 3 washing machines. A free "Irrigation 101" class was offered, as well as offering customers access to the Home Water Works website, a powerful tool to understand water use and efficiency measures in the home. <http://mwwa.memberclicks.net/>

Source Water Projection: The Environmental District Manager, Matthew Mostoller, provided technical support to the District Counsel with respect to encroachment (illegal dumping and off-road vehicle use, for example) at the Assabet Well Site. Water District staff also continued their participation in technical meetings and review of documents related to the ongoing Acton – WR Grace site cleanup process (information on the Superfund site can be found at www.epa.gov/region1/superfund and searching for "Acton"). The Landfill area treatment system continued to operate as did the Northeast Area treatment system. Both of these systems are designed to remove contaminants from the aquifer and limit the concentrations of contaminants reaching the vicinity of the District's wells. In June 2012, a transformer on a utility pole in Zone 1 of the Clapp wells fell and ruptured. District staff worked with NStar, MassDEP and Clean Harbors Environmental to assess and clean up the release of mineral oil from the transformer. Groundwater was not impacted by this incident.

The Acton Water District participates in many education and outreach programs to the public, including public school students, local Discovery Museum, high school Envirothon Team, Cub Scouts, Acton Lions and Rotary clubs, Green Acton and the Council on Aging. Acton TV produced a documentary on the Water District.

The Acton Water District continually promotes water conservation. They participate in the Alliance for Water Efficiency. Homeowners are encouraged to visit the new website www.home-water-works.org to identify water used and water wasted based on individual actions in the home.



Yellow pond-lily floating on Robbins Mill Pond.

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

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4.A TOPOGRAPHY, SOILS, GEOLOGY, AND CLIMATE

4.A.1 Soils

Soils are predominantly moist, but rough and stony in character, with many areas of sandy loam. Wet soils are associated with the stream valleys, and certain areas of town have a number of ledge outcroppings.

The soil types identified in this report were compiled for the Town of Acton by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and reported in "Soil Survey of Middlesex County, Massachusetts", 2009. (See Section 11 in Map Booklet, Map 4, General Soil Map of Middlesex County, MA.) These soils are described below. There are 547 acres of prime agricultural soils (See *Agricultural Survey* in appendix.) and a limited number of active farms in town that total about 167 acres, according to the land classification of the Acton Assessors (Chapter 61: 97 acres, other, 70 acres). Much of the prime farmland is no longer in agricultural use. The general soil map shows broad areas which have a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, and drainage. Each map unit on the general soil map is a unique natural landscape, typically, consisting of one or more major soils or miscellaneous areas and some minor soils or miscellaneous areas, and is named for the major soils or miscellaneous areas. The components of one map unit can occur in another, but in a different pattern. (Need soil map)

The general soil map can be used to compare large areas for general land uses. Areas of suitable and unsuitable soils for different uses can be inferred from the map. Because of its small scale, the general map is not suitable for planning the management of a farm or field or for selecting a site for a road or building or other structure. More detailed mapping is available for those purposes. The soils in any one map unit differ from place



to place in slope, depth, drainage and other characteristics that affect management. Any particular site can have a variety of soil types.

4.A.1.1 HINCKLEY-FREETOWN-WINDSOR (BEIGE, #3 ON MAP)

Nearly level to steep, very deep, excessively-drained sandy soils that formed in glacial outwash; and nearly level, very deep and very very poorly-drained organic soils.

Excessively-drained Hinckley soils are on glacial outwash plains and terraces. Nearly level, very poorly-drained Freetown soils are in large depressions and along streams. These typically have layers of muck, mucky peat and peat to a depth of about 65 inches.

Excessively-drained Windsor soils are on glacial outwash plains, and the tops of terraces and deltas. Typically, the soils have an 8-inch surface layer of loamy sand. The 15-inch subsoil consists of loamy sand in the upper part and sand in the lower part. The substratum consists of gravelly sand and sand.

The dominant minor soils in this general map unit are the somewhat excessively-drained Merrimac soils on smooth-sloping plains, moderately well-drained Sudbury and Deerfield soils on low plains and in swales, and both

poorly-drained Wareham and Raynham soils and very poorly-drained Scarborough soils in depressions and along drainage-ways.

This map unit is mostly forested. Some areas are cropland. Many areas are used for home sites. A few isolated areas are used as sources of sand and gravel.

This map unit has severe limitations for onsite sewage disposal, as the Hinckley and Windsor soils readily absorb, but may not adequately filter and treat, the effluent from septic tanks and may contaminate ground water resources. This map unit is poorly suited to cultivated crops and pasture

as the Hinckley and Windsor soils are droughty and require irrigation for optimum crop production. Freetown soils have severe limitations for urban use because they are wetlands.

4.A.1.2 PAXTON-MONTAUK-WOODBRIDGE (YELLOW, #6 ON MAP)

Nearly level to steep, very deep, well-drained and moderately well-drained loamy soils formed in glacial till on drumlins and smooth-sloping ground moraines.

Well-drained Paxton soils are on top slopes and side slopes of drumlins. Typically, the soils have a 7-inch surface layer of sandy loam. The subsoil has fine sandy loam in the upper part and sandy loam in the lower part. The approximately 43-inch substratum is firm sandy loam in the upper part and very firm fine sandy loam in the lower part.

Well-drained Montauk soils are on smooth sloping ground moraines and broad, irregularly- shaped drumlins. Typically, the soils have a 7-inch surface layer of fine sandy loam. The subsoil is about 22 inches thick and consists of sandy loam. The substratum is firm, gravelly loamy sand.

Moderately well-drained Woodbridge soils are in drainage swales and on top slopes, upper side slopes, and

toe-slopes of drumlins. Typically, the soils have a 2-inch surface layer of fine sandy loam. The subsoil of fine sandy loam has distinct, brown and yellowish-red masses of iron accumulation. The substratum is firm, fine sandy loam with similar red masses of iron accumulation.

The dominant minor soils are moderately well-drained Scituate soils on drumlins and moraines, and poorly-drained Ridgebury and very poorly-drained Whitman soils in depressions and drainage-ways. Many small areas of very poorly drained Freetown and Swansea soils occur in depressions and small narrow valleys.

This map unit is mostly forest. Some areas are orchards, hay, or pasture. Some areas are used for home sites. It has severe limitations for onsite sewage disposal because of restricted permeability and a seasonal high water table. Where slopes do not exceed 15 percent, this map unit is well suited to cultivated crops, orchards and pasture, and has good potential for conifer production. Areas with slopes in excess of 15 percent are suitable for orchards, but are subject to erosion.

4.A.1.3 URBAN LAND-MERRIMAC-UDORTHENTS (BLUE, #4 ON MAP):

Soils are nearly level to strongly sloping, very deep, somewhat excessively-drained Merrimac soils on broad outwash plains and valleys, plus areas of urban land and udorthents (man-altered land).

Nearly level and gently sloping, somewhat excessively-drained Merrimac soils are in areas where less than 85 percent of the land is covered with impervious surfaces, and most areas are in intricate patterns with urban land. Typically, the soils have a surface layer of fine sandy loam about 9 inches thick. The subsoil is gravelly sandy loam in the upper 9 inches and gravelly loamy coarse sand in the lower 8 inches. The substratum is gravelly coarse sand in both the upper and lower parts. Urban land consists of areas where 85 percent or more of the land is covered with impervious surfaces such as buildings and pavement.

Udorthents consist mainly of areas where soil has been removed and areas that have been filled. Where the surface soil has been removed, loamy or sandy subsoil and substratum layers are exposed. The fill consists of soil, rubble, refuse and spoil from dredging, and ranges from 2 to 20 feet thick.

The dominant minor soils are well-drained Canton, Charlton, and Paxton soils on uplands. Also included are moderately well-drained Sudbury soils in swales and depressions and excessively-drained Hinckley soils on knolls and low ridges. Freetown, Swansea, and Scarboro soils occur in isolated wetlands.

This map unit is mostly in residential, commercial and industrial developments. Because of the Merrimac soils, this map unit has severe limitations for septic tank absorption fields; but since most of these areas are served by municipal water and sewage disposal systems, there are few limitations for additional development, as far as the major soil components are concerned.



Canada goose feather floating on pond, Nashoba Brook.

NOTE: The Acton 2020 plan goes into a discussion of septic and soil suitability.

4.A.2 Geology

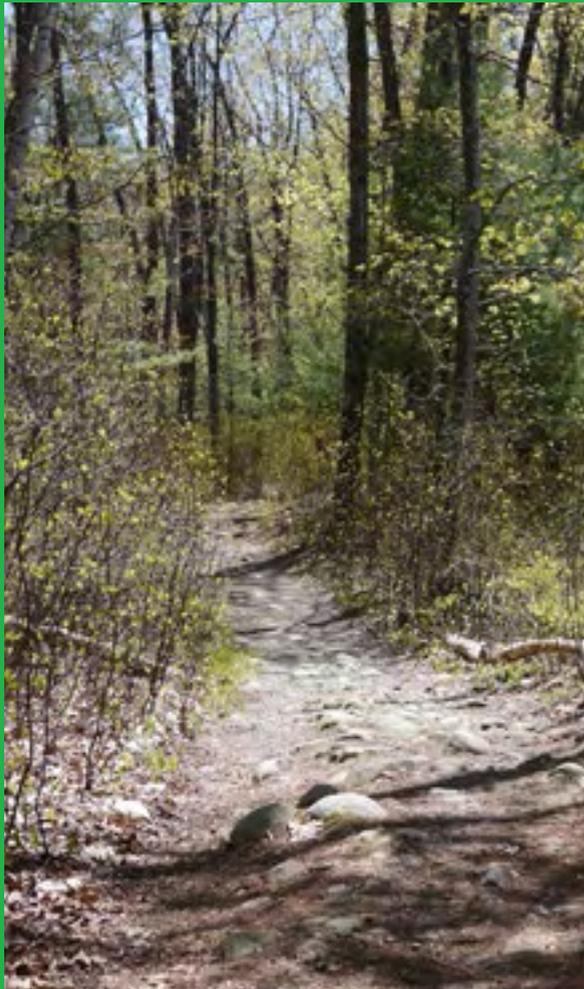
Acton is underlain by old metamorphic rocks, which were reshaped and covered during the continental ice ages. The bedrock beneath Acton is the Nashoba Formation, an assemblage of metamorphic rocks (Hansen, 1956; Alvord, 1975). These rocks were originally sandstones and similar sedimentary rocks, but were altered by heat and pressure over geologic time into metamorphic rocks. The Formation is largely gneiss, a relatively coarse-grained rock which shows different layers of minerals upon close examination. There is considerable variety in the mineral composition of the rocks in the Nashoba Formation, and numerous subdivisions have been identified. Most of the Formation in Acton is biotite gneiss, in which can be seen small plate-like crystals of the mineral biotite, a black form of mica. The Formation is relatively old, dating back to the Ordovician geologic period, which occurred between 430 and 500 million years ago.

The Nashoba Formation has been subjected to extreme forces over geologic time, and at least one mountain range rose and was eroded away. As a result, the Formation is extensively folded and faulted (Goldsmith, 1991). The various subgroups within the Nashoba Formation are mapped as elongated bands stretching from northeast to southwest. Faults separate the Formation from the neighboring rocks to the northwest and southeast. These faults are minor and do not present a significant geologic hazard. Nonetheless, small magnitude earthquakes occur once every year or two. If residents even notice these earthquakes they often mistake them for a large truck passing on the road, although sometimes they are accompanied by a sudden loud noise like a cannon shot.

The Nashoba Formation is punctuated in places by younger volcanic rocks, known as Acton granite. Granite deposits were formed when molten magma intruded from



A glacial esker can be found along a portion of the loop trail at Will's Hole conservation land. An esker is a sand and gravel ridge deposited by a stream that flowed beneath a melting glacier. The curving form of this narrow, raised landform, with steeply sloping sides, functions as a drainage divide. Water on its easterly side flows into Nonset Brook; water on the westerly side flows southward to Wills Hole Brook.



the subsurface into the Nashoba Formation. The intrusions, which are relatively small features, were mined in the past in several small quarries in Acton. Quarries are located in North Acton off Quarry Road and in the Acorn Park subdivision. The large foundation stones seen in colonial houses and barns around Acton are usually Acton granite.

The geologic character of Acton is largely determined by younger deposits that overlie the bedrock. These varied formations were deposited during the continental ice ages which ended 10,000 years ago, a very recent time geologically. During the ice ages, sheets of ice, over a mile thick in places, blanketed Canada, New England and the north-central United States. The glaciers formed, wasted away, and reformed although only the effects of the most recent ice age are clearly discernible in the area's geology. During each ice age, massive sheets of ice moved over the landscape, scraping and re-depositing rocks and sediment. In Acton, the last glacier moved more or less due south. Glacial striations, marks scraped by the moving glacier and the rocks it carried, can still be seen on smooth rock outcrops.

The ice ages resulted in numerous and varied geologic deposits formed when the glacier passed, and also during the post-glacial period as the melting glacier produced torrents of water. Much of Acton is blanketed by glacial till, a compact mixture of sediment. Till is composed of a wide range of grain sizes, from very fine clay particles to large boulders. These various grain sizes were compressed under the moving glaciers into a poorly sorted mixture that is tight to water. The high water tables and poor drainage that interfere with on-site wastewater treatment system performance in much of Acton are caused by these till deposits. The rocky soils that discourage farming in New England are also a consequence of the glacial till soils.

One striking manifestation of till is drumlins, elongated hills aligned with the direction of movement of the glacier. There are nine drumlins in Acton, ranging in height from 310 to 430 feet above mean sea level. They include Faulkner Hill in South Acton, Wright or Mead's Hills in West

Acton, and Great Hill near the intersection of Routes 27 and 111.

The lower elevations are generally occupied by glacial outwash deposits of sand and gravel deposited in water running from the melting glaciers. Fine-grained clay and silt were washed from these deposits by the running water, and therefore these soils are more open and drain more readily than the till soils. All of Acton's public water-supply wells are located in sand and gravel outwash, and these deposits generally require greater protection from pollution than the areas covered by till.

The sand and gravel outwash deposits are punctuated by a variety of intriguing glacial features. Blocks of ice left by the wasting glacier eventually melted to create kettle-holes in the outwash. Grassy Pond and Will's Hole formed in such glacial kettle holes. Today, these two ponds have evolved into quaking bogs in which mats of sphagnum moss float on the water. With time, the floating mats will slowly close in on the open water and eventually the ponds will disappear and give way to meadows.

Eskers, long sinuous gravel deposits, are also found in Acton. These deposits were probably made in tunnels under the wasting glacier. Today, they stand as narrow causeways, 10 to 30 feet high, winding through the woods. Were it not for their tortuous path, one would mistake them for constructed road or railroad beds. Eskers are found in the Town Forest in North Acton and in the Acton Arboretum.

Other glacial deposits include kames, kame terraces, and kame deltas. Kames are relatively flat-topped hills that formed in holes in the ice sheet. Kame terraces were formed by glacial melt-water streams along the margin between the wasting ice sheet and higher valley walls. Where these streams flowed off the ice onto ice-free land they formed kame deltas. A large kame delta occupies the area south of Fort Pond Brook along the Concord town line and west to Parker Street. A kame terrace lies to the north of the brook along School Street. Forest Road runs on top of a kame west of Hosmer Street.

Beaver dam and lodge, built next to Heath Hen Meadow conservation land pedestrian bridge which spans across Heath Hen Meadow Brook. Additional beaver lodges exist upstream. A larger dam is built downstream, at the convergence of Fort Pond Brook and Heath Hen Meadow Brook. These beaver dams can cause water levels to rise in West Acton neighborhoods, threatening abutting residents' septic systems.

Acton's geology continues to change in present times, and there are geologic formations that postdate the ice ages. They include swamp deposits, which are forming in wetlands throughout the town, and alluvium, which forms in stream beds.

Few commercial rock or mineral deposits exist in Acton. Historically, Acton granite was quarried and deposits of bog iron were used to produce a low-quality ore. Several gravel pits were recently active, producing aggregate from esker and glacial outwash deposits.

There are no features that pose significant geologic hazards or limitations on development. Perhaps the only exception is the recent swamp deposits, which have poor bearing capacity for structures. These deposits generally occur within wetlands, which are precluded from development by town bylaw and the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

4.A.3 Climate

Based on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data at Hanscom in Bedford, the region generally shows seasonal average high temperatures in July of approximately 83 degrees and seasonal low average temperatures in January of 16 degrees. Normal annual precipitation is approximately 43 inches, generally evenly spread with 3-4 inches of precipitation each month across the year. Acton is located on the western side of Route 128, traditionally seen as the snow/rain line beyond which heavier snowfalls have often resulted than in Boston. However, in the last 5-10 years that "snow line" appears to have moved westward to Route 495; whether this is a minor variation or a sign of long-term climate change remains to be seen.

4.B LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

10,000 years ago, during an atmospheric warming period, North America's most recent continental glacier began its slow recession north, which marked the beginning of an evolution into the landscape of Acton we know today. Local topography is dotted with glacial



features mentioned in the geology section. The early European settlers found the scant existing topsoil was acidic and densely mixed with glacial cobble. The results of their painstaking efforts to clear these marginal fields for crops can be seen in the many stone walls criss-crossing the landscape. While several successful farms still operate, most small subsistence farms were abandoned between 1860 and the 1930's; thus many of the mature red oak and white pine forests are about 70 years old, some slightly older.

Acton's most noticeable landscape aspect has been its abundance of trees, although even newcomers are watching familiar woody lots developed. As noted elsewhere, the open fields, pastures, and orchards of Acton's farming past are rapidly becoming obscured by forest re-growth. The town has run an active street-tree maintenance and planting program since the time of the depression, and most new home buyers in the subdivisions

immediately plant their yards heavily. Acton has been recognized by the nation's Arbor Day Foundation as a "Tree City USA" since 1984.

Acton's center corridor, running east to west from Acton Center to the Littleton town line, is particularly woody, and contains two large conservation areas, including Nagog Hill and Grassy Pond. Nagog Hill Road is on Acton's scenic road list. Grassy Pond, small and boggy, is important habitat. There are relatively few homes in this area; development should be guided elsewhere.

Acton's heavy tree cover, which provides a beautiful, cool, leafy appearance to the streets and public areas, and a habitat for birds and small mammals, is a mixed blessing. Acton has very few long vistas. Its many hills disappear behind the trees, and many streams and small ponds are not visible from the road. Many structures that are noteworthy from an historic or architectural point of view are obscured.

The landscape continues to evolve as beavers have created several beaver ponds, killing stands of swamp maples and providing open areas and new ecosystems.

To encourage diverse habitat and to provide aesthetic beauty, unforested open space should be preserved not only from development, but also from the encroaching forest. See 4.D.10 for early successional habitat preservation/meadow management information.

4.C WATER RESOURCES

4.C.1 Acton's Streams and Ponds

Two major streams flow through the town. Fort Pond Brook, fed by Grassy Pond, Guggins Brook and Heath Hen Meadow Brook, flows through the western and southern portions of town. Nashoba Brook flows across the eastern portion of the town; Butter Brook, Will's Hole Brook, Conant Brook and Nagog Brook are its tributaries. Spencer Brook and its tributaries drains the extreme northeast corner of town. Since approximately 75% of the watershed areas for Fort Pond and Nashoba Brooks are located in Acton, the quality of these brooks depends on how well we protect them. The streams and associated wetlands mentioned above provide an estimated average of 65% of the recharge of the aquifers, the source of Acton's water.

Other than the pond at NARA, the town does not have any large ponds or lakes that are used for public swimming, as do many surrounding towns. Ice House Pond, located off Concord Road, was used as a source of ice for many years. Grassy Pond, with its bog-like characteristics, is a source of many rare plants and home to a diverse wildlife population. Part of Nagog Pond is located in Acton (the other part is in Littleton), although water supply rights were assigned to Concord by the General Court in 1884.

The state has classified all of Acton's surface waters, with the exception of Nagog Pond, as Class B waters. This classification indicates the waters are generally suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation, may be used for

water supply with appropriate treatment, and will provide good wildlife habitat. Nagog Pond is classified as Class A water, reflecting its high quality and use by Concord for drinking water.

Excess nutrients are a problem in Acton's surface water bodies. During the summer and early fall a green carpet of aquatic plants, indicating eutropic conditions, can be seen on Robbins Mill Pond, an impounded section of Nashoba Brook. Ice House Pond has had problems in the past with water chestnut overgrowth.

In addition to the nine-acre pond at NARA, Acton has numerous water-related recreational options, which are detailed in the description of water-based recreation in Section 5.C.4. Some of the town's waters are popular for fishing, skating, boating, and wildlife observation. Many of the ponds and streams can only be accessed by hiking



Fishing at NARA Park.

through town conservation lands, but some, such as Ice House Pond, are adjacent to parking. These bodies of water are discussed further in Section 5.C.4 Water Based Recreation. From its hatcheries, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife stocks both Acton's Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook with rainbow, brown, brook and tiger trout each spring. See Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game official website (www.mass.gov/dfwe/dfw/) for more information.

4.C.2 Acton's Water Protection and Conservation Measures — Acton Water District (AWD)

Environmental Manager, Matthew Mostoller, is a member of the New England Water Works Association Conservation Committee, providing him an opportunity to network with other water suppliers and interested parties who are involved in water conservation efforts in New England (*Environmental Manager's Report 2011*). The AWD Offered water conservation rebates in 2012 for replacement toilets and washing machines. They offered a free irrigation 101 class attended by over 30 customers. The District has a membership in the Alliance for Water Efficiency to offer customers access to Home Water Works website, a tool to understand home water efficiency measures.

"For a community the size of Acton, it is unique in both its natural and engineered water systems. All of our water is drawn from groundwater wells located within the Town of Acton. It is true that the aquifers that supply these wells cross many communities, but our ability to access these aquifers is local. In disposing of our wastewater, most of this is returned to our aquifers or local water bodies through septic systems, clustered wastewater plants, and the sewer portions of South Acton and Kelley's Corner. This is in contrast to many nearby communities or ones that we may have moved from or grown up in. Water is usually shipped in or shipped out, sometimes even both, creating the potential for a serious alteration of the natural water cycle. Here in



Acton, we do not import or export our water, which means we have more control and therefore greater responsibility, to address our water and wastewater systems. We all need to be mindful of what we dispose of down our drains, how much water we use during the summer months when it is least plentiful, and increasingly, how we deal with our storm water and balance aquifer recharge and protection needs with new and existing development.”

For more information, please visit their website: www.actonwater.com/Web%20Ready/WaterWords.pdf

AWD PROTECTION MEASURES:

Mr. Mostoller provided technical support to the District Counsel with respect to encroachment at the Assabet Well site. In 2011, he was appointed to the Massachusetts Waste Site Cleanup Advisory Committee to represent water supply interests on regulations and policies regarding contaminated site cleanup. The AWD continued participation in technical meetings and review of documents related to the ongoing Acton-WR Grace site cleanup process. Most notably, the AWD has been able to change regulatory status of 1,4-dioxane and participated in a community update held in May, 2011. The sediment cleanup in Sinking Pond and the North Lagoon wetlands was completed in 2011. For a complete 2013 report by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with maps, visit www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/sites/graceacton/530655.pdf. The Landfill area treatment system continued to operate as did the Northeast Area treatment system. Both of those systems were designed to remove contaminants from the aquifer and limit the concentrations of contaminants reaching the vicinity of the District’s wells. The AWD continues to plan perennial improvements to Acton’s aging infrastructure and, in the realm of treatment and regulatory compliance, they are turning their eye toward South Acton and the full-scale treatment of the Assabet and School Street wells. Construction of a sophisticated water filtration system is

being initiated in 2013. (Excerpted from *Environmental Manager’s Report 2011*).

For more information about water supply and demand see Section 3.C.3 MAPC Build-Out.

4.C.3 River Protection

OARS for the Assabet, Sudbury and Concord Rivers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to protect, preserve and enhance the natural and recreational features of the Assabet, Sudbury and Concord Rivers, their tributaries and watersheds and to increase public awareness of the rivers’ values as important natural resources. Established in 1986 as the Organization for the Assabet River, OAR added the Sudbury and Concord Rivers to its mission in 2011, becoming OARS. They raise awareness of the rivers, collect data, work with local and state governments and promote stewardship. Their most recent accomplishment was an Army Corp of Engineer’s sediment remediation study funded and completed in 2010. The Assabet River runs through a tiny portion of the southeast corner of Acton. The Acton tributary to the Assabet River is Nashoba Brook. There is a canoe launch on Route 62 in South Acton where one can fish, go boating or birding. OARS conducts annual cleanup events, when many volunteers have removed tons of trash (such as tires and appliances) from the Assabet River at the “Canoe Launch” parcel and along the shoreline above the Powder Mill Dam in Acton. For more information including

water quality reports and the EPA-approved monitoring program, visit www.oars3rivers.org.

Acton Stream Teams founder, Mary S. Michelman, passed away from breast cancer in December of 2010. Her organization sought to identify and reduce sources of pollution and excessive nutrients to Acton waterways, and to raise awareness of the wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities provided by Acton’s local streams. The Stream Teams, an all-volunteer group begun in 1998, has not been active since Mary’s passing. In 2012, the Natural Resources Department and the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. collaborated to publicly name a previously-unnamed stream after Mary. The stream, named “Mary’s Brook” flows through the Acton Arboretum and into Cole’s Brook, which flows into Fort Pond Brook. Street signs were installed on Minot Avenue and a plaque placed on the fern boardwalk in the Acton Arboretum. A locally-recognized natural resource may become eligible for federal recognition five years after the honoree has passed away. The Town intends to seek such recognition for Mary’s Brook.

4.D VEGETATION

As stated in the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program BioMap2 Town Overview: “Acton lies within the Southern New England Coastal Plains and Hills Ecoregion, an area comprised of plains with a few low hills. Forests are mainly central hardwoods with some transition hardwoods and some elm-ash-red maple and red



and white pine.” This section describes the vegetation of Acton, including both a historic and management perspective. As per the Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements, this section includes the following specific topics:

- General Inventory
- Forest Land
- Public Shade Trees
- Agricultural Land
- Wetland Vegetation
- Rare Species
- Unique Natural Resources
- Vegetation Mapping Projects

4.D.1 Historic Overview

Acton’s natural plant life still echoes the town’s agricultural past, and is typical of vegetation elsewhere in the region. Acton, like most of Massachusetts, was essentially clear-cut during the Colonial era, and as late as 1900, over 90% of the town was in open fields. As the town was subdivided, starting in 1950, many developments were established in old orchards, fields, and areas that were just beginning to revert to forest. In 1990, those areas of town that were not covered with structures, pavement, or maintained lawns, were approximately 90% forested (including treed house lots), with most trees between 25 and 75 years old. Conversely, MassGIS reports that of the approximately 13,000 acres in Acton, 68 percent was undeveloped land and 32 percent was developed land in 1971. In 1999, that had changed to 54 percent undeveloped and 46 percent developed.

4.D.2 General Inventory

The principal native forest type in Acton is red and white oak, hickory, and white pine in the upland areas, with most flood plains, that had once been excellent hay meadows, reverting to a red maple monoculture. Acton is seeing the growth of new habitats as many of the 30-year-old red maple swamps are flooded by beaver



Waterlily and water chestnut plants on Robbins Mill Pond.

activity. With the inundation of water, the trees have died, and the swamps are becoming open marshes. This circular progression is inviting new species such as spotted turtles and herons. The growing open marsh on Newtown Road is a good example of such a new habitat, although the flooding in nearby residential areas has endangered septic systems. In isolated areas, such as ravines and steep north slopes, there are stands of beech, birch, and hemlock. One example of a hemlock and beech stand occurs in the Spring Hill Conservation Area.

Since 1900, a number of factors have limited diversification of the town’s woodlands compared to what existed in pre-Colonial times. Chestnut blight has eliminated American chestnut, once one of Acton’s most valuable species, from its predominant place in the forest. Virtually all American elms of any size have succumbed to Dutch elm disease. The sugar maples planted along our roadways at the turn of the century have now naturalized into the woodlands, and many of the white ash trees are now dying of “ash decline.” This loss of diversity in the

woodlands could have serious consequences if the area is faced with a new insect or disease complex; in fact, the over-abundance of oak has been a liability during the gypsy moth outbreaks of the early 1980s and again in 1990-1991. Acton is beginning to see occurrence of the Hemlock woolly adelgid, which has decimated hemlocks south of Massachusetts. In August, 2008, the Asian Longhorned Beetle was identified in Worcester, Massachusetts. This alien invasive is a tremendous threat to the hardwood forests of New England, and State and Federal officials have begun a quarantine and eradication program over a sixty-square-mile area, resulting in the removal of over 20,000 trees thus far. If the beetle escapes from the quarantine area, it would only be a matter of time before it reaches Acton. Because the preferred host trees for the beetle include maple and birch, the species selection for roadside trees should be evaluated further.

A number of non-native species are naturalizing into the woodlands. These include Norway maple, European and common buckthorn, oriental bittersweet, burning bush, autumn olive, Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed and multiflora rose. Mile-a-minute vine, a very aggressive invasive, has been reported in Littleton. Purple loosestrife, an invasive wetland plant originally from Europe and Asia, is present in Acton’s wetlands. In the United States, there are no native “pest” species that control purple loosestrife. As a result, the plant spreads rapidly and causes significant negative impacts, including reduced native plant coverage, lower plant diversity and impaired wildlife habitat. Water chestnut, an aquatic invasive, has been found at Ice House Pond and the pond at Robbins Mill. Management of purple loosestrife and water chestnut is described in Section 4.D.10. Acton has been fortunate that another wetland invasive species, reed grass, has very limited presence in the town. In 2009 the Commonwealth enacted a “Prohibited Plant List”, outlawing the planting of invasive

alien species, such as Norway maple, burning bush, and honeysuckle. This will not seriously impede the spread of these invasives, but will set a good educational tone for the public and the green industry.

Despite the loss of many forest species as noted above, a wide variety of plant species exists in Acton. A plant list of the species found in the Arboretum was compiled by Dr. Richard Howard in 1986 and is included in the Appendix. Disease-resistant elms have also been planted at the Arboretum, and, in a limited way, on conservation land, and are part of the ongoing streetscape plantings described in Section 4.D.10. Visit www.elmpost.org for more information on "Saving the American Elm."

4.D.3 Forest Land

Acton has an abundance of forestland. The habitat map (See Map F Vegetation and Fisheries and Wildlife) shows about 7,000 acres of forest, including forested wetlands, in Acton (about 50 percent of the town's total area). A large forested area (720+ acres), in a largely roadless part of town, is located in the northeast corner, east of Nashoba Brook. Part of this area is protected by Spring Hill and Nashoba Brook conservation lands. Another large forested area (400+ acres) is located south of Nagog Pond. Part of this area is protected by the Nagog Hill conservation land. Mixed oaks dominate the upland areas, sometimes mixed with white pine, American beech, pitch pine, black birch, sassafras and pignut hickory. Three hundred and four acres of Acton's privately-owned forests are in the State's Chapter 61 tax abatement program. The program allows the owner to pay reduced taxes as an incentive to keep the land in forest and gives the town first right to purchase the land when the owner wishes to sell.

Much of Acton's forest land is in small private holdings, including street-side trees and the back land of residential lots. Some of these areas are ecologically significant as wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and make important contributions to the town's character.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Urban and Community Forestry

Program has developed guidance for community forest management. A municipality can receive a Massachusetts Sustainable Community Forestry Award if it attains the following six goals:

- Hire professionally trained forestry staff
- Enact a local tree protection ordinance
- Establish an advocacy group
- Develop a Forest Resource Management Plan
- Achieve Tree City USA status
- Maintain good interagency coordination

Acton has achieved four of these six goals. The Municipal Properties Director serves as the Tree Warden and is a certified arborist. Acton has enacted a local tree protection ordinance under the Scenic Roads Bylaw, and further protection is provided under MGL Chapter 87 for public shade trees (see also Section 4.D.4 and 4.D.10). Advocacy groups such as the Acton Garden Club and the Friends of the Acton Arboretum have been established and provide a forum for forest management. The town has good coordination between these groups and departments, as well as the Acton Conservation Commission and the Land Stewardship Committee of the Conservation Commission, which provides stewardship for the Acton conservation lands. Acton has a Forest Management Plan for the 72-acre Wetherbee Conservation land. See section



Mowing at Wetherbee conservation land.

4.D.8. In order to receive accreditation as a Tree City, the following four criteria must be satisfied:

1. Have a tree board or department (such as an active Tree Warden)
2. Possess a community tree ordinance (such as enforcement of MGL Chapter 87)
3. Maintain an annual urban forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita
4. Host an Arbor Day observance and proclamation

4.D.4 Public Shade Trees

Public shade trees include those along streets, in cemeteries and parks, or any other publicly-owned and managed trees. These trees are overseen by the Municipal Properties Department under MGL Chapter 87, and street trees are also protected under the Scenic Road By-Law. The Municipal Properties Director, Dean Charter, also serves as Tree Warden. The incumbent is both a Massachusetts Certified Arborist and an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist. He has also served as President of the Massachusetts Tree Wardens' and Foresters' Association and as President of the New England Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture. The Director and members of the staff are also Massachusetts Certified Pesticide Applicators. Street tree maintenance and the town's shade tree planting program are described in Section 4.D.10.

4.D.5 Agricultural Lands

Acton has a number of farms that are important to preserving the town's remaining rural character. "Prime farmland" (PF) is land available for agricultural purposes (and not currently in urban use) with a favorable combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oil seed crops. "State or locally important farmland" (SLIF) soils are those that fail to meet the requirements of prime farmland but are still important to the production of crops. (Map 4: Soils and Geologic Features Map)



Current active farms include:

- Stonefield Farm in South Acton at the end of Martin Street, a 60-acre working farm that has been in the Simeone family since 1929 (small amount of PF, mostly SLIF). This includes the 15-acre Caouette-Simeone property, purchased at the October 2010 special town meeting. It abuts the Assabet River Rail Trail, forms an important link in a Fort Pond Brook greenbelt, and provides access to the brook and the historic South Acton mill pond.
- Cucurbit Farm, a 17-acre family-owned farm at 32 Parker Street, a working farm (PF and SLIF)
- Idylwilde Farm, owned by the Napoli family, includes approximately 100 acres in and around West Acton, but most of it behind the Central Street location near Route 2. A major portion of the farm's acreage is in the Fort Pond Brook flood plain and is too wet to grow spring crops. Abutting the farm are the conservation areas of Guggins Brook to the south and Jenks to the north (PF and SLIF).
- The Hennessey Farm on Prospect Street, a 17-acre farm containing a feeder tributary to Fort Pond

Brook and abutting town-owned conservation land on Central Street

- Kennedy Farm, a large Westford pig farm, also has 140-acres of land in Acton. Most of the original pig farm has been converted to the Butter Brook Golf Course in Westford, while the Acton portion of the land is classified under Chapter 61 (forestry) and contains a gravel operation.
- The state Northeastern Correctional Facility's farm fields abutting Route 2, approximately 100 acres of fields that in the past were used to grow corn and alfalfa for their dairy herd, which was sold in 2002
- The State Police horse barn and fields, a 16-acre parcel abutting Route 2
- Bobby's Ranch, a large horse farm behind Nagog Park, has an Acton address, but the land is in Westford and Littleton. Bobby's usually has over five dozen horses available for trail riding and lessons.
- Horse farms can also be found in the Pope Road/ Strawberry Hill Road/Estabrook Road area, on Wetherbee Street/Route 2, on Nagog Hill Road, in West Acton and other sections of town.

All agricultural activities should use best management practices, such as those developed by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, to prevent pollution of adjacent wetlands. For a more comprehensive listing, see *MAGIC Agricultural Survey* in the appendix.

4.D.6 Rare Species

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) lists only one plant in Acton that has status under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). The dwarf mistletoe, *Arceuthobium pusillum*, a Species of Special Concern, was last observed in Acton in 1898. BioMap2 states that there are 7 species of Conservation Concern: 1 bird, 2 reptiles, 2 amphibians, 1 insect, 3 mussels and 1 plant.

4.D.7 Unique Natural Resources

Acton encompasses numerous unique natural resources. These are described in full in Section 4.F. According to the 2012 NHESP, Acton has 715 Core Habitat acres, 40% of which is protected. Acton has 79 Acres of Critical Natural Landscape of which 32.2% is protected.

4.D.8 Town Vegetation Management

Vegetation management activities undertaken by the town include programs geared to developed areas, such as roadsides, and also undeveloped areas, such as Conservation Lands. Management of vegetation in developed areas is performed by the Municipal Properties Department (see Section 4.D.4). Vegetation management activities undertaken by the town include the following programs:

- Roadside mowing — Road shoulders are mowed on an annual basis, providing for traffic visibility while allowing wildflowers to flourish.
- Street tree maintenance — Public shade trees, as defined under MGL Chapter 87, are pruned and cared for, to provide for both safety and aesthetic



Wildflower garden on Meetinghouse Hill, Acton Center.

Pile of water chestnuts pulled from Ice House Pond.



quality. Dead or structurally unsound trees are removed as public hazards.

- Shade tree planting program — The town has run a tree-planting program since 1941. Over 2,000 trees have been planted, set back from the road edge, under this program. The town has attempted to plant no more than 10% of any one species, so as to maintain diversity in street trees. Both funding considerations and a lack of suitable planting spots have prevented a “one for one” replanting program for street trees, although natural forest re-growth is a significant factor not only in the woods, but also along the roadsides. In 2009 the Town Meeting appropriated the sum of \$10,000 in Community Preservation Funds (Historic Preservation) to restore the historic traditional streetscape in the three Historic Districts through the planting of street trees. Approximately 15-20 trees have already been planted with this funding, the majority of which were disease-resistant elms. This funding stream should generate another 10-20 new plantings over the next three years.
- Poison ivy control — The Town conducts a very limited poison ivy spray program along the roadsides and hiking trails to allow the public to safely use those areas. A more extensive program has been curtailed due to the onerous requirements of the Vegetation Management Plan, which requires the application of herbicides to a right-of-way, and which has been filed with the Massachusetts Pesticide Bureau.
- Wildlife openings — Any open fields on conservation lands are mowed each fall with a brush hog to keep the fields open and provide a diversity of habitat. As time allows, new fields are also placed on the annual mowing schedule. Six meadow management plans were created in 2013 by Oxbow Associates. These include meadows at NARA; Stoneymeade, Heath Hen Meadow, Grassy Pond and Jenks conservation lands; as well as 3

areas at Morrison Farm. The two primary goals of these plans are to maximize diversity of native flora associated with early successional communities, and minimize or eradicate invasive flora. Other habitat goals of these plans are to establish and maintain the aesthetic appeal of the management area; provide recreational and/or agricultural activities; and establish a mosaic of different types of meadow habitat. See appendix for complete *Oxbow Associates Meadow Management Plan*.

- Purple loosestrife control - In 2001, the Acton Conservation Commission authorized the release into two wetlands areas (Great Hill Conservation Area and NARA Park) of *Galerucella* beetles that eat loosestrife and lay eggs only on that plant. This initiative has had positive effects on controlling the spread of loosestrife, though it has fallen short of reducing loosestrife by 90 percent in those areas as had been hoped.
- Water chestnut control — Ice House Pond was dredged in 1995 to control the infestation of water chestnut. This invasive species has, however, returned. Natural Resources and the Conservation Commission work collaboratively with SuAsCo Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) to schedule volunteer workdays for hand-pulling water chestnuts. Hand-pulling of water chestnut began on Ice House Pond during the

summer of 2011 and will continue with scheduled work-days in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

- Forest Resource Management —In June, 2011, a DCR Forest Management Plan was created for the Wetherbee conservation land. Its stewardship is overseen by the Acton Conservation Commission. The plan's purpose is to manage the parcel sustainably for long-term forest health, productivity, diversity and quality, as well as to enhance cultural, historical and aesthetic resources. The entire plan may be read in the appendix.

4.E FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

As per the Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements, this section includes the following specific topics:

- Inventory
- Vernal Pools
- Wildlife Migration Corridors
- Rare Species
- Wildlife Management

4.E.1 Overview

Over the last 30 years, Acton, like many suburban communities within the Route 495 belt, has experienced a transformation from an agrarian/orchard community to a residential community with greater than 70 percent forest cover. As a result of this dramatic change in land use and increased forest cover, Acton has experienced a reintroduction of many wildlife species, which have been uncommon in eastern New England for the past 150 years.

While wildlife can be found in even the most densely-populated areas of town, the most productive and diverse wildlife habitat corridors follow the two major stream basins, Nashoba Brook and Fort Pond Brook. Together, these streams and their associated tributaries represent Acton's contribution to the Assabet River watershed and are home to a rich wildlife community.





Robbins Mill Pond, part of Nashoba Brook.

Nashoba Brook enters Acton from Westford and flows in a southerly direction, eventually running under Route 2 near the Concord line. The brook traverses a distance of 4.5 miles before it converges with Fort Pond Brook and feeds into Warner's Pond in West Concord. Fort Pond Brook enters Acton from Boxborough and runs in a southerly and easterly direction. Each of these major stream basins and associated tributaries are rich in floodplain/wetlands habitat.

The inventory section of the report focuses on the two major stream basins described above. Each basin's wildlife species are identified, as are the important unprotected open space parcels essential to preserving contiguous, unfragmented habitat. The goal of this section is to identify both inter- and intra-town wildlife corridors vital to the survival success of native species.

4.E.2 Inventory - Nashoba Brook Drainage Basin

The Nashoba Brook Drainage Basin can be broken into three general sections, as described below:

4.E.2.1 NORTHERN NASHOBA BROOK BASIN — NORTH ACTON TO GREAT ROAD

Nashoba Brook and Butter Brook converge in North Acton and flow south into the Robbins Mill impoundment. The northernmost portion of Nashoba Brook is characterized by open marsh/floodplain habitat utilized primarily by beaver, mink, otter and fisher. Much of the flooded red maple swamp associated with recent beaver activity has produced favorable habitat for wood ducks and other cavity-nesting species. Many acres of young red maple swamp common to this riverine ecosystem have been flooded and drowned by beaver activity within the past five years. Muskrats, beaver and river otter populate the open marsh region bordering the inlet to Robbins Mill Pond. Many songbird species nest in the extensive cattail marsh borders.

Of greatest value to the diversity of wildlife species in this area is the undisturbed acreage running north and west into Westford. To the south and east, the unprotected Robbins Mill parcels were developed after a ballot vote to purchase this property was defeated in 2000. However, this property was developed as a cluster subdivision and sixty percent of the total 235 acres has been granted to the town. When combined with the existing conservation lands of Spring Hill, Camp Acton, Nashoba Brook and Hearthstone Hill, this area represents more than 600 acres of contiguous undisturbed uplands forest habitat, as well as extensive forested wetlands. Collectively, the properties along the east side of the Robbins Mill impoundment represent diverse wildlife habitat. The uninterrupted corridor running north into Carlisle and east into Concord should be preserved wherever possible. The uplands forested swamps east of the Robbins Mill impoundment provide critical habitat for many common forest species, both mammal and bird.

The section of Nashoba Brook running south towards Great Road has open marsh and floodplains that have been cited as critical habitat for wood turtles. A cooperative project is being conducted to assess habitat and population of wood turtles in this section of Nashoba

Brook, which employs both students and professionals from Oxbow Wetlands Associates.. Small radio trackers have been attached to several of the wood turtles to follow their migratory patterns.

4.E.2.2 SOUTHERN NASHOBA BROOK BASIN — LAKE NAGOG TO ICE HOUSE POND

South of Great Road and flowing into the Ice House Pond Basin, Nashoba Brook meanders, forming a series of deep pools with steep banks and broad floodplains. This is a prized area for fishing and is populated by both beaver and otter. Beginning in this region and running in a westerly direction, including Conant Brook and Nagog Brook, is an extensive unbroken chain of open space parcels producing one of the most significant wildlife corridors in Acton. This broad wildlife corridor is important to deer, coyote, fox, fisher and the occasional black bear. It connects the Nashoba Brook Basin with Lake Nagog, Nagog Hill Conservation Area, Nagog Brook, Grassy Pond, Wills Hole Brook and several critical unprotected parcels west of Route 27. The blend of both stream corridor and uplands hardwood forest create habitat suitable for white-tailed deer, coyote, red fox, barred owls, screech owls, sharp-shinned hawk, Coopers hawk, broad-winged hawk and wild turkeys, as well as many species of song birds. Access to and viewing of the Nashoba Brook riverine ecosystem will be made easier for the public as implementation and construction of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail becomes a reality.

The portion of the Nashoba Brook Basin south of Brook Street also provides a diverse wildlife habitat. South of the Brook Street bridge, there is a large tract of land (town atlas E-4, Parcel 47) with rich habitat value containing a tapestry of forested uplands, open pastureland and floodplain/marsh. This important unprotected open space provides a critical connection to the properties in the Nagog Brook drainage basin, where white-tailed deer follow a well-traveled corridor to the open space parcels on the west side of Route 27.

The Ice House Pond Basin, in combination with the Morrison Farm and Woodlawn Cemetery property, represents an uninterrupted wildlife corridor through to the Acton Arboretum. White-tailed deer, coyote, red fox and fisher frequent this travel corridor. The Ice House Pond Basin and connected open marsh represent important wildlife habitat for a variety of migratory ducks, as well as nesting habitat for mallards, Canada geese, wood ducks, and a healthy population of muskrats and beaver. Since the dredging of Ice House Pond in 1995 to control the infestation of water chestnut, this area has once again become a favorite fishing spot for Acton residents. An annual volunteer-based workday was begun in 2011, overseen by the Natural Resources Department, to remove water chestnuts from Ice House Pond.

The southern extent of Nashoba Brook in Acton is an area encompassing the farm fields owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Route 2 conservation land and an unprotected parcel (Town Atlas Plate G-4, Parcel 174); the combined area represents more than 100 acres of open space with high wildlife value. This is an area frequented by Canada geese, white-tailed deer, coyote, and several nesting pairs of eastern bluebirds.

4.E.3 Inventory - Fort Pond Brook Drainage Basin

Fort Pond Brook enters Acton from Boxborough and flows in a southerly and easterly direction through much of West and South Acton. A considerable portion of Fort Pond Brook runs through heavily-developed residential areas. The major tributaries associated with Fort Pond Brook are Guggins Brook, Heath Hen Meadow Brook, Grassy Pond Brook, Muddy Brook, Pratt's Brook and Cole's Brook. The Fort Pond Brook Drainage Basin can be broken into three general sections, as described below.

4.E.3.1 FORT POND BROOK BASIN — WEST ACTON/ BOXBOROUGH

Guggins Brook and the associated open marsh habitat, specifically near the Boxborough town line, have proven to be significant breeding habitat for both

wood turtles and spotted turtles. The Natural Resources Department has been working with Brian Butler of Oxbow Associates studying the wood turtles in Guggins Brook. Mr. Butler and the staff of the Acton Water District (AWD) have cooperatively set aside an area on AWD land, which is comprised of sand and gravel where the turtles lay eggs, in order to study and measure their population changes over time. Throughout the Fort Pond Brook watershed, beaver activity is extensive, requiring monitoring and management over the next five years. Evidence of flooding and groundwater infiltration into septic systems (resulting from beaver activity) has been experienced in the Flint Road area south of Massachusetts Avenue. Beaver activity along the Heath Hen Meadow Brook and Muddy Brook tributaries will be monitored, but do not now pose a health or safety concern to West Acton residents. In both locations impoundments caused by beaver dams have greatly diversified wetlands ecosystems by killing off large stands of red maple.



Native cinnamon ferns grow in large clumps in moist woods in Acton.

4.E.3.2 FORT POND BROOK BASIN — SOUTH ACTON/ STOW

The Heath Hen Meadow riverine ecosystem contains extensive wetlands habitat, much of which is protected open space. The Acton Conservation Trust purchased the 16-acre Whitcomb land in 2005 in an effort to connect the Heath Hen Meadow Brook and Flagg Hill conservation areas, making an unbroken wildlife corridor connecting conservation land in Acton to the protected Captain Sargent conservation land in Stow. The upstream section of Heath Hen Meadow Brook represents diverse riverine habitat and an extensive red maple swamp. Beaver activity is widespread in the watershed.

4.E.3.3 FORT POND BROOK BASIN — ACTON CENTER — GRASSY POND

Grassy Pond exhibits peat land characteristics with many associated bog species; the pond and connected wetlands provide important wildlife habitat. There are two



unprotected parcels in this area that are very important to protect for their wildlife habitat and corridor benefits. The first parcel (Town Atlas D-3, parcel 11) is a 14-acre forested property on Newtown Road, abutting Grassy Pond and the Grassy Pond Conservation Area. It contains significant wetlands and provides habitats for important species of birds and warblers. The second parcel (Town Atlas D-3, parcel 10) is a 39-acre property abutting Bulette Road and the Bulette Town Forest. Preserving this property would safeguard a wildlife corridor running from Grassy Pond to Route 2.

In the future, the outlet to Grassy Pond at the intersection of Newtown Road and Arlington Street will require management to eliminate the impoundment caused by beaver activity.

4.E.4 Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are small seasonal ponds that often are not connected to streams or other water bodies. Thus, they depend on groundwater, snowmelt and rainwater, and usually become dry by late summer. Twenty-three Certified Vernal Pools and 142 “potential vernal pools”



Douglass-Gates boardwalk.

are identified on the Habitat Map for Acton. Vernal pools are critical habitats for some salamander species, wood frogs, and a wide variety of other wildlife. Some species of salamanders and wood frogs migrate from surrounding forested uplands to these pools in the spring to breed. Without these vernal pools, we would lose these animals. Potential vernal pools are small topographic depressions or small pockets of suspected standing water identified from topographic maps and aerial photographs by NHESP as possible candidates for being vernal pools. A vernal pool is certified by NHESP following submission of documentation that a species of animals that require vernal pool habitat are actually present. Acton's wetland regulations provide a degree of protection for vernal pools regardless of their certification status. Ponds and vernal pools also provide preferred habitat for the following wildlife species: bullfrog, pickerel frog, eastern painted turtles, little brown bat, big brown bat, mink, and beaver.

4.E.5 Wildlife Migration Corridors

The Nashoba Brook and Fort Pond Brook watersheds described in Section 4.E.2 and 4.E.3 provide the main wildlife migration corridors between Acton and adjoining towns. Several transportation corridors, most notably Routes 2 and 27 and the MBTA rail line, as well as developed areas, serve as barriers to unrestrained migration.

4.E.6 Rare Species

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) lists eight animals in Acton that have status under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). The 2012 list of rare species published by NHESP lists the occurrences of rare or endangered animals in Acton with the date they were last noted. Estimated Habitats of Rare Wetlands Wildlife mapped by NHEPS are indicated on the *Habitat Map*. These areas are known sites for rare or threatened species and receive an extra degree of protection from the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, administered by NHESP, and the Massachusetts

Wetlands Protection Act, administered by DEP and the Acton Conservation Commission. It is likely that there are other important wildlife species and habitats, and more vernal pools in Acton that are as yet unmapped.

The seven listed animal species include one threatened species, the vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus* 2003), and six species of special concern -- blue-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale* 2002), twelve-spotted tiger beetle (*Cidindela doudecimguttata* 1930), frosted elfin butterfly (*Callophrys irus* 2008), dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium pusillum* 1898), wood turtle (*Glyptemys insculpa* 2006), and eastern pondmussel (*Ligumia nasuta* 1999).

4.E.7 Wildlife Management

Much of the vegetation management undertaken by the town, as described in Section 4.D.10, has a wildlife management component, especially as regards to habitat. Maintenance of wildlife openings and control of invasive species such as purple loosestrife and water chestnut help keep a diverse and healthy wildlife population. The Forest Resource Management Plan will also have a large wildlife component. Other specific management efforts include:

- Acton Bluebird Recovery Project — This project has worked with the elementary schools to construct and place bluebird boxes throughout conservation areas. A dedicated group has monitored bluebird boxes, replacing older boxes with better-quality ones, and greatly helping to control the population of house sparrows.
- Vernal pool certification — As indicated above, the town has taken an active role in certifying vernal pools throughout the town. Identification of these resources will help manage adjacent areas to protect these resources.

4.F SCENIC RESOURCES AND UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

Acton has a variety of scenic areas and unique environments worthy of preserving, and fortunately, many of these areas already have some form of protection. As

per the Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements, this section includes the following specific topics:

- Scenic Resources
- Geologic Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Unique Resources

In addition, specific attention is given to the biodiversity of Acton.

4.F.1 Scenic Resources

Acton has diverse scenic resources, encompassing both cultural and natural settings. Specific areas are discussed below in Section 4.F.2 and 4.F.4 (natural) and 4.F.3 (cultural). This section notes general scenic inventories and protections afforded by the town.

4.F.1.1 STATE SCENIC LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

Acton has three areas listed as Distinctive or Notable on the state's Scenic Landscape Inventory. One is Nagog Pond and its shoreline. Another includes portions of Pope, Strawberry Hill and Esterbrook roads. The third area is Grassy Pond, some of which is conservation land, but much of the shoreline is unprotected. For more details, see "The Acton Reconnaissance Report/Freedom's Way Landscape Inventory" online at www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/reconReports/acton.pdf.

4.F.1.2 SCENIC ROAD BYLAW

Acton's Scenic Road Bylaw provides, in part, that any repair, maintenance, reconstruction or paving work done with respect to any road designated as a scenic road shall not involve or include the cutting or removal of trees; or tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof, except with prior written consent of the Planning Board after a public hearing. The bylaw covers all or portions of the following:

Windsor Avenue	Arlington Street	Robbins Street
Stow Street	Liberty Street	Martin Street
High Street	School Street	Piper Road
Hayward Road	Coughlin Street	Taylor Road

Minot Avenue	Forest Road	Newtown Road
Concord Road	Pope Road	Proctor Street
Spring Hill Road	Esterbrook Road	Center Street
Brook Street	Carlisle Road	Fort Pond Road
Nagog Hill Road	Quarry Road	Hammond Street
Minuteman Road	Strawberry Hill Road	Bulette Road
Isaac Davis Trail	Wheeler Lane	Simon Hapgood Lane

4.F.2 Geologic Resources

Acton has a rich history of utilizing its granite deposits to produce products shipped around the northeast for building construction. Throughout much of North Acton, evidence of these open pit gravel quarries can be seen. In recent years the largest of the quarries, found off Quarry Road, has been purchased privately and some of the granite is now once again being used to generate sculptures. Evidence of rich gravel deposits resulting from the last continental glacial period 10,000 years ago can be found throughout Acton. The North Acton Recreation Area (NARA) 9-acre pond was excavated from alluvial outwash material. One hundred eighty thousand cubic yards of gravel from this deposit were shipped to Boston and became incorporated into the Fort Point Channel roadway reconstruction, otherwise known as "The Big Dig." Other notable gravel deposits in the form of eskers can be found throughout Acton. Three notable eskers on publicly-owned land are the esker at Wills Hole/Town Forest, the esker in the Acton Arboretum and the esker on the Bulette land near Route 2. Acton's conservation lands feature numerous egg rocks. These glacial erratics can be found highlighted in the trail guides.

4.F.3 Cultural Resources

Acton has a rich historic background, as described in Section 5. With specific regards to open space and recreation, the town's resources include the Town Common and several historic sites, structures and corridors as described below.

4.F.3.1 TOWN COMMON

Acton is blessed with a traditional town common, which still marks the governmental center of town, and

Glacial erratics are stones and rocks that were transported by a glacier, and then left behind after the glacier melted. Erratics can be carried long distances, and are a piece of rock that differs from the size or type of rock native to the area in which it rests. Scientists sometimes use erratics to help determine the route of ancient glacier movement.



Resting Rock in Nagog Hill conservation area.

is the geographic center as well. This area includes "Meeting House Hill", the site of the first meetinghouse in Acton, which is now a small park and wildflower garden maintained by the Acton Garden Club. The wide grass expanses, mature trees, historic homes and stone monuments complete the "New England small town" tableau. The town common itself is protected by both its Chapter 40C Historic District designation, and as part of the Acton Center National Historic Register District. However, its appearance could benefit from having the utilities put underground, and any attempt to widen busy Route 27, which bisects the Common, should be resisted.

The Acton Congregational Church, a traditional New England structure with spire and a well-maintained street-front garden, has expanded the church building and its parking area on a previously-wooded parcel of land, Boardman's Hill, in town center. This loss of a charming rural lot in the town center was offset somewhat by additional parking for the church that will keep vehicles off the narrow residential roads during church functions.

The expansion of the Acton Memorial Library required the use of Goward Field for parking. This change in use required a vote of the State Legislature. The adjoining residential property, where portions of the Library's septic system are located, was purchased by the Town for future municipal use. The Library's 1890 building, which faces Main Street, was not changed. The small playground located behind the Library on land that was part of Goward Field is a popular park for young children. A new handicapped-accessible playground will be installed in the summer of 2013.

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the signing of the Armistice in 1918 ended the First World War. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 2011, Acton saw a new Veterans' Memorial on the Town Common. The granite memorial was carved by Acton artist, Yin Peet, and is of an eagle with a revolutionary flag in one talon and an American flag in the other talon. The wording on the monument reads:



Veteran's Memorial monument, Acton Center.

"To all Veterans, and those now active in the Armed Forces of the United States of America:

We honor your service and recognize the hardship of your loved ones,

We welcome you home, while remembering those who have yet to return,

And we Grieve for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

With heartfelt gratitude that

Our Freedom will endure and flow to future generations,

We hereby dedicate this Memorial to you.

The People of Acton

11*11*11"

4.F.3.2 HISTORIC SITES, STRUCTURES AND CORRIDORS

South Acton Historic District: Parcels H2A 48 and 49 (9 and 13-23 School Street): The former South Acton depot lot (H2A-49) and the lot just west (H2A-48), which

was the site of at least two buildings of the Tuttle, Jones & Wetherbee Company, are both now open. In recent years the depot lot has reverted to the town. Part of this lot could be reserved for open space.

North Section of Parcel H2A-57: This is an old sawmill lot, owned by the owners of Erikson Grain Mill, which lies on the north bank of Fort Pond Brook and dates from 1728. It is a small grassy space used frequently by walkers, with foot access along a short path remaining from the original main road dating before 1703. It crosses the brook over a stone arch bridge dating from 1906. If Erikson Grain Mill has no use for this relatively inaccessible space, the town or other agent could negotiate the acquisition of at least the sawmill site for conservation or recreation.

The Faulkner Mill Dam, located on Parcel H2A-57: This dam was rebuilt in 1848 as a replacement for the original dam which had stood at the location since 1702. The South Acton Village Plan assigned a high priority to preserving the structural integrity of the dam, which is the only reason the Mill Pond exists. The dam's collapse would eliminate Mill Pond as a scenic and recreational resource.

Isaac Davis Trail: The Trail was listed on the National Register in 1972, and is part of the April 19, 1775 "line of march". It runs along portions of Hayward Road, Musket Drive, Minuteman Road, Woodbury Lane and Main Street, as well as through some open land, into Concord. Vistas, stone walls and roadside vegetation are a part of this trail's aesthetic.

4.F.4 Unique Resources

Acton has numerous unique resources. Five key resource types or areas are described below. Biodiversity, which in part incorporates unique resources, is discussed in Section 4.F.5.

4.F.4.1 QUAKING BOGS

There are three large quaking bogs, or peat lands, in Acton. They are located at the Arboretum, Grassy Pond and Will's Hole. These areas are home to many bog plants,

including sphagnum moss, pitcher plants, sundew, black spruce and tamarack.

The Arboretum's bog or peat land is entirely owned by the Town and is home to a wide variety of acid-loving plants. While several species of sphagnum blanket the entire bog, leather leaf and northern pitcher plants are also common. This is one of only a few locations in town where poison sumac can be found. A boardwalk traverses the bog and is a favorite stop for school groups and nature lovers. Plans are in place to rebuild the bog boardwalk along with handicap access from Minot Avenue. Construction will occur in 2014.

Grassy Pond exhibits bog-like characteristics, and has been identified by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program as being "worthy of protection". Approximately one quarter of the shoreline is town conservation land, and a considerable amount of the watershed for this pond is also town-owned. With a pH of 5.5, the water is not extremely acidic, and has a considerable fish population. As adjacent land becomes available, it should be considered a high-priority purchase.

Will's Hole looks very much like the classic quaking bog, and it is also totally on town conservation land. However, a portion of the water in the bog is supplied by a small stream, rather than springs, and off-site development along Nagog Park should be closely monitored so that the water quality in this feeder stream is not degraded. Thanks to the hard work of the Acton Conservation Commission at the time, recent development adjacent to this bog area was performed in such a way as to practically eliminate the impact on Wills Hole.

4.F.4.2 ICE HOUSE POND

This millpond is an impoundment of Nashoba Brook and part of the Nashoba Brook greenbelt. The town owns the pond bottom and the entire shoreline. Located in a very high-visibility area close to the heavily-populated

areas of Acton Center and East Acton Village, the pond provides fishing, picnicking, and canoeing opportunities. In 1995, in response to the pond being rapidly overwhelmed with water chestnuts, the town dewatered and dredged the pond, taking away approximately 25,000 cubic yards of organic sediment. The pond now has a depth of 5-6 feet, instead of the 2 feet prior to dredging. The dam control structure (under private ownership) was also rebuilt by the town in 1995, allowing for periodic drawdowns to control future infestations of nuisance weeds. Water chestnut has begun to spread throughout the pond again. Workdays to manually remove water chestnut began in earnest in 2011 and will continue in years to come.

4.F.4.3 GREENBELTS

The town has identified two greenbelts associated with the major watersheds in Acton: Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook (Refer to Section 4E on Wildlife for a complete description of these two water basins). These greenbelts extend the full length of each of these brooks.



View through the trees at Heath Hen conservation area.

These areas have been mapped, and this OSRP update includes a priority list of possible areas to protect. Many parcels close to the brooks have high conservation and recreation value, but very little development potential at this time, so they might be acquired in lieu of taxes. In recent years, several parcels of land abutting Fort Pond Brook have been deeded to the town for conservation, including the Cunningham land and Prescott land. In addition, the back section of the Morrison property which abuts Nashoba Brook is an important part of the Nashoba Brook greenbelt. The back of the property, currently classified as general municipal property, should be protected as conservation land.

4.F.4.4 REFORMATORY FIELDS

These large agricultural areas flanking Route 2 near the Concord line provide a vital break from the urbanized section of Route 2 that traverses Concord near the reformatory. They are a unique combination of agricultural, recreational and scenic resources that provide a gateway as drivers enter Acton from the east. Some of the fields have been protected. For instance, one field is town-owned conservation land leased to the state to grow corn and alfalfa for the dairy herd maintained by the Department of Corrections farm. All of the fields are zoned conservation (ARC). If any of these fields become available, the town's highest priority should be to purchase them from the state, as was done with the Wetherbee parcel, and keep them in agriculture and as a scenic overlook.

4.F.5 Biodiversity

Biodiversity encompasses the habitats and interactions of native species in a particular area, with emphasis on the quality of the community. NHESP has recently issued BioMap 2, a biodiversity conservation plan for the Commonwealth. In addition, the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord (SuAsCo) Biodiversity Protection



and Stewardship Plan provides more specific biodiversity information within those target watersheds. Together, these two projects have identified several areas of interest within Acton.

4.F.5.1 BIOMAPS

NHESP produced the first BioMap and Living Waters plans in 2001 and 2003. BioMap 2 was issued in 2010 and encompasses the NHESP data on rare species and natural community data, the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan and The Nature Conservancy's assessments of large ecosystems throughout the Commonwealth. BioMap2 is comprised of Core Habitats and Critical Natural Landscapes. Core Habitats include:

- Habitats for rare, vulnerable or uncommon plant and animal species
- Priority Natural Communities
- High quality wetland, vernal pool, aquatic and coastal habitats
- Intact forest ecosystems

Critical Natural Landscapes are areas that complement the Core Habitat areas and include large landscape blocks and buffers that support habitat, ecological processes and connectivity, and which provide ecological resilience.

BioMap2 identifies five areas in Acton. These include:

1. NARA/Wills Hole/Kennedy/Marshall Land/Nashoba Sportsman Club: This is also a Zone II Wellhead Protection Area, Priority Habitat of Rare Species, Estimated Habitat of Rare Wildlife, medium-yield aquifer
2. Grassy Pond: includes a small area of Critical Natural Landscapes, NHESP Natural Community, Scenic Landscape
3. Heath Hen Meadow: medium-yield aquifer, Zone II Wellhead Protection Area, Priority Habitat of Rare Species, Estimated Habitat of Rare Wildlife

4. Assabet River in southeastern corner of town: Priority Habitat of Rare Species, Estimated Habitat of Rare Wildlife, medium- and high-yield aquifer, Zone II Wellhead Protection Area
5. Reformatory Fields/Wetherbee Conservation Land: Ag fields, medium- and high-yield aquifer, Zone II Wellhead Protection Area, Priority Habitat of Rare Species

4.F.5.2 SUASCO (SUDBURY, ASSABET, CONCORD RIVERS) BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION AND STEWARDSHIP PLAN

The SuAsCo Biodiversity Protection and Stewardship Plan, a research project on biodiversity within the watershed of the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Rivers, was released in August 2000. Written by naturalist Frances Clark under the direction of the Massachusetts Riverways Program, and in conjunction with the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative, the plan was undertaken to help the 36 communities of the three river basins “conserve and restore natural biodiversity in the watershed.”

The plan highlights biodiversity sites that are critical to the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Rivers watershed. All of the sites were selected based on current conservation biology science and for their biodiversity value. Scientific evidence has demonstrated that biodiversity drops significantly in areas smaller than 1000 acres, requiring the rich variety of habitat types or natural communities that exist within the areas surveyed in the report. Clark wrote: “It is...clear that healthy ecosystems depend on healthy streams, rivers, and riparian areas.... Large protected upland areas in one part of the watershed need to be connected to other areas so that over the long term populations of wild animals can intermingle...”

Seven critical biodiversity sites, all part of the Assabet River Watershed, lie within Acton. The report urges them to be considered priorities for conservation. Portions of these sites are already protected.

1. Heath Hen Meadow: On the border between Acton and Stow, this is one of the largest red maple

swamp and stream systems in the entire watershed, with over three miles of unfragmented stream.

2. Great Swamp: Shared by Acton, Stow and Maynard, this large red maple swamp in the heart of the SuAsCo watershed serves as an important linkage area for species. Development, as well as road maintenance and repair, could impact the future quality of biodiversity within this site.
3. Long Pond / Fort Pond site: This site contains the headwaters of Fort Pond Brook, two large ponds, a wide diversity of habitats, and is a critical link between Grassy Pond and Nagog Pond. Endangered herps are also found here.
4. Grassy Pond: This forest of black birch and hop hornbeam is home to species of special concern identified by the Natural Heritage Program.
5. Will's Hole: This is one of the few bogs in the watershed. Despite protected upland nearby, questions remain about the hydrology impact as a result of the nearby industrial park.
6. Nagog Pond and Brook: This great pond is a significant stopover for migratory ducks and waterfowl, including common loon, bald eagle and osprey. The nearby roads, Nashoba Road and Route 2A, are cause for concern, and may impact the quality of biodiversity on the site.
7. Spring Hill/Nashoba Brook site: This is one of the last remaining large forest tracts in the eastern part of the watershed. It protects over a mile of Nashoba Brook, and serves as a very important wildlife corridor. The imminent development of the Robbins Mill Pond land and increasing traffic on surrounding roads are of significant concern and will likely impact the biodiversity quality in this area.

SECTION 5: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

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5.A INTRODUCTION

Table 5.A.1 is a summary rollup of the grouping of open space lands, both public and private, in the town of Acton. Detailed descriptions and a breakdown of component parcels are included in the sections that follow.

TABLE 5.A.1: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST	
5.B Private Parcels	Acres
Chapter 61 Forestry Land	494.0
Chapter 61A Agricultural Land	171.0
Chapter 61B Recreation Land	44.0
Conservation Restrictions	126.0
5.C Public and Non-Profit Parcels	Acres
Conservation Areas	1745.0
Municipal Facilities	
NARA Park	40.0
Athletic Fields and Playgrounds	30.0
Morrison Farm	32.0
Acton Town Common	10.0
West Acton Village	1.0
School Department Fields and Playgrounds	66.0
Water District Lands	399.5
Cemetery Lands	
Woodlawn Cemetery	80.0
Mount Hope Cemetery	94.0
Forest Cemetery	0.5
State Owned Lands	203.0
Concord Lands	58.0
Total Acres	3594.0

5.B PRIVATE PARCELS

5.B.1 Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Lands

In 2011, a total of 706 acres of Acton's open space fell under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B tax classifications. These state statutes allow for reduced real estate taxes

in exchange for keeping the land "open" for forestry, agricultural or private recreational use. Chapter 61 applies to forestland; Chapter 61A applies to land in agriculture, and Chapter 61B applies to private recreational lands. These lands can be developed, but in the event of a change in use the town, in exchange for its having foregone the full taxation on the property, is afforded an opportunity to match a bona fide Purchase and Sale Agreement within 120 days. The 120-day right of first refusal may be exercised by the town or a non-profit nominee designated by the town, such as the Trustees of Reservations, Sudbury Valley Trustees, the Audubon Society or a local land trust. The owner or applicant must follow a fairly prescribed process, including the repayment of five years of back taxes, and the presentation of a contract of sale that must be non-contingent and without the need for any zoning relief, sub-division approvals, variances from wetlands regulations, et cetera.

In 2010 the Town of Acton followed this procedure in its efforts to acquire the Caouette land, a 10.5-acre parcel of land (with a mill pond) in South Acton, by allocating funds from the Community Preservation Act. Once the town informed the landowner, who was in possession of a bona fide offer from a developer for six houses, that it intended to exercise its right of first refusal, the town and the landowner entered into discussions that progressed beyond the 120-day statutory limit, but extensions were mutually agreed upon by the parties. The process was prolonged because, during a period of due diligence, contaminants were discovered on the land, and a survey found that there was less land than had been previously thought. This reduced the number of houses that could be built on the property, and hence diminished the agreed-upon value of the land. These problems were eventually resolved, and the sale to the town took place. Part of the land was leased back to Stonefield Farm for ten years, as the Simeone family, owners of Stonefield Farm, had been farming the land for years. Another portion of the land, which adjoins the terminus of the Assabet River Rail Trail, is being considered as a possible trailhead for the rail

trail. Although the funding dates for the rail trails continue to slide, as of this writing the funding is scheduled to be available in 2014.

These Chapter 61, 61A and 61B open spaces, although not owned by the town, have a significant impact on the environment and aesthetics of the community. Maintaining their enrollment in the chapter programs is a desirable course of action for the town.

In 2011, the land enrolled in the Chapter 1/61A/62B programs is as follows:

- Chapter 61 (forestry land) 494 acres
- Chapter 61A (agricultural land) 171 acres
- Chapter 61B (recreation) 44 acres

Unfortunately, since the last OSRP inventory in 2002, the amount of land in these classifications has declined by 25 percent, which is roughly equivalent to the decline between 1995 and 2002. Some of these withdrawals, however, are for positive reasons, in that several properties have gone from privately-owned open space to municipally- owned conservation land, e.g. the aforementioned Caouette land in South Acton. Even the

Robbins Mill Pond land, a residential housing development in North Acton, is not a total loss of open space as a significant proportion of the 233 acres were deeded to the Town of Acton in 2011 for open space and some recreation. In all, some 119 acres were turned over to the town.

The progressive diminishment of Chapter 61 lands over the past 16 years is as follows:

- 1995 1,255 acres
- 2002 940 acres
Notable conversions: Robbins Mill Pond land (housing development), DiDuca Farm (shopping center)
- 2011 706 acres
Notable conversions: Palmer land (Quail Ridge Golf course), Caouette land (town acquisition for conservation)

5.B.2 Private Conservation Restrictions

With the increasing cost of purchasing a fee interest in lands for conservation purposes, the Town has increasingly relied on donations of restrictions on the use of privately-held parcels to protect open space. Conservation restrictions are generally granted in perpetuity and list prohibited acts, including construction of buildings, excavation of materials, dumping, and cutting of vegetation. All conservation restrictions must be approved by the Acton Board of Selectmen and by the MA Department of Conservation Services. Over 125 acres are currently subject to conservation restrictions and five additional restrictions totaling 36 acres are pending approval by DCR.

Acton's Zoning By-Laws permit the proposal of a Planned Conservation Residential Community on a tract of land greater than 8 acres. The Zoning By-Law requires that 60% of the tract be set aside for conservation or

other public purposes and that this land be deeded to the Town or to a non-profit agency. If conveyed to a non-profit agency, a conservation restriction must be conveyed to the Town.

5.C PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT PARCELS

5.C.1 Public Conservation Lands Owned by the Town of Acton

Acton has over 1700 acres of designated Conservation and Town Forest properties, with about 1600 acres grouped into "Conservation Areas." All conservation lands are owned by the Town of Acton and maintained by the Land Stewardship Committee (hereafter "LSCom") under the direction of the Department of Natural Resources and the Conservation Commission, and in cooperation with other town departments. Appendix 5.C lists all conservation properties owned by

5.B.2 CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS HELD BY THE TOWN OF ACTON											
#	Fy	Town	Grantor	Grantee	Acres	Term	Received	Approved	Book	Page	Comments
1	1979	Acton	Harold & Devena Buxton	Town	13.9		12-Dec-78	27-Dec-78	13615	339	
2	1990	Acton	R.Smith Associates, Inc.	Town	49.77	p	2-Oct-89	2-Feb-90	20065	420	
3	1998	Acton	The Haartz Corp.	Con.Com.& Town	14.5	p	15-Oct-96	10-Jan-97	27757	537	Industrial District Buffer
4	2002	Acton	James & Mary Donald	SVT	11.2	P	15-Mar-00	13-Dec-01	34449	6	600' unnamed tributary to Fort Pond Brook
5	2005	Acton	Leo F. Bertolami	Town	3.59	P	15-Apr-04	28-Oct-04			Canoe access for public/CR req. as part of DEP wetlands permit
6	2005	Acton	Paul & Alan Wagner	Acton Water Supply	0.12	P	21-Jul-04	25-May-05			Groundwater protection/ See Concord #118
7	2007	Acton	The Haartz Corp.	Con.Com.& Town	6.3	P	6-Jun-06	21-May-07	50696	555	Required by permit
8	2010	Acton	Aria @ Laurel Hills	Town	6.67	P	5-Oct-06	27-Aug-10	55334	311	See Westford CR#59
9	2007	Acton	William & Nancy Kingman	Acton Cons. Trust	6.41	P	17-Oct-06	7-Dec-06			Protects scenic views
10	2008	Acton	John and Elizabeth Valentine	Carlisle Cons. Found.	14.19	P	29-Oct-08	29-Dec-08	22622	245	See Carlisle #63
11	2010	Acton	W. R. Grace & Co. - Conn	Town	15.3	P	21-Jun-10				
12	2010	Acton	The Groener Land	Acton Cons. Trust	12.1	P	2-Aug-10				
13	2011	Acton	Town		5.24	P	13-Apr-11				
14	2011	Acton	Town		0.2	P	25-Apr-11				
15	2011	Acton	Simeone Irrevocable Trust	Town	3.68	P	25-Jul-11				
Total Acres					163.2						



the town of Acton, grouped as three Divisions. Division One, the largest, consists of all the properties that have been grouped according to their designated titles as “Conservation areas.” These most often consist of two or more contiguous parcels that comprise an area having specific characteristics such as an historic site, vernal pools, or public gardens and are actively managed by LSCoM. Division Two consists of groups of contiguous parcels that have yet to be incorporated into the actively managed Conservation Areas by LSCoM. Division Three is a group of isolated parcels that are owned by the town that have not been incorporated into the large conservation scheme and have minimal value for public access.

The matrix provides the following information for each parcel: Name of Conservation Area; Total Acres for the area and each component parcel; Usage, i.e. Passive Recreation, Agriculture, Camping; Facilities available at the site; Plate and Parcel IDs from Acton town maps; Address of the component parcel; Size of the component parcel in acres; Zoning; Acquisition Date; Funding Source; and Additional comments as appropriate. Facilities available at the site are coded as follows: H = Handicap Access; K = Information Kiosks; P = Parking available; T = Trails blazed.

Table 5.C.1 is a summary of the three divisions of conservation lands.

5.C.1 THREE DIVISIONS OF CONSERVATION LANDS			
Division One	All Conservation Areas actively managed by LSCoM	1596.71 acres	18 unique areas
Division Two	Conservation areas not yet being actively managed by LSCoM	136.3 acres	8 areas
Division Three	Isolated parcels with minimal public access	12.2 acres	7 parcels
Total		1,745.21 acres	

Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment to the State Constitution, (Article 97) protects certain lands acquired for natural resources purposes, i.e. conservation land,

as a way to conserve our vanishing natural resources. Transfer from Conservation to another use is intentionally difficult and requires a majority vote of the Conservation Commission—stipulating that the land in question is no longer needed—plus a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting and a two-thirds vote of each house of the state legislature. Parcels with a Self-Help number are restricted by state regulations to passive recreation use only. Great Hill Conservation Area is also regulated by the Land and Water grant.

5.C.1.1 CONSERVATION LANDS AND THE LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

The current excellent condition and public accessibility of our conservation lands can be attributed in large measure to the efforts of the Land Stewards who have blazed extensive trail systems in all of the managed conservation areas. LSCoM, established in 1996 in fulfillment of a recommendation from the prior OSRP, is an all-volunteer committee under the direction of the Conservation and Natural Resources Director. This

committee is composed of up to 20 members who each take on responsibility for one of the conservation areas, including the key tasks of maintaining conservation areas, educating the public, and advocating for the protection of biodiversity of the lands under their care. The LSCoM has successfully completed projects that have improved individual conservation areas, town-wide projects to ensure consistency and standardization among the conservation areas, and educational projects to help the public understand and appreciate the meadows, woods, and wetlands of Acton.

Kiosks of standard design and color have been installed in most of the conservation areas. Kiosks are sturdily-built structures equipped with map boxes, roofs, and a notice-board surface on which standard information including the parcel’s map, steward contact, and land use regulations are posted. These were constructed, for the most part, by Eagle Scouts, with direction from an LSCoM mentor. All entrances to principal conservation areas are now marked with similar “Conservation Area”

Acton Recreation/Natural Resources was selected as the winner of the 2013 Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association's "Design of Facility Agency Award" for constructing the Miracle Field.

5



signs, including the name of the area, and in some places, prohibitions. [...Kiosk?]

Acton's conservation areas are complete with trail systems, often with one or more secondary trails, where appropriate, and one or more accesses. Major trails (yellow-blazed) are usually loop trails unless the land configuration prohibits this. Secondary trails (blue-blazed) either bisect the loop or provide access to a more remote portion of the conservation area that is of special interest. All secondary trails leave and rejoin the major trail. Access trails, red-blazed, either provide access to a loop trail through a narrow corridor or easement, or act as connectors between two conservation areas that are either contiguous or close to one another. Blazing has been done in both directions for the least intrusion. Refreshing blaze markers is the responsibility of LSCom members assigned to the task.

Among its many accomplishments, LSCom has installed bridges at stream crossings and extensive boardwalks in many of the perennially wet areas. Nesting boxes have been installed for bluebirds and other species, blight-resistant elm trees planted for future shade where appropriate, heavy trash and old farm equipment of no historical interest removed. Maintenance of special habitat areas such as meadows, fields, old orchards, and a pine-barrens—open lands rare in Acton—has been performed at the lowest level deemed necessary to maintain the unique character of the area. Otherwise, management practices have been limited to keeping trails open while allowing natural succession processes to occur. In addition, attention has been directed at control of invasive species such as bittersweet, Norway maple, barberry and euonymus.

LSCom continues to be assisted in its activities by Boy Scout Eagle candidates, Cub Scout dens and Girl Scout troops, ABRHS Senior Community Service Day participants, the Merriam School Service Learning Project 5th and 6th graders, as well as by other public-spirited citizens.

Areas listed in the matrix as Miscellaneous Parcels have not been actively taken under LSCom's responsibility.

The Acton Arboretum is supported by Friends of the Acton Arboretum, a private non-profit organization, with help from town staff, and the Community Gardens is open agricultural space. It is expected that the town rezones all conservation lands after purchase as ARC (Agriculture, Recreation, and Conservation). The isolated parcels are yet to be evaluated for their possible future use as part of the public access conservation system.

Acton takes just pride in its conservation lands, and it is particularly grateful for the dedication and efforts of the Land Stewards who have done an outstanding job in managing these lands for the benefit of the citizens of Acton.

5.C.1.2 SUMMARY LISTING OF CONSERVATION LANDS AND AREAS

5.C.1.2.1 Town Forests

Acton has two areas historically designated Town Forest: the Wills Hole parcel, off Quarry Road, acquired in 1949; and Bulette town forest, acquired in 1926. The Bulette land was the first parcel to be designated town forest. It is comprised of two parcels, at 20 Bulette Rd Rear, consisting of approximately 30 acres. As adjacent parcels were acquired, these two areas were rolled into the larger Wills Hole conservation area and the Bulette Conservation area. Both are considered conservation land and managed by LSCom. See Appendix 5.C.1 for details.

5.C.1.2.2 Acton Conservation Lands

The following descriptions refer to the conservation areas listed in Section 1 of the Conservation Matrix, Appendix 5.C.1. Much of the text is excerpted from A Guide to Acton Conservation Lands, a publication offering maps and details of most of these major conservation areas. The guide, originally published in 1996, is now in its third printing and is available to the public for a small fee. It can also be accessed electronically through Acton's website. (<http://www.actontrails.org/CasD.htm>) Additional information has been provided and reviewed by Jim

Snyder-Grant, Chairman of the Land Steward Committee, and Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director for the town of Acton.

5.C.1.2.3 Acton Arboretum

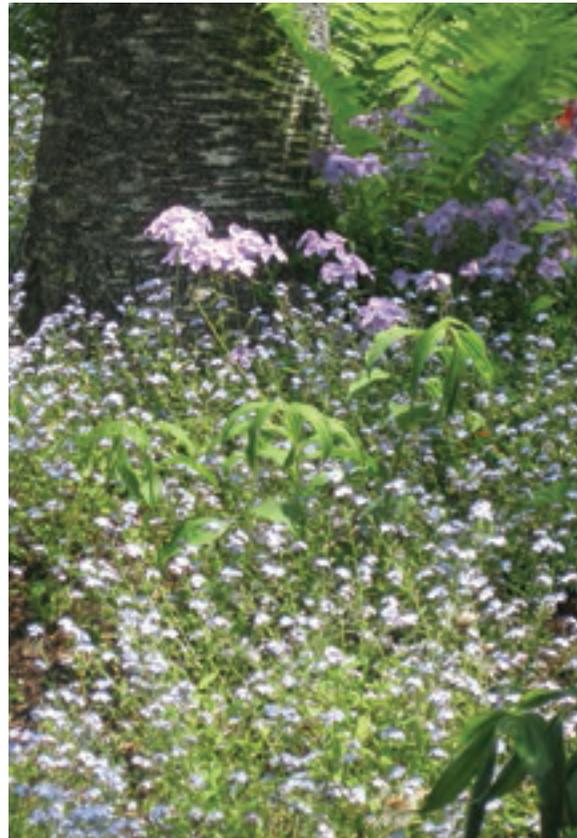
The Acton Arboretum, in the town's center, consists of 65 acres of woods, meadows, swamp, ponds, old apple orchards, a glacial esker, and a bog. The land, successively owned and improved by the Craigs, the Reeds, the Tuttle, and the Bridges, was acquired by the town in 1976 and 1977. It was formalized as an Arboretum in 1986 when Town Meeting funded the purchase of plant materials and site improvements, and the original warrant article was amended by John Whittier to specify use of the property for an arboretum. Since then, the Arboretum has been developed through the efforts of the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc., assisted by many volunteers. In 2002, an 11-acre parcel adjacent to the Arboretum's southwesterly corner was donated to the town. Encompassing a red maple swamp and some wooded upland, it has an unimproved trail passing through it from the Highland/Bog Loop's esker to the Wildflower Loop. In 2012 the Acton Board of Selectmen approved naming a small, previously unnamed stream, which flows through the Acton Arboretum, in honor of Mary S. Michelman. A small plaque was placed on the Fern Boardwalk in the Arboretum over the brook. A commemoration ceremony dedicating "Mary's Brook" took place in October, 2012. Mary Michelman passed away in 2010 and was an esteemed citizen who created the Acton Stream Teams and who worked assiduously to keep Acton's drinking water safe and clean. Mary's Brook is part of Acton's watershed that eventually flows into the Assabet and Concord Rivers. A complete report highlighting future goals, prepared by the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, may be found in the appendix (index 5.c123).

5.C.1.2.4 Bulette Conservation Area

The Bulette Conservation Area is the first parcel of land the Town of Acton acquired for conservation

purposes. Its purchase was authorized at the March 1965 Annual Town Meeting. The land abuts Acton's first Town Forest which was purchased in 1926. Together, the two parcels total 38 acres, much of which is wetlands. For many years the only access into this area was on a fire road that was annually cleared of vegetation and obstructions to assure passage for fire apparatus.

The first hiking trails were cut in 1974 as an Eagle Scout project. In the following years, development and maintenance resources were focused on the newer and larger conservation tracts the Town acquired and this area was overlooked. In 1999, access trails and loop trails were cut. The area is notable for its plentiful glacial features: a number of large erratics and an esker that may be seen



Wildflowers, Meetinghouse Hill, Acton Center.

from the trail crossing a wetlands. An easy bushwhack during dry periods will take the hiker to the top of this esker, which has an animal track along its top, with views of both hemlock forest and additional wetlands beyond.

5.C.1.2.5 Camp Acton Conservation Area

The Camp Acton Conservation Area, a property formerly owned by the Boy Scouts, was acquired by the town in 1996 with the aid of a Self Help grant. This area is one of three contiguous conservation areas, the others being Spring Hill, Nashoba Brook Conservation and, the most recent addition, Robbins Mill. Together, they comprise almost 500 acres of preserved conservation open space.

Camp Acton's unique feature is its suitability for a type of passive recreation that is not offered by any other presently-owned town property. Picnicking, as well as individual or group day or overnight camping may be enjoyed with a permit from the Recreation Department of the Town of Acton. There are six large, primitive campsites, established by the Boy Scouts, maintained free of poison ivy, brambles, and damp or stony ground. Each is equipped with a rustic picnic table and crude stone-ring fireplace, and each is located in a woodsy setting that allows some privacy. The gated internal parking area makes possible easier access with gear to these sites. Close to the parking area is a large-stone masonry fireplace suitable for group gatherings. Further modest enhancements are anticipated. Wetlands comprise about twenty percent of the acreage in Camp Acton. Other natural features include two isolated vernal pools and an unnamed stream, which eventually flows into Spencer Brook.

5.C.1.2.6 Community Gardens

This small, 5-acre property provides space for community gardens in the North Acton area on Route 27 just south of Carlisle Road. Flanked by Nashoba Brook's Robbin's Mill Pond, the property sits in fertile lowland. This rich earth is prime farming land and is the major asset of this site. A small picnic area is also located there. Due to its small size, no trails have been developed, but a small



parking lot for both the community gardens and fishing access was built in 1992. No stewarding is currently being done at this site.

Community gardens have been located at this site for over 30 years. The field area is subdivided into 39 plots, all of which are rented to both residents and non-residents. The Town of Acton Recreation Department, located in Town Hall, manages the rental of the garden plots. Currently water for irrigation purposes is obtained by a direct hookup to the town's water line. Developing access to the water in the nearby Robbin's Mill Pond is under consideration, though no detailed plans have been developed at this time.

5.C.1.2.7 Grassy Pond Conservation Area

Grassy Pond Conservation Area is one of Acton's larger conservation areas, with over 95 acres located between Newtown Road and Nagog Hill Road close to the adjacent town of Littleton, and lying west of Acton Center. It is also one of the town's most diverse conservation areas because of its varied habitats and ecosystems. These include the Pond, an extensive wetlands at the pond's outlet, two small streams, a boulder field, a large meadow, many stone walls, dense stands of eastern white

pine, and open stands of northern hardwoods such as white ash and red and white oak. Mosses are prolific, coating many of the stones and tree stumps.

About half the land was acquired by the town in 1968 and 1972 through two Self Help grants, and the remainder was acquired in 1971 and 1984. It was one of Acton's first conservation areas to have a Master Plan. The stated purpose was to maintain the unspoiled serenity of the area while increasing its potential for use and enjoyment. The first trail, designed according to this plan, was built in 1978 as a Boy Scout Eagle project with assistance from the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) and it entered the property from Newtown Road. Gradually, the boardwalk across the wetlands, the pier at the pond's edge, the trail in from the Nagog Hill Road side, and the Willis Holden Drive trail were added. Inmates of the Northeastern Correctional Center, as well as Boy Scouts working on Eagle projects, carried out many of these improvements. In 1998, members of the Land Stewardship Committee modified the main trail into a loop.

There are three entrances to the Grassy Pond Conservation Area -- from Nagog Hill Road, Newtown Road and Willis Holden Drive. Both Nagog Hill and Newtown Road entrances have designated parking facilities, while

the entrance from Willis Holden Drive has on-street parking only.

Grassy Pond is a naturally occurring kettle hole exhibiting bog characteristics around its shoreline. Nowhere is the pond more than 15 feet deep, although the level has fluctuated in recent years due to beaver activity. The gradual colonization of the perimeter areas by species of plants that thrive in very wet and highly acid areas continues to shrink the open water through an ever-quickening process. Leading this advance are sphagnum moss, pitcher plants, leatherleaf, highbush blueberries, larches and red maples. A short side path off the loop trail leads to the pond's edge, and a recently constructed boardwalk leads through the wetlands boundary of the pond to an observation deck providing good views and an appreciation of the bog's characteristics.

5.C.1.2.8 Great Hill Conservation and Recreation Area

Great Hill Conservation and Recreation Area, located in a busy section of South Acton, is a large tract, diverse in topography, vegetation, natural features, and uses available to the public. This 192-acre conservation area is bounded on its southerly side by School Street, where there is a major access behind the South Acton Fire Station. The property's other boundaries are provided by Piper Road on the east, Massachusetts Avenue on the north, and Main Street on the west, with a minor access across from Oakwood Road. The Main Street access, located across from the intersection of Prospect Street and Main Street, is a second major access and also provides parking. A second minor access is from Francine Road. Kiosks are positioned at the top of the meadow beyond the fire station playing fields and the Main Street entrance.

The town acquired the land, with state and federal assistance, in two phases between 1971 and 1975 with the purchase of seven contiguous parcels that had no existing structures on them other than the common New England stone walls. Since then, the area just beyond the fire station entrance has been developed for limited recreational uses. These include installation of basketball

hoops, soccer fields, and barbecue pits and picnic tables. A former marshy area was dredged in 1986 and made into a skating pond. A large open meadow beyond the playing fields creates a feeling of spaciousness, and slopes up to the wooded areas where the trail system begins. In 2009, an additional 5.5 acres of abutting land was appropriated with Community Preservation funds. The land at 8 Piper Lane (see Table 5.C2) is to be protected under a permanent Conservation Restriction. (2008 Special Town Meeting Warrant, Article 2)

5.C.1.2.9 Guggins Brook Conservation Area

The 61-acre Guggins Brook Conservation Area, acquired in 1975 and 1976 through a Self Help grant, is predominantly a low-lying, frequently wet area through which Guggins Brook and Inch Brook flow. The main access is from a small parking lot on the northerly side of Route 111 (opposite Birch Ridge Road) about 0.5 mile west of West Acton center. Here the conservation area abuts Water District land traversed by a fairly lengthy access trail, much of which consists of muddy ground before crossing Inch Brook on a short boardwalk into the main Guggins property. A secondary access, also lengthy, is from Central Street by way of an easement granted by the New View Co-Housing community. Public parking for this entrance is about 0.3 mile away, in the playing field lot on nearby Elm Street. It is also possible to access the area from the Jenks Conservation property via a private trail across the back of Idlywilde Farm.

This conservation area is not suitable for either horses or mountain bicycles because of the wetness, but there are some very scenic areas, particularly along Guggins Brook where it flows through a canal bounded on one bank by a raised dike. Here the water calms and flows quietly through a straight streambed. Trees found on the parcel include white pine, red maple, oaks, hemlocks, quaking aspens, and occasional apple trees (remnants of the orchards that were once common throughout Acton).

5.C.1.2.10 Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Area

Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Area in southwest Acton comprises 113 acres of streams, meadows, upland forest, and large tracts of wetlands. Only one-third of this conservation area is upland. The major portion of the property, almost 100 acres, was purchased using both town and state funds in 1974. Smaller parcels, providing access corridors, were acquired in 1995. The area is crisscrossed by several stone walls which serve as reminders of its use as farmland during the 17th and 18th centuries. The conservation area is named for the Heath Hen Meadow Brook which rises in Stow and meanders through the property, picking up the Muddy Brook tributary, and eventually merging with Fort Pond Brook just beyond the property's border.

Heath Hen Meadow is home to a variety of wildlife including beaver, skunk, raccoon, opossum, deer, ducks, partridge, and an occasional blue heron. The meadows and surrounding woods provide habitat for numerous species of songbirds, as well as insects and amphibians.

5.C.1.2.11 Jenks Conservation Area

Jenks Conservation Area comprises 30 acres consisting primarily of a broad, sweeping meadow, once part of the apple orchards extensive throughout this area. To the west, however, the property is bisected by the MBTA commuter railroad line. Wedged between this railroad line and the Idlywilde Farm property is a 7-acre extension of the Jenks Land. This conservation area and the nearby Guggins Brook Conservation Area both serve the same immediate area of West Acton, and both lie within the same aquifer protection zone. The land was purchased using town and state funds in 1975.

The main entrance to Jenks is from a small parking area just off Central Street. A barrier gate with a small notice board and map box maintained by the Land Stewardship Committee separates the parking area from the beginning of the access trail. This access leads slightly downhill through a narrow corridor bordered with tangled shrubs and berry bushes to a concrete and stone culvert

through which the Fort Pond Brook flows. The shrubby area along the corridor has been partially brushed out to provide visual access to two ponds just downstream from the culvert. A second minor entrance to the property comes into the 7-acre parcel on the westerly side of the railroad line, from private property beyond. There is also an access from the adjacent town of Boxboro, and a trail access from Idlywilde Farm that connects to Guggins Brook Conservation Area. Plans are underway to expand the Central Street parking lot to allow spaces for up to 4 cars including one handicapped spot.

5.C.1.2.12 Nagog Hill Conservation Area

Nagog Hill Conservation Area comprises over 175 acres providing trails that are generally wide, well-marked, and in good condition. Much of the area was once cleared farmland, and there are many dry-stone walls delineating the boundaries of the former farm fields. The property was acquired by the town in a series of purchases between 1975 and 1980 using both state and town funds. An additional 12 acres was purchased by the town in 2007 from the Groener family using CPA funds.

A special feature that exists in this area is a large glacial erratic, called Egg Rock, on the south side of the main trail just north of the most easterly stream crossing. A large vernal pool just south of the main trail where it crosses the open field beyond the horse corral is home to many species that breed only in such habitats. Just outside of the conservation property is Nagog Pond, one of the Commonwealth's 'great ponds', as defined under the State Statutes. Rights to this pond, relinquished by Acton in 1886, were given to the Town of Concord which continues to use it as a water supply.

5.C.1.2.13 Nashoba Brook Conservation Area

Nashoba Brook Conservation Area's 123 acres were donated to the town beginning in 1987 as part of the Arbors cluster development approval process, and as such they are exempt from further development. This conservation area is one of a group of three contiguous

5.C.2 ACTON CONSERVATION LAND

Component Parcels														
	Total Acres	Use	Facilities*	Plate	Parcel	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Funding source	Deed Book	Deed Page	Comment
Conservation Areas														
Total acres: 1596.71														
Areas managed by LSCom														
Acton Arboretum	64.83	Passive	T, P, K, H											Pedestrian access from Town Center
Total Acres: 64.83				F3	78-1	F3-78-1	33 Minot Av	11.20	R-2	6/5/02	GIFT	35623	499	
				F3A	76	F3A-76	2 Taylor Rd	14.81	ARC	12/27/77	SH 31	13361	526	
				F4	28	F4-28	47 Wood Ln	30.00	ARC	11/1/76	SH 30	13085	558	
				F4	44	F4-44	17 Minot Av	6.42	ARC	12/16/76	SH 30	13112	231	
				F4	45	F4-45	86 Wood Ln	2.01	ARC	9/28/76	GIFT	13065	198	
				F4	40-4	F4-40-4	7 Concord Pl Beside	0.39	ARC	12/2/98	GIFT			
Bulette/ Town Forrest	47.35	Passive	T, K											First conservation parcel!
Total Acres: 47.35				D2	10	D2-10	20 Bulette Rd Rear	13.33	ARC	8/13/65	SH 1	10900	136	
				D3	12	D3-12	20 Bulette Rd Rear	18.80	ARC	3/23/26		04950	435	
				D3	16	D3-16	20 Bulette Rd Rear	12.00	ARC	3/23/26		04950	435	
				D3	22-4	D3-22-4	53 Arlington St	3.22	ARC	12/21/79		13863	336	
Camp Acton	56.00	Passive/ Camping	T, P, K, PP											Only area allowing camping
Total Acres: 56.00				D5	31	D5-31	362 Pope Rd	15.00	R-8	3/7/96	SH 34	26115	336	
				E6	7	E6-7	362 Pope Rd	41.00	R108	3/7/96	SH 34	26115	336	
Community Gardens	5.38	Agriculture	P, K											
Total Acres: 5.38				C5	41	C5-41	861 Main St	0.88	ARC	12/23/75	SH 23	12913	6	
				C5	51	C5-51	845 Main St	4.50	ARC	12/23/75	SH 23	12913	6	
Grassy Pond	95.61	Passive	T, P, K											Future viewing platform planned
Total Acres: 95.61				D3	14	D3-14	149 Newtown Rd	28.95	ARC	10/30/68	SH 4	11594	514	
		Corridor		D3	14-5	D3-14-5	13 Willis Holden Dr	0.24	R-8	10/29/84		15861	102	
				D3	14-27	D3-14-27	22 Samuel Parlin Dr	16.82	ARC	10/29/84		15861	102	
				D3	14-34	D3-14-34	12 Willis Holden Dr	1.05	R-8	10/29/84		15861	102	
		Corridor		D3	14-41	D3-14-41	13 Samuel Parlin Dr	0.23	R-8	10/29/84		15861	102	
		Corridor		D3	14-47	D3-14-47	14 Samuel Parlin Dr	0.52	R-8	10/29/84		15861	102	
				D3	23-9	D3-23-9	5 Samuel Parlin Dr Rear	4.20	ARC	1/8/71	GIFT	11942	74	
				D4	1-2	D4-1-2	236 Nagog Hill Rd	43.60	ARC	6/11/74	SH 22	12646	305	

5

	Total Acres	Use	Facilities*	Plate	Parcel	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Funding source	Deed Book	Deed Page	Comment
Great Hill	192.10	Mixed	T, P, K, P, F											
Total Acres: 192.1				G2	124	G2-124	219 Main St	14.71	ARC	7/17/72	SH 15	12246	280	
				G2	152	G2-152	199 Main St	16.79	ARC	7/20/72	SH 14	12249	46	Land & Water Grant
				G3	111	G3-111	46 Piper Rd	33.00	ARC	2/8/73	SH 18	12376	554	
				G3	10-1	G3-10-1	264 Mass Av	38.52	ARC	12/18/74	SH17	?	?	
				G3	68	G3-68	Kelley Rd End	13.44	ARC	1/11/73	SH 19	LC830	39	
				G3	79	G3-79	18 Stoney St	13.52	ARC	12/29/72	SH 20	12355	195	
				H3A	1-1	H3A-1-1	34 School St Rear	53.62	ARC	11/21/72	SH 12	12333	412	
				H3	11-1	H3-11-1	36 Piper Rd Rear	2.00	ARC	8/22/75	SH 27	12848	237	
				H3A	5	H3A-5	60 School St Rear	1.00	R2	5/11/65		10815	431	
				H3A	4	H3A-4	8 Piper Ln	5.50	R2	2/20/09	CPA			2008 Special Town Meeting Warrant, Article 2
Guggins Brook	61.00	Passive	T, P, K											Pedestrian access from W. Acton
Total Acres: 61				F1	5	F1-5	667 Mass Av	55.50	ARC	12/24/75	SH 28	LC870	80	
				F1	2	F1-2	659 Mass Av	5.50	ARC	12/1/77		13381	6	
Heath Hen Meadow	113.37	Passive	T, K											Pedestrian access from W. Acton via Mt. Hope Cemetary
Total Acres: 113.37				G2	184-1	G2-184-1	17 Overlook Dr Behind	1.39	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
		Corridor		G2	184	G2-184	19 Overlook Dr Behind	1.99	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
		Corridor		G2	193-14	G2-193-14	19 Overlook Dr Beside	0.07	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	240	
				G2	194	G2-194	15 Overlook Dr Behind	3.11	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
				G2	194-1	G2-194-1	13 Overlook Dr Behind	2.64	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
				G2	194-2	G2-194-2	11 Overlook Dr Behind	1.59	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
		Corridor		G2	194-3	G2-194-3	9 Overlook Dr Behind	0.61	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
		Corridor		G2	194-4	G2-194-4	7 Overlook Dr Behind	0.82	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
				H2	1	H2-1	Robbins St End	84.00	ARC	7/19/74	SH 21	12670	362	
				H2	36	H2-36	123 Stow St	14.80	ARC	7/19/74	SH 16	12630	111	
		Corridor		H2	7-11	H2-7-11	1 Overlook Dr Behind	0.70	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
				H2	7-16	H2-7-16	5 Overlook Dr Behind	1.14	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
				H2	7-5	H2-7-5	3 Overlook Dr Behind	0.51	ARC	10/25/95	GIFT	25759	239	
Jenks Land	28.00	Passive	T, P, K											Meadowland, great birding area
Total Acres: 28				E2	20	E2-20	396 Central St	22.00	ARC	12/2/75	SH 24	12902	200	
				E2	60	E2-60	396 Central St Rear	6.00	ARC	12/2/75		12902	200	

	Total Acres	Use	Facilities*	Plate	Parcel	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Funding source	Deed Book	Deed Page	Comment
Nagog Hill	176.54	Passive	T, P, K											
Total Acres: 176.54				D4	1-3	D4-1-3	257 Nagog Hill Rd	53.89	ARC	2/2/75	SH 29	12902	197	
				D4	6	D4-6	221 Nagog Hill Rd	88.14	ARC	9/16/80	SH 33	14066	130	
				D4	37-6	D4-37-6	193 Nagog Hill Rd	12.51	R 8	10/1/07		50251	161	
				D4	14	D4-14	568 Main St Rear	6.00	ARC	12/6/85		16619	567	
				D4	15	D4-15	568 Main St Rear	5.00	ARC	12/6/85		16619	567	
				D4	21	D4-21	288 Main St Rear	5.00	ARC	12/6/85		16619	567	
				D4	22	D4-22	558 Main St Rear	6.00	R 8	3/23/04		42294	359	
Nashoba Brook	123.29	Passive	T, P, K, H											Includes historic sites
Total Acres: 123.29				D5	6	D5-6	Wheeler Ln Rear	1.80	PCRC	11/22/71	Town	12114	415	
				D5	11-18	D5-11-18	21 Milldam Rd	0.53	R-2	10/27/89	GIFT	20163	11	
				D5	11-33	D5-11-33	17 Sawmill Rd Rear	2.26	R-2	9/26/88	GIFT	19361	363	
				D5	22	D5-22	1-17 Blue Heron Wy	112.00	PCRC	11/10/87	GIFT			
				D5	25	D5-25	Davis Rd Rear	6.70	PCRC	11/10/87	GIFT	18682	0183	
Pacy Land	38.32	Passive	T, K											Pedestrian access from S. Acton
Total Acres: 38.2				G2A	17-1	G2A-17-1	43 Central St	1.13	ARC	12/23/75		12724	278	
				G2A	17	G2A-17	55 Central St Rear	30.30	ARC	12/23/75		12913	178	
		Corridor		G2	123-37	G2-123-37	39 Tuttle Dr Behind	0.25	ARC	1/23/1979		13631	143	
				G2A	18	G2A-18	30 Prospect St	6.64	R8/4		GIFT	32802	136	
Pratt's Brook	59.39		T, P, K											Blueberry Barrens
Total Acres: 59.39				H3	237	H3-237	95 Parker St	26.54	ARC	4/18/1980	SH 32	13948	187	
				I3	2	I3-2	108 Parker St Rear	31.00	ARC	4/18/1980	SH 32	13948	187	
		Corridor		I3	5	I3-5	16 BRdview St	1.75	ARC	10/20/70		LC797	165	
				I3	20	I3-20	15 BRdview St	0.10	R-2	10/20/70		LC797	165	
Robbins Mill	114.99	Passive	T, P, H											Newest area, viewing platform planned
Total Acres: 114.99				C5	115	C5-115	9-17 Carlisle Rd	19.73	ARC	4/4/11		44436	505	
				D6	2	D6-2	Canterbury Hill Rd Behind	95.26	ARC	4/4/11		44436	505	
Spring Hill	213.20	Passive	T, K											Native Artifacts on site
Total Acres: 213.2				D5	23	D5-23	Wheeler Ln End	2.43	ARC	8/19/1971	SH 10	12058	587	
				D5	24	D5-24	Wheeler Ln	7.99	ARC	6/10/1971	SH 11	12012	564	
				D5	29	D5-29	Spring Hill Rd End	36.20	ARC	11/22/71	Town	12114	415	
				D5	30	D5-30	Spring Hill Rd	9.67	ARC	5/31/1967	SH 3	11331	359	
				D5	30-1	D5-30-1	320 Pope Rd	0.45	ARC	5/31/1967	SH 3	11331	359	
				D5	35	D5-35	Spring Hill Rd End	49.81	ARC	11/22/71	Town	12114	415	

	Total Acres	Use	Facilities*	Plate	Parcel	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Funding source	Deed Book	Deed Page	Comment
				D5	36	D5-36	308 Pope Rd Rear	5.82	ARC	12/27/66		11270	552	
				D5	37	D5-37	Spring Hill Rd	7.94	ARC	11/1/1971	SH 13	12101	686	
				D5	37-1	D5-37-1	Spring Hill Rd Rear	7.92	ARC	11/1/1971	SH 13	12101	686	
				D5	38	D5-38	Wheeler Ln	2.34	ARC	6/10/1971	SH 11	12012	564	
				E5	4	E5-4	Spring Hill Rd	12.13	ARC	11/22/71	SH 3	12114	415	
				E5	45	E5-45	21 Spring Hill Rd Behind	22.76	ARC	9/19/1966	SH 2	11214	347	
				E5	7	E5-7	Spring Hill Rd Rear	16.04	ARC	5/31/1967	SH 3	11331	359	
				E5	16-2	E5-16-2	10 Jay Lane	31.70	R108	12/4/98	GIFT	29450	341	
Stoneymeade	44.51	Passive	T, K											Abutts Concord Conservation land
Total Acres: 44.51				F5	12-11	F5-12-11	93 Pope Rd	44.51	R8	3/24/89	GIFT	19719	283	
Wetherbee Land	72.68	Passive/ Agri	T, K	G4	173	G4-173	65 Mass Av	72.68	ARC	2/8/82		14534	117	Agricultural field & Managed Forest
Total Acres: 72.68														
Wills Hole	90.15	Passive	T, P, K											Bog area, pedestrian access from NARA Park
Total Acres: 90.15				B5	33	B5-33	Off Quarry Rd	20.80	ARC	10/8/69	SH 5	11749	734	
Town Forest				B5	34	B5-34	Off Quarry Rd	49.00	ARC	12/31/43		06734	596	
				C5	10-1	C5-10-1	12 Harris St Rear	3.25	ARC	8/03/1971	SH 8	12047	586	
				C5	10	C5-10	12 Harris St	15.07	R108	1/01/1999				
				C5	10-18	C5-10-18	1 Capt Handley Rd	2.03	R108	5/5/99	GIFT	30137	563	
	1596.71													
Miscellaneous Parcels													Areas not currently managed by LSCom	
Total Acres: 136.30														
Arborwood Area	8.78	Passive												Separate, non-contiguous parcels
Total Acres: 8.78				H3	38	H3-38	Robinwood Rd (end)	1.57	R2	12/6/1985	GIFT	16619	565	Upland pine stand
				H3	80-6	H3-80-6	11 Sandy Dr	7.21	OOR	12/6/1985	GIFT	16619	565	Pond surrounded by red maple
Caouette Land	10.50	Agri.												Actively farmed
Total Acres: 10.50				H2A	62	H2A-62	2 Stow St	7.50	R8/4	2010	CPA	31063	229	
				H2	95	H2-95	90 Martin St	3.00	R8/4	2010	CPA	31063	231	

	Total Acres	Use	Facilities*	Plate	Parcel	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Funding source	Deed Book	Deed Page	Comment
Flint Rd & West Acton	23.00	Wetland												Flood plain wetlands, adjacent to Fort Pond Brook
Total Acres: 23.0				F2	122	F2-122	492-496R Mass. Av	4.50	R2	6/8/1993	GIFT	23276	0559	
				F2	128	F2-128	488-492R Mass. Av	6.00	R2	10/2/1987	GIFT	18589	1604	
				F2	149	F2-149	494 Mass. Av Behind	3.00	R2	10/27/89	GIFT	20163	0013	
				F2	150	F2-150	494-500R Mass. Av	1.50	R2	6/8/1993	GIFT	23276	0559	
				F2	151	F2-151	482-500R Mass. Av	8.00	R2	10/2/1987	GIFT	18589	1604	
Marshall Crossing	16.46	Passive												Buffer between two residential developments
Total Acres: 16.46				C6	9	C6-9	3-19 Carlisle Rd Behind	12.86	R108	5/15/1997	GIFT	27294	0359	
				C6	8	C6-8	13 Carlisle Rd	2.99	R108	10/6/47		07197	0290	
				C6	11	C6-11	Canterbury Hill Rd	0.30	ARC	4/4/211		44436	505	
				C6	14-14	C6-14-14	22 Blueberry Path	0.31	ARC	4/4/211		44436	505	
Monsen Land	15.76	Wetland												Large Bog area
				G2	185	G2-185	84 Central Behind	6.00	ARC	12/31/79	GIFT??	13902	0236	
				G2	178	G2-178	86-104 Central St	9.76	ARC	6/7/1971		12010	0058	
Patriot's Hill	6.06	Passive												Contiguous lots
		Corridor		E3	87-54	E3-87-54	36 Washington Dr	0.56	R2	4/8/1974	State	12612	0024	
				E3	87-64	E3-87-64	22 Musket Dr (rear)	5.50	ARC	4/8/1974	State	12637	0474	
Putnam Land	15.30	Wetland		E3	80	E3-80	65-67 Newtown Rd	15.30	ARC	1/21/1976	Town	12924	0635	Flood plain open marsh
Steinman & McGloin	40.44	Wetland												Borders Maynard
				I3	132-1	I3-132-1	7 Putter Dr Rear	8.63	ARC	7/21/1970	GIFT	11863	640	
				I3	132-29	I3-132-29	14R Robert Rd	0.10	R4	2/25/1982		14547	245	
				I3	153	I3-153	31 Carlton Dr	0.35	ARC	5/11/00	GIFT	31392	195	
				I3	150	I3-150	30 Carlton Dr Behind	2.20	R-4	5/11/00	GIFT	31392	195	
				I3	127	I3-127	48 Conant St Behind	1.40	R-4	5/11/00	GIFT	31392	195	
				I2	71	I2-71	66 Conant St	17.76	ARC	12/28/78	GIFT	13614	0120	
				I3	148	I3-148	14R Conant St	10.00	ARC	12/27/67		11270	552	

	Total Acres	Use	Facilities*	Plate	Parcel	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Funding source	Deed Book	Deed Page	Comment
Isolated Parcels														
Unclassified parcels														
Total Acres: 12.20														
915 Main St	0.65			C5	9	C5-9	915 Main St	0.65	R2	10/20/70		11905	0673	An open marsh adjacent to Nashoba Brook.
52 Harris St Rear	1.00			C5	74	C5-74	52 Harris St Rear	1.00	ARC					Area to be evaluated
5 Samuel Parlin Dr Rear	4.20			D3	23-9	D3-23-9	5 Samuel Parlin Dr Rear	4.20	ARC	1/8/71		11942	74	Forested wetlands, surrounded by residences
2 Minot Av Rear	0.69			F4	47-1	F4-47-1	2 Minot Av Rear	0.69	R2	3/28/1984		15594	551	Isolated forest surrounded by residences.
41 Tuttle Dr	0.91			G2	123-25	G2-123-25	41 Tuttle Dr	0.91	ARC	1/23/1979		13631	0143	Area to be evaluated
53-73 Stow St	4.70			H2	41	H2-41	53-73 Stow St	4.70	R2	5/7/1992	GIFT	22013	592	Red maple swamp adjacent to Fort Pond Brook
46-54 Martin St	0.05			H2A	41-3	H2A-41-3	46-54 Martin St	0.05	R2	8/31/93	GIFT	23604	0448	Wooded upland adjacent to Fort Pond Brook
Total Isolated Parcels	12.20	12.20												
Total Miscellaneous Properties	136.30	136.30												
Total Conservation Areas	1596.71	1596.71												
Total all Conservation property	1745.21	1745.21												

* Facilities key: T = Trails P = Parking K = Information Kiosks H = Handicap access

OSRP Requirements (info only): Public and Nonprofit parcels: list facilities, evaluate existing conditions, current use and potential, protection, public assess, source of funding
Headings: Ownership, mgt. agency, current use, condition, rec. potential, public access, grants, zoning, protection

conservation lands -- Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, and Camp Acton--comprising almost 400 acres, each with its own trails and separate entrances.

This conservation area is probably the most scenic and varied of all the town's conservation lands, due in large part to the mostly unspoiled Nashoba Brook that runs through the land from north to south. The exceptional stonework, including the foundations of early mills, two earth fill dams, many stone walls, and the enigmatic corbelled stone chamber built into a hillside, together with a variety of riverine and upland habitats, make this conservation area a jewel of its kind. In 2009 Linda McElroy, first chairman of the Acton Land Stewardship Committee, received a grant from the Community Preservation Fund to create a "Trail Through Time." The project entails several phases, some of which have been completed, such as the total renovation of the ancient stone chamber. Other aspects include handicap accessible trails, picnic areas, viewing platforms, mill restoration, and restoration of a granite block homestead foundation. The project has been assisted by several Eagle Scouts.

5.C.1.2.14 Pacy Conservation Area

The 38.2-acre Pacy Conservation Area, acquired in 1975 and 1979, is tucked in between Central Street and the residential neighborhoods of Tupelo Way and Tuttle Drive. The land is bisected, north to south, by a mature red maple swamp that takes up about one third of the entire Pacy area. A lovely vernal pool can be seen from the southern end of the loop trail. An unnamed feeder tributary in the middle of the swamp drains into Fort Pond Brook. The western uplands, near Tuttle Drive, have no trails. The eastern uplands have a single loop trail. There are two access points to this loop. The first is a cul-de-sac at the end of Tupelo Way, which provides room for parking, along with a kiosk and map box. The other entrance, on Central Street, opposite Martin Street, is for pedestrian access only since it has no room for parking. The loop provides a pedestrian connection between the commercial area near

upper and lower Prospect Street and Martin Street, and access to Jones Field and beyond.

The uplands has the appearance of a former early 20th-century pasture land, abandoned when the surrounding areas were developed, and now providing habitat for deer. There are many forty-year-old and older canopy trees, white pines, sugar maples, white ash, hickory, red oak and other hardwoods. But there are almost no saplings, young or small trees in the mid-story, and the understory is dominated by small and young plants that have been able to grow in the shaded conditions, such as hay-scented ferns, Mayflower, Jewel-weed, barberry, and other plants that deer typically avoid.



Native *Arruncus dioicus*, or "goat's beard," Acton Arboretum.

5.C.1.2.15 Pratt's Brook Conservation Area

Pratt's Brook Conservation Area, located in South Acton in the area between Parker Street and High Street, has three accesses. The most heavily used is the Parker Street entrance, with parking near the railroad crossing. A second access is from the large parking area at the end of Brewster Lane, off High Street. A minor access at the end of Valley Road, also off High Street, was most recently opened.

This conservation area, formerly belonging to Frank and Zillah Averett, was purchased in 1980 for \$88,000 through a combination of town and state funds. It comprises 60 acres of wetlands, forested uplands, a pine barrens, unique to this part of Massachusetts, Pratt's brook, and a small pond and vernal pool. The brook bisects the property, entering it as a briskly flowing stream that soon spreads out into a broad wetlands area with multiple channels before plunging down a rocky slope to join with Fort Pond Brook just beyond the conservation land's southeastern boundary. A smaller stream, the outlet from Tenney Circle Pond, meanders across the southern portion of the land.

The parcel is suitable for hiking and cross-country skiing as well as enjoyment of several different habitats. South of the wetlands is an area of uplands, forested with white pine, red oak and pitch pine and characterized by a series of hilly shoulders that reach down to the wetlands. This area is most suitable for cross-country skiing. Adjacent to the Brewster Lane parking area, a 2-acre park was created for enjoyment by residents of the contiguous Audubon senior community. This area has been enhanced with the help of Boy Scout Eagle projects by the introduction of wild grasses, native wildflowers and ground covers, an elm tree for shade, birdhouses, and rustic benches. An attractive, gently-graded and woodchip-covered trail has been cut leading down into the pine barrens area.

Wildflower garden at Meetinghouse Hill, Acton Center.



5.C.1.2.16 Spring Hill Conservation Area

Spring Hill Conservation Area's 213 acres, acquired by the Town of Acton between 1966 and 1995 through a series of purchases and donations, are home to a variety of wildlife, natural features, and recreational opportunities. The major entrance is along a short access from the Spring Hill Road cul-de-sac off Pope Road. A secondary (red-blazed) access to the Spring Hill loop trail (yellow-blazed) enters through the Hearthstone Hill Land from its entrance on Jay Land off Strawberry Hill Road.

Spring Hill is covered with a deciduous forest of mostly red and white oak, red maple, and black and white birch. A scattering of beech, larch, hemlock, and white pine are found throughout. On the forest floor a distinct community of ground covers and low-story vegetation exists. These include mosses, partridgeberry, princess pine, and several other members of the clubmoss family, all of which are indigenous to wet or heavily shaded areas. The under-story vegetation is dominated by high-bush blueberry and swamp azalea.

The Hearthstone Hill Land, now an integral part of Spring Hill's southeast corner, is a 32-acre parcel extensively covered with a hemlock swamp. The Hearthstone Hill access trail, 1.0 mile in length, leads from the cul-de-sac at the end of Jay Lane off Strawberry Hill Road, and skirts the swamp along its westerly edge. The trail, which follows a predominantly upland area through a stand of beech extending down into the hemlock lowlands, crosses a boardwalk in a low area before joining the main Spring Hill loop trail close to its main entrance. The entire Hearthstone Hill Land is contained within a rectilinear stone wall.

5.C.1.2.17 Stoneymeade Conservation Area

Stoneymeade Conservation Area was donated to the town in 1989. Located off Pope Road in East Acton, this conservation area borders conservation land in the town of Concord. Stoneymeade's 44.5 acres, a mix of fields, small streams and bordering woods, preserves one of the largest remaining open fields in Acton. The distant vistas seen

from the main field encompass a small pond surrounded by marshy growth, more fields beyond, a horse farm with corrals, and forestland on the far edge. Much of what can be seen here lies in Concord, but the boundary between the two towns is seamless, enabling both towns to enjoy this tranquil open area. On the Acton side, the field is kept open by mowing late each fall to prevent forest succession from occurring.

Stoneymeade's main entrance is from the far side of Stoneymeade Way, off Pope Road, where a prominent sign marks the beginning of an access trail. A short walk along this pleasant, tree-shaded path brings one to the large open field that makes up most of the Stoneymeade Conservation Area. A large, stately oak tree surrounded by ledge stands in the center of the field. The other access is from the town of Concord, across the Annursnac Conservation Area. The distance from the main entrance to the boundary with Concord is only 0.4 mile.

Stoneymeade Conservation Area is home to many species of birds. Among those that can be observed

raising their young here are scarlet tanagers, red-winged blackbirds down beside the marshy margin of the pond, and tree swallows. Year-round resident species such as chickadees, robins and titmice also make Stoneymeade their summer home. The Acton Bluebird Recovery Group's concerted efforts to encourage bluebirds to reestablish after years of decline resulted in a successful nesting pair in 1999. Several pairs of bluebirds now nest here annually, as well as a pair of bobolinks.

5.C.1.2.18 Wetherbee Conservation Land

The Wetherbee Conservation Land, located in East Acton, totals just over 72 acres. The property is bounded by Wetherbee Street to the east, Route 2 to the south, state property/Berry Lane to the west and Alcott Street/Moritz Land to the north. It currently has a single formal entrance, which is on Wetherbee Street where it runs beside the farm field. Parking is available along the western edge of this road.

This conservation land was purchased from the state in 1982 for \$108,000. The state acquired it in 1898 from the Heywood/Sellors family; before this, it had been part of the Wetherbee Farm. Wetherbee Land's eastern section is the only actively-farmed agricultural field that belongs to the town of Acton. This gently rolling terrain is used by the state for rotating silage crops. Just northwest of the farm field is a small, sloping, short-grass meadow, accented with crab apple trees. South of and below this meadow lies a marshy habitat that feeds a tiny north/south stream and collection-pool that separate the woods from the field's edge. The property's back section, to the west, is wooded and typical of New England upland secondary growth. It features red maple, black and red oak and white pine, with a scattering of ash, sassafras and hawthorn. In the woods, old stone walls still define early boundaries. One of these, running north/south, is ancient, the others are more recent. This property is considered one of the conservation areas most conducive to initiating a forest management program, which is currently under consideration. There is also access to the future Bruce Freeman Bike Trail.

The area generally is suitable for cross-country skiing, as well as walking, horseback riding, snow shoeing and tracking/birding. After harvest, the fields themselves are used for a variety of activities, including Boy Scout meets, dog obedience training, rocketry contests, kite-flying, sky-watching/photography and star-gazing during unusual celestial events.

A Forest Management plan was written in June, 2011 and submitted to the Massachusetts DCR in Ch61/61A/61B Forest Stewardship Program for the Wetherbee parcel. Primary goals of the plan are to promote biological diversity; enhance habitat for birds; enhance habitat for small and large animals; preserve and improve scenic beauty; and improve access for walking, skiing and recreation. Goals of secondary importance in the plan are to enhance the quality and quantity of timber products to generate long term income for management of open space properties. Invasive shrub species are abundant on many portions of the property. The long-term management

objective is to improve the health of the forest. The 13th Edition of the Natural Heritage Atlas indicates that the field is within a Priority Habitat Area. Through a Forest Stewardship Outreach Plan, the Conservation Commission's desired goal is to educate the public about the benefits of active management, and to gain its acceptance of multiple-use management of the town's open space.

5.C.1.2.19 Wills Hole Conservation Area

The Wills Hole Conservation Area and the contiguous Town Forest, located in North Acton near NARA Park, have been combined into one conservation area that comprises 90 acres. The 49 acres of the Town Forest was purchased in 1943 for \$490 and was intended for the harvesting of timber and firewood by Acton residents. It is covered with stands of red oak, white oak, red maple and white pine. Abutting properties contain former quarries. The remaining property includes 24 acres assembled from two land parcels purchased in 1969 and 1971 for conservation purposes. In 1999, the Captain Handley Road subdivision granted another 17 acres along its perimeter which provides a conservation corridor from Harris Street into the Wills Hole area.

There are three entrances to the area: Captain Handley Road entrance, Quarry Road, off Route 27, and Nagog Park Drive cul-de-sac off Route 2A. Wills Hole is a classic quaking bog. A 170-foot boardwalk, completed in 2000 by LSCOM volunteers, leads from the esker to the open water edge of the bog. At its center it is an open pond, but ringing the open water is a mat of floating sphagnum moss. The sphagnum mat is in turn ringed by a more upland zone of dense shrubs and trees. Carnivorous plants found at Wills Hole bog include pitcher plant and sundew. Other non-carnivorous plants on the sphagnum mat include American cranberry, leatherleaf, sheep laurel, and swamp loosestrife. Just a short distance upland from the sphagnum mat, shrubs and small trees, including black spruce, North American tamarack and swamp azalea, are found. All these plants may be seen from the boardwalk.

5.C.1.2.20 Miscellaneous and Isolated Parcels

Approximately 150 acres of conservation areas are in this category. They comprise a number of parcels that can be grouped together but have not yet been taken under the management of the Land Steward Committee. Some are not suitable for public access, such as the extensive flood plain wetlands that border Flint Road and West Acton. The Caouette Land is the most recent addition to the town's conservation properties. It was approved for purchase in 2011, with an agreement that allows current farmers to continue leasing the land for active farming for the next ten years. A conservation restriction is also being drawn up for this property, and there are plans to use a small portion for parking access to the Assabet Rail Trail that runs adjacent.

The two Arborwood parcels are non-contiguous, though in close proximity. The one- and-one-half-acre parcel is a small upland pine stand, and the larger parcel contains a pond surrounded by a red maple swamp. The Monson property is an open marshy bog, bounded by the railroad tracks and Central Street. The unnamed stream that runs through Pacy Land drains here, and this wetland eventually drains into Fort Pond brook. The Putnam Land consists of an open marsh flood plain adjacent to Conant Brook. The marsh was created in recent years by beaver activity, indicated by trees killed from the flooding but still standing. These, like the Flint Road and West Acton parcels, may prove to be unsuitable for public access.

Marshall Crossing, a sixteen-and-one-half-acre parcel that buffers two large developments, Marshall Crossing and Robbins Mill, has potential as a public access facility. It is accessible from either the Marshall Crossing development or the Robbins Mill development, and consists of sloping, forested rocky uplands. Similarly, Patriot's Hill parcels are comprised of two adjacent vacant lots accessible from Washington Street. Conant Brook runs through the middle of these 15 acres. The Steinman & McGloin parcels, which make up an area slightly more than forty acres, are forested wetlands in the southern part of the town that borders the neighboring town of Maynard. These three

areas will be assessed in the future for potential trail access, vegetative population, and suitability for being included in the group of managed conservation areas.

The remaining 7 parcels of conservation lands total just over 12 acres, but their value for passive recreation use is minimal, due to their location, size and characteristics. The lots at 5 Samuel Parlin Drive Rear and 2 Minot Avenue Rear are surrounded by residences and have no public access. The parcel at 915 Main St is an open marsh, adjacent to Nashoba Brook, and the Stow Street parcel is a red maple swamp adjacent to Fort Pond Brook. The Harris Street parcel is still to be explored, and the small Tuttle Drive parcel, adjacent to an old railway bed, has not yet been characterized. The Martin Street parcel, a small piece of wooded upland also next to Fort Pond Brook, may have some potential for inclusion in the managed parcels, but this is yet to be determined.

5.C.2 Municipal Facilities and Open Spaces

The following sections treat areas owned and/or managed by the town of Acton's Recreation Department. For instance, the Recreation Department manages the assignment of garden plots both for the Community Gardens, which is part of the conservation land inventory described above, and the Morrison Farm gardens, which remain general municipal property at this time. Recreational facilities owned by the town, including playing fields, playgrounds and school facilities, as well as several areas of the town that have historic interest and help to maintain the town's rural characteristics, are described below.

5.C.2.1 NATHANIAL ALLEN RECREATIONAL AREA (NARA PARK)

NARA Park has been operating for over ten years, opening to the public in the spring of 2000. This 40-acre outdoor recreation area is home to 6.5 acres of irrigated softball/soccer fields, a 3,000-seat amphitheater and storage shed/snack bar, a playground, volleyball courts, handicap-accessible paved walking trails, a 500-foot-long bathing beach with a swimming area, a bathhouse with

snack bar, changing and bathroom facilities. Three canopy tents with picnic tables are rented as picnic areas. This area is a hot bed of activity during the summer months. Programs include beach operations: lifeguarded beach, Red Cross swimming lessons, boat rentals and snack bar, NARA Summer Camp for ages 4-15, free outdoor summer concert series, Acton Adult Softball League (AASL), recreation and league-sponsored athletic events, and the annual July 4th celebration. NARA Park hosts many community events each year, such as American Cancer Society's Acton Relay for Life, theater productions, and cultural events such as Sri Lanka Day, Acton Chinese Cultural Day and Celebrate India. NARA Park beach provides the only public swimming area in town and serves over 600 seasonal members, in addition to selling over 4,500 daily passes each season. NARA is also home to many special events each year: Halloween Monsterbash, Winter Carnival, and Beach Party. The Recreation



Wetherbee conservation land agricultural field.

Department offers a variety of classes for all ages at NARA Park through its Spring-Summer and Fall-Winter programs. Many individuals and companies also use NARA's picnic areas and fields for large functions such as weddings and corporate picnics.

5.C.2.2 COMMUNITY GARDENS

Two areas of the town offer opportunity for residents and non-residents to rent a small garden plot each season for a minimal fee. This is managed through the Recreation Department. North Acton Community Gardens, an approximately 5-acre parcel of Conservation Land, is located off Rt. 27 in North Acton. There are 46 total plots, 12 of which are half size plots, including a permanent herb garden which is not rented. See Sec. 5.C.1.2.6 for details. Morrison Farm Community Gardens are located on Concord Road. There are currently 38 organic garden plots at Morrison Farm. A full description of the entire Morrison Farm property is treated in Sec. 5.C.4.1.

5.C.2.3 ATHLETIC FIELDS AND TOWN PLAYGROUNDS

The Town of Acton provides approximately 30 acres of town-owned athletic fields, in addition to the facilities provided by the local and regional schools that are frequently used for non-school activities. The location, sizes, and most common uses of these fields are detailed in Table 5.C.2.3, Inventory of Recreation Department Fields and Playgrounds, and reviewed below. Most areas are suited for a variety of athletic uses, with some areas capable of supporting multiple simultaneous uses. However, others are restricted by field and infrastructure limitations. Jones Field and Great Hill Field, for example, are often too wet in the spring to be playable, and Gardner Field was taken offline in 2000 due to lack of parking. Similarly, aging playgrounds were removed at Great Hill in 2005 and Elm Street in 2010, and neither have been replaced. Goward, Hart, MacPherson and Little Great Hill fields are all limited in their utility due to their size and geometry. In each case, only certain levels of play are possible. The difficulty of parking near some of the fields

makes them less desirable for their targeted age groups as the very young players are required to walk on the side of, or across, busy town streets. These issues are discussed in detail in Section 7, and the Recreation Department's comprehensive five-year plan is presented in Section 9.

The scheduling of field use is the responsibility of the Recreation Department. In addition to use by athletic leagues, many community groups and companies reserve the athletic areas for games and picnics. Athletic fields, and their associated picnic and playground areas, are also intensively used by families and groups of children.

Maintenance of the town athletic fields is the responsibility of the Recreation/Natural Resources Department. The Town's Natural Resources crew provides routine trash removal and weekly mowing for the athletic fields, and the Recreation Department has made efforts to reinstitute regularly-scheduled field seeding, fertilization and aeration utilizing the services of outside contractors and using funds accumulated from field and picnic reservations. However, due to budget and manpower constraints, the Town's maintenance of athletic fields is limited in scope. Some leagues provide their own lining of fields, and materials such as silt or stone mix and amenities, and Youth Baseball and Soccer frequently re-sods or reseeds worn areas of fields. The leagues that use the illuminated fields at Elm Street and 2A/27 provide their own funding for lights. Such donations of time, labor and services from leagues have been the mainstay of field upkeep for Acton's fields. Fields and playgrounds are itemized in Table 5.C.2.3 with individual descriptions in the sections that follow.

The scheduling of field use is the responsibility of the Recreation Department. In addition to use by athletic leagues, many community groups and companies reserve the athletic areas for games and picnics. Athletic fields, and their associated picnic and playground areas, are also intensively used by families and groups of children.

Maintenance of the town athletic fields is the responsibility of the Recreation/Natural Resources Department. The Town's Natural Resources crew provides

TABLE 5.C.2.3. INVENTORY OF RECREATION DEPARTMENT FIELDS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Ref.	Field Name	Acres	Playground	Field Uses	Location
1	Jones Field	3.3	Yes	Baseball	Martin St., S. Acton
2	Concord Road Field	2	No	Soccer	104 Concord Rd.
3	Hart Field	2	No	Baseball	80 Taylor Rd.
4	MacPherson	1	No	Baseball	80 Taylor Rd.
5	Great Hill	2.5	No	2 Soccer	54 School St.
6	Little Great Hill	.5	No	Soccer	54 School St.
7	Elm Street Field	2	No	Softball/Football/ Tennis/Soccer/ Picnic Shelter	21 Elm St.
8	Veterans Memorial Field	2	Yes	2 Baseball	655 Main, intersection of Rts. 2A & 27
9	School Street	14	No	6 Soccer	343-347 School St., off Rt. 2 E
10	Goward Field	1.69	Yes	Basketball	486 Main St., behind Acton Memorial Library
11	Gardner Field	1.6	Yes	Basketball; Grass Field closed for league use due to lack of parking	Rt. 111, W. Acton
12	NARA Fields	6.5	No	Softball/3 Soccer	25 Ledge Rock Way, off Quarry Rd.
13	T.J. O'Grady Skate Park	1.15	No	Skateboarding, Inline Skating	66 Hayward Rd., near ABRHS
14	Robbins Mill Rec. Area	1	Yes	Soccer, Basketball, Picnic Shelter	61 Canterbury Hill Rd.
Total Acres		31.25			

routine trash removal and weekly mowing for the athletic fields, and the Recreation Department has made efforts to reinstitute regularly-scheduled field seeding, fertilization and aeration utilizing the services of outside contractors and using funds accumulated from field and picnic reservations. However, due to budget and manpower constraints, the Town's maintenance of athletic fields is limited in scope. Some leagues provide their own lining of fields, and materials such as silt or stone mix and amenities, and Youth Baseball and Soccer frequently re-sods or reseeds worn areas of fields. The leagues that use the illuminated fields at Elm Street and 2A/27 provide their own funding for lights. Such donations of time, labor and services from leagues have been the mainstay of field upkeep for Acton's fields. Fields and playgrounds are itemized in Table 5.C.2.3 with individual descriptions in the sections that follow.

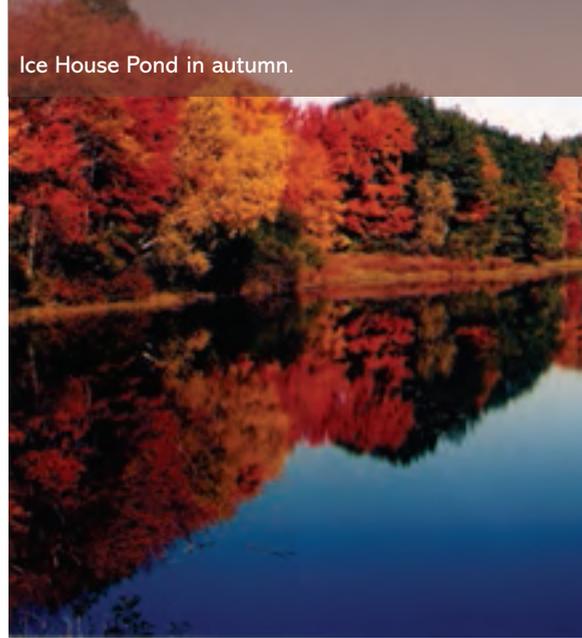
5.C.2.3.1 Jones Field

Jones Field is located on Martin St., near the intersection of Stow Rd. and Martin St. This field consists of a playground and a full size baseball diamond. Routine maintenance has occurred at Jones Field including playground repairs and field repairs from vehicle damage. In 2010, the Recreation Department replaced a large safety net that was in tatters between the ball field and playground area to prevent balls from hitting children while they are using the play structures. Infield improvements have been made by the Acton-Boxboro Youth Baseball organization.

5.C.2.3.2 Concord Road Field

Concord Road Field (a.k.a. Woodlawn Field) is located on Concord Rd. between Ice House Pond and the Woodlawn Cemetery entrance. It is an irrigated multiuse

Ice House Pond in autumn.



soccer field. Concord Road was originally leased under a ten-year agreement between the Recreation Commission and the Cemetery Commission, and the site will eventually be used for burial purposes. The lease was renewed in 2008 for 5 years, to be reviewed in October 2012. This field has undergone repeated turf maintenance over the past five years in an effort to produce a better-quality playing surface. Current challenges have been the need to reseed or re-sod worn areas and the infiltration of crabgrass. Overseeding in the fall and winter has recently been attempted. Frequent irrigation system repair is required. Winter skating rinks on the field were discontinued in 2008, due to maintenance issues.

5.C.2.3.3 Hart Field

Hart Field is located at the Conant Elementary School. This field consists of a baseball/softball diamond. Routine maintenance has taken place at Hart Field over the past five years.

5.C.2.3.4 MacPherson Field

MacPherson Field is located at the Conant Elementary School. This field consists of a baseball diamond. MacPherson received two new shaded dugouts in May 2008 by Acton-Boxboro Youth Baseball (ABYB), who led the construction effort with Town support and a grant from the Melanoma Foundation. Field vandalism from vehicles was an issue and was resolved by blocking field entry with boulders.

5.C.2.3.5 Great Hill Field

Great Hill is located on School St. behind the South Acton Fire station. This field contains two soccer fields adjacent to the Great Hill Conservation Area. A station with dog waste bags is provided by the Recreation Department. A playground with outdated equipment was removed in 2005 and has not been replaced. Great Hill has been extensively used by Acton-Boxboro Youth Soccer (ABYS) for soccer play. The field and pond area are also frequented by dog owners and their pets. A routine

Sunday morning gathering of dogs has been reported to number up to fifty at a time, and tensions between dog owners and sports players have at times been addressed by the Recreation Commission. Field wear has been on the increase and has been addressed with reseeding and resting. Overseeding in the fall and winter has been recently attempted, since access to this field in the spring is often delayed due to its wetness.

5.C.2.3.6 Little Great Hill Field

Little Great Hill is located off of School St. behind the South Acton Fire station and to the left of the Great Hill Field. This field contains small sized soccer fields. In the past five years, Little Great Hill has been used in a more limited capacity by Youth Soccer. The path to the field is in need of a boardwalk extension closer to the parking lot due to frequent muddy conditions. The existing boardwalk has occasionally been reported as a site of ground bee nests that attack passersby and need removal.

5.C.2.3.7 Elm Street Field

The Elm Street playing fields are located next to the Douglas Elementary School in West Acton. The Elm Street fields consist of a picnic shelter, two tennis courts

and a lighted softball diamond, outfield multiuse practice area, and adjacent small soccer field. Most notably, Elm Street Field underwent a major lighting replacement project that was completed in August 2007. The new Musco lighting system provides safer illumination of playing fields, reduces undesirable lighting of neighboring properties, and meets Town lighting bylaw requirements. Lighting of the field is automatically scheduled by the use of Musco's Control-Link computer system. The lighting project expanded the softball outfield's lit area to provide multifield use by Pop Warner, the local Youth Football league. In 2008, Elm Street playground was the oldest playground in our inventory and Recreation was awarded a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant for a new fenced and handicap-accessible toddler playground. The "Seideman vs. City of Newton" court decision in November 2008 caused the Town to put this grant in stasis, and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) chose not to renew the grant when the 3-year grace period for project initiation expired. The funding was returned to the CPC in 2011. The Elm Street playground was dismantled in 2010.

5.C.2.3.8 Veterans Memorial Field (Route 2A/27)

Veteran's Field is located at the intersection of Route 2A and Route 27. This field consists of two irrigated Little League diamonds and a playground. This is a tournament-quality lighted field that has been heavily utilized over the past five years. Insufficient parking is often an issue and parking along Route 27 and overflow parking into the Acton Woods Plaza parking lot across the intersection of Route 27 and Route 2A is sometimes needed. Acton-Boxborough Youth Baseball (ABYB) has invested time, materials and funds in its upkeep, replacing fence caps and scoreboards, re-sodding turf and contributing to lighting system repairs. They have a 3-year renewable Agreement with the Town that allows ABYB to display sponsorship signage on the outfield fence. An effort was made in 2008 to design and construct shaded dugouts funded by the Melanoma Foundation, but size limitations caused ABYB and the Town to conclude that they should be built instead

at MacPherson field. Also in 2008, the Town developed a design for a new three-bay North Acton firehouse to be situated on the rise above the Veterans Field along Route 27, but the funding and construction of the project was put on hold due to a downturn in the economy.

5.C.2.3.9 School Street Fields

The School Street fields are located at the end of School St. off of Rte. 2 East. In 2006, an additional 10 acres was added to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Corrections System lease, for a total of 14 acres. The lease was due for renewal of a ten-year term from the Department of Corrections, in return for that agency's use of 25 acres of Acton's Wetherbee Conservation Land. Coupled with this expansion, a CPA grant for \$111,930 to build a twin baseball field was awarded to Recreation. Due to a variety of circumstances at the State level, the multi-year lease remains in negotiation with the State, and the Twin Ball field project remains on hold, with extensions

granted by the CPC. Since then, the field has remained a heavily-used soccer field, although in the past five years little has been done to maintain the field, as the site has remained under an annual lease renewable at the end of each calendar year while the multiyear lease negotiation has been in process. These fields are difficult to keep in playable condition because the soil is sandy with a gravel base and does not retain water. The proximity of the fields to Acton Water District wells (at 315 School Street and Lawsbrook Road) and an aeration tower restrict the Town or the sports leagues from irrigating the fields. The fields must be "rested" as much as field demand allows in order to retain a minimum amount of vegetation. The 10-acre parcel is "unplayable" for lacrosse users due to poor turf conditions. The Lion's Club Town Fair utilized this location in 2011, after using NARA Park playing fields in 2009 and 2010.

5.C.2.3.10 Goward Playground

Goward Playground is located behind the Acton Memorial Library at 486 Main St., in Acton Center. In the last five years, the wooden structures have deteriorated and many complaints about its condition have been voiced. This has traditionally been a very heavily-used playground. However, some residents report that they have been going out of town to use other facilities because of the playground's condition. A tire swing was removed in 2007 due to rotting and unstable posts. The standalone wooden train, bouncing cart and playhouses are worn and need replacement. Recreation invested significant funds on Goward Playground maintenance in 2010 to replace failed components and bring the playground up to ASTM F-1487 Playground Safety standards. A citizen's fundraising organization, "Friends of the Playground" has recently launched a fundraiser with a goal of \$100,000 to supplement the \$150,000 requested in capital funding to build a new playground.

5.C.2.3.11 Gardner Playground

Gardner Field is located on Rte. 111 (Massachusetts Ave.) near Kinsley Rd. This field consists of a playground, basketball hoop and field area. Recent maintenance updates to the playground have included complete replacement of worn swing components and replenishment of wood safety fiber surfacing surrounding two climbing play structures. Parking access to the playground is limited to three designated paved spaces and increased parking has long been desired to again make use of the field area for organized sports activities.

5.C.2.3.12 Nathaniel Allen Recreational Area (NARA)

NARA Park was opened in the spring of 2000. It is located at 25 Ledge Rock Way off Rte. 27 (Main St.). NARA Park is home to the NARA Youth and Mighty Mini Summer Camp and summer concert series. The park consists of a playground, NARA Pond and beach, a paved walking trail (approx. one mile loop), an irrigated softball field, three soccer fields, three picnic areas, a bathhouse



Fourth of July celebration at NARA Park amphitheater.

pavilion, and an outdoor amphitheater stage. Three stations with dog waste bags are provided by the Recreation Department.

The NARA fields are used quite extensively. On any given Saturday, the three soccer fields are broken down into multiple play areas to allow several teams to practice simultaneously. The Acton Boxborough Regional High School cross country program also uses the fields in the fall of each year. At the end of 2009, field vandalism from a vehicle severely damaged the playing fields and took the field offline for the 2010 spring season for reparation. Since then, a regular program of fertilization, aeration and reseeded has resulted in an improved playing surface. Frequent irrigation system repair is required.

5.C.2.3.13 T.J. O'Grady Memorial Skate Park

This facility is for skateboarding and inline skating and was opened in the fall of 2005. The park is free and is open to the general public during daylight hours. The Skate Park is located at 66 Hayward Road, adjacent to the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School (ABRHS).

On November 20, 1998, a fourteen-year-old boy named T.J. O'Grady was struck and killed by an automobile while skateboarding down a residential road in Boxborough. Soon after this tragic accident, T.J.'s mother, Lori O'Grady, along with many of T.J.'s friends and their families, formed the T.J. O'Grady Memorial Skate Park Committee. The goal of this non-profit organization was to construct a safe place for children and adults to skateboard and inline skate.

Due to the lack of local facilities in Acton and Boxborough, those who enjoy skating had no choice other than to skate in streets and parking lots. Such a setup would put skaters and motorists in dangerous situations, and create both an annoyance and a liability for local businesses. A designated skating area would offer a responsible alternative, and, for this reason, the committee gained instant support from many organizations across town.

The Committee raised \$78,500 from private and business donations in addition to the \$80,000 that the Town of Acton approved in April, 2001. The town moved to accept the conveyance of 1.15 acres of land from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for \$2,500 to be used for the Skate Park. The land was accepted after the Annual Town meeting in 2003. In a series of several CPA grants (under "recreation"), the Town came up with the additional funding necessary to complete construction, totaling \$285,000. Following the Town's acquisition of the property from the Commonwealth, over a period of years, the property topography, site engineering and design was completed as a donation from the engineering company of Stamski and McNary. The lot was cleared and rough-graded thanks to the donation of services by Ace Brothers and Onyx Transportation and paving was donated by Lazaro Paving. Additional generous donations from many contributors made the construction of the park possible.

The grand opening of the T.J. O'Grady Memorial Skate Park took place in June of 2006. The Recreation Department holds an annual concert with the support of Danny's Place Youth Services, consisting of live bands and skating demonstrations. This has been a free event because of the generosity of local businesses and is open to the public. A valuable addition to the Town of Acton, the Skate Park builds community by providing a shared recreational opportunity for all ages.

5.C.2.3.14 Robbins Mill Recreation Area

In April 2011, the Robbins Mill Recreation Area was accepted as a gift to the Town of Acton from the Robbins Mill Estates Subdivision. It consists of a playground, picnic shelter, water fountain, basketball court, small soccer field and 40-space parking lot that were provided by the developer, Pulte Homes. The Recreation Dept. had the condition of the field assessed by a landscape contractor over the summer and had it fertilized and seeded in the fall to improve the playing surface, which had not developed adequate turf coverage. The playground was inspected by the Recreation Dept. for routine maintenance and a

Playground at NARA Park.



bolt for the multi-pondo teeter-totter was replaced. The playground equipment for the subdivision was purchased in 2006 and was stored onsite at the Recreation Area parcel but was not installed until Pulte Homes began the construction of the Recreation Area in 2010 when home purchases in the subdivision neared 90%, a delay attributed to an economic downturn in 2008.

5.C.2.3.15 Miracle Field

In 2009, Lauren and Andy Richardt formed the Miracle League of Boston, a local franchise of a nationwide organization, Miracle League, which sponsors baseball opportunities for children with disabilities. They were the first formed in Massachusetts. The mission of the nation-wide organization is to provide support for creating their model of a fully handicapped accessible baseball field throughout the US. After several years operating a very successful program in Boxborough with 90+ participating children from 40 surrounding towns, the Richardts were looking for both a permanent home for their league, designed after the national model, and

sufficient sponsorship to finance. They took on the non-profit organization name, "Miracle League of Massachusetts" [www.miracleleagueofma.com] and told their story to the Acton Recreation Department and many potential supporters.

In 2010 Town of Acton Natural Resources Director, Tom Tidman, came up with a proposal to tuck the new field into a corner of Town property currently utilized by the Department of Public Works, adjacent to NARA Park, and connected to the soon-to-be expanded NARA parking lot which had just secured funding. With the support of the Board of Selectmen, the Town Manager and DPW, Tom signed on the assistance of George Dimakrakos, partner of Stamski & McNary, an Acton Civil Engineering firm, to develop the design. Kim Ahern of Kim Ahern Landscape Architects created the landscape plan for the facility. A beautiful plan resulted, which included birch and maple and native shrubs. Local philanthropist Steven Steinberg offered to match up to \$100,000 in donations by naming the new facility in honor of his business partner, the "Joseph Lalli Miracle Field." The gift was accepted by the Town.

The field was constructed in time for September 15, 2012 start of the fall season. The location of the site was advantageously located near stockpiles of base material available for construction. J. Redmond Corp., located just up the street signed on to do the construction. The result is a story of a perfect private-public partnership. The field is managed by the Acton Recreation Department and can also be used for other activities and variations like "Whiffle Ball" and for other groups, such as handicapped Veterans, etc.

5.C.2.4 OTHER RECREATIONAL AND OPEN SPACE PUBLIC AREAS

The following section treats the miscellaneous properties belonging to the town of Acton not fully covered in the above listings. Most notably is the Morrison Farm property and Acton Town Common.

Joseph Lalli Miracle Field, NARA Park.



5.C.2.4.1 The Morrison Farm Property

Located at 116 Concord Road in East Acton, the 32-acre Morrison Farm property lies between two Town-owned properties, the Woodlawn Cemetery and Ice House Pond. The front portion (about 17 acres) on Concord Road is open field with a farmhouse, garage, barn and three out-buildings and the rear portion (about 15 acres) is wooded. The Farm property in its entirety can be compartmentalized into four general areas: pine woodlands, open hayfield, lower meadow, and farm buildings and paddocks.

An historic inventory prepared in 2005 by Arthur Krimm of the Massachusetts Historical Commission determined that both the Morrison Farm and the Ice House Pond properties were eligible for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the spring of 1997, Town Meeting voted to acquire the property for \$1.3MM. The warrant article was supported for three overriding reasons: (1) use for passive recreation and conservation; (2) potential use for active recreation; and (3) elimination of a potential for residential development. The Morrison Farm was purchased with a life estate to the resident, Betty Morrison, and in 2003 when Mrs. Morrison permanently vacated the property, it then came under the control of the Town.

The Board of Selectmen appointed an advisory committee in 2004 composed of members representing various interests concerning the recommended reuse

of the property. The goal of the Morrison Farm Reuse Committee was to develop a reuse plan that would accommodate citizens' desires for active and passive recreation while taking into account the land's value in terms of conservation and rural character. This committee held meetings open to the public welcoming proposals from special interest groups and town residents, including an open forum at Town Hall.

Following upwards of 18 months of meetings, the Committee reached consensus on several fundamental goals. Most importantly, the agricultural heritage of the property should be

preserved. Since 1669, the fields have remained in the same general condition. It is also important that the familiar rural views from Concord Road be preserved, and the Morrison Farm Property be integrated into the surrounding cultural context through incorporation of nearby existing properties into the proposed Farm design. Lastly, a portion of the property should be set aside for recreational use in accordance with the original Town Meeting vote in 1997.

Several augmentations of existing trails have been proposed, along with an observation platform and canoe launch on the pond, which would enrich both the fitness and wildlife-viewing aspects of the property. The 19th-century Nashoba Brook Bridge should be reconstructed, which would provide access to the Farm property from potential alternate parking locations along Great Road. Integrating the proposed East Acton Village Green, the future Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Woodlawn Cemetery, the historic Captain Robbins' site, and the Nashoba Brook ecosystem into the design planning of the Morrison Farm would enhance the region through the creation of a community complex. A multi-purpose recreation field is included in the recommendation goals, but the committee strongly suggests that the Farm remain a last resort for active recreation development. A Community Organic Farm was established on the southwestern portion of the property, to great success. There are currently 38 organic garden plots.

Such recommendations for this property aim to optimize land use in a historically and environmentally sensitive manner. Through thoughtful management of our natural resources, the splendor of this valuable town resource can be appreciated well into the future.

Implementation of the final-design recommendations are pending budget limitations. However, the current lease for the Concord Road soccer fields, which are on cemetery property, expired in 2012, escalating the urgency of moving forward on the final plans.

In October, 2012 The Pam Resor Organic Orchard was commemorated. Former Massachusetts Senator, Pamela Resor spent much of her career in support of environmental stewardship, especially with regard to keeping toxics out of the soil, air and water. A new sign was installed on site, made possible with funding from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute at the University of Massachusetts in Lowell.

5.C.2.4.2 The Acton Town Common

The Acton Town Common, for the purposes of this discussion, includes the open space and buildings that constitute the civic center of Acton. The various parcels of land that make up the "Common" were purchased and assembled over many years, beginning in 1735 when the property now known as Meeting House Hill was established as the site of the first meeting house (combined church and town hall) in Acton; such a building being a prerequisite for Acton to split off from Concord and become an incorporated Town. Other parcels were added in 1802 when the property for the Town Hall was purchased. At that time the Common was graded by citizen work parties assembled by school districts. There were numerous unsuccessful attempts to make the Common a public livestock grazing area. In 1838 the Selectmen had a formal survey of the Common conducted to stop the infringement onto public property by abutters. In April, 1840 the Town voted

to set out trees on the Common, and a combination of buttonwood, rock maple, elm, and white ash were set out. In 1851 the Davis Monument was erected on the Common in memory of Capt. Isaac Davis, Abner Hosmer, and James Hayward, all killed at the Battle of the North Bridge on April 19, 1775, and their remains are entombed in the monument. In 1889 a small parcel was added to allow the construction of the Acton Memorial Library, which was donated by William H. Wilde as a library, Civil War monument, and meeting room for the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1899 the Common was further improved with landscaping and addition of the granite post and chain fence around the Davis Monument. Beginning in 1901 the Town, in compliance with the Massachusetts Shade Tree Law, appointed a Tree Warden and formalized the care of public shade trees, beginning with those trees on the Common:

"The trees upon the Common, those on the roadside near Woodlawn Cemetery, and others in different parts of the Town are much in need of judicious trimming, both for

the sake of the trees and to the travelling public. I beg leave to suggest that an appropriation for this purpose might be wisely made"

— **Charles J. Williams,
Tree Warden,
1901 Acton Town Report**

The land now known as Goward Field, located behind the Memorial Library, was purchased from the Acton Agricultural Fair in 1941 for the site of the Highway Department. That operation was moved in 1960 and the parcel is now used as open space and a playground. In the early 1960s the Acton Center School, which had occupied the site of the first meeting house, was torn down, and Meeting House Hill became landscaped open space maintained by the Town of Acton and the Acton Garden Club. In 1996 Town meeting voted to use part of Goward Field for an expansion to the Memorial Library, and at the same time approved funds to purchase the residence at 17 Woodbury Lane. A portion of this property is used for parking, a portion for open space, and a portion is still occupied by the now vacant house.

The Common now consists of approximately ten acres, including the Monument Triangle, the Town Hall/Memorial Library complex, Center Fire Station, Municipal Properties office at 468 Main Street, Goward Field playground, Meeting House Hill and the "front lawns" of the buildings along Main Street from Newtown Road to Nagog Hill Road. This property is the true geographical, civic and emotional center of Acton. On the Common and on the surrounding structures are monuments and remembrances of the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Viet Nam War. There is tremendous activity in this area with most Town offices still located in Town Hall, and over 1,000 patrons per day visit the Memorial Library.

The grounds of the Common are maintained primarily by the Acton Municipal Properties Department with assistance, especially at Meeting



The first meetinghouse in Acton which once stood on "Meetinghouse Hill" on the corner of Main Street and Nagog Road.



Canada lily at Acton Arboretum

House Hill, from the Acton Garden Club. Any formal activities on the Common are regulated by the Board of Selectmen. The Common is the site of events such as plant sales, book sales, reenactments, and parades. This is truly passive recreational space that is accessible to all.

5.C.2.4.3 West Acton Village Open Space

West Acton Village has several very small parcels of publically-owned land that have significance as historical and cultural open spaces. These are reviewed below.

Edwards Square. Edwards Square is a small (1,000 SF +/-) green triangle at the confluence of Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington Street and Central Street. It is dedicated to the memory of Sidney Edwards who was killed by hostile fire in France during World War One while serving in the Canadian Army. This parcel serves as the terminus

of the Memorial Day parade every other year, and was the site of peace vigils during the Viet Nam War. It is just a bit of grass with three Ash trees and a c. 1900 horse trough that is planted by the Acton Garden Club, but it acts as a bit of relief to the dense urban core that represents other portions of West Acton Village.

Windsor Building. The Windsor Building is the current name for the 1904 West Acton Fire Station. That building was spun off for other uses (Teen Center, meeting area for the "Acton Minutemen", Food Pantry), and has now come back to true public use. The Municipal Properties Department has been conducting a historic restoration of the building using Community Preservation Funds, and eventually it will be used for public meetings and events. The grounds (7,770 SF) and building are now used for smaller events, such as support space for the

Farmer's Market, Octoberfest, and the West Acton Citizens' Library book sales.

West Acton Citizens' Library. The West Acton Citizens' Library on Windsor Avenue is Acton's original and oldest library, dating back to c. 1884. The building dates back to c. 1840. The Library has recently been totally renovated and restored, using gift money, operating budget funds, and the Community Preservation Fund. The grounds (8,277 SF) have been landscaped in period fashion by the Municipal Properties Department and the Acton Garden Club. The entire parcel is used for public events, such as library book sales, Octoberfest, and the Farmer's Market, which is held on Pearl Street (adjacent) on Sundays.

5.C.3 School Department Fields and Playgrounds

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District owns approximately 66.6 acres of land, and the Acton School District controls 121.77 acres of land which is under town ownership. Although there are buildings on move of this acreage, the school campuses and grounds provide valuable recreation space. In addition, almost 80 acres are forest, wetland or undeveloped open space. A detailed listing of all properties that includes estimated acreage, location and associated school can be found in Appendix (for 5C).

In addition to those parcels directly associated with the various school campuses, the District owns a separate, undeveloped 25-acre parcel of particular interest as a potential conservation parcel. This parcel is located at 24 Arlington Street and was acquired in 1962 as a potential school site. However, the soils were subsequently determined to be unsuitable for construction. In addition, the parcel contains two centrally-located vernal pools protected under the local and state wetland regulations.

5.C.3.1 SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS AND PLAYING FIELDS

There are a number of playgrounds and playing fields located on the various school campuses in town. These include the following:

PLAYGROUNDS

Luther Conant School,	80 Taylor Road
Paul P. Gates School	75 Spruce Street
C.T. Douglas School	21 Elm Street
Merriam School	11 Charter Road
McCarthy-Towne School	11 Charter Road

PLAYING FIELDS

R.J. Grey Junior High School	16 Charter Road
Acton-Boxboro Regional High School	36 Charter Road

5.C.3.2 Intermunicipal Agreements

Intermunicipal Agreements between the Town of Acton and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District have created expanded recreational opportunities at school facilities for all of the Acton community, beyond their routine school usage. These agreements were forged as a key piece of several funding initiatives for active recreation projects through the Community Preservation Act (CPA). The projects funded via this method to date include:

- 2005 High School Synthetic Turf Football Field – Leary Field, ABRHS
- 2006 Douglas School Basketball Courts – Douglas School
- 2007 High School Baseball and Tennis Court Sports Lighting, ABRHS
- 2012 (Proposed) Lower Fields Project (sports lighting, parking, skating bowl), ABRHS and T.J. O’Grady Skate Park

5.C.4 Water Based Recreation

This section provides a review of the water-based recreation areas in Acton.

5.C.4.1 NARA PARK

NARA Park Beach provides the only public swimming area in town and serves over 600 seasonal members, in addition to selling over 4,500 daily passes each season. Fishing and boating are enjoyed by patrons.

C.5.E SCHOOL PROPERTIES LAND USE ANALYSIS

Property ID	Location	School/Campus	Total Area	Forest/Wet/Undeveloped	Open	Playground	Athletic Field	Parking/Roads/Building
137	80 Taylor Rd	Conant	24.4	7.29	6.5	0.64	1.76	8.21
E2-247	7 Elm St	Gates / Douglas	33.9	14.72	1.86	1.26	4.62	11.44
F3-74-1	312 Main St	Charter Rd. Campus	4.24	4.24	0	0	0	0
F3-15	70 Hayward Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	15.92	9.35	0	0	6.57	0
F3-6	88 Hayward Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	0.74	0.74	0	0	0	0
F3-16-1	68 Hayward Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	0.33	0.33	0	0	0	0
F3-31-1	23 Charter Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	3	0	0	0	3	0
F3-31	9 Charter Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	25.15	9.71	0.5	2.73	1.89	10.32
F2-109	441 Mass Ave	Charter Rd. Campus	7.32	0.85	0.92	0	0.73	4.82
F2-101	12 Charter Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	16.59	3.7	0.53	0	4.88	7.48
F2-49	108 Hayward Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	9.09	3.96	0	0	0	5.13
F2-50	92 Hayward Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	8.76	0	0	0	0	8.76
F3-27	23 Charter Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	9.1	0	0	0	5.12	3.98
E3-8	24 Arlington St rear	n/a	24.94	24.94	0	0	0	0
Totals			183.48	79.83	10.31	4.63	28.57	60.14

(Estimated areas in acres)

5.C.4.2 GREAT HILL RECREATION AREA SKATING POND

The pond is a ¾-acre impoundment created by excavating an old, silted-up farm pond that was reverting into a red maple swamp. Completed in 1986, the pond is used for skating, fishing and wildlife viewing.

5.C.4.3 MILL POND RECREATION AREA

This half-acre site is located between Main Street and the Fort Pond Brook Mill Pond, above the 1848 stone dam near the site of Faulkner Mills. The site has a half-acre of grass, and is open to the water for fishing and related activities. This area’s use is somewhat limited by lack of on-site parking. Eventual completion of the ARRT near this site will improve access. This location also houses a pumping facility for Acton’s wastewater treatment system.

5.C.4.4 ROBBINS MILL POND

This is a man-made impoundment in the Nashoba Brook Conservation Area. The pond, approximately three acres in size, is the site of mill foundations and an earth fill dam that dates back to pre-Colonial times. In 1990, the town, using funds for materials donated by the Acton Conservation Trust, rebuilt the dam extensively. The restored impoundment is suitable for fishing, canoeing and wildlife study. Additional reconstruction was undertaken in 1995, utilizing an eight-man crew from the Northeastern Correctional Facility in Concord.

5.C.4.5 GRASSY POND

The boardwalks and trails leading to Grassy Pond, in the Grassy Pond Conservation Area, provide access into the pond for fishing, canoeing and wildlife study. This large pond covers about 20 acres.

5.C.4.6 ARBORETUM POND

A 4,000-square-foot pond was excavated at the Arboretum in 1991. This small pond provides an open water habitat for birds and other wildlife that reside in, or migrate through, the Arboretum.

5.C.4.7 ARBORETUM BOG BOARDWALK

There is a 100-yard-long boardwalk across the quaking bog located at the Arboretum. This boardwalk, which includes an observation bench, allows close study of bog plants and related wildlife. Many elementary classes study the bog and its inhabitants each year during outings hosted by the Natural Resources Department.

5.C.4.8 WILL'S HOLE BOG BOARDWALK

The boardwalk into Will's Hole, a kettle-hole pond and associated quaking bog, provides safe access to the pond for wildlife and plant observation.

5.C.4.9 ICE HOUSE POND

This is a four-acre impoundment of Nashoba Brook, located on town-owned land at the intersection of Concord Road and Great Road. Since management activities (including yearly draining) related to ice harvesting stopped in the 1950s, the pond was very rapidly filling with floating and emergent vegetation that cut into the recreational potential of the site. In 1995 the pond was de-watered and dredged to restore its value as a boating and fishing area. Because of the proximity of the parking area to the water's edge, this site has the potential for handicapped access for water recreation.

5.C.4.10 SANDY POND

In 1988 a contractor dredged a two-acre pond located near Sandy Drive, off of School Street, that is located on town conservation land. This impoundment is accessible to the public for fishing and nature study.

5.C.5 Planned Bike Trails

Two bike trails are planned to run through portions of the town: the Assabet River Rail Trail, passing through South Acton, and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, passing through North Acton. At this time, funding constraints have delayed the construction of the Acton sections of both of these trails.

5.C.5.1 ASSABET RIVER RAIL TRAIL (ARRT)

5.C.5.1.1 ARRT Regional Overview

The ARRT is planned as a multi-use recreational rail trail that will pass through the communities of



*Top and middle: volunteer cleans up, Ice house pond.
Bottom: kite flying at Indian Festival, NARA Park.*

Marlborough, Hudson, Stow, Maynard and Acton. The trail will be built along the abandoned rail bed of the former Marlborough Branch RR, which was active from 1850 until 1979. As of September 2005, 5 miles of the trail have been paved in Marlborough and Hudson and are open to the public.

At Acton Town Meetings in 2004 and 2006, articles were passed that funded Acton's local contribution to the cost of designing and building the Acton-Maynard-Stow sections of the trail. A total of \$255,000 has been appropriated. In 2007, Acton took ownership of the 0.7 miles of the MBTA right-of-way at no cost. The same year, an easement across the private Wedgewood-Beacon property was signed which resolved all the trail access issues in Acton.

5.C.5.1.2 ARRT Trail Description - Acton

Approximately 1.1 miles of the trail will run through Acton. The trail's alignment will follow the railroad right-of-way (ROW) from the Maynard-Acton town line on Route-27, run in front of the Beacon building, then behind the Saab dealership and pass west of Sylvia Street. After it crosses Mill Pond on an existing 37-foot-long timber trestle bridge, the trail will reach the edge of the adjacent Caouette Farm. Subject to the future conservation restrictions of the farm, the trail will skirt the edge of the fields and exit out the property's access to Maple Street. This will be the limit of the formal ARRT in South Acton Village.

Trail users will be able use a new crosswalk across Maple Street to reach the south platform of the Acton MBTA station, where new bike racks are planned. The trail head is relatively close to the Acton-Boxborough school campus at Kelley's Corner, Great Hill Recreation Area, and the Acton Discovery Museum. Historic buildings are close by in South Acton Village – Exchange Hall, Jones Tavern and Faulkner Homestead.

The southernmost portion of the ARRT in Acton is flanked on each side by a red maple swamp. These wooded wetlands give rise to a brook that flows under

Footbridge crossing Nashoba Brook.



the trail and under Route 27, eventually joining Pratt's Brook. This section of the ARRT is within a Groundwater Protection District Zone 3, and the 100-year flood plain.

In the vicinity of Sylvia Street the trail runs east of Stonefield Farm, classified by the state as "Prime Farmland". The trail runs through wetlands once again as it nears Mill Pond, which was created by damming Fort Pond Brook. The Mill Pond and its surroundings are strikingly beautiful. The trestle crossing the pond will offer a prime viewpoint. Waterfowl observed at the pond include great blue heron, wood duck, osprey and mallards. Fort Pond Brook is an important wildlife corridor and is part of one of the two greenbelts in town. White-tailed deer and eastern coyote travel along such corridors. The area around the pond, with its wetlands and floodplain, is part of the Groundwater Protection District Zone 3. Fort Pond Brook ultimately provides water which enters the aquifer that supplies the Lawsbrook well field.

The following design issues will have to be addressed for the trail:

- The trail crossing at Pratt's Brook Culvert must be reviewed.
- The existing timber trestle crossing Mill Pond is being replaced, which must support emergency vehicle design load.
- The final connection to the South Acton Commuter Rail Station will likely be by way of a new crosswalk across Maple Street. Extensive signage and pavement markings will be needed.

5.C.5.2 BRUCE N. FREEMAN MEMORIAL BICYCLE PATH (BFRT)

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT), a linear path, when built will provide 4.9 mile handicap-accessible pedestrian and bicycle route within Acton, and will connect to an additional 20 miles of the trail to the north (Carlisle, Westford, Chelmsford, and Lowell) and the south (Concord, Sudbury, and Framingham). Within Acton it will provide access to the following areas of interest from north to south:

- Bay Circuit Trail
- Robbins Park
- NARA Park
- Nashoba Brook Conservation Area
- Veterans Memorial Field (Route 2A/27 Little League complex)
- Isaac Davis Trail
- Great Road commercial district
- Ice House Pond and the Morrison Farm
- East Acton Village District

5.C.5.2.1 BFRT Regional Overview

The BFRT is planned as a 25-mile multi-modal trail running from Lowell to Sudbury via the dormant Penn Central Railroad (a/k/a New Haven Railroad Framingham & Lowell line) right-of-way now owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (just south of Crosspoint Towers, Lowell to ~Route 20 in Sudbury) and by the transportation firm CSX (~Route 20, Sudbury to ~Route 30, Framingham). As of 2011 trail development is segmented into the following phases:

- Phase 1 is 6.8 miles in length and constructed in Westford and Chelmsford.
- Phase 2A includes 4.9 miles from Route 27 / Route 225 in Westford, through Carlisle and Acton with a terminus at Teamworks (nee Acton Indoor Sports) in East Acton. This section is currently in final design, which is scheduled to be completed in 2013. (Approximately 4.6 of the 4.9 miles are in Acton)
- Phase 2B is 0.8 miles continuing in Acton to the Concord Border at Route 2, then crossing Route 2 via a bridge terminating at Commonwealth Avenue in Concord. The 25% design (i.e., preliminary design) should be complete by the end of 2011 (Approximately 0.3 miles of Phase 2B are in Acton.)
- Phase 2C is 3.0 miles and continues on the ROW to the Concord border. This section is currently in final design (under the same contract as Phase 2A) with design scheduled to be finished in 2013.
- Phase 2D (not the official name, yet) continues 4.6 miles on the ROW to approximately Route

20 in Sudbury. Preliminary assessment has been completed, with no current definitive plans for future design.

- Phase 3 continues 4.7 miles on the ROW to approximately Route 30 in Framingham. Negotiations for purchase of the ROW from CSX by the towns of Framingham and Sudbury (separately for their respective sections) are ongoing.

As of June 28, 2012, funding was approved for phase 2A by the Boston Metropolitan Planning organization (Boston MPO) and construction is expected to commence in 2014. Currently there is no scheduled construction for Phase 3.

5.C.5.2.2 BFRT Trail Description — Acton

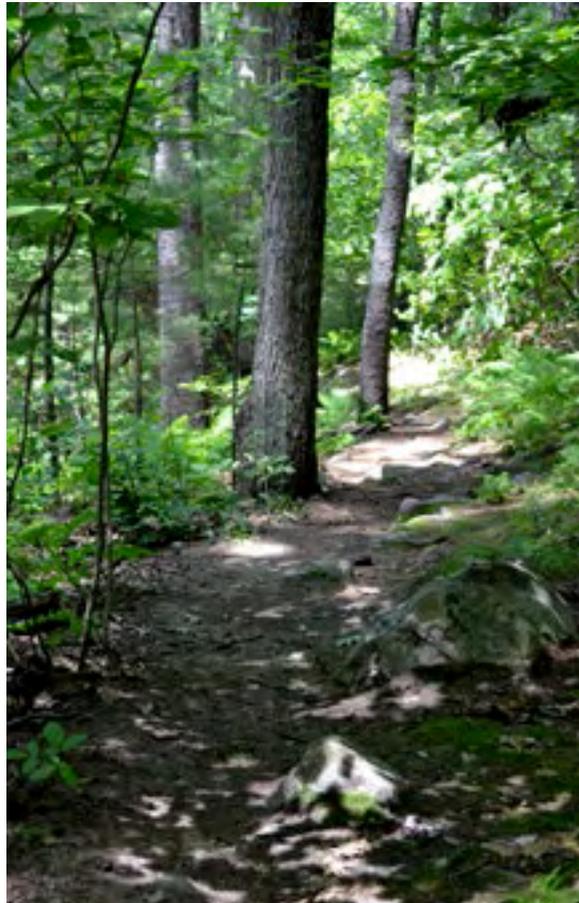
Approximately 4.9 miles of the BFRT will be located in Acton. The trail will be bituminous concrete (blacktop) and for the vast majority be 12 feet wide with 2 feet shoulders. It will reduce to 10 feet wide where needed. In addition much of the BFRT in Acton will be bordered by a parallel 6 feet wide soft surface path that may be preferred by runners, equestrians, and cross-country skiers. Access will likely be restricted to pedestrians, equestrians, and non-motorized vehicles with the exception of wheelchairs and emergency vehicles.

Starting in the north at the Carlisle border just to the east of Main Street (Route 27) the trail travels south through woods. Just south of the Carlisle border the Town has acquired land for BFRT parking at 1013 Main Street. This section first parallels and then crosses Main Street at grade about 0.4 miles south of the Carlisle border.

West of Main Street the trail follows a causeway over wetlands of Butter Brook, crossing the Nashoba Sportsman's Club driveway, and continuing behind the Robbins Brook development. It deviates off the ROW to the west of Rex Lumber¹, and then hugging the Rex Lumber property it enters NARA Park. Just south of NARA Park it again crosses Main Street at grade. This section is approximately 1.3 miles.

After crossing Main Street the trail enters the Nashoba Brook Conservation Area. It will parallel Nashoba Brook through woods and then over a causeway until crossing Great Road (Route 2A) via a bridge after approximately 1.1 miles. This section of the trail could provide easy access to the Pencil Factory and many Nashoba Brook Conservation Area trails via a bridge crossing Nashoba Brook.

The BFRT continues south on the west side of Great Road and travels behind Gould's Plaza until reaching Brook Street for an at-grade crossing after approximately 0.3 miles.



Trail at Great Hill conservation land, South Acton.

South of Brook Street the trail parallels Great Road for 1.1 miles until reaching Concord Road. This section crosses Nashoba Brook twice as well as the Isaac Davis Trail (for which there is pedestrian access only twice yearly: Patriots Day and July 4th). Much of the trail abuts commercial properties along Great Road. Access to the eastern section of Great Road at the Brookside Shops stop light will be provided by an easement at Powers Gallery at 144 Great Road. Just to the south of 144 Great Road access to the Morrison Land is possible via an old cart path. There is a path perpendicular to the BFRT which leads to a causeway. A small bridge will be needed to cross Nashoba Brook and enter the Morrison property. Just before reaching Concord Road the trail will enter the planned East Acton Village Green area with access to the Ice House Pond portion of Nashoba Brook.

After crossing Concord Road, the trail continues southeast behind Bursaw's and first parallels and then crosses Nashoba Brook again until reaching Wetherbee Street for an at-grade crossing after 0.3 miles.

After crossing Wetherbee Street, Phase 2A terminates at Teamworks after approximately 0.1 miles.

The final portion of the trail in Acton is part of Phase 2B and follows the ROW southeast 0.3 miles until reaching the Concord Border just short of Route 2. The planned crossing of Route 2 will be via a bridge.

Updated information can be found at the town of Acton website (www.acton-ma.gov and search on BFRT) who is managing the project, or the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Trail site www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org

¹ The ROW runs directly through the Rex Lumber property at 840 Main Street. Rex Lumber provided access to the NARA Park property with the agreement that the Town would make all best efforts to work with the Commonwealth to have the BFRT go around rather than through the Rex Lumber property. These efforts were successful, and the designed trail will provide safe access to NARA Park.

5.C.6 Regional Hiking Trails

5.C.6.1 BAY CIRCUIT TRAIL

The Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) is a two-hundred-mile-long corridor of connected publicly-accessible open spaces running between the north shore and the south shore of Massachusetts Bay and touching fifty Massachusetts towns. The concept behind this “Outer Emerald Necklace” dates back to 1929.

Acton has been a part of the Bay Circuit Trail for over ten years, and both the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen have dedicated our portion of the trail corridor that runs through the Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, Camp Acton and Stoneymeade conservation areas. The trail dedication was made possible by the purchase, in 1995, of Camp Acton. The Municipal Properties Director serves as the local liaison on the Board of Directors of the Bay Circuit Alliance. Acton’s LSCOM is maintaining the trail and signs within Acton’s boundaries.

5.C.7 Water District Lands

The Acton Water District, a separate political unit from the Town of Acton, owns a total of 399.5 acres of land. These parcels protect the groundwater wells, Acton’s only source of public water. Some of these parcels were purchased for future well sites or storage reservoirs.

No recreational use of these lands is permitted, but they hold value for wildlife and open space. It appears that most potential well sites have been identified, so the Water District probably will not purchase a great deal

TABLE 5.C.7. LANDS OWNED BY THE ACTON WATER DISTRICT

Plate	Parcel	Location	Deed (Book/ Page)	Acquisition Date	Acres
B-5	035-01	924R Main Street	8548/226	1987	12.1
B-6	1	960-962R Main Street	19375/003	1988	33.33
B-6	001-01	960-962 Main Street	15833/313	1984	24.37
B-6	11	954-956 Main Street	19375/003	1988	0.42
B-6	012-01	941-959 Main Street	LC997/172	1985	10.92
C-3	8	283-295 Nagog Hill Road	12582/076	1974	26.5
D-4	30	629-639 Main Street	14500/437	1981	1.48
D-4	34	619-627 Main Street	14500/437	1981	2.98
D-5	13	013 Wyndcliff Drive	14044/050	1980	7.29
E-1	2	693-699 Mass Ave.	LC652/167	1961	10.58
E-1	3	677-683 Mass Ave.	LC654/074	1961	10.34
E-1	4	687-689 Mass Ave.	unknown	unknown	5
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	8681/282	1956	
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	3737/531	1956	
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	8619/590	1955	13.67
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	8681/230	1956	
E-4	47-1	Behind Post Office Square	25911/36	1995	24.25
F-1	1	693 Mass Ave.	LC652/167	1961	0.5
F-1	4	680-700 Mass Ave.	12621/663	1974	40.44
F-1	7	001 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.75
F-1	11	005 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.46
F-1	19	007 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.47

Plate	Parcel	Location	Deed (Book/ Page)	Acquisition Date	Acres
F-1	27	009 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.53
F-1	39	011 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.48
F-2	121	500R Mass Ave.	19703/504	1989	5.29
F-2B	31	504 Mass Ave.	15915/301	1984	5.5
F-2B	031-10	514 Mass Ave.	15915/301	1984	1.45
G-1	102	009R Ticonderoga	13226/656	1977	11.38
G-1	141	051R Ethan Allen	10384/195	1963	2.03
G-2	139	211 Main Street	unknown	unknown	5
H-4	76	315 School Street	11816/511	1970	29.12
H-4	113	028 Lawsbrook Road	11828/413	1970	13.9
H-4	114	064R Lawsbrook Road	11828/413	1970	9.4
H-4	119	056R Lawsbrook Road	11803/226	1970	13.3
H-4	126	064 Lawsbrook Road	11828/413	1970	5
H-4	130	044 Lawsbrook Road	11828/413	1970	5.3
H-4	134	052R Lawsbrook Road	LC791/049	1970	0.85
H-4	135	052R Lawsbrook Road	11824/156	1970	1.51
H-4	139-01	060R Lawsbrook Road	11280/135	1967	0.96
I-3	135-01	39-41R Independence	19427/393	1988	0.45
I-3	136-01	104-106R Powder Mill Rd.	18980/054	1988	4.78
I-3	145	25-27R Independence Rd.	19427/393	1988	1.83
J-3	21	082R Powder Mill Rd.	LC831/084	1973	9.6
J-3	34	284-290 High Street	11919/434	1970	56

Total Acres 399.51



of additional land. These lands do not generate any tax revenues, but they are protected from development.

5.C.8 Cemetery Lands

There are three cemeteries in Acton. Woodlawn, located on Concord Road in Acton Center, was established in 1738, and comprises 80 acres, of which 31 are developed. Mount Hope, located on Central Street in West Acton, was established in 1848, with 94 acres, 11 of which are developed. Forest Cemetery, a half acre in size, and located on Carlisle Road in North Acton, was established in 1750. It is now fully developed and retired.

These three municipal cemeteries have value as open space both in their undeveloped and developed conditions. The undeveloped land provides wildlife habitat and is useful for the sorts of passive recreation that commonly occurs on conservation lands. The developed areas of the cemeteries provide beautifully landscaped grounds and wide, paved roadways that are commonly used for walking and bird watching. The cemeteries also provide an aesthetically pleasing, peaceful setting for quiet contemplation and study of the social and cultural history of the town.

The Recreation Department has an agreement with the Cemetery Department to use a portion of Woodlawn as a soccer field. Originally set to expire in 1998, the agreement was extended to 2002 and again in 2008, and expected to be received in 2012.

At the present rate of use, the two active cemeteries will provide sufficient room for at least 100 years. Even when fully developed, some areas will be left untouched such as wetlands and flood plains that have value as conservation land. The value of the developed cemeteries will only increase in the years to come.

Acton's Land Stewardship Committee, with support from the Cemetery Commission, has improved undeveloped land behind Mt. Hope Cemetery in West Acton. They have built a footbridge spanning Heath Hen Meadow Brook, linking the Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land to the Mt. Hope Property. This provides a connection between West Acton and the Acton-Stow border.

5.C.9 State Owned Lands

The state owns 202 acres of land in Acton, 159 acres of which have been identified as having high

conservation and/or recreation value. The state-owned land falls into four major categories of open space: land that is part of the Department of Corrections Farm (about 100 acres containing active farm fields), a 16-acre parcel containing the State Police horse barn and fields, parcels that were taken when Route 2 was built but that lie outside of the actual right-of-way, and the Whittier land (25 acres) under the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

The Corrections Department land is very significant to the town due to the fact that the open fields abutting Route 2 add a great deal to Acton's rural image. If these lands were ever to be disposed, the town would consider them a high priority purchase, as it did when given the opportunity to buy the Route 2 Conservation Area (now the Wetherbee Conservation Area section 5.C.2.18) from the state in the early eighties. Part of that parcel is now leased back to the state for agricultural purposes.

On August 14, 2008, the Massachusetts legislature authorized Chapter 313 of the Acts of 2008, "An Act Designating Certain Land in the Towns of Acton and Concord for Conservation, Agricultural, Open Space and Recreational Purposes." Chapter 313 essentially designated approximately 106 acres of DOC land in Acton, and a similar area of land in Concord, to be "held solely for

the purpose of open space protection, management and conservation, agriculture, forests, and limited public access for passive and specified active recreation and enjoyment.” For the full text of Chapter 313 of the Acts of 2008 see Appendix 5C.9 .

Currently, the town of Acton has a ten-year lease agreement with the Commonwealth to use 14 acres of open space that runs along Route 2 and School Street. These fields are described in section 5.C.2.3.9. This agreement has effectively given the Commonwealth leasing rights to farm a portion of the Weatherbee parcel in return for the use of the 25 acres of School Street property for recreation playing fields. The current negotiations include an additional requirement for the town to protect the forested component of the remaining Weatherbee property not in agricultural use by instituting a forest management program.

5.C.10 Lands Owned by the Town of Concord

The town of Concord owns 58 acres in Acton. This land abuts Nagog Pond, one of Concord’s principal water supplies. This land provides a significant wildlife corridor, greatly contributes to the rural character of that part of Acton, and has both active and passive recreation potential. If Concord should ever change its use of this property, Acton should seek to protect this land from development.

TABLE 5.C.9 LANDS OWNED BY THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS					
Plate	Parcel	Location	Deed (Book/Page)	Acquisition Date	Acres
C-5	89	066-070 Harris Street	8181/354	1953	1.4
C-5	090-02	066R Harris Street	10928/156	1965	0.5
E-3	81	60R Washington Drive	7866/367	1952	3.98
D-4	23	592 Main St. Rear		1993	8
D-4	24	592 Main St. Rear		1993	2
E-4	3-1	600 Main St.		1992	25
F-3	90	349R Main Street	unknown	unknown	2.5
G-3	12	332-338 Mass Ave.	12449/652	1973	1
G-4	176	99 Mass Ave.	11703/603	1969	2.22
G-4	184	60 Hosmer Street	12717/213	1974	0.92
G-4	185	135-139 Mass Ave.	12731/213	1974	0.78
G-4	187	105-125 Mass Ave.	unknown	unknown	4
G-4	197	70-88 Hosmer Street	7751/053	1951	13
G-4	198	92-126 Mass Ave.	unknown	unknown	21
G-4	209	58-76 Wetherbee Street	unknown	unknown	16
G-5	95	66R Wetherbee Street	unknown	unknown	4.6
G-5	96	25 Keefe Road rear	unknown	unknown	1.1
H-3	38-1	5 River St. and rear	unknown	unknown	3
H-4	5	320-346 School Street	unknown	unknown	42
H-4	6	323-347 School Street	unknown	unknown	50
Total Acres					203



5

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION

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6.A DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

In setting forth the values of the town, relative to open space and recreation needs, a number of sources were utilized:

- The 2002 – 2007 Open space and Recreation Plan.
- The 2007 Acton survey, specifically developed and spearheaded by Peter Ashton, in preparation for the next OSRP report. A series of sixteen questions, chosen specifically to provide input for the next Open Space and Recreation Plan, was mailed to all households. Approximately 1200 households, representing about 15% of the total population, responded. Survey questions and tabulated responses are printed in appendix 6A. The summary of results was presented to the Board of

Selectmen by Peter Ashton in March of 2008. (See appendix 6A1+2)

- The Acton 2020 Plan — a comprehensive community development plan begun in 2008. Acton 2020 is intended to be the primary planning document that will set the course of the town for the next ten to fifteen years. This planning process is required by the state and offers residents the opportunity to engage with one another in developing a direction for the town over the next several decades. Phase I gathered input from residents, business owners and town staff through attendance at visioning workshops and survey responses. Out of this process came a set of shared values and priorities, recognition of primary assets and identification of challenges. The goals and objectives synthesized through this process are now guiding the development of the Phase II action plan. Phase III, the implementation phase, addresses the fiscal and planning realities.

In addition to the above sources, the following persons or groups provided information and knowledge used in developing the goals and objectives of the OSRP:

- Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director
- Jim Snyder-Grant, Land Stewardship Committee Chairman
- Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Department Director
- Recreation Department
- Conservation Commission
- Acton Water District
- Open Space Committee
- Community Preservation Committee

6.B STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS

The prior plan, OSRP 2002 – 2007, retained the three high-level goals originally defined in the 1998 plan, specifically:

- Preserve the remaining elements of Acton's rural character
- Protect the environment
- Improve recreational opportunities

The Acton 2020 Plan, the ten-year master plan for the town currently in its final stages of development, defined seven high-level goals for the Town:

- Preserve the town character
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Improve connections
- Provide more opportunities for community gathering and recreation
- Support inclusion and diversity
- Preserve and enhance town-owned assets
- Maintain and improve the financial well-being of the town

The Acton Survey, specifically structured to be used as input to the 2012 OSRP, revealed similar concerns closely paralleling results from a prior survey conducted in preparation for the 2002 OSRP:

- Monitor residential growth
- Protect open space
- Enhance existing recreational space
- Preserve character of town

Recognizing the synergy apparent in these various sources, the Conservation Commission chose to essentially retain the three primary goals originally espoused in the 1998 OSRP with only minor changes. The three primary goals and the sub-goals defining specific areas of focus to support these goals are listed below:

6.B.1. Preserve the remaining elements of Acton's rural character

- Protect existing open fields/meadows and agricultural parcels



Bog boardwalk at Douglass-Gates.

- Support local farming
- Maintain and support communication with key landowners to discuss options for protection in the future

6.B.2. Protect critical environmental resources

- Support compliance with the town's Storm Water Discharge Permitting bylaw
- Acquire parcels necessary to preserve and protect Acton's water supplies
- Manage and control invasive and nuisance species
- Encourage regional planning with abutting towns as well as within the town to create more expansive wildlife corridors
- Develop public education programs

6.B.3. Improve and expand recreational opportunities

- Ensure playground facilities are made up-to-date, safe and accessible
- Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields through improved, environmentally-conscious maintenance techniques

- Provide additional athletic fields to meet the needs of the town's growing population
- Ensure handicapped accessibility is available for recreational activities (e.g., trails, picnicking, water-based recreation and camping) at both recreational and conservation areas
- Develop and extend trail networks both within the town and with abutting towns
- Enhance possibilities for hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, boating and fishing on conservation lands
- Expand public outreach to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities
- Promote the development of two regional bike trails planned to run through Acton
- Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton villages

An expanded discussion of the current needs of the Town, including reasonable and attainable objectives for the next five years, is presented in subsequent sections of this report.



Wetland behind Douglass-Gates playground and sports fields.



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7.B.1.f Secure adequate funding for maintenance	7-5		

Many conservation parcels were acquired through Self-Help grants, bestowing on them permanent protection.



View over the marsh and stream in Heath Hen Meadow conservation land.

7.A SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS

7.A.1. Protect existing open fields/meadows and agricultural parcels

There are approximately 18 meadowlands in Acton, most held under Chapter 61A. A meadow management program, developed and managed through the Land Steward Committee, and working with the Natural Resources Department, is needed to maintain the meadowlands on existing conservation properties. This would include frequency and time of mowing, removal of invasive species, introduction of native species, and, in the case of the privately owned properties, educational outreach.

7.A.2. Post boundaries of conservation lands

The lack of posted boundaries on existing conservation lands leads to uncertainty and confusion regarding jurisdiction and accessibility, as well as enforceability of violations. However, it is recognized that historic land markers on existing properties would be prohibitively expensive to locate. A more reasonable and cost-effective approach could be to work with the planning board to establish the practice of marking boundaries for all future and, where feasible, the most recent acquisitions to conservation properties.

7.A.3. Support local farms and farming

The increasing popularity of Farmers Markets in the area has placed renewed focus on the value of locally-grown produce. Community awareness has made the need to preserve remaining farms, as well as to provide opportunities for citizens to rent community gardens, a priority. The availability of locally-grown produce contributes to the health and wellbeing of the citizens of the town. In addition, local farms preserve the rural character that defines the town of Acton and which is valued by so many of its citizens.

7.A.4 Ensure all conservation lands are adequately and permanently protected

Many conservation parcels were acquired through Self-Help grants, bestowing on them permanent protection. In addition, some lands gifted to the town came with explicit stipulations that the land be maintained in perpetuity for conservation purposes only. However, there are a number of parcels that have no such protection. Finding a way to apply permanent protection status, through Conservation Restrictions or another vehicle, is a primary need to ensure these parcels are not converted to some other use in the future.

7.A.5 Preserve and protect Acton's water supplies

Excess nutrients are a problem in Acton's surface water bodies, resulting in eutrophic conditions observed in a number of Acton's mill ponds. Reducing the amount of chemical fertilizers used, as well as treating surface run off, would contribute to the reduction of these pollutants in our waterways. To that end, the Water District and the Conservation Commission should promote all efforts to support and expand water conservation practices, seek to optimize the amount of water provided from existing wells and continue to manage demand. Vigorously supporting the Storm Water Run-off Bylaw to minimize non-point source pollution of ground water is also a priority.

7.A.6 Manage and control invasive and nuisance species

As in many of the adjacent towns, Acton has a number of non-native species naturalizing in our various ecosystems. These include Norway maple, European and common buckthorn, oriental bittersweet, burning bush, autumn olive, Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed and multiflora rose. Mile-a-minute vine, a very aggressive invasive, has been reported in Littleton. In wetland areas, purple loosestrife and water chestnut have both become significant intruders, though reed grass has been minimally invasive in Acton. See Section 4.D.10.

Nuisance beaver control has become a significant municipal budget expense over the past 10 years. The town, through its Natural Resources Department and Land Stewardship Committee, has installed control devices in Conant Brook and at the Guggins Brook Conservation Area to maintain acceptable water depths in beaver ponds. In 2010, the town's Highway Department removed dams from culverts on Charter Road, Main Street in South Acton, Stow Street and Central Street (Fort Pond Brook). In 2011 dams were removed from culverts under Central Street, Charter Road, Lawsbrook Road, Arlington Street (Grassy Pond Brook) and Main Street in North Acton (Butter Brook). In addition, 10-day permits were obtained from the Board of Health for beaver removals at various locations in town where flooding was impacting septic systems. Beaver population control and impact to private property is a growing problem faced by the town.

Lyme disease, primarily spread through the bite of an infected "deer tick" (*Ixodes scapularis*) has reached levels of incidence in the community, and has become a major concern in both Acton and the neighboring town of Boxboro. Controlling the vectors, deer and mice in particular, as well as plants such as Japanese barberry which attracts mice and harbors the nymphs, is a priority in the effort to reduce the incidence and spread of Lyme disease.

7.A.7 Preserve and protect forests and specimen trees

Preserving the integrity and health of our forested areas can be supported by a properly-implemented Forestry Management program. This entails, but is not limited to, maintaining age diversity, promoting understory growth and controlling invasive species, thereby promoting diverse wildlife habitat and continued health and sustainability of our forests.

A tree planting and replacement program, replacing damaged or non-native trees with healthy, native specimens, and planting additional ones as appropriate, supports the effort to maintain the rural character of the town.

7.A.8 Develop and extend corridors both within the town and with abutting towns

Several parcels of conservation land in Acton abut, or are close to, neighboring towns, offering the potential for regional trail systems. Each one of our neighboring communities lies close to one of Acton's conservation lands. Among those in process or in consultation:

7.A.8.1 HEATH HEN MEADOW AND CAPTAIN SARGENT FARM CONSERVATION AREA

A link from West Acton's Heath Hen Meadow to Stow's Captain Sargent Farm conservation area is partially complete. The link uses land that runs through the Acton Conservation Trust's Whitcomb property, adjacent to the town conservation land, and runs close to the Stow border. At this time, a walk to Stow's Captain Sargent land can only be done in cold weather, when there is enough thick ice formed to get over the many marshy areas. It also requires

the use of an old and well-used hunting trail system on private property that runs through Stow and part of Acton. This same trail system connects to a public trail easement over to West Acton Road in Stow at an entrance to the Flagg Hill conservation area.

7.A.8.2 GUGGINS BROOK AND JENKS CONSERVATION AREAS

Since 2010, Guggins Brook conservation area and the Jenks conservation area have a wooded trail link through an easement along the edge of Idlywilde Farm and the Boxboro border. An old easement leading from Reed Farm Road to the Jenks/Guggins connector trail was re-opened by the Boxboro trail committee. This new Boxboro easement allows for a short walk up Reed Farm Road to an entrance to Boxborough's Half Moon Conservation land.



Sunset over the marsh at Heath Hen Meadow conservation land.

Footbridge over creek wetland in winter, Acton Arboretum.



7.A.8.3 NASHOBA BROOK/CAMP ACTON/SPRING HILL AND BENFIELD CONSERVATION AREAS

Conversations are underway with the town of Carlisle and the Carlisle Conservation Trust to link North Acton's large combined Nashoba Brook/Camp Acton/Spring Hill Conservation Areas via the newly-donated Robbins Mill Pond Land to Carlisle's new Benfield conservation land. The Acton land and the Carlisle land meet at a single point, and a short access over private land is needed to complete this link.

In addition to these inter-town connections, many conservation parcels in Acton are close enough together that inter-parcel pedestrian connections can be planned for. Inter-parcel connections in process or in planning include:

7.A.8.4 NAGOG HILL TO WILLS HOLE

A Quail Ridge trail easement from the Acorn Park access at Hazelnut Street would link Nagog Hill conservation area to Rt. 2A and then to Wills Hole town forest. A boardwalk over a stretch of wetland is to be built by the current owner and developer.

7.A.8.5 WEATHERBEE CONSERVATION AREA TO HOSMER STREET

The Commonwealth owns three parcels of land adjacent to the far western edge of the Wetherbee conservation area that would link to Hosmer Street if an easement could be obtained. It would also offer possible parking access.

As sidewalks continue to be built along Acton streets, many of the smaller parcels, such as Pratt's Brook, become more accessible to pedestrians. A walking route that links all or most of the conservation lands has been mapped out by one of the Land Stewards using a combination of trails and sidewalks. The map is available on Google Earth. Promoting the sidewalk construction will render conservation areas more accessible for citizen use.

7.A.9 Encourage regional planning with abutting towns as well as within the town to create more expansive wildlife corridors

The Nashoba Brook, Spencer Brook and Fort Pond Brook watersheds provide the main wildlife travel corridors between Acton and adjoining towns. Several transportation corridors serve as barriers to unrestrained migration. The

Nashoba Brook

uninterrupted corridor running north into Carlisle and east into Concord should be preserved wherever possible.

Sites of old railroad beds are often viable wildlife corridors. Therefore, the routes of the proposed rail trails should be protected from any major development efforts. The rail trails themselves will provide no barrier to wildlife travel, and will enhance travel for some species. Consideration should also be given to protecting a portion of the Kennedy property, adjacent to NARA Park, which contains a railroad spur that runs through dry upland, serving as a desirable wildlife corridor that could also serve as a trail corridor.

Spring Hill/Nashoba Brook/Camp Acton areas provide a large tract that continues through the Robbins Mill site. The point at which Robbins Mill meets the Carlisle conservation area narrows to a "pinch point" that should be expanded to protect the full length of this corridor.

7.B SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

7.B.1 Improve and expand recreational opportunities

7.B.1.A CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A MASTER PLAN FOR NARA

Nathaniel Allen Recreational Area (NARA park) comprises about 40 acres of land. It was officially opened in 2000 and has been expanding its facilities for public recreational activities each year. The potential to become a major recreational center for Acton, thereby substantially contributing to the recreational needs of the town, can best be met with the creation of a comprehensive master plan for the area that incorporates expansion of existing facilities and improvements as well as additional facilities. Because of its diverse offerings, NARA has rapidly become a regional recreation destination as well.

7.B.1.B IMPLEMENT THE MORRISON FARM REUSE PLAN

The Morrison Farm property comprises 32 acres purchased by the town in 1997 for conservation purposes, passive recreation and potentially active recreation. A

comprehensive plan for the property was developed in 2004 but has had limited rollout due to funding constraints. Implementing the Morrison Farm Reuse Plan would contribute to providing additional recreational opportunities. Phase I of the plan, developing a community garden, has been completed and is an enormous success.

7.B.1.C DEVELOP AND EXPAND FACILITIES AT ICE HOUSE POND

This four-acre impoundment of Nashoba Brook, located on town-owned land at the intersection of Concord Road and Great Road, was dewatered and dredged in 1995, restoring its value as a boating and fishing area. Proximity of the parking area to the water's edge offers potential for handicapped access for water recreation. This is the ideal site for an East Acton playground, linked via a loop trail to the Morrison fields, the parking area and a picnic area, and with a bridge over Nashoba Brook, to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the future East Acton Village Green.

7.B.1.D PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL INDOOR SPACE

There is a pressing need for indoor recreational space. Several possibilities offer a solution, including the Harris Street site, a new Senior Center/Community Center complex now being considered, the renovation or reconstruction of the barn at Morrison Farm and the reuse of the existing Senior Center. Any and all of these options, should they succeed, could meet the current need for recreational indoor space.

7.B.1.E DEVELOP NEW AND IMPROVED FACILITIES

The Recreation Department has had numerous requests for new facilities such as a Deck Hockey rink, a water and a dog park and an additional Community Garden for West Acton. New or enlarged parking areas at Veterans Field, Morrison Farm, Gardner Playground, the Piper Road Access to Great Hill Conservation Area, and the Jenks Conservation Land are sorely needed. Improvements

such as field leveling and resurfacing, improving drainage, installing spectator seating, expanding existing facilities, installing simple dugout roofs for sun protection are some of the items under consideration. These are outlined in detail in sections 8 and 9.

7.B.1.F SECURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR MAINTENANCE

At current funding levels, it is impossible to address the basic maintenance improvements outlined above and in the areas that follow. In order to properly maintain town playgrounds, athletic fields and the skate park, adequate funding must be provided. At a minimum, a budget of \$15,000 per year would be adequate to maintain basic safety standards.

7.B.2 Ensure playground facilities are made up-to-date, safe and accessible

Many of Acton's playgrounds are comprised of aging equipment that is becoming very expensive to maintain. Moreover, while some sites meet minimum accessibility standards, Acton does not have a fully-accessible playground where children with physical and mobility challenges can play side-by-side with their peers. Many families, whether by necessity or choice, travel to neighboring towns to access this type of recreational facility. Acton's youngest citizens deserve better, and improving playground facilities is a top priority for the Recreation Commission and Recreation Department in the coming years.

7.B.3 Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields through improved, environmentally-conscious maintenance techniques

Because of the high demand for field access by youth and adult sports leagues, there is little time, funding or manpower for vital maintenance and rest periods for the town's athletic fields. The town has benefitted by the cooperation of some leagues to fund and carry out the rebuilding of worn turf and to maintain the fertility of the soil. In order to ensure that our playing fields are safe and

sustainable, the Recreation Commission and Recreation Department are committed to identifying and directing the use of more efficient, sustainable approaches to field maintenance that take into account the needs of users as well as best practices in "green" techniques for turf management.

7.B.4 Optimize the condition and allocation of athletic fields to meet the needs of the town's growing population

The level of demand for field use in Acton has increased 100% in the last 5 years, diminishing the quality of the turf and creating scheduling difficulties for all of the town's field users. Some of the fields, such as the School Street fields, are in poor general condition, limiting their use for sports such as lacrosse. With the increasing pressure on existing resources, it's important that all fields be maintained in optimum condition to ensure their availability to meet recreational needs. The Recreation Commission and Recreation Department are determined to identify alternate sites for the creation of additional field space, or optimize the use of existing fields, with the ultimate goal that all participants are accommodated.

7.B.5 Ensure handicapped accessibility is available for recreational activities (e.g., trails, picnicking, water-based recreation and camping) at both recreational and conservation areas

Acton's recreational and conservation areas need to meet minimum accessibility requirements as dictated by federal and state laws, and we must bring this up to 100%. Meeting these minimum standards does not ensure, however, that all of Acton's citizens have equal ability to enjoy the town's resources. The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission are committed to improving access in every feasible way so that recreational and conservation areas can be enjoyed by all interested citizens. Specific areas for consideration follow:

- Acton Arboretum handicap accessible trail improvements



Bridge over Nashoba Brook



- Creation of a handicap accessible baseball field, the Miracle Field
- Sidewalk extensions to popular recreation sites, particularly from north of Route 2A on Route 27 (Main Street), linking Veterans Field to NARA Park
- Improved handicap accessibility at existing facilities such as NARA beach, picnic areas, and playgrounds
- Planned handicap accessibility at new or renovated facilities such as East Acton, Goward, and Elm Street playgrounds; NARA Picnic Pavilion; and T.J. O'Grady Skate Park
- Handicap accessible gardening at Morrison Farm Community Garden
- Handicap accessible trail encircling pond at Great Hill Conservation Land

7.B.6 Expand public outreach to better inform the public of our available passive and active recreation opportunities

Acton has a wealth of opportunities for passive and active recreation, but if town residents are not aware of them they will be underutilized. Informing residents about all of these resources will not only ensure greater use but will also keep residents informed about the maintenance and improvement requirements of the facilities, hopefully ensuring greater buy-in as fiscal needs arise. The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission are committed to exploring a variety of methods of communication, from direct mail to web-based communication, in order to effectively reach the broadest segment of the town's population.

Identifying and communicating which of the 18 conservation areas are conducive to specific recreational activities -- hiking, birding, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, boating and fishing -- will encourage the use of these areas for such activities. Adding this information to the kiosks set up for each of these areas, and posting trail markers that point to the appropriate areas for specific activities, would encourage and promote their use.

Additional suggestions follow:

- Better communication with residents regarding facilities available, events and procedures (e.g., for reserving fields and facilities at NARA)
- More communication and coordination with neighboring towns, such as information-sharing regarding procedures and coordination of similar events
- Establishing better and easier access to internet-based resources regarding Acton's passive and active recreational opportunities
- A "one-stop-shopping" location in town manned by the Recreation Dept., such as 68 Harris Street (former MA Fish and Wildlife building), where materials are available for pickup, staff is available to answer questions and residents can view

published information about Acton's recreational opportunities, both passive and active

7.B.7 Promote and prepare for the development of the two regional bike trails planned to run through Acton

Anticipating the eventual funding and construction of the connecting links through Acton, the town should purchase or develop areas for access and parking that will facilitate utilization once they are completed. In addition, undertaking an analysis of the parcels involved to identify possible access links or parking would be prudent to avoid any delay once the funding becomes available to move ahead. In addition, there must be continued pressure on the Commonwealth to prioritize and implement the development of the sections of the trails planned for Acton.

7.B.8 Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton's villages

The fourth goal of Acton's 2020 Master Plan calls for providing "more opportunities for community gathering and recreation." One of the objectives to support this goal was to "maintain and improve existing gathering spaces and look for opportunities to create informal gathering spaces." Pocket parks are small areas of open public spaces, easily accessible and can offer a place for children and/or adults to gather informally. They can be naturalized settings, gardens, small playgrounds, or simply attractive and inviting areas for public enjoyment.

7.B.9 Prepare for and address demographic trends

To meet the needs of the growing population of senior citizens, conservation areas should continue to be enhanced to improve accessibility of trails, installing bench/seating areas and improving parking facilities.

There is also an interest in more "family friendly" trails on some of the conservation areas. These would be easily accessible trails attractive to children that convey a sense of safety and security. Currently the Arboretum has such

trails and could be a model for designing similar trails in one or two of the other conservation areas.

7.C MANAGEMENT NEEDS, POTENTIAL CHANGES OF USE

7.C.1 Improve communication and organizational efficiency

Efficiency and improved communication are needs for Acton, as in most towns. This applies to both interdepartmental interactions and interactions with the public. Under consideration for addressing these needs by the Town Manager is the creation of a "Land Use Department." This would combine the Health, Building, Engineering, Planning and Conservation Depts. The goal of this group is to simplify and streamline the permitting process, both for the citizenry and administrators, through the utilization of digital technology and an expanded use of the town's GIS, ultimately benefiting both the public and those who serve them.

7.C.2 Expand and promote the availability of web-based information

There is a need to facilitate and encourage public access to information through the expansion of the use the town website. Currently, town maps are accessible on-line, the Conservation Guide is accessible and down-loadable, and meeting notices as well as archived documents are all available on-line. Encouraging and promoting the use of these tools should be an on-going effort, and finding ways to enhance and expand the use of the website should be pursued.

7.C.3 Support and maintain communication with key landowners

The Open Space Committee should continue to discuss and explore options for protection in the future, by maintaining an awareness of land purchasing opportunities as they arise. They also need to coordinate their efforts.

7.C.4 Find a new facility for the Recreation and Natural Resources Departments

Current facilities are not conducive to public outreach by the Recreation Department or the Natural Resources Department. Effective indoor programs, the dissemination of informational material and being more accessible to the general public would be enhanced if the Recreation Department was housed in an appropriate facility, particularly an area that had the capacity to provide an indoor recreational gathering space. Proximity to the town's recreational center, NARA Park, would facilitate management of the expanding programs offered at the park as the Recreation Department continues to strive to meet the growing needs of the town. An expanded facility would also satisfy the need for storage and working space.



Native cattails, wetland NARA Park.

7.C.5 Finalize agreement with the Commonwealth for leasing the School Street Fields

In 2011 the Town of Acton, through its Conservation Commission, initiated a forest management plan for its Wetherbee Conservation land. Located along the north side of Route 2, this 72- acre tract, with 31 acres in agricultural fields and 41 acres in woodland, is one of the fields that gives Acton its distinctive country feel. The agricultural fields are farmed by the Massachusetts Correctional Institute of Concord under a lease agreement, and in the summer of 2012 the plan was to farm 16 acres of corn, which, combined with the agricultural fields on the south side of Route 2, produced significant forage for the livestock at the prison. Meanwhile, the Commonwealth has allowed the Town of Acton to use an additional 13 acres of fields on the south side of Route 2 and east of School Street Extension as soccer fields.

To compensate for taking that prime 13-acre agricultural parcel out of circulation, the Commonwealth proposed that Acton establish a forest management plan for the wooded portion of the Wetherbee land. This is an area that the Conservation Commission, with responsibility for approximately 1,500 acres of conservation land and town-owned land, has long considered. So the commission hired a licensed professional forester to create a management plan, and Acton enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program. The long-term objective for this plan is to maintain the forest, while improving biodiversity, maintaining passive recreational use and improving the health and condition of the forest. A part of the program involves public outreach and the commission has reached out to the Land Stewards and other landowners interested in forestry practices. It is hoped that the active management will begin in the summer of 2012.



In memory of our *Harry Lauder's walking stick* plant, which has been planted twice, both plantings have not survived.
Dog owners: Please watch that your dogs do not douse the specimen plants in the Arboretum!

SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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8.A. GOAL #1: PRESERVE THE EXISTING ELEMENTS OF ACTON'S RURAL CHARACTER

8.A.1 Preserve forests and trees

- Implement a self-sustaining Forestry Management Program to actively manage selected forested areas of our conservation lands ensuring protection of these resources for future generations. Benefits of the program include:
 - Diversification of age of forest
 - Promotion of understory growth
 - Removal and control of invasive species
 - Promotion of wildlife value
- Institute a tree planting and replacement program, replacing damaged or non-native trees with healthy, native specimens, securing this important resource for future generations.



Morrison Farm house and barn.

8.A.2 Protect existing open fields, meadows and agricultural parcels

- Demonstrate a systematic commitment to managing these resources by identifying and securing a funding source for Meadow Management training for staff and a budget for yearly management requirements.
- Implement on-going best management practices for the maintenance of public parcels.
- Coordinate with Planning Board to encourage "cluster-style" development, where appropriate, that enables larger parcels of open space to remain intact. Encourage that such areas be managed as meadow habitat.

8.A.3 Support local farming

- Work closely with land trusts such as ACT, to purchase land and to create incentives for existing farming activities to continue.
- Provide a water source for Morrison Farm Community Gardens.
- Identify sites in West and South Acton for additional community gardens.
- Implement the Morrison Farm Reuse Plan to create a community center for recreation and environmentally-sustainable gardening.
 - Seek funding to replace the barn at Morrison Farm with a facility that can be used as a public gathering space to offer educational programs related to sustainable living, farming, gardening, etc.
 - Continue to expand the facilities at the Morrison Farm Center with additional facilities such as a greenhouse, expanded organic orchard, and access trails that link the Farm to the Ice House Pond area and the BFRT.

8.A.4 Support and maintain communication with key landowners

- Improve communication and cooperation between the Open Space Committee and the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), as well as other regional land trusts.
- Ensure that the Open Space Committee and regional land trusts work in close concert to identify priority parcels and coordinate dialogue with owners.

8.B. GOAL #2: PROTECT CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

8.B.1 Preserve and protect Acton's water supplies and conservation values

- Support compliance with the town's Storm Water Discharge Permitting bylaw.
- Promote the acquisition of parcels necessary to preserve and protect Acton's water supplies and conservation interests.
- Find a source of irrigation that does not rely on the town well water for the North Acton Community Gardens.
- Work jointly with the Acton Water Department to locate parcels that have potential for dual use, for both well protection and passive recreation. Seek state and federal funding for Zone 1 & 2 protection, with an eye toward recreation as well.

8.B.2 Ensure permanent protection status of all conservation parcels

- Permanently secure conservation parcels that are not adequately protected through conservation restrictions or Self-Help grants. Secure conservation restrictions on some of the more vulnerable parcels.

- Create a part-time position in the Natural Resources Department to oversee development of future CR's and to manage existing CR's .

8.B.3 Manage and control invasive and nuisance species

- Continue to support the efforts of the Land Steward Committee in the on-going removal of target species on conservation land.
- Select a point-person to spear-head additional workdays for invasive species removal.
- Launch a public education and awareness campaign, including publication of "success" stories, i.e., water chestnut removal from Ice House Pond.

8.B.4 Develop and extend trail networks

- Working with LSC, design and develop a trail system that connects "Trails Through Time" (TTT) with conservation land in Carlisle.
- Explore other opportunities with LSC for inter-town trail systems such as the following:
 - Work with the Concord Water District to secure access to land running along the shore of Nagog Pond to create a permanent corridor through the Nagog Hill property to the Sara Doublet property in Littleton.
 - Continue dialogue with the adjacent towns of Concord and Maynard to develop a walking path along the Assabet River through the three towns.
 - Facilitate discussions with abutting property owners to develop a public trail easement tying the shoreline of Grassy Pond to Grassy Pond Brook.

8.B.5 Create more expansive wildlife corridors

- Encourage regional planning with abutting towns as well as within the town to identify opportunities to expand and protect wildlife corridors .

- Install "Turtle Crossing" signs at critical points along Acton's roadways.

8.B.6 Develop public outreach and education programs

- Promote the collaborative efforts of the Conservation Department, LSC, Recreation Department, Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Acton Water Department, etc, to develop a number of educational programs. The objectives of these programs would be to promote familiarity with Acton's Open Space resources, invasive species recognition and management, and water conservation practices.
- Offer nature walks coordinated by the Recreation Department and Community Education Department.

8.B.7 Improve access to and use of managed conservation areas

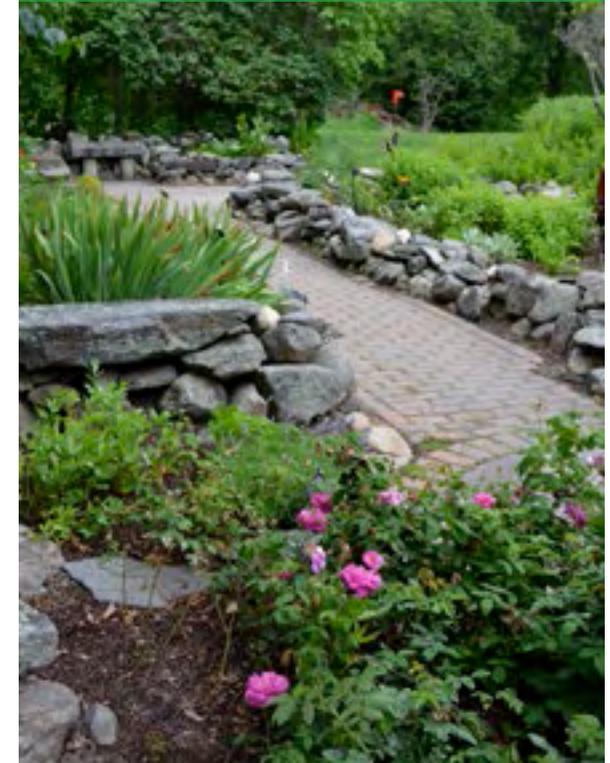
- Complete the Arboretum Master Plan.
- Expand and improve parking facilities.
- Continue to upgrade trails to be handicapped-accessible wherever possible.
- Add boundary markers to conservation properties.
- Continue to add signs along road and river intersections that identify riverways.
- Install benches/seating areas in appropriate locations.
- Update and print a new edition of Acton's trail guide booklet.

8.C GOAL #3: IMPROVE AND EXPAND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

8.C.1 Improve and expand the facilities at the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area (NARA park)

- Complete the NARA Master Plan to include the following improvements and amenities:

Herb garden, Acton Arboretum.



- Expanded parking access
- Pond aeration system to improve water quality
- Additional picnicking facilities, including a permanent pavilion for events such as corporate outings and weddings
- Miracle Field (See section 8.C.4)
- Concession and restroom facility to service Upper Fields and Miracle Field (see 8.C.4)
- Synthetic turf on one of the athletic fields to reduce maintenance costs and wear on natural turf fields
- Lighting at upper fields to extend usability, extended street lights along Quarry Road and town Forest Trail, solar lighting along pond path and around upper and lower parking areas





- Replacement of failing trees with new trees in strategic areas such as the playground and beach, to insure shade for future generations of park patrons
- Solar panel installation
- Signage, “NARA Park”, added to large sign on Rt 2 near Rt 27 exit
- NARA ledge rock entrance gateway composed of a stone base and wrought iron arch
- Improved and enhanced playground access and structures
- Water spray area, located at current utility tent area next to volleyball courts or in the playground area
- Ice rink, a new gravel upper parking lot winter conversion, with lighting
- Surrey bicycle rental and storage area for Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

- Spur from bike path to bathhouse for additional public access
- Connection of Miracle Field handicapped accessible trail system and parking to the existing NARA trail system
- Rain gardens adjacent to the interior road at the picnic pavilion to intercept and treat surface runoff from impervious surfaces

8.C.2. Implement the Morrison Farm Reuse Plan

- Replace the existing barn with a new facility, an Agricultural Center having a kitchen, restroom facilities, floor-space for active use such as dance or fitness classes, and rooms for lectures, classes, and community group meetings.
- Provide parking for the Community Garden as well as Center activities.
- Build a greenhouse.

8.C.3 Develop the Ice House Pond Recreation Area

- Install a playground on the old icehouse factory location, connecting it with a loop trail that links the parking area, playground and Morrison Farm fields, creating an expanded recreational facility for the East Acton area. The area becomes complete with the addition of picnic facilities and a foot bridge over Nashoba Brook linking the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to the Ice House Pond recreational area and the future East Acton Village Green.

8.C.4 Secure recreational indoor space

- There is a critical need for indoor recreational space. Possible options to address this need include:
 - Relocate the Recreation Department to a new space that would provide storage for equipment, house the department offices, offer a lobby and information center, as well as provide indoor recreational facilities. Optimally, this would be the 68 Harris Street site in North Acton, located within a mile of NARA Recreation Center.
 - Explore the use of the Senior Center as a source of additional indoor recreational space.
 - Utilize the new Morrison Farm barn when completed.

8.C.5 Create additional facilities and improve existing ones

- Meet demand for deck hockey by providing a 2-rink deck hockey facility.
- Offer additional community garden sites in West Acton and South Acton.
- Create new parking lots or expand existing lots at Veterans Field, Morrison Farm, Gardner Playground, Great Hill Conservation Area off Piper Rd. and Jenks Conservation Land.
- Upgrade and improve playing fields.

- Secure funding source for yearly management of existing playgrounds.
- Improve general maintenance and seek funding for additional structures at the T. J. O'Grady Skateboard Park.

8.C.6 Secure adequate funding for facility upkeep

- Seek funding of \$15,000 per year, to be appropriated in Town budget for Town recreational facility maintenance to ensure safety standards continue to be met.

8.C.7 Ensure playground facilities are made up-to-date, safe and accessible

- Update and rebuild a number of playgrounds that are behind schedule for replacement such as Goward Playground and Elm Street Playground.
- Support the Friends of Goward Playground who are raising funds for a new facility.
- Build a playground in East Acton Village district.
- Build a shade structure at the NARA Park playground.
- Begin planning for the renovation of Jones Field Playground (due in 2 years), the Gardner Playground, (due in 3 years), and Veterans Field (due in 4 years).
- Plan for a water spray park and a dog park in recognition of citizens' interest.

8.C.8 Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields

- Identifying funding sources is a priority. Sponsorships, grants, CPA funds where applicable and fundraising activities should all be explored.
- Employ environmentally-responsible maintenance techniques. This requires an investment in educating the town maintenance staff in environmentally-sound approaches to turf

management, as well as seeking qualified outside contractors to augment Town manpower.

- Investigate opportunities to replace natural turf fields with synthetic turf.
- Extend the use of school facilities to Town and community groups through such projects as the ABRHS Lower Fields project. This project is intended to install two synthetic turf fields with parking, adjacent to T.J. O'Grady Skate Park.
- Identify properties that can support new recreational uses, such as deck hockey.
- Secure multi-year lease of the School Street fields from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and develop softball and baseball fields, improve parking, and resolve the problem of inadequate water for irrigation at the fields.

8.C.9 Provide additional athletic fields to meet the needs of the town's growing population

- Build a Miracle League Field, a baseball field for physically and mentally challenged youth athletes. The town of Acton is planned to be the site of the first field in Massachusetts. (see appendix ??)
- Explore the potential of other field sites for the installation of an in-line skating rink.

8.C.10 Expand handicapped accessibility

- Ensure handicapped accessibility for recreational activities (e.g., trails, picnicking, water-based recreation and camping) at both recreational and conservation areas.
- Build the handicapped-accessible baseball field, Miracle Field, and tie the existing trail system at NARA to the new trail at Miracle Field.
- Replace and improve accessibility to the Wildflower Garden Boardwalk at the Acton Arboretum. Replace the Bog Boardwalk and link it to a new

Identifying funding sources is a priority. Sponsorships, grants, CPA funds where applicable and fundraising activities should all be explored.



Indian Festival, Nara Park.

handicapped-accessible connection from the Minot Ave. sidewalk.

8.C.11 Expand public outreach to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities

- Initiate a series of regular “walks” with members of the Conservation Commission and representatives from other town departments, such as Recreation, Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Town Manager, etc., to familiarize them with the richness of Acton town lands, thus promoting common ideas for improvements, future acquisitions, and appreciation of the resources available to the townspeople of Acton.
- Develop a better means of dialogue between Recreation, Conservation and Land Stewards on ways to communicate to the general public the

trails most suitable for various types of passive recreation (hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, etc.).

- 8.C.12 Promote the development of two regional bike trails planned to run through Acton
- Acton Conservation Commission and Concord Natural Resources should work together to ensure that the trails between their towns are developed in an environmentally-sensitive manner.
- Identify and secure parking areas to facilitate access to the trails when they become available.

8.C.13 Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton villages

- Work with the West Acton Village Ecology (WAVE) project developers to design a West Acton trail from Arlington Street to Route 111.

- The Conservation Commission and the Recreation Department need to find opportunities to work more closely with the Open Space Committee to identify and prioritize available private open space parcels of interest to the town.
- The Conservation Commission and the Recreation Department should collaborate to map out short, safe and accessible walks within the villages.

8.C.14 Relocate and centralize operations of the Department of Recreation and provide equipment storage for the Natural Resources Department grounds crew

- Move the office to a new site that is adequate for both storage and program expansion. The Harris Street facility, currently owned by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, is ideal for this use.



Watching fish swim from the footbridge crossing the edge of NARA Park pond.

SECTION 9: FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN

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9.A GOAL #1: PRESERVE THE REMAINING ELEMENTS OF ACTON'S RURAL CHARACTER

9.A.1 Preserve forests and trees

- **2012-13:** Begin implementation of the Wetherbee Forestry Management Plan.
- **2013:** Working in conjunction with the Tree Warden, begin a tree planting and replacement program along Acton's streets.
- **2014-2016:** Working together, the Conservation Commission and the Land Stewardship Committee continue the rollout of the Forestry Management program to other forested conservation areas.
- **2014:** Find a suitable location and begin a street-tree nursery on municipal land.

9.A.2 Protect existing open fields, meadows and agricultural parcels

- **2013:** Send appropriate personnel to a Meadow Management training program.
- **2013:** Initiate dialogue with the Departments of Planning, Zoning, Health and Conservation and the Board of Selectmen to examine and consider an Open Space Design bylaw for the town.
- **2014:** Implement Best Management Practices for managing the town meadows.

9.A.3 Support local farms and farming

- **2012:** Find an irrigation source for Morrison Farm Community Garden.
- **2012-2016:** Implement the Morrison Farm Reuse Plan, working with Selectmen and newly-formed Morrison Farm Implementation Committee, to advance activities at the farm as outlined below:
 - **2012-2013:** Complete renovations to Morrison Farm house as outlined in the "Morrison Farm Feasibility & Preliminary Design Study" (Stephen

Kelleher Architects 2012) to ready house for occupancy.

- **2014:** Find a caretaker to live in the Morrison Farm house and oversee the property.
- **2014:** Design and install parking lot and trail system along Ice House Pond frontage that connects to Morrison Farm property, extending the trail along Ice House Pond shoreline to Morrison Farm.
- **2014:** Seek CPA funding for design of Morrison Education Center to be built on the site of the existing barn
- **2012-2015:** Expand the organic orchard at Morrison Farm.
- **2015:** Install a greenhouse at Morrison Farm.



Arboretum picnic area.

- **2015:** Seek funding for the design of Nashoba Brook Bridge to connect to BFRT from Morrison Farm and Ice House Pond Recreation Area.
- **2016:** Designate another site for community gardens in South Acton.
- **2016:** Find irrigation source for North Acton Community Gardens to render the site no longer dependent on town drinking water supplies.
- **2017:** Design and install a community garden in West Acton, located on Town property abutting Arlington Street.

9.A.4 Support and maintain communication with key landowners

- **On-going:** At the monthly meetings with the Open Space Committee and Acton Conservation Trust, continue discussions regarding additional open space protection for all of Acton's conservation parcels.
- **2013:** Create a part-time position in the Natural Resources Department to oversee development of future CR's and to manage existing CR's.

9.B GOAL #2: PROTECT CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

9.B.1 Preserve and protect Acton's water supplies and conservation values

- **2013:** Initiate discussions with the Acton Water Department about dual-use properties.
- **2014:** Resolve irrigation-source issue for North Acton Community Gardens.
- **2015:** Install a rain garden adjacent to the new parking lot at the Acton Arboretum (see 9.B.6) to address storm-water runoff.
- **2015:** Review the condition of municipal parking lots and develop a plan to address storm water runoff.



- **2017:** In conjunction with Acton Water District, create a loop trail at Knox Trail.

8.B.2 Ensure permanent protection status of all conservation parcels

- **2013:** Create and fill the part-time position of Conservation Restriction Manager.

9.B.3 Manage and control invasive and nuisance species

- **2012:** Appoint a key person to coordinate and lead workdays for invasive species removal.
- Annually (July): Conduct the annual volunteer-based workday, begun in 2011 and overseen by the Natural Resources Department, to remove water chestnuts from Ice House Pond.
- **2012:** Install “Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers” signs at regularly-paddled waterways such as the Canoe Launch off Route 62, Ice House Pond off Concord Road in North Acton, and Mill Pond in South Acton.
- **2012:** Evaluate various invasive species management strategies.

- **2012-2016:** The Land Stewardship Committee will continue to remove invasive species from conservation lands.
- **2012-2016:** The Natural Resources Department will periodically publicize and make available to the general public informational articles and handouts regarding invasive species recognition and removal techniques.
- **2013:** Expand public education efforts regarding the recognition and control of invasive species.
- **2014:** Dewater Robbins Mill Impoundment, the source of the continued water chestnut infestation, during the winter months to reduce opportunity for invasive species migration.

9.B.4 Develop and extend trail networks

- **2013:** Continue dialogue with conservation entity in Carlisle regarding the connection of the “Trail Through Time” (TTT) in Acton with a trail in Carlisle highlighting sites of historic significance.
- **2013:** Initiate discussions with the Concord Water District to secure access to land running along the shore of Nagog Pond, creating a permanent

corridor through the Nagog Hill property to the Sara Doublet property in Littleton.

- **2014:** Initiate discussions with adjacent towns of Concord and Maynard to develop a walking path along the Assabet River through the three towns.
- **2015:** Enter into discussions with abutting property owners to develop a public trail easement tying the shoreline of Grassy Pond to Grassy Pond Brook.
- **2015:** Seek funding from OARS and CPA to design and construct an “Assabet River Walk” connecting Acton with Concord and Maynard.

9.B.5 Create more expansive wildlife corridors

- **2012:** Install “Caution: Turtle Crossing” signs at Route 2A/27 and Route 111 (Fort Pond Brook) and Newtown Road (Conant Brook).
- **2012-2013:** Develop a plan to protect riverine habitat along Grassy Pond Brook and the vernal pools located in adjacent properties. Establish a plan that ensures protection of a significant wildlife corridor, and also provides space for a human corridor, connecting Arlington Street and Grassy



The Recreation Department, in conjunction with the Water District, will continue efforts to provide "Water-wise" education courses.



Pickerel weed in marsh pond, Douglass-Gates.

Pond conservation area to the east with the Bulette conservation land and Town Forest to the west.

9.B.6 Develop public outreach and education programs

- **2013:** Initiate a series of regularly-scheduled walks with members of the Conservation Commission, LSC and representatives from the Recreation Department, the Board of Selectmen, Town Management, the Water District, et al, to familiarize them with the richness of Acton town lands, thus promoting common ideas for improvements, future acquisitions, and appreciation of the resources available to the townspeople of Acton.
- **2013:** In collaboration with Friends of the Acton Arboretum, initiate seasonal public walks at the Arboretum.
- **2012:** The Recreation Department, in conjunction with the Water District, will continue efforts to provide "Water-wise" education courses.

9.B.7 Improve access to and use of managed conservation areas

- **2012:** Implement new Bench Donation Program.
- **2013:** Install additional stream signs at the following locations: Assabet River – Route 62, Inch Brook- Route 111, Nashoba Brook – Route 2, Fort Pond Brook – Route 111, Mary's Brook – Minot Ave. and Spencer Brook – Pope Road.
- **2013:** Begin construction of an observation platform at the Wheeler Lane Mill site; construct a handicapped-accessible path to the site; design, build and install an information kiosk at the platform site.
- **2013:** Install a 4-car parking lot at Jenks Conservation Land.
- **2014:** Complete the implementation of the Arboretum Master Plan.

- **2014:** Replace the Bog Boardwalk at the Acton Arboretum, tying this new, handicapped-accessible boardwalk to the Minot Ave. sidewalk.
- **2015:** Install parking lot for Great Hill Conservation/Recreation area from the Piper Road access point.
- **2015:** Replace Arboretum Parking lot using pervious materials.

9.C GOAL #3: IMPROVE AND EXPAND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

9.C.1 Improve and expand the facilities at the Nathaniel Allen Recreational Area (NARA park):

- **2012:** Complete the master plan for NARA park.
- **2012 - 2017:** Seek funding and implement plans for expanded facilities and amenities :
 - **On-going:** Replace failing trees and plant new trees in strategic areas such as the playground and beach, to insure shade for future generations of park patrons.
 - **2012:** Expand parking access.
 - **2012:** Complete the installation of Miracle Field (See section 8.C.4).
 - **2012:** Improve and enhance the playground area.
 - **2012-2013:** Build ice skating area at new gravel parking lot at NARA Park.
 - **July 2, 2013:** Hold formal dedication of the Nathaniel Allen Park, with the new sign at the Ledge Rock Way entrance.
 - **2013:** Add Signage: "NARA Park" to large sign on Rt 2 near Rt 27 exit. 2013: Install a NARA Ledge Rock Way entrance gateway to be composed of a stone base and wrought iron arch.

Old wildflower boardwalk, Acton Arboretum.



- **2014:** Provide additional picnicking facilities throughout the park.
- **2014:** Build a concession and restroom facility to service Upper Fields and Miracle Field (see 8.C.4).
- **2014:** Finalize design for a snackbar and lighting near and around the ball fields.
- **2015:** Open up a spur from the BFRT bike path to bathhouse for additional public access.
- **2016:** Build a permanent pavilion for events such as corporate outings and weddings.
- **2016:** Install lighting around upper fields to extend usability.
- **2016:** Install solar lighting along pond path, and around upper and lower parking areas.
- **2017:** Install a pond aeration system to improve water quality.
- **2017:** Install synthetic turf on one of the athletic fields to reduce maintenance costs and wear on natural turf fields.
- **2017:** Extend street lights along Quarry Road and town Forest Trail.
- **2017:** Install solar panels to support energy sustainability.
- **2017:** Install a water spray area, to be located at current utility tent area, next to volleyball courts or in the playground area.
- **2017:** Set up surrey bicycle rental and storage area for Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users.

9.C.2 Implement the Morrison Farm reuse plan

- **2013:** Install parking area for Morrison Farm.
- **2012-2013:** Complete renovations to Morrison Farm house.
- **2014:** Seek CPA funding for design of Morrison Education Center to be built on the site of the existing barn.

- **2014:** Find a caretaker to live in the Morrison Farm house and oversee the property.
- **2012-2015:** Expand the organic orchard at Morrison Farm.
- **2015:** Install a greenhouse at Morrison Farm.
- **2015:** Seek funding for the design of Nashoba Brook Bridge to connect to BFRT from Morrison Farm.
- **2016:** Build and install a handicapped-accessible raised-bed garden area.
- See Sec. 9.A.3 for additional items.

9.C.3 Develop the Ice House Pond Recreation Area

- **2014:** Create a loop trail connecting a handicapped-accessible parking area to the Playground and Morrison Farm fields.
- **2015:** Install an East Acton playground on the site of the old Ice House factory foundation.
- **2015:** Include a picnic area at the Ice House Pond factory site.

- **2015:** Build a bridge over Nashoba Brook to link the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to this expanded recreation area.

9.C.4 Secure recreational indoor space

- **2013:** Relocate the Recreation Department to the 68 Harris Street site in North Acton, located within a mile of NARA Recreation Center.
- **2015:** Utilize the new Morrison Farm barn when completed.
- **2014:** Explore the possibility of utilizing facilities at the Senior Center for additional indoor recreational space.

9.C.5 Create additional facilities and improve existing ones

- New Facilities:
 - **2012:** Create new or expanded parking lots at Veterans Field, Morrison Farm, Gardner Playground, Great Hill Conservation Area off Piper Rd. and Jenks Conservation Land.
 - **2014:** Build a 2-rink deck hockey facility to meet demand.

Bench on handicapped accessible path in Acton Arboretum.



- **2014:** Open a community garden in West Acton or South Acton.
- Improved facilities:
 - School Street Fields:
 - **2012:** Sign multi-year lease with Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
 - **2013:** Install well and irrigation system.
 - **2013:** Install a baseball field to serve Little League, Pony, Babe Ruth and softball teams.
 - **2013:** Resurface one of the fields for multi-use to include lacrosse and soccer.
 - Elm Street
 - **2012:** Replace backstop and sideline fencing.
 - **2012:** Install new perma-lines.
 - **2012:** Seek relief from the Elm Street Injunctions, dated 1974 and 1984, which prohibit organized play on the Elm Street softball field on Saturdays and Sundays. (see appendix ?? for explanation of this item)
 - Veterans Field
 - **2013:** Expand parking capacity.
 - **2014:** Install tiered spectator seating.
 - Hart, Jones and Veterans Baseball fields and NARA Softball field
 - **2013:** Install dugout roofs for sun protection.
 - T.J. O'Grady Skate Park
 - On-going: Remove graffiti and develop oversight controls.
 - **2012:** Construct new skating bowls.
 - **2012:** Implement skater-suggested improvements, such as coping on ledges and rail installation.
 - **2012:** Improve the High School lower field driveway for access to Hayward Road.
 - Gardner Playground

- **2013:** Expand parking to abutting Water District property.
- **2015:** Construct a new basketball court.

9.C.6 Secure adequate funding for facility upkeep

- **2013:** Seek funding of \$15,000 per year, to be appropriated in Town budget for Town recreational facility maintenance to ensure safety standards are maintained.

9.C.7 Ensure playground facilities are made up-to-date, safe and accessible

- **2012 – 2013:** Reconstruct the Goward Field Playground, as funds become available, through a combination of private donations (fundraising Friends of Goward Playground) and a FY13 warrant article.

- [Responsible party: Recreation Department & Natural Resources Dept.]
 - **July, 2012:** Funding available
 - **Summer, 2012:** Finalize playground design
 - **September, 2012:** Seek CPA funding
 - **Summer, 2012:** Submit for public bid
 - **October, 2012:** Begin construction
- **2013:** Repurpose the dismantled playground area at Elm Street as a spray park, new deck hockey facility, or a new playground.
- **2014:** Build a shade structure at the NARA Park playground.
- **2014:** Renovate Jones Field Playground.
- **2014:** Find sites and begin planning for a water spray park and a dog park, in recognition of citizens' interest.
- **2015:** Renovate Gardner Playground.
- **2015:** Build a playground in East Acton Village district.
- **2016:** Renovate Veterans Field playground.

9.C.8 Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields

- **On-going:** Seek qualified outside contractors to augment Town manpower.
- **2012:** Implement the ABRHS Lower Fields project to install two synthetic turf fields with parking, adjacent to T.J. O'Grady Skate Park.
- **2012:** Identify properties that can support new recreational uses, such as deck hockey.
- **2012:** Identify funding sources for improvements and ongoing maintenance through sponsorships, grants and fundraising activities.
- **2013:** Provide education and training to maintenance staff in environmentally-sound approaches to turf management.
- **2013:** Review condition of all fields and prioritize candidates for synthetic turf installation.

9.C.9 Provide additional athletic fields to meet the needs of the town's growing population

- **2012 (Summer):** Prepare site for future construction of Miracle League Field. Finalize design for accessible walkways at NARA to be connected to Miracle Field path system. Continue fundraising efforts for field installation.
- **2016:** Install inline skating rink at Robbins Mill Recreation Area.

9.C.10 Expand handicapped accessibility

- **On-going:** Improve Acton Arboretum handicapped-accessible trails. On-going: Improve handicapped accessibility at existing facilities such as NARA beach, picnic areas, and playgrounds.
- **On-going:** Plan handicapped accessibility at new or renovated facilities such as East Acton, Goward, and Elm Street playgrounds, NARA Picnic Pavilion and TJ O'Grady Skate Park.
- **2013:** Add handicapped-accessible gardening at Morrison Farm Community Garden.
- **2013:** Install handicapped-accessible trail encircling pond at Great Hill Conservation Land.
- **2013:** Create a handicapped-accessible baseball field, the Miracle Field.
- **2014:** Construct handicapped-accessible ramp from Minot Ave. sidewalk to the accessible bog boardwalk, and develop a short loop trail along perimeter of bog.
- **2014:** Add sidewalk extensions to popular recreation sites, particularly from north of Route 2A on Route 27 (Main Street), linking Veterans Field to NARA Park.
- **2012-2013:** Replace Wildflower Garden boardwalk at Acton Arboretum with one that is handicapped accessible.

9.C.11 Expand public outreach to better inform the public of our available passive and active recreation opportunities

- **On-going:** Continue to provide opportunities for educational nature walks and guided birding walks.
- **2013:** Initiate a series of regular walks with members of the Conservation Commission and representatives from the Recreation Department, Board of Selectmen, Town Management, et al, to familiarize them with the richness of Acton town lands, thus promoting common ideas for improvements, future acquisitions, and appreciation of the resources available to the townspeople of Acton.
- **2013:** Promote all forms of recreation, both passive and active, through informational brochures and informed Recreation staff at new Harris St. offices.
- **2013:** Host Recreation and Conservation talks at new Harris St. offices.

9.C.12 Promote the development of two regional bike trails planned to run through Acton

- **2012:** Continue discussions between Acton Conservation Commission and Concord Natural Resources to ensure that the trails between their towns are developed in an environmentally-sensitive manner.

9.C.13 Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton villages

- **2014:** The Conservation Commission and the Recreation Department collaborate to map out short, safe and accessible walks within the villages.
- **2014:** Create a Fort Pond Brook riverfront park (name tbd) funded by CPA funds for Open Space. Responsible Parties for the project are the Open Space Committee, Recreation Commission, Natural Resources Dept. and Acton Water District.

- **2015:** Develop a pocket park on Patriot's Road, and loop the accessible boardwalk to Newtown Road.
- **2016:** Design and construct West Acton Village – Fort Pond Brook loop trail from Arlington Street to Route 111.
- **2017:** Construct East Acton Village Green.

9.C.14 Relocate and centralize operations of the Department of Natural Resources and the Recreation Department

- **2013:** Purchase the Harris Street Fish and Wildlife building and relocate the Department of Natural Resources offices as outlined below:
 - **2013:** Finalize agreement to transfer municipal property to the Department Of Fish and Wildlife in exchange for the 1.3-acre Harris Street site.
 - **2013:** Sign license agreement with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to allow municipal access to the site for use by the Department of Natural Resources. 2013: Seek funding for office renovations.
 - **2014:** Initiate remodeling of and upgrades to office space.
 - **2014:** Move the Department of Recreation office to the Harris St. facility.
 - **2014:** Seek funding sources, including CPA, for handicapped-accessible facilities at the site, including the indoor activity center.
 - **2015:** Renovate existing office workshop to become an indoor activity space; renovations to include a new sewage disposal system.
 - **2015:** Remove existing garage and resurface the parking lot.



CONSERVATION
AREA

TOWN OF ACTON

A COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION
PROJECT BETWEEN THE ACTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION &
THE COMMONWEALTH OF
MASSACHUSETTS

SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS



10

SECTION 11: REFERENCES

SECTION 1:

www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/aquatics/waterchestnut.shtml#.USKF_FJYRhc

SECTION 2:

2002-2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan:

www.doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-4819

Acton Conservation Trust: <http://www.actonconservationtrust.org>

ABFM photos courtesy of the Acton-Boxborough Farmers Market, through Debra Simes, Communications Coordinator of ABFM

AB Farmers Market: <http://www.ABFarmersMarket.org>

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail:

<http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/about/phase-two-acton-west-car.html>

Assabet River Rail Trail: <http://www.arrtinc.org/>

SECTION 3:

495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan:

<http://www.495partnership.org/assets/Compact/FinalPlan/finalcompactplansmall2.pdf>

Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan:

www.doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-4819

http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth-toolkit/pages/mod-osrd.html

Annual Report of the Acton Water District for the year ending December 31, 2012 and the Acton Water District Winter 2012 Water Words Notice

<http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/659>

<http://www.minutevan.net>

www.home-water-works.org

www.epa.gov/region1/superfund, search on "Acton"

SECTION 4:

2002-2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan:

www.doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-4819

Environmental Protection Agency 2013 report on the Grace Cleanup:

www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/sites/graceacton/530655.pdf

"Saving the American Elm": www.elmpost.org

Acton Water District Environmental Manager's Report 2011:

www.actonwater.com/Web%20Ready/WaterWords.pdf

Biomap2: <http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap2.htm>

MASS Rivers Alliance: www.massriversalliance.org

Organization for the Assabet River: www.oars3rivers.org

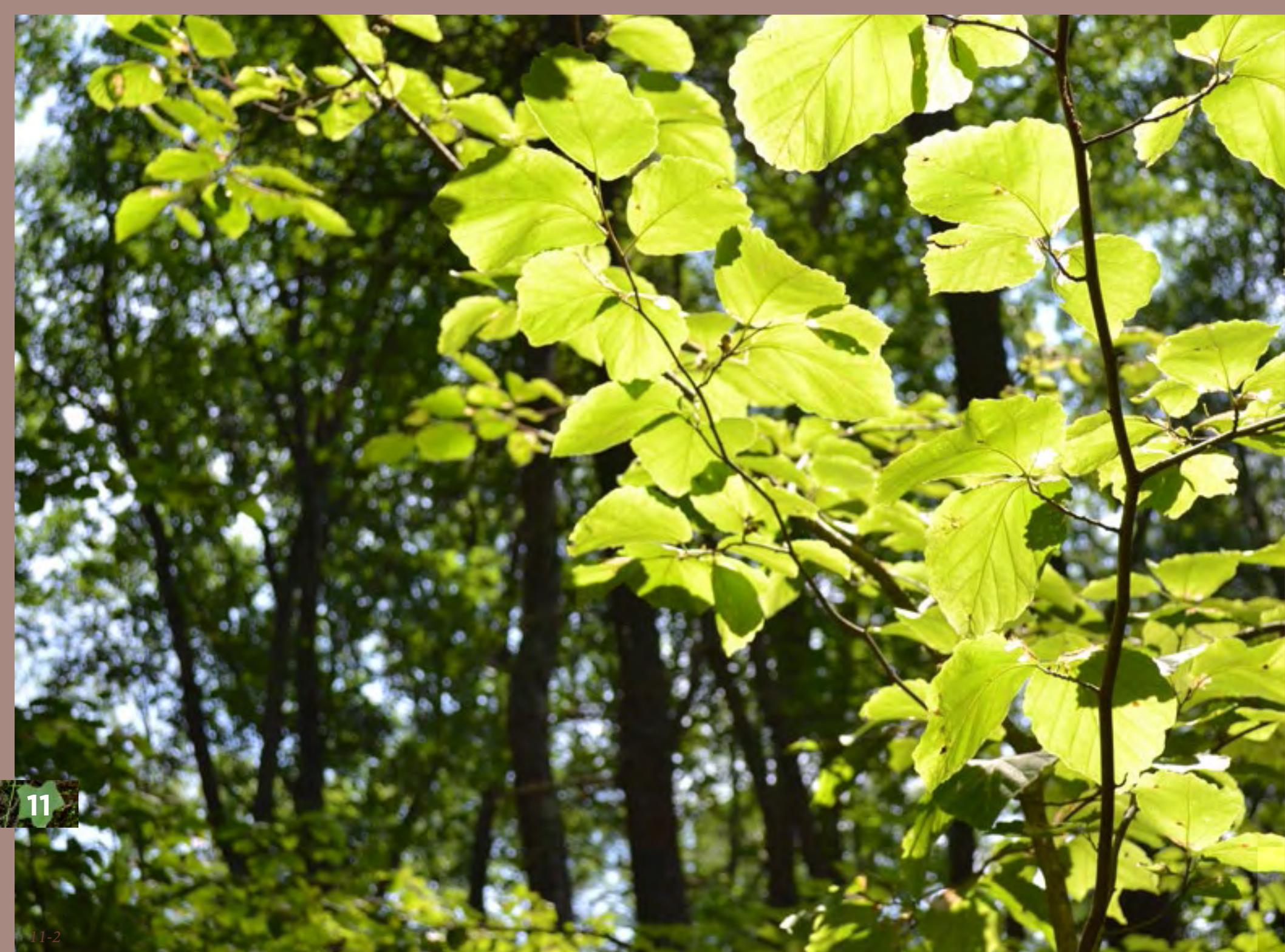
"The Acton Reconnaissance Report/Freedom's Way Landscape Inventory" online at www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/reconReports/acton.pdf.

SuAsCo Biodiversity Protection and Stewardship Plan by Frances Clark, 2000

SECTION 5:

www.acton-ma.gov: search on BFRT

www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org



SECTION 12: APPENDICES

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN SURVEY RESULTS	12-2
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OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN SURVEY RESULTS

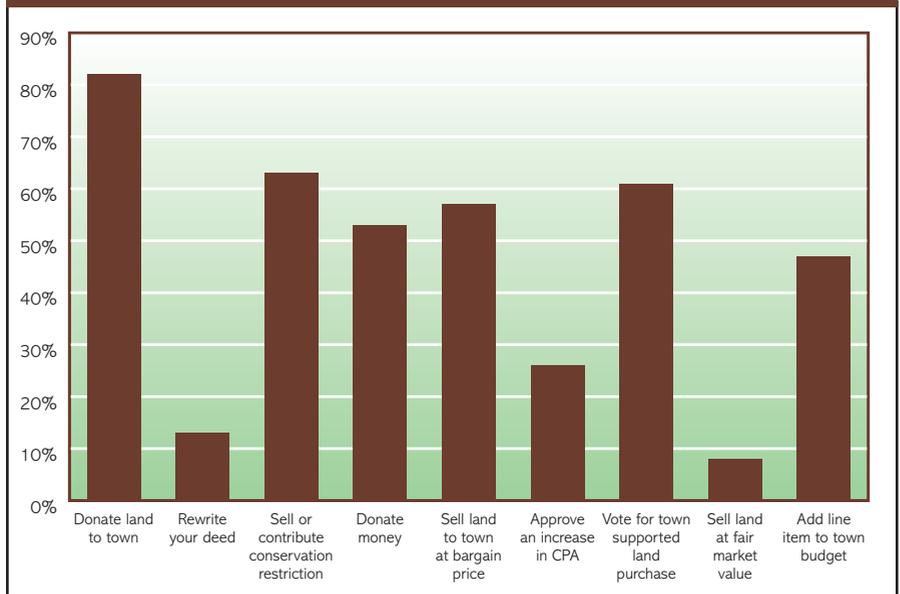
OVERVIEW

- Results of survey have been tabulated and reviewed
 - 16 questions: provide input into the update to the Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Survey very similar to prior one for comparative purposes
 - No cost to the town
- Draft by May-June
- Approximately 1200 responded — about 15% of Acton households

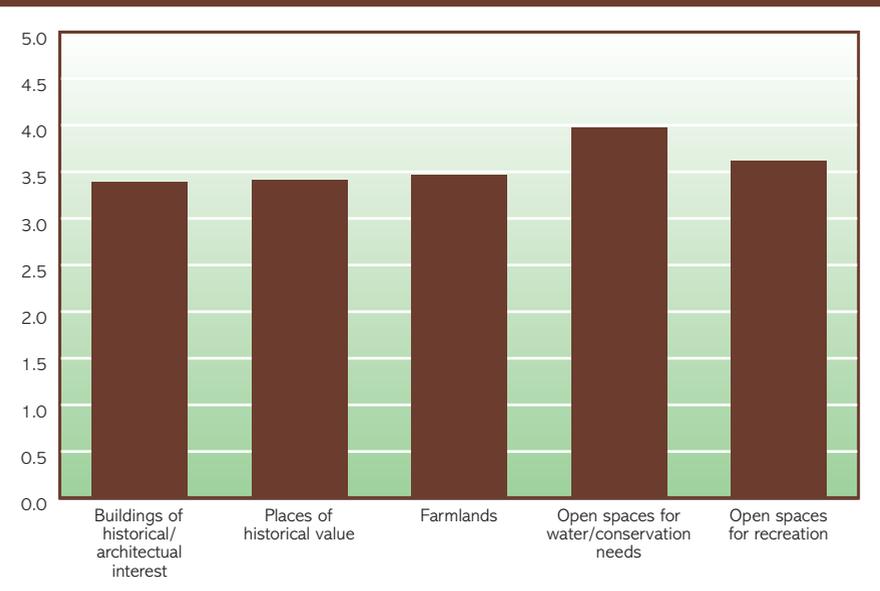
GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- Results are remarkably similar to results of survey performed seven years ago
- Concerns about residential growth, protection of open space, recreation space, preserve character of town
- Emphasis on conservation restrictions; bike trails; willingness to support purchases of land

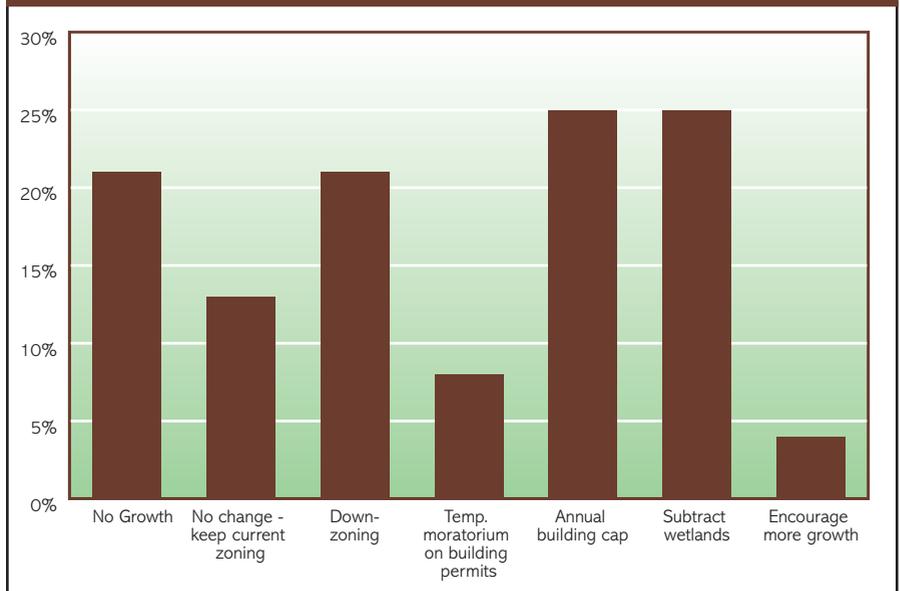
TO PRESERVE OPEN SPACE IN ACTON, WHAT ACTIONS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE PEOPLE DO?



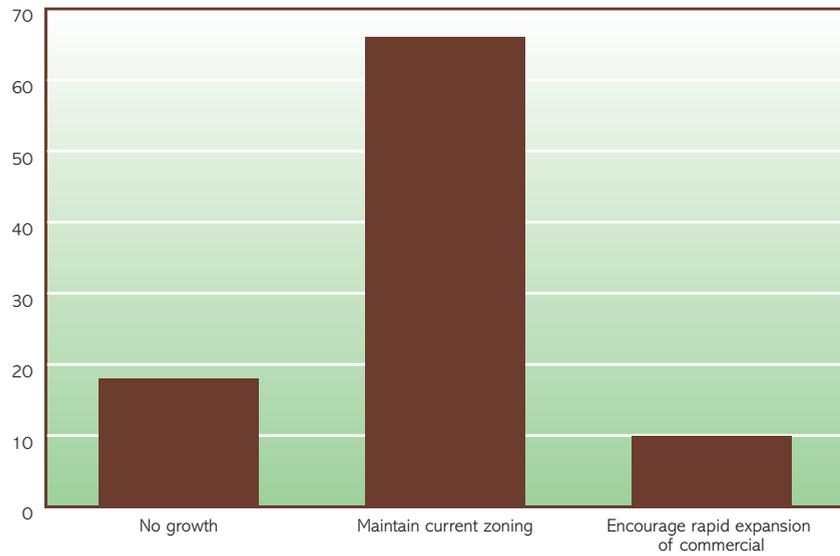
RANKING OF HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO PRESERVE (on scale of 1-5)



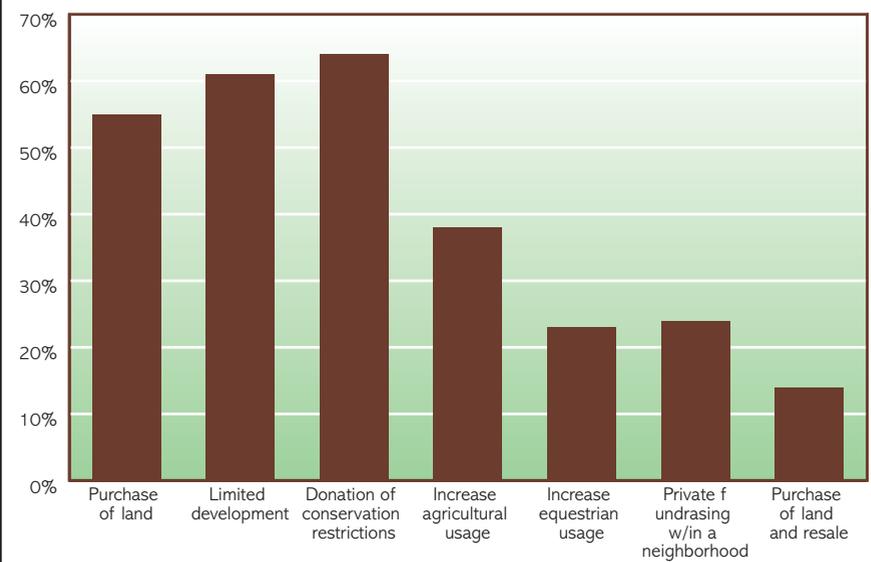
WHAT RESIDENTIAL GROWTH POLICY DO YOU FAVOR IN THE FUTURE?



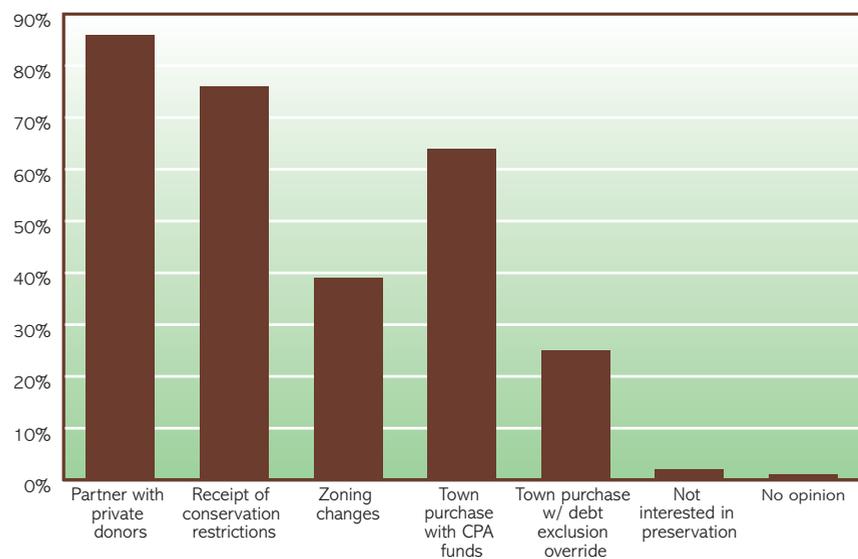
WHAT COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL POLICY DO YOU FAVOR IN THE FUTURE?



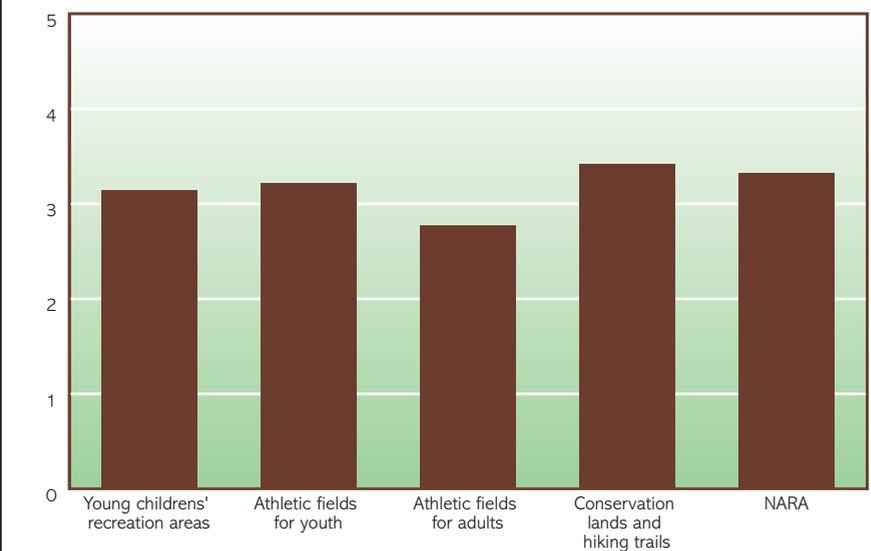
WHAT PRIVATE ACTIONS DO YOU FAVOR TO PRESERVE LAND?



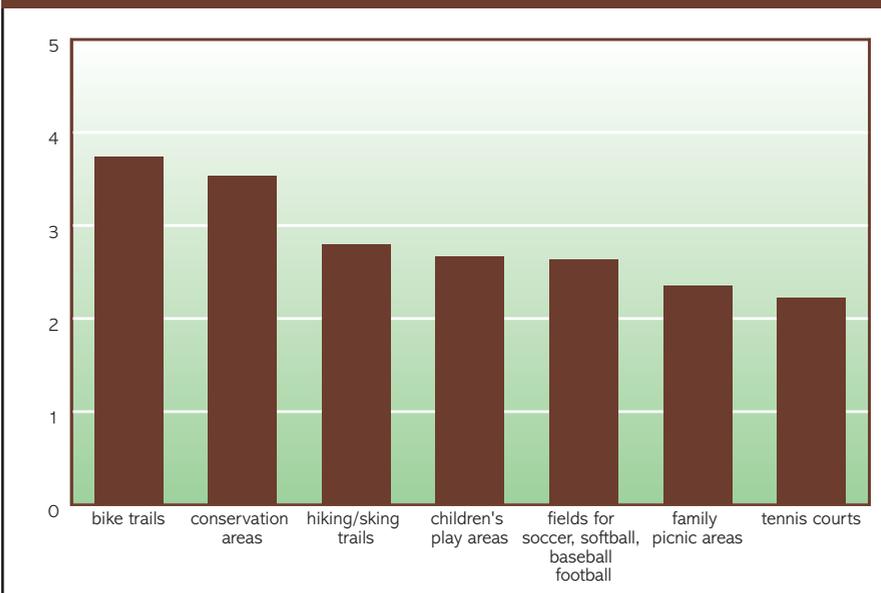
WHAT TOWN GOVERNMENT ACTIONS DO YOU FAVOR TO PRESERVE OPEN SPACE?



RANK ON SCALE OF 1-5 YOUR SATISFACTION WITH RECREATION AREAS



TOP SEVEN RECREATIONAL FACILITIES NEEDED IN TOWN



WHAT IS IT ABOUT ACTON THAT YOU LIKE THE BEST?

- Community
- Open space and conservation land
- Diversity of population
- School system
- Rural/town character
- Location
- Youth sports and other recreation opportunities

WHAT IS IT ABOUT ACTON THAT YOU LIKE THE LEAST?

- Traffic/congestion/need for sidewalks
- Too much residential development
- Taxes too high

Exactly the same three as last time

Overwhelming majority of views expressed

QUESTION 11 ASKED WHETHER YOU BELIEVED OUR CONSERVATION LANDS ARE PROTECTED AND FREE FROM THREAT OF DEVELOPMENT OR CONVERSION:

- 35% said yes
- 20% were unsure
- 45% said no

QUESTION 14 ASKED WHETHER YOU OWNED YOUR OWN HOME:

- 92% of respondents were homeowners (much higher than before)

QUESTION 15 ASKED WHETHER YOU OWNED 5 ACRES OF LAND OR MORE

- Only 2% of respondents owned 5 acres or more

QUESTIONS 12, 13 AND 16 REQUESTED HOW LONG YOU'VE LIVED IN TOWN, DEMOGRAPHIC DATA, AND LOCATION

- Ensure coverage in terms of responses
- Very even distribution geographically and demographically
 - 17% of respondents are seniors
 - 33% are families with young children
- About 60% of respondents have lived in town 10 years or more
 - Up from last time

(RESPONSES COMPILED FROM: ACTON PLANNING DEPARTMENT, COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE, ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST AND ACTON RESIDENTS)

LAND USE

Question 1: Geography

A) Is there a pattern as to where the farms in your community are located? (e.g., near the town center, near residential neighborhoods etc.).

According to Assessors' Codes for Agricultural/Ch. 61 and 61A, most land is located in Residential Zoning Districts, adjacent to Agricultural Recreation Conservation (ARC) Zoning Districts*. 264.35 acres are located in North Acton. Approximately 37.53 acres of farm land is located within a one mile radius of South Acton Village and approximately 34.48 acres of farm land is located within a one mile radius of West Acton Village. Most lots are oversized.

Additionally, there is significant farm land acreage in East Acton along Route 2 owned by the Commonwealth and the Town (former Concord prison farm). The Town owns 72 acres of conservation land, some of which are leased back to the State for farm use. The Commonwealth owns 133.6 acres of agricultural land. All the land is located in the ARC Zoning District. Most lots are oversized.

B) To the best of your knowledge, what is the total number of acres of agricultural land within your town?

According to Assessors' codes:

- Land Codes 712, 713, 714 (Agricultural/Horticultural) and 601 (All land designated under Chapter 61) = 354.31 acres
- Land Codes 712, 713 and 714 alone (Agricultural/Horticultural) = 81.71 acres
- [No land was classified under Code 210 or 27]
- [Does not include State or Town owned farm land]
- According to the Open Space and Recreation Plan: 447 acres total

C) What data sources did you use to arrive at this number (e.g., assessors' land use codes)?

- Assessors' Land Use Data/Codes
- Open Space and Recreation Plan 2002-2007

Question 2

What are the types of agricultural production in your town (e.g., vegetable, dairy, fruit, livestock, equine, etc.)?

- Code 712-Truck Crops/Vegetables, Code 713 -Field Crops, Code 714-Orchards (Assessors' land use codes)
- 164 acres in equestrian farms; 18 horse farms; 11 agricultural farms (Open Space and Recreation Plan)

REGULATION

Question 1

Does your town have an Agricultural Commission?

No

Question 2

Does your town have a Right-to-Farm Bylaw?

No

Question 3: Zoning

A) How does your town define agriculture? Do you have more than one definition, depending on the regulation?

The Town of Acton recently amended the definition of Agriculture at the April 2012 Town Meeting. The definition now mirrors that of MGL Ch. 128, s.1A and MGL Ch. 40A, s. 3

B) What provisions do your town zoning bylaws include regarding agriculture (e.g., Ag Use districts, prohibitions, special permit allowances)?

Acton allows agricultural uses (as defined above) by-right in all zoning districts. See Acton Zoning Bylaw which mirrors MGL Ch. 128, s.1A and MGL Ch. 40A, s. 3

C) What are the use categories or prohibitions (e.g., on-farm processing, special provisions for agro-tourism, recreation)?

See Acton Zoning Bylaw which mirrors MGL Ch. 128, s.1A and MGL Ch. 40A, s. 3

Question 4

What permissions and prohibitions do your zoning bylaws have for animal agriculture (e.g., piggeries, poultry, bees)?

See Acton Zoning Bylaw which mirrors MGL Ch. 128, s.1A and MGL Ch. 40A, s. 3

Question 5: Master Plan

A) Does your town have a Master Plan or Open Space Plan?

Acton has a Master Plan (2012) and Open Space and Recreation Plan (2002-2007). Acton also has a Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventory document which lists and prioritizes farmlands.

B) If yes, does your plan identify agricultural lands of conservation interest (i.e., any agricultural land that the community finds valuable — permanently protected or not)?

Yes.

C) If yes, does your plan prioritize agricultural lands of conservation interest?

Yes. The Open Space and Recreation Plan contains a prioritized list for non-Chapter 61 properties.

*(The ARC Zoning District is comprised of Town owned land, it does not include any privately owned land.)

Question 6

Does your town have any regulations, other than zoning bylaws, which address agriculture (e.g. wetlands, board of health, wellhead protection)?

No

Question 7

To your knowledge, what are some of your town's regulatory impediments to fostering agriculture (e.g., excise tax on farm machinery)?

See Acton Zoning Bylaw which mirrors MGL Ch. 128, s.1A and MGL Ch. 40A, s. 3. Excise tax abatements for farm plate vehicles are available. Other farm machinery is subject to personal property tax.

CONSERVATION

Question 1

Does your municipality lease or license any of its conservation land for agricultural uses?

Yes

Question 2

Does the town currently hold any agricultural conservation restrictions?

No. The Town of Acton does not hold any Agricultural Preservation Restrictions as specified by Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources. The Town does hold Conservation Restrictions as specified by EOEEA on lands which have some agricultural use aspects to them.

Question 3: Land Trusts

A) Does your community have a land trust that deals with agriculture or addresses farming?

The Acton Conservation Trust focuses on the preservation of open space. They are trying to reach out to farms, and are scheduled to cohold land with crop use and equestrian use but agricultural preservation is not their main purpose.

B) Does your community work with a regional land trust that deals with agriculture or addresses farming?

The Town of Acton works with the Sudbury Valley Trustees which is a regional land trust that focuses on land conservation. They do some work with farms but agricultural preservation is not their main purpose.

Question 4

What is the number of acres of land in your community protected under M.G.L. Chapter 61, 61A and 61B, respectively?

- Ch. 61 = 272.6 Acres
- Ch. 61A = 81.71 Acres
- Ch. 61B = 9.79 Acres

Question 5

Does the municipality have a split tax rate (e.g., residential/commercial)?

No.

Question 6

How is agricultural land classified for property tax purposes (e.g., open space or commercial)?

As Agriculture/Horticulture (Tax codes 7**)

Question 7: Land Acquisitions

A) How much has the town spent on acquiring agricultural lands in the last five years?

\$1,000,000

B) How much has the town spent on purchasing or otherwise contributing to an agricultural easement, either on its own or with other partners?

The above included both acquisition and easement. (The Town has budgeted \$22,600 to cover costs associated with placing a CR on the agricultural property purchased in 2010 including baseline documentation and stewardship costs.)

C) Where did these funds come from?

Community Preservation Act funds, Town General funds and two donations: one from the Steinberg-Lali Foundation and one from the Acton Conservation Trust.

PRODUCTION

Question 1

Does the public school district have a program to purchase local foods?

Yes. They purchase food from Bolton Orchards, Lanni Orchards, and Costa

Fruit and Produce Company. They also participate in Mass Farm to School Week, each year they bring in corn on the cob for all of the elementary schools and the children shuck the corn. (Kirsten Nelson, Director of Food Services Acton Schools)

Question 2

Does your town have any community gardens? If so, who owns the land?

Yes. The Town owns and manages two Community Gardens. (Morrison Farm and Robbins Mill)

Question 3

Are there any farming operations in town that operate as Community Supported Agriculture?

No.

Question 4

Does your community have a farmer's market?

Yes.

Question 5

Does your community have any farming support organizations (e.g., 4H, Grange)?

Boxborough Grange #131 includes the Town of Acton. Acton also has a 4H club C.R.A.F.T. & Zingers COMPACT

MIRACLE FIELD LAYOUT (?)



PLANT LIST

Symbol/Botanical Name	Common Name	No.	Size	Remarks
Trees (Deciduous)				
AKO/Acer rubrum 'October Glory'	October Glory Red Maple	7	2.25" C	
ASR/Acer rubrum 'Red Sunset'	Red Sunset Red Maple	8	2.25" C	
ABM/Acer saccharum 'Bonfire'	Bonfire Sugar Maple	1	2.25" C	
ASJ/Acer saccharum 'Green Mountain'	Green Mountain Sugar Maple	3	2.25" C	
BN/Betula nigra 'Heritage'	Single stem Heritage River Birch	3	8-10 Hc	May sub. 'Dura Heat'
CLC/Cedrus lasa	Yellowwood	3	2.25" C	
CLP/Cedrus lasa 'Parkin's Pink'	Parkin's Pink Yellowwood	1	2.25" C	
LS/Liquidambar styraciflua	Sweetgum	1	2 - 2.5" C	
NS/Nyssa sylvatica	Tupelo	3	5-6 HT	
Shrubs				
ALU/Amelanchier 'Autumn Brilliance'	Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry	10	6-7 Hc	Multi-stem/ white fls early May; fruit/birds; native
FL/Forsythia 'Lynwood Gold'	Lynwood Gold Forsythia	21	4-5 Hc	Matching
HA/Hamamelis venalis (or inc. 'Arnold Promise')	Vernal Witchhazel	10	4-5 Hc	Matching; heavy; Yellow fls-Feb-March
IG/Illex glabra 'Shamrock'	Shamrock Holly	13	5gal	Evergreen native
DI/Dillenia verticillata 'Sparkberry'	Sparkberry Viburnum	15	5gal	Improved native
VI/Viburnum cassinoides	Withered Viburnum	5	5gal	
VIB/Viburnum densum 'Blue Muffin'	Blue Muffin Viburnum	15	5gal	Improved native
Groundcover and Bulbs				
VC/Vaccinium angustifolium	Lowbush Blueberry	160	1 or 2 gal bulbs	Random spacing
DA/Dracopis	Daffodils	200		Random spacing
Sun and/or shade mixes as needed				
Rain Gardens - Locate plants on site with landscape architect				
Rain Garden "A"				
ALU/Amelanchier 'Autumn Brilliance'	Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry	6	4.5 Hc	Multi-stem/ white fls early May; fruit/birds; native
CD/Cornus stolonifera	Redosier Dogwood	7	2-3 Hc	
LC/Lonicera comocladia	Birdfoot Trillium	30		4" pot or as available
Rain Garden "B"				
ALU/Amelanchier 'Autumn Brilliance'	Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry	5	4.5 Hc	Multi-stem/ white fls early May; fruit/birds; native
VJ/Vernonia virginiana	Eastern Redcedar	3	4-5 Hc	
PH/Physocarpus opulifolius 'Summer Wine'	Summer Wine Ninebark	5	3gal	
LB/Lonicera borealis	Spicebush	7	3gal	
P/Panicum vergatum	Switchgrass	30		4" pot or as available

Miracle Field - Site & Planting Plan Acton, Massachusetts

Prepared For: **The Miracle League Field of Massachusetts and The Town of Acton, MA**

Civil Engineers: **Stamski & McNary, Acton, MA**
978.263.8585

Landscape Architect: **Kim Ahern Landscape Architects**
978.486.0040

Date: **11/17/2011**
Scale: **1" = 20'**



L-1
Sheet:

Section 9.C.5:

The factors that prompted these injunctions from neighbors have been resolved, e.g. light spillage on abutting properties, mitigated by the 2008 installation of Musco sports lighting that meets the Town's lighting bylaws. Expanded hours will allow softball and baseball teams expanded playing time and the opportunity to expand the number of teams on the league.

I. TOWN OF ACTON OBJECTIVES (from last two Acton Master Plans 2002-2007):

- 1. Preserve the rural character and history.**
- 2. Protect the environment.**
- 3. Improve recreational possibilities.**

II. ACTON ARBORETUM'S MASTER PLAN MISSION AND GOALS:

1. The Arboretum will provide an educational and aesthetically pleasing experience in and of the landscape. It will concentrate attention on the educational value of the following areas:
 - Succession stages (ex. open field to scrub to bog and forest)
 - Wildlife habitats
 - Geological landforms (ex. esker, bog, streams, ponds, quarry)
 - Historic site features
 - Natural systems
 - Effective gardening practices using the Arboretum as a learning tool
2. Native and introduced species hardy to the Acton area will be utilized and planted in a naturalized fashion within the framework of existing microclimates and soils ("right plant, right place.")

III. CORRELATING TOWN OBJECTIVES WITH ACTON ARBORETUM'S MASTER PLAN:

- **Preserving the rural character:**
The Acton Arboretum embodies both natural and manmade features that contribute to Acton's character such as apple orchards, open fields, woodlands, ponds, country roads, scenic vistas and stonewalls.
- **Protecting the environment:**
The utilization of the Acton Arboretum as a town natural resource include gardening, planting trees and shrubs, applying conservation land regulations, preserving ecosystems, promoting habitat diversity, protecting wetlands. Wildlife corridors are protected through land acquisition and public education.
- **Improving recreational opportunities:**
Town Staff and volunteers regularly maintain, upgrade and expand the possibilities for hiking the Arboretum's trails by removing obstacles, blazing, mapping, building/maintaining bridges and boardwalks over and through wetlands. Recent initiatives to better inform the public about accessibility are the expanded kiosk, website, ACAT Video and paved trail. Unlimited passive recreation is available to picnickers, painters, photographers, readers, poets, philosophers, musicians, etc.

IV. Current Description of the Acton Arboretum (May 2011)

Location of Acton Arboretum and Current General Description:

Located in the town's center, the Acton Arboretum consists of 64 acres of gardens, lawn with picnic tables, woods, meadows, swamps, ponds, old apple orchards, a glacial esker, and a bog.

The Arboretum has approximately 3,000 feet of handicap accessible trail finished primarily in compressed stone dust; including 500 feet that is paved asphalt. The trails are not plowed in winter, therefore are not considered assessable in snowy or icy conditions.

Current Parking Availability:

Parking is available at the Arboretum's main entrance, off Taylor Road. Other entrances are on Concord Road on the Billings Trail and from Wood Lane and Minot Avenue. Much of the area adjacent to the parking lot is handicapped-accessible, and is open with graveled paths, gardens, bridges, and picnic tables. Trails and paths crisscross the entire area. An information kiosk stands at the main entrance. Please see Section V. "The Future Five Year Improvements" for parking lot improvement plan.

History in Brief:

The land, successively owned and improved by the Craigs, the Reeds, the Tuttlés, and the Bridges, was acquired by the town in 1976 and 1977. It was formalized as an Arboretum in 1986 when Town

Meeting funded the purchase of plant materials and site improvements, and the original warrant article was amended by John Whittier and Brewster Conant to specify use of the property for an arboretum.

Since then, the Arboretum has been developed through the efforts of the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc., Tom Tidman, Acton Natural Resources Director and town staff, assisted by many volunteers and donors. The Acton Garden Club members maintain the Herb, Hosta, and Butterfly Gardens. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts completing large projects have worked on plantings, paths and boardwalks. Junior High and High School students perform service day clean-ups. Local businesses and landscaping firms have donated services and materials. The Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. have been awarded various grants over the years to make maps, design and print educational materials and create gardens (1992 George E. Stone Award from the Massachusetts Association of Tree Wardens and Foresters; 1997 Urban Forest Planning and Education Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; William P. Wharton Trust 1992 and 1997; Community Preservation Act award in 2006 for \$20,000).

The Friends of the Acton Arboretum

The Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. was incorporated in 1991 as a non-profit organization and is a group of citizens who care about the natural

world and share a vision of preserving and enhancing our natural resources for educational purposes. Friends contribute time, money, plants, and other gifts and talents in support of the Acton Arboretum to achieve these goals.

Trail Descriptions

There are three major trails at the Acton Arboretum: the Orchard Loop, the Wildflower Loop, and the Highland/Bog Loop (along with a number of interconnecting paths). An access trail on the property, which connects the Arboretum to the sidewalk on Main Street is actually the right of way for a future sidewalk on Taylor Road. Along this access trail are the Swale Garden, the Daylily Collection, and a grouping of crab apple trees and native shrubs.

Future Paved Sidewalk:

In the next few years, part of this trail will be paved (asphalt), becoming a sidewalk extending from Main Street, along Taylor Road, connecting to Minot Avenue and Conant Elementary School. Identified as a priority since at least 1989, construction has been delayed by abutters heretofore unwilling to give easements to the town. The Acton Sidewalk Committee (created in 2008) has put this sidewalk on a priority list, hopefully instigating construction in the next few years.

The Orchard Loop Trail is a perimeter loop of the upper, most open, area of the Arboretum together with the old orchard grid to its south. This 1,200-foot trail begins at the Taylor Road parking lot and is handicapped

accessible with gentle grades, primarily made of crushed stone base with a number of benches along its length. It takes the walker through unique garden areas and labeled specimen trees, as well as beside a small pond constructed in 1992. All are situated around the open grassy area along with old, granite, watering trough, dated 1878. Picnic tables and a stone reading circle add to the utility of the open area.

Plantings along this trail include:

- **An Herb Garden**, designed as a replica of a typical 1700's herb garden with medicinal, culinary, and stewing herbs, situated within and around an old foundation.
- **The Butterfly Garden**, designed to provide plants to feed butterflies and their larval caterpillars.
- **Hosta Garden**, created in 1991 in honor of Judy Dempsey's mother, Emily A. Paul.

These 3 gardens are maintained by the Acton Garden Club volunteers. Situated along the more southerly reaches of the Orchard Trail are the Rhododendron Garden, groups of Japanese larches with an arbor, and areas of wetlands.

The **Wildflower Loop Trail** leaves and rejoins the Orchard Loop Trail on the eastern and southern sides of the Arboretum property. On the northern edge is a handicap accessible **Lilac and Fragrance garden (built with CPC funding)** with benches. Features along this route are two ponds (one on private property), an extensive

Wildflower Garden and boardwalk, a Fern Garden with a boardwalk and small brook crossing and several benches. The Wildflower loop was created in 1992 with the aid of a William P. Wharton Grant. The trail was designed as an interior loop, 2,280 feet in length, and is handicapped accessible. Its location was chosen to take advantage of more than 780 feet of uplands hardwood forest, ideal for establishing a wildflower collection. The wildflower loop also features a fern collection along the **Mary's Brook boardwalk**.

New Paved Section:

A 500-foot section of this trail was paved in asphalt in July 2010 (paid for jointly by the Town of Acton and the Friends of the Acton Arboretum) because severe seasonal erosion had made it inaccessible. Scouts and volunteers have planted grass and wildflowers along the edges to enhance and protect the path during heavy rains.

The **Wildflower Garden** along this trail loop was created in the 1990's by Acton volunteers and Acton Director of Natural Resources, Tom Tidman. A naturalistic garden with labels was created next to a boardwalk and pond with additional naturalized plantings along the trail. Volunteers continuously donate plants on a large scale. Please see www.elmpost.org/trail.htm for an illustrated tour of this garden. Acton resident Bruce Carley has dedicated himself to this wildflower garden for approximately 20 years.

Most of the species along this trail were manually planted with native wildflowers that have been re-introduced. Only a few species of wildflowers, such as Jack-in-the-pulpit, wood anemone, and some of the ferns were growing here naturally before the work on the gardens began.

There are roughly a hundred native species including a few types of uncommon ferns, totaling over 3,000 plants. Exclusively native wildflowers have been deliberately planted by volunteers who have worked tirelessly to build the collection.

The is a 3,500-foot journey from the highest area in the Arboretum to the lowest. The 30 acres traversed by this trail, in the most southerly portion of the Arboretum, comprise a wide variety of forest types, succession growth, and geological features. It is based on old farm roads, cow paths, and foot trails, and is not handicapped-accessible.

Along the southwestern portion, the trail follows a narrow, long hill or esker. After descending the esker, the trail crosses a quaking bog, with its specific plant community, along a winding boardwalk. In a short distance, the trail leads back towards the main Arboretum and completes the Highlands-Bog Loop.

V. The Future

The Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. will continue to work to support the Arboretum according to its mission statement (Section II above) on projects within the scope of the

organization. (for detailed projects list, please see attached FAA 3/24/11 board meeting minutes.)

The following major improvements will require significant funding allocation, as granted from either the Community Preservation Committee, grants, donors or the Acton voters at Town Meetings:

Two Year Improvements by 2013:

- Rebuild the bog boardwalk to be handicap accessible with a paved ramp from Minot Avenue sidewalk, including educational maps and kiosk depicting a "glacial loop trail."
- Pave upper section of the Wildflower Trail currently susceptible to erosion, requiring yearly maintenance.
- Enhance website.
- Create an accessibility guide.

Five Year Improvements by 2016:

- Design, reconstruct and pave Taylor Road parking lot, addressing stormwater by building rain garden to catch and filter parking lot rain runoff and replenish water supply.
- Construct formal entrance as designed and submitted for CPA funding in ??
- Hire a full or part-time caretaker of the Acton Arboretum (see attached job description.)

Ten Year Improvements by 2021:

- Build a "green" visitor's center that utilizes renewable energy and building materials, and with composting toilets.

These 8 improvements all act to maintain Acton's rural character by encouraging visits to the Acton Arboretum, a historic property full of gardens, stone walls and apple orchards. They encourage people to protect the environment when they see beautiful, natural surroundings and learn about geology, horticulture and ecosystems. Recreational opportunities are expanded when walkways are clear and accessible. A dedicated employee will do much to manage volunteer efforts and maintenance of this town treasure.

I. DUTIES

1. Upper grounds
 - cut grass
 - maintain picnic tables
 - kill poison ivy
 - stone dust trails maintenance
 - keep trails level, fill washout gullies
 - keep cobbles prominent
 - spray grass/weeds growing in stone dust
 - plant trees and shrubs
 - apple raking, seasonal (winter, spring, fall) cleanups
 - meadow work
 - plant seeds, plants, flowers
 - mulch gardens, weed and prune in coordination with garden club
 - ranger on site
 - apply fertilizer, compost, lime, etc.
2. Buildings management:
 - a) indoor meeting/function space (solar panels, composting toilets, small office fieldstone fireplace) booking of the function space for scouts, events, etc.
 - b) storage space for maintenance equipment
3. Volunteer coordinator (students, FAA, LSC, Acton Garden Club)

4. Parking lot and kiosk maintenance
5. Back 40
 - trail maintenance, mulching, hardening/corduroying wet areas
 - boardwalk repair
 - blow-down removal

II. SKILLS REQUIRED

- people skills: working with the public (friendly, flexible, good communication)
- carpentry
- moderately heavy equipment: mower, weed-whacker, bobcat, chainsaw
- gardening skills
- laptop computer and cell phone with GPS

III. SUPERVISED BY/REPORTS TO:

Tom Tidman and ConsCom

In 2011 the Town of Acton, through its Conservation Commission, initiated a forest management plan for its Wetherbee Conservation land. Located along the north side of Route 2, this 72- acre tract, with 31 acres in agricultural fields and 41 acres in woodland, is one of the fields that gives Acton its distinctive country feel. The agricultural fields are farmed by the Massachusetts Correctional Institute of Concord under a lease agreement, and in the summer of 2012 the plan was to farm 16 acres of corn, which, combined with the agricultural fields on the south side of Route 2, produced significant forage for the livestock at the prison. Meanwhile the Commonwealth has allowed the Town of Acton to use an additional 13 acres of fields on the south side of Route 2 and east of School Street Extension as soccer fields.

To compensate for taking that prime 13-acre agricultural parcel out of circulation, the Commonwealth proposed that Acton establish a forest management plan for the wooded portion of the Wetherbee land. This is an area that the Conservation Commission, with responsibility for approximately 1,500 acres of conservation land and town-owned land, has long considered. So the commission hired a licensed professional forester to create a management plan, and Acton enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program. The long-term objective for this plan is to maintain the forest, while improving biodiversity, maintaining passive recreational use and improving the health and condition of the forest. A part of the program involves public outreach and the

commission has reached out to the Land Stewards and other landowners interested in forestry practices. It is hoped that the active management will begin in the summer of 2012.

Based on the success of the Wetherbee forest management, Acton will need to identify other tracts of conservation land suitable for a forest management plan.