

# Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook

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# Introduction

## Why Write an Open Space and Recreation Plan?

It is through thoughtful planning and active stewardship that Massachusetts' open spaces, critical habitat, and quality outdoor recreation facilities remain a part of our communities' landscapes. Without planning, the condition of our natural resources and recreational amenities can quickly be dramatically altered due to ill-conceived changes in land use patterns.

Planning provides your community the opportunity to assess where it is, where it would like to go, and how it might get there. Planning now to protect important open space and recreational facilities can greatly enhance the attractiveness of your community and encourage compatible growth in the future.

To obtain the benefits of development without losing valued open space and recreation assets, you must plan for how your community will use its land. Planning allows you to manage many aspects of the community's growth and development in a way that preserves, protects, and enhances the environment. Many communities are embracing the concept of smart growth, which protects critical natural resources while encouraging high quality development in places where development should go.

Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRPs) allow a municipality to maintain and enhance all the benefits of open space that together make up much of the character of the community and protect its open space and recreation resources. Planning this green infrastructure of water supply, conservation land, working farms and forests, viable wildlife habitat, parks and recreation areas, trails, and greenways is as important to the economic future of a community as planning for schools, roads, water, and wastewater infrastructure. These sites are also important as communities plan for climate change resilience and adaptation.

Once completed, an OSRP is a powerful instrument to effect community goals. It establishes the community's aspirations for open space and recreation that can be supported through planned patterns of development. Having this document available can help you advocate for your community's open space and recreation needs. A thorough public process will also help engage residents on the importance of these issues.

Finally, a Massachusetts community with an approved OSRP becomes eligible to apply for grant programs administered by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), Division of Conservation Services (DCS). OSRP planning processes will help to coordinate with ongoing acquisition efforts of state environmental agencies and local and regional land trusts.

## What is Open Space?

The term open space is often used to refer to conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, and amenities such as green buffers along roadways or any other predominantly undeveloped area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation or recreation. The term can also refer to undeveloped land with conservation or recreation potential. This includes vacant lots and brownfields that can be redeveloped into recreation areas or community green spaces. Open space can be used for **passive recreation**, which is defined as *any outdoor activity that occurs in a*

*natural setting with minimum disturbance of the natural and cultural resources and that is consistent with quiet enjoyment of the land including walking, hiking, and nature study.* Land can also be used for **active recreation**, defined as *outdoor recreation that occurs in parks and requires significant alteration of the natural landscape to provide playground or active sports facilities including soccer, tennis, or baseball.* Throughout this document, the term is used with these broader definitions in mind.

Although open space itself is a simple concept, the factors that affect it, and that it affects, are complex. Through an OSRP, you identify and examine these factors and lay out strategies your community can use to protect and enjoy its character, natural resources, and open spaces.

## The Role of the Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook

The purpose of this Workbook is to help guide you, your planning committee, and your community through the process of writing an OSRP without requiring a professional consultant. This approach will hopefully keep the planning process more affordable and make local ownership and implementation of the Action Plan more likely.

Please note that this Workbook is presented in the same order as an OSRP. However, this order may not be the best way to proceed in organizing a committee's work. Some suggestions on a logical sequence of events are given on the section about organizing an Open Space and Recreation Committee.

## The Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee

Creating an OSRP, whether completely undertaken by volunteers or supervised by municipal staff, will likely require an OSRP Committee. Be sure to spend time at the beginning of the planning process to organize, which will help your community develop the most useful plan for you.

Whether the community decides to hire a consultant, utilize municipal staff, or a volunteer writes the plan, it is important that an OSRP Committee be established, if one doesn't currently exist. Ideally the committee should be involved in all facets of the planning process, including public participation, research, and writing. You want to avoid a situation where very few people have read the Plan, resulting in recommendations that are solely those of the author.

An inclusive and thorough planning process is a critical part of the OSRP development, as well as helping to ensure public buy-in. The process should be opened to a wide variety of stakeholders, which will also have the benefit of leading to a built-in group of supporters for the Plan when it is completed. Effective ideas for an inclusive public participation process can be found in Section 2 – Introduction.

## Committee Leader

Getting the most out of the committee means choosing an effective leader. Keep in mind that the most effective leader may not be the person with the most knowledge about open space, recreation, or the environment. The most important role for the committee leader is to coordinate the work of the committee, motivate the volunteers, effectively engage with the community, and ensure timely completion of the Plan before committee members lose interest. This person may be a volunteer or a paid municipal staff member.

## Committee Membership

The membership should be representative of your community's population. To ensure that the plan has broad based support, involve as many citizens and board representatives as possible. To the extent that they are available, staff from municipal departments should be asked to contribute. Some of these people may participate only on the subcommittee dealing with the subject of their interest, others may want to participate in every aspect of the project. Municipal staff should give input in relevant subject areas, regardless of their official committee membership.

In general, the Committee's membership should be committed to this project, reflect the diversity of the community (especially those from historically marginalized groups), value collaboration and respect the lived experiences of all participants, be able to balance the need for thoughtful, inclusive, decision-making, and have strong organizational skills.

Typically, an Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee will include some or all of the following (note that these are suggestions, not a required membership listing):

- Conservation Commission member;
- Planning Board member;
- Recreation Commission member;
- Historical Commission or Society member;
- Members of Board of Public Health, Water Commission, or Public Works Department;
- Members of a local nonprofit, advocacy group, or community organization with experience in issues such as environmental justice, public health, youth engagement, land trusts, watershed organizations, and/or recreation;
- Indigenous peoples;
- Community Preservation Committee member;
- Municipal Vulnerability Program participant;
- Citizens interested in climate change issues;
- Landowners;
- Real estate, development, or business interests;
- Residents interested in community character and landscape preservation;
- Residents interested in the environment and natural resource conservation;
- Residents interested in playgrounds and recreation;
- Residents interested in trail development and use;
- Residents interested in rare and endangered species;
- A youth representative;
- Residents experienced in environmental justice, cultural competency, or community engagement;
- Citizens with expertise in accessibility standards and the Americans with Disabilities Act; and
- Others you determine to be important.

## Forming Subcommittees

Among the objectives of your first meeting should be to review the purpose and tasks involved in the project you are beginning, and to perhaps divide the Committee into subcommittees, each of which will be responsible for contributing to specific portions of the plan. However, subcommittees may not be

necessary in your community to effectively complete an OSRP. Since you will ultimately need information on many subjects, encourage interested Committee members to chair subcommittees on these major topics. Then, give the subcommittees appropriate sections of this Workbook to guide their work.

The leaders of each subcommittee are responsible for following the guidelines given in this Workbook. After everyone agrees on a timetable for completing their research and writing, the leader of the whole Committee is responsible for keeping the sub-committee leaders on schedule.

One or two people should be assigned to write the final plan. They will collect draft versions of all the required sections of the OSRP from the various subcommittees and edit them into a document with a consistent style.

As you are writing each section, note the places (perhaps highlight with a yellow marker) that a particular action is recommended. Then as you write the Action Plan, be sure that each of these actions has been included.

The creation of a thorough OSRP may seem difficult at first glance, however involving many residents and seeking technical assistance when needed will make it less daunting. Many Massachusetts agencies, institutions and environmental interest groups are willing and able to assist you with valuable guidance and information. Some of these organizations will send a representative to meet with your committee or direct you to useful websites for references.

## How to Use This Workbook

This Workbook has been revised and reissued in 2025. There have been changes made to the requirements to focus them solely on open space and recreation issues and eliminate previously required sections that were not as relevant to the topics at hand. The hope is that this makes the Open Space and Recreation Plan process easier for all and frees up time for the Committee to spend on the most critical sections of the plan, such as the Inventory and Public Participation.

Samples from approved Open Space and Recreation Plans that satisfy the 2025 requirements will be forthcoming.

Your final OSRP must be posted to your municipal website with a version that includes the Action Plan translated to languages commonly spoken in the community, to ensure it is accessible to individuals with Limited English Proficiency, as appropriate. Make sure to have copies available to the public, such as in the library and the city or town hall.

## General Mapping Considerations

Throughout this guide, you will encounter sections describing the various maps that are useful in the planning process and some that are required elements of an approved OSRP.

## On-line Mapping Viewers

[MassMapper](#) is an on-line mapping system presenting data developed by MassGIS and departments within EEA.

The many different data layers available for viewing in MassMapper are grouped into categories. Much of the data most relevant to OSRPs are in the Conservation/Recreation category. A small sample of

other useful data layers includes hydrography and wetlands (under Physical Resources), Environmental Justice populations (under Census/Census 2020) and water supply protection areas (under Regulated Areas). There are hundreds of additional data layers for Massachusetts available for viewing in MassMapper.

A link to MassMapper, and information about using it, including a Quick Guide, can be found at MassGIS's website [here](#). MassMapper can both save a map with a Permalink and print a map showing what data has been selected for display.

MassGIS is developing a dataviewer specifically for OSRP authors. The relevant dataviewer will be inserted in each section as soon as they are completed. As you dig into the data in MassMapper, if you notice any discrepancies in your community's open space data, or if you have updates to provide, please reach out to EEA GIS staff at [benjamin.smith@mass.gov](mailto:benjamin.smith@mass.gov).

The Open Space and Recreation Plan requires the following maps (more information on each map are included in the specific sections and sample maps can be found in Appendix C):

1. Regional Context
2. Environmental Justice
3. Zoning
4. Soils
5. Water Resources
6. Unique Features
7. Climate Change
8. Inventory of Open Space

## Environmental Justice and Equity

EEA is committed to ensuring the fair and equitable distribution of all environmental and energy benefits and burdens. In February 2024, EEA released its inaugural [Environmental Justice Strategy](#) (EJ Strategy) that outlined key initiatives to integrate environmental justice and equity across EEA and its agencies. The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity (OEJE) works with all agencies and offices under EEA, including DCS, to ensure every policy and program is designed with equity at the center and that all voices are heard to shape solutions. OEJE also works to promote meaningful engagement in all processes, resulting in more equitable public policies.

Communities across the Commonwealth are facing many environmental challenges associated with Massachusetts' industrial legacy. Neighborhoods with EJ Populations lack open space and recreational resources and often live side-by-side numerous existing large and small sources of pollution and old abandoned, contaminated sites, which can pose risks to public health and the environment.

Critical to advancing environmental justice in the Commonwealth is the equitable distribution of environmental assets such as parks and open spaces. Toward this end, and where applicable, municipalities shall work with EJ Populations to identify and prioritize open space sites in their OSRPs that are socially, recreationally, and ecologically important to EJ populations within the community. Additionally, municipalities should ensure meaningful engagement with EJ Populations throughout the planning and decision-making processes, actively seeking input and fostering collaboration to ensure the needs of historically marginalized communities are reflected.

There are specific OSRP requirements for communities with an EJ population, including performing enhanced outreach. These will be described throughout the Workbook in the relevant sections. Note: EJ Populations are defined in the 2021 [Environmental Justice Policy](#). To see if your community as any EJ populations, please visit the EJ dataviewer [here](#). For any questions or concerns, please contact OEJE at [EJ.inquiries@mass.gov](mailto:EJ.inquiries@mass.gov)

## Regional Open Space and Recreation Plans

Some of our smaller communities by population in the Commonwealth share many resources, including conservation and outdoor recreation amenities. Therefore, it may make sense for an Open Space and Recreation Plan to be submitted jointly by two or more communities. DCS will allow for communities with populations of 5,000 residents or less to partner on their OSRP. The total population of the communities submitting an OSRP cannot total more than 10,000 residents. The maximum number of communities submitting an OSRP together, regardless of population, is five.

Each community must share in the work, most importantly in the public participation process, and a lead person from each community must be appointed to ensure that the needs of all are represented. These leads will be identified in the OSRP submission cover letter to DCS.

## Section 1 – Executive Summary

Give a brief overview, no longer than a half page, of what is being recommended in the Open Space and Recreation Plan. Mention the overall aspirations of the community that are addressed in the document. This can be accomplished by highlighting the community's critical needs uncovered through the public participation process, actions to satisfy them, and identification of major projects.

This section should be written after the plan is finished. It is very similar to a conclusions section. The purpose of putting it first is to give the reader a quick understanding of your open space and recreation goals and needs and how you intend to meet them. The target audience for this section could be key decision makers, so make your points quickly and concisely. This section should be a half-page summary of the entire process that you could hand to a newspaper reporter or to Town Meeting or City Council members – something that summarizes the main findings of your OSRP.

Describe these goals in general terms, such as “protect the rural character of the community” or “to provide community gathering places”. The vision should be a restatement of the action plan section found later in the document.

To ensure they are front and center, end this section with the Goals and Objectives copied and pasted directly from the Action Plan.

## Section 2 – Introduction

### A. Statement of Purpose

In a paragraph, describe why the plan was written and the status of open space and recreation planning in the community, including:

- An update since the last plan citing efforts to protect and enhance open space and recreational opportunities that have occurred;
- Is this a first-time Open Space and Recreation Plan or is this the tenth update?
- What was the impetus behind this version of the plan? Was a major acquisition recently completed, a new land protection opportunity made available, or call for a new municipal pool? Or does your community regularly update the plan when the last one has expired?

### B. Planning Process and Public Participation

Describe the process used to develop the plan in less than a page:

- Name the people who worked on the committees, etc.;
- List the meetings, surveys, public participation opportunities, etc. that contributed to the development of this Plan;
- Describe how the opportunities above were advertised to the public; and
- Consider specifying the entity that will monitor progress on the Plan, if one isn't established, such as an Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee.

Public participation lies at the heart of any effective planning effort. Most communities undertake the planning and public participation process on their own, without hiring a consultant. A consultant could be useful in helping with the public participation process for large communities, where getting feedback from a significant portion of the residents would be daunting work for a volunteer committee or a solo municipal employee. When planning your public participation process, keep in mind that meetings should be held in universally accessible locations and, where applicable, locations that are convenient to public transportation and in Environmental Justice neighborhoods. Make sure to involve a diverse group of residents from your community. Having an online survey or sending surveys home with school children are important outreach tools, but if they are your only means of outreach, they will ensure that only a subset of your residents' opinions will be voiced.

Listed below are different engagement tools communities can use to solicit public interest in outdoor recreation and conservation and where the perceived gaps are. Read the options and determine which combination of the techniques will work best in your community. DCS does not require any specific type of outreach be used or that a particular percentage of the community's population has responded to a survey for the OSRP to be approved, you know your community best and what will work there. The only requirement is that the public is aware of the opportunity to participate in the planning process for the development of the OSRP. Also, if there is an Environmental Justice neighborhood in your community, enhanced outreach must be done there (more information on this below). Most communities find that

using a variety of these methods works best, and some could be combined within a single event (e.g., working groups as a component of a public forum, covered by the local paper).

**Public Hearing:** A legal term for a particular kind of public meeting, requiring more extensive notice (typically publication in a newspaper at least two weeks in advance), recording of proceedings, minutes, and other formal elements. Not all public meetings need to be public hearings. Holding only a Public Hearing to seek public input is not sufficient.

**Public Forum:** A meeting held to present material and seek additional input. A moderator is needed to frame and coordinate the discussion, but the emphasis should be on the interaction of the audience (typically viewed as “participants”). Be sure to have a clear agenda for each forum – specific information that will be presented (an open space and recreation map, the results of a survey, etc.), a particular topic that will be discussed, and stick to it.

**Visioning Session and Charrette:** Visioning Sessions emphasize brainstorming and open discussion and work well for developing consensus on shared goals and objectives. Charrettes emphasize hands-on interaction, typically through drawing or mapping projects, and work well for efforts involving design problems.

**Working Group Meeting:** Meeting in smaller groups (5-10 people) can allow for a more careful and involved treatment of a specific topic. Often the real work of the plan gets done through such small groups: drafting specific language for goals, objectives, and actions; dividing up tasks to research and present; deciding what to include on maps; developing alternatives to consider; and so on. Note that working group meetings can occur on their own or as part of a larger Public Forum, such as in break-out groups.

**Survey:** A survey can be a good tool to gather input quickly from a wide range of residents. However, most planning surveys are not scientific since only people interested in the issue tend to respond. Nonetheless, they can provide a good base to start from, and they help to define the range of opinions in the public at large. Don’t underestimate the time required to tabulate and analyze the results, or the possible costs involved with mailing. Consider mailing only to a random sample or coordinating mailing with community water bills or annual census forms. Be careful not to bias the results through the phrasing of the questions; open-ended questions will provide more useful information (but be harder to tabulate) than strict “agree/disagree” or “ranking” questions. Be sure to widely advertise the availability of any survey. See sample survey questions in Appendix F.

**Media:** Even if the public will not come to you, you can still go to them, through the media, including social media. Local papers, public access cable television, school newsletters, municipal websites, and other local media channels offer opportunities to inform the public about the planning process and solicit their input. Beyond the usual meeting announcements in local papers, contribute substantive articles, letters, podcasts, or guest editorials on the planning process; participate on cable talk shows to discuss the elements of the plan; and invite the media to attend and record or report on your meetings and public events. Be sure to utilize alternative media outlets such as foreign language newspapers, church bulletins, or NGO newsletters to reach Environmental Justice populations.

**Public Events:** Host a walk or event at a critical property that is not protected (with the owner’s enthusiastic permission) or at a protected and cherished property in the community. This could help

make the case for protecting open space and hopefully motivate more volunteers to help implement the Plan's actions.

**Other Ideas:**

- Have a photo contest in your community that highlights residents' favorite open spaces and parks... not only will this increase awareness of the OSRP but will provide you with photos for your finished document. The photographers, upon submission of photos, can also be sent a survey.
- Advertise the availability of the survey/forum date at trail heads, athletic fields, parks and playgrounds, youth centers, senior centers with a QR code that people can scan.
- For teenagers' input, send the survey/forum advertisement home to children active in youth sports leagues and other youth activities.
- For additional teen input, engage student councils at local schools.
- Ask your public library to include a handout with books that advertises the public forum or survey.
- To get targeted input from user groups of interests, go where they are, meaning, hold meetings at youth centers, senior centers, college campuses, or monthly meetings of interest groups, such as high school environmental organizations or the disability commission.
- Do a bus tour to the parks and open spaces in the community and ask visitors directly what types of recreational amenities they would like to see in your community.
- Ask to have a table at a municipal public event, such as a fair or farmer's market, and talk to attendees about their open space and recreation priorities. Bring a map so people can place stickers on their favorite places or comment on what are perceived as needs, or the list of goals and objectives from the Action Plan so people can choose their top three.

## C. Enhanced Outreach and Public Participation

Ensure meaningful involvement in the OSRP planning process. Detail the enhanced outreach and public participation strategies, processes, tools, and actions to engage and incorporate input from EJ Populations.

It is recommended that a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) be developed before initiating outreach. PIPs are designed to foster meaningful and ongoing public participation in decision-making processes while ensuring decisions reflect the voice of communities. The plan should include: an overview of the project; a schedule of public involvement activities; methods for addressing and incorporating public comments and feedback; and a strategy for implementing the plan effectively. EEA's PIP<sup>1</sup> can be used as a reference.

Note: If your community has residents with limited English-language proficiency, translation services should be provided for any written materials, and interpretation services should be provided for public

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<sup>1</sup> Full text of EEA's Public Involvement Plan (PIP) at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/december-2024-eea-public-involvement-plan-english/download>

meetings. EEA's Language Access Plan<sup>2</sup> requires that offices and departments under EEA's purview translate vital documents into the top five languages, in addition to English. It is highly encouraged and recommended that any materials created for public participation be translated to the top languages spoken in your community.

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<sup>2</sup> Full text of EEA's Language Access Plan (LAP) at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/the-executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs-eea-language-access-plan>

## Section 3 – Community Setting

This section will provide an overview of your community, with a focus on open space and recreation. It should be two or three pages.

### A. Regional Context

Describe the community's physical location (is it in the coastal plain, foothills of the Berkshires, Connecticut River floodplain?) (Required Map 1). Describe the community's regional context in terms of open space and recreation resources shared with neighboring communities (such as water resources or a mountain range).

You can review neighboring communities' OSRPs to better understand the regional context of your community. Be in touch with your regional planning agency to learn about any relevant studies or planning projects for nearby cities and towns it has completed. Local land trusts can be contacted to hear about their involvement in open space planning within the region. This section should describe how your neighbor's planning efforts and open space and recreational resources could positively or negatively impact yours, especially those open space and recreation resources located near shared community boundaries. This discussion can also include shared protection strategies so that regional resources may be shared amongst communities.

It is good practice to then share your Action Plan with your neighbors to be certain there is agreement on protection strategies for resources of regional significance, such as trails and aquifers, as well as regional recreational facilities.

### Mapping Considerations

A map that illustrates the regional context of the community, depicting surrounding communities, and its overall location in the state (Required Map 1). Other things such as water resources, regional transportation networks, and the like, can also be included.

### B. Population Characteristics

The community's demographics will be described through the lens of open space and recreation. Population density, age, and family income, as well as any Environmental Justice neighborhoods will be discussed. The plan should not just list this information but analyze it in terms of what the data say about the population's open space and recreation needs. For example, the more densely developed areas of your community may need more neighborhood parks. A community with an aging population that is on a fixed income may need more walking paths and sidewalks. One with a younger population would have a need for tot lots and ball fields. Use the most up to date [Census information](#) for this section.

### Context and Demographics of Environmental Justice Population(s)

Environmental Justice Populations (EJ Populations) are defined by one or more of the following criteria:

- The annual median household income is not more than 65 percent of the statewide annual median household income,
- Minorities comprise 40 percent or more of the population,
- 25 percent or more of households lack English language proficiency, and/or
- Minorities comprise 25 percent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 percent of the statewide annual median household income as determined by the Secretary in accordance with 2021 An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy<sup>3</sup>

This section should include information on what EJ characteristics are found in the Census block group(s) in your community (minority population, median household income, and/or households with language isolation). To find this information, use the [EJ dataviewer](#). As with the other demographics listed above, this information should be provided in an open space and recreation context as well – what does the presence of the EJ populations say about the open space and recreational needs for your community? Include a [map of the Environmental Justice Populations](#) (Required Map 2).

Data on population trends and how the population has changed since the last plan may help guide the development of goals and objectives by considering the questions below. [GEAR Maps for MVP 2.0](#) are a good source of this information. Consider the effects of various changes, such as those listed below (and shown in the GEAR Maps):

- What percentage of the population are children under 18 in the city or town and in the EJ Populations?
- How dense is the residential development in the community?
- What is the percentage of renters and how likely is it to affect the recreation needs of the population?
- What are the major vulnerable public health indicators and how likely is it to affect the recreation needs of the population?
- What is the median family income and how likely is it to affect the recreation needs of the population?
- What percentage of the population are [vulnerable health EJ Populations](#) (population that have evidence of higher than average rates of environmentally-related health outcomes, including but not limited to childhood asthma, low birth weight, childhood lead poisoning, and/or heart disease morbidity)?
- Have new recreation facilities been constructed since the last OSRP was submitted? If not, should they be and, if so, what additional types of facilities are needed based on current demographics and community needs gathered from the Enhanced Outreach and Public Participation Process?
- Has there been any new residential development? Are the densest populated areas well-served by open space and recreational facilities?

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<sup>3</sup> Full text of the 2021 An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy at <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2021/Chapter8>

- What are the projections identified by the regional planning agency and what does that say about future open space and recreation needs?
- How easily accessible are recreation facilities via public transportation?
- This information needs to be updated every ten years. Population and other demographic shifts can have a drastic impact on a community's open space and recreation needs.

## C. Growth and Development Patterns

The purpose of this section is to understand and consider how growth pressures may impact open space and recreation. The required sections below may have been included in a completed master plan. If your city or town has recently prepared a master plan, most of this information can come directly from that plan.

**Open Space-based Infrastructure:** Describe the existing open space-based infrastructure in your community. The intent is to understand how the community's trails and sidewalk infrastructure can be used as a transportation network. If they cannot be, is there a desire from your community's residents for them to be expanded to provide this resource? Another question is if the water infrastructure in your community can be used as a recreational asset. Include the following infrastructure systems:

- Open space-based transportation systems, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities and trail networks; and
- Preserved watershed land, if open to the public for recreation.

**Long-term Development Patterns:** List local zoning and include a current Zoning Map. (Required Map 3). Comment on ecological impacts of zoning, specifically how zoning may not be protecting vulnerable natural resources. An example of this could be that the aquifer recharge area in your community is zoned industrial, which is not a compatible use.

One action item of your OSRP may be to make zoning changes to achieve OSRP goals. Another action item may be to coordinate infrastructure investments and incentives with the OSRP. For example, extending sewer lines to a sparsely developed part of town will likely attract more development there, whether it's wanted or not.

### Mapping Considerations

Several maps may be needed to comprehensively address the requirements of this section. However, only a Zoning Map is required. It should be available from your Planning Department (many local zoning maps have also been electronically rendered in GIS format by the regional planning agencies, but be sure to check accuracy, especially where recent changes have been made).

## Section 4 – Environmental Inventory and Analysis

Section 4 is an inventory of your community's resources. The analysis should begin to suggest the Open Space and Recreation Plan goals and objectives that will help protect the ecological integrity of your community. (Note: this environmental data will allow the planning committee to assess the possibility of legal constraints for development in Section 6: Analysis of Needs.) This section should be about five pages.

### A. Soils and Topography

Describe the topography and soils of your community. This includes prime farmland soils and [soils of statewide or local importance](#). Describe the effects of these features on recreational opportunities and how they may determine future land use. Much of this information can be obtained from the U.S. Geological Survey or the local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) office. Contact [Massachusetts' statewide NRCS office](#) for soils map data.

The required Soils Map (Required Map 4) should show soil types grouped by development limitations. You should map those soils that may determine future land use as they may focus future land protection efforts. Some groupings that you might choose are listed below:

- Deep, sandy or gravelly, well-drained and excessively-drained soils, which have implications for both water supply and septic systems.
- Wetland soils (peats and mucks), poorly-drained soils with water table at or near the surface for at least a portion of the year, which has implications for septic systems and the eight interests addressed by the Wetland Protection Act.
- Soils with slow infiltration rates located on steep slopes (>25%), which have implications for erosion.
- Prime farmland soils and soils of statewide and local importance.

MassGIS has data sets depicting surficial geology that could be helpful in developing the required maps. You may also wish to consult NRCS maps.

### B. Water Resources

Describe the water resources in your city or town through the lens of open space and recreation. Known water quality and quantity problems that affect recreational use of water bodies should be identified.

Required sections include:

1. [Watersheds](#) – your community's primary watershed should be named and be labeled on the map. Massachusetts' 27 major watersheds can be found on [MassMapper](#).
2. [Surface water](#) – lakes, ponds, bays, streams, rivers, and reservoirs. Coastal communities should visit [Coastal Zone Management's Public Access and Coast Guide Program](#). Label surface water bodies on the map.

3. Aquifer recharge areas (existing and potential drinking water supplies) – identifying where these areas are in your community is important, so you are aware of what land remains to be protected. Information on drinking water is available through the [Department of Environmental Protection](#). These should be included on your map.
4. Flood hazard areas – [FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer](#) should be included on your map. Flood hazard areas are important to identify in a time of increased flooding due to climate change. Consider what areas may be good candidates for acquisition for passive parks due to their ability to be used for flood storage.
5. Wetlands – both forested and non-forested wetlands must be mapped. There are several potential sources of mapped wetlands, such as the [National Wetlands Inventory maps](#) and MassGIS. Wetlands are critical resources for communities.

## Mapping Considerations

All these factors, including watershed boundaries, need to be mapped as part of Required Map 5. Required section 1-5 listed above must be included on Required Map 5. Basic information on lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and wetlands can be obtained from [MassMapper](#).

## C. Vegetation

In discussing the vegetation of your community, concentrate on the vegetation's recreation values, such as hunting, scenic viewing, etc., as well as conservation-related issues such as biodiversity and ecosystem protection.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's [Urban and Community Forestry Program](#) assists communities and nonprofit groups in protecting, growing, and managing community trees and forest ecosystems to improve the environment and enhance livability throughout Massachusetts. It is a good resource for information on the topics in this section.

The following sections should be included in your OSRP (note some communities may not have some of these types of vegetation, such as agricultural land or rare, threatened, or endangered species):

1. General inventory – mention important plants and plant communities that characterize the area, including forest land.
2. Public shade trees – include street trees, cemetery trees, trees in parks, and any other publicly owned and managed trees.
3. Rare species – include federal and state listed endangered, threatened and special concern species. A [GIS datalayer is available](#) of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program's Priority Habitats of Rare Species.
4. Agricultural land – these parcels have both scenic values and may serve as cover for wildlife, as well as be potential priorities for land protection.
5. Wetland vegetation – important wildlife resource.
6. BioMap information – the [BioMap website](#) has a [Town Reports page](#) that links to a report for each municipality in the state (see more information below on BioMap).

Information that may be useful in developing your community's OSRP include:

- [State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet](#) prepared by USDA;
- Prime Forest Land data can be downloaded from MassGIS [here](#);

- The UMass Extension Service has created the [MassWoods website](#) for forest landowners to serve as a clearinghouse of information on Massachusetts forests;
- The [Forest Legacy Program](#) is a USDA Forest Service program that offers grants for the acquisition of threatened forest tracts of statewide significance;
- The [Forest Stewardship Program](#) is a USDA Forest Service and EEA program that offers cost-sharing for the cost of forest management plans and implementing sustainable forestry practices to landowners and municipalities; and
- [Conservation and Land Use Planning](#) is an excellent guide by the Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust that includes the extensive amendments to the Chapter 61 Forest Tax Law program in 2007 and guides municipalities through the Right of First Refusal process

## D. Fisheries and Wildlife

This discussion should be like the one in the previous section, that is, an inventory of wildlife species found in the community, with consideration of necessary steps to protect your community's biodiversity and ecosystems, especially those that make it unique. It should also guide the siting of new recreational facilities. The following items should be included in your description (note some communities may not have wildlife corridors or rare, threatened, or endangered species):

1. Inventory – General description of wildlife found in the community. This doesn't need to be a list of every species in the community, but at least the major ones in each class, such as birds, mammals, reptiles, etc.
2. Wildlife corridors – wildlife corridors should be identified to guide land protection efforts. In general, corridors are found along rivers, along large blocks of protected open space, ridge tops, etc. BioMap provides useful information on Regional Connectivity [here](#).
3. Rare species – include federal and state listed endangered, threatened and special concern species. A [GIS datalayer is available](#) of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program's Priority Habitats of Rare Species.

Information that may be useful in developing your community's OSRP include:

- The University of Massachusetts produced the **Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System**, an ecosystem-based (coarse-filter) approach for assessing the ecological integrity of lands and waters and subsequently identifying and prioritizing land for habitat and biodiversity conservation. It can be found online [here](#).

## BioMap

[BioMap](#) is an important tool to guide strategic protection and stewardship of lands and waters that are most important for conserving biological diversity in Massachusetts and was developed by MassWildlife in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Chapter. BioMap includes Core Habitat, areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, exemplary natural communities, and resilient ecosystems; Critical Natural Landscape, large landscape blocks that are minimally impacted by development, as well as buffers to core habitats and coastal areas, both of which enhance connectivity and resilience; and to complement statewide habitats, Local Components, assessed and prioritized from

the perspective of each city and town, and Regional Components, habitats that are particularly important for conservation success across the Northeast.

## E. Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

This section should identify and map (part of Required Map 6: Unique Features Map) those areas that contribute to the community's character from the perspective of open space and recreation. The resources listed in this section may not have fit neatly into one of the previous categories but should be valued and discussed here and mapped for their importance. Consider these to be the things that give your community character and make it different from your neighbors. The public participation process is critical to coming up with this list as no federal or state agency knows your local landscape as well as you do, and what your community members deem to be of most critically important for protection.

1. Scenic landscapes – include notable areas such as hilltops, stream corridors, open meadows, agricultural landscapes, scenic views, and scenic roads.
2. Major characteristic or unusual geologic features and any other resources for potential protection and exploration that make your community different than your neighbors, such as ridgelines, glacial erratics, etc.
3. Cultural, archeological, and historic areas – your local historical commission should be a resource here. This is a good place to add a short history of your community's open space and recreation resources, should you choose to add one.
4. Unique environments – include any state identified [Areas of Critical Environmental Concern](#) (ACEC). Identify and describe areas or ecosystems that contain a combination of critical resources that are important to protect; for example, areas that include wildlife habitats (especially Priority Habitats for rare species and Natural Heritage BioMap and Living Waters priority areas).

## Mapping Considerations

Your own community's OSRP public process is the best resource for identifying some of the Unique Features that should be mapped, such as scenic landscapes and unusual geologic features. Others, such as historic areas and ACECs, can be found on [MassMapper](#) (Required Map 6).

## F. Climate Change Impacts

This section is where you can add information that your community has gathered through the [Municipal Vulnerability Program](#) (MVP) Planning Process. Most communities throughout the Commonwealth have gone through the MVP Planning 1.0 Process, developing a plan for their city or town that includes action items in three categories: infrastructure, societal, and environmental. Some of these are directly related to open space and recreation. A list of the MVP Planning 1.0 plans can be found on the [MVP website](#). Over the next several years, communities will be updating their priority MVP actions through the [MVP Planning 2.0 process](#) and priorities revised and developed through this process will be the most up-to-date.

Any relevant sections from your community's MVP Plan may be copied and pasted into the OSRP with an introductory paragraph explaining its context. You may include a list or table from your MVP 1.0 Plan

with a narrative describing how the list and/or table relates to open space and recreation goals or include a narrative based on the actions identified in the 1.0 or 2.0 Plan.

Land protection and park development are important mitigation strategies to protect against the worst impacts of climate change. Information on how to best plan for land acquisitions that will benefit the climate can be found through many sources, including [The Nature Conservancy's Resilient Lands Mapping Tool](#). [Hot spots](#) are good places to locate new parks or think about the redevelopment of existing parks that includes tree planting, spray park construction, and other heat mitigation strategies. Another useful example is the City of Medford's OSRP, which included [an appendix](#) that evaluated their parks and open spaces based on how they could be leveraged to mitigate and minimize vulnerability to climate change by using nature-based solutions.

### Mapping Considerations

A map should be included (Required Map 7) that incorporates data from the TNC Resilient Lands Mapping Tool, as well as the Hot Spots data viewer, along with the protected open space data layer so that your community can identify areas that are vulnerable to climate change considerations.

## Section 5 – Conservation and Recreation Lands Inventory

Section 5 is one of the most critical sections of the Open Space and Recreation Plan and should begin with an explanation of what is meant by the terms “open space” and “protected property”, definitions of which are included in this Workbook, and why it is so critical to protect vulnerable open space and recreation land, whether it is for climate change resiliency, community character, mental well-being, or economics. For more on protected property, see Appendix A.

In Section 7, the Action Plan will identify the open space and recreation needs of your community’s residents as determined by the public participation process. In this section, available existing protected open space and recreation properties in your community will be inventoried. This will make it possible to see which of the newly identified conservation and recreation needs can be met by your community’s current supply or if it may be necessary to add a goal and objective to your Action Plan to acquire conservation or recreation land to meet demand.

Keep in mind that while your community may be almost entirely developed and feel that there are few opportunities for additional land protection or new park developments, this is where it is important to be creative. Brownfield sites, infill development, or small community-owned lots can be the perfect place to create new recreational amenities.

Inventories that identify areas permanently protected for open space along with those that are not yet available for conservation and recreation but may be valuable for those purposes are a critical part of any OSRP. Three types of inventories of open space and recreation properties are required for all approved OSRPs.

### The Three Types of Land Inventories

#### #1: Municipally owned Conservation and Recreation Properties

A table that lists all municipally owned conservation and recreation properties should be inserted with the bulleted list below serving as the column headers. Note that each square in the table must have an entry, even if it’s N/A, otherwise it is unclear if the OSRP author completed the necessary research.

- Name of the property – as much as possible, list the property as the colloquial name, not by parcel ID, as that is how your residents know parks and conservation areas. If multiple parcels make up one conservation area or park but have been funded through various grants over time or have different types of public access, separate into as many entries in the table as necessary. The point is to make this as easy as possible on the author by having the fewest number of entries as possible.
- Current use – list specific recreational amenities available at the site, i.e., kayak launch, soccer field, trails, etc. (this will help identify the recreational amenities currently available in your community requested by your community’s residents during the public process).
- Recreation potential – list specific recreational amenities that could be developed at the site, i.e., kayak launch, soccer field, trails, etc. (this will help identify the recreational amenities that

could be developed on land held by your community that your residents asked for during the public process).

- **Condition** – list the quality of the recreational amenities as “excellent”, “good”, “fair”, or “poor” (by identifying those areas in need of work, you are clarifying why a park renovation may be necessary and, therefore, included in the Action Plan, for example).
- **Public access** – is it open to the general public, is it only wetlands, is there a fee?
- **Type of grant received**, if any (i.e. LAND, PARC, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Forest Legacy, MVP, etc.), for the acquisition and/or development or renovation of the property.

Sample Municipally Owned Conservation and Recreation Properties Inventory

Property Name	Current Use	Rec. Potential	Condition	Public Access	Grant
Jones Park	Baseball, soccer, perimeter trail	Bathrooms, softball field	Good	Open to all	PARC, LWCF
Smith Conservation Area	Hiking trails	Kayak launch	Excellent	Open to all	Self-Help

**#2: Public properties providing conservation and recreation amenities, but not held by municipal conservation or recreation departments**

The level of information needed for this type of land is less rigorous than that for those in category #1. This information will still be provided in a table, but the column headers need to include only:

- Property name
- Landowner
- Current use – list generally available recreational amenities

Any additional information that the author would like to include is at their discretion.

The following is a list of the types of land ownership to be included in this table:

- Federal and state lands and facilities used for conservation and recreation.
  - Examples of protected federal properties include land held by the National Park Service and USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Lands
  - Examples of unprotected federal properties include land held by the Department of Defense
  - Examples of protected state properties include Department of Conservation and Recreation land (State Parks and State Forests) and Department of Fish and Game land (Wildlife Management Areas)
  - Examples of unprotected state properties include Department of Public Health and Department of Corrections
- Municipal lands and facilities used for conservation and recreation (but not held by the conservation commission or park/recreation department)
  - Examples of protected municipal land include water department lands

- Examples of potentially unprotected municipal land include school playgrounds and ballfields
- Nonprofit lands – properties of the local land trusts and similar private nonprofit conservation organizations. This can include statewide organizations, such as The Trustees of Reservations and MassAudubon, as well as municipally based land trusts.

**Sample Public Properties Inventory**

Property Name	Landowner	Current Use
Green State Park	Department of Conservation and Recreation	Hiking trails, swimming beach, fishing
Memorial High School	City of Madeup	Baseball field, tot lot, track
Beautiful Land	Local Land Trust	Hiking trails

### #3: Permanently Protected Private Parcels

1. Parcels protected by a CR, APR, or WPR, and
2. Parcels under Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B
3. Estates, major institutional holdings, corporate holdings

List private lands permanently protected by fee ownership through a Conservation Restriction (CR), Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), or Wetlands Preservation Restriction (WPR).

If your community does not have any Chapter 61 lands, CRs, APRs, or WPRs please make note of that in your plan.

The level of information needed for this type of land is less rigorous than that for those in category #1. The level of information needed for this type of land is like that in category #2. This information will still be provided in a table, and the column headers will depend on the type of property being listed. For any major institutional or corporate holdings that provide outdoor recreation to the community, column headers can be limited to the following:

- Property name
- Landowner
- Current use – list generally available recreational amenities

Any additional information that the author would like to include is at their discretion. Again, some authors choose to include a narrative, but it is not an OSRP requirement.

While not required, your community may want to list any cultural respect agreements that have been recorded. According to the Native Lands Conservancy, a cultural respect easement is, “a legal agreement that guarantees Indigenous people cultural access to land in perpetuity. Cultural Respect Easements provide Indigenous people with safe areas to practice their traditional and spiritual lifeways, such as ceremonies, seasonal celebrations, camping, and more.”

For CRs, APRs, WPRs, and Chapter 61 lands, column headers can be limited to the following:

- Parcel ID/Property name (whatever makes the most sense)
- Landowner
- Duration of easement (i.e., in perpetuity or term-limited)

**Sample Major Institutional Properties Inventory**

Property Name	Landowner	Current Use
Gold Park	Roberts Corp	Baseball fields

**Sample CR, APR, WPR Inventory**

Property Name	Landowner	Current Use
Timmons CR	Rachel Timmons	Perimeter trail
Johnson APR	Sheila Johnson	Dairy farm – no public access

### Mapping Considerations

A map depicting protected and unprotected open space in the community is Required Map 8: Inventory of Open Space. MassGIS maintains a datalayer on open space. Your local Assessor’s Office or Planning Department may offer some assistance, especially if your community has begun to implement a computer mapping system linked to the assessor’s database; each parcel should be associated with an assessor’s land use code, which can then be used to generate maps.

If this plan is being completed not long after your previous one has expired (or if your current plan has yet to expire), much of the inventory is likely to remain the same. However, there may be some parcels that were developed and removed from Chapter 61, while others may have been permanently protected or received a grant for park development since your last OSRP was written. Revise the inventory to reflect such changes.

DCS recognizes that this can be a difficult undertaking and that the Open Space datalayer for your community may not be complete. If you feel that completing a thorough inventory of community-owned open space and recreation resources would be a worthwhile goal for the Action Plan, please discuss this with DCS OSRP staff. Also, consider applying for a [Land Conservation Assistance grant](#) to receive funding to assist your community with deed research or other necessary work that may be completed by an outside vendor to satisfy this requirement.

### Park and Open Space Equity

Identify and prioritize open space and recreation opportunities that would advance environmental equity in your city or town. This analysis should be completed with a heightened focus on EJ

populations, if applicable to your community. If a lack of open space equity is identified, strategies to address it must be included in the Action Plan.

The Action Plan goal should identify areas and describe means to more effectively create, restore, and maintain open spaces, especially those located in neighborhoods where EJ populations reside. Remember to be creative in what types of land can be acquired to provide new recreational amenities in under resourced neighborhoods.

To effectively address park equity, the first step is to assess whether there are “gaps”<sup>4</sup> in park and open space availability within your city or town, and then overlay the designated EJ Populations (available through [MassGIS](#)), where applicable, to identify areas of greatest need. At that point, it is essential to engage with the community through surveys, focus groups, or public meetings to understand their specific needs and priorities for park access and recreational facilities. Based on this information, strategies can be developed to enhance park equity.

To develop strategies that are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of the community, the following factors must be addressed:

- **Access and Proximity:** Parks and open spaces should be evenly distributed across neighborhoods, with a focus on underserved areas. Ensure that parks are well-connected by public transportation, walking paths, and biking routes.
- **Quality of Facilities:** Parks should not only be accessible but should also be equipped with playgrounds, restrooms, sports fields, walking paths, and shaded areas.
- **Maintenance and Safety:** Regardless of location, parks should be well-maintained and safe. Ensure lighting on sidewalks and in parks and sidewalk planning.
- **Inclusive Design:** Parks should be designed to be accessible to people with disabilities, offering features like wheelchair-friendly paths and sensory gardens.
- **Free Access:** Parks and open spaces should be free for all residents, with no barriers to entry based on income.

The prioritization of open spaces must incorporate community input to ensure that the spaces meet local needs, support cultural diversity and promote long-term sustainability. Engaging EJ Populations in the design and ongoing maintenance of these spaces ensures that the parks are not only environmentally beneficial, but also socially meaningful and accessible for all community members.

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<sup>4</sup> Park gaps are identified by assigning service and accessibility areas to each existing park. Walking distance (within one mile) to parks define service areas.

## Section 6 – Analysis of Needs

Section 6 should be a systematic examination of what is needed to achieve the community's stated goals for open space conservation and outdoor recreation as heard through the public participation process. Your citizens provided feedback on many topics, such as scenic viewsheds they would want protected, as well as what types of outdoor recreational pursuits they enjoy. This section will help identify where gaps are to provide residents with the requested amenities or community outcomes (for example the lack of a particular type of recreational facility, sufficient trails, or the need for an overall land acquisition strategy).

Section 6 should describe any shortfalls in both open space resources and recreational opportunities between what the community has today and what its citizens would like in the future. Potential actions and solutions will be developed during this analysis phase for development into the goals and objectives that will make up Section 7 – the Ten-Year Action Plan. This section should be about five pages, if not shorter.

### A. Summary of Natural Resource Protection Needs

Think of this section as the needs of your community's critical habitat – what actions must be taken to keep land, water, air, and wildlife healthy? Your community may wish to protect large core areas, those that will link riparian and upland corridors and maintain or restore your community's ecological integrity. This may help fill in gaps in wildlife corridors, greenways and trail networks, linkages to major forest or agricultural resources in adjacent communities, and riverways and other surface water bodies.

Resource protection can be achieved by a variety of means, not just through the purchase of property. Other options can include limited development, regulatory controls, conservation zoning, implementation of the Community Preservation Act, and cooperative use of recreational facilities on a regional basis.

### B. Summary of Community's Outdoor Recreation Needs

This section should discuss the outdoor recreation needs of your residents from information gathered through the public participation process and the latest Massachusetts [Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) (SCORP). The needs of diverse populations, such as people with disabilities, language barriers, teens and the elderly, as well as the frequently overlooked needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, should be called out in a separate subsection.

Questionnaires, surveys, and public meetings may document people's desires for various facilities that conflict with resource protection needs. For example, people may call for swimming areas to be opened along a reservoir while a recent water quality study indicated a need to exclude bathing in it. Be candid – you cannot please all the people all the time. If the requested amenities cannot be satisfied through existing community resources (look to the “recreation potential” column in the Inventory in Section 5), this may be a good opportunity to be creative in identifying new land acquisition opportunities, especially in underserved areas. It's quite possible that people are asking for an amenity that already

exists. In this case, an Action Plan goal could be to improve outreach or increase accessibility at specific parks or conservation areas where those amenities are currently available.

### C. Management Needs

This section will help provide your community with the management structure needed to implement the goals and objectives of the Action Plan. This could be changes in citizen boards and committees or the ways in which municipal staff communicate or even the need for municipal staff where none exist. Are local boards and departments (such as recreation, open space committee, school, DPW, and conservation commission) communicating well? Are certain areas of the municipality threatened by abutting development? Does your conservation commission receive Chapter 61 right of first refusal notices concurrently with the Select Board? Does the school department alert the parks department when a school renovation project plans to use the abutting park as a construction staging area? Are there invasive species or erosion issues in your conservation areas? Do you require volunteer trail crews to help facilitate the work needing completion?

## Section 7 – Action Plan

In Section 7, you develop a list of goals and objectives informed by the data analysis completed in Section 6. This section should begin with a paragraph summarizing how these goals and objectives were developed – what did you learn from residents during the public participation process? What gaps in available open space and recreation amenities in your community did this shed light on? This does not need to be a repeat of Section 6, just an introductory paragraph to put the Action Plan into context. Make certain that the list of goals and objectives can be reasonably accomplished within the ten-year window of the plan.

The Action Plan itself should be formatted into a table with a year-by-year timetable established to accomplish specific objectives. The goals and objectives should be listed in some sort of priority order with a responsible party identified to implement each, and, where possible, a funding source for accomplishing the task. Be as specific as possible in the funding source column. For instance, do not list “grants”, but list “LAND grant”. In some cases, staff or volunteer time may be a reasonable entry in the funding source column. For more information on prioritizing land protection and funding acquisitions, see Appendix B.

Being as specific as possible in the priorities, approximate schedule, responsible party, and funding source columns of the Action Plan will keep the plan implementation on target and, especially during the approval phase of the OSRP development process, demonstrate that the identified goals and objectives are reasonable from a budgetary and schedule standpoint. Most likely, formatting the table by goals and objectives, rather than by month, will be most effective as it enables you to see if certain objectives are being given preference at the expense of others.

The Action Plan should allow for flexibility in the timetable if early action is needed to take advantage of opportunities that arise out of sequence. Each year, the community (perhaps your newly formed Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee?) should evaluate implementation activities of the previous year and revise the Action Plan accordingly. This will make writing your next OSRP easier.

It is recommended that as part of the ten-year action plan, some entity be designated or established to oversee management and implementation of the OSRP. As discussed above, it could be the existing Open Space and Recreation Committee. Some communities have appointed a special committee comprised of representatives from several departments, boards and citizen committees. The goal is to have one group that has the responsibility of ensuring communication, coordination, and implementation.

## Section 8 – Public Comments

At minimum, distribute your draft Open Space and Recreation Plan to the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission (and/or Parks Department), chief executive officer, and regional planning agency. Letters of review from these groups and individuals demonstrating that they have had the opportunity to review and have input into the OSRP must be included in the final plan submitted to DCS. A letter of review from the Board of Health is desirable. If any of these groups recommends changes, consider revising your draft, and respond respectfully. The Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee must have the draft plan posted on the community's website so that its residents have easy access to meeting notes and draft copies.

### The Approval Process

Once you believe the OSRP is ready for review and final state approval, send an electronic copy of the plan to the [Division of Conservation Services](#) along with a cover letter stating who the contact person is to answer any questions. An approved plan makes your community eligible to participate in DCS grant rounds for a period of up to ten years. DCS approval is limited to a review of the required elements and format of the plan. It is the public participation and comments that are critical to securing local approval of the plan.

You may concurrently submit one copy of your draft to DCS for review while other municipal boards review the report. The required letters of review must be provided to DCS with the final plan. DCS will most likely require changes, so do not have multiple final copies printed until DCS issues a letter of final approval.

### Formatting and Publishing Your Final Report

All final, approved plans must be legible and posted on your municipality's website and include numbered pages and a table of contents. The cover and title page must be dated. The plan must follow the format of EEA's Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook. Maps must be included with the plan.

Once the plan is approved by DCS, a final electronic copy must be provided to DCS, with the Action Plan translated to the languages most commonly spoken in the community, to ensure it is accessible to individuals with Limited English Proficiency. It is good practice to send the OSRP to all community boards and agencies. Provide your local library with at least two hard copies for general reference.

## Section 9 – References

Cite all the reference documents you used and experts you contacted in preparing your community's Open Space and Recreation Plan.