

Open Space and Recreation Public Forum
Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission joint meeting

December 16, 2021

VIRTUAL Meeting opened at 7:00pm

Open Space Committee: Penny Jaques, Gail Fleischaker

Presenter: Tamsin Flanders, FRCOG Land Use and Natural Resources Planner

Attendees: 23 participants pre-registered, including representatives from the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Library Trustees, Planning Board, Recreation Committee, Recycling and Solid Waste Committee, and Select Board.

- 1) Welcome and Introduction by Penny Jaques, Open Space Committee. Jaques noted that the Open Space Committee has worked closely with FRCOG's Tamsin Flanders for the past year. Flanders was instrumental in collecting and organizing the lion's share of the massive amount of information contained in the 200+ page draft.
- 2) A draft of the OSRP Plan was posted on the Shutesbury website for a two-week period starting on December 9.
- 2) Tamsin Flanders presented an overview of the draft of Shutesbury's 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan. A PowerPoint of the presentation, which was posted to the Open Space Committee website, is attached here (ForumSlides.pdf).
- 3) Questions/comments from attendees
 - Request was made for breakdown of categories of protected land within Town.
 - Clarification was requested on guidelines for use of Amherst Watershed Land.
 - Stormwater concerns were raised, both around Lake Wyola and on unpaved Town roads.
 - Request was made to know more about management and uses allowed in State-owned land within Town.
 - Participants expressed interest and support for a Trails Summit, developing a strategy for controlling invasive species, investigating ways to enhance 'walkability' in Town Center, creation of trail maps, and parking for land that is accessible to residents.
- 4) Feedback on the draft OSRP was requested and will be accepted through December 23rd.
- 5) The Open Space Committee's goal is to complete the plan in January 2022. and submit for State approval. Approval confers eligibility for a number of Division of Conservation Services grant programs.

Notes taken by Penny Jaques.

Approved by Open Space Committee voice vote at end of meeting (8:38 pm).

TOWN OF SHUTESBURY OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)



Ames Pond at Julian's Bower
Susan Loring-Wells

Public Forum

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Public Forum Agenda

- Welcome
- Opening Presentation (7:05 – 7:30)
 - What is an OSRP
 - Key features of the new plan
 - Accomplishments since previous OSRP
 - Community, natural, recreational resources and needs
 - 7-Year Action Plan priorities
 - Questions
- Public Comment period (8:20 – 8:30)
 - Discussion
 - Review the plan and provide comments by Thursday, December 23rd:
<https://www.shutesbury.org/OSRP-update>

Open Space & Recreation Plan Purpose

- ❑ Inventories natural, recreational and cultural resources in Shutesbury
- ❑ Identifies natural resource, open space, and recreation needs
- ❑ Establishes Goals, Objectives, and Actions to meet these needs
- ❑ Enables the Town of Shutesbury to apply for state grants for land conservation and recreation facility improvements

Quabbin Reservoir from Gate 16
Dan Diffendale



Contents of the OSRP



1. Plan Summary
2. Introduction
3. Community Setting
4. Environmental Inventory & Analysis
5. Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest
6. Community Goals
7. Analysis of Needs
8. Goals & Objectives
9. Seven-Year Action Plan
10. Public Comments

Key features of the new plan

- Local climate change data and impacts at watershed scale
- Updated ecological data and land conservation resources
- Relevant recent research and planning work:
 - 2017 Shutesbury Vision Report
 - 2020 MVP Plan
 - 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - 2021 Historical Commission reports



Mountain Laurel
Susan Loring-Wells

Plan Update Process

- The **last update** to the Shutesbury OSRP was 2012
- The **Open Space Committee** took the lead on the current update
- **9 open meetings** since November 2020
- **Public survey** in June (**186 responses!**)
- **Public forum** – TODAY – December 16, 2021
- **Comment period** – now thru Thursday the 23rd
- **Submission** to the Department of Conservation Services - January

Accomplishments Since 2012 Plan

- Conservation Projects
 - 4 acres off Leverett Rd
 - 135-acre Julian's Bower
 - 1,939-acre Walter C. Jones Working Forest
- Top of the Lake Conservation Area
- Elliot Park (formerly Old Town Beach)
- New track and playground at the elementary school
- Mapping of trail system in Lake Wyola and South Brook Conservation Areas
- *Wildlife Habitat Evaluation for Annual Winter Drawdown of Lake Wyola*
- Recreation Committee re-established
- Open Space Committee re-established
- Solar bylaws that increase protection of forest
- *Introduction to Indigenous Cultural Sites in Shutesbury, Massachusetts and Historical Preservation and Solar Development in Shutesbury, Massachusetts.*
- Ongoing Projects:
 - Library events; kayak loan program
 - Water testing in Lake Wyola; municipal test wells



Community Findings

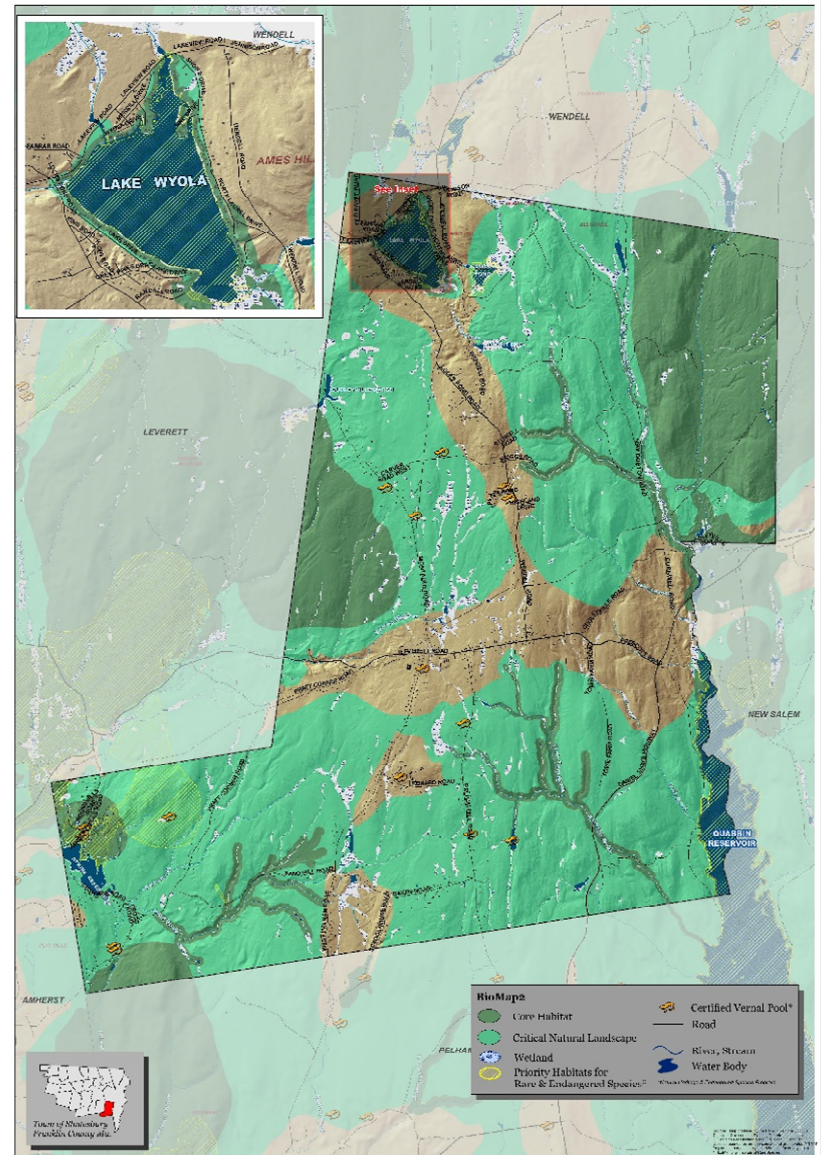
- Population grew dramatically from the 1970s to 2000s, stable over the last 20 years
- People ages 65 to 74 fastest growing age cohort over last decade
- Population projections show possible population decline, aging
- 17 building permits for new homes issued 2010 – 2019



Town Center in Autumn
Jamie Malcolm-Brown

Environmental Findings

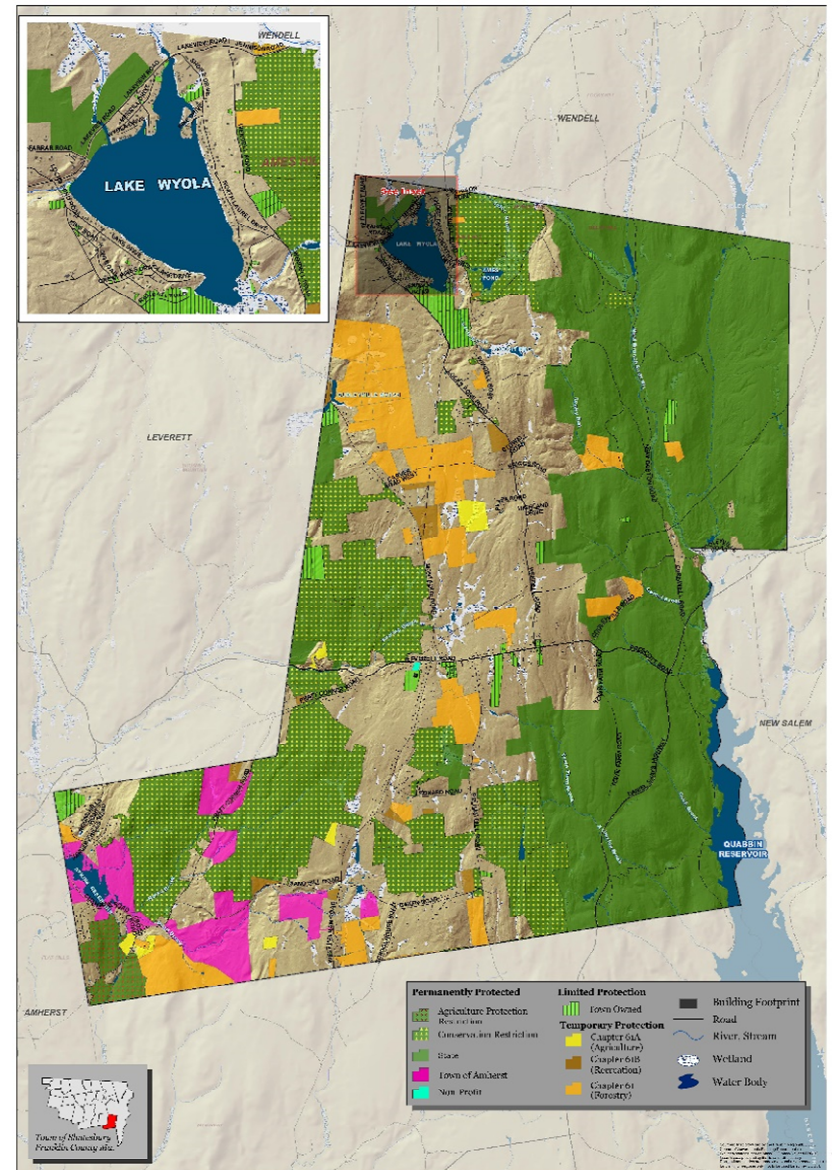
- BioMap2 Core Habitat:
 - Brushy Mountain
 - Shutesbury State Forest
 - Along streams
 - Southeast Shutesbury
- Priority Habitat around water
- Large blocks of contiguous forest
- 14 certified and 30+ potential vernal pools
- Quabbin
 - Water supply
 - Habitat
 - Recreation
- Most water resources in good condition
- Stormwater management at Lake Wyola



Open Space Findings

Protected lands as a percentage of town area

- 1% limited
 - 62% permanent
 - + 8% temporary
 - 71% protected in some form
- High ratio of permanently protected land
 - Number of recent protection projects
 - Water resources fairly well protected; some unprotected wetlands
 - Need for a system to protect high-value parcels when opportunities arise

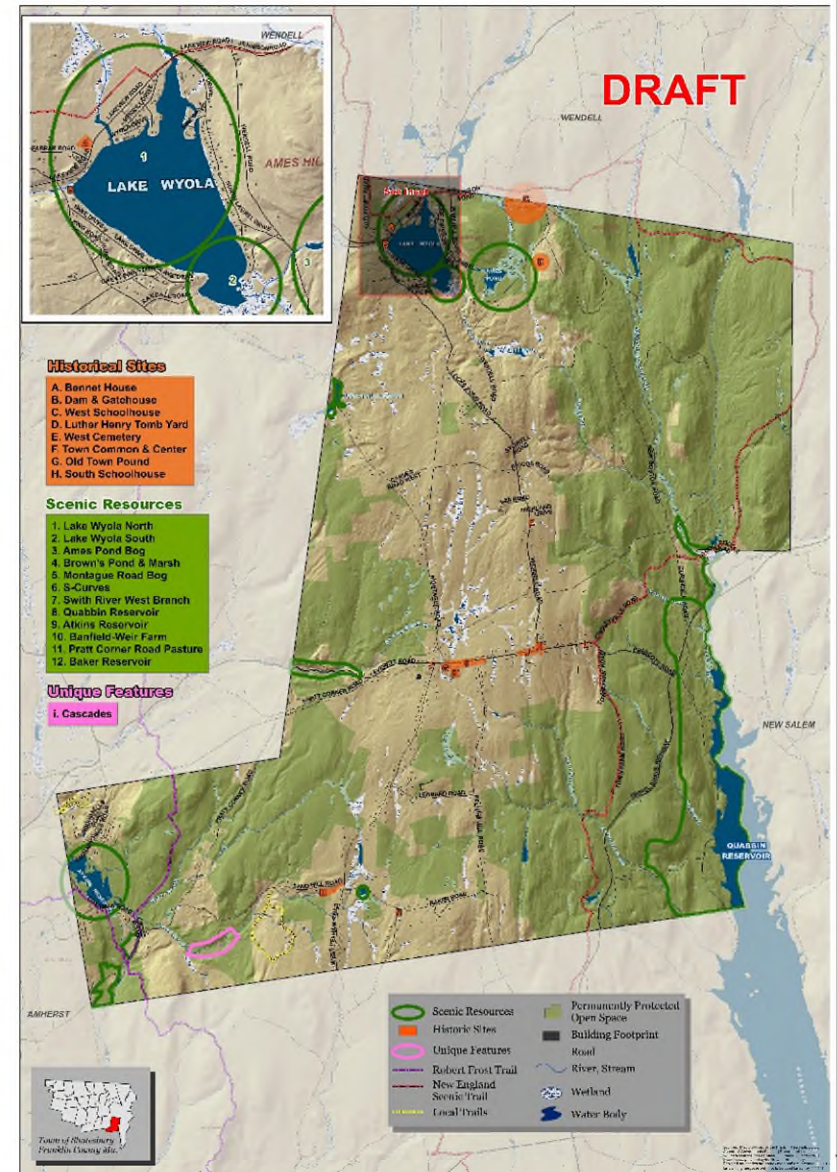


Scenic and Historic Resources

- Scenic areas:
 - Lakes and wetlands
 - S-curves
 - Farmhouses and agricultural parcels

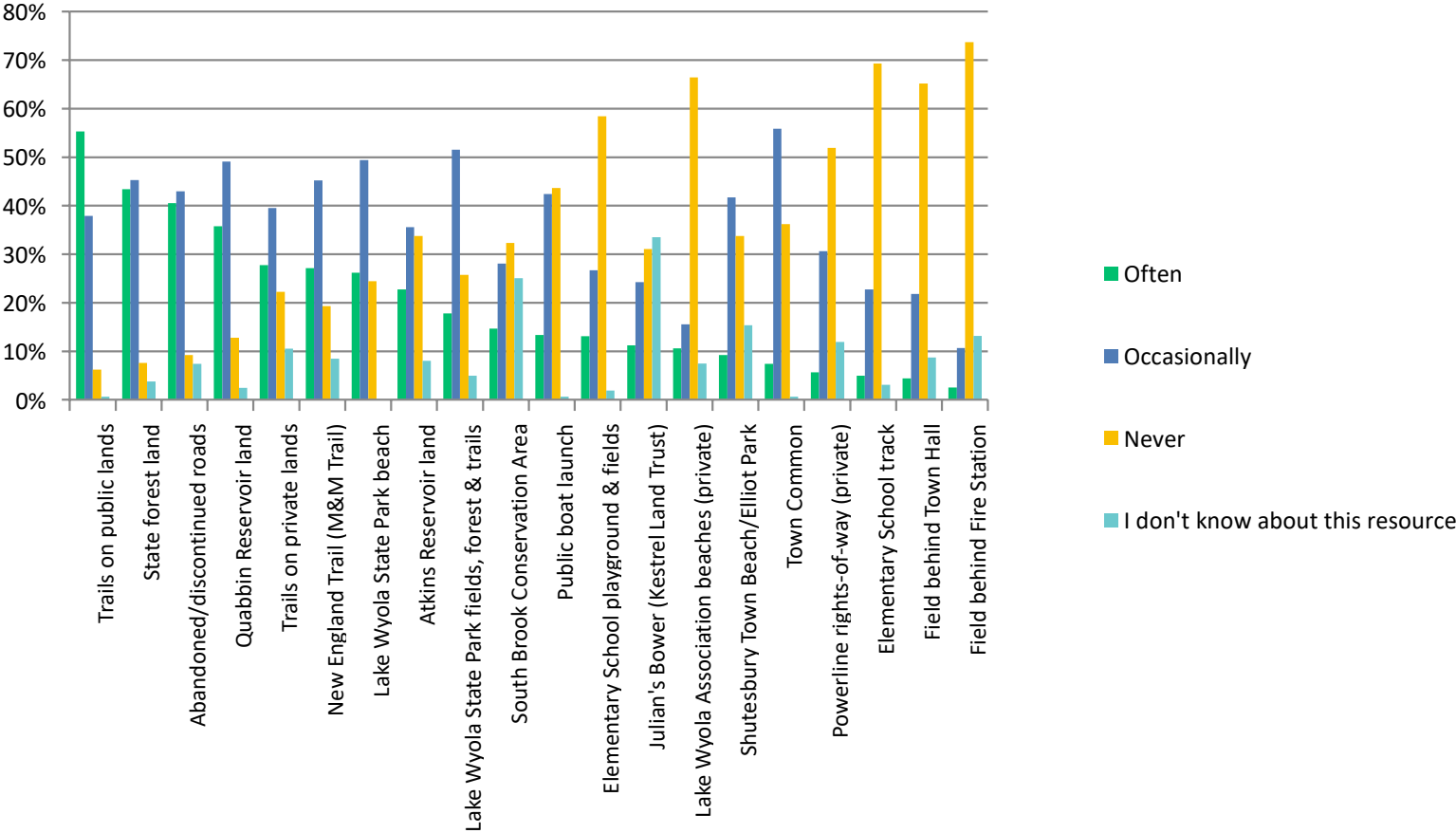
- Historic areas:
 - Town Center
 - Cemeteries
 - Abandoned pre-colonial and colonial sites in forests

- Unique features
 - Cascades
 - Boiling springs
 - “High Bridge” waterfall



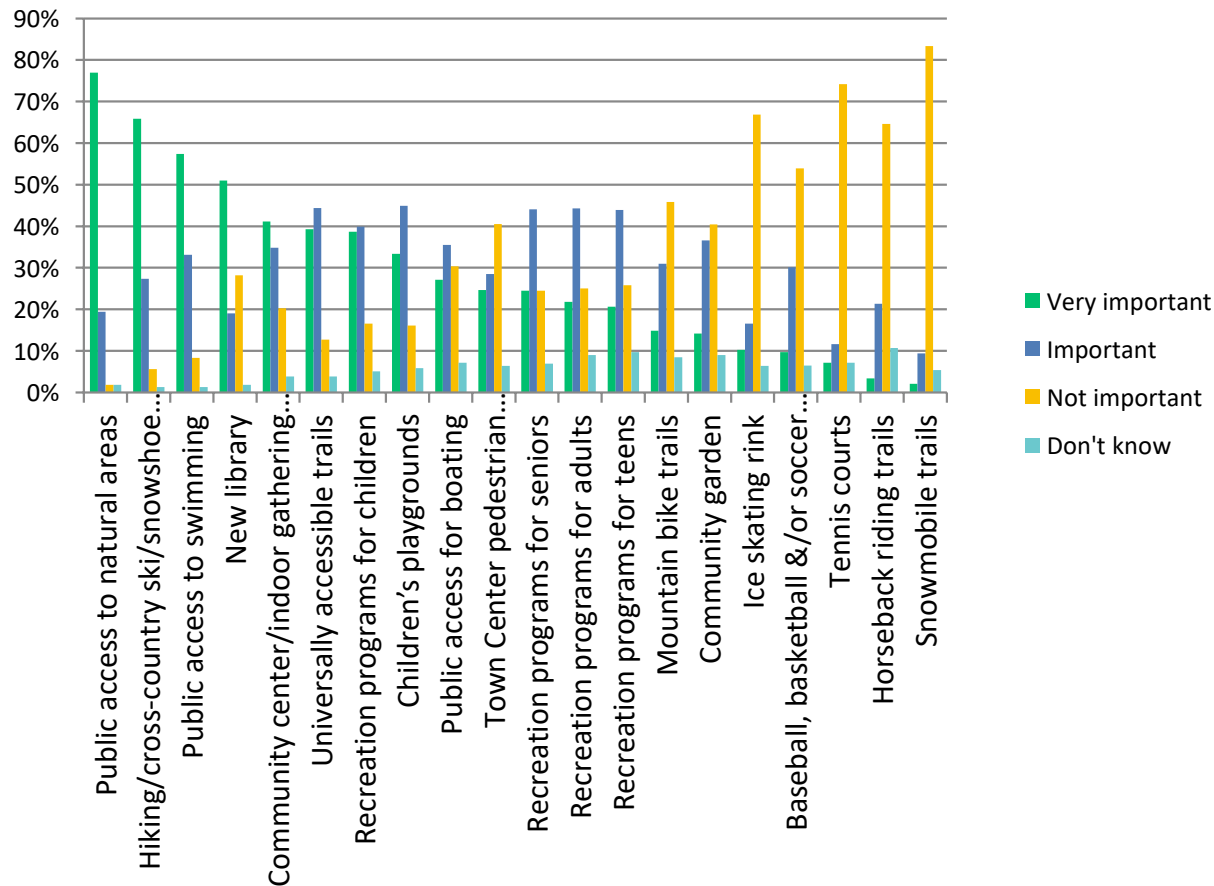
Open Space and Recreation Trends

How often do you use the following open space and recreation resources in town?



Open Space and Recreation Trends

How important are the following recreation resources to you?



Open Space & Recreation Resources

- State-owned passive recreation:
 - Shutesbury State Park
 - Quabbin Reservoir
 - Brushy Mountain WMA
- Town-owned active recreation:
 - Elementary School track, field, and playground
- Town-owned passive recreation:
 - 3 small/pocket parks around Lake Wyola
 - South Brook Conservation Area
 - Haskins Meadow
 - Montague Road Conservation Area
 - Lots behind Town Hall and Fire Station
 - Proposed community garden
- Privately owned public-access: W.D. Cows land
- ADA Assessment
- Volunteer committees



Quabbin Reservoir
Dan Diffendale

Recreation Needs

- Trails:
 - Accessible trails
 - More information about outdoor recreation options and expectations for use (digital and print), and on-site signage
 - A group responsible for public trail stewardship and planning
 - Concern about public access on private land
- Planned nature walks and guided hikes
- Improvements to Lake Wyola access
- Community gathering space
- Consideration of future recreation facilities; accommodation of teenagers



Open Space/Natural Resource Needs

- Protection of valued open space, focusing on intact contiguous forest blocks
- Vegetation management: expanded pollinator habitat, reduced invasives
- Stormwater management
- Protection of drinking water quality
- Protection of favorite scenic/historic resources and unique natural features
- Improved walkability in Shutesbury Center



Plan Goals

Open Space

PROTECT SHUTESBURY'S NATURAL RESOURCES – CLEAN AIR, CLEAN WATER, LARGE FOREST BLOCKS

Community

BUILD AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY IN SHUTESBURY

Recreation

ENHANCE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN SHUTESBURY

Communication

CREATE THE ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN

See Table 9-1, Section 9: Seven-Year Action Plan

DRAFT Priority Actions

Land Protection

- Develop criteria the Town can use to identify priority areas to conserve when exercising its Right-of-First-Refusal for land coming out of Chapter 61 or when other conservation opportunities arise.
- Continue to work with adjacent towns, local land trusts, the state, and willing property owners to permanently protect parcels identified as having high conservation value following the criteria developed in the above action.
- Revive the proper protocol for notifying relevant Town bodies of a property sale subject to Chapter 61 Right-of-First-Refusal.

Trail Access

- Create and maintain a central information site for public trails, recreation and conservation areas, and scenic and historic places of interest. Include resources for private landowners to learn about land protection and sustainable land management.
- Sponsor public walks, hikes, and/or workshops where residents of all ages can learn more about public access trails and the natural history of Shutesbury.

Discussion Topics

How do we best address the recreational needs of everyone in Shutesbury?

How do we maintain the town's character & open spaces we all love?

How do we achieve our open space & recreation goals?

Next Steps

1. **Review the plan on the Town website**
<https://www.shutesbury.org/OSRP-update>
And send comments to tflanders@frcog.org
by Thursday December 23rd
2. Pursue OSRP Seven-Year Action Plan priorities:
 - Have responsible committees identify their actions
 - Apply for grants identified in the OSRP action plan table
3. Apply for action grants identified in the 2020 MVP plan + 2021 HMP to improve resiliency

THANK YOU!

