

Shutesbury 2006 Open Space and Recreation Survey Results

Background Information: This survey was sent to each Shutesbury household (total of 549) in January 2006 with a request for replies by March 1, 2006. The objective of this survey was to gather information to assist the preparation of an updated Shutesbury Open Space and Recreation Plan. A total of 185 responses were received representing a 33% response rate. It is expected that this Survey information will also be useful to other town committees. For the sake of this survey, “**Open Space**” was defined as: “*undeveloped land (fields, forests and wetlands) with particular conservation, recreation or scenic interest.*”

In addition, numerous written comments were received and are included as Appendix A. It is recommended that these written comments be reviewed in addition to the numerical information. A copy of the original survey is included as Appendix B.

Respondents provided their views based on the following numerical indicators:

- 1 = very important
- 2 = important
- 3 = indifferent
- 4 = unimportant
- 5 = very unimportant

The numerical scores are the average “mean” scores for each question. The results mirror the questions asked as well as their sequence in the survey. Since the response rate varied per question, the average response rate is indicated.

As an example, 176 people may have responded to a question. The total of their preference scores (1-5) is divided by 176 in order to indicate the average or “mean”. For this reason, the response rate is also shown per question as a percentage.

Generalized Summary of Results:

- Similar to the town’s first Open Space Plan which covered the period from 1980- 1985, the survey results indicate that the town’s low density rural character, together with its forests, wetlands, clean air and water, and tree-lined streets were important factors in deciding to live in Shutesbury.

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- Protection of these natural resources ranked high among the respondents with consideration for wildlife habitat, hiking trails and scenic views as features to merit continued protection.
- Despite the vast expanse of State protected lands buffering the Quabbin Reservoir, both use of these areas and the availability of these lands as a factor for residing in Shutesbury was less important.
- Question #2 listed 24 town features for respondents to designate as priorities for protection in town. Although there are various categories listed under this question (e.g. specific locations, historic structures and general environmental conditions), the answers suggest a higher priority for maintaining general healthy environmental indicators (e.g. clean air) than for specific structures or geographic sites. The variance in the “mean” responses, however, is not numerically large and many of the 24 features are not mutually exclusive.
- Recreational use occurs more frequently on trails in non-populated areas with less activity on town owned lands that are “open” in nature (e.g. town common).
- Among future additional recreational features, respondents favored additional trails as well as a community center.
- Question #8 indicated a series of preferences for recreational activities on respondents’ lands, public land and posted trails. A preference was indicated for passive recreational activities such as hiking and x-county skiing versus motorized vehicle use.
- Respondents to Question #8 indicated a greater willingness to allowing hiking or x-country skiing on private lands in strong contrast to concerns about motorized vehicle uses – even on public lands.
- Priority for use of the newly acquired town lands across from the Highway Department favored its use as a new town library.

Question #1: How important was each of the following in your decision to live in Shutesbury?

1 = VERY IMPORTANT, 2= IMPORTANT, 3= INDIFFERENT, 4 = UNIMPORTANT, AND 5 = VERY UNIMPORTANT

The **mean score** listed below represents the average of the total numerical scores divided by the numbers of respondents. In addition, the scores are listed from highest to lowest among preferences expressed by the responses. Since 1 represents “very important” and 5 represents “very unimportant”, a score between the range of 1.0 – 2.9 represents a higher degree of interest by the respondents rather than a score of 3.0 – 5.0, which represent “indifferent” and “very

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unimportant” respectively. The sequence corresponds to the numerical hierarchy of the respondents’ preferences by listing the scores in a range that reflects from “very important” to “very unimportant”.

Average Response Rate for Question #1 = 96%

Peace and Quiet – Mean = 1.27

Forests – Mean = 1.27

Rural or Small Town Character – Mean = 1.33

Air/Water Quality – Mean = 1.38

Trails – Mean = 1.53

Lower Housing Densities – Mean = 1.66

Safety from Crime and Vandalism – Mean = 1.68

Recreational Opportunities – Mean = 1.95

Public School System – Mean = 2.07

Perception of Community Values – Mean = 2.09

Proximity to Area Colleges – Mean = 2.25

Access to Quabbin Land – Mean = 2.36

Participatory Government – Mean = 2.52

More Affordable Housing – Mean = 2.54

Easy Commuting – Mean = 2.59

Friends or Relatives Here – Mean = 2.88

Question #2: How do you feel about protecting the following natural, historical and scenic resources in town? (Please see question #1 for an explanation of both the numerical options for respondents and the mean numerical score.)

Average Response Rate for Question #2 = 97%

Clean Air – Mean = 1.19

Peace and Quiet – Mean = 1.25

Habitat for Wildlife – Mean = 1.39

Tree-lined Country Roads – Mean = 1.42

Walking and Hiking Trails – Mean = 1.43

Large Areas of Forest – Mean = 1.44

Scenic Views – Mean = 1.51

Absence of City Lights – Mean = 1.53

Open Fields – Mean = 1.54

Clean Streams and Water Bodies – Mean = 1.56

Roaring Brook – Mean = 1.63

Wetlands – Mean = 1.65

Lake Wyola – Mean = 1.69

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Old Stone Walls – Mean = 1.77

Old Structures – Mean = 1.82

Town Common – Mean = 1.86

Historic Buildings – Mean = 1.92

Brown's Pond and Wetland – Mean = 2.04

Spear Library – Mean = 2.10

Old Town Hall – Mean = 2.16

Dirt or Gravel Roads – Mean = 2.21

Historic Cellar Roads – Mean = 2.33

Church on Common – Mean = 2.34

“S Curves” = 2.57

Question #3: *Where would you rather see future development occur? (responses to “Other Options” below appear as part of the written comments in Appendix A)*

Along Roadsides, to keep large tracts of back land undeveloped – 46 positive responses

Set back from the road, to keep the roadside view less developed – 78 positive responses

Other Options – 43 responses

**Of the preferences listed, there were no responses from 38 of the households – as a result, the response rate was 90% for this question.*

Question #4: *How often do you use the following open space and recreational resources in town? (Please see question #1 for an explanation of both the numerical options for respondents and the mean numerical score.)*

1= Weekly, 2= monthly, 3 = seasonally, 4= annually, 5= never

Average Response Rate = 95%

Trails on Public Lands – Mean = 2.48

Trails on Private Lands – Mean = 2.52

Abandoned Roads – Mean = 2.81

State Forest Land – Mean = 3.02

Shutesbury Conservation Lands – Mean = 3.25

Lake Wyola State Beach – Mean = 3.32

Quabbin Reservoir lands – mean = 3.33

M&M Hiking Trail – Mean = 3.41

Power line Rights of Way – Mean = 3.79

Atkins Reservoir Lands – Mean = 3.85

Town Common – Mean = 3.86

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Elementary School Playground and Fields – Mean = 4.01

Boat Ramp – Mean = 4.15

Randall Road Town Beach – Mean = 4.17

Lake Wyola Association Beaches – Mean = 4.22

Field Behind Town Hall – Mean = 4.59

Field Behind Fire Station – Mean = 4.62

Question #5: What would encourage you to use these resources more often?

Answers to this question appear as written responses in the attached comments.

Question #6: Which of the recreational opportunities below would you like to see developed in town? Please consider that town committees, run by volunteers, would do the work and that improvements to land would have to be funded by grants and or taxes?

(Please see question #1 for an explanation of both the numerical options for respondents and the mean numerical score.)

Average Response Rate = 93%

Public Nature Hiking Trails – Mean = 1.65

Public X-Country Ski Trails – Mean = 1.71

Community Gathering Place – Mean = 1.96

Handicapped Accessible Sites at Lake Wyola – Mean = 2.02

Improved All-purpose Playing Field – Mean = 2.06

Programs for Teens – Mean = 2.09

Recreational Programs for Seniors – Mean = 2.09

Community Concerts/dances/movies – Mean = 2.12

Accessible Trail Behind Town Hall – Mean = 2.26

Ice Skating Rink – Mean = 2.34

New Playground – Mean = 2.38

Soccer Fields – Mean = 2.38

Public Mountain Bike Trails – Mean = 2.41

Basketball Court – Mean = 2.43

Tennis Courts – Mean = 2.50

Question #7: Are there specific natural/historical/archaeological areas in Shutesbury that the Town should try to acquire, protect access to, or otherwise protect?

Answers to this question appear as responses in the attached comments.

Question #8: Public use of trails on private property is at the discretion of the private property owner, who can withdraw their permission at any time. Types of activities allowed

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on public land are determined by the public agency that owns or manages it, including conservation and watershed land. With this in mind, what activities do you support or oppose on public land or your land in town?

1= Support, 2 = neutral, 3 = oppose

<u>Hiking, walking, running</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land – 73% response rate	66 responses	29 responses	38 responses
If trails are on public land and roads only – 89% response rate	147 responses	12 responses	3 responses
If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged trail etiquette – 86% response rate	137 responses	14 responses	6 responses
<u>Horseback Riding</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land – 88% response rate	61 responses	40 responses	60 responses
If trails are on public land and roads only – 86% response rate	123 responses	29 responses	6 responses
If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged trail etiquette – 84% response rate	116 responses	33 responses	5 responses
<u>Mountain Biking</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land – 88% response rate	33 responses	37 responses	92 responses
If trails are on public land and roads only – 87% response rate	94 responses	41 responses	24 responses
If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged trail etiquette – 84% response rate	96 responses	38 responses	19 responses

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<u>Snow-shoeing</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land - 88% response rate	99 responses	29 responses	34 responses
If trails are on public land and roads – 72% response rate	115 responses	16 responses	3
If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged trail etiquette – 85% response rate	136 responses	14 responses	6 responses
<u>Cross-Country Skiing</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land – 88% response rate	101 responses	29 responses	32 responses
If trails are on public land and roads – 85% response rate	139 responses	13 responses	4 responses
If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged trail etiquette – 84% response rate	134 responses	14 responses	6 responses
<u>Snowmobiling</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land – 90% response rate	9 responses	12 responses	144 responses
If trails are on public land and roads—87% response rate	38 responses	39 responses	82 responses
If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged trail etiquette – 83% response rate	44 responses	37 responses	70 responses
<u>All Terrain Vehicle Use</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land – 89% response rate	5 responses	5 responses	156 responses
If trails are on public land only – 77% response rate	4 responses	27 responses	110 responses

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If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged trail etiquette—86% response rate	32 responses	23 responses	102 responses
<u>Other Motorized Vehicles</u>	Support	Neutral	Oppose
If trails crossed your land – 88% response rate	3 responses	3 responses	156 responses
If trails are on public lands only – 86% response rate	18 responses	23 responses	116 responses
If trails are posted with trail standards and encouraged etiquette -- 83% response rate	25 responses	25 responses	102 responses

Question #9: Have you personally experienced problems with motorized vehicles on trails in town?

Response rate = 72%

Yes: 60 (33%)

No: 73 (40%)

No Reply: 51 (27%)

Question #10: The Town acquired the property Lot 032 across from the Highway Department on Leverett Road last year for future municipal use. How do you think it should be used?

	Yes	Uncertain	No
New Library Complex— 88% response rate	92 responses	36 responses	34 responses
New highway, police or fire station bldg -- 73% response rate	51 responses	66 responses	36 responses
Athletic Fields – 84% response rate	51 responses	69 responses	36 responses
Conservation Land – 82% response rate	72 responses	56 responses	23 responses
Other—7% response rate	14 responses		

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Question #11: What interesting wildlife have you seen, or seen signs of in town in the past few years?

Wild Turkey – 154 positive responses
Moose – 109 positive responses
Coyote – 98 positive responses
Bear – 96 positive responses
Beaver – 91 positive responses
Eagle – 78 positive responses
Great-horned owl – 58 positive responses
Fisher – 53 positive responses
Bobcat – 45 positive responses
Wood Turtle – 35 positive responses
Snowshoe Hare – 31 positive responses
Mountain Lion – 6 positive responses

Completion of Questions #12 - #17 was optional and elicited fewer responses.

Question #12: What part of town do you live in?

Lake Wyola Area – 32 positive responses
West Pelham Road Area – 26 positive responses
Wendell & Locks Pond Roads Area – 17 positive responses
Montague Road Area – 17 positive responses
Leverett Road Area – 15 positive responses
Baker and Schoolhouse Road Area – 14 positive responses
Sand Hill & Pratt Corner Roads Area – 12 positive responses
Atkins Reservoir Area – 11 positive responses
Pelham Hill Road Area – 9 positive responses
Town Center Area – 5 positive responses
Cooleyville Road Area – 5 positive responses
Leonard Road Area – 2 responses

Question #13: What is your age?

45 – 64 years of age – 102 positive responses
20 – 44 years of age – 44 positive responses
65 – 78 years of age – 20 positive responses
79 years of age and older – 4 positive responses
19 years or younger – no positive responses

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Question #14: How many years have you lived in Shutesbury?

- 6 to 14 years – 50 positive responses
- 15 to 24 years – 43 positive responses
- 25 to 49 years – 36 positive responses
- Less than 5 years – 31 positive responses
- 50 years or more – 4 positive responses
- I am a native, I was born here – no positive responses

Question #15: How many people are in your household?

- 2 people – 60 positive responses
- 4 people – 36 positive responses
- 3 people – 34 positive responses
- 1 person – 20 positive responses
- 5 people – 10 positive responses
- 6 or more people – 3 positive responses

Question #16: Please circle that phrase that best describes your housing situation.

- Year-round Resident (property owner) – 155 positive responses
- Seasonal Resident (property owner) – 6 positive responses
- Renter – 6 positive responses
- Other – 2 positive responses

Question #17: If you own property in town, how many acres?

- Less than 3 acres – 82 positive responses
- 3- 9 acres – 52 positive responses
- 10 – 49 acres – 24 positive responses
- 50 – 99 acres – 3 positive responses
- Greater than 100 acres -- no positive responses
- I do not own property in town -- no positive responses

End of Survey