

# SECTION 9

## **SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN**

The Seven-Year Action Plan outlines actions that fulfill the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) goals and objectives. By implementing the recommended actions, each goal and objective will be closer to realization.

Implementing the OSRP will not only require the participation of the Open Space Committee, but it will also necessarily involve many other town groups, including the Select Board, Town Assessor, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Highway Department, Board of Health, Recreation Committee, Lake Wyola Advisory Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Water Resources Committee, Tree Warden, and Library Board of Trustees. In addition, UMass Extension is listed as a potential resource for technical support.

In addition to limitations in funding, many of these actions may be constrained by a lack of volunteer time. Where money is required, such as with open space protection, it does not have to be provided by the Town alone. State and federal agencies, private non-profit conservation organizations, individual donors, and private foundations are potential sources of funding. Many are more likely to invest in projects that have a broad base of community support.

Two recent planning efforts undertaken by the Town provide important points of leverage and overlap with the OSRP. In 2020, Shutesbury engaged in the planning process to become designated a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) community. Shutesbury also updated its five-year Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) in 2021. Both the HMP and the MVP Plan include a discussion of climate change and the natural hazards that are increasingly impacting Shutesbury's natural environment as well as the important ecosystem services that floodplains, rivers, wetlands and forests provide. These plans include strategies and action items to address and mitigate impacts from climate change and from natural hazards and to protect and restore the town's natural resources.

A number of actions identified in the MVP Plan and HMP align with the OSRP's goals, illustrating the interconnectedness of the environmental issues we face today. Efforts to improve the health of natural resources have numerous co-benefits with climate resilience, flood resilience, climate adaptation, and the ability to enjoy these resources. Relevant action items from the MVP and Hazard Mitigation Plans are included in the OSRP Seven-Year Action Plan. Thinking creatively and designing a project to achieve multiple objectives and provide multiple benefits can expand the opportunities for funding. Some OSRP projects could be funded by the MVP Action Grant program, the FEMA hazard mitigation grant program, or a grant program administered by the Division of Conservation Services if open space preservation and/or recreation amenities are included in the project design. Actions similar to actions identified in the HMP or MVP plan are indicated in *Table 9-1: Action Plan* in the Plan Sharing Action Item column.

For the goals of an Open Space and Recreation Plan to be realized, it is important to establish which actions to prioritize for the first seven years. The Open Space Committee has selected a set of priority action items, which are represented on the *Seven-Year Action Plan Map* at the end of this section and outlined in detail in Table 9-1. The most important action steps for Shutesbury in the next seven years pertain to improving the land protection process in Shutesbury and making public trails more accessible”

### **Land Protection**

- Use the Criteria for Open Space Protection (*Section 5.F Criteria for Open Space Protection*), available land conservation tools, the technical support of UMass Extension, GIS data and analysis, 2021 OSRP Survey results, and other available conservation tools to 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.
- 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.

## **A. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Despite being a small town reliant on a limited number of paid staff and dedicated volunteers, Shutesbury has accomplished a number of action items that support the goals of the Town’s previous OSRP. The following list summarizes Shutesbury’s accomplishments since the publication of the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan:

- In 2015, apportioned CPA funding to the West Cemetery Gravestone Preservation Project, which commenced work in 2020.
- In 2015, established the Top of the Lake Conservation Area on the north end of Lake Wyola. In 2019 and 2020, built stone steps, installed a boat launch and fence, and planted native shrubs (CPA funds).
- In 2015, made improvements to Elliot Park (formerly Old Town Beach), including the installation of a gazebo, garden, and racks for the Spear Memorial Library’s kayak lending program (CPA funds).
- In 2016, funded a track and new playground at the Shutesbury Elementary School and rehabilitated the school’s playground (CPA funds).

- In 2018, developed a plan for the removal of silt in the North Cove of Lake Wyola and for restoration to its historical depths. Removal has not been conducted.
- In 2019, commissioned a Wildlife Habitat Evaluation for Annual Winter Drawdown of Lake Wyola, completed by Stockman Associates for the Conservation Commission and Lake Wyola Advisory Committee.
- In 2019, commissioned the Conway School of Landscape Design to do a feasibility study of ecological designs for Town parcel O-32
- In 2019, re-formed the Recreation Committee to steward the community's playing field, playground, and equipment needs, create a community garden, and serve as a central point in a communication network for the topics of trail use and care, handicap accessibility, activities, beach use, and more.
- In 2019, adopted a Complete Streets Policy.
- In 2020, voted at Annual Town Meeting to revise the solar bylaws to increase protection of large contiguous blocks of forest.
- In 2020, revitalized the Open Space Committee for the purpose of updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- In 2021, the Historical Commission authored an *Introduction to Indigenous Cultural Sites in Shutesbury, Massachusetts* and a report titled *Historical Preservation and Solar Development in Shutesbury, Massachusetts*.
- Ongoing: the Spear Memorial library regularly hosts and advertises events, acting as a community anchor point.
- Ongoing: the Lake Wyola Advisory Committee regularly tests water quality on the three beaches of the Lake Wyola Association as well as the state beach at Lake Wyola State Park.
- In process: using CPA funds, the Recreation Committee is establishing an 8-bed community garden to be opened in 2022.
- In process: the Town is overseeing the replacement of the Locks Pond Road culvert.
- In process: using CPA funds, the Conservation Commission hired a consultant to map the trail system in the Lake Wyola and South Brook Conservation Areas for the purpose of improving the trail system and its uses.

In addition, private non-profit entities have contributed to Shutesbury's open space and recreation goals:

- In 2019, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) acquired lots F105 and F3, located on Leverett Road and bisected by Roaring Brook. Lot F3 features an historic mill site and will be open to the public.
- In 2020, the Kestrel Land Trust protected Julian's Bower, 135 acres on Laurel Road containing Ames Pond. This property is now open to the public.
- In 2021, the 2,038-acre Walter Cows Jones Working Forest was protected in Shutesbury, Pelham, and Leverett by the Department of Fish and Game.
- The Morse Hill Outdoor Education Center runs outdoor programs for children and provides employment in the outdoor recreation field. The Center recently opened Learn at Morse Hill, an outdoor alternative to elementary school.
- The Porcupine Ridge Runners Snowmobile Club maintains trails in Shutesbury, Leverett, Wendell, and New Salem to help provide safe and enjoyable winter recreation.

**B. SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN**

HOW TO READ THIS TABLE:

- **Goals** are general concepts that articulate the vision of the community for itself. Goals are included as headers under which objectives are listed; the plan’s goals and objectives are of equal importance and not listed in any kind of priority order.
- **Objectives** are milestones for achieving a goal. Objectives are listed in the far-left column of Table 9-1.
- **Actions** are concrete steps to be taken to fulfill objectives within a time frame.
- **Responsible Board/Group** suggests the Town group that would take the lead in shepherding the project, and coordinating with other involved groups.
- **Start Date** is the suggested start date, knowing that start dates can be adapted as needed. Actions are ordered by start date.
- **Plan Sharing Action Item** denotes whether an action with similar wording is also an action item in the Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) or the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (MVP). For actions listed in the MVP plan, the priority ranking is also indicated. Actions carried over from the 2012 Shutesbury OSRP action plan are indicated with the term **2012 OSRP**.
- **Potential Funding Sources** are suggested starting places for funding; more details and URLs for each grant program can be found in *Appendix B* and should be applied for through the Community One Stop for Growth grant application portal.<sup>1</sup>

An approved Open Space and Recreation Plan qualifies a Town for Division of Conservation Services (DCS) grant programs, which include the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant, Drinking Water Supply Protection (DWSP) grant, Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant, and Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant, among others.

**Acronyms:**

3C	MassDOT funding to FRCOG for Continuing, Cooperative, and Comprehensive (3C) transportation planning	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	FRCOG	Franklin Regional Council of Governments
BMP	Best Management Practice	LAND	Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity
CPA	Community Preservation Act	LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
DCR	Department of Conservation and Recreation	MassTrails	DCR funding for trail systems and trail experiences
DCS	Department of Conservation Services	MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program
DWSP	Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant Program	OSRP	Open Space and Recreation Plan
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance program	PARC	Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Grant Program
EEA	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	s.319	Grants funded through section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act and administered by MassDEP
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program		

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Community One Stop for Growth online grant portal: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE PLAN SHARING ACTION ITEM	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
<b>GOAL A. PROTECT SHUTESBURY'S NATURAL RESOURCES — CLEAN AIR, CLEAN WATER, LARGE FOREST BLOCKS</b>				
<b>A.1 Prioritize the protection of lands that contain and support the function of natural, recreational, and cultural resources in Shutesbury.</b>	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.	<b>Select Board,</b> Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Board	Ongoing 2012 OSRP	Volunteer time, MVP Action Grant, Kestrel Land Trust
	Use the Criteria for Open Space Protection ( <i>Section 5.F Criteria for Open Space Protection</i> ), available land conservation tools, the technical support of UMass Extension, GIS data and analysis, 2021 OSRP Survey results, and other available conservation tools to 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.	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Select Board, Community Preservation Committee	Year 2	Volunteer time, DLTA, LAND, MVP Action Grant
	Research deeds of land owned by the Town Amherst Water Supply District (Table 5-12) to determine level of protection. If needed, identify if there is a path toward permanently protecting properties.			
<b>A.2 Use Shutesbury's land use regulations to increase protection of valued natural and cultural resources, and to support climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.</b>	Continue to review and update land use regulations, the development review process, and general Town bylaws and policies for best practices to support green infrastructure, <sup>2</sup> low-impact development, environmental protection, and additional climate resiliency provisions.	<b>Planning Board,</b> Conservation Commission	Ongoing HMP, MVP - High	MVP Action Grant, EEA Planning Assistance Grant, DLTA, s.319
	Revive the proper protocol for notifying relevant Town bodies of a property sale subject to Chapter 61 Right-of-First-Refusal.	<b>Select Board,</b> <b>Town Assessor,</b> Planning Board, Conservation Commission	Year 1	Town funds
	Consider revising Zoning and Subdivision Regulations to improve performance standards for capturing stormwater runoff flowing from impervious surfaces in the Lake Wyola District.	<b>Planning Board,</b> Lake Wyola Advisory Committee	Year 1	MVP Action Grant, EEA Planning Assistance Grant, DLTA, s.319
<b>A.3 Protect the availability and quality of drinking water resources.</b>	Continue to educate owners of private septic systems about the importance of having systems pumped out and keeping them in good working condition in order to prevent risks to public health and the environment from systems that become overwhelmed during periods of heavy precipitation.	<b>Board of Health,</b> Select Board	Ongoing/ Year 3	Town funds, Volunteer time

<sup>2</sup> A variety of management practices that capture, filter, and reduce stormwater, primarily using vegetation and other natural systems. Green infrastructure is different from grey infrastructure, which uses structures such as curbs, pipes, stormwater drains, sewer, and water treatment plants to handle stormwater.

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE PLAN SHARING ACTION ITEM	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
	Continue to educate homeowners about the risk of well contamination and proper disposal of household waste, keeping them informed of water testing programs.		HMP, MVP - Moderate	
	Hire a consultant to conduct a feasibility assessment, including bedrock mapping, for a municipal water supply that would rely on multiple supply sources and relieve some of the need for private wells at every residence. Assess which areas in town would most benefit from a municipal water supply.  Use the findings of the bedrock mapping study to inform the protection of important aquifer areas.	<b>Water Resources Committee,</b> Select Board	Year 5 HMP, MVP - Moderate	MVP Action Grant
<b>A.4 Sustainably manage stormwater to reduce harm from polluted and erosive runoff to ground water, surface waters, and public and private infrastructure.</b>	Hire a consultant to complete an assessment of all culverts in town. Include an evaluation of the physical state of the culverts and GIS data recording location. Based on the results of the inventory, prioritize repairs and replacements.  Maintain an inventory of culvert and bridge needed and completed upgrades.	<b>Highway Department,</b> Select Board	Year 1 MVP - High	FRCOG, 3C, MVP Action Grant, DLTA
	Incorporate stormwater BMPs for rural dirt roads into public roadway projects following the forthcoming (2023) Dirt Roads Toolkit best practices manual created by the FRCOG.  Assess opportunities to reduce runoff flowing from private driveways into roadways, including by encouraging stormwater BMPs at private residences.	<b>Highway Department</b>	Year 2 MVP - High	MVP Action Grant, FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant
	Explore funding options for private road maintenance for the Lake Wyola area.	<b>Lake Wyola Advisory Committee</b>	Year 2 MVP - Moderate	Volunteer time
	Hire a consultant to develop a plan for managing stormwater around Lake Wyola. Together with the <i>Locks Pond Road and Lake Wyola Subwatershed Stormwater Improvement Study</i> , use the plan to identify and implement high-priority practices to reduce runoff and sedimentation.  Explore potential funding sources for top projects.	<b>Select Board,</b> Lake Wyola Advisory Committee	Year 1 - 3 MVP - High	s.319, MVP Action Grant, FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant
<b>A.5 Manage ecosystems for their many benefits, including biodiversity, habitat, stormwater management, climate resilience, and carbon sequestration.</b>	Work with Highway Department to implement best management practices for a) protecting pollinators and pollinator habitat, b) managing stormwater runoff from roads and municipal properties, and c) reducing the rate of spread of invasive species.	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> Highway Department	Year 2	Volunteer time, MVP Action Grant, EEA Planning Assistance Grant
	Conduct a public awareness campaign for residents on protecting and enhancing pollinator habitat.	<b>Open Space Committee</b>	Year 3	Volunteer time, DLTA MVP Action Grant, EEA Planning Assistance Grant

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE PLAN SHARING ACTION ITEM	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
	Develop a comprehensive public tree and forests management plan to identify, remove, and replace problem trees, preserve intact forests and street tree cover, and provide guidance and resources for gradually moving toward more climate-resilient trees and forest communities (e.g., species that will tolerate warmer temperatures).	<b>Select Board,</b> Town Tree Warden	Year 3 HMP, MVP - Moderate	MVP Action Grant, DLTA
	Hire a consultant to develop a comprehensive invasive species management plan including inventory, prioritization, and management options to address existing invasive populations that threaten important habitat and valued recreation spaces.	<b>Select Board,</b> <b>Open Space Committee</b>	Year 4 MVP - moderate	EQIP, MVP Action Grant
<b>A.6 Protect scenic and historic landscapes and structures.</b>	Familiarize all appropriate Town committees, boards, and property owners about efforts to protect and preserve historically significant Indigenous and Euroamerican cultural resources in Shutesbury.  Ensure that Town-owned Indigenous and Euroamerican cultural resources are handled in a manner that is sensitive to and respectful of the need to preserve these cultural resources.	<b>Historic Commission</b>	Year 1	Volunteer time
	Submit an application to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for Historic Districts in Shutesbury	<b>Historic Commission</b>	Year 2	Volunteer time, CPA
	Assess whether there are roads in Shutesbury for which a scenic roads overlay zoning district could be an appropriate measure to protect historic stone walls and trees.	<b>Historic Commission,</b> Open Space Committee, Planning Board, Conservation Commission	Year 2 2012 OSRP	Volunteer time
	Conduct a landscape inventory to identify landscapes, vistas, stone walls, cellar holes, mill works, stone structures, etc. and prioritize for protection.	<b>Historic Commission,</b> Conservation Commission Select Board, Open Space Committee, Planning Board	Year 3	CPA
	Update the inventory of historically significant structures and properties in Shutesbury.	<b>Historic Commission</b>	Year 4	Volunteer time, CPA

<b>GOAL B. BUILD AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY IN SHUTESBURY</b>				
<b>B.1 Preserve and enhance public community gathering spaces.</b>	Support the growth and development of the Shutesbury Community Garden’s size, infrastructure, and programming.	<b>Recreation Committee,</b> Open Space Committee	Ongoing ----- 2012 OSRP	CPA, volunteer time, LWCF
	Support the Town’s efforts to fund and construct a new library with indoor community space for public use as well as outdoor trails and gardens.	<b>Select Board,</b> <b>Library Board of Trustees,</b> Open Space Committee	Year 1	Volunteer time, PARC
	Obtain a grant to purchase playground equipment for children under 10. Consider the future library as a location for a playground.	<b>Recreation Committee,</b> Select Board, Open Space Committee	When library location is finalized	PARC, CPA, LWCF
<b>B.2 Improve trails and trail systems, ensuring useful trail connections, improving public access, and establishing universal accessibility.</b>	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.	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> <b>Recreation Committee</b>	Ongoing ----- 2012 OSRP	Volunteer time, Shutesbury Cultural Council
	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.	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> Recreation Committee	Ongoing ----- 2012 OSRP	Volunteer time
	Develop a formal plan for trail access, development, and maintenance. Consider hosting a “Trails Summit” to convene stakeholders and identify needs and priorities.	<b>Open Space Committee</b> <b>Recreation Committee</b>	Year 2	Volunteer time
	Organize a dedicated group of volunteers to maintain the Town-owned South Brook Conservation Area.	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> Conservation Commission	Year 3	Volunteer time



**GOAL C. ENHANCE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN SHUTESBURY**

<b>C.1 Provide recreation options for residents of all ages and abilities.</b>	Implement the recommendations of the 2021 Shutesbury ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan ( <i>Appendix C</i> ) to improve handicap access at Town-owned property.	<b>Select Board,</b> Recreation Committee, Open Space Committee	Year 2	MA ADA Improvement grant
	Obtain funding for and create a public trail with access for persons with disabilities. Consider the South Brook Conservation Area for this purpose.	<b>Open Space Committee</b> Recreation Committee, Select Board	Year 2 _____ 2012 OSRP	MassTrails, CPA MA ADA Improvement grant, LWCF
	Explore the possibility of improving existing infrastructure for recreational opportunities for teenagers (e.g., elementary school field for soccer, ultimate frisbee, and other team sports; volleyball court and baseball diamond behind the Fire Station).	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> <b>Recreation Committee</b>	Year 3	CPA, PARC, LWCF
<b>C.2 Enhance water-based recreation options for residents.</b>	Establish an area on Town-owned land suitable for stowing personal kayaks or canoes at Lake Wyola (in which the owner is responsible for securing their property).	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> Conservation Commission, Select Board	Year 3 _____ 2012 OSRP	CPA, LWCF
<b>C.3 Improve pedestrian access and safety.</b>	Enhance “walkability” in town through the creation of walking paths to popular destinations.  Seek funds for the creation of a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan or other means to assess the need for sidewalk construction and/or wider shoulders to accommodate pedestrians and bikers in town.	<b>Select Board,</b> Planning Board, Highway Department	Year 4 _____ MVP - Moderate	3C grant, Complete Streets

**GOAL D. CREATE THE ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING GOALS OF THE OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN**

<b>D.1 Follow through with the action items identified in this 2022 Shutesbury Open Space and Recreation Action Plan.</b>	Provide for the implementation of this plan by ensuring that the Open Space Committee and Recreation Committee continue to be populated by members committed to attending meetings and carrying out the committee’s responsibilities.	<b>Open Space Committee,</b> <b>Select Board,</b> <b>Recreation Committee</b>	Year 1 _____ 2012 OSRP	Volunteer time
<b>D.2 Improve public awareness among Town departments and residents of environmental issues, natural resource protection, climate change, open space, recreation, and multi-use trails through effective systems of communication.</b>	Outline a timeline for creation of public awareness campaigns for residents on topics such as pollinators, climate change, stormwater management, proper septic management, invasive plant management, and other public awareness needs identified in this plan.	<b>Open Space Committee</b>	Year 1	Volunteer time
	Establish annual Select Board updates from Town departments and committees regarding the impact of climate change on the town (including Lake Wyola), as well as their activities toward climate adaptation and mitigation. Updates to be reported at Annual Town Meeting and included in Annual Town Report.	<b>Select Board</b>	Year 2 _____ MVP - Moderate	Volunteer time