

Unprotected Parcels

The only protected town parcels are the eight-acre Coolidge Trust land on Southern Avenue, 40 acres within the Woods, and 100 acres of tax-title saltmarsh that was voted into conservation in 2005. All other town-owned land is unprotected and could be developed. Unprotected parcels fall into the following categories:

- Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B reduced tax status parcels
- Other large privately-held parcels

Properties in these categories are described below.

1) Chapter 61, 61A and 61B Lands

Description: Essex has approximately 973 acres within 65 parcels that are offered some protection under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B of the Massachusetts General Laws. These laws provide tax relief for certain lands held as forested, agricultural, or recreational. Chapter 61 land, which is forested, represents 211 acres (12 parcels) in Essex. Chapter 61A lands are agricultural, and represent 620 acres (48 parcels) in Essex. Chapter 61B lands are recreational, and comprise 142 acres (five parcels) in the town.

Current Use: These parcels are currently used as farms and forested lands.

Recreation Potential: Many of these parcels have great recreation potential for activities including hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, and biking.

Public Access: These properties are privately-held and are only available to the public by invitation.

Degree of Protection: Reduced tax status gives owners an incentive to maintain these parcels as farms, woodlands and open space.

Although the town has right of first refusal to purchase Chapter 61, 61A and 61B lands if the property is up for sale for conversion to another use, no money is currently set aside to purchase such lands. As a result, Chapter 61 lands are subject to be sold to developers. The Town has the ability to assign its right to a non-profit group within 120 days, with both MECT and ECGA having offered their services in such cases.

2) Other Largely Privately Held Parcels

Description: There are a large number of sensitive parcels that are privately owned and are not under the Chapter 61 program. As per state open space planning guidelines, those parcels are not listed here.

Degree of Protection: These parcels are not protected in any way.

Table G. Summary of Open Space and Other Parcels of Conservation Interest

| Type of Parcel | Number of Parcels | Total Acreage |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Private – CR | 15 | 849 |
| Private –APR | 1 | 40 |
| Private – Chapter 61 (forestry) | 15 | 214 |
| Private – Chapter 61A (agriculture) | 55 | 680 |
| Private – Chapter 61B (recreation) | 7 | 137 |
| Town of Essex, Protected Open Space | 1 | 8 |
| Town of Essex, Other Open or Recreation Space | ~8 | ~254 |
| Town of Essex Tax-Title Land (100 acres in conservation) | N/A | 220 |
| Essex County Greenbelt Association | 23 | 255.5 |
| Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust | 213 | 586 |
| The Society for The Preservation of New England Antiquities | 2 | 126 |
| The Trustees of Reservations | 15 | 578 |
| Private, identified at-risk, no designation (at least) | 150 | 950 |
| Total | 521 | 4,865 |

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION

A. Description of Process

Two main tools were used to determine the open space and recreation goals of Essex residents.

1. Open Space and Recreation Survey

A subcommittee of the Open Space Committee designed an open space and recreation survey in the fall of 2002, drawing upon the surveys of other local towns such as Rowley as examples, and adapting the questions to the particular resources and issues in Essex. Drafts of the survey were reviewed by a local survey design and analysis professional, who is also a current Open Space Committee member.

The survey was mailed to every household and business in town (approximately 1,350 addresses) and also made available at several well-attended retail shops, the town hall, and the library. Survey respondents had the option to mail in their completed surveys or bring them to the locations mentioned above. In all, 278 surveys were completed and returned. The results, including respondents' comments, were tallied pro bono by the survey design and analysis business (Appendix A).

In the survey, responders were given the opportunity to indicate the importance of protecting particular types of land for a variety of purposes. In addition, they were asked to rank a variety of methods for funding land acquisition, and to indicate whether they support town boards working with developers and land-owners to conserve land using several different means, such as conservation restrictions and easements. They were also asked how they would like to see the current open space in Essex used in the future.

Specifically, responders indicated that salt marsh, waterfront, and freshwater wetlands (such as ponds and vernal pools) are their top three most important types of land to protect as open space. They selected drinking water supply, wildlife habitat, and buffer zones for wetland/marsh protection as the top three most important purposes for preserving open space.

Agricultural lands, natural and scenic features, historic properties and recreation areas were determined to be "important" by more than 50% of responders.

The methods of funding land acquisition which received the most support in the survey included gifts of land or easements or tax title land (97%), working with private conservation organizations (93%), and use of matching grants from state and federal government (89%). Other methods, which rely on the use of appropriations, town bonds, and a land bank rather predictably received less approval but still achieved approval rates of 60% or higher.

Responders indicated their overwhelming approval of three ways in which town boards could work with developers and land owners to obtain open space: through gifts of land

(94% approved), donations for open space acquisition (93%), and conservation restrictions (92%). When asked to describe the growth rate if the current rate of development in Essex were to continue in the future, 60% indicated that it would be “too fast,” while 29% selected “about the right amount.” Nearly 50% of responders indicated they have lived in Essex for 21 years or more, and about one-third are between the ages of 36 and 50, while another one-third are between 51 and 65.

2. Natural Resources Forum

In the spring of 2003, similar themes were identified at the Essex Natural Resources Forum facilitated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the state-funded group that guided Essex in formulating a Community Development Plan.

At a public meeting in April 2003, more than 55 residents discussed and then prioritized natural resource themes of importance. The themes were either introduced by residents or brought up by MAPC facilitators based on their research into Essex’s maximum buildout capacity (the maximum level of population and development that can be sustained by the town’s systems and natural resources). Once the themes were listed, each participant was given six “votes” in the form of stickers, which could be placed next to the themes listed at the front of the room. Participants had the option to place all of their votes on one theme, or divide them in any way they liked among the choices.

The top ranking natural resource themes were as follows:

Table F: Top-Ranking Natural Resource Themes

| Natural Resource Theme | # Votes |
|---|----------------|
| Slow Down the Rate of Growth | 34 votes |
| Identify and Increase Conservation Lands | 24 votes |
| Paid Conservation Agent | 20 votes |
| Protection of Offshore Marine Resources + Management Plan for River & Salt Marsh Buffer Zones | 19 votes |
| Conservation Sub Bylaw & wetland bylaw | 16 votes |
| Protect Drinking Water Supply | 14 votes |
| Better Stewardship of what we have | 13 votes |
| Protect Wildlife Habitat | 12 votes |
| Protect Agricultural Uses | 9 votes |
| Protect Scenic Features (i.e. stone walls) | 8 votes |
| Education | 8 votes |

Next, participants prioritized open space parcels that had been identified as having “outstanding characteristics” on an existing natural resources map of Essex developed by MAPC. The same 6-vote method of prioritization as described above for the natural resource themes was used to rank the parcels.

The top-ranking open space parcels are as follows:

Table G: Top-Ranking Open Space Parcels

| <i>Open Space Parcel</i> | <i># Votes</i> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Essex Woods combined parcels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parsonage Lot: virgin forest, Priority Site of Rare Species Habitat, Core Habitat Tax Title land in Essex Woods: wetlands, Core Habitat, Priority Sites of Rare Species Habitat areas Maple Swamp area: wetlands, Core Habitat and Priority Sites of Rare Species Habitat Rocky Hill/Conomo Road south to Manchester line, including Southern Ave. | 30 votes |
| Route 133 Corridor parcels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority Sites of Rare Species Habitat, Endangered Species Habitat, wetlands, supporting natural landscapes/habitats, linking parcels. | 24 votes |
| Alewife Brook buffer parcels between Pond Street and Essex Park, or from TOHP Burnham Library/Town Hall to Chebacco Lake, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Habitat for Anadromous fish, Interim Wellhead Protection, Wetlands, potential Vernal Pools, and Core Habitat | 23 votes |
| Parcels between Eastern and Southern Ave. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wetlands, core habitat, natural supporting habitat | 21 votes |
| Giddings Farm parcel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supporting natural landscape, wetlands, adjacent to permanently protected land | 16 votes |
| Conomo Point Road & land east of it to town line <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting habitat; adjacent to town land | 16 votes |
| Land between John Wise Lane to (& including) Cedar Brook Farm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bio Map Core Habitat, wetlands | 13 votes |
| Cross Island – Emerson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High community character/view values, adjacent to Core Habitat, Supporting Natural Landscape, wetlands, permanently protected land | 12 votes |
| Land on either side of John Wise Avenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting habitat, ACEC, Island Road, Hardy, etc. | 10 votes |
| Land South of Choate Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland Core Habitat | 9 votes |
| Land at end of Spring Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetlands, Core Habitat | 9 votes |
| Land off Story Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Natural Habitat | 5 votes |

B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

The residents of Essex – be they humans, animals, or plants – will derive the greatest benefit from living here in the future if the town’s unique landscape and history is preserved while, at the same time, enough contiguous open space remains to create valuable habitats that can protect and preserve its flora and fauna.

Essex's rich shipbuilding past and the small-scale, independent agricultural endeavors of many of its residents have shaped its landscape in numerous ways. Since people have largely moved away from these pursuits and Essex's scenic landscapes and sweeping marsh vistas have become a tourist destination, it is vital that our overall vision both provides for the recreational needs of our citizens and visitors *and* protects the many truly unique and vulnerable ecosystems of Essex's forests, wetlands, streams, river and lake.

The geography of Essex encompasses the confluence of river systems, watersheds and wetlands, and contains a remarkably as-yet undisturbed forest that provides crucial habitat for many species, including some that are rare and endangered. The marsh and forest each serve as a filter and a nursery for the young of many species, and Chebacco Lake is the only remaining natural anadromous fish run in the state. These features make Essex a keystone for the health of a large percentage of the North Shore's habitats, and emphasize the importance of the good stewardship our town can provide.

Such rich resources also draw many people to enjoy and explore their beauty, and a robust system of trails, facilities, security, and other amenities would serve to increase this type of activity, while boosting economic activity in the town's shops and restaurants.

An ideal open space system for Essex would preserve as much contiguous, high-quality, and undeveloped habitat as possible, in order to provide buffer zones between areas of human activity and the town's natural settings that are so often fragile and vulnerable to disturbances. It would also provide for the many recreational activities that our town's natural resources afford, many of which take place in the very same fragile areas mentioned above. The combination of contiguous habitat and accessible recreational features would allow the town to enjoy the economic benefits of well-attended recreational areas while protecting the assets that make Essex so attractive.

There is a difference between habitat protection and scenic resource protection, yet an ideal system would address both of these distinct needs in Essex. There are landscapes in Essex that simply cannot be replaced, should they be slated for development. Some of these, such as the fields and farms along John Wise Avenue, can be described as scenic resources, while others, such as the Essex Woods, are more appropriately deemed habitats for important species of plants and animals.

An ideal system also has built-in flexibility for town officials and boards to choose from a pool of prioritized sites depending upon the funding sources available (e.g., matching grants, public support, private/nonprofit funding, etc.). To have such a pool of sites with varying characteristics and features allows those in positions of authority to select or approve site(s) for specific projects that have been "pre-qualified," which can significantly reduce last-minute efforts when grants or proposals are due.

SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

A. *Summary of Resource Protection Needs*

As detailed in Section 4, Essex is fortunate enough to contain within its boundaries some of the most valuable plant and wildlife habitat yet identified in Massachusetts, as defined by the Nature Conservancy. Essex's portions of the Great Marsh and the Manchester-Essex Woods provide some of the last remaining habitat on the north shore for several rare and endangered species such as the Blanding's Turtle. Less fortunately, much of this habitat remains in private hands without protection restrictions such as conservation easements. The vast majority of vernal pools remain uncertified, and as such are largely vulnerable to destruction through development and land use change. Chebacco Lake's watershed is also a major target for preservation, as it is the last remaining alewife breeding ground on the North Shore, and perhaps on the entire eastern shore of Massachusetts.

For this reason, from an environmental standpoint, the following areas have been prioritized for protection:

1. Parcels providing adjacent and connective land to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties in southern and western Essex.
2. Parcels providing upland buffer around large freshwater wetlands (20 acres+) such as those found off of Apple Street and near Chebacco Lake.
3. Parcels containing certifiable vernal pools and adequate (1500 linear feet) buffer zones.
4. Parcels adjacent to the saltwater marsh system that provide meaningful water quality protection buffer, as defined in the Section 4 of this report.

According to the results of the Open Space survey, the Committee found that most of Essex's citizens focus on the protection of the open spaces and natural resources that they see and use every day, namely the scenic landscapes along major roadways, and the Essex River and the salt marshes that are ubiquitous along the Town's coastline. The support for preservation of these areas is strong.

However, in terms of biodiversity, rare habitat, and presence of threatened and endangered species, the Essex portion of the Manchester-Essex Woods is of highest priority for preservation, and yet few Essex residents recognize them as needing such protection. This is partially attributable to the mistaken notion that all of these woods are protected by the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust, which owns limited parcels within the woods and is attempting to raise the capital to buy more. Another reason for the lack of recognition of the Woods' importance and vulnerability is the fact that it is less visibly prominent than other scenic resources, the unique value placed upon its old growth sections is largely unknown by the public, and it is not used as much for recreation as the river and estuary. A hopeful sign, however, was the recognition and ranking of the Woods as the highest preservation priority at the Natural Resources Forum hosted by MAPC.

By prioritizing parcels providing adjacent and connective land to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties in southern and western Essex, this open space protection strategy aims work towards protecting large core habitat areas, linked via riparian and upland corridors that will maintain and restore Essex's ecological network. The success of such a strategy is evidenced by the ACEC designation and subsequent protection of the Great Marsh, which stretches beyond Essex all the way to Rockport to the east, and Salisbury to the northwest.

From a scenic context, priorities for open space preservation (mainly through conservation easements and facilitation of private nonprofit acquisitions) include the preservation of the large agricultural parcels along Southern Avenue and John Wise Avenue, as overwhelmingly supported by the Open Space survey results.

B. Summary of Community's Needs

According to the MAPC data published in 2000, the town's population statistics show a significant (35.1%) increase in the 45-64 age bracket, accompanied by marked drops in the population of those aged 0-14 (48.5% in children under five and 18.3% in children ages 5-14), and 25-44 (90%). The population of those 65+ is projected to decline by 12.5%. Data from the town's Community Development Plan shows that many residents on a low income are in the 45-64 age bracket.

Population statistics also indicate that the town may not necessarily have a need for more active recreational settings, such as soccer and baseball fields, since the population of 0-14 year olds shows a substantial decrease, although maintaining and updating current assets should be a goal.

These factors suggest a two-pronged approach reflecting the need for more passive and trail-based recreational opportunities, such as hiking and bird watching, and the need for affordable housing. Both of these approaches require a focus on accommodating the needs of people with disabilities.

Siting housing (affordable and otherwise) in areas that are walkable to the downtown and the school, and already serviced by the town's infrastructure of roads, water/sewer lines, and sidewalks would ensure that the infrastructure needs for such housing could be more easily met than in more outlying areas. This would also mesh well with the local economy's focus on river-related activities, such as tourism, boating, clamming, and shopping or dining along the scenic causeway, especially since the lack of readily available public transportation in the town could be a factor for an aging population and/or people with disabilities if housing were not centrally located.

In the Statewide Comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan (SCORP) published in 2000, survey respondents from the Northeast Region of the state reported a strong preference for water-based activities, followed by passive recreation activities, while wilderness activities were the least reported¹ (from SCORP 2000 Regional Perspective

¹ SCORP, 2000 *Regional Perspective*, Northeastern Region section, page 73.

chapter, Northeastern Region section, page 73). These patterns fall in line with the rankings Essex residents gave in the town Open Space & Recreation survey to the types of land they deemed important to protect – salt marsh, waterfront and freshwater wetlands ranked highest, and woodlands came in last. However, as is reported in the SCORP 2000 report, they also reflect the “abundance of water (both coastal and fresh) and conservation resources, and hint at the relative scarcity of trail and wilderness types of resources.”²

The SCORP report also reveals that those surveyed in the Northeast Region harbor the highest level of dissatisfaction in the state for bikeways and forests, citing such issues as cleanliness and maintenance, capacity and attractiveness. It should also be noted here that the SCORP report’s findings show that residents in the Northeast region support improving access for people with disabilities more strongly than in any other region (96.1%).

While the Natural Resources Forum conducted during the formulation of the town’s Community Development Plan process did not directly address recreational issues, it did reveal a desire of those who participated to establish an “emerald necklace” approach to land conservation, in which a contiguous system of protected parcels is established in order to preserve the most habitats for the notable species of plants and animals in Essex. Participants chose to allow the area in the center of town, which is already served by infrastructure and economic amenities, to continue to be developed, and focused conservation efforts on the areas bounded by Southern Avenue, Apple Street, Route 22, and Pond Street as areas of highest priority for preservation.

Thus, the factors mentioned above seem to reflect a need for better trails, sidewalks and/or bikeways along the town’s central, scenic waterways (such as the Essex River as it winds through the center of town), and improved walking/hiking/biking access to forested areas. The improved “recreation infrastructure” in the center of town would serve the growing population of those 45-64; those who would take advantage of centrally-located affordable housing (in some cases, one and the same); and the influx of tourists who visit Essex throughout the year. Meanwhile, creating, maintaining, and/or expanding a trail system in forested areas would provide needed recreational options while also educating those who would visit as to the importance of these areas for ecologic, scenic and many other reasons.

C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

When speaking of “management” in the town of Essex, it’s important to remember that we refer to a *very* small, dedicated professional staff, assisted by a number of volunteer community members who together coordinate and oversee the town’s business. Communication between twenty-some departments, commissions and committees is a challenge under the best of circumstances; we recognize that a successful two-way dialog with all these entities, about the objectives, benefits and concerns of this Open Space Plan

² *Ibid.*

are essential and will require an ongoing commitment of time and energy from Open Space Committee members.

On the plus side, Essex is truly fortunate to have an abundance of exemplary non-profit organizations in our literal and figurative backyard. Essex County Greenbelt, TTOR, and MECT not only have significant interests in the town's natural assets, but also lend their own scarce manpower/human resources to help manage those properties. As has been noted elsewhere, citizens of the town have ranked these properties at or near the top of the list of Essex's most important attributes, as well as providing free or inexpensive recreation for residents and attracting tourism.

However, improved communication among and between the various town committees to achieve an understanding of how each one affects, and is affected by growth and development in and around our community is very important. Uncertainty about the future of Conomo Point, for example, is a high profile challenge for the town, but it is only one of a host of smaller concerns where good outcomes depend on a foundation of consistent, thorough and patient communication. In all these matters, it would be greatly helpful to have the services of a conservation agent available to the town to educate all of us and help us prioritize our open space assets.

This Open Space Plan affords the town with an excellent lens through which to view and evaluate the competing interests of such diverse projects as the state highway, community preservation act, development, and the like.

SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The uniting theme of the Town of Essex's open space preservation goals and objectives is the ideal of maintaining and increasing residents' connection with, investment in, and understanding of its invaluable natural resources and history. The best way to achieve this is through an action plan with built in flexibility, based on established science and public input, and implemented with substantial public participation.

With this in mind, the following list contains the specific goals and objectives envisioned by this Open Space Plan. Obviously some goals are overlapping. For example, Goal C: Improving Public Awareness, certainly contributes to Goal A: Protect and Preserve Open Space. However, this breakdown of goals and objectives most clearly delineates the distinct areas that need to be addressed for successful implementation of the Open Space Plan.

Goal A. Protect and Preserve Essex's Open Spaces, particularly the Essex Woods and the scenic vistas of the Route 133 Scenic Byway

Objectives:

A-1: Preserve and protect the singular and threatened habitats of Essex, in particular:

- a. The critical habitats contained within the Essex Woods
- b. Chebacco Lake, the last anadromous fish breeding lake on the North Shore of Massachusetts
- c. The Great Marsh/A.C.E.C.

A-2: Preserve and protect the unique scenic open spaces of Essex, particularly the agricultural parcels adjacent to Scenic Roads, using tools such as Chapter 61A

A-3: Work to create a wildlife corridor, or "emerald necklace" of contiguous parcels that protect or provide buffer for the major habitat types represented in Essex (saltmarsh, freshwater wetlands and vernal pools, old growth forest, meadows, transition environments, woods, streams and lakes), and which provides enhanced recreational access to protected parcels throughout Essex and in adjacent towns

A-4: Preserve, protect, and enhance Essex's parks, playgrounds, and other recreational spaces

A-5: Work to improve the Town's capacity to preserve and protect open space strategically and proactively (see Goal D)

Goal B. Support and Improve Recreational Opportunities and Access to Open Spaces for All Essex Citizens

Objectives:

B-1: Improve non-vehicular access to recreational opportunities and open spaces through bike, canoe/kayak, and walking trail improvements

B-2: Improve recreational opportunities and access for all demographic groups in Essex, including the elderly, low-income, and the disabled

B-3: Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed

Goal C. Improve Public Education and Awareness of the Unique Nature of Essex's Natural Resources and Challenges to Preservation

Objectives:

C-1: Publish and promote a brochure guide to the open spaces of Essex that effectively educates the public regarding the truly unique resources of the Town

C-2: Use creative outlets, such as town festivals, to disseminate information of challenges and opportunities to protect Essex's character and natural resources

C-3: Work with Essex Public Schools to re-establish and strengthen environmental education based on Essex's open spaces

Goal D. Strengthen the Town of Essex's capacity for preserving and protecting open space strategically and proactively

Objectives:

D-1: Improve communication among and education of Town Boards regarding open space issues and goals in Essex

D-2: Obtain training for Open Space Committee members on topics such as vernal pool certification, land conservation techniques, and grant writing

D-3: Work towards the adoption and use of the regulatory and legal tools available to aid open space preservation, such as:

a. The draft Open Space Residential Design Bylaw currently under consideration

b. The Community Preservation Act

D-4: Identify grant opportunities and apply for funding to purchase parcels, development rights, or conservation easements

D-5: Continue to foster strong relationships with the superb local land conservation NGO's including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, and the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

D-6: Evaluate and update the Town's Open Space Plan in a timely and efficient manner to ensure effective guidance of the open space protection process

D-7: Recruit and train enthusiastic Open Space Committee members to create as robust and effective a committee as possible

SECTION 9: FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN

All actions contained in the five-year plan will be initiated and led by the Open Space Committee unless otherwise noted.

Goal A. Protect and Preserve Essex's Open Spaces

Objective A-1. Preserve and protect the singular and threatened habitats of Essex

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Meet with MECT representatives to gain clear understanding of the current Essex Woods conservation campaign and what the Town's role should be | Spring of 2007 | N/A |
| Work to identify and certify vernal pools on privately held parcels | 2007 and ongoing | N/A |
| Meet with the Chebacco Lake Watershed Association and identify opportunities for buffer preservation | Spring of 2007 and ongoing | N/A |
| Research ownership and negotiate deed restrictions for Woods parcels lacking frontage. Educate the public and bring to town vote a proposal to conserve the 120 acres of Town-owned tax-title woodlots within the Woods. | 2007-2008 | N/A |

Objective A-2. Preserve and protect scenic open spaces

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Meet with Selectmen, NGO representatives, and Planning Board to review properties under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B protection, discuss prioritized lands as determined by this Plan, and plan strategy in case of chapter program refusal | Spring-Fall of 2007 | N/A |
| Contact Essex Enhancement Committee and discuss enhancement needs and opportunities for cooperation with the Open Space Committee | 2008 | N/A |

Objective A-3. Work to create a an "emerald necklace" of contiguous parcels that protect or provide buffer for the major habitat types represented in Essex, and which provides enhanced recreational access to protected parcels

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Using the maps developed by MAPC for the Essex Community Development Plan, identify the ownership of privately held parcels within the proposed "necklace" and | Produce plan by Spring of 2009 | N/A |

| | | |
|---|--------------|--|
| formulate a strategic plan for protection | | |
| Implement strategic plan | 2009-ongoing | Apply for EOE Open Space grant funding |

Objective A-4. Preserve, protect, and enhance Essex's recreational spaces

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|---|-----------------|--|
| Contact Essex Enhancement Committee and discuss enhancement needs and opportunities for cooperation with the Open Space Committee | Fall of 2007 | N/A |
| Work with the Watershed Association to create a Management Plan for the Chebacco Lake Nature Trail | Ongoing | Apply to Essex County National Heritage Program for trails maintenance grant |

Objective A-5. Work to improve the Town's capacity to preserve and protect open space strategically and proactively – please see the five-year action plan for Goal D.

Goal B. Support and Improve Recreational Opportunities and Access to Open Spaces for All Essex Citizens

Objective B-1. Improve non-vehicular access to recreational opportunities and open spaces through bike, canoe/kayak, and walking trail improvements

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Work with MECT to create accurate trail maps of the Essex Woods, using GPS technology | 2008 | N/A |
| Work with MassHighways on the upcoming causeway improvement project to ensure safe bicycle and walking access to open spaces | 2007-2008 | N/A |
| Identify grant sources for trail mapping, expansion and improvements and apply as appropriate | Ongoing | |

Objective B-2. Improve recreational opportunities and access for all demographic groups in Essex

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Meet with representatives from the Essex Council on Aging to identify opportunities for improving elderly access to open space and recreation areas in Essex | 2008 | N/A |
| Form and subcommittee to develop a plan for improving and promoting passive, water-based recreation as recommended in the SCORP | 2009 | N/A |

Objective B-3. Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Contact Essex Beautification Committee and discuss enhancement needs and opportunities for cooperation with the Open Space Committee | 2008 | N/A |

Goal C. Improve Public Education and Awareness of the Unique Nature of Essex's Natural Resources and Challenges to Preservation

Objectives:

Objective C-1. Publish and promote a brochure guide to the open spaces of Essex

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Identify funding sources and obtain printing moneys | 2007 | N/A |
| Draft brochure and circulate among Town Boards and interested individuals | Fall of 2007 – Spring of 2008 | N/A |
| Publish, publicize and distribute brochures | Spring of 2008 | Open Space Committee Budget and apply for grants (to be identified) |

Objective C-2. Use creative outlets to disseminate information of challenges and opportunities to protect Essex's character and natural resources

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Brainstorm and list events and forums | Spring 2007 | N/A |
| Recruit volunteers and set event schedule | 2007 and ongoing | N/A |
| Work with public schools to conduct environmental education around Essex's unique open spaces and rare and endangered species | Begin in Fall of 2007 and ongoing | Apply for grants if needed |

Goal D. Strengthen the Town of Essex's capacity for preserving and protecting open space strategically and proactively

Objective D-1. Improve communication among and education of Town Boards regarding open space issues and goals in Essex

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Meet with Selectmen, Conservation Commission, and Planning Board to discuss moving forward with OSP objectives and strategies to improve communication | Spring 2007 | N/A |
| Publish quarterly updates and send to other town boards via email and memo | Ongoing | N/A |

Objective D-2. Obtain training for Open Space Committee members

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|

| | | |
|--|---------|-----------------------------|
| Set schedule and obtain member commitments to attend vernal pool certification and other trainings at the Putnam Institute, annual MACC conference, and other trainings as they are identified | Ongoing | N/A |
| Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment | Ongoing | N/A |
| Continue to earmark money for training of OSC members | Ongoing | Open Space Committee Budget |

Objective D-3. Adopt and use the regulatory and legal tools available to aid open space preservation

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Designate a member to work with the Planning Board to facilitate passage of the draft OSRD bylaw currently under consideration | Ongoing | N/A |
| Designate a member to work with the Selectmen to facilitate passage of the CPA and if adopted in 2007, help shape the public CPA project recommendation process | Ongoing | N/A |

Objective D-4. Identify grant opportunities and apply for funding to purchase parcels, development rights, or conservation easements

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Attend Land Conservation Grant and grant writing workshops at Putnam Institute | 2007 | Open Space Committee Budget |
| Designate member to research grants and make recommendations | 2007 | N/A |
| Work with local NGO's to write successful grant applications | Ongoing | N/A |

Objective D-5. Continue to foster strong relationships with the superb local land conservation NGO's including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, and the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Meet with representatives from local NGO's to discuss final OSP goals, objectives and action items, and set process for regular communication with Essex Boards | Ongoing | N/A |

Objective D-6. Evaluate and update the Town's Open Space Plan in a timely and efficient manner to ensure effective guidance of the open space protection process

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Create a subcommittee to manage the evaluation and update process, including oversight of submissions to EOEA | Ongoing | N/A |

Objective D-7. Recruit and train enthusiastic Open Space Committee members to create as robust and effective a committee as possible

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Schedule</i> | <i>Funding Source</i> |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Brainstorm a list of potential members | 2007 | N/A |
| Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment | 2007 | N/A |

SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS

All public comments from received by the Open Space Committee were reviewed, responded to through verbal or written correspondence, and incorporated as appropriate and agreed upon with the interested party. We would like to thank all of the individuals, organizations, and Town Boards who undertook thorough reviews and provided indispensable and constructive comments, often in very detailed form. Where written comments were provided copies have been included in Appendix F. Where information or comments were provided verbally through meetings, they have been noted in the references section. The required letters of review from the Essex Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council are also included in Appendix F, as is the required letter of approval from the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services.

SECTION 11: REFERENCES

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Interviews/Personal Communications and Comments:

Helen Bethell, Executive Director, Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

Sam Cleaves and Joan Blaustein, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Paul Goodwin, Water Superintendent, Town of Essex Department of Public Works

Dave Santomenna, Director of Land Conservation, Essex County Greenbelt Association

Town of Essex Conservation Commission

Town of Essex Planning Board

Brendhan Zubricki, Town Administrator, Town of Essex