

# SECTION 2

## INTRODUCTION

In 1987, the Wendell Conservation Commission prepared the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. In 1990, through the Rural Design Assistance Grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, Conway Design Associates developed a Community Vision of the Future for the Town of Wendell, entitled "Wendell Places of the Heart Plan." Since then, the Town has worked to develop a vision of future development through the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan (of which this plan is an update), the 2002 Western Millers River Watershed Growth Management Plan, the 2004 Wendell Community Development Plan, and the 2007 Pelham Hills Forest Conservation Project. Many of the focus areas, ecosystems, historical structures and sites, and scenic areas identified in all of these plans as being worth protecting are also found in this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The land and all it contains continues to capture the hearts and minds of Wendell residents, though perhaps these days it seems the search for effective tools and action steps may have taken on a more desperate energy. For the past several years Town officials, volunteer boards, local conservation agencies, and concerned citizens have been exploring the feasibility of, and implementing, different land use and open space projects within the Town of Wendell. These projects include amending the zoning bylaws with cell tower, phased growth, and large development review measures; continuing to permanently protect vital parcels of land within the forested landscape; and, organizing the means of protecting key parcels of recreation land in town. It became apparent that the lack of an approved, up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan has kept the Town of Wendell from benefiting from state and federal grant programs that could provide financial support for the acquisition of open space and the development of recreational facilities.

This update has been developed between 2008 and 2010 with the aid of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments using Town funds and local technical assistance funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development. The 2010 plan builds on the strengths of the earlier plan, while providing updated information and revised priorities and objectives reflecting the many accomplishments that the Town has achieved in the intervening years in implementing the 2002 Action Plan.

## **A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of this plan is to provide an accurate and thorough basis for decision-making involving the current and future open space and recreation needs of the residents of Wendell. This plan brings together and builds upon the planning efforts of the past twenty years including the Open Space and Recreation Surveys in 2008 and 2001, as well as the survey results of the 1990 and 1987 planning efforts.

The 2010 Wendell Open Space and Recreation Plan also establishes a strong foundation for further town master planning. This plan identifies the most important community and natural resources needs in Town and recommends steps necessary for their satisfaction and/or protection.

## **B. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Public participation in the planning process began in 2008, when an Open Space and Recreation Survey was prepared and sent to all the households and landowners in Wendell. Of these, 53 surveys were returned from Wendell residents, which represented a five percent return rate (See Appendix). The 2008 Open Space and Recreation Survey results were used as the basis for the development of Section 8: Goals and Objectives, as well as the overall open space and recreation goals or vision. In addition, three residents in their early 20's assisted with the initial collection of information for the Plan during the summer of 2008.

A total of 12 public meetings were held by a volunteer Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee between September 2008 and December 2010. Two to three drafts of each section of the plan were mailed to a broad range of reviewers representing key town boards, community groups, and non-profit organizations for their comments and suggestions for revisions before and after each of these meetings. This process was followed both in 2008 and in 2010, resulting in an especially comprehensive review of the draft chapters, particularly those inventorying the community, its natural resources, and its open space lands.

Several sets of the Open Space and Recreation Plan maps have been displayed during regular meetings of the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee, in two map review sessions held at the Town Offices, as well as at the Public Forum. All comments have been incorporated into the maps included in the Plan.

Additional opportunities for public participation included tables with information about updating the Plan with an emphasis on the goals and objectives at the Earth Day Celebrations in both 2009 and 2010; information about the planning process in the Town newsletter; and materials available at Old Home Day in 2010 focusing on the objectives and proposed action steps including opportunities for community feedback.

Town Boards and departments also had numerous opportunities to provide input into the Plan. The Chair of the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee met with the Planning Board, Agricultural Commission, and Selectboard in 2009 to review the goals and objectives and gather action steps. In 2010, the Chair met with the Selectboard, Conservation Commission, the Tree Warden, and the Open Space Committee to discuss their concerns and review the new draft Action Plan. The Planning Board and Agricultural Commission reviewed the Action Plan at their meetings in 2010 and provided valuable feedback that was incorporated into the Plan.

A public forum was held on November 4, 2010, attended by 17 people. The public forum was advertised extensively through the use of posters displayed around town, press releases to three different local papers, notices sent out on the town e-mail list, and was featured on the town website. In addition, the complete draft plan was available for review on the website and hard copies of the draft were available at the Country Store, the library, and at the Town Offices. At the public forum, residents reviewed and discussed the inventory, analysis, community goals, objectives, and seven-year Action Plan, including assisting with the prioritization of action items. All public comments have been recorded and incorporated into the final version of the 2010 Wendell Open Space and Recreation Plan.