

## **II. Introduction**

### **A. Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this plan is to guide open space and resource protection efforts and the related provision of outdoors-oriented recreation opportunities. These efforts are intended to protect the town's remaining rural landscape and character, to provide some usable open space in or near most neighborhoods, and to protect natural resources, particularly wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, and water resources. The project is also done to ensure the town's eligibility for state support in these endeavors through the Self Help (now PARC) Program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Community Preservation Act, and any related resources.

### **B. The Planning Process and Public Participation**

The town's Community Development Office hired consultant Katherine Doherty to begin preparing this plan in 2001. Ideas and concepts for the revised plan were discussed at public forums with the local land trust (The Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater-NRTB), the Bridgewater Recreation Commission, the Master Plan Study Committee (whose community-wide public survey was drawn upon for residents' opinions), the various Neighborhood Stewardship Committees monitoring and maintaining the linked park system, civic groups, including the Bridgewater Garden Club, and members of the Bridgewater Improvement Association.

Subsequently, the Town's Transportation Coordinator, David M. Matton, drew upon these resources and the Master Plan to prepare a preliminary Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2005.

The Board of Selectmen, understanding the need to complete the updated plan, formed an Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC) in 2006 to review past documents and to create a new vision for Bridgewater as it relates to open space and recreation. The committee included members from the Recreation Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, the Assessors Office, the Board of Selectmen, the Water Department, two citizens at large, an observer from the Natural Resources Trust and informal participation of a member of the Master Plan Implementation Committee. In addition, project staff meets with the whole Master Plan Implementation Committee

The OSRC met to review documents and then developed a plan to best accomplish the task at hand. The Committee decided to reach out to institutions such as Bridgewater State College, the Taunton River Watershed Campaign, Bridgewater's new Community Preservation Act Committee (CPC), and the East and West Bridgewater open space committees.

Through a successful fundraising campaign the Committee secured grants from the Taunton River Watershed Campaign and the CPC. These were used to write some of the plan and to update the Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping. Even with this

success we still fell short of the money needed to accomplish these objectives until we were able to contract with the Old Colony Planning Council which agreed to write the plan and matched our funds with Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting District Local Technical Assistance funds.

In order to publicize the effort and to encourage community participation the Committee ran a photo contest where different age groups were invited to take pictures of their favorite open space or recreation areas and to send them to the local cable channel to be reviewed by a panel of judges. Winning pictures were selected and are credited and incorporated throughout this document. Drafts of the plan were made available on line for citizens to review and comment on through a web site created as part of the town's conservation web site. In addition, the public meetings of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee were posted and were held at the centrally located, handicapped-accessible Recreation Department building next to Legion Field. Interested citizens were welcome to attend these sessions.

Outreach to the main Environmental Justice Population reflected the fact that most of the Environmental Justice Neighborhood contains the Bridgewater Correctional Complex whose population has little contact with the town as a whole and generally returns to other communities upon release. The young population of the northern portion of the Environmental Justice neighborhood is largely students whose lives focus on the campus area, and longer-term residents who know the town well. These groups have opportunities to follow and influence the study through the posted meetings of the Open Space Committee which are held at edge of the Neighborhood in the Recreation Department building at Legion Field as noted above. . These groups also have access to the emerging draft through the publicized posting of the entire document on the town's web page and on the Old Colony Planning Council's web page. In addition these groups and all citizens had an opportunity to influence the final plan at the community meeting described below.

When the draft was near completion, a community meeting was held to share findings and recommendations and receive public comment as part of a final review. All participants agreed that the new Plan should be a living document to be used by the townspeople to maintain the town's remaining natural wonders and to plan for future recreational and open space projects. The Plan recommended that the Selectmen institute a permanent Open Space and Recreation Committee in order to update the document as needed, thereby keeping its goals and objectives on the forefront.

The Committee's assertion is that the townspeople feel deeply about protecting the remaining natural areas of Bridgewater and the surrounding towns, and are anxious for leadership which will articulate their concerns and move to protect and embrace them. As noted, many acres have been lost since the last report and only continued diligence will secure the remaining natural beauty for future generations to enjoy.

The present plan has drawn upon the efforts described above, on the insights and concerns of the broadly-based Open Space Committee listed below, on the exploratory

public meeting, on the “Show Us What You Like about Bridgewater” photo contest, and on responses to information posted on the town’s web site.

Note: Since the Plan was completed, the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts and the state Department of Fish and Game have acquired the 250-acre Lehtola farm recommended for protection in Chapter V. The Trust holds 125 acres north of Auburn Street and the Department holds 105 acres to the south along with a Conservation Restriction on the Trust’s land. Another 10 acres was left around the former owners’ house and barn. The acquired land is expected to remain in hay production.

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#### Bridgewater Open Space Committee 2007/2008

Chair, Brian Connelly

Vice Chair, Raymond Ajemian,

Clerk, James P. Campbell

William M. Callahan

Charles J. Kane

Rick Kranes

Stanley Kravitz, Selectmen’s Representative

Thomas Pratti

Former Planning Board Member

Recreation Commission

Board of Assessors

Water Commission

Conservation Commission

Selectman and Health Agent

Planning Board

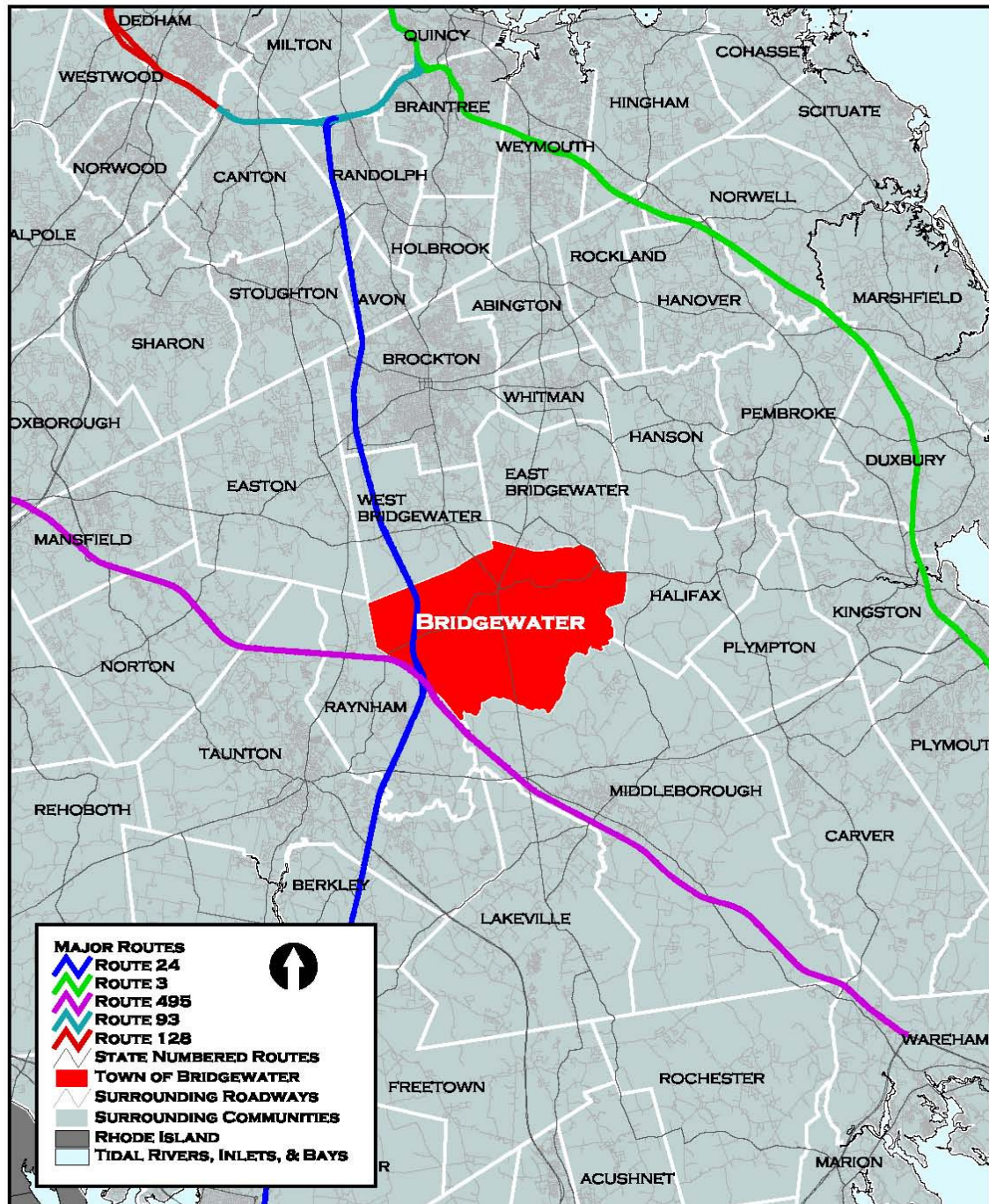


Enjoying the Taunton River at the Titicut Conservation Parkland across from Middleboro



# BRIDGEWATER OPEN SPACE PLAN LOCUS

FIGURE III - 1



OLD COLONY PLANNING COUNCIL  
GIS DATA SOURCES: MASSGIS,

70 SCHOOL STREET BROCKTON, MA 02301  
EOTPW, TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER

SEPTEMBER, 2008