

## **VII Analysis of Needs**

These needs reflect the goals above and earlier analyses of the community's issues, resources and opportunities. While needs can be subjective and are often difficult to distinguish from wants, these needs are those implied in the Goals and Objectives and earlier data, and those derived from the standards in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). A summary of needs organized by major areas of concern follows.

### **A. Resource Protection Needs**

- Protection of the riparian areas of the Taunton, Matfield and Town Rivers
- Protection and continued agricultural use of remaining farmland, whether or not under current-use taxation
- Continued protection of ground water and surface water resources
- Preservation or creation of connections between blocks of woodlands or other similar or symbiotic habitats e.g., the combination of pond shores and woods needed by some turtles.
- Repair or improvement of fish ladders needed on present or restorable fish runs
- Protection of remaining privately-owned land around Lake Nippenicket and Carver's Pond
- Examination of the sensitivity of the Carver's Pond wells to surface water quality in order to protect the supply while allowing expanded recreation uses
- Continued steps to measure and counter any eutrophication in Carver's Pond, Skeeter Mill Pond, (Flynn's Pond) or other water bodies.
- Examination of the prospects and needs of anadromous (herring) fisheries along the major streams and impoundments in cooperation with the Bridgewater-West Bridgewater Town River Fishery Committee and action on any identified needs.
- Maintenance of increasingly rare open grassland habitats along the rivers, Old State Farm and elsewhere. In particular, developing appropriate management plans and scheduling any haying around the birds' nesting and breeding seasons.

### **B. Community Needs**

#### **1- Conservation Needs**

- Creation of a town-wide system with varied, usable, open space abutting or close to all neighborhoods
- Complementing the above by creating a linked system of conservation lands and open spaces threading through neighborhoods and connecting major resources
- Protection of major outlying free-standing holdings such as the Lehtola Farm meadows sloping down to the wooded Taunton River bank.
- Protecting remaining private shoreline on Carver's Pond and Lake Nippenicket.
- Acquisition and trail use of key portions of streamside land such as along South Brook
- Acquisition of scattered Ch.61, 61A and 61B holdings and other properties to create extensive neighborhood open spaces
- Planning and developing proposed trails on the open space portion of the former Hogg Farm land and running these on through the adjacent Starr Playground/Park land
- Integration of the Bridgewater Correctional Complex holdings protected under Article 97 with Ch.61A riverside holdings and scattered town holdings (e.g. Highway Dept. and Water Dept. lands) to create a maximum system of streamside protected holdings

## **2. Recreation Needs**

### **Approaches**

There is no easy way to measure the need for recreation facilities. The following explores use of published standards and then reviews the needs reported or observed by the Recreation Commission and staff and by the Open Space Committee and its consultant.

The state has quantitative guidelines suggesting the number of acres of a particular facility type needed for a given population. These are found in past Statewide Conservation Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORP) and are applied below. However, such standards do not recognize that the demand for a facility or activity reflects many factors including the population's age groups, sex, income, and ethnic traditions; local patterns of interests; and the present opportunities. Also, past standards focusing on facilities for competitive team sports are less helpful in measuring the needs of individual, less formal, activities such as hiking, fishing, swimming, bicycling, gardening, or camping.

Reliance on such published standards alone also could lead to missing unique local opportunities such as:

- Gardening on former farm fields (for which a program is being developed at the Correctional Complex.)
- Hiking, sledding or skiing over a properly-shaped capped landfill
- Canoeing on local streams
- Motorized sports like dirt bike riding in an old sand pit.
- Rock climbing in an inactive quarry
- Horseback riding over dedicated or multi-purpose trails

The following is a list of traditional public recreation facility definitions and standards from the SCORP.

- **Tot Lots** One half-acre for each 1000 persons in densely-populated neighborhoods. The population served would live within one-quarter mile. Facilities should include swings, slides and other equipment for five year olds.

(Ideally they would also have facilities or activities for accompanying adults, e.g., sitting areas, tables and benches, and/or exercise circuits.) In a low-density town like Bridgewater, smaller numbers would need to be served by each lot to get a good distribution town-wide.

- **Playgrounds:** Playgrounds serve as outdoor games centers for particular neighborhoods. Facilities should include play devices, running areas, swings and benches. Larger playgrounds should include an area for tot lot activities. Some standards require a 5-acre minimum size. SCORP standards require one acre per 250 children of elementary school age in densely populated neighborhoods, and a service area radius of one-quarter mile.

Comment: The need for playgrounds and tot lots may seem to be less in low-density, relatively affluent communities where many families have large yards, but these facilities can encourage more interaction among children and parents than is available in isolated private yards.

- **Neighborhood Park:** A neighborhood park is similar to a community park, but serves a smaller geographic area. The purpose of this type of park is to provide water, forest, or landscaped settings as an aesthetic release from development. Past standards for a neighborhood parks are one-half acre serving a one-quarter to one-half mile radius. This need may be less when individual house lots are large, but there still could be value to a larger, shared gathering place.

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- **Community Parks:** These serve the entire community and provide a large contiguous open space area for town residents. Some standards call for 20 or more acres for a community park.
- **Playfields:** Playfields are a community's center for outdoor sports competition for all ages, but especially for teenagers and adults. They can be all-purpose (available for both spontaneous and organized activities) or specialized, i.e., designed specifically for use as baseball, football or soccer fields to meet dimensional standards. Past SCORP guidelines called for 3 acres per 1,000 residents, with a minimum size of 10 acres. Playfields also require a parking area with adequate number of parking spaces. These needs are partially met at the Legion Field and Scotland Field

## **Regional Demands or Needs**

These are suggested by the present use of facilities in Southeastern Massachusetts. An extract from the discussion in the SCORP plan, Massachusetts Outdoors 2000!, follows:

### **Demand in the Southeastern Region**

#### *Activities*

By a wide margin, the three most popular individual activities in the Southeastern Region are close in percentages: swimming at 60.1%, sightseeing, tours and events at 57.3% and walking at 57.1%. In fact, the sightseeing, tours, and events category received its highest level of interest statewide in this region. Well below that level of participation, substantial numbers also enjoy playground activities (37.9%), fishing (34.2%), and hiking (32.6%). Nearly one quarter of the population of this region has experience during the year with golfing (24%), and watching wildlife and nature study (23.7%). Lesser, but still significant, numbers (10-20%) also experience picnicking, sunbathing, biking (both types), skiing (downhill), non-motorized boating (motor boating is just under 10%), and canoeing.

When grouped by type of activity, the water-based activities predominate, but as in other regions, there is strong participation in some dimension of each type. A rough rank order would be water-based, passive, trail-based, field-based, and wilderness activities.

While no one community can be expected to meet all the regional needs or desires, this extract does suggest meeting desires such as swimming, hiking and biking that can be done locally, while continuing to provide for field sports and other organized activities.

### **Local Needs**

### **Calculated Needs**

Past published SCORP standards suggest the following present and future needs:

<b>Item/ Standards</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Supply</b>	<b>Calculated Total Need/ Remaining Need</b>
<b>Playgrounds</b>			
One acre Per 250 Elem Age. Children	2000 population 0-14 years old - 4860	Table V-2 shows six broadly- defined playgrounds totaling about 10 acres in actual use (Starr Playground is woods as is most of J. Leonard Playground.)	19.4 acres/ 9.4 acres
<b>Tot Lots</b>			
Half an acre per 1000 pop, preferably w/i ¼ mile	Total town. year 2000 pop. is 25,185	None unless small playgrounds count	25 lots on 12.6 acres/ 25 lots on 12.6 acres
<b>Community Park</b>			
One @ 20+ acres		None as such but Legion Field, the Golf Course and riverside parklands meet many of these needs but without one major gathering place	One Major Community Park / One such park
<b>Playfields</b>			
Three acres / 1000 pop. Some at 10 acres each	Total town. year 2000 pop. is 25,185	Town has an est. 49.2 acres including planned Hogg fields	On a population basis town needs 75.6 acres/ 26.4 acres more
<b>Tennis Courts</b>			
None Known		Town has eight at old high school	Unknown

Since these standards were designed for dense neighborhoods with small yards little informal open space (and since they omit other interests such as skate boarding), and since present areas are imprecise, they may greatly overstate some needs, while missing other, more current, needs/possibilities, hence they only suggest Bridgewater's needs.

### **Observed Recreation Needs**

The Recreation Commission and staff, project staff and other observers suggest the following needs/opportunities. These reflect the town's Goals, the data and analyses above, and the observations, insights and concerns of the study participants.

#### Walkways, Bikeways and Trails

- Walking opportunities including a “rough-hewn” Town River walkway for walkers and joggers, with some degree of accessibility.
- Walking, hiking, and riding trails. They would serve segments of the community not involved in organized sports and be developed according to the terrain to meet/challenge varying levels of fitness. Some portions would be part of a useful network of bike paths connecting neighborhoods and common destinations like downtown and the college. Others might also function as bridle paths.
- An expanded recreational and functional town-wide pedestrian and bicycle path system connecting neighborhoods and varied destinations, possibly including segments of the trails noted above.
- Completed walkways around all or the north side of Carver's Pond to Bedford St. with land acquisitions, easements or boardwalks where needed as per the Management Plan

#### Water Sports

- Places to pull out canoes and kayaks to give paddlers access to all protected riverside holdings. These need not be auto-accessible launching areas
- An indoor or outdoor pool to give the summer swimming program more pool time and to expand the free public swimming time through August. This is needed since the contract for the BSC pool is now limited to six weeks. An indoor pool would allow cold weather recreational swimming and lessons including those needed for a Lake Nippenicket boating program. (And swimming in a pool in the summer even though you have ponds, could allow safer more, contained swimming instruction.)
- A developed natural swimming area (like that Stoughton's Ames Long Pond) at Carver's Pond or elsewhere following study of water quality issues
- Canoe, kayak or small sailboat rentals at the Town River Landing, Lake Nippenicket, Carver Pond and/or the Iron Works Park where feasible.
- Provision of a sailing program at Lake Nippenicket including development of a needed dock (possibly off of the state boat ramp) and acquisition of a rescue boat
- Small Boat and fishing docks at Carver's Pond

- Improved canoe/kayak landing areas giving access to tenting areas at the Wyman Meadow, the Titicut Conservation Parkland , or other riverside conservation sites.
- Improvement of the car-accessible canoe/kayak launching areas, if needed, at the Iron Works Park

### Playgrounds

- Full-sized playgrounds to replace the one at Legion Field lost to the expansion of the Williams Middle School. This served younger siblings of youth playing at Legion Field.
- Restoration/improvement/expansion of the handsome and imaginative Rainbow's End Playground and Jenny Leonard Park
- The Legion Field play area and the very minimal (One swing set) play area at Scotland Field.
- Dispersed tot-lots with adult benches and tables and/or exercise circuits for accompanying adults. These can offer a valuable break and adult company to parents while giving small children greater contact and variety than found in their own yards.

### Field and Court Sports

- A lighted football practice field, separate from the game field. The lights would allow late practices into the late Fall.
- Four football-sized fields to be left open to accommodate any field sport. An international-sized field for the use of adult leagues and other leagues
- Sufficient fields to allow closing one for rehabilitation
- Two centrally located tennis courts with a practice backboard (beyond those at the Old High School) to replace those at Legion Field lost to the skateboard park. This would implement the commitment to replace the courts and allow the Recreation Commission to again sponsor a tennis program.
- Courts for volleyball, particularly since it can be played at various levels thereby accommodating all ages and skills.
- Public indoor sports facilities providing more all-season space for basketball, volleyball and tennis as well as track, soccer, exercise programs and other indoor pursuits beyond the present and proposed private facilities. These would also provide indoor space for summer programs and could accommodate expanded after-school

programs and meet demands for indoor courts without the constraints of school district gym time.

Note: Some of these needs may be somewhat offset by the indoor Bridgewater Sports Complex (The Dome) on Bedford Street and by the much larger Premier Sports Center complex proposed on farmland at the north end of Elm Street. However these are regionally-oriented fee-charging commercial facilities.

- Facilities for older people such as the horseshoe pit and bocce court the Recreation Commission installed at the Senior Center along with walking trails (below)

### Winter Sports

- An outdoor skating pond/rink for general skating. Indoor rinks are largely committed to hockey and lessons, and allow little general skating. If located on a pond this could share a support building with a summer swimming site. If done by flooding a level area it could be located in many places near other facilities with the one in West Bridgewater.
- Cross-country ski trails through selected holdings such as Wyman Meadow and the adjacent Wildlands Trust of SE Massachusetts holdings

### Special Facilities

- Replacement of the Skate Board Park in a suitable location

### Special Interests /Opportunities

- Community garden space for those whose yards are small, rocky, or dark.
- Badlands for activities like trail bike and ATV riding - possibly on old sand pits
- Expanded local tenting opportunities at the Titicut Conservation Area and possible restoration of past tenting at Carver's Pond
- Expansion of the Titicut Conservation Parkland into adjacent unused Water Department Land and possibly into Middleboro land across in the bend of the River to create a regional facility..



- Improvement of the Titicut tenting sites to reducing impacts on the conservation area as recommended in the Management Plan
- Improved canoe stops giving access to a tenting areas at the Wyman Meadow and to the varied terrain of the Tuckerwood Conservation Area.
- Creation of an interpretive center and at the Iron Works Park, possibly in the old stone Ironworks building
- The addition of the unused downstream town land with industrial ruins reported in the Management Plan to expand trail opportunities, historic interest, and conservation value at the Iron Works Park.
- Acquisition of the privately-owned dam, fish ladder and pond area, and resolution of any access and parking issues at the Iron Works Park.
- Improved access and parking at the Stiles and Hart Conservation Area; connecting the trails to the ponds and other features, and running them between the High Street and Bedford Street entrances.

## **Special Needs Populations**

### **The Elderly**

Bridgewater's elderly population, defined as those 65 and over, grew from 1648 (7.7%) in 1990 to 2168 (8.7%) in 2000. This is still less than the regional figure of 11.36% but continued growth is expected as the oldest Baby Boomers enter their 60s. In addition, developments for those over 55 years old are attracting older persons from other communities. Beyond this, Bridgewater's character as a college town increases its attractiveness as a place to retire, particularly given its rail service to Boston's resources and the seasonal (school year) bus service to the Brockton. For these reasons, the Bridgewater Department of Elder Affairs expects the 2010 Census to find at least 4000 persons over age 65. The Department operates the new Senior Center located behind several other facilities west of Rte. 18/28, a considerable distance south of the town center.

Activities, and interests observed by the Department and related facilities include:

- Card playing and table games whist etc., at the Senior Center
- Wii virtual computer sports at private facilities. This system calculates the results of physical actions like swinging a bat which are shown on a computer screen so that actual exercise is involved. However there is no Wii machine at the Senior Center.

- Swimming at the Bridgewater State College pool and, for its residents, at a private pool at the High Point 55+ development.
- Meals and social gatherings at the Senior Center
- Walking on safe level trails, though unfortunately, the circular trail behind the Senior Center reportedly has a deteriorated rough surface
- Various exercise programs at the East Bridgewater YMCA.
- Bocce at a court at the Senior Center. This is little used since the original users died and the remote site does not encourage casual pick-up games
- Gardening in the BSC greenhouse to prepare plants for the spring. However, there are no community garden plots for people lacking yard except for those being developed at the BCC.
- Shopping at the Campus Plaza with access via the Senior Shuttle

Changes/improvements which are needed or recommended to increase the range of usable facilities and programs include:

- Improvements, grading of the Center's circular trail and of selected other greenways and trails town-wide to create safe walking opportunities near every neighborhood. This would benefit the elderly, the handicapped, and anyone with limited mobility
- Increased opportunities for accessible swimming within the town
- Development of community garden plots particularly, near concentrations of elderly persons in multi-unit low-cost housing like that found in the north end of the community
- Acquisition of a wii machine for the Center
- Extension of Senior Shuttle service to increase access to local programs and resources and to nearby ones such as the East Bridgewater YMCA.
- Addition of shaded tables, sitting areas and low-stress activity opportunities like an exercise circuit or bocce court at existing and future playgrounds and parks

### **The Handicapped/Disabled**

The handicapped or disabled population has a wide range of abilities and needs. Mobility limitations range from slight, to infrequent balance problems, to use of crutches, to use of hand-powered wheelchairs, to reliance on electric wheelchairs. Some people have little

use of their legs but strong upper bodies and can swim once they get into the water or can play basketball from a wheelchair. Other people have varying vision or hearing limitations affecting their use of facilities and programs.

The ADA survey at the end of this report notes the access and use limitations of the present Conservation and Recreation holdings. Such limitations are also a concern at the town's other open space and recreation facilities and a program to remedy these shortcomings should be developed and implemented through a transition plan as soon as resources allow.

This plan assumes that the overall needs of the diverse handicapped population include:

Physical access to facilities in order to:

- Watch sporting events
- Use supportive facilities such as bathrooms, picnic tables, viewing points, and

Modification of facilities and programs to allow:

- Participation in sports and games through reasonable accommodations
- Use of basic facilities where that can be made possible through such accommodations

As noted in the Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook, the required "Programmatic Accessibility" means that programs must be accessible "in their entirety." Not every facility, at every location needs to be completely accessible, but if, for example "swimming, hiking, picnic areas and play equipment...(are offered), some pools, trails, picnic areas and play equipment must be accessible within (the) system."

(This leaves unresolved the question of the use of one-of-a-kind inherently difficult facilities or activities beyond reasonable, affordable accommodation; but most local resources are not so extreme.)

At the same time, facilities that are to be accessible, should be totally accessible, i.e., it is little help to have a ramp to a bathroom if the door then opens the wrong way and blocks use of the toilet and sink. The Disabilities Commission's survey of recreation facilities is sensitive to these concerns.

Improvements that might give diverse handicapped persons access to a cross-section of facilities include:

- Conventional ramps to bathrooms, bleachers, public spaces
- Modification of picnic tables to allow people in wheelchairs to sit close to the table
- Means of entering the water for swimmers, e.g. a ramp or lift into a pool, or provision of large-wheeled wheelchairs that can roll into the water at any beach
- Provision of boardwalk or trail guidance system for the blind (e.g. a rope strung from pole to pole) and a coordinated Braille or audible system identifying significant aromatic plants

- Modification of swings, seesaws etc. to allow use from wheelchair or use by some one lacking balance or upper body strength.
- Modification (grading, smoothing, use of oversized graphics ...) of trails to allow passage by wheel chairs, or confident walking by people with balance or vision problems

These suggestions of means and approaches supplement those noted or implied in the ADA surveys of Conservation and Recreation facilities. Further study in cooperation with the Disabilities Commission, the Department of Elder Affairs, and related bodies will be needed during development of a future Transition Plan

### **Environmental Justice Population**

The size and location of the Environmental Justice Population have been discussed in Chapter III and the existing and proposed resources serving the population have been reviewed under Environmental Justice/Environmental Equity in Chapter IV.

### **C. Management Needs**

- Reconciliation of ownership of sites needing protection, particularly by putting the appropriate parcels of municipal land under the Conservation Commission
- Close work with the Parkland Stewardship Council to continue its efforts and to assist in planning and managing the Self-Help assisted acquisitions totaling of 157 acres along the Town and Taunton River Greenways and other sites.
- Exploration of ways to maintain and manage the Conservation Parkland System including defining and incorporating the roles of the non-profit Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater (NRTB) and the Parklands Stewards in Park and Open Space maintenance and management, and considering reorganizing / creating a Conservation Park System Department
- Continuation of the joint West Bridgewater-Bridgewater Town River Fisheries Committee's work for restoration, protection and management of the herring fishery, and consideration of fish ladder improvements or construction where needed on the rivers, and on South Brook en route to Skeeter Mill Pond and possibly to Carver's Pond.
- Building on the recommendations of the 2005 Taunton River Stewardship Plan / Wild and Scenic River Study and on the related Town River Survey report.
- Capitalizing on the Taunton's recent Federal Designation as a Wild and Scenic River.
- Systematic monitoring of the status of Ch. 61, 61A and 61B lands

- Encouragement of selective use of Agricultural Preservation Restrictions
- Drawing on this plan's recommendations to set priorities for CPA-funded acquisitions
- Cooperation with the Division of Fish and Wildlife, The Wild lands Trust of SE Massachusetts, and The Nature Conservancy to manage, protect and use Lake Nippenicket for diverse wildlife protection, conservation, and recreation purposes.
- Inclusion of the six professionally prepared Conservation Parkland Management Plans given to the town by the NRTB in this plan and in future plans by reference, and summarizing the key findings for implementation through CPA funds, State/Federal funds and other resources.

