

VII Analysis of Needs

These reflect the goals above and earlier analyses of the community's issues, resources and opportunities.

A. Resource Protection Needs

- Protection of the riparian areas of the Taunton and Town Rivers
- Protection and continued agricultural use of remaining farmland, whether or not under current use taxation
- 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 Fisheries Committee and act on any identified needs.
- Maintenance of increasingly rare open grassland habitats along the rivers and elsewhere. In particular, timing any haying around the birds' nesting and breeding seasons.

B. Community Needs

1- Conservation Needs

- Creation if 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.
- Protection of 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.
- Plan and Develop proposed trails on the open space portion of the former Hogg Farm land and run 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.) 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 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
- 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

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

- 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 a 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 maybe less when individual house lots are large, but there still could be value to a larger, shared gathering place.
- 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 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 cannot 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:

Item/ Standards	Population	Supply	Calculated Total Need/ Remaining Need
Playgrounds			
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
Tot Lots			
Half an acre per 1000 pop, preferably w/i	Total town. year 2000 pop. is 25,185	None unless small playgrounds count	25 lots on 12.6 acres/ 25 lots on

¼ mile

12.6 acres

Community Park

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

Playfields

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

Tennis Courts

None Known

Town has eight at old high school

Unknown

Since these standards were designed for dense neighborhoods with little informal open space and small yards (and since they omit other interests such as skate boarding), and present areas are imprecise, they may greatly overstate needs, while missing more current needs and possibilities, Hence they are only suggestive of 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 and 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 boaters access to all protected riverside holdings. These are not necessarily 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 as 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 at Ames Long Pond in Stoughton at Carver's Pond or elsewhere following study of water quality issues.
- Canoe, kayak or small sailboat rentals at the Stiles and Hart Conservation Areas, 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 Boat ramp) and acquisition of a rescue boat as needed.
- Boating and fishing docks at Carver's Pond
- Improved canoe landing areas giving access to tenting areas at the Wyman Meadow and elsewhere at riverside conservation sites.
- Improvement of the car-accessible canoe launching areas if needed at the Iron Works Park

Field and Court Sports

- A lighted football practice field, separate from the game field which needs to be prepared for games. The lights would allow late Fall practices.

- Four football-sized fields to be left open to accommodate any sport, soccer, lacrosse... An international sized field for the use of adult leagues and other leagues
- Sufficient fields to allow closing one at a time 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 find a new site and allow the Recreation Commission to again sponsor a tennis program.
- Volleyball courts to meet many requests. 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, exercise programs and other indoor pursuits like soccer beyond the present and proposed private facilities. These would also provide indoor space for summer programs during bad weather and could accommodate expanded after-school programs and summer programs and meet unmet 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 while indoor rinks are 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 like that in West Bridgewater.
- Cross-country ski trails through selected holdings such as Wyman Meadow and the adjacent Wildlands Trust of SE Massachusetts holdings
- Full-sized playgrounds to replace the one removed at Legion Field. This served younger siblings of kids playing at Legion Field, 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.
- Restoration/improvement/expansion of the handsome and imaginative Rainbow's End Playground and Jenny Leonard park

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 Area into adjacent unused Water Department Land and into adjacent land owned by the town of Raynham, and possibly into Middleboro land across in the bend of the River.
- Improvement of 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 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; and connecting the trails to the ponds and other features, and running them between the High Street and Bedford Street entrances.

C. Management Needs

- Reconciliation of ownership of sites needing protection, particularly by putting municipal land under the Conservation Commission

- Close work with 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 institutionalizing the roles of the Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater in Park and Open Space maintenance and management.
 - Considering creation of 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 Carver's Pond.
- Building on the recommendations of the SRPEDD sponsored-\$300,000 National Park Service Upper Taunton Wild and Scenic Feasibility 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
- Setting priorities for CPA-funded acquisitions
- Cooperation with the Division of Fish and Wildlife, The Wildlands 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 Management Plans for the Iron Works Park (by Mass Audubon), The Stiles and Hart Conservation Area, (by the NRTB), The Tuckerwood Reservation (by Nature's Refuge Landscape Design), The Wyman Meadows (by NRTB), the Titicut Conservation Area (by Mass. Audubon), and Carver's Pond (by Mass Audubon) in this plan by reference. Reviewing the recommendations and implementing selected ones with CPA funds, State/Federal funds and other resources.