

SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

A town of more than 28,000 people just north I-495 and on the New Hampshire border, Dracut grew over 20 percent in the 1980s and another 12 percent in the 1990s but growth has slowed significantly since 2000. Dracut is unusual given is densely developed neighborhoods near the City of Lowell in the western part of the town, and the numerous farms that continue to operate in East Dracut. Since completion of the 1996 Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan, Dracut residents have become increasingly concerned about development pressures on the agricultural and semi-rural character of East Dracut. As a result, residents voted to accept and implement the Community Preservation Act. In addition, a local land trust was recently formed.

The 2009 Update was prepared by the Community Preservation Committee, comprised of representatives of town boards and interested citizens, with technical assistance, from the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG). For the 2009 Update, public input was solicited via a Visioning Session conducted on April 15, 2008 and a general public hearing on October 7, 2008 to present the draft document, a written survey that was distributed as part of the Recreation Department annual mailing, and made available to citizens at both the Town Hall and the Town Library, Informational items were posted on the Town's website; and media coverage via the local cable television

The 2009 Plan Update follows the Massachusetts Department of Conservation Services (DCS) guidelines and format. The document inventories open space and recreational resources, assesses community needs, establishes goals and objectives and outlines a seven year action plan. The 2009 Plan Update focuses on five goals:

- Preserve the viability and vitality of the Town's agricultural enterprises
- Make all recreational activities accessible to all members of the community
- Increase quality and quantity of recreation space and facilities
- Development of land management and facilities and maintenance plans
- Environmentally healthy water and wetlands resources

The first five sections of the Plan Update provide an overview of Dracut's natural and cultural environment; development history and current trends; and protected and unprotected lands of recreational or conservation interest. Based on this information and on input solicited through the public involvement process, the Committee developed the community needs analysis, goals, objectives, and seven-year action plan as delineated in the second half of the Plan.

The Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan Update is consistent with the regional open space and recreational goals in the Commonwealth's previously issued

Massachusetts Outdoors 2006: Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP), particularly in its emphasis on greenways and trails, improved public awareness and stewardship of open space resources, and public access to water resources.

SECTION 9: SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The table below outlines the Seven-Year Action Plan for implementing the goals and objectives described in previous sections of this document. Implementation responsibility is identified and the timeframe for the implementation of individual actions is specified as follows:

- Ongoing: Implementation occurs on an ongoing basis throughout the seven-year implementation period;
- Short-term: Implementation is planned within 2 years;
- Intermediate: Implementation is planned between years 2 and 4; and
- Long-term: Implementation is planned in years 5 through 7.

Based on the variability of the many factors involved in implementing the Action Plan, such as funding, the need for town meeting approval, and legal and permitting issues, the Committee concluded that structuring the schedule in the timeframes outlined above was more practical and meaningful than the year-by-year schedule utilized in previous Open Space and Recreation Plans. (Also see Map 8 – Seven Year Action Plan.)

GOAL 1: Preserve the viability and vitality of the Town’s agricultural enterprises.

Objective: Promote farmland preservation			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Develop data base on existing farms	Town Assessor	Town budget	On-going
Meet periodically with farm owners about farmland preservation options	Open Space Committee, Town Planner	Town budget	On-going
Consider developing and implementing farm-friendly zoning and other by-laws, e.g. “Right to Farm” and investigate creative ways to support farming economically	Agricultural Commission, Town Planner; Town Meeting	Town budget	Short term
Pursue alternative funding sources for farmland preservation	Town Planner	Town budget	On-going
Hold annual joint meeting of all committees involved in farmland preservation	Agricultural Commission	Town budget	On-going

Objective: Encourage local farming activities			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Develop a plan to encourage people to “buy local”	Agricultural Commission	CPA funds, town budget	On-going
Continue holding local farmers’	Town Manager	Town budget	On-going

market			
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Objective: Develop creative methods to preserve farmland			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Pursue all funding sources for farmland preservation	Town Planner, Agricultural Commission	Town budget	On-going
Develop "right of first refusal" instruments in favor of the Town for existing farms	Town Planner Town Counsel	Town budget	On-going

Goal 2: Make all recreational activities accessible to all members of the Community

Objective: Comply with court consent decree on ADA accessibility			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Inventory and prioritize facilities	Recreation Director, DPW, Town Engineer, ADA Coordinator	Town budget	Short term
Develop implementation schedule	Recreation Director, Town Manager, ADA Coordinator	Town budget	Short term
Retrofit facilities	Town Manager	CDBG Funds	Long term

Objective: Encourage broader participation in recreational pursuits			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Fill vacancy on Town Disability Commission	Town Manager	Town budget	Short term
Advertise availability and accessibility of programs	Recreation Director, Town Manager, ADA Coordinator	Town budget	Short term

Goal 3: Increased quantity and quality of recreation space and facilities

Objective: Create more neighborhood and youth recreational facilities			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Inventory and identify tax title parcels for suitability for neighborhood parks and tot lots, and survey neighborhoods for interest in town acquisition for this purpose	Town Planner, Recreation Director, Recreation Commission, Open Space Committee	Town budget, CPA	On-going
Ensure maintenance and accessibility of dedicated open space in new subdivisions	Planning Board	Town budget	On-going

Objective: Review use of existing school facilities for maximum utilization			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Develop an inventory of all school facilities and utilization schedule	Recreation Director, School Athletic Director	Town budget	On-going
Develop and implement use schedule	Recreation Director, School Athletic Director	Town budget	On-going

Objective: Expand existing non school recreational programs and facilities			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Identify users and needs	Recreation Director, sports sponsors and	Town budget	On-going

	volunteers		
Identify land adjacent to existing facilities for possible expansion opportunities	Town Planner, Recreation Director, sports sponsors and volunteers	Town budget; CPA	On-going
Pursue funding for expansion of facilities	Town Planner, Recreation Commission, Recreation Director, Town Manager	CDBG funds; CPA funds; Urban Self-help Funds	On-going

Objective: Develop an appreciation on the value of open space in the Town/Region			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Develop and initiate public nature walks	Recreation Director, Open Space Committee	Town budget, CPA funds	On-going
Develop printed guide to the conservation areas and hiking trails in town	Recreation Director, Open Space Committee, Engineering Department	Town budget, CPA funds	Short term
Develop signage in public conservation areas to identify natural features, vegetation etc.	DPW, Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee	Town budget	On-going
Work with surrounding municipalities to develop regional trails, etc.	Town Manager, Recreation Director, Conservation Commission	Town budget	On-going
Prioritize parcels needed for interconnected wildlife corridors	Open Space Committee, Community Preservation Committee	Town budget	On-going
Develop local cable TV information	Open Space Committee	Town budget	Short term

program			
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Goal 4: Development of land management, facilities and maintenance plans

Objective: Proper management of athletic facilities			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Create or appoint a sub-committee to oversee all athletic facilities	Recreation Commission	Town budget	Short term
Inventory needs and develop a long range plan for ongoing maintenance and upgrades	Recreation Commission, DPW	Town budget	Short term
Develop a maintenance plan to accompany sidewalk, bike lane, and bike and pedestrian trail plans	Recreation Commission, DPW	Town budget	Short term
Implement maintenance plan	Town Meeting	Town budget	Long term

Objective: Expand existing non school recreation programs and facilities			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Identify users and needs	Recreation Director, sports sponsors and volunteers	Town budget	On-going
Identify land adjacent to existing facilities for possible expansion opportunities	Town Planner, Recreation Director, sports sponsors and volunteers	Town budget, CPA	On-going
Pursue funding for expansion of facilities	Town Planner, Recreation Director, Recreation Commission, Town	CDBG Funds, CPA funds, Urban Self-help Funds	On-going

	Manager		
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Objective: Develop an appreciation on the values of open space in the Town and Region			
Actions	Actions	Actions	Actions
Develop and initiate public nature walks	Recreation Director, Open Space Committee	Town budget, CPA funds	Short term
Develop printed guide to the conservation areas and hiking trails in town	Recreation Director, Open Space Committee, Town Engineer	Town budget, CPA funds	Short term
Develop signage in conservation areas to identify natural features, vegetation, etc.	DPW, Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee	Town budget	On-going
Work with surrounding municipalities to develop regional trails, etc.	Town Manager, Recreation Director, Conservation Committee	Town budget	On-going

Objective: Proper management of open space/natural areas			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Develop a stewardship program for conservation land	Conservation Agent, Conservation Commission	Town budget	Short term
Develop a use and maintenance plan to accompany all new open space	Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, DPW	Town budget	Short term
Document existing maintenance and management gaps	Recreation Commission, Conservation	Town budget	Short term

and problems	Commission, DPW		
Create a management and maintenance plan with incremental implementation steps for existing conservation land	Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, DPW	Town budget	Short term

Objective: Enhanced partnership with volunteer/private organizations			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Develop a stewardship program for recreation facilities	Recreation Director. Town Manager	Town budget	Short term

GOAL 5: Promotion of environmentally healthy water and wetland resources

Objective: Use best management practices to control nonpoint source pollution and other activities that impact water quality			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Create stormwater and wellhead protection by-laws	Water Departments, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Town Counsel, Town Meeting	Town budget	Short-term

Objective: Increase awareness and importance of wetlands resource areas			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Work with schools to develop educational program	Conservation Commission, School Department	Conservation Commission funds, school funds	On-going
Develop wetlands informational	Conservation Commission	Town budget, Conservation	Short term

booklets		Commission funds	
Develop local cable TV information program	Conservation Commission	Town budget, Conservation Commission funds	Short term

Objective: Eliminate/minimize invasive and exotic species

Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Develop informational booklets	Conservation Commission	Town budget, Conservation Commission funds	Short term
Help NHESP update inventory of invasives	Conservation Commission	Town budget Conservation Commission funds	On-going
Remove or control invasives	Conservation Commission	Grants, Conservation Commission funds	On-going

Objective: Protect upland buffers to waters and wetlands

Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Educate private owners about vegetation management on river, stream, pond and lake banks through activities such as web page information or videos for public forums	Open Space Committee Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC) conservation Commission	Town budget	On-going
Form a sub-committee to prioritize upland wetland buffers in acquisition efforts	Community Preservation Committee Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee,	Town budget, CPA Funds	On-going

Objective: Preserve and protect wildlife habitat			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Document rare and endangered species and survey wildlife and vegetation communities	Volunteers, Conservation Commission, NHESP	Volunteer funds	On-going
Identify and prioritize key habitat along rivers and ponds and advocate for public acquisition	Open Space Committee; Community Preservation Committee	CPA Funds	On-going
Advice on the transfer of suitable undeveloped tax title properties to the appropriate board or commission in accordance with open space priorities	Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Town Meeting	Town budget, CPA Funds	On-going

Objective: monitor water quality			
Actions	Responsible Party	Potential Funding Sources	Timetable
Identify needs for further water quality monitoring and testing of streams, ponds, and lakes	Board of Health; MRWC	Town budget	On-going
Identify Open Space Comm. representative to focus on water issues and participate in MRWC	Open Space Comm.	Town budget	Short term

