

## **ELEMENT III**

### **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

*"Shall include an inventory of recreational resources, open space areas and recorded access to such resources and areas. The element shall also contain an analysis of forecasted needs and policies for the management and protection of such resources and areas. The policies and implementation techniques must be identified for inclusion in the implementation program."*

Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act of 1988, Open Space and Recreation Element.

#### **SECTION I INTRODUCTION**

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that the Town of West Greenwich experienced any significant growth and development. This growth pattern has left most of the Town's open spaces and natural beauty, the type of which has been lost to development in other communities in Rhode Island. The sense of openness in the Town is due to large areas dedicated to public use in the form of the Arcadia Management Area, the W. Alton Jones Campus of the University of Rhode Island, the Big River Reservoir property, Wickaboxet Management Area, Beach Pond State Park and other public lands. Despite such large areas in public ownership, most of the Town's private land is susceptible to development as rising property values continue to spur increasing density of active land use. Fortunately, the Town has recognized that choices are available; planning for the future is an option that can manage the growth of the Town and preserve valuable parts of the land for open space, recreation and conservation purposes.

This Open Space and Recreation Element is a step toward maintaining valuable natural resources and preserving a quality of life for this and future generations. Specifically, the Open Space and Recreation Element responds to the Town's needs to identify existing recreational sites, conservation areas and open space; to determine the recreational needs of its citizens; and to present an overall plan of action to enhance recreational opportunities and preserve the natural resources of West Greenwich for future generations.

**Map 1**

**Open Space/Recreation Map**

**A. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION MAP**

The Open Space and Recreation Map shows proposed recreational sites and existing open space and public park lands. The inventory in Section II of this Element relates directly to this map and should be referred to frequently.

**B. STATE GUIDE PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

The Act requires that the Open Space and Recreation Plan Element demonstrate consistency with the following State Guide Plan Elements:

110 - Goals and Policies

121 - Land Use 2010: State Land Use Policies and Plan

152 - Ocean State Outdoors: RI SCORP

161 - Forest Resources Management Plan

and the following Goals of the Act:

(1) To promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for use and the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services and facilities.

(4) To promote the protection of the natural, historic and cultural resources of each municipality and the state.

(5) To promote the preservation of the open space and recreational resources of each municipality and the state.

(6) To encourage the use of innovative development regulations and techniques that promote the development of land suitable for development while protecting our natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources and achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.

## **SECTION II - INVENTORY & ANALYSIS**

### **A. TOWN OF WEST GREENWICH - ONGOING CONSERVATION EFFORTS**

The Town has undertaken a number of important steps to protect its open spaces and recreational sites. These are summarized below.

#### **1. Farm, Forest and Open Space Act**

The Town makes successful use of the State's Farm, Forest and Open Space Act that allows land owners with more than ten acres to apply for local tax assessment relief. Approximately 165 property owners have successfully utilized this State/Local program to ensure that large tracts of land would remain in open space.

#### **2. Open Space Zoning**

The Town's Zoning Ordinance mandates the provision of a special designation of all State, Town and quasi-public open space to become part of the Open Space and Public Land (OSPL) zoning district (Page 30 of the Zoning Ordinance). This provision restricts the use of these areas for any use other than open space and recreation. The purpose of this zone is to insure all OSPL properties owned by a public agency have a district associated with it in the event of transference or sale. This district regulates and manages any parcel or area of land or water essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated, reserved, and preserved from private development. Such land includes the W. Alton Jones Campus, State owned Big River Reservoir property, Wickaboxet Management Area, Arcadia Management Area, Beach Pond State Park and other designated public land or water. A zoning district would safeguard such property therein, in the event of transference or sale, while granting via special-use permit exclusively, select public-related uses.

#### **3. Interior Building Lots**

The Land Use and Housing Elements are recommending the use of Interior Building Lots (IBL) in the Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of the IBL is to maintain and preserve the historically rural character of the Town; to preserve environmentally-sensitive areas and protect open space/wildlife corridors; to protect against suburban sprawl and increased service demands resulting from major subdivision development; and to assure

affordable housing opportunities.

The IBL concept involves the subdivision of a buildable lot, which has more than the required road frontage (minimum 230 feet), but cannot be subdivided in the conventional sense where all future lots will have frontage on a town or state road. The existing lot of record must conform to zoning setback and sideyard regulations. An "interior building lot" can be created to allow for a maximum of one single-family dwelling in perpetuity. The IBL may be authorized only in an RFR-2 district.

Only one (1) IBL may be established through a subdivision of the original tract or lot. IBL's shall not be allowed in tracts or lots originally approved and endorsed by the Planning Board as lots in "major subdivisions" as defined in local Subdivision Regulations. Any original lot shall have a minimum land area dimension of ten (10) acres (in accordance with local open space tax program - see Appendix for preliminary ordinance).

#### **4. Youth Litter Corps**

As a means of assisting in the cleanup of litter on various Town and State properties, the Town has successfully utilized with grant assistance from the R.I. Department of Environmental Management OSCAR Program, the "Youth Litter Corps or Clean Team."

The Town has hired six young people between the ages of 14 to 17 to work nine weeks during the summer to clean up litter, automobile tires, bottles, cans and any other debris that is present along the roads and other open space areas. The Town is committed to continued support to assist the State in managing litter control on Town and State property.

#### **5. State Greenways Program**

The Town is committed to participating in the State Greenways Program. This includes mapping and identifying local greenways and working with neighboring towns to develop a regional greenway system.

#### **6. Scenic Roads**

The Town is working with the Department of Transportation to implement a designation program. This involves identifying roads that have historic or scenic value. These roads will benefit from State protection and local regulation to maintain historic landscapes and scenic quality.

**B. PUBLIC LANDS - INVENTORY AND MANAGEMENT AREAS**

In this section, the State and local lands are described and documented. The State, by far, owns the largest tracts within the Town. Over 39% of the Town's lands are owned by one or more State agency. Local and private jurisdictions own another 2%. These are described below.

**1. Arcadia Management Area<sup>1</sup>**

The Arcadia Wildlife Management Area, whose uses include hunting, fishing, swimming, hiking, camping, horseback riding, mountain biking, and canoeing, covers a total land area of 13,817 acres of which 16% to 18% is in the Town of West Greenwich, while the rest covers Exeter, Hopkinton and Richmond. State Route 165 divides the management area into a north and south section. The Town's Tax Assessors measure Arcadia at 2,255.7 acres, while the State's 1989 Inventory of Recreation, Conservation and Open Space places Arcadia within West Greenwich at 2,569.7 acres.

Arcadia Management Council (AMC) is responsible for the administration and maintenance of the Arcadia properties. The AMC includes representatives from Divisions in the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) that have a significant interest in the Arcadia Region. AMC Member Divisions include Division of Forest Environment (DFE designated lead agency); Fish and Wildlife; Enforcement; Planning and Development; and Parks and Recreation.

The main access point to the north section is located just east of the bridge at Wood River along Midway Trail, where there is a gravel parking area. Access to the south section can be gained along Old Nooseneck Road, K-G Ranch Road or Summit Road. Numerous gated trails and other gravel roads exist throughout the management area which permit foot traffic or non-motorized vehicles only. The management area is found on the Hope Valley and Voluntown U.S.G.S. Topographic quad sheets.

Arcadia is the largest of the State Management Areas. The area is dominated by forest cover (11,576 acres) in mixed species deciduous forest (64%) and evergreen forest (36%), principally white pine. Freshwater wetlands including swamps, shrub wetlands,

---

<sup>1</sup> This subsection is largely excerpted from "Atlas of Rhode Island Wildlife Management Areas," by Brian C. Tefft, Division of Fish, Wildlife and Estuarine Resources, R. I. Department of Environmental Management (July 29, 1993).

marshes and open water bodies cover 1,678 acres. Major bodies of water within the area include Breakheart Pond, Beach Pond, and Browning Mill Pond. The Wood River, one of the finest trout streams in the state and Rhode Island's best example of a scenic and wild river, flows through the management area. Primary tributaries to the Wood River include the Falls River, Flat River, Parris Brook and Roaring Brook, all found within the management area. The State actively manages 1.1% of the land acreage (156 acres) in agricultural fields to create food plots and plantings for wildlife.

Arcadia Management Area contains resident wildlife of a broad diversity of groups, including several game animals and fish and numerous nongame species. Typical game mammals found there include cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hare, gray squirrel, white-tailed deer and furbearers including fox, raccoon, and mink. Typical game birds include ruffed grouse, wild turkey, ring-necked pheasant and bobwhite. Both pheasants and bobwhite are stocked by the state during the hunting season. Diverse habitat types present within the area attract a wide variety of nongame species providing opportunity for wildlife observation of songbirds and raptors, reptiles and amphibians. Wood River and tributaries provide fine fishing for trout, with portions of the area designated catch and release. Warm and cold water fish are found in the Area's ponds, including trout, bass, and pickerel. Frosty Hollow Pond is stocked with trout and is managed for youth (under fourteen) fishing only.

## **2. Wickaboxet Wildlife Management Area**

Wickaboxet Wildlife Management Area is entirely located within the Town of West Greenwich. Access to the area is gained from Plain Meeting House Road to a small parking area along Wickaboxet Trail. The gravel roads within the management area are gated to limit access to foot traffic and non-motorized vehicles only. The management area is found on the Coventry, RI topographic quad sheet. Wickaboxet Management Area covers a total land area of 668 acres, according to the DEM 1989 Inventory. The Town's Tax Assessor records estimates this area to be 721.9 acres.

The land is dominated by forested cover composed of primarily deciduous forest cover (589 acres, or 86% of area) and evergreen forest cover (27 acres, or 3% of area). Wetlands cover the remainder of the parcel (60 acres) consisting of forested and shrub dominated wetlands. Typical game mammals found inhabiting the Wickaboxet area include cottontail rabbits, gray squirrel, white-tailed deer, and furbearers such as fox, coyote, and

raccoon. Gamebirds using the area include ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and woodcock. Forest habitats present also support populations of nongame wildlife, including various songbirds, birds of prey, amphibians, reptiles and insects, with ample opportunity for observation of these species.

### **3. Liberty Tract**

The Liberty Tract is managed as part of the Arcadia Management Area, even though its 29 acres are not contiguous to Arcadia. The site is accessible between Liberty Hill Road and Plain Road. There are five walking trails available to local residents. Liberty Tract is entirely within the Town of West Greenwich.

### **4. Big River Wildlife Management Area**

Big River is located in the towns of West Greenwich, Exeter, Coventry and East Greenwich, with the major portion within West Greenwich. Interstate Route 95 separates the southern section from the northern segment that extends in Coventry. Access can be gained to the south segment along several roadways, of which Nooseneck Hill Road (Route 3) and Division Street are major roads. Several gravel roads also exist within the area, most of which are gated to limit vehicle access. Access to the north segment is limited but occurs along Harkney Hill Road. Access to Big River and Flat River Reservoir is available at Route 3 Zekes Bridge (boat ramp) and the fishermen's access off Weaver Hill Road. USGS Topographic maps Crompton and Slocum Quads cover the area.

Big River covers a total area of 8,319 acres, of which over 86% or 7,181.6 acres is in West Greenwich. The Town's Tax Assessor records estimates the latter figure to be 6,945.0 acres. The area is composed of mainly forest land (evergreens 4,374 acres, deciduous 1,781 acres), wetlands (1,288 acres), agricultural lands (233 acres), and other areas (gravel, residential and other uses 407 acres). Major rivers or streams in the area are Big River, Nooseneck River, Congdon River and Carr River.

Big River Wildlife Management Area contains the diversity of habitats necessary to support a wide range of wildlife. Typical game mammals found there include cottontail rabbits, gray squirrel, white-tailed deer, fox, raccoon and mink. Typical game birds include ruffed grouse and wild turkey, while some wetlands support waterfowl. Ample opportunity also exists to observe many nongame birds, mammals and insects throughout the area. Fishing for both stocked and native trout is available in Big River,



which also supports several species of warm water fish.

Big River is owned by the Rhode Island Water Resources Board and managed by Arcadia Management Council. Management activities include enforcement, road maintenance, installing and maintaining gates and barways as needed. The State Water Resources Board, with assistance from the University of Rhode Island's Natural Resources Department and designated public officials, is collaborating to create an updated land management plan for the entire Big River Reservoir Area at this time.

The Big River Management Area began as a reservoir project in 1964, which had been in various planning stages decades earlier.

In November of 1964, the State voters adopted a referendum for the acquisition of the necessary land for the Big River and Wood River Reservoirs. That same year, the voters also approved a bond issue for Big River Reservoir Referendum for \$5 million to be used to purchase site property.

In June of 1965, the R. I. Water Resources Board hired the engineering firm CE Maguire & Co. to survey the land to be taken and appraisers were hired to appraise the land value. Based on the survey information, CE Maguire issued a condemnation map. That year, the major issues that had to be addressed included 1) financing of project; 2) construction and operation; and 3) relocation of owners of 322 tracts of land. By November, condemnation proceedings claimed 1,088 acres of land from private owners and town residents. In January 1966, the State took over another 7,000 acres by eminent domain.

The Providence Water Supply Board reported that it could handle the financial aspects of development and operation of the Big River Reservoir. The Board said that they did not favor multi-use, since it would add to the cost of treatment and open the door to potential liability suits.

From 1966 to 1967, a number of disputes were waged in court concerning the payment of money to owners of condemned land. The State's position was to pay the appraised market value, while the owners claimed that the State should pay the replacement value of land taken. During this period, a referendum was initiated for \$4 million to pay for land taking costs associated with Big River. By September 1967, 78% of the land cases were settled.

## **5. University of Rhode Island - W. Alton Jones Campus**

The University of Rhode Island owns and maintains 2,326.5 acres

of largely forested lands with open meadows, wetlands, nature trails, farmlands and ponds. The land was donated to the University of Rhode Island in 1962 by the late W. Alton Jones.

The campus has three main components:

- a. Whispering Pines Conference Center with an existing room capacity 18 rooms and 36 beds. A new building, whose construction is in progress, will add 14 rooms and 28 beds. This will bring the total capacity to 32 rooms and 64 beds. The center is capable of handling conferences with meeting rooms and dining facilities. About 80% of conferences are held overnight.
- b. Environmental Education Center with various educational programs for range of ages (kindergarten through college age). This center is capable of housing five cabins with a total occupancy of 94 people.
- c. Research Facility with environmental project research facilities, including plant & animal studies, botany, zoology, water quality, and pond quality. URI faculty use these facilities in conjunction with collaborative research projects with other area universities and colleges.

## **6. Summary of State owned Properties**

As noted above, there are discrepancies in the actual acreage calculations between the DEM 1989 Inventory and the Town's Assessors Office. These discrepancies are not great and are likely based on different methods of calculation.

The following Table (Table 1) below summarizes the State owned sites, lists them by plat and lot and gives the acreage by both the State and the Town Assessors. The noteworthy aspect of the table is that by either calculation, over 12,973 acres or 39.6% of the Town's total acreage of 32,733 acres is owned by one or more agencies of the State of Rhode Island.

**Table 1 - Summary of Open Space, Recreation Sites and  
Conservation Areas owned by the State of Rhode Island in West  
Greenwich in 1989**

Site	Plat / Lot	Acres* (Town)	Acres* (DEM)	Comments
Arcadia Management Area (within West Greenwich)	35/2 47/2	2,255.7	2,569.7	Includes 15 miles of Horse Trails and 8 miles of Hiking Trails
Pinetop Area	45/1 45/2	585.5		Pinetop area is part of Arcadia and is included in the State figure
Wickaboxet Management Area	34/1 38/11 31/2,3 32/9	721.9	668.0	
Beach Pond State Park	44/1 43/1 43/2	139.0		Not listed in the DEM Inventory
Liberty Tract			29.0	Not listed in the Town Inventory
Big River Reservoir	7/1 7/2	6,945.0	7,181.6	Includes three Boat Ramps
URI - W. Alton Jones Campus	35/1 35/2	2,326.5	2,324.0	NOTE: Not accessible to Town residents.
TOTAL		12,973.6	12,772.3	

\* Represents acreage calculation discrepancy.

**C. QUASI-PUBLIC OPEN SPACE & RECREATION SITES****1. Audubon Society Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge**

The Audubon Society owns a total of 580 acres in West Greenwich and Exeter of which approximately 97 acres are in West Greenwich. This property is open to the public for walking trails and is located south of Henry Brown Road near the Exeter boundary line.

Access is available off Pardon Joslin Road in Exeter. The Audubon Society plans to establish a children's day camp and nature center on the property.

**D. PRIVATE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION EASEMENT****1. Pysz Farm**

The Pysz Farm is a 154 acre tract of undeveloped forest and open space land off Weaver Hill Road. It was operated as a small family-owned farm since before the Revolutionary War. The then Rhode Island Natural Heritage Preservation Commission (now R. I. Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission) recognized the many exceptional characteristics of this western upland terrain and selected it for preservation through a property conservation easement secured through donation from the Edwin Pysz family and the State Open Space Grant funds to purchase the development rights.

The reasons cited for preservation included the following values:

- a. Rare and Endangered Species: Various rare native plants and the wood turtle.
- b. Critical and Uncommon Habitat Type: Basin Fen.
- c. Very Good Examples of Common Community Types: Deciduous Swamp, Deciduous Upland Forest, White Pine Forest.
- d. Habitat Diversity: Open Agricultural Field & Meadows.

A professional management plan has been developed to provide guidance in managing and preserving these values. The owners will retain title to the property combining a diversity of management strategies including:

- Agricultural use
- Forestry practices

- Watershed protection
- Wildlife conservation
- Endangered species & critical habitat protection
- Environmental education
- Research access

**E. PRIVATE ASSOCIATION OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PROPERTY**

**1. South County Rod & Gun Club**

- Property approximately 254.3 acres in West Greenwich (100 acres in Exeter).
- Property located off Hazard Road in southwestern corner of West Greenwich with adjacent property in Exeter.
- Private organization with approximately 300 members.
- Facilities: Shooting - rifle, skeet, pistol  
Hunting  
Fishing  
Camping  
Meeting Hall for outings, dinners, etc.
- Caretaker living on premises.

**2. R.I. Fish & Game Protective Association**

- Property approximately 84.4 acres.
- Property located off Sharpe Street.
- Private fishing/sporting organization.
- Limited to 125 active membership (waiting list - 6 years)
- Facilities: Trout/bass fishing ponds  
Three shooting ranges  
Clubhouse for outings/clambakes/steak frys/ meetings, etc.

**3. Rhode Island Coon Hunters Association**

- Private sporting organization with 42 acres in West Greenwich and approximately 60 acres of land located in Exeter.
- Property located in southeastern corner of West Greenwich with majority of property located in the Town of Exeter.
- Approximately 30 - 35 members - main activities include hunting of raccoon, deer, bird, rabbit and training of dogs.

**4. Wickaboxet Camp Association**

- Private organization created by Bailey Pond Estates subdivision.
- Land is common open space for all association members. Association owns (2) parcels: 4.7 acres located on Bailey Pond for beach access/picnic grounds and 38 acres of common open space located between Niantic Trail and Hazard Road.

**5. The Saddle Rock Association**

- Private association created by Saddle Rock Subdivision for purpose of scenic view easement for property owners.
- Land is held by all property owners in subdivision (4.3 acres).

**6. Mishnock Beach Association**

- Private homeowners association for purpose of maintaining Lake Mishnock beach access parcel.
- Serves approximately 40 - 45 homeowners with main use of parcel recreational uses - beach/waterfront access, picnics, playground area (property 1,200 square feet located off Mishnock Road).

- Includes 80 feet of beach frontage and a tot lot.

**7. Mishnock Terrace Beach Association**

- Private homeowners association for purpose of maintaining Lake Mishnock beachfront property.
- Property 0.9 acres located off Club House Road.
- Includes 75 feet of beach frontage.

Table 2 summarizes Quasi-Public, Conservation Easement and Private Association Open Space and Recreation Property within the Town of West Greenwich.

**Table 2 - Quasi-Public, Conservation Easement and Private  
Association Open Space & Recreation Property Summary**

	<u>PLAT/LOT</u>	<u>ACRES</u>
1. South County Rod & Gun Club	42/3-1	10.3
South County Rod & Gun Club	43/3	244.0
TOTAL S.C. ROD & GUN CLUB		254.3
2. Rhode Island Fish & Game Protective Association		
TOTAL	22/1	84.4
3. Rhode Island Coon Hunters Association		
TOTAL	60/3	42.0
4. Audubon Society of R.I. Fisherville Brook Property		
TOTAL	52/1	97.0
5. Paul & Edwin Pysz Farm Conservation Easement to Town of West Greenwich		
TOTAL	9/1-3	154.0
6. Wickaboxet Camp Association	41/33	4.7
Wickaboxet Camp Association	41/97	38.0
TOTAL		42.7
7. The Saddle Rock Association		
TOTAL	32/6	4.3
8. Mishnock Beach Association	4/161	1,200
TOTAL		sq.ft.
9. Mishnock Terrace Beach Association		
TOTAL	5/102-1	0.9
<b>TOTAL FOR TOWN OF WEST GREENWICH</b>		<b>679.7</b>



**F. PRIVATELY OWNED - ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC - OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL AREAS****1. Steppingstone Ranch**

This 80 acre privately owned horse stable, located in the Escoheag area, is open to the public for horseback riding purposes. In addition, picnic facilities are available to service clientele through the summer. Most notably, the site provides scheduled summer musical events, culminating in the regionally significant annual Cajun-Bluegrass Festival held on Labor Day weekend.

**2. Oak Embers Camp Grounds**

The Oak Embers Camp Grounds can accommodate approximately sixty camp sites, mostly for small trailers and similar recreational vehicles. This site contains about 8.6 acres adjacent to the Steppingstone Ranch in the western side of town.

**G. TOWN AND/OR SCHOOL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES****1. Town Hall<sup>2</sup>**

The Town Hall, Police Station, Highway Garage and Library are located on 38 acres. The site is separated in two areas. The first being the Town Hall and Library "front yards", and the second being the expansive area behind all existing town facilities.

The yards in front of the Town Hall and library are already very important spaces for the West Greenwich Community. Aesthetically, they provide a setting for the two buildings to all those passing on Route 102. Functionally, they are logical places for people to gather. The areas have evolved to become the chosen sites for town picnics and parade preparations. These uses are important for projecting a town image, as well as creating citizen enthusiasm and loyalty to the Town.

A consultant's study recommends that these uses should not only remain, but be supported. Improvements can define the area, and create spaces that invite users. The objective would be to

---

<sup>2</sup> This subsection is excerpted from "Conceptual Master Plan Analysis of the Proposed West Greenwich Recreation Facility," by Gifford & Fairbanks, December, 1993.

encourage use even when no event is planned. For example, a paved pedestrian area outside of the Town Hall front door could incorporate the existing flagpole and monument, and provide a pleasant space for town employees to eat lunch, or citizens to gather before a Town Council Meeting.

There has been interest to create a playground area in the vicinity of the Library. This use would conform well with the objective stated above. An outdoor sitting/reading area would accommodate parents of the playground users, as well as provide a transitional space between the library and the play structure. Again, the facility would encourage use of the space outside of the Library without a planned event.

Later phases of the overall Master Plan may include soccer and/or football fields, a baseball field and basketball courts. There has even been some interest expressed in the development of a street hockey court. The Town, in developing a plan for recreation should not overlook passive recreation. Statewide, it has been determined that facilities with very active uses (such as soccer and football) tend to develop passive needs, such as walking/running tracks. This is understandable, since athletic events are often family affairs. Senior citizens, parents and young children often come to the events as spectators.

The consultants estimate the first phases, including site preparation, playgrounds, structures and paved pedestrian areas to cost over \$85,500, while later phases could reach about \$675,000.

## **2. Town Transfer Station**

It should be noted the Town's Transfer Station is located on a 72.2-acre parcel located off of Bates Trail near the eastern border of town. Residents may bring their solid waste and recyclables to this Town-owned facility during designated times. Much of this property remains as natural open space.

## **3. Linehan School Area**

The Town owns approximately 13.5 acres of land behind the Linehan School. This property is currently being developed into two (2) new ballfields to serve the varied recreational needs of both local and regional recreation organizations.

**Table 3 - Summary of Open Space or Recreation Sites owned by Town or Private Entrepreneurs in West Greenwich in 1995**

Site	Acres	Comments
<b>Town</b>		
Town Hall Site	38.0	Includes 3 picnic tables and hiking trails
Transfer Station	72.2	Much of land in natural open space
Behind Linehan School	13.5	Upper Field: Includes tot lot and 2-new ballfields in progress
<b>Private</b>		
Steppingstone Ranch (Stables)	80.0	Includes 15 picnic tables and 1-mile of horse trails
Oak Embers Camp	8.6	Includes 60 campsites and 25 picnic tables
Mishnock Grove	8.2	Includes 1 gamefield + 420 feet of beach frontage
<b>TOTAL ACREAGE</b>	<b>220.5</b>	

Significant open space and recreation sites owned by the State (approximately 12,974 acres); by quasi-public, conservation easement, and private association (approximately 680 acres); and by the Town and private entrepreneurs (approximately 220 acres) totals nearly 14,000 acres or over 41% of the Town's total acreage.

#### **4. Exeter - West Greenwich Regional School District Facilities**

The following recreational facilities are available at the four (4) regional school district sites noted below. A detailed description of each facility can be obtained in the Community Facilities and Public Service Element (see Element V for applicable data and map).

- a. E/WG Junior - Senior High School Facilities:
  - Baseball/Softball Fields

- Football/Soccer Field
- Tennis Courts (2)
- Track
- b. Metcalf School
  - Baseball/Softball Fields (3)
- c. Wawaloam School
  - Baseball Fields (3)
- d. Lineham School
  - Playground, Tot Lot
  - Softball Fields (4)

## **5. Recreation Organizations**

- a. E/WG Little League Baseball
- b. E/WG Youth Basketball Association
- c. WG Summer Recreation Program
- d. E/WG Knights Pop Warner Football & Cheerleading Association
- e. Ocean State Soccer
- f. Babe Ruth Senior Baseball League
- g. WG Girls Softball League

## **H. RECREATIONAL FACILITY DEVELOPMENT - NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Three (3) specific areas in town are referenced for further recreational analysis. The Town recognizes the recreation potential associated with these sites located away from school facilities: One, the Town Hall Site; two, Mishnock Area; and three, the Bailey Pond or western area.

### **1. Town Hall Site**

The Town Hall property consisting of 38 acres is ideal for the

development of a regional recreation facility. There are few environmental constraints, and the topography would allow for the development of athletic fields. Maintenance by the Town's Highway Department is facilitated by the close proximity to the site.

The development of pedestrian areas outside of Town Hall and the Library, as well as a play structure in the vicinity of the library would be a logical Phase One to an overall development plan, since it is already apparent that these improvements would be used. Later phases involve more extensive planning, and a greater financial commitment by the Town.

At the time of the consultant report, the specifics of West Greenwich's overall recreation needs had not been determined. It was not intended that this analysis provide an answer to this important issue.

A recreational advisory committee calling itself the "wRECKing CREW" has been working with the Town to develop the Town Hall site. It has since been determined by the Town Council that this site shall receive priority over other targeted recreation needs.

## **2. Mishnock Area**

The need was identified for land acquisition for a public playground to serve neighborhood recreational needs. It has been determined that a public-oriented recreation site should be provided to serve the high density population germane to this area.

## **3. Bailey Pond Area or Western Area**

It has been determined that a public-oriented active recreation site to better serve residents in the western end of town should receive consideration.

There is a potential need for a public access changing and toilet facility for Bailey Pond. The private Wickaboxet Camp Association has facilities, but are not available to the public.

## **4. North-South Trail**

There is a potential opportunity to make use of the North-South Trail that could provide future linkages to various recreational sites around the town (e.g., Wickaboxet Management Area, W. Alton Jones Campus, Big River Management Area). As the Town of West

Greenwich is geographically located adjacent to other rural communities that have formed a large green belt separating urban areas, the potential exists to provide GREENWAYS through a developed system of trails that link various state-owned properties.

**SECTION III OPEN SPACE & RECREATION GOALS & POLICIES**

**A. GOALS**

- G#1** Identify, inventory, and protect significant open space and recreation areas that promote the preservation of natural resources and the rural identity of the community
- G#2** Promote the preservation and conservation of public and private open space areas
- G#3** Protect, preserve, and manage natural resources and those environmentally-sensitive areas deemed worthy of preservation for open space and active/passive recreational needs
- G#4** Adopt regulatory measures to guide and manage development activity that threatens to degrade valuable natural resources and severe constraints to development
- G#5** Promote conservation, preservation, and enhancement of family farming/agricultural opportunities to protect large tracts of open space from subdivision and to further enhance the rural identity of the Town
- G#6** As the Town is located amidst adjacent communities that have formed a large Greenbelt separating urban areas, it is recommended the Town be promoted as a regionally-significant GREENWAY by encouraging "Greenway Corridor Connections" that link various state-owned properties with abutting communities
- G#7** Plan and implement GREENWAYS and greenspace as part of community development and as a means of utilizing the potential aesthetic benefits thereof
- G#8** Develop strategies through educational activities to inform, enhance, and elevate public awareness of the contributions that GREENWAYS, Scenic Highway designation, Flexible land use techniques, and the State Farm, Forest, & Open Space Act have on preserving the rural quality of life in the Town
- G#9** Develop strategies to guide efforts to protect open space resources and to provide varied recreational opportunities
- G#10** Provide opportunities for both active and passive recreational facilities to service various neighborhoods in the Town

**B. POLICIES**

- P.1** The Town shall implement policies to preserve the rural character and scenic/visual resources of the community
- P.2** Emphasis shall be placed on the management of growth and development to enhance the traditional rural landscape and natural environment. Flexible land use regulations and techniques should be considered and adopted to guide growth and development in a direction that complements and preserves the inherent rural landscape and land use patterns of the Town
- P.3** To achieve natural & cultural resources preservation and prohibit compromise of existing sensitive areas, the Town supports the premise that land owned by the State and other quasi-public organizations be maintained as management areas
- P.4** Adopt a Scenic Road ordinance that includes appropriate measures to preserve and protect the rural character of the Town
- P.5** The Town should adopt measures designed to ensure protection of existing natural/cultural resources and open space. Future growth should be directed only to limited areas classified as "slight-moderate" constraints to development-- as shown on the "Composite Constraint Map" (see Natural and Cultural Resources Element)
- P.6** The Town shall utilize a variety of conservation techniques designed to promote preservation or management of environmentally-sensitive areas by promoting regulations and/or programs that discourages development of those areas labelled as "severe" constraints as shown on the "COMPOSITE Constraint Map" (see Resource Element)
- P.7** Preserve the capacity of the land for wildlife habitat, agriculture, wetlands and groundwater protection, and other town resource needs to the fullest extent possible by promoting use of Flexible development options and alternatives or land acquisition programs
- P.8** Encourage Flexible "Building Envelopes" through the use of a zoning overlay/ordinance or increase minimum residential building front yard varying setback standards ranging between 50-foot depth to 100-feet (in the RFR-2 district)



- P.9** Consideration should be given to promote an Interior Building Lot (IBL) ordinance as means of ensuring preservation of open space in perpetuity
- P.10** Consideration shall be given to promote Open Space Cluster Development as a means of protecting valuable cultural/natural resources and scenic areas that contribute significantly to the rural character of the Town
- P.11** Continue to promote an incentive to landowners to preserve private open space through the use of the State Farm, Forest, & Open Space Act program pertaining to property value assessment and taxation
- P.12** Identify and protect natural/cultural resources through development plan review, design guidelines, and Flexible development siting (see Development Impact Statement and IBL preliminary ordinances in Appendix)
- P.13** Develop a system of Greenways/Trails
- P.14** Promote the creation of "Loop Trails" (Spur Trails) connecting the North-South Trail with the Wickaboxet Management Area and the URI Alton-Jones Campus
- P.15** The Town shall coordinate with the RIDEM Division of Planning any Greenway plans pertaining to the existing North-South Trail
- P.16** Collaborate with the URI Alton-Jones Campus to potentially develop a "destination" location for the North-South Trail hikers that promotes Greenway Corridor linkages and economic incentives
- P.17** The Town should collaborate with the Alton-Jones Campus to develop strategies to promote open space preservation, Greenways, environmental education, and trail linkage
- P.18** Proposed linkage of the Alton-Jones Campus to Big River Management area could effectively connect the eastern and western areas of town by way of a designated Greenway. Said linkage may be achieved by creating a COMBINATION TRAIL

(hiking/horseback riding) along one (1) side of a designated route within the street Right-of-Way often reserved for sidewalk purposes. Three (3) routes are recommended; one, via Sharpe Street and Weaver Hill Road; two, via Linden Lane to Regina Drive to Fry Pond Road to Robin Hollow Road; and three, via John Potter Road to Old Raccoon Hill Road to Tanglewood Drive to Robin Hollow Road

- P.19** Recommend the Town consider subsidizing either through a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) or the open space recreation fund, the creation of said Greenway Combination Trail that connects the eastern and western areas of town via one 5-foot wide gravel base/stone dust trail or distinctive striping on paved roadways where necessary
- P.20** Recommend proposed subdivision roads--where practical--shall include Greenway Combination Trails on only one (1) side of the proposed roadways in the design of the Master Plan stage
- P.21** Promote the continuation of existing Subdivision Regulation policy requiring dedicated Open Space or "payment in lieu of dedication" in all major subdivision plans
- P.22** The Town recognizes the potential of three (3) major recreation areas away from school facilities: one; the Town Hall Site; two, Mishnock area; and three, the Bailey Pond or western area
- P.23** Promote the Town Hall open space/recreation site--which features the Town Hall and Library as destination points--as the Town Center
- P.24** Develop a non-profit West Greenwich Recreational Facility Committee to oversee and manage programs designed to provide for recreational opportunities for local residents at the Town Hall Site and Mishnock areas
- P.25** The Town shall follow the Gifford Master Plan study as a guide for of the Town Hall Site--dated December, 1993--recommending 6-Phases for development based on resource availability
- P.26** To further ensure open space land protection the Open Space & Public Land (OSPL) zoning district adopted by the Town is designed to further ensure protection of all OSPL owned by a public agency in the event of transference or sale

- P.27 Coordinate with the URI Alton-Jones Environmental Education program using a local Greenway as a field laboratory for use by schools, social clubs, and organizations
- P.28 The 38-acre Town Hall Site is recommended for Phased development as the priority site for servicing the recreational needs of the entire Town as the functioning Town Center
- P.29 Promote multi-purpose court development in Phase II of the Town Hall Site
- P.30 Continue to promote utilization of existing on-site school recreation facilities
- P.31 Locate resources to aid in financing and developing recreational facilities
- P.32 Recommend the Town acquire a land parcel (or seek donation thereof) in the Mishnock Area to service neighborhood public recreational needs
- P.33 The Town recommends and encourages the Bailey Pond area residents (Wickaboxet Camp Association) utilize, maintain, and seek grant funding for the existing Privately-owned open space/recreation area that serves neighborhood needs
- P.34 Consider employing a part-time Town Recreation Director to oversee open space/recreation issues
- P.35 Licensed campgrounds are encouraged in town where on-site facilities prove suitable to safely accommodate prospective clientele
- P.36 The Town should consider identifying and acquiring a land parcel in the western end of town to service neighborhood public active recreational needs or mandate future major subdivisions to provide said facilities

**SECTION IV - ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

**G = Goal**

**P = Policy**

**I = Implementation**

**Identify and Inventory**

**G#1** Identify, inventory, and protect significant open space and recreation areas that promote the preservation of natural resources and the rural identity of the community

**P.1** The Town shall implement policies to preserve the rural character and scenic/visual resources of the community

**Preservation and Conservation**

**G#2** Promote the preservation and conservation of public and private open space areas

**P.2** Emphasis shall be placed on the management of growth and development to enhance the traditional rural landscape and natural environment. Flexible land use regulations and techniques should be considered and adopted to guide growth and development in a direction that complements and preserves the inherent rural landscape and land use patterns of the Town

**I#1** Carry out proposals of the Natural and Cultural Resource Element and Land Use Element

**P.6** The Town shall utilize a variety of conservation techniques designed to promote preservation or management of environmentally-sensitive areas by promoting regulations and/or programs that discourages development of those areas labelled as "severe" constraints as shown on the "COMPOSITE Constraint Map" (see Resource Element)

**P.7** Preserve the capacity of the land for wildlife habitat, agriculture, wetlands and groundwater protection, and other town resource needs to the fullest extent possible by promoting use of Flexible development options and alternatives or land acquisition programs

**I#1** Amend Zoning Ordinance and/or Subdivision Regulations

**Manage Natural Resources**

**G#3** Protect, preserve, and manage natural resources and those environmentally-sensitive areas deemed worthy of preservation for open space and active/passive recreational needs

**P.3** To achieve natural & cultural resources preservation and prohibit compromise of existing sensitive areas, the Town supports the premise that land owned by the State and other quasi-public organizations be maintained as management areas

**I#1** The Town shall preserve open space resources by promoting the designation of scenic highways and granting continued support for the highly successful Youth Litter Corps program

**I#2** The Conservation Commission shall pursue establishment of a local Land Trust to promote and coordinate land conservation techniques such as conservation easements, grants, and purchase of development rights

**P.26** To further ensure open space land protection the Open Space & Public Land (OSPL) zoning district adopted by the Town is designed to further ensure protection of all OSPL owned by a public agency in the event of transference or sale

**Regulatory Measures**

**G#4** Adopt regulatory measures to guide and manage development activity that threatens to degrade valuable natural resources and severe constraints to development

**P.4** Adopt a Scenic Road ordinance that includes appropriate measures to preserve and protect the rural character of the Town

**P.5** The Town should adopt measures designed to ensure protection of existing natural/cultural resources and open space. Future growth should be directed only to limited areas classified as "slight-moderate" constraints to development--as shown on the "Composite Constraint Map" (see Natural and Cultural Resources Element)

- P.8** Encourage Flexible "Building Envelopes" through the use of a zoning overlay/ordinance or increase minimum residential building front yard varying setback standards ranging between 50-foot depth to 100-feet (in the RFR-2 district)
- I#1** Amend Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations
- P.9** Consideration should be given to promote an Interior Building Lot (IBL) ordinance as means of ensuring preservation of open space in perpetuity (see IBL in Appendix)
- I#1** Adoption of an Interior Building Lot (IBL) ordinance that promotes limited development of large tracts of land thereby ensuring preservation of open space in perpetuity
- P.10** Consideration shall be given to promote Open Space Cluster Development as a means of protecting valuable cultural/ natural resources and scenic areas that contribute significantly to the rural character of the Town
- I#1** Adoption of other types of Flexible zoning techniques designed to ensure preservation of severe constraints include: e.g. open space cluster, DIS, and variable setbacks
- P.12** Identify and protect natural/cultural resources through development plan review, design guidelines, and Flexible development siting (see Development Impact Statement in Appendix)
- I#1** Amend Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations
- P.20** Recommend proposed subdivision roads--where practical--shall include Greenway Combination Trails on only one (1) side of the proposed roadways in the design of the Master Plan stage
- I#1** Amend Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations
- P.21** Promote the continuation of existing Subdivision Regulation policy requiring dedicated Open Space or "payment in lieu of dedication" in all major subdivision plans

- I#1** Adoption of Subdivision Regulation requiring the developer, where applicable, to install trails, ball field or a multi-purpose playground to serve neighborhood recreational needs

#### **Farming/Agricultural Opportunities**

- G#5** Promote conservation, preservation, and enhancement of family farming/agricultural opportunities to protect large tracts of open space from subdivision and to further enhance the rural identity of the Town

- P.11** Continue to promote an incentive to landowners to preserve private open space through the use of the State Farm, Forest, & Open Space Act program pertaining to property value assessment and taxation

#### **Greenway Corridor Connections**

- G#6** As the Town is located amidst adjacent communities that have formed a large Greenbelt separating urban areas, it is recommended the Town be promoted as a regionally-significant GREENWAY by encouraging "Greenway Corridor Connections" that link various state-owned properties with abutting communities

- P.13** Develop a system of Greenways/Trails

- I#1** A base Street Map shall be utilized by the Conservation Commission to create a map showing all hiking trails and horseback riding opportunities in the Town

- P.14** Promote the creation of "Loop Trails" (Spur Trails) connecting the North-South Trail with the Wickaboxet Management Area and the URI Alton-Jones Campus

- P.18** Proposed linkage of the Alton-Jones Campus to Big River Management area could effectively connect the eastern and western areas of town by way of a designated Greenway. Said linkage may be achieved by creating a COMBINATION TRAIL (hiking/horseback riding) along one (1) side of a designated route within the street Right-of-Way often reserved for sidewalk purposes. Three (3)

routes are recommended; one, via Sharpe Street and Weaver Hill Road; two, via Linden Lane to Regina Drive to Fry Pond Road to Robin Hollow Road; and three, via John Potter Road to Old Raccoon Hill Road to Tanglewood Drive to Robin Hollow Road

**P.19** Recommend the Town consider subsidizing either through a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) or the open space recreation fund, the creation of said Greenway Combination Trail that connects the eastern and western areas of town via one 5-foot wide gravel base/stone dust trail or distinctive striping on paved roadways where necessary

**I#1** The Conservation Commission and Planning Board shall identify and map detailed Greenway Corridor Connections via use of Assessor Plat Maps and associated reference maps as a means of developing an interconnected system of Greenways

**I#2** The Conservation Commission and Planning Board shall promote Greenway Corridor Connections through cooperative review of subdivision plans and by identifying select parcels worthy of potential acquisition

**I#3** The Conservation Commission and Planning Board shall work closely with developers to include a Greenway component in the Master Plan stage

#### **Aesthetic Benefits**

**G#7** Plan and implement GREENWAYS and greenspace as part of community development and as a means of utilizing the potential aesthetic benefits thereof

**P.15** The Town shall coordinate with the RIDEM Division of Planning any Greenway plans pertaining to the existing North-South Trail

**P.16** Collaborate with the URI Alton-Jones Campus to potentially develop a "destination" location for the North-South Trail hikers that promotes Greenway Corridor linkages and economic incentives

**P.17** The Town should collaborate with the Alton-Jones Campus



to develop strategies to promote open space preservation, Greenways, environmental education, and trail linkage

**Educational Activities and Public Awareness**

**G#8** Develop strategies through educational activities to inform, enhance, and elevate public awareness of the contributions that GREENWAYS, Scenic Highway designation, Flexible land use techniques, and the State Farm, Forest, & Open Space Act have on preserving the rural quality of life in the Town

**P.27** Coordinate with the URI Alton-Jones Environmental Education program using a local Greenway as a field laboratory for use by schools, social clubs, and organizations

**Recreational Opportunities**

**G#9** Develop strategies to guide efforts to protect open space resources and to provide varied recreational opportunities

**P.30** Continue to promote utilization of existing on-site school recreation facilities

**I#1** The Town Council shall work with the local school system, on an on-going basis regarding the maintenance, expansion, and use of existing onsite recreational facilities and in the development of additional facilities

**P.22** The Town recognizes the potential of three (3) major recreation areas away from school facilities: one; the Town Hall Site; two, Mishnock area; and three, the Bailey Pond or western area

**P.23** Promote the Town Hall open space/recreation site--which features the Town Hall and Library as destination points--as the Town Center

**P.24** Develop a non-profit West Greenwich Recreational Facility Committee to oversee and manage programs designed to provide for recreational opportunities for local residents at the Town Hall Site and Mishnock areas

- I#1** The West Greenwich Recreational Facility Committee shall report to the Town Council and coordinate plans with town administrators, state and other agencies in enhancing the development of the Town Hall Site and Mishnock Area
- P.25** The Town shall follow the Gifford Master Plan study as a guide for the Town Hall Site--dated December, 1993--recommending 6-Phases for development based on resource availability
- P.28** The 38-acre Town Hall Site is recommended for Phased development as the priority site for servicing the recreational needs of the entire Town as the functioning Town Center
- P.29** Promote multi-purpose court development in Phase II of the Town Hall Site
- P.31** Locate resources to aid in financing and developing recreational facilities
  - I#1** Recommend the Town's grant agent apply for Town Hall Site open space/recreation funding available through the RIDEM, Champlin Foundation, RI Foundation, and other sources
- P.34** Consider employing a part-time Town Recreation Director to oversee open space/recreation issues
- P.35** Licensed campgrounds are encouraged in town where on-site facilities prove suitable to safely accommodate prospective clientele

### **Neighborhood Recreation**

- G#10** Provide opportunities for both active and passive recreational facilities to service various neighborhoods in the Town
  - P.32** Recommend the Town acquire a land parcel (or seek donation thereof) in the Mishnock Area to service neighborhood public recreational needs
    - I#1** The Town's grant agent shall prepare applications to seek CDBG funds for the possible acquisition of

land and/or recreation equipment to service the Lake Mishnock area public neighborhood

**I#2** The Town Council shall create a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to allocate local funds to assist in the purchasing of recreational equipment and for the acquisition of land parcel(s) where deemed necessary. Town Meeting funding is encouraged

**P.33** The Town recommends and encourages the Bailey Pond area residents (Wickaboxet Camp Association) to utilize, maintain, and seek grant funding for the existing Privately-owned open space/recreation area that serves neighborhood needs

**P.36** The Town should consider identifying and acquiring a land parcel in the western end of town to service neighborhood public active recreational needs or mandate future major subdivisions to provide said facilities