

9.0 SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN

This section provides a detailed Action Plan spanning the next seven years for working toward the goals and objectives outlined in this plan. The Action Plan is intended to be a realistic, implementable plan for the coming years. Throughout the development of this plan, as well as in planning processes in neighboring communities, it has been widely recognized that all-volunteer boards are stretched extremely thin and sometimes experience “board fatigue” resulting in the loss of valuable committee members. To address this, the Action Plan targets key projects, partners and funding opportunities to implement important building blocks toward the achievement of the long-term goals outlined herein.

Three tenets are inextricably linked to each of the eleven goals:

- Land conservation through private and public means
- Support of working forest and farmlands
- Continued and expanded access to working lands (farm and forest) and conservation lands for recreation

There is no one size fits all approach to achieving any of Southampton’s goals for open space and recreation. Land conservation will require local, state and federal government investment through ownership and/or funding assistance. Non-profit land trusts can be critical partners either as outright land owners or the holder of a conservation restriction. Private land owners will need access to many potential partners to implement voluntary restrictions, and donations or sale of their land for conservation purposes.

Local Community Preservation Act funds are a critical source of funding that can be used in part or in whole for any number of the land conservation partnerships and strategies noted. State and federal grants will also be important. To maximize Southampton’s ability to apply for conservation grants, the community needs to be ready to act when the opportunity presents.

This requires staying in touch with important land owners to know when opportunities for land protection may become available. It is recognized that there are typically only a few times in a land owner’s life when they start to plan for the future of their land. Estate planning can help a land owner meet their financial and personal goals relative to their land, and address a community’s goals for the protection of natural resources. Similarly, the community should be aware of and maintain working relationships with land trusts and other conservation organizations for technical assistance on these matters and potential access to funding.

Much of the same approach applies to development and expansion of trails and other recreational opportunities.

The Open Space Coordinating Committee has prioritized several on-going and successive trail projects for completion as part of this Action Plan. Building on past trail success at

Wolf Hill and Szczypta Farm Conservation sites (see Appendix), and the emerging Southampton Greenway, additional funding will be needed through grants and possibly local CPA funds.

Another critical component of land conservation is ensuring that local bylaws and regulations promote growth in areas where infrastructure exists and supports the protection of important natural resources.

Action Plan maps are provided on pages 145-148 herein, and in the Appendix.

Target Dates for Completion are organized into two categories: Short Term (completion within 1-5 years); Mid Term (completion within 6-10 years)

Goal 1: Identify and preserve important parcels for ecological, recreational, cultural and historical value to create a town-wide green network

Objective: Increase capacity for management of town-owned open space lands and promote public use of existing open space network.

Strategy 1: Develop a prioritized list of key open space parcels for acquisition based on available developable vacant lands, key natural resource areas, critical habitat areas, priority agricultural lands and soils, recreational lands, and expansion and connection to town-wide green network.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Agricultural Commission, Planning Board, Recreational Needs Committee, Community Preservation Committee

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Strategy 2: Establish and develop a relationship with existing land trusts in the region.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Town Administrator, Select Board, Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Strategy 3: Continue to update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) every five years in order to qualify for state and federal grants.

The state Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants provide funding to communities for acquisition of open space, but the town must have an updated OSRP in order to qualify

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Town Administrator

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Staff Time, Consultants

Target Date for Completion: FY2012

Strategy 4: Maintain a current environmental inventory and develop a management plan for conservation areas.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Parks Commission

Resources Needed: Consultant, Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Strategy 5: Develop a comprehensive outreach and education campaign to inform the community about existing open space resources, to improve and maintain trail networks, and to improve signage and access to open space resources. Develop trail maps, establish a volunteer trail maintenance program, and educate the public about conservation issues as part of this effort.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Parks Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Strategy 6: Develop a plan to enhance Conant Memorial Park and to connect it to other town and open space resources.

Responsible Party: Department of Public Works, Recreation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2012

Strategy 7: Explore the possibility to secure public access to the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir area with the City of Holyoke..

Responsible Party: Select Board, Town Administrator

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2015

Objective: Connect open space resources to enhance community livability and wildlife habitat, and to encourage walking and biking.

Strategy 1: Develop a rail trail along the existing rail bed to create a north-south connection between the numerous open space areas along its length. Consider expanding the current plan to extend the Rail Trail south along its entire length to Swanson Corners and the Westfield town line.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Highway Department, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant, Transportation Improvement Funds, PVPC, MassDOT

Target Date for Completion: FY2013 and FY2014

Strategy 2: Develop a plan for an east-west connection from the Rail Trail to the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir area. Compile a list of parcels that area critical to creating this link and work with town boards, officials, and local / state conservation groups to acquire or gain public access easements to these priority parcels.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Department of Public Works, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant, Community Preservation Act funds, state LAND grant, federal LWCF grant

Target Date for Completion: FY2015

Strategy 3: Develop a Manhan River Greenway and Wildlife Corridor Management Plan, and develop a list of priority parcels for acquisition or easements to support the development and enhancement of this greenway and wildlife corridor area.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Select Board

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, CPA funds, state LAND grant, federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant

Target Date for Completion: FY2015

Goal 2: Protect Southampton's remaining agricultural lands, promote local farming, and create opportunities for residents to become involved in local agriculture.

Objective 1: Develop a public outreach strategy to support agricultural activity.

Strategy 1: Compile an inventory of farmlands with ownership information, protection status, vulnerability, etc., and meet with owners to explain their importance to the community and available preservation options. Coordinate these efforts with the community's prioritized list of key open space parcels for acquisition, (as listed under Goal 1, Strategy 1).

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission, Board of Assessors, Community Preservation Committee, School Committee
Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Staff Time
Target Date for Completion: FY2016

Strategy 2: Work with farmers and develop marketing materials to promote agriculture in Southampton.

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission
Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Consultant
Target Date for Completion: Short Term

Strategy 3: Develop educational materials and hold public meetings to stimulate consciousness about agriculture and the tools available to protect it.

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission, School Department
Resources Needed: Volunteer Time
Target Date for Completion: FY2014

Strategy 3: Establish a weekly Farmer's Market in an appropriate location in the community

Resources available at Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets (massfarmersmarkets.org) or MA Department of Agricultural Resources (mass.gov/agr)

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission
Resources Needed: Volunteer Time
Target Date for Completion: FY2016

Strategy 4: Identify appropriate locations and parcels to be used as a town owned community garden

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission, Select Board, Conservation Commission
Resources Needed: Volunteer Time
Target Date for Completion: FY2016

Goal 3: Protect Southampton's water resources.

Objective: Continue to protect Southampton's public water supply and the Barnes Aquifer for generations to come and assure that all infrastructure is up to date and in good repair.

Strategy 1: Continue and strengthen homeowner education / awareness about the

importance and vulnerability of the Barnes Aquifer, particularly residential areas that cover recharge areas.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Public Health, Water Commission,
BAPAC
Resources Needed: Volunteer time, funding for outreach materials
Target Date for Completion: FY2015

Strategy 2: Continue to educate landowners with contaminated wells and determine solutions to tie into the public water system.

Responsible Party: Water Commission
Resources Needed: Staff time
Target Date for Completion: FY2015

Strategy 3: Build a piping system to loop Pequot Pond to Valley Road and connect to an existing water main in Westfield.

Responsible Party: Water Commission
Resources Needed: Funding for infrastructure improvements, staff time
Target Date for Completion: FY2015

Strategy 4: Build a new water tank that would strengthen water capacity for the Ponds area to accommodate new growth in the area.

Responsible Party: Water Commission
Resources Needed: Funding for infrastructure improvements, staff time
Target Date for Completion: FY 2017

Strategy 5: Build a new water line to connect to an existing water line on East Street.

Responsible Party: Water Commission
Resources Needed: Funding for infrastructure improvements, staff time
Target Date for Completion: Mid Term

Strategy 6: Conduct a water quality education campaign that targets the landowners in town.

Educate landowners about septic system failures, fertilizer use on lawns and agricultural properties, pet wastes, and other homeowner actions that deteriorate the quality of water.

Responsible Party: Board of Health, Highway Department, Conservation Commission, Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee, Water Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2014

Strategy 7: Adopt Low Impact Development (LID) standards for stormwater management in the zoning, subdivision, and stormwater regulations. Low Impact Developments are designed to reflect natural hydrology, minimize impervious surfaces, treat stormwater in small decentralized structures, preserve portions of the site in natural conditions, and use natural topography for drainageways and storage.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Highway Department, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2017

Strategy 8: Consider adopting a River Protection Overlay District that minimizes development impacts in sensitive river buffer areas.

This Overlay District can increase community control over activities on riverfront areas not regulated by the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act. The district designates a portion of the riverbank from the shoreline landward up to an established distance from each bank. It provides restrictions on uses and structures that will damage the environmental integrity of the river. Uses permitted as a matter of right should be limited to those consistent with the scenic qualities of the river, such as agricultural production, recreational uses, reasonable emergency procedures, conservation measures, and residential development on lots with frontage on an existing way.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2016

Strategy 9: Consider developing a larger local buffer zone requirement than the existing state-mandated 100' protection buffer in order to better protect the town's significant wetland resources.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2016

Strategy 10: Adopted a Reduced Road Salt Policy that minimizes salt application and storage near environmentally sensitive areas adjacent to highways and roads in order to to protect aquifers, private wells and surface waters.

Responsible Party: Highway Department, Conservation Commission, Water Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2014

Strategy 11: Actively participate in the Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee (BAPAC), and allow BAPAC to comment on development proposals of regional impact.

Responsible Party: Planning Board

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Goal 4: Promote land use policies that protect the town's natural lands and rural community character

Objective: Balance residential development with the protection of the town's natural, scenic and historic resources.

Strategy 1: Establish priority areas and parcels for scenic preservation.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Strategy 2: Review and expand the town list of designated scenic roads.

Responsible Party: Highway Department, Planning Board, Tree Warden, Historical Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Strategy 3: Adopt overlay zoning districts that protect scenic vistas, for example, along the southern portion of College Highway (Route 10), which include buffers and design standards for developments.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2018

Objective: Establish land use and development policies that respond to infrastructure capacity

Strategy 1: Hold a series of public presentations about the benefits of smart growth policies that concentrate development in some places and discourage it in others. Present zoning strategies to preserve rural character within the context of a comprehensive smart growth zoning strategy.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Select Board, Local Cable Access Channel, School Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2012

Strategy 2: Hold a series of public presentations about the benefits of cluster development, or the building of homes closer together so that the remaining land on a site can be protected as open space or farmland.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Select Board, Local Cable Access Channel, School Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: FY2013

Strategy 3: Review the zoning bylaws and update regulations to better protect priority natural resources and farmland.

Zoning bylaw examples could include: Open Space Residential Development, Green Development Performance Standards, and Resource Protection Overlay Districts, or Transfer of Development Rights.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Agricultural Commission, Select Board, Local Cable Access Channel

Resources Needed: Consultant, Staff Time

Target Date for Completion: FY2015

Strategy 4: Promote the use of of Southampton's Agricultural Preservation District

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Agricultural Commission

Resources Needed: None

Target Date for Completion: FY 2013