

2014

Open Space & Recreation Plan



**Town of
Palmer**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
SECTION 1: Plan Summary	2
SECTION 2: Introduction	4
A. Statement of Purpose	4
B. Planning Process and Public Participation	5
SECTION 3: Community Setting	9
A. Regional Context	9
B. History of the Community	12
C. Population Characteristics	13
D. Growth and Development Patterns	22
SECTION 4: Environmental Inventory & Analysis	37
A. Geology, Soils, and Topography	37
B. Landscape Character	40
C. Water Resources	40
D. Vegetation	48
E. Fisheries And Wildlife	53
F. Scenic Resources & Unique Environments	59
G. Environmental Challenges	67
SECTION 5: Inventory of Lands	73
A. Introduction	73
B. Permanently Protected Open Space	74
C. Partially Protected Open Space	83
D. Inventory of Lands: Publicly Owned Open Space & Conservation Lands	92
E. Inventory of Lands: Non-Profit Conservation and Recreation Land	95

SECTION 6: Community Goals	97
A. Description of Process	97
B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals	98
SECTION 7: Analysis of Needs	100
A. Summary of Resource Area Protection Needs	100
B. Summary of Community Needs	101
C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use	103
SECTION 8: Goals & Objectives	107
SECTION 9: Seven-Year Action Plan (2014-2021)	109
A. Potential Funding Sources	109
B. KEY to Responsible Parties and Collaborators	110
SECTION 10: Public Comment	118
SECTION 11: References	130
Appendix A: Open Space Committee Meeting Notices & Agendas	
Appendix B: Community Survey Results	
Appendix C: Community Visioning Session Agenda, Handouts & Participant	
Appendix D: ADA Self-Assessment	

LIST OF MAPS

MAP 1: Regional Context	10
MAP 2: Mass GIS Environmental Justice Populations	20
MAP 3: Population Distribution by Block Group, MA Environmental Justice Areas (Low Income)	21
MAP 4: Current Land Use	23
MAP 5: Infrastructure	27
MAP 6: Infrastructure – Waterlines	28
MAP 7: Infrastructure – Public Water Supply	29
MAP 8: Infrastructure – Sewer Lines	30
MAP 9: Infrastructure – Street Map	31
MAP 10: Zoning	34
MAP 11: Soils & Geologic Features	39
MAP 12: Water Resources	42
MAP 13: Water Resources – Public Water Supply	44
MAP 14: Water Resources – DEP Wetlands (General w/ Hydrologic Connections)	45
MAP 15: Water Resources – FEMA Q3 Flood Zones	47
MAP 16: NHESP Habitat Assessment	52
MAP 17: NHESP Critical Natural Landscapes & Priority Natural Communities (BioMap 2)	58
MAP 18: Unique Environments w/ Scenic Resources	64
MAP 19: Unique Environments	65
MAP 20: Historic Context	66
MAP 21: Environmental Challenges	72
MAP 22: Conservation & Recreation Lands – Land Ownership, Deed Restriction, Level of Protection	77
MAP 23: Conservation & Recreation Lands – Primary Purpose, Deed Restriction, Level of Protection	78
MAP 24: Action Plan	111

PREFACE

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), Division of Conservation Services reviews applications for open space funds including the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) and the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grants. The acceptance of this Open Space and Recreation Plan by the State Division of Conservation Services makes the Town of Palmer eligible to compete for such funds, which it can use for land acquisition, maintenance and improvement of parks, playgrounds, conservation areas and other open spaces. Additionally, this plan is useful to the Town as a community information resource and comprehensive town planning related to open space and recreation.

The EEA defines the term open space as “conservation land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation”. The EEA goes further to state that a broader definition of open space can be defined as “any undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest.” This broader second definition will be used in this plan when referring to Palmer’s open space.

The 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan was developed by the Palmer Open Space and Recreation Update Committee with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Funding is provided by a District Local Technical Assistance Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan is available through the Open Space and Recreation Committee’s website located at:

http://www.townofpalmer.com/index.asp?SEC=BAD42420-FF52-4A88-9825-B81A68AFFE43&Type=B_BASIC