

# 2018 Falmouth Open Space Plan: Honoring Our Legacy, Now and for Our Future



Adopted by Town Council, October 22, 2018

Prepared by the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee +  
Town of Falmouth, Maine



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Open Space Manager

Dear Reader,

As the 2013 Comprehensive Plan stated, where and how we want to be as a community requires that we listen to each other, value insights and discussions, coordinate, educate, clarify the Town's rules, and concern ourselves with all parts of our community. In furtherance of the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations, the Town Council asked LPAC to examine the topic of open space.

Like the Comprehensive Plan, the plan before you – the *2018 Falmouth Open Space Plan: Honoring Our Legacy, Now and for Our Future* - has as its overarching goal enhancing and growing community and contains recommendations which will guide our Town leaders in making decisions over the next decade or more.

This plan seeks to maintain a balance between managed growth that prevents unmitigated sprawl and strategic preservation of additional open space to protect the health and value of our community.

The plan recommends six goals and thirty-three actions. The goals are:

- Protect our natural resources and open spaces,
- Provide a range of open spaces and experiences for a diverse population,
- Ensure that protected open spaces are available throughout the entire town,
- Utilize open space acquisition as a land use growth management tool,
- Ensure the utility and longevity of open spaces through good management, and
- Educate the public about the presence, functions, and values of open space.

Your interest and participation will make implementation of this plan over the next ten years even more successful for Falmouth.

Special thank you to Bob Shafto, Kurt Klebe, Tommy Johnson, Andrew Clark, and Michael Vance for their valuable assistance.

Sincerely,

Samuel Rudman  
Chair, Long Range Planning Advisory Committee



Photo 1 LPAC+ at its field tour, January 2017.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction .....	5
Background on the Town’s Open Space Program .....	10
2018 Open Space Plan Goals and Recommended Actions .....	19
Goal 1: Protect Our Natural Resources and Open Spaces .....	19
Goal 2: Provide a Range of Open Spaces and Experiences for a Diverse Population .....	23
Goal 3: Ensure that Protected Open Spaces are Available throughout the Entire Town .....	25
Goal 4: Utilize Open Space Acquisition as a Land Use Growth Management Tool.....	28
Goal 5: Ensure the Utility and Longevity of Open Spaces Through Good Management .....	30
Goal 6: Educate the Public about the Presence, Functions, and Values of Open Spaces.....	32
Conclusion.....	36
Appendices .....	37



## Executive Summary

In 2016 the Town Council tasked the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) to update the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan. Combining strengths from LPAC with other municipal organizations and groups, “LPAC+” was created to take on this challenge. In devising this plan, LPAC+ conducted site visits, worked with stakeholders, collected results from a town-wide open space survey, and held a public forum on the open space plan. The work of LPAC+ has resulted in this *2018 Falmouth Open Space Plan: Honoring Our Legacy, Now and for Our Future*.



Photo 2 Suckfish Brook Conservation Area protects over 150 acres near Highland Lake.

This plan acknowledges that population growth and development will likely continue in Falmouth. Both are important elements to retaining a vibrant and economically stable community. The 2018 Open Space Plan concludes that in order to protect the health, values, and character of our community, and to achieve the vision of the Town’s 2013 Comprehensive Plan, it is crucial to maintain a balance between managed growth and strategic preservation and management of open space.

To help achieve this balance, the plan takes stock of what has been accomplished in the recent past and provides a framework of ideas to guide the Town’s open space efforts now and in the future. The plan provides six specific goals for open space planning, and provides recommendations for achieving each of these goals. The six goals are:

1. Protect our natural resources and open spaces.
2. Provide a range of open spaces and experiences for a diverse population.
3. Ensure that protected open spaces are available throughout the entire Town.
4. Utilize open space acquisition as a land use growth management tool.
5. Ensure the utility and longevity of open spaces through good management.
6. Educate the public about the presence, functions, and values of open spaces.

The plan also recommends that the Town Council commission an Outdoor Recreation Plan to help guide the planning for, and stewardship of, those open spaces that this open space plan does not address.



## Introduction

Open space is one of the pillars of Falmouth's quality of place. Along with first-rate public schools and judicious Town management, open space protection and management are widely recognized as vital to our well-being and recognized as a prime reason that Falmouth is such a desirable place to work, live, and raise a family. Thanks to long-term planning, engaged citizens, and the continued hard work of many staff and volunteers, Falmouth is fortunate to have a large amount of valuable and permanently-protected land.

This everyday-life investment in ourselves, and for future generations, should be celebrated, revered, safeguarded, and expanded upon. Ongoing pressures from development and sprawl require continued advocacy for open space preservation and management. As Falmouth plans for its future, its residents expect a balance between sound development and open space to protect the health and value of the community. Thoughts on achieving this distinctive balance are key elements of this plan.

In order to assess upcoming opportunities and challenges, changing development pressures, and attitudes regarding open space, the Town Council tasked the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) with updating the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan (see Appendix 1). The plan before you takes stock of what has been accomplished relative to open space, and provides an updated plan to guide the Town's open space efforts over the next ten or more years.

An expanded "LPAC+" committee was formed to take on this task. In addition to the seven regular LPAC members, the Open Space Ombudsman and representatives from the Falmouth Land Trust, Conservation Commission, Parks and Community Programs Committee, and LMAC also joined the committee. LPAC+ volunteers worked on the effort from fall 2016 through summer 2018 to produce the plan before you. The committee's efforts included reviewing documents, data, and maps, going on a field trip of existing Falmouth open space, soliciting public input, and developing the plan's recommendations. Additionally, in the fall of 2017, the committee gathered opinions on open space issues in Falmouth through an online Open Space Survey, which garnered 458 responses by residents. The survey results were considered as a public perspective on the themes and priorities of this plan (see Appendix 6).

### 2018 Open Space Plan Purpose

This plan is advisory. It has been prepared to help guide Town Council (and associated committee) actions regarding the use and protection of open space over the next ten years and beyond. These actions may involve improving access to open spaces, developing management plans, providing informational materials or programs, funding new open space acquisitions, or updating Town regulations. Development of additional details for each action item is anticipated.

## Scope of this Plan

The scope of this plan largely follows that of the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan, in which the term “open space” is generally limited to undeveloped properties, properties containing ecological resources, woodlands, wetlands, riparian corridors, waterfront areas, farmlands, orchards, fields, and park lands that contain hiking trails or have trail potential. This was done for the sake of consistency and to stay within the charge given to the committee by the Town Council. The spaces studied protect a variety of functions, such as wildlife habitat, buffer zones, trails, agriculture, recreation, and scenic enjoyment.

However, the committee recognized that open space also serves recreational purposes. As such, to many residents the term “open space” may also include outdoor athletic facilities, playgrounds, cemeteries, and parks without trails or trail potential. Such a definition of “open space” is an expansion of the concept from the 2006 plan and the committee has generally maintained the more limited definition of “open space” from the 2006 plan. This issue is mentioned here to provide strategic context and point to the need for specific planning regarding these other types of open spaces.

The committee finds that *all* types of open spaces are important to the well-being of the community. Thus, the committee hopes that, in the near future, the Town Council will commission an Outdoor Recreation Plan to help guide the planning for, and stewardship of, those open spaces that this plan does not seek to address. These recreational opportunities are the number one desire expressed by residents. Furthermore, the committee believes the Town will be best served in the long run by a *single plan* that *integrates* the conservation and recreation aspects of all open spaces.



Photo 3 Falmouth's open spaces are enjoyable year-round.

## Guiding Vision

What will Falmouth look like for future generations? Let's paint a picture...

*In 2121 - and beyond - Falmouth is a community with an extensive, well-managed, and connected green infrastructure of protected open spaces containing healthy, diverse plant and wildlife populations and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Consistent with the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, Falmouth's open space network is compatible with the growth of the community. Open spaces connect unfragmented habitat for wildlife, are incorporated into vibrant commercial hubs and close-knit residential neighborhoods, and provide a wide variety of activities and user experiences. Falmouth is a community that actively protects its rural character by preserving areas for productive farms, fields, woodlands, and aquatic resources. Falmouth's open spaces provide a healthy environment for all natural resources and people.*

This vision stems from the 2006 Greening of Falmouth Plan, which is also worth restating in part here as it addresses a widely-held community vision that helped define the character of the 2018 Open Space Plan:

*"(...) Additional homes and roads will be built as the community grows. At the same time, new residential development will preserve natural features; provide buffers along roads, wetlands, and streams; and incorporate meaningful pieces of open space. Connectivity will be a hallmark of new development for both wildlife (in the form of travel corridors and interconnected habitat) and pedestrians (in the form of off-road trails). Some very large natural areas will be preserved to protect habitats of area sensitive species and provide opportunities for traditional outdoor pursuits, such as hunting, snowmobiling, and hiking.*

*(...) Community organizations, town government, landowners, developers, realtors, the public, and people in adjacent towns will work together collaboratively to actively plan for, protect, and manage the open space resources of the community. A guiding principle for land conservation will be that landowners retain the fair market value of their land. Thus, the methods will be flexible, depending on the type of open space to be conserved and the nature of the collaboration involved. Appropriate measures may include research and education, monetary incentives, encouraging the use of tax programs, conservation easements and purchasing fee interest in land. Because of the active involvement of private landowners, a significant portion of the town's forestland will continue to be managed for wood products, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and the protection of groundwater supplies."*

The vision in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan also offers an important grounding for the 2018 Open Space Plan:

*"(...) [The two] commercial areas are welcoming — with green spaces for gathering and relaxing — enhancing our sense of community.*



*Trails connect these commercial hubs with other Town areas, in keeping with the Open Space vision: extensive Town open spaces form a green network that connects many areas of the Town and surrounding communities, enabling varied types of activity — promoting a healthy environment. This network connects through paths, trails, and bike paths that give residents access to parks, fields, and places of solace and natural beauty.*

*Residents enjoy a myriad of housing opportunities that can fit changing life circumstances; housing that affords easy maintenance — with cost and energy efficiencies. There are neighborhoods that offer convenient and walkable access to services and entertainment, and others that offer privacy and quiet in a rural environment. (...)*

## **Plan Conclusion and Goals**

To achieve the vision stated above, this plan finds that the Town should continue the successful direction set by the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan, the 2013 *Comprehensive Plan*, and the *Greening of Falmouth 10-Year Progress Report, 2006-2016*. While continued growth and dynamic economic forces will result in new development in Falmouth, it is important to maintain a balance between managed growth that prevents unmitigated sprawl, and strategic preservation of additional open space to protect the health and value of our community. In addition, stronger protections and management and enhanced user information are recommended for already preserved public land and existing trails. A successful open space program requires a public that is informed about current open space opportunities and becomes even more actively engaged and responsible stewards of open space currently held and acquired in the future.

Thus, the goals of this open space plan are presented as follows:

- Protect our natural resources and open spaces,
- Provide a range of open spaces and experiences for a diverse population,
- Ensure that protected open spaces are available throughout the entire town,
- Utilize open space acquisition as a land use growth management tool,
- Ensure the utility and longevity of open spaces through good management, and
- Educate the public about the presence, functions, and values of open space.

What follows is a detailed background history of open space planning in Falmouth and discussion of recommendations for achieving each goal.



Photo 4 Bog bridges like this one help protect fragile habitat.

## **Background on the Town's Open Space Program**

The Town of Falmouth has been planning for open space for more than thirty years. Its first open space plan was adopted in 1989. A second plan, *The Greening of Falmouth*, followed in 2006. The 2013 *Comprehensive Plan* also addressed this topic. See Appendix 7 for a list of related Town studies and planning reports.

While work has been going on for many years, significant progress was made between 2006 and 2017. Many open space lands were acquired and protected, grants procured, trails built, and management plans developed. As a result, the Town's open space initiative has had a substantial impact on the community and has drawn widespread praise. These accomplishments are thanks in large part to the efforts of former Open Space Ombudsman, Bob Shafto (a part-time, contracted position funded by the Town), the Land Management & Acquisition Committee ("LMAC") and its predecessor committees, and steadfast support by the Falmouth Town Council, Falmouth Land Trust ("Land Trust"), and more importantly, the residents and other tax payers who make this town a community.

### **Open Space Program in 2006**

In 2006 the Town and Land Trust owned or held easements on a combined 1,432 acres of open space. This protected open space represented 7.6 percent of Falmouth's overall land area (18,725 acres). Much of the Town-owned and conserved land at that time was not well known and was generally inaccessible to most residents. This included land that now constitutes Hadlock Community Forest, Woods Road Community Forest, Hardy Road Conservation Area, and the River Point Conservation Area. In fact, by 2006, the Falmouth Nature Preserve and the Land Trust's Blackstrap Hill Preserve were the only two large open space properties that contained established trail systems.

While the Town has had a long-standing interest in protecting open space, in 2006 it had no organized system for identifying and evaluating potential acquisitions, managing the open space parcels it owned, or monitoring the easements it held. Many acquisitions resulted from community concerns about preventing development on prime parcels such as Wilshore Farm, portions of Blackstrap Hill, Pleasant Hill, and Community Park, and thus were more reactive than proactive in nature. Likewise, many Land Trust properties and easements were acquired through the subdivision conservation zoning process and were often small and disconnected parcels. While there was a great deal of support for open space protection, there was very little underlying organizational structure to support that process. This lack of cohesive guidance for open space management led to the creation of the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan.

### **Open Space Program Post-2006**

As a result of the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan, the Town organized various players and put in place a robust system for proactively acquiring and managing open space properties. The key elements of that system are:



- **The Land Management & Acquisition Committee (LMAC)**

This is a group of Council-appointed citizens that replaced the Open Space Subcommittee of the Conservation Commission (2006-2008), Open Space Implementation Committee (2008-2011), and Land Management Team (2011-2012). This committee:

- ✓ Develops procedures for how conservation land and associated facilities are created, managed and maintained in accordance with Town ordinances;
- ✓ Advises the Town Council on matters pertaining to the acquisition and management of conservation lands;
- ✓ Creates management plans for each designated conservation property owned by the Town;
- ✓ Produces information and guidance for the public regarding trails, land, and public facilities in Falmouth;
- ✓ Recommends funding levels for the acquisition of new properties and for the management of existing properties; and,
- ✓ Designs and conducts public information events and activities regarding open space issues.

- **The Open Space Ombudsman** (*now referred to as **Open Space Manager***)

This was a part-time, contracted position, funded by the Town, now a part-time employee. This is critically important position for the Town that should be maintained. The Open Space Manager:

- ✓ Works with landowners interested in permanently protecting their property from development;
- ✓ Staffs the Land Management & Acquisition Committee and Falmouth Conservation Corps;
- ✓ Oversees the development of management plans for each open space property, and is responsible for implementing those plans;
- ✓ Builds relationships with external persons who, and agencies which, are in a position to support and further the Town's open space efforts, including, but not limited to, the Falmouth Land Trust;
- ✓ Monitors easements held by the Town;
- ✓ Raises funds for open space acquisition and management activities; and,
- ✓ Provides general day-to-day management, leadership and oversight of the open space program.

- **The Falmouth Conservation Corps**

This is a group of volunteers with a wide variety of interests and skills that provides much of the hands-on labor required to effectively manage Town open space properties. Over 6,500 hours of volunteer time has been logged by a multitude of volunteers since 2007. The activities by the Corps have included:

- ✓ building trails;
- ✓ keeping rivers navigable;
- ✓ creating educational print and video materials;
- ✓ controlling invasive species; and,
- ✓ conducting natural resource inventories.



Photo 5 Members of the Falmouth Conservation Corps install plantings in restored wetland adjacent to Highland Lake on the McDermott Way parcel in the Suckfish Brook preservation area.

Two additional entities have also been crucial to the community’s open space success.

- **The Falmouth Land Trust**

The Land Trust started in 1981. It is a private, non-profit organization with the mission to “preserve and care for fields, forests, farms, and shorelines in Falmouth, while maintaining the historical character and nurturing an enduring stewardship and enjoyment of the land.” The Land Trust and the Town work closely together on open space matters. The Town considers the Land Trust a strategic partner in open space planning, acquisition and management in Falmouth. The Executive Director is an *ex officio* member of the Land Management & Acquisition Committee. See Appendix 3 for more information.

- **The Public**

The public has a special role in this open space work. Members of the community:

- ✓ use open spaces in a variety of ways, including active and passive recreation, hunting, hiking, biking, etc.,
- ✓ need to know what spaces exist, where they are, and how they can be best used, so important resources remain protected;
- ✓ participate in the Falmouth Conservation Corps to help improve open spaces or assist with other management activities;
- ✓ pay for the acquisition and management of open spaces through taxes and approval of bonds;
- ✓ voice opinions that allow the Town Council to make decisions on open space acquisitions and management;
- ✓ provide local support that plays a critical role in procuring grant funds;
- ✓ make up the body of the Council and the various boards, trusts and committees that help steer open space planning in Town;
- ✓ include the students of today who may become effective open space stewards of tomorrow; and,
- ✓ have a key role in assuring that Falmouth's open space legacy is passed on from generation to generation.

## Open Space Program Progress

As of 2017, the Town, the Land Trust, and other organizations owned or held conservation easements on a combined 3,480 acres of open space. This is 18.6 percent of the total land area of Falmouth.

Several efforts contributed to the recent open space preservation accomplishments. Following the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan, the Town put in place a formal system for identifying, rating, and recommending possible acquisition or trail parcels (see Appendices 4 and 5 for the two acquisition rating sheets) as well as a set of policies and procedures for managing those properties. The Falmouth Land Trust has become more proactive in the past decade in acquiring easements and outright ownership of conservation properties. Since 2005 the Town has required open space preservation within the Resource Conservation Zoning Overlay District (RCZO). The RCZO District covers most of the Town's residential area and mandates that lands unsuitable for development (e.g. wetlands and steep slopes) *and* at least 30 percent of the remaining potentially suitable land be preserved as open space in most residential developments. Prior to 2011 this requirement was 50 percent. In May 2018 the 50% requirement for the rural residential area was reinstated.

One of the goals in the 2006 plan was to protect smaller properties that have less recreational or wildlife habitat value, but contain scenic views and have rural character. This goal was not met with the same success as other properties. While almost thirty of such properties were tentatively identified by the Open Space Subcommittee in 2006, only two - Stillings Field, now part of Blackstrap Hill Community Forest, and Hurricane Valley Farm - have since been protected. These parcels have not been as available for acquisition as other properties and have generally not ranked as high on the acquisition rating sheet as other open space properties.



The result of these efforts is summarized in the tables that follow.

<b>Table 1: Total Open Space Acreages</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Town open spaces <sup>1 2</sup>	798	2,544	219%
Falmouth Land Trust open spaces	634	1,477	133%
Other organizations' open spaces <sup>3</sup>	39	547	1,302%
Miles of pedestrian trails, town wide <sup>4</sup>	8.4	49	479%

Note that there is significant overlap in Table 1 among the various organizations' holdings. For example, the Land Trust holds easements on a number of Town-owned properties, and vice-versa. Table 2 shows acreages when accounting for this overlap.

<b>Table 2: Open Space Acreages by Type</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Town-owned open spaces	2,027
Falmouth Land Trust-owned open spaces	686
Open spaces owned by other organizations	256
Town-held easements on private property	160
Falmouth Land Trust-held easements on private property	291
Easements on private property held by other organizations	59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,480</b>
Private subdivision set-asides	282

<sup>1</sup> In this study, the term "open spaces" includes all fee-owned property and all portions of property held in easement.

<sup>2</sup> The 2006 figure does not include land the Town owned that was not designated as "open space" at the time, but should have been. The 2016 figure represents the reclassification of 334 acres and acquisition of an additional 698 acres.

<sup>3</sup> "Other organizations" include Portland Trails, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Audubon Society, and the State of Maine.

<sup>4</sup> Does not include Portland Trails, Mackworth Island trails, or Maine Audubon trails.

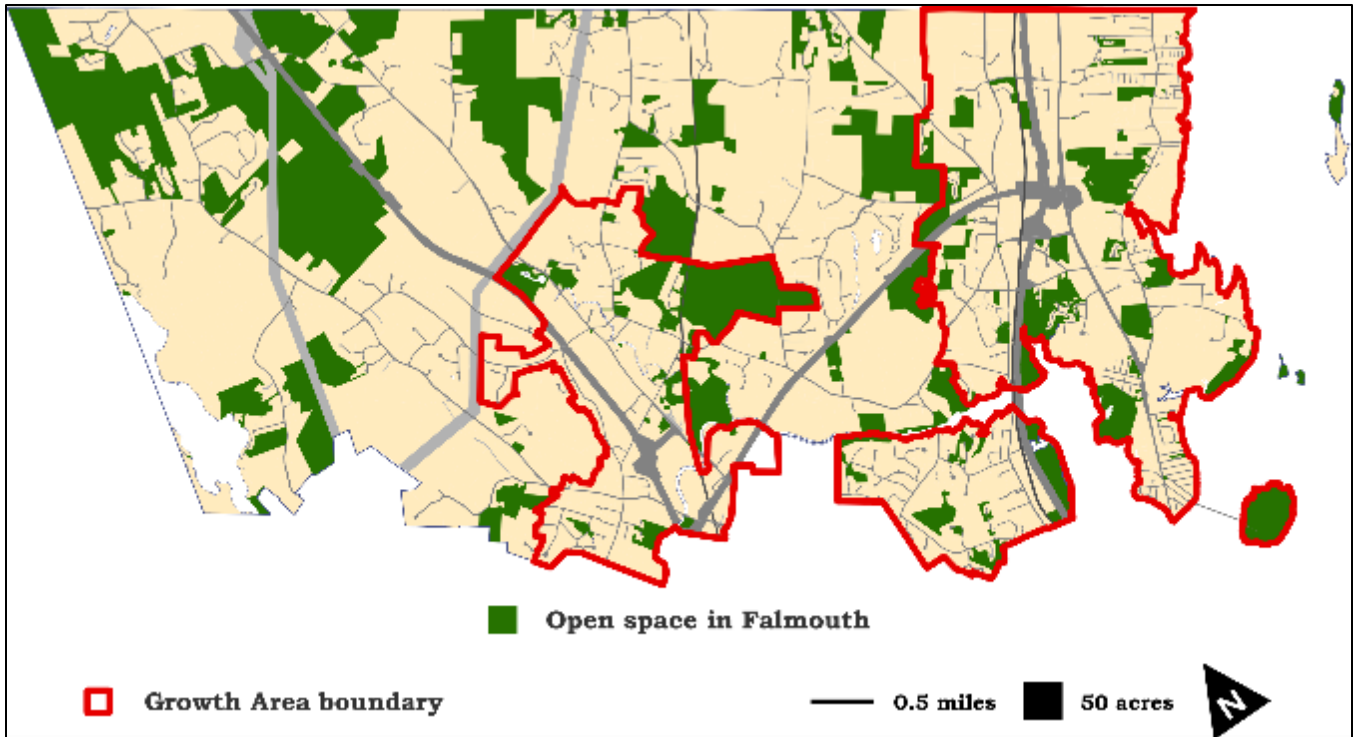
The two organizations most involved in the work of open space preservation are the Town and the Falmouth Land Trust. Tables 3 and 4 show the significant holdings of those two organizations.

<b>Table 3: Ten Largest Town-Owned Open Spaces</b>	<b>Acres</b>
1. North Falmouth Community Forest	410
2. Hadlock Community Forest	290
3. Blackstrap Hill Community Forest	237
4. Community Park	160
5. Woods Road Community Forest	154
6. Suckfish Brook Conservation Area	153
7. Falmouth Nature Preserve	83
8. East Branch Conservation Area	56
9. Hardy Road Conservation Area	54
10. River Point Conservation Area	41

<b>Table 4: Ten Largest Land Trust-Owned Open Spaces</b>	<b>Acres</b>
1. Blackstrap Hill Preserve	337
2. McCrann/McLaughlin Preserve	79
3. Falmouth Corners Preserve	66
4. Hurricane Valley Farm	62
5. Pleasant Hill Preserve	25
6. Mill Creek Preserve	23
7. Stormy Brook Road Common	21
8. Ledges Preserve	18
9. Twin Ponds Drive Common	18
10. Presumpscot River Preserve	16



Photo 4 Blazing a trail through Community Park.



Map 1. Open space shown on this map includes: open spaces owned by the Town, the Land Trust, the State of Maine, the Maine Audubon Society, Portland Trails, and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, conservation easements on private property, and private subdivision set-asides.

## Open Space Financing

In 2007, 69 percent of Falmouth voters approved a ballot measure that authorized the Town Council to appropriate “\$5,000,000, including proceeds of the issuance of up to \$2,000,000 in General Obligation Bonds, for the preservation of open space, including, but not limited to undeveloped land, farmland, orchards, hayfields, woodlands, and wetlands, to serve a variety of functions such as wildlife habitat, riparian corridors, buffer zones, ecological protections, agriculture, woodlot management and harvesting, passive recreation, trails, and scenic enjoyment, through acquisition of real estate and interest in real estate by the Town and by selected non-profit organizations.”

The measure did not *require* the Council to spend that amount, but the result sent a clear message of support for such spending. Annual appropriations have varied, but Council support for open space has consistently remained strong. The Town has also been very successful in raising additional funds from other sources, primarily through grants, to support open space acquisition and management. Those efforts are summarized in Table 5.

Grant funders for property acquisitions have included the Land for Maine’s Future Program, the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program, the Casco Bay Estuary Project, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Forest Service. Trails have been funded by the Recreational Trails Program grants, and by donations from the Falmouth Lion’s Club and Falmouth Wal-Mart.



<b>Table 5: Town Open Space Funding, 2006-2016</b>	
Source	Amount
Grants	\$1,822,506
Town property sales <sup>5</sup>	\$1,160,000
Cash donations	\$30,461
Bargain sales <sup>6</sup>	\$530,808
Land/easement donations	\$397,000
Resource sales <sup>7</sup>	\$39,568
Town appropriation	\$1,971,969
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,952,312</b>

## 2013 Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan proposes two main goals related to open space: actively manage open space to maximize its benefits and promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities, including access to surface waters. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, this plan addresses the importance of increasing connectivity of open space and identifying goals and recommended actions for open space that are compatible with the growth and rural zones.

## 2016 Greening of Falmouth 10-Year Progress Report

In September 2016, LMAC prepared the *Greening of Falmouth Ten-Year Progress Report, 2006-2016* (see Appendix 2) which documented the implementation accomplishments of the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* plan. LMAC noted in this 10-year report that, while the community has made a great deal of progress in protecting and managing open space, the next decade will offer additional opportunities and challenges. These include:

- maintaining public support for new open space acquisitions;
- managing our open space properties for multiple uses;
- finding a new generation of conservation leaders and volunteers; and
- offering more opportunities for outdoor recreation and education to children and adults.

<sup>5</sup> Revenues realized from the sale of the Plummer and Lunt school property to OceanView as part of the Land & Water Conservation Fund's required conversion of that property designated as recreational land. The revenues allowed acquisition of the Hundred Acres Woods property. The sales proceeds do not count against the \$5M appropriation from 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Bargain sales represent the value of the charitable contribution seven different landowners made when selling their land for less than its appraised value.

<sup>7</sup> Resource sales come from the value of wood harvested from Town property during forest improvement operations.

## 2017 Open Space Survey and Public Forum

In October 2017, the committee conducted an online survey as part of its work. In commissioning the survey, the committee was particularly interested to find out from respondents the following:

- how they use Falmouth's open spaces;
- how successful they felt the Town had been with its open space work in the last decade;
- if they felt that more open space preservation was required;
- what they saw as benefits to open space preservation;
- what their extent of support was for the draft goals of this plan; and,
- what they thought of Falmouth's current open spaces.

Ultimately, the committee used the feedback it obtained to further develop this plan's vision and goals. The 450+ respondents were mostly from Falmouth and fell into three main groups: those younger than 20 years, those between 21 and 40 years old, and those 41 years and older. People between 20 and 40 years old were underrepresented. Most people (approximately 75 percent of respondents) were not familiar with the 2006 *Greening of Falmouth* report. Respondents thought that the Town had been successful in its open space work in the last decade, and that more open space preservation was needed. On average, respondents rated Falmouth's current open spaces at a 7.11 on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being worst, and 10 best).

Survey respondents saw the top benefits (in order) of open space as:

1. Recreational opportunities: The town-wide trail system and open spaces are used in a variety of ways, including hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.
2. Connections to nature/serenity: Open space properties provide an opportunity to connect with nature, and experience the serenity nature offers, close to home.
3. Rural character: Preserving land from development adds to the aesthetic quality of the community and keeps large portions of the town rural in character.
4. Health/Wellness: Studies have shown that people living in close proximity to undeveloped natural areas and trails are healthier than people who do not.
5. Education: Falmouth schools and Community Programs use open space properties as outdoor classrooms for both children and adults.

Survey respondents noted the top two goals (listed in order) to help guide the Town's open space efforts over the next decade (2018-2027) as:

1. Protect our natural resources and open spaces; and,
2. Ensure that protected open spaces are sufficient and available throughout the entire Town.

The survey also provided ample opportunity for open-ended comment, which provided additional insight for the LPAC+ in assessing this plan. See Appendix 6 for detailed survey results. LPAC+ also held a public forum at the Town Hall on June 26, 2018, to provide an opportunity for public opinion and input on the draft 2018 Open Space Plan.

# 2018 Open Space Plan Goals and Recommended Actions

The committee recommends the following goals and recommended actions. Each goal first addresses the following questions before stating the recommended actions:

- Why is this goal important?
- What issues are in play with this goal?
- How does the plan address this goal?

## Goal 1: Protect Our Natural Resources and Open Spaces

### *Why is this goal important?*

Preservation of open spaces is a vital part of Falmouth’s character. Open spaces in Falmouth offer a wide variety of ecological benefits, including improved air and water quality, flood control, wildlife habitat, waste decomposition, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and land management benefits, such as creating a sense of place and protecting property values. Open spaces provide an opportunity for Falmouth residents to connect with nature close to home, and experience the serenity nature offers. Studies have demonstrated that people who live near undeveloped natural areas and trails are healthier than people who do not. Health benefits associated with outdoor recreation, as noted in Maine’s outdoor recreation plan, include: reduction in heart and vascular disease; improvements in cognitive functioning; reduced obesity; improved mood and self-esteem; lower blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension; reduced depression, anxiety, and stress; positive influences on immunity and cardiovascular function; and increased attention levels. (See Appendix 7)

### *What issues are in play with this goal?*

Open space is continually lost to new development driven by changing population dynamics and the regional pressures of urban sprawl. Undeveloped lands with high conservation value still remain in Falmouth, but many are at risk of being developed in the future. LPAC+ concluded that there is no “finish line” for open space preservation as residential development in Falmouth will likely continue indefinitely. The committee believes that the formula for maintaining Falmouth’s open space successes needs to be protected and should not be compromised. If Falmouth is to remain a livable community, it must continue to strive for a balance between land for open space and land for development. Therefore, LPAC+ intentionally avoided setting firm goals for meeting the open space needs of the town. LPAC values the past practice of the Council of allocating \$300,000 annual towards open space acquisition.

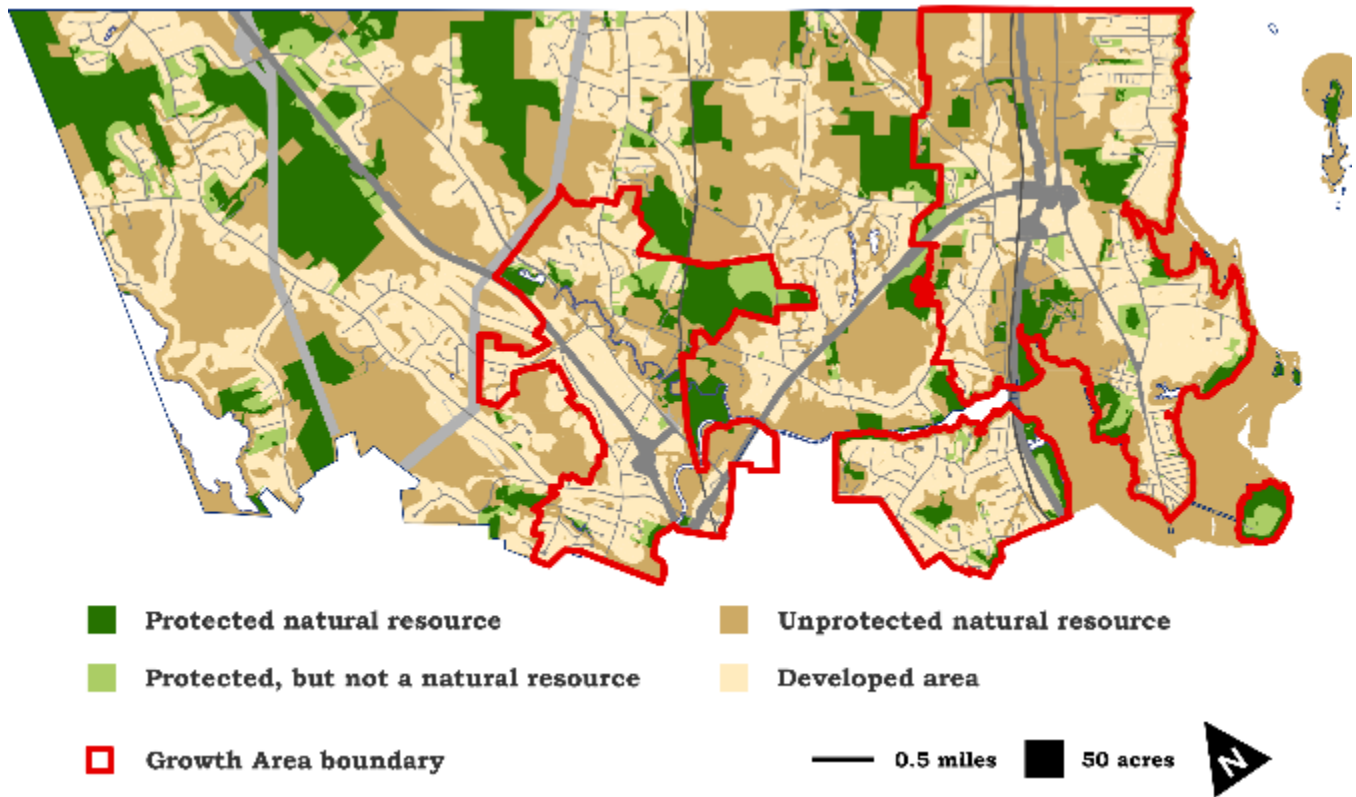
Due to the opportunities for biodiversity, as well as exceptional educational, scenic, recreational, and wildlife habitat functionality, larger areas of open space generally provide a wide variety of ecological and societal benefits. While the overall size of a contiguous open space is important, connectivity and corridors between open spaces are also vital to maintaining high quality wildlife

habitat. As development isolates existing open spaces, the quality of these open spaces is diminished for humans and wildlife.

*"Just knowing that open spaces are there gives me peace of mind."*  
 2017 survey response

Connectivity is also important to maintain and expand trail networks for recreational pursuits. Currently, several privately held parcels include key segments of the trail system that might be eventually sold to new owners who may be less willing to allow trails on their property. Acquiring these parcels through a fee purchase or securing permanent trail easements should be a high priority for the Town, and are already a high priority of the LMAC. Sometimes, trails that are part of Town approvals have not been built, disappear over time, or "paper" streets and rights-of-way for future trails are forgotten. If this occurs, the vision of a well-connected and protected trail network is not realized.

Climate change is another aspect of changes affecting Falmouth that can alter natural resources in a negative way. Future change may reduce the ability of these resources to improve water quality and regulate water flows, cause the displacement or loss of many species, or shift the timing of biological events, affecting species and habitats. Protecting a diverse suite of habitats, complete with corridors between open spaces, in various locations throughout the town, may help mitigate future changes, including those we can reasonably predict and those not yet foreseen.



Map 2 Significant areas of natural resources, including high-value habitat and fragile wetlands, have not yet been incorporated into an open space.



### ***How does the plan address this goal?***

This plan strives for continued acquisition, enlargement, and resiliency of large tracts of land with natural resources, including the permanent protection and management of open spaces and, wherever feasible, protection of corridors between existing and future open spaces. Resiliency in this context means the capacity of the natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from disruptions, such as climate change, invasive pests, or fire. To help accomplish this, through the following recommended actions, the plan seeks to assure continued annual funding for open space acquisition, prioritize protection of the most important remaining open space areas, incentivize private land owners and organizations to permanently protect open space, find ways to leverage developer funds toward open space protection, amend zoning ordinance regulations pertaining to open space protection where appropriate, and review the Town's funding strategy for land acquisition as necessary.

In addition, this plan addresses the need to acquire small, distinct parcels of land that contain features of ecological significance, such as vernal pools, parcels that provide outdoor recreation opportunities in rural as well as more developed areas, and parcels associated with historic and scenic features. This plan considers the various uses and features of open space in Falmouth and provides a more targeted approach to preserving open space and natural resources to reflect current and future needs, to the best of our ability to predict those needs.

### **Recommended actions for Goal 1**

1. Establish an annual open space acquisition appropriation amount of \$500,000 by the Town.
2. Review and update the Open Space Rating Guides used by LMAC in evaluating potential acquisition and trail properties to reflect (1) the variation in development patterns in the growth and rural areas and (2) the variation of open space that is desired in the growth and rural areas.

For example, the criteria for open space in rural areas should reflect the need for acquisition of large parcels or smaller parcels that, when combined, create large parcels, or those lands that provide connectivity for the purposes of habitat conservation/corridors, natural resource protection, and trails.

Similarly, the criteria for open space in the growth area should reflect the need for walkability and accessibility of smaller, more developed open spaces for recreational and aesthetic purposes, as well as increasing connectivity for the purposes of habitat conservation and corridors, natural resource protection and trails.

3. Preserve lands that provide specific benefits or achieve specific goals that will enhance the chances for acquisition of supporting grants or funding (e.g. wetlands or vernal pool protection/enhancement funds, farming and forestry grants, trail connection grants, shoreline access funding, etc.)
4. Protect waterfront and water access areas; incorporate active farmland, viable timberland, and other working lands; and reflect the need for resilient and adaptable

ecosystems, including factors occurring due to climate change, such as the increasing intensity of storms, sea level rise and changes/threats to habitat.

5. Identify the conservation tools and resources available to the Town, and utilize these tools and resources in discussions with landowners, policy makers, and other stakeholders to promote open space preservation (see Goal 4).
6. Develop a monitoring system to assure that requirements of Town permit approvals regarding open space, trails, and corridors are properly executed.



Photo 7 Springtime on a woods trail.

## Goal 2: Provide a Range of Open Spaces and Experiences for a Diverse Population

### *Why is this goal important?*

Open spaces include working lands, woodlands, wetlands, riparian corridors, waterfront areas, farmlands, orchards, fields, and parks. Each of these spaces provides a different experience and serves a different purpose. Having a range of spaces available helps ensure that everyone, from young to old, and from active to passive users, is able to enjoy the benefits of open spaces. These spaces should also include lands that are conserved for conservation sake as habitats also have value for wildlife and water quality. This plan covers the spaces and activities in the green and yellow areas in the above graphic, but not the red area.



### *What issues are in play with this goal?*

People enjoy various activities in, and the community gains different values from open spaces. For example, users may be bird watching, deer or turkey hunting, exercising (e.g. running or mountain biking), seeking peace and quiet, or walking their dog. Sometimes these uses are not compatible with each other. Having a variety of open spaces that are diverse and can cater to specific uses and users will help enhance user experiences.

### *How does the plan address this goal?*

The plan strives to better understand how people use the current open spaces, the distribution of the various types of spaces, the agricultural/production capabilities of land, as well as the habitat needs of specific wildlife species. The plan also recognizes that Falmouth's open spaces and trail networks are one part of a regional network that extends into neighboring communities, and strives to achieve benefits of combined efforts with our neighbors. Lastly, the plan also seeks to actively protect working lands and promote local food production through recognition and conservation of active farms and forests.

*"Balancing the various uses of open space is challenging. Access for recreation is important, but I also want a focus on habitat preservation for wildlife."*

*2017 survey response*

## Recommended actions for Goal 2

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of current open spaces, their uses, and available amenities.
2. Develop an up to date understanding of open space users and their needs and expectations.
3. Develop a user impact assessment of open space parcels, including compatibility of current uses and identification of underutilized and overutilized parcels. Monitor user impact and adjust as necessary to ensure optimal user experience and preservation needs. Use the

open space inventory and user impact assessment to determine where natural resource protection and recreational access need to be improved.

4. Coordinate efforts with neighboring communities and non-governmental conservation and recreation organizations to preserve and enhance regional open space, trails, and wildlife corridors.
5. Enhance accessibility to open spaces for the handicapped, special accommodations and elderly populations.
6. Develop an approach for preserving and acquiring access to smaller, more developed open space areas with recreational value.



### **Goal 3: Ensure that Protected Open Spaces are Available throughout the Entire Town**

#### ***Why is this goal important?***

Accessibility and connectivity of protected open spaces increases their utility for people and wildlife. A growing population will have a need for access to open spaces. As development continues, undeveloped spaces, trails, and wildlife corridors will become more valuable to people and nature. It is important that all of Falmouth's citizens and taxpayers enjoy and reap the benefits of our common open spaces.

Trails and significant open space are amenities that attract new residents. These amenities have been shown to bolster property values. One study states that "the real estate market consistently demonstrates that many people are willing to pay a larger amount for property located close to parks and open space areas than for a home that does not offer this amenity." One report (see Appendix 7 for Crompton 2004) estimates a 20 percent increase in value for property adjoining or fronting a passive-use park. This report states that "if the incremental amount of taxes paid by each property which is attributable to the presence of a nearby park is aggregated, it will be sufficient to pay the annual debt charges required to retire the bonds used to acquire and develop the park." In such circumstances, the park or open space is obtained at no long-term cost to the Town.

Because preserved open spaces are generally exempt from property taxes, there is an opportunity cost associated with the loss of property tax revenues that would have been collected had the land been otherwise developed. However, fiscal impact analyses have shown that the public costs associated with new residential development typically exceed the public revenues that accrue from it. Therefore, the purchase of open space land by municipalities can reduce the net tax deficit. The strategy of conserving parks and open space is not contrary to a community's economic health, but rather is an integral part of it.

#### ***What issues are in play with this goal?***

As more of Falmouth gets developed, wildlife has less land to live on, and its needs for connected, unfragmented habitat and wildlife corridors are intensified. At the same time, more people are using the open spaces that are available, which may lead to overcrowding in the most popular open spaces. This may diminish the benefits that people receive from open spaces, and tends to negatively impact the ability of wildlife to co-exist in those spaces.

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan notes that approximately 52 percent of the combined critical natural resources are located in the designated Rural Area, whereas 37 percent is located in the designated residential Growth Area and 10 percent in the designated commercial Growth Area. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that an emphasis be placed on protection of these critical natural resources in the Rural Area. Does this mean that the natural resources in the Growth Area should be ignored? On the contrary. This plan recommends protection of important open spaces and corridors throughout the town, including within the target growth areas. However, as noted in the Comprehensive Plan, within the growth areas, growth-related considerations take on increased importance and should be factored into the overall approach for land acquisition for

open space. This is a trade-off that is important to recognize in implementing the growth-rural area concept, a concept that also underlays this open space plan. Therefore, LPAC+ concludes that the quantity of open spaces that are needed depends on the quality of these spaces and the wants of Falmouth’s citizens. In addition, the committee feels that targeting different types of open spaces for the Growth Area (e.g. pocket parks) versus the Rural Area (e.g. wildlife habitat) is also important.

***How does the plan address this goal?***

The plan strives for open space and outdoor recreation opportunities to be available and accessible throughout the community. This includes integrating the connectivity between open space areas for people as well as wildlife. Waterfront areas suitable for walking or sitting are desired as those are not abundant in Falmouth. Proximity and accessibility of open spaces, as well as the amenities they provide, will encourage their use.

*"The focus has been in West Falmouth, but we need to preserve in the Foreside area as well, especially the community trails."*  
*2017 survey response*

In the Growth Area the goal is for additional, smaller spaces that are near residences, such as open spaces of any size within a quarter-mile, or a 5 to 10-minute leisurely walk. The Town has already done a great job of securing larger open space parcels in the Growth Area. An inventory of existing amenities at each open space (such as trails, playgrounds, benches, water fountains, general purpose fields, and community gardens) will allow the Town to make adjustments so that needs of users are met.

In the Rural Area, walking distance is likely to be less of a concern. Users most likely drive to a trailhead, hike or mountain bike, and then drive home; or users may be fortunate to have properties abutting large conservation areas such as Blackstrap Hill Preserve or the Falmouth Community Forest. In fact, approximately 92 percent of properties within the Rural Area are within a half-mile of open space. Open spaces in the Rural Area tend to be more important for environmental/habitat connectivity purposes, and are important in helping maintain the historic rural “feel” of these areas. Additionally, open spaces in the rural areas are used by a variety of wildlife species and recreational users, as well as for active forestry and agricultural purposes. Adding lands to these existing open spaces continues to increase their overall value and ability to provide these benefits.

**Recommended actions for Goal 3**

1. Increase access to open spaces designated for recreation in accordance with the following benchmarks:
  - a. Within the Growth Area: Strive for walkable access to all residents, e.g. an open space within a 5-minute walk or within a quarter-mile.
  - b. Within the Rural Area: Strive for an interconnected recreational trail network with good signage and readily available maps.

2. Implement related actions in the 2016 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan incorporating non-open space connections between open spaces. Consider sidewalks, lanes, and driveways to help create a more connected system for walking and bicycling.
3. Protect and expand habitat corridors to allow greater access for wildlife to unfragmented habitat areas (within Falmouth and beyond).
4. Protect waterfront areas for coastal and riparian habitat, fishing, non-motorized watercraft, swimming, passive recreation, and similar activities.
5. Promote regional interconnectivity by acquiring and planning for open space that connects with recreation trails and open space in neighboring municipalities.



Photo 8 View of the Presumpscot River estuary. Many properties along the river have been preserved for wildlife habitat, riparian health, and public access and recreation.



## **Goal 4: Utilize Open Space Acquisition as a Land Use Growth Management Tool**

### ***Why is this goal important?***

The Comprehensive Plan identifies official Growth and Rural Areas. The goal of that distinction is to encourage a “significant majority of new development in the Growth Area and to preserve the less developed character of the Rural Area.” A higher density of development in the Growth Area, compatible with the density in existing neighborhoods, promotes a more efficient use of roads and utilities and allows more opportunity for walking and biking from those neighborhoods to the mixed use commercial areas at Route 1 and Route 100. This, in turn, enhances the chance of keeping open spaces in the rural area undeveloped.

### ***What issues are in play with this goal?***

Through targeted acquisition or protection of open spaces in the rural area, the available land for development there can be reduced and the rate of residential growth can be slowed. Recent examples of this strategy are the acquisition of a portion of the North Falmouth Community Forest and Hurricane Valley Farm, both of which are undeveloped parcels located in the Rural Area, but had been targeted for residential development. These acquisitions were aided by a declining real estate market, at the time they were acquired.



Photo 9 Fall in Community Park.



Within the Rural Area, there are currently 21 potentially developable parcels of more than 25 acres. Nine of those are more than 50 acres. Dense residential development within these parcels would have noticeable effects on both wildlife habitat connectivity and on efficient delivery of municipal services.

On the other hand, there are less than five parcels more than 25 acres in the Growth Area. This goal requires the Town to develop and implement policies and procedures to encourage denser development in the Growth Area and discourage denser development (and the associated fragmentation and loss of habitat) in the Rural Area. If there is doubt about Town policies allowing or encouraging growth in the Growth Area, property acquisition may be the single most important and widely agreed upon tool to manage growth. In that case, more funding will be needed for open space acquisition in order to remain consistent with the Comprehensive Plan vision.

***How does the plan address this goal?***

In accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, this plan applies the lens of Growth and Rural Areas to evaluate the needs of, and opportunities in, each of these areas. Acquisition of potentially developable land, either by fee title acquisition or easement, would reduce land available for development and increase land preserved as open space.

**Recommended actions for Goal 4**

1. Identify the suitability for preservation of remaining undeveloped properties and those containing trails with accompanying trail licenses and prioritize those parcels that also have a high potential or risk for development. Enter into a dialogue with the owners of these properties about property or trail preservation potential.
2. Expand the review of all development proposals to include the Open Space Manager to help determine their potential and/or plan for open space preservation and trail connections.
3. Proactively negotiate with developers and owners property acquisition through fee title or easement before development proposals are prepared and submitted to the Town for review.
4. Explore certain fee-in-lieu programs, such as the following:
  - a. allow added residential density to a project subject to payment into an open space fund dedicated for use by the Town to fund open space acquisition; or
  - b. implement a fee for development impacts within natural resources and buffers, with the funds dedicated to protecting natural resources and buffers in other parts of the town.
5. Review and update land use ordinances as necessary, including, but not limited to, open space provisions for Residential Planned Developments.

## **Goal 5: Ensure the Utility and Longevity of Open Spaces Through Good Management**

### ***Why is this goal important?***

Many open spaces were acquired with the intent of keeping them as wild places where primarily important ecological functions could take place, such as recharging ground water, protecting water quality, preserving wildlife habitat, sequestering carbon, protecting air quality and natural resiliency. Open spaces also provide people with opportunities for reflection and recreation that are only available in the natural world. Yet, other places will have a more active recreational purpose. Maintaining the functions of all these places is important. Each one will require its own management approach.



Photo 10 Volunteers work on a canoe launch to improve access to the East Branch Conservation Area.

### ***What issues are in play with this goal?***

Forest properties have management plans to make sure the forest is maintained in an appropriate manner. That may mean harvesting at certain times to encourage the growth of other species. Or, as the popularity of the trail system grows, so increases the need to minimize and manage any conflicts that may arise between different user groups. Ultimately, this plan finds that the overall level of use needs to remain within the carrying capacity of each open space parcel, so that the natural ecological functions of these parcels can be preserved. In sensitive spaces where wildlife habitat preservation is a top concern, a conscious decision may have to be made not to build trails or parking areas in order to minimize human disturbance.

### ***How does the plan address this goal?***

This plan recognizes the importance of having management plans for all open spaces, plans that address the unique attributes of each property. These plans will help to balance human needs with the needs of the natural environment. All Town properties currently have land management plans in place. This plan affirms the need for this and reinforces the necessity of updating these plans on a regular basis.

Open space stewardship also requires that sufficient funding is available for the proper management of the Town's open spaces. Execution of management plans may involve grant writing, restoration work oversight, forestry plan oversight, tree harvesting, trail work, and invasive species management. In addition, open space stewardship requires that the roles of the various parties that are charged with implementing management plans are clear. Implementation of management plans currently falls to the Open Space Manager, LMAC, the Falmouth Conservation Corps, and other volunteers. There are also relationships with user groups such as

*"The breadth of open space and recreational opportunity was pivotal in our decision to relocate to Falmouth."*

*2017 survey response*

mountain bikers, snowmobilers, etc., and cooperating entities such as the Falmouth Land Trust, which need to be maintained. Overlapping capabilities and sharing of resources of these groups should be monitored on an ongoing basis to maximize efficiencies between these organizations, especially between the Town and the Land Trust.

## **Recommended actions for Goal 5**

1. Incorporate new data to make the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) more powerful in identifying, prioritizing, and managing open space protection efforts.
2. Develop and/or update land management plans for all open space properties that are the responsibility of the Town and encourage other organizations with open space properties in Falmouth to do the same.
3. Ensure adequate staffing, volunteer, and capital resources to execute management plans and fulfill any other operational open space needs. Where certain positions require ongoing funding, ensure that the Town's budgetary allocations meet the needs of the program.
4. Formalize agreements between the Town and organizations such as the Falmouth Schools and Falmouth Land Trust regarding open space stewardship, educational programming and sharing of resources.

## **Goal 6: Educate the Public about the Presence, Functions, and Values of Open Spaces**

### ***Why is this goal important?***

The public uses open spaces in a variety of ways, but needs to know what spaces exist, where they are, and how they can be best used. The public is involved, directly or indirectly, in a number of ways. Citizen volunteers, through the Falmouth Conservation Corps, help to improve open spaces by building trails or performing other management and maintenance activities. The public elects the Town Council, which in turn makes decisions on open space acquisitions and management. The public provides input at the Council level and its support plays a critical role in procuring grant funds. Open spaces benefit one's personal health, and provide places of outdoor learning. Students of today may become the open space stewards of tomorrow, thus assuring that Falmouth's open space legacy is passed on from generation to generation. Participating in physical improvement work can help residents feel a direct connection to, and sense of protection and ownership of, these spaces.

### ***What issues are in play with this goal?***

On an ongoing basis, new generations of conservation leaders and volunteers need to be found. Committee members turn over periodically; volunteers age out, move on, or lose interest in the work. New Council members get elected every year and Town staff changes over time. New policy priorities capture the public's and elected official's attention. Institutional memory will remain important and should not be lost. New leaders are briefed on a regular basis and this practice should continue and be enhanced. They should be informed that current and past policies and leaders have been very supportive of Falmouth's open space initiative and history.

*"Promote your efforts. Educate the public. If it is great, promote it."*

*2017 survey response*

### ***How does the plan address this goal?***

The time and effort in developing this plan has already started to re-engage the public and policy makers in thoughtful consideration regarding the kind of community we want and hope to leave to future generations. The October 2017 open space survey made many people aware of this planning effort and brought to light many issues that are on people's minds.

There is an opportunity to incorporate awareness and education through the Falmouth School Department. Involving the department and its students is an avenue for engagement as open space properties are wonderful classrooms for learning about the outdoors. In an era when "nature deficit disorder" has become a recognized problem, there is much that can be done to reconnect citizens with the natural resources that sustain them. For example, this could include starting young students on field trips and encouraging older students to participate in community service projects through the open space program. This could result in a lifelong experience for a student, evidenced by, for example, a Snapfish book (customized for each student) about their experience in all elementary school grades with photos when they were in each grade at each location and present it to them at 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade graduation. Robust programming could be made



Photo 11 Students enjoy an outdoor classroom.

available through partnerships with the Falmouth Land Trust and/or the Parks and Community Programs Department for students of all ages, especially during summer months (such as one day of astronomy, one day of nature photography, one day about pollinators).

The communication processes around open space land management are important as well. These processes allow the public to be appropriately apprised of open space in Falmouth and the historical relationship among the Land Trust, the Town, and subsets of the Town, such as Falmouth Conservation Corps. Ongoing communication includes informational kiosks at open space sites, provision of educational background materials, information in Town committee newsletters, and reporting in *The Forecaster*, as that newspaper is a major conduit for residents to get their local news. Improving public exposure and consistent education about Town open space properties is an important goal of this plan.

A comprehensive, systematic, programmed education effort is needed to educate and motivate stakeholders of open space opportunities. The stakeholders of such an education effort include:

1. Administrators: Town Council, Town Management, Parks and Community Programs, Town Committees, School Board and School Administrators/Educators;
2. Beneficiaries: active users, volunteers, residents, Falmouth Schools students; and,
3. Interested parties: State and Federal Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the Falmouth Land Trust, and others.

The education strategy should address how open space preservation is part of Falmouth's tradition and how it is an essential component of the community's Comprehensive Plan. A broad, simple, consistent communication statement is needed that makes the case for this Open Space Plan across stakeholders, explain how it is part of Falmouth's "constitution", of who we are as Falmouth citizens. In addition, the statement should address the importance of the environmental values of open space for our future.



Furthermore, in keeping with Falmouth’s sound fiscal tradition, the economic benefits of open space preservation and the reasons for the spending of public funds on open space preservation, which in turn takes private property off the tax rolls, should also be addressed.

## **Recommended actions for Goal 6**

1. Ensure that the public is appropriately apprised of the presence, access to, and use of Town open space through the communication processes around open space land management.
2. Prepare a communication and outreach strategy that underscores the broad community support for open space preservation.
3. Improve graphic materials that depict the range of open space locations and uses (e.g. invest in maps, brochures, web pages, perhaps a Global Positioning System (GPS) enabled app depicting open space boundaries, access points and trails, etc.).
4. Strengthen the bond and connection that different population groups feel with existing open spaces. Examine current and new opportunities for open space use, and explore expanded partnerships with stakeholder organizations, such as Falmouth Community Programs, Falmouth Land Trust, Falmouth Schools, and the media. Examples of these include:
  - a. Supporting educational programs focused on natural resource conservation that are already underway, such as the Land Trust’s work in school programming;
  - b. Supporting the development of young leaders and enthusiasm for open space conservation through grants, contests, and internships; and,
  - c. Re-engaging the public in the natural history of open spaces and their natural resource and ecosystem values in partnership with local organizations such as the Falmouth Historical Society, Falmouth Land Trust, or Maine Audubon.
5. Develop short term (<12mo.), medium term (2-3 yrs.) and long term (ongoing) awareness building campaigns with the media, through effective signage, information, and events aimed at maximizing citizen engagement.
6. Develop a feedback mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the open space education strategy.
7. Educate the public about Falmouth’s open spaces and trail networks by utilizing the existing outreach strength of neighboring communities and potential partner organizations (e.g. Portland Trails, Maine Audubon, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, the Greater Portland Chapter of the New England Mountain Bicycling Association).



Photo 12 A robust education strategy to engage our young residents will ensure Falmouth's open spaces remain protected long into the future.

## **Conclusion**

Open space is one of the pillars of Falmouth's success, along with first-rate public schools and judicious Town management. Thanks to hard work, diligent town planning, and dedicated staff, volunteers and citizens, Falmouth is fortunate to have valuable and permanently-protected land. As mentioned before, the value of the existence, and Town funding for, the position of the Open Space Manager cannot be overstated.

This everyday-life investment in ourselves and to the benefit of future generations, should be celebrated, revered, safeguarded, and expanded upon. As the Town plans for its future, Falmouth residents expect a balance between sound development and open space to protect the health and value of the community.

This plan seeks to accomplish that. The plan lays out a set of goals and recommended actions for the next 10 years based on a long term vision for Falmouth and focuses on setting clear priorities as to what should be preserved, managing preservation lands wisely, educating the public about the availability of open space, and using a variety of acquisition methods.

LPAC+ hopes that the plan's implementation of the thirty-three recommendations will be met with as much interest, energy, and success as the work that preceded it.

## **Appendices**

1. Council Resolution 60-2016
2. Greening of Falmouth Ten-Year Progress Report, 2006-2016
3. Update from the Falmouth Land Trust
4. Open Space Rating Guide
5. Connecting Properties Rating Form
6. 2017 Open Space Survey Results
7. References and Continued Reading

## Appendix 1: Council Resolution 60-2016

### Resolution No 60-2016

#### TOWN OF FALMOUTH RESOLUTION

#### *Development of an Update of the 2006 Greening of Falmouth Plan*

- Whereas,** Falmouth’s first open space plan was adopted in 1989; and
- Whereas,** in 2004, the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) requested the Conservation Commission to update the 1989 plan; and
- Whereas,** the Council adopted *The Greening of Falmouth* plan in August 2006, created an Open Space Subcommittee of the Conservation Commission, and contracted for a part-time open space ombudsman to oversee the implementation of the plan; and
- Whereas,** the Open Space Subcommittee has since become Land Management & Acquisition Committee (LMAC); and
- Whereas,** the Open Space Subcommittee, for the purposes of its work, defined open space as “any non-developed land and water areas in the community. Open space may include woodland, wetlands, riparian corridors, farmland, orchards, and fields that serve a variety of functions: wildlife habitat, buffer zones, ecological protection, agriculture, passive public recreation, and scenic enjoyment;” and
- Whereas,** ten years have passed since adoption of *The Greening of Falmouth* plan; and
- Whereas,** in September 2016 LMAC prepared a Ten-Year Progress Report, 2006-2016, that documents the implementation accomplishments of the *The Greening of Falmouth* plan; and
- Whereas,** LMAC notes in this report that, while the community has made a great deal of progress in protecting and managing open space, the next decade will offer additional opportunities and challenges, such as:
- maintaining public support for new open space acquisitions,
  - managing our open space properties for multiple uses,
  - finding a new generation of conservation leaders and volunteers, and
  - offering more opportunities for outdoor recreation and education to children and adults; and
- Whereas,** LMAC recommends creating a new open space plan that will guide this work in the coming decade; and
- Whereas,** the Council has included in its draft 2016-17 Work Plan, dated July 19, 2016, a high priority action item to develop a *Greening of Falmouth version 2.0* plan; and
- Whereas,** the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) has completed its current assignments and expressed interest in working on an updated open space plan as a complement to its work on growth areas and infill development; and



- Whereas,** the leadership of LMAC and LPAC met with Councilor Hemphill and Town staff to discuss a collaborative approach to this assignment; and
- Whereas,** the recommendation is for LPAC to take the lead on the open space plan update effort with input from LMAC, Conservation Commission, Falmouth Land Trust, and other interested parties; and
- Whereas,** LMAC, in addition to supporting the open space plan update effort, will continue with its role assigned by the Council which includes:
- identifying and assessing key properties for acquisition,
  - creating strategies for acquisitions, and
  - creating and implementing management plans for acquired properties.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FALMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL ASSEMBLED THIS 24<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2016, THAT:**

1. The Town of Falmouth, Town Council, applauds the accomplishments of LMAC, open space ombudsman, and Falmouth Conservation Corps in implementing *The Greening of Falmouth* plan over the past decade; and
2. The Town of Falmouth, Town Council, agrees that an updated plan is needed to address ongoing open space opportunities and challenges; and
3. The Town of Falmouth, Town Council, believes that such a plan should follow the direction set by the 2013 Comprehensive Plan which identified growth and rural areas; and
4. The Town of Falmouth, Town Council, requests that LPAC prepare and recommend an update to *The Greening of Falmouth* plan; and
5. The Town of Falmouth, Town Council, for the purposes of the open space plan update assignment, expands the membership of LPAC with the following members:
  - Up to two liaisons of LMAC,
  - One liaison from Conservation Commission,
  - One liaison from Parks and Community Programs Advisory Committee (PAC-PAC), and
  - One liaison from the Falmouth Land Trust; and
6. The Town of Falmouth, Town Council requests that LPAC reports its progress to the Council on a regular basis, but no later than six months from adoption of this resolution.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ellen Planer, Town Clerk

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Greening of Falmouth Ten-Year Progress Report, 2006-2016

See following pages.

# ***The Greening of Falmouth***

## **Ten-Year Progress Report, 2006-2016**

### **Land Management & Acquisition Committee**

#### I. Background

Falmouth's first open space plan was adopted in 1989. In 2004, the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) asked the Conservation Commission to update that plan. They agreed and created a seven-member sub-committee comprised of people with varied interests in Falmouth land use to prepare the plan. The sub-committee's membership included Conservation Commission members, a Falmouth Land Trust representative, two large landowners, and a developer. The sub-committee worked for two years to produce *The Greening of Falmouth*; solicited public input regarding its recommendations; and submitted the plan to the Town Council in June 2006. The Council adopted the plan in August of that year which included a directive that the town create an Open Space Sub-committee of the Conservation Commission and contract for a part-time Open Space Ombudsman to oversee its implementation. The ombudsman began work in December 2006. The Open Space Sub-committee subsequently evolved into the Land Management & Acquisition Committee (LMAC), a Council appointed committee in 2013.

For the purposes of its work, the committee defined open space as *"Any non-developed land and water areas in the community. Open space may include woodland, wetlands, riparian corridors, farmland, orchards, and fields that serve a variety of functions: Wildlife habitat, buffer zones, ecological protection, agriculture, passive public recreation, and scenic enjoyment."* The report did not include parks, cemeteries, golf courses, or other active recreational areas in its definition of "open space."



#### II. Vision, Goals

*The Greening of Falmouth* articulated a 100-year vision for our community summarized as follows:

*In 2106 – and beyond – Falmouth is still a community that has significant tracts of open land, healthy & diverse plant & wildlife populations, opportunities for traditional outdoor recreation, and visible rural character. Falmouth continues to be a "quality place."*

To achieve that vision, the report identified five major goals regarding open space in Falmouth:

1. To retain and protect Falmouth's rural character and natural resources.
2. To protect large tracts of land for wildlife habitat.
3. To insure the availability of outdoor recreation.
4. To provide connectivity between open space areas.
5. To actively manage open space to benefit all citizens of Falmouth.

While not identifying any specific properties to be targeted for future acquisition, the plan did identify two general priorities:

1. Large, contiguous parcels of 250-acres or more; and
2. "Jewel properties" that may have little recreational or wildlife habitat value, but protect scenic views and preserve rural character.

### III. Falmouth Open Space in 2006

Taken together, the Town and Falmouth Land Trust owned or held easements on 1,432 acres of open space. Much of the town-owned land was not publicly identified and inaccessible to most residents, including land that now constitutes Hadlock Community Forest, Woods Road Community Forest, Hardy Road Conservation Area, and the River Point Conservation Area. The Falmouth Nature Preserve and the Land Trust's Blackstrap Hill Preserve were the only large open space properties that had an established trail system.

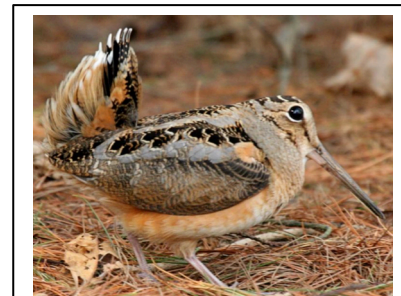


While the town had long standing interest in protecting open space, it had no organized system for identifying and evaluating potential acquisitions, managing the open space parcels it owned, or monitoring the easements it held. Many acquisitions resulted from community concern about preventing development on key parcels such as Wilshore Farm, Blackstrap Hill, Pleasant Hill, and Community Park, and were more reactive than proactive in nature. Likewise, most Land Trust properties came through ownership or a required easement on subdivision conservation set-aside parcels. While there was a great deal of public support for open space protection, there was very little underlying structure actually make it happen.

### IV. Falmouth Open Space in 2016

As a result of *The Greening of Falmouth*, the town now has a robust system for proactively acquiring and managing open space properties. The key elements of that system are:

- The Land Management & Acquisition Committee (LMAC), a group of citizens and town staff that:
  - ✓ Develop procedures for how conservation land and associated facilities are created, managed, and maintained in accordance with town ordinances.
  - ✓ Advise the Town Council on matters pertaining to the acquisition and management of conservation lands.
  - ✓ Create management plans for each designated conservation property owned by the town.
  - ✓ Produce information and guidance for the public regarding trails, land, and public facilities in Falmouth.
  - ✓ Recommend funding levels for the acquisition of new properties and for the management of existing properties.
  - ✓ Design and conduct public information events and activities regarding open space issues.
- The Open Space Ombudsman, who:
  - ✓ Works with landowners interested in permanently protecting their property from development.
  - ✓ Oversees the development of management plans for each open space property, and is responsible for implementing those plans.
  - ✓ Builds relationships with external entities and agencies in a position to support and further the town's open space efforts, including the Falmouth Land Trust.



*Protecting wildlife habitat is a major management priority.*

- ✓ Monitors easements held by the town.
  - ✓ Raises funds for open space acquisition and management activities.
  - ✓ Provides the day to day leadership needed to keep things moving and on track.
- The Falmouth Conservation Corps, a group of volunteers who provide much of the labor required to effectively manage town and Falmouth Land Trust open space properties. Over 6,700 hours of volunteer time has been logged by a multitude of volunteers since 2007.



*People with a wide range of recreational interests use our trails.*

The Town now has a system for identifying and rating possible acquisition parcels; a set of policies and procedures for managing those properties; and the annual budget appropriations needed to accomplish its goals.

During the past decade, the Falmouth Land Trust has become more proactive acquiring easements and ownership of conservation properties. The town has also enacted a conservation subdivision ordinance that mandates at least 30% of new subdivision land be preserved as open space.

The effectiveness of this system can be seen in the results, as summarized in Table I:

Table I: Open Space Acreage	2006	2016	% Change
Total acreage of designated Town open space properties <sup>1</sup>	798	1,830	129%
Total acreage of Falmouth Land Trust open space properties	634	1,045	65%
Other open space parcels <sup>2</sup>	39	86	121%
Number of miles of pedestrian trails, town wide <sup>3</sup>	8.4	48.6	479%

Perhaps the most impressive accomplishment is how connected many of these parcels are, both to other Falmouth conservation properties as well as to adjacent towns. To have so much permanently protected land in the most developed area of Maine is a real gift to future generations.

However, not much success has been realized in protecting “jewel properties.” While almost thirty such properties have been tentatively identified by LMAC, only one has been protected.

<sup>1</sup> Does not include land the town owned that was not designated as open space at the time. 698 acres of town-owned conservation land have been newly acquired since 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Includes conservation land owned by Portland Trails, Maine Coast Heritage Trust & the State of Maine.

<sup>3</sup> Doesn't not include Portland Trails, Macworth Island, or Maine Audubon trails.



Town-Owned Open Space Properties	
Name	Size (acres)
Blackstrap Hill Community Forest	234
Brookfield Open Space	17
Deer Ridge & Wildwood Way Open Space	19
East Branch Conservation Area	56
Falmouth Community Park North	61
Falmouth Nature Preserve	83
Hadlock Community Forest	294
Hardy Road Conservation Area	68
High Meadows Open Space	15
Longwood Road Forest	27
North Falmouth Community Forest	373
River Point Conservation Area	41
Town Forest	22
Suckfish Brook Conservation Area	94
Woods Road Community Forest	160

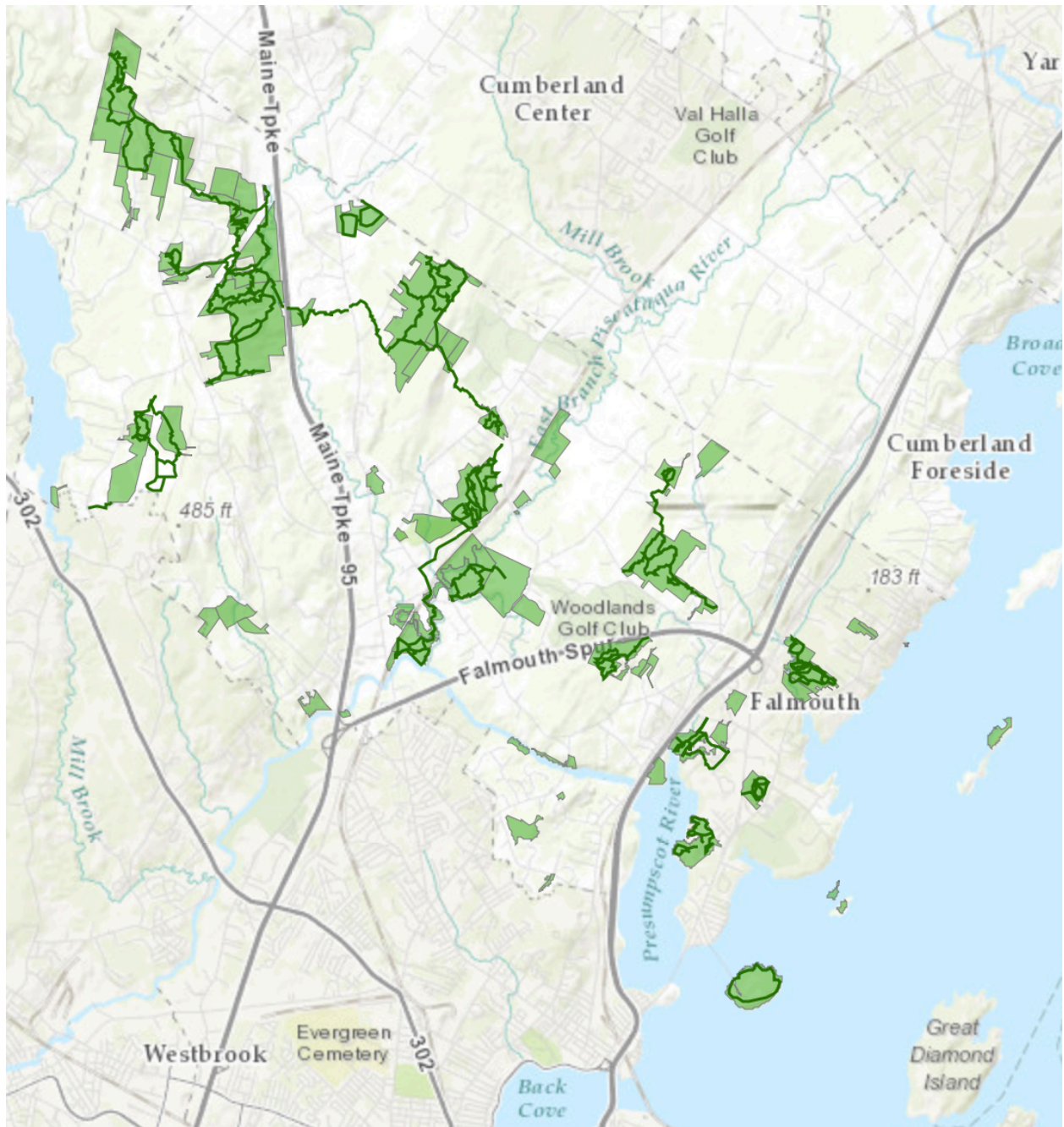
#### IV. Financial Summary

In 2007, 69% of Falmouth voters approved a ballot measure that authorized the Town Council to appropriate \$5,000,000 over the next ten years for open space acquisition. It did not require the Council to spend that amount, but sent a clear message of support for such spending. Annual appropriations have varied over the years with the ups and downs of the economy, but Town Council support for open space has been strong during that period. The town has also been very successful with fundraising to support open space acquisition and management. These efforts are summarized in Table II:

Table II: Open Space Funding, 2006-16.		
Town Appropriation	Other Funding	Total
\$1,971,969	\$3,980,343	\$5,952,312

In addition to funding acquisition costs, the town has also spent \$35,592 from 2008-16 on property management expenses, such as trail building supplies and materials, kiosks, invasive plant control, signage, and parking areas.

# Falmouth's Publicly Accessible Parks & Conservation Properties



[As of September 2016]

A breakdown of the “Other Funding” category includes these sources:

Table III: Sources of Outside Funding.	
Source	Amount
Grants	\$1,822,506
Cash Donations	30,461
Bargain Sales	530,808
Land/Easement Donations	397,000
Resource Sales	39,568
Land & Water Conservation Fund Mitigation	1,160,000
TOTAL =	\$3,980,343

Grant funders for property acquisitions have included the Land for Maine’s Future Program, Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program, Casco Bay Estuary Project, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Forest Service. Trails have been funded by the Recreational Trails Program grants, and donations from the Falmouth Lion’s Club, and the Falmouth Walmart.

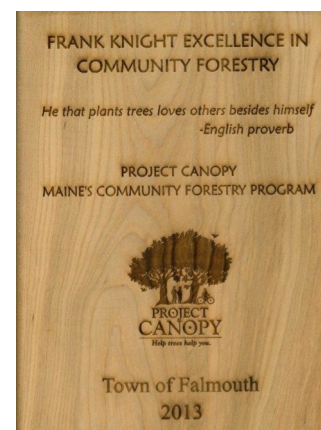
Bargain sales represent the value of the charitable contribution seven different landowners made when selling their land for less than its appraised value.

Resource sales come from the value of wood harvested from town property during forest improvement operations.

## V. Opportunities & Challenges

While we have made a great deal of progress protecting and managing open space in our community, the next decade will offer additional opportunities and challenges. They likely include:

- ❖ *Maintaining public support for new open space acquisitions.* There are still prime undeveloped parcels in town that have high or very high conservation value, particularly parcels that add to the size of existing conservation areas or which provide connectivity between parcels. Size is important to preserving high quality wildlife habitat and connectivity is important to maintain and/or expand our extensive trail network. Currently, several privately held parcels include key segments of our trail system that might eventually be sold to new owners less willing to allow trails on their property. Acquiring these parcels in fee or by easement should be a high priority.



*This is one of several awards Falmouth has received for its management of open space properties.*

- ❖ *Managing our open space properties for multiple uses.* These parcels were acquired with the intent of keeping them wild places, where important ecological functions and values such as recharging ground water, protecting water quality, preserving wildlife habitat, sequestering carbon, protecting air quality, and providing people with opportunities for the kind of reflection and recreation only available in the natural world. As the popularity of our trail system grows, conflicts will likely increase between and among different user groups. These include mountain bikers, dog walkers, bird watchers, geocachers, hunters, hikers, and nature enthusiasts. It will be a challenge to manage these conflicts and the overall level of use, while keeping the preservation of our open space properties natural ecological functions and values foremost.
- ❖ *Finding a new generation of conservation leaders and volunteers.* New Town Council members are elected every year and town staff positions change over time. LMAC members turn over periodically; volunteers age out, move on, or lose interest in the work; and new town policy priorities capture the public and policy maker’s attention. Unless new leaders are well informed and supportive of Falmouth’s open space initiative, it will be hard to sustain this work over time. Periodically updating the open space plan and making a determined effort to inform elected and appointed leaders about the work will help address this problem.
- ❖ *Offering more opportunities for outdoor recreation to children and adults.* Our open space properties are wonderful classrooms for learning about the outdoors. In an era when “nature deficit disorder” has become a recognized problem nationally, there is much we can do to reconnect citizens with the natural resources that sustain us all. More offerings could be scheduled through Falmouth Parks and Community Programs and much closer connections can be made with our public and private schools and universities.
- ❖ *Creating a new open space plan that will guide this work in the coming decade.* Investing the time and effort required to develop a new iteration of *The Greening of Falmouth* would do much to lay the groundwork for addressing the aforementioned challenges and opportunities. Done well, it will also reengage the public and policy makers in thoughtful consideration regarding the kind of community we hope to leave to future generations.



*Our open space properties offer many opportunities for learning about nature.*

## VII. Conclusion

The Town of Falmouth’s open space initiative has had a substantial impact on our community over the past ten years, and has drawn widespread praise from environmental leaders both regionally and statewide. At this juncture, it would be easy to declare it a success and move on to other policy priorities. In our view, that would be premature. There is still more to be done if we are to fully realize *The Greening of Falmouth’s* vision, and given the steady pressure on our remaining undeveloped land, little time left to do it. Creating a new open space plan focused on our goals for the next decade would be a logical next step to address the identified challenges and opportunities.



## Appendix 3: An Update from the Falmouth Land Trust



CONSERVING LAND IN OUR COMMUNITY  
FROM 1981 'TIL FOREVER

### **THE FALMOUTH LAND TRUST - CONSERVING LAND IN OUR COMMUNITY FOR NEARLY FORTY YEARS**

**1981 – Forming the Trust.** The Falmouth Conservation Trust (aka Falmouth Land Trust) was incorporated in 1981 and is an independent nonprofit organization with a mission of conserving land in Falmouth. It was formed by a small group of local citizens eager to permanently protect lands in Falmouth for future generations. At that time, the Land Trust movement was in its early stages and conservation easements and land purchases by non-profit organizations were a relatively new concept. The first Falmouth Land Trust (FLT) fee properties were donated, and easement projects were typically on private lands that did not have provisions to guarantee public access. A few properties, notably the 230-acre Blackstrap Hill Preserve, were purchased by the Trust through a major fundraising campaign along with Land for Maine's Future grants. As properties grew in size, a trail system began to take shape.

**2006 – 2016 Ten years of land protection.** In 2006, the town of Falmouth launched a ten-year Greening of Falmouth plan, authorized spending up to \$5M, and funded an open space ombudsman (a former president of the Falmouth Land Trust) to execute the vision of land acquisition in Falmouth. Working closely with the town, the Trust started accepting easements on many of the town's new land acquisitions. The FLT's Board worked hard to keep pace with the conservation projects, eventually hiring a board member to sustain the work as its first staff person. Between 2006 and 2016, trails and acres protected in open space in Falmouth increased by upwards of 450%.

**2016 - Strengthening the Trust.** Ten years after the first Greening of Falmouth effort, the Falmouth Land Trust found itself at an institutional crossroads as a community non-profit. The organization had assumed significant responsibilities with nearly fifty parcels under conservation in either fee or easements. With the Trust's 2015 purchase of a 62-acre working farm property, as well as a pipeline of additional conservation opportunities, the organization found itself at an inflection point. FLT has historically managed with a small budget by relying on volunteers and board trustees. FLT needed to grow its support structures and use professionals to sustain its existing responsibilities and continue to conserve strategically important parcels.

**2017- 2021 Five year strategic goals.** In 2017, a new strategic planning process was undertaken with an emphasis on sustainable institutional growth. The Trust's institutional goals for 2017 - 2021 include increasing its visibility, increasing sources of reliable funding, and professionalizing systems and staff. The organization rebranded itself in 2017 in an effort to make FLT a more visible and identifiable institution, differentiated from the town's open-space team. Grant funds in 2017 and 2018 enabled FLT to expand its outreach and education efforts, allowing the organization to conduct programs for all age groups including seniors, elementary school students and those seeking physical and mental health opportunities. FLT is now regularly communicating about open space events using social media, and articulates its relevance in the community through articles and print media.

With more land under protection, and growing development pressure in the town, the Falmouth Land Trust is in a phase of growth and expansion -- focused on community engagement, strengthening the institution and ongoing management of open space lands. In addition, FLT continues to work with the town to identify and protect parcels that are strategic for their historic, natural or recreational values, and ensure that management safeguards those values in perpetuity.



## Appendix 4: Open Space Rating Guide

### Town of Falmouth Open Space Rating Guide

Property Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Rural Area (Y/N)? \_\_\_\_\_

Map / Lot Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Size (acres): \_\_\_\_\_ Rater Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation Category	Subcategory	Maximum Points	Score
1. Ecological Value (16 points)	Contains areas of special biological or geological significance (e.g. – nesting areas, waterfalls, vernal pools, significant woodland).	6	
	Includes areas of high value habitat.	5	
	Helps connect prime greenways and wildlife corridors.	5	
Comments:		Subtotal =	
2. Natural Function Value (14 points)	Significant upland buffer to an area otherwise protected (wetland, shoreline, riparian area).	4	
	Contains prime/unique soils or agricultural values.	3	
	Provides ground water recharge and water quality enhancement.	3	
	Provides flood and storm water control.	2	
	Provides important natural functions not protected by other means.	2	
Comments:		Subtotal =	
3. Parcel Size <b>(Select one)</b> (10 points)	Large land area that will add to, or has the potential to become, part of a 250 ac. or larger block of unfragmented habitat.	10	
	Property abuts permanently preserved property or property that has the potential to be permanently preserved.	10	
	Property larger than 5 acres.	5	
	Property less than 5 acres.	3	

Comments:		Subtotal =	
<b>Evaluation Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Maximum Points</b>	<b>Score</b>
4. Aesthetic Value  (12 points)	Contains or enhances striking landscape features (e.g. – river corridor, pronounced landforms, mixed viewscales).	5	
	Provides open greenspace to separate incompatible land uses or relieves monotony of same uses.	4	
	Provides unique aesthetic values.	3	
Comments:		Subtotal =	
5. Recreation Potential/Trails  (14 points)	Property is or can be used for hunting, fishing, hiking and other traditional outdoor pursuits.	5	
	Property contains existing trails or has the potential for trail development that would provide a key link in an existing or potential trail system.	5	
	Property provides access to beaches, rivers, other land of interest.	4	
Comments:		Subtotal =	
6. Surrounding Land Uses  (8 points)	Property contiguous to protected lands (e.g. – wetlands, riparian areas, parks or preserved land).	4	
	Property contiguous to agricultural area.	2	
	Property contiguous to undeveloped land.	2	
Comments:		Subtotal =	
7. Falmouth Priorities <b>(Select either a or b, then rate c)</b>	Property identified as a “jewel” property or a “pocket parcel” that offers potential neighborhood greenspace.	10	
	Property falls within one of the seven identified unfragmented habitat blocks.	10	

(16 points)	c) Property aligned with Comprehensive Plan goals.	6	
Comments:		<b>Subtotal</b> =	
<b>Evaluation Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Maximum Points</b>	<b>Score</b>
8. Development Potential <b>(Score in one subcategory only)</b> (10 points)	High likelihood the property will be developed in the next year or two.	10	
	Moderate development potential.	5	
	Low development potential.	3	
Comments:		<b>Subtotal</b> =	

### Scoring Total

Category	Max Pts.	Score
<b>Ecological Value</b>	<b>16</b>	
<b>Natural Function</b>	<b>14</b>	
<b>Parcel Size</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>Aesthetic Value</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>Recreation Potential/Trails</b>	<b>14</b>	
<b>Surrounding Land Uses</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Falmouth Priorities</b>	<b>16</b>	
<b>Development Potential</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>TOTAL =</b>	<b>100</b>	

Adapted from a selection guide developed by Ada Township, Michigan.

November 2007

Revised March 2015

## Appendix 5: Connecting Properties Rating Form

### Connecting Properties Rating Form

Property Owner:

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Property Location:

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Map/Lot Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Size (acres): \_\_\_\_\_ Rater Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Highest Priority

- Property secures a section of the Cross Falmouth trail currently in private ownership, either by fee acquisition or easement provision. \*
- Property allows for a new trail connection between two or more existing open space parcels that does not currently exist.
- Property would provide access to an existing open space parcel that currently lacks public access.

#### Moderate Priority

- Property would provide access to an open space parcel that already has at least one other means of access, but in an area of the property heretofore inaccessible.
- Property offers a means of improved or enhanced access to an existing open space parcel.

#### Low Priority

- Property would provide access to an open space parcel that already has at least one other means of access, but is not necessary to achieve full access to the property.

\* Acquisition is assumed to be either outright fee ownership or by means of a legally binding right-of-way pedestrian easement.

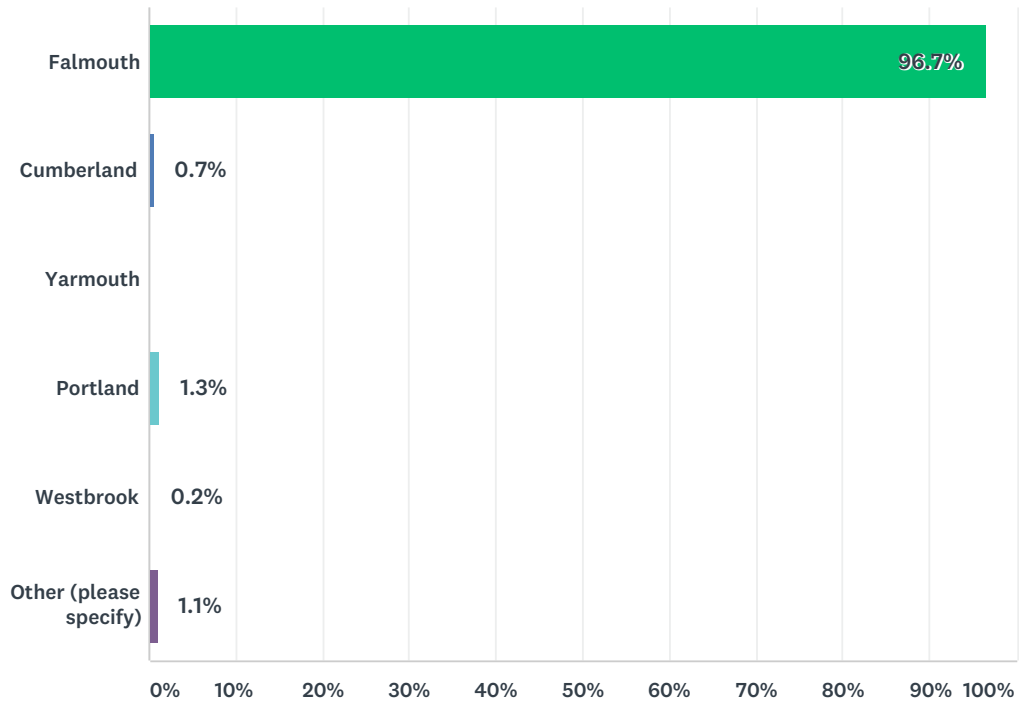
## Appendix 6: 2017 Open Space Survey Results

The Committee conducted an on-line survey in fall 2017. A total of 458 responses were received. See the following pages for the survey instrument and the summary results. All survey results can be viewed here: <https://www.falmouthme.org/long-range-planning-advisory-committee/pages/2016-18-open-space-plan-update-work>.



# Q1 In what town/city do you live?

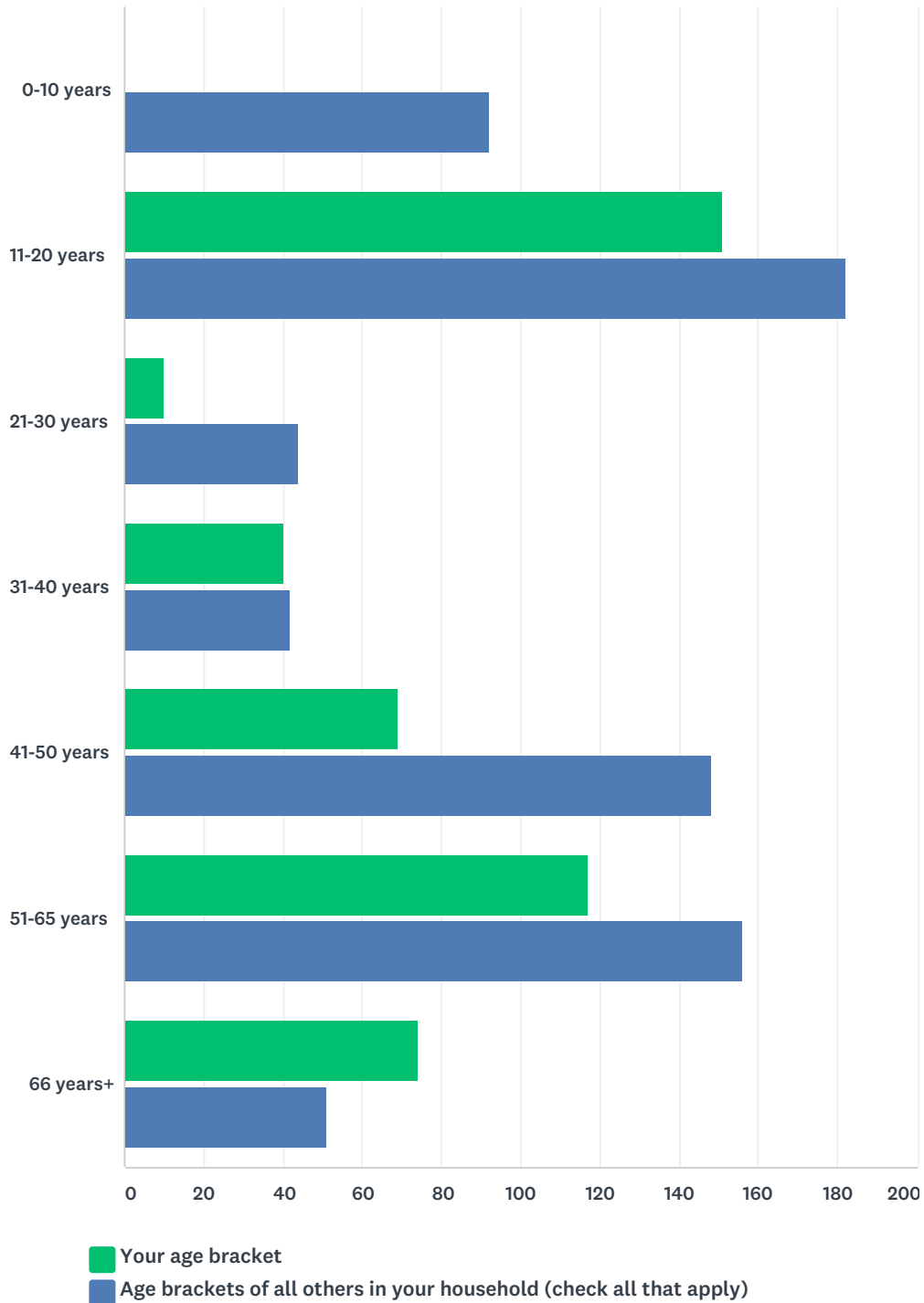
Answered: 458 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Falmouth	96.7%	443
Cumberland	0.7%	3
Yarmouth	0.0%	0
Portland	1.3%	6
Westbrook	0.2%	1
Other (please specify)	1.1%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>458</b>

## Q2 In what age bracket are you and all other people in your household?

Answered: 457 Skipped: 2

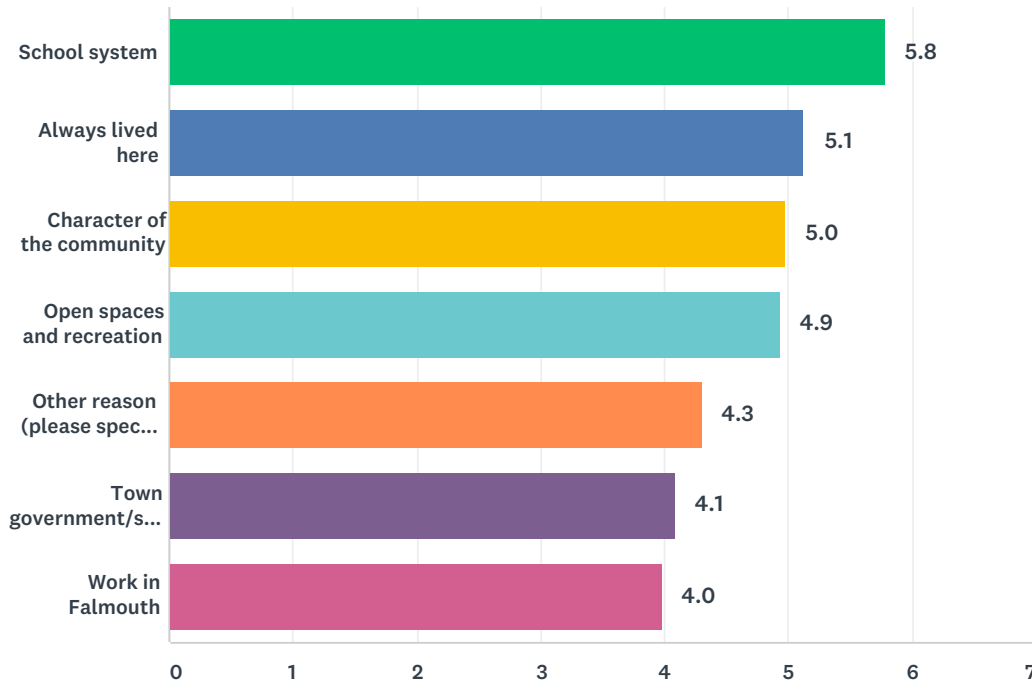


	YOUR AGE BRACKET	AGE BRACKETS OF ALL OTHERS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
0-10 years	0.00% 0	100.00% 92	92
11-20 years	63.45% 151	76.47% 182	238

21-30 years	18.87% 10	83.02% 44	53
31-40 years	67.80% 40	71.19% 42	59
41-50 years	37.70% 69	80.87% 148	183
51-65 years	54.67% 117	72.90% 156	214
66 years+	81.32% 74	56.04% 51	91

### Q3 Please rank order the reasons why you value living in Falmouth. You can drag each answer up or down or click "N/A."

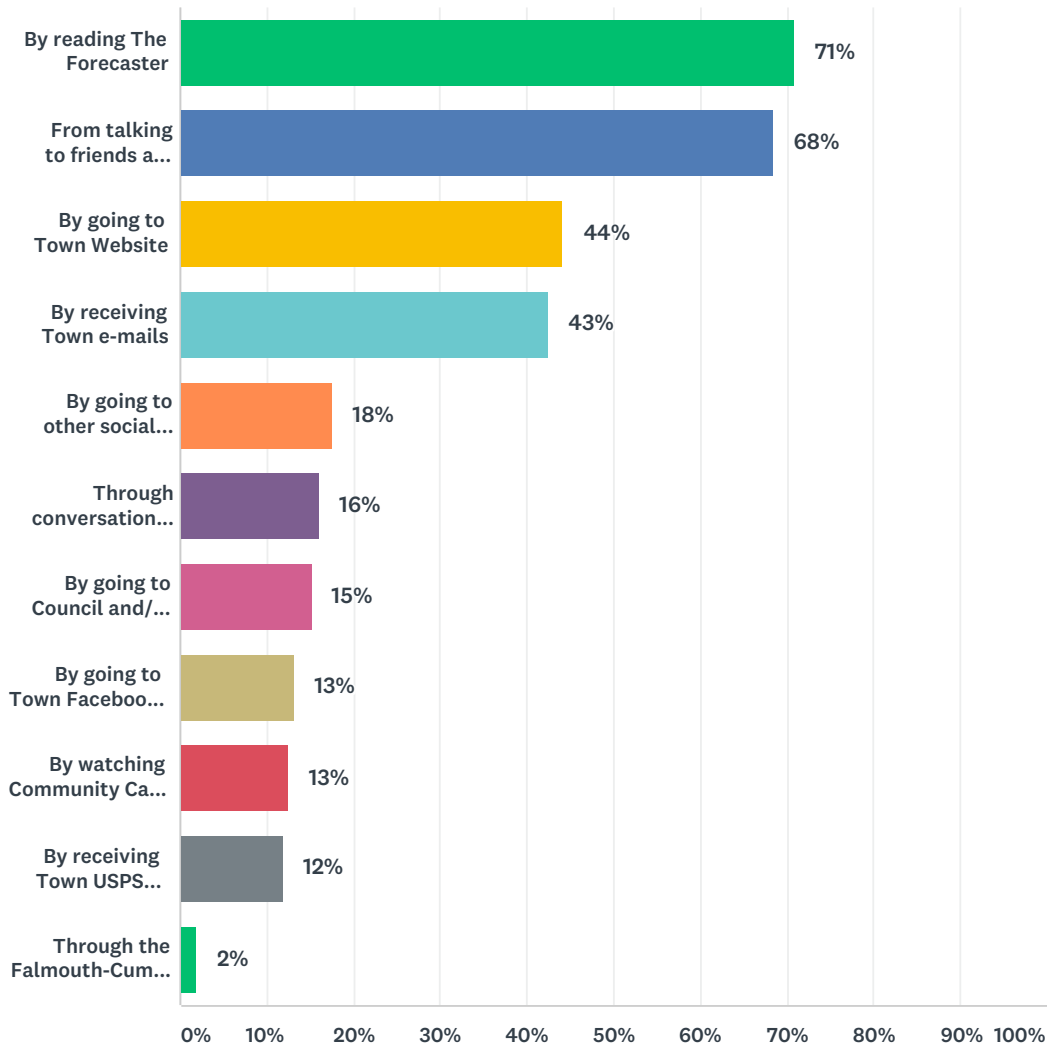
Answered: 454 Skipped: 5



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A	TOTAL	SCORE
School system	39.42% 164	23.80% 99	9.62% 40	5.53% 23	5.53% 23	4.09% 17	0.96% 4	11.06% 46	416	5.79
Always lived here	18.39% 73	7.30% 29	3.27% 13	4.53% 18	3.53% 14	4.28% 17	3.53% 14	55.16% 219	397	5.12
Character of the community	15.65% 67	21.50% 92	22.90% 98	17.76% 76	9.81% 42	5.14% 22	0.47% 2	6.78% 29	428	4.98
Open spaces and recreation	10.90% 47	24.36% 105	25.06% 108	14.85% 64	11.83% 51	4.64% 20	0.00% 0	8.35% 36	431	4.93
Other reason (please specify your reason(s) in next question)	9.33% 35	8.80% 33	9.87% 37	6.40% 24	9.87% 37	6.13% 23	5.60% 21	44.00% 165	375	4.30
Town government/services	3.01% 12	8.52% 34	17.04% 68	29.07% 116	19.55% 78	5.76% 23	1.50% 6	15.54% 62	399	4.09
Work in Falmouth	5.01% 20	5.01% 20	7.27% 29	7.27% 29	8.27% 33	7.27% 29	3.51% 14	56.39% 225	399	3.98

### Q5 How do you stay informed on town matters? Check all that apply.

Answered: 437 Skipped: 22



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
By reading The Forecaster	71%	310
From talking to friends and neighbors	68%	299
By going to Town Website	44%	193
By receiving Town e-mails	43%	186
By going to other social media	18%	77
Through conversations with Councilors and/or Town staff	16%	70
By going to Council and/or committee meetings in Town Hall	15%	67
By going to Town Facebook pages	13%	58
By watching Community Cable TV 2	13%	55
By receiving Town USPS mailings	12%	52



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Through the Falmouth-Cumberland Community Chamber

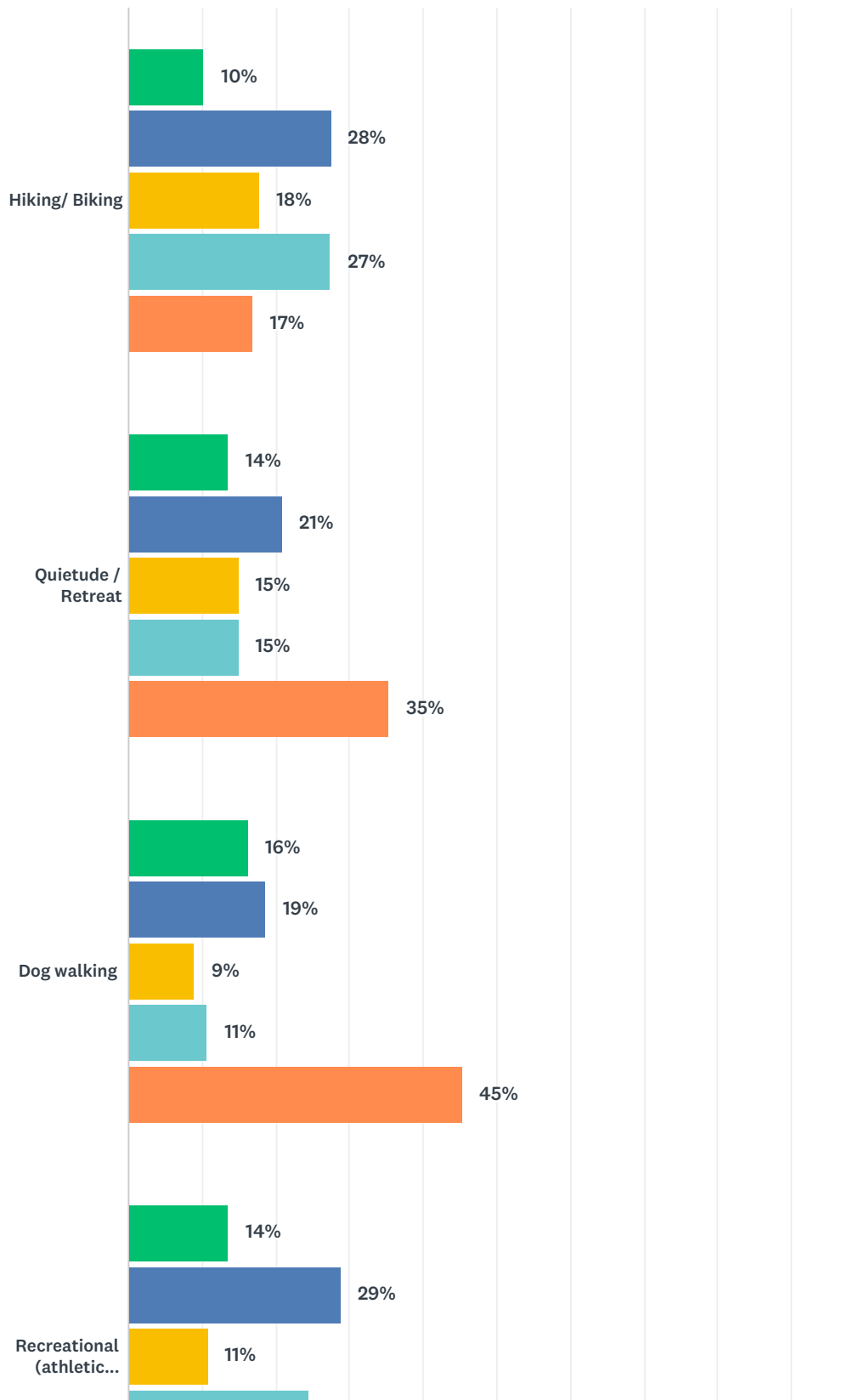
2%

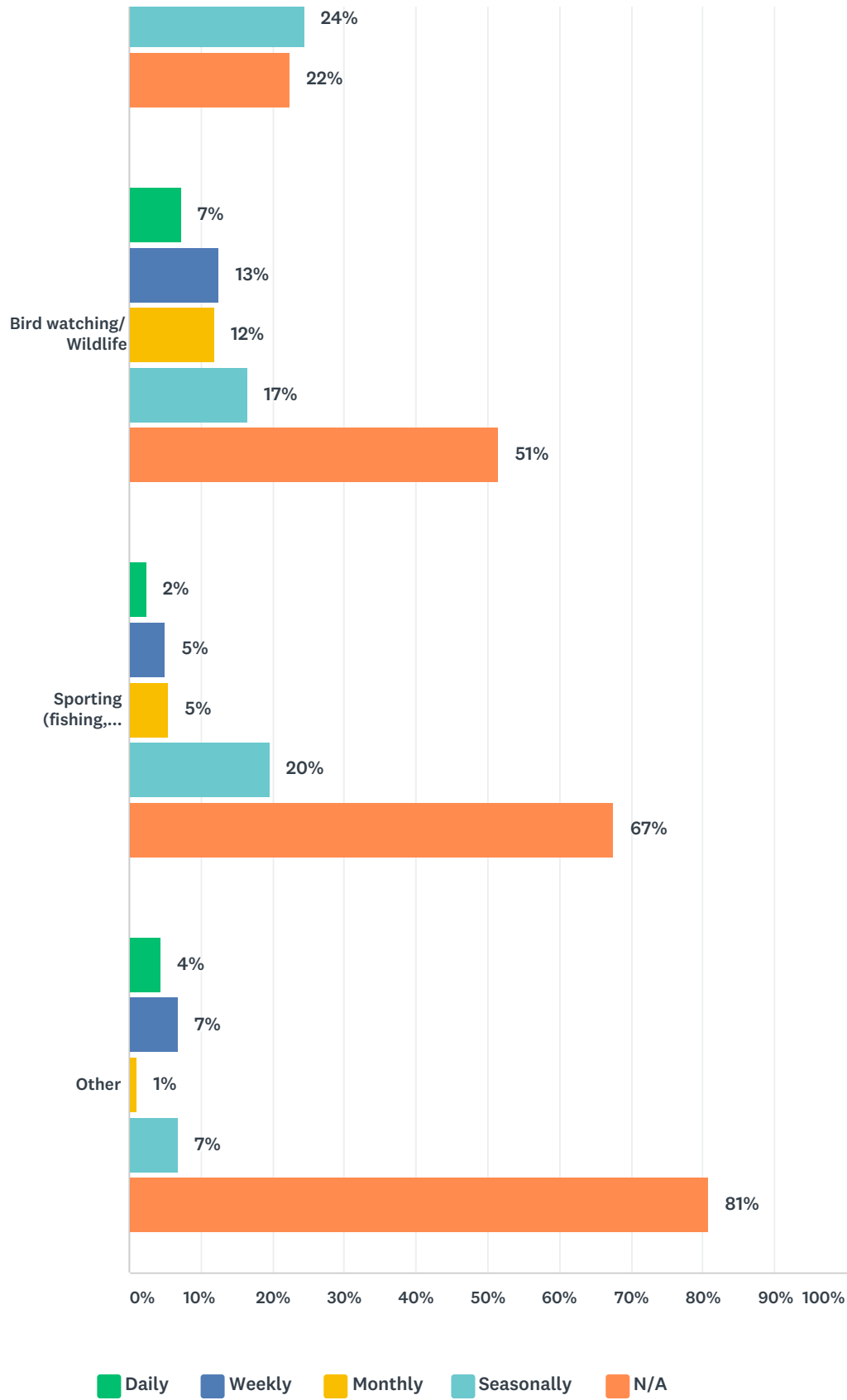
8

Total Respondents: 437

### Q6 How, and how often, have you used Falmouth's open spaces in last 12 months for the following?

Answered: 457 Skipped: 2



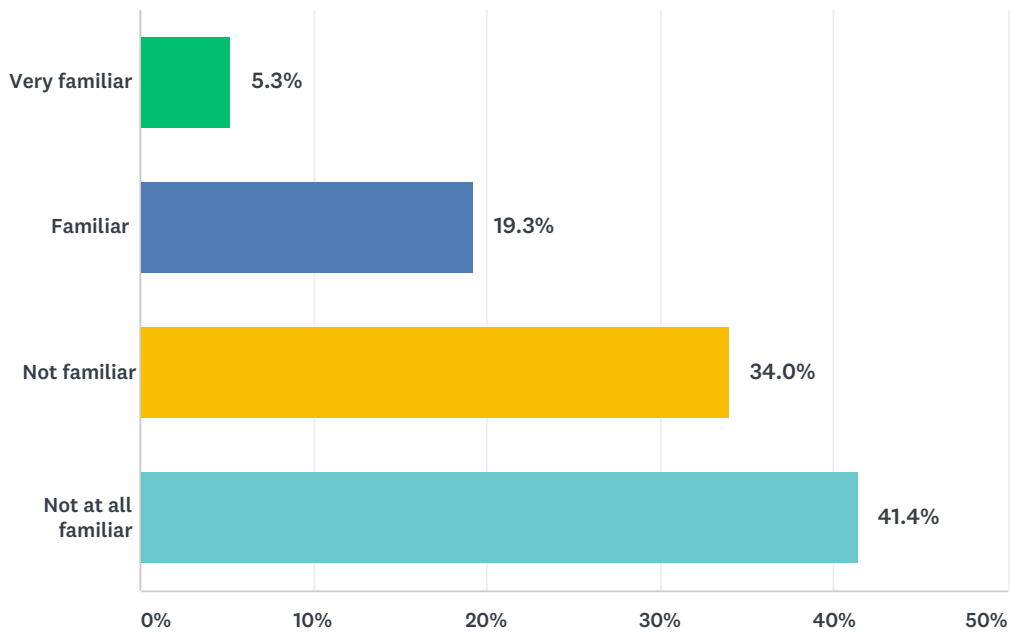


	DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	SEASONALLY	N/A	TOTAL
Hiking/ Biking	10%	28%	18%	27%	17%	435
	45	120	77	119	74	

Quietude / Retreat	14% 59	21% 90	15% 65	15% 65	35% 152	431
Dog walking	16% 68	19% 78	9% 38	11% 45	45% 190	419
Recreational (athletic fields, playgrounds)	14% 57	29% 120	11% 45	24% 102	22% 93	417
Bird watching/ Wildlife	7% 30	13% 51	12% 48	17% 67	51% 208	404
Sporting (fishing, hunting)	2% 10	5% 20	5% 22	20% 79	67% 272	403
Other	4% 9	7% 14	1% 2	7% 14	81% 164	203

**Q7 How familiar are you with the 2006 Greening of Falmouth report? The 2006 plan has guided the Town's efforts on protecting open space in Falmouth for the past decade by setting a vision, articulating goals for conservation, and outlining what needed to be done to achieve those goals.**

Answered: 456 Skipped: 3

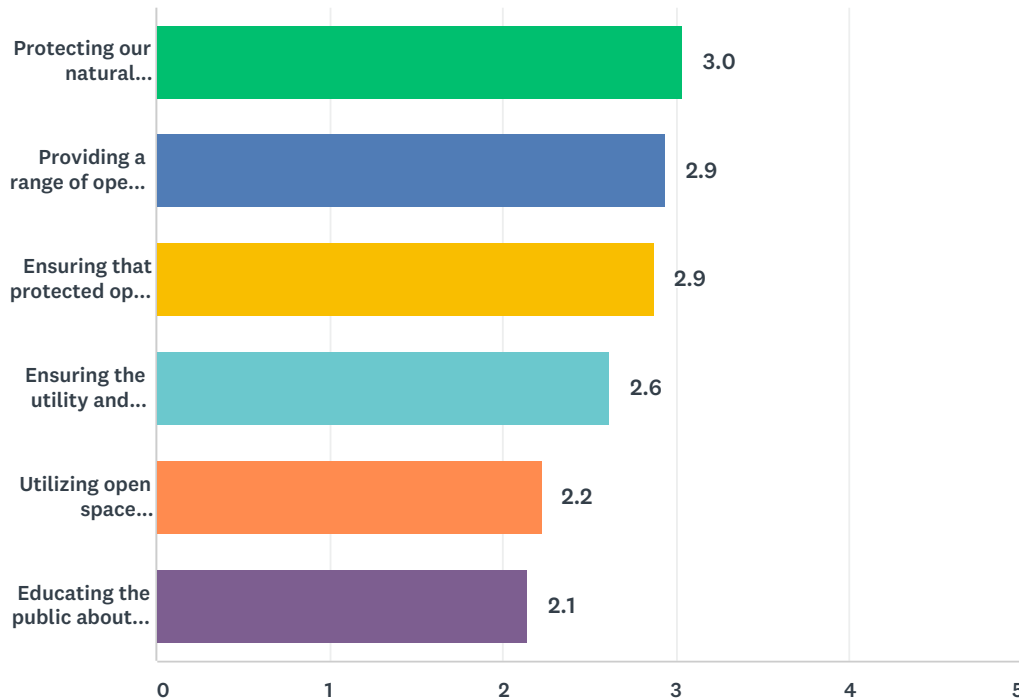


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very familiar	5.3%	24
Familiar	19.3%	88
Not familiar	34.0%	155
Not at all familiar	41.4%	189
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>456</b>



### Q8 How successful do you feel the Town has been in each of the following 6 goals over the last decade (2006-2017)? 1 = not at all successful, 5 = very successful

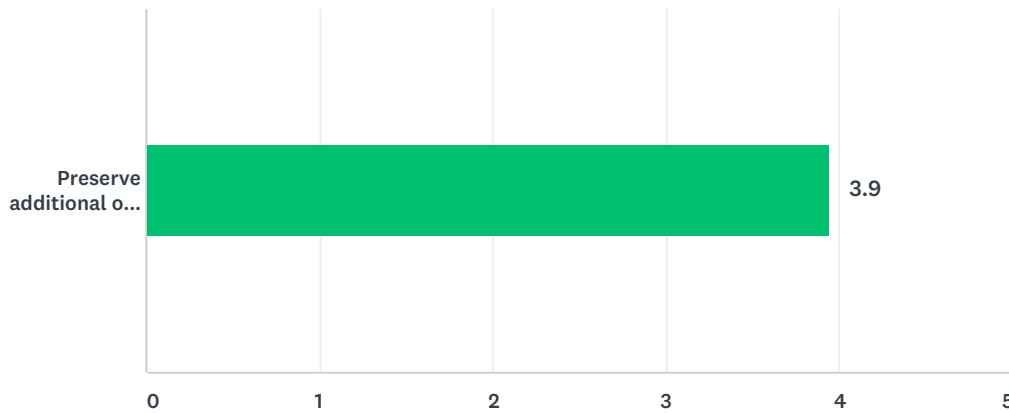
Answered: 453 Skipped: 6



	NO OPINION/DON'T KNOW	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Protecting our natural resources and open spaces.	20.13% 91	1.99% 9	5.97% 27	17.04% 77	36.50% 165	18.36% 83	452	3.03
Providing a range of open spaces and experiences for a diverse population.	18.71% 84	5.12% 23	6.90% 31	20.04% 90	31.18% 140	18.04% 81	449	2.94
Ensuring that protected open spaces are sufficient and available throughout the entire Town.	19.29% 87	4.43% 20	7.98% 36	21.29% 96	31.49% 142	15.52% 70	451	2.88
Ensuring the utility and longevity of open spaces through good management.	26.95% 121	2.67% 12	10.02% 45	16.70% 75	29.40% 132	14.25% 64	449	2.62
Utilizing open space acquisitions as a growth management tool	32.58% 145	5.39% 24	11.24% 50	19.33% 86	20.45% 91	11.01% 49	445	2.23
Educating the public about the values of open spaces.	23.44% 105	13.84% 62	17.86% 80	21.43% 96	16.74% 75	6.70% 30	448	2.14

### Q10 How important is it to you that the Town preserve additional open space? 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

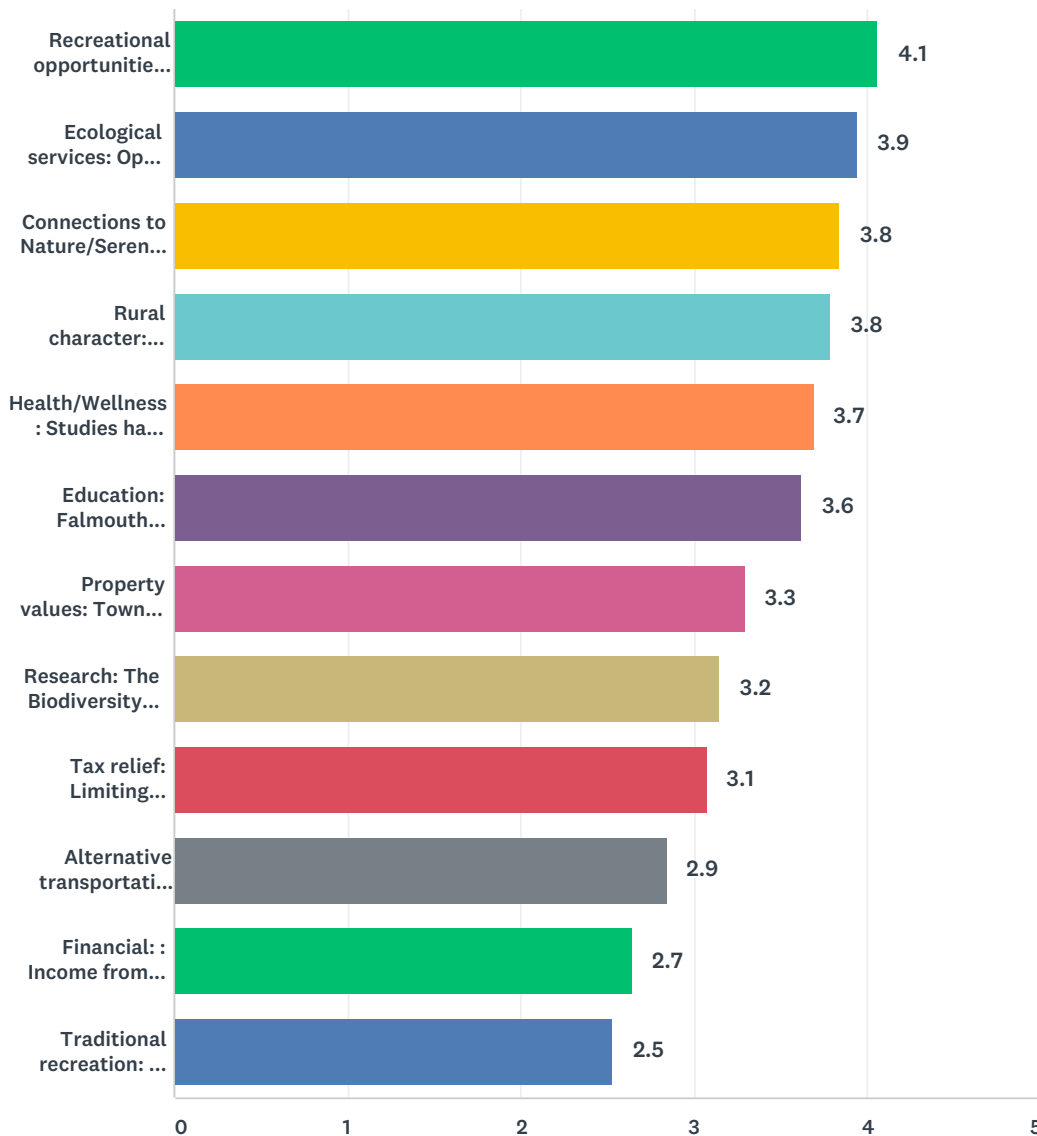
Answered: 448 Skipped: 11



	DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Preserve additional open space	6.92% 31	5.58% 25	2.68% 12	12.72% 57	15.85% 71	56.25% 252	448	3.94

### Q11 How important are each of the following benefits to you of preserving open space in Falmouth? 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

Answered: 455 Skipped: 4

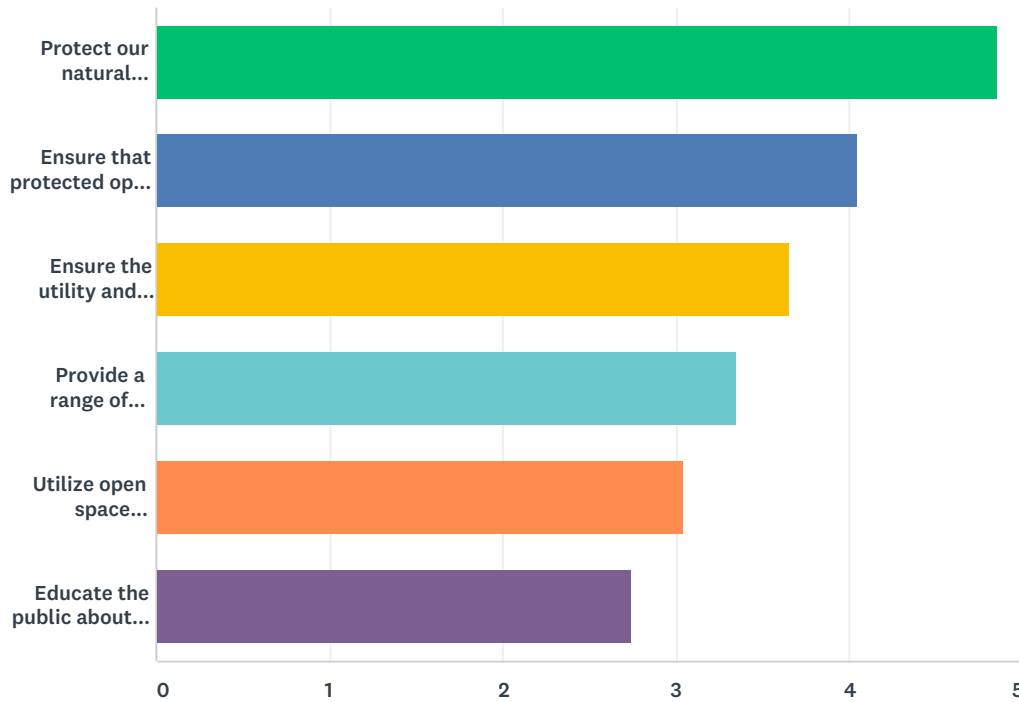


	NO OPINION/DON'T KNOW	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Recreational opportunities: The town-wide trail system and open spaces are used in a variety of ways, including hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.	6.61% 30	3.08% 14	3.74% 17	7.93% 36	22.03% 100	56.61% 257	454	4.06
Ecological services: Open space properties offer a wide variety of ecological benefits, including improved air and water quality, flood control, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity.	7.11% 32	3.78% 17	4.22% 19	13.11% 59	16.67% 75	55.11% 248	450	3.94

Connections to Nature/Serenity: Open space properties provide an opportunity to connect with nature, and experience the serenity nature offers, close to home.	7.10% 32	4.43% 20	5.76% 26	12.42% 56	20.40% 92	49.89% 225	451	3.84
Rural character: Preserving land from development adds to the aesthetic quality of the community and keeps large portions of the town rural in character.	6.84% 31	3.53% 16	9.27% 42	11.92% 54	20.53% 93	47.90% 217	453	3.79
Health/Wellness: Studies have shown that people living in close proximity to undeveloped natural areas and trails are healthier than people who do not.	10.35% 47	4.19% 19	5.29% 24	11.45% 52	23.57% 107	45.15% 205	454	3.69
Education: Falmouth schools and Community Programs use open space properties as outdoor classrooms for both children and adults.	7.98% 36	4.66% 21	6.87% 31	16.41% 74	25.72% 116	38.36% 173	451	3.62
Property values: Towns with trails and significant open space attract new, like-minded residents, thus bolstering property values.	12.92% 58	7.35% 33	5.79% 26	17.59% 79	23.83% 107	32.52% 146	449	3.30
Research: The Biodiversity Research Institute uses the River Point Conservation Area as a research site for the study of bird migration.	13.33% 60	8.00% 36	11.11% 50	15.78% 71	21.33% 96	30.44% 137	450	3.15
Tax relief: Limiting housing development may have a positive impact on property taxes by reducing the need for additional town services, such as public safety, schools, road maintenance, and infrastructure.	14.89% 67	10.22% 46	9.11% 41	16.67% 75	16.44% 74	32.67% 147	450	3.08
Alternative transportation: The trail system offers opportunities for people to move around without using their cars.	12.39% 56	13.05% 59	15.27% 69	19.03% 86	16.59% 75	23.67% 107	452	2.85
Financial: : Income from sustainable forest management can help in a modest way to offset the loss of tax revenue that occurs when properties become Town-owned.	15.96% 72	9.98% 45	15.30% 69	24.17% 109	20.84% 94	13.75% 62	451	2.65
Traditional recreation: The town-wide trail system and open spaces are used for traditional recreation, such as hunting, and snowmobiling.	11.53% 52	22.17% 100	16.85% 76	16.63% 75	16.85% 76	15.96% 72	451	2.53

**Q12 Please rank order the following goals to help guide the Town's open space efforts over the next decade (2018-2027). What is most important to you? If a goal is not important to you, please click "n/a."**

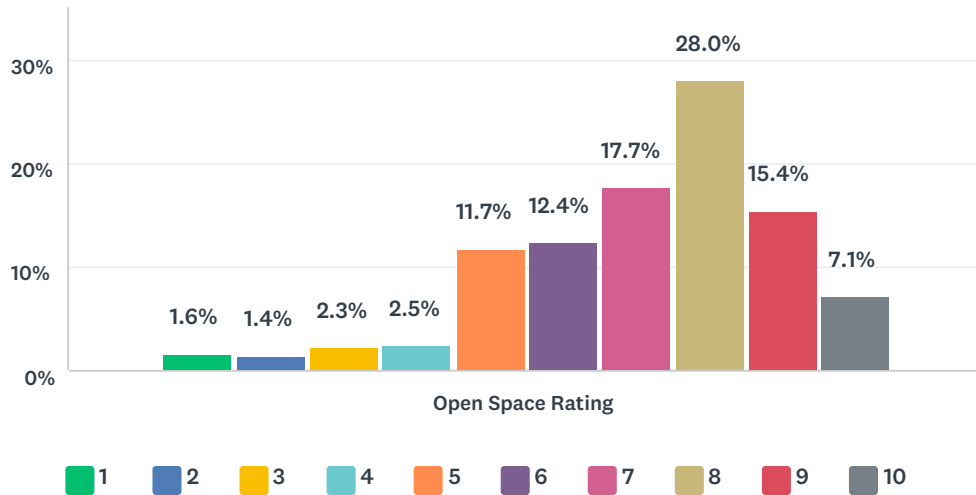
Answered: 438 Skipped: 21



	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A	TOTAL	SCORE
Protect our natural resources and open spaces.	49.88% 209	13.37% 56	6.92% 29	8.11% 34	5.01% 21	6.21% 26	10.50% 44	419	4.85
Ensure that protected open spaces are sufficient and available throughout the entire Town.	10.44% 43	27.43% 113	24.27% 100	12.86% 53	10.44% 43	3.40% 14	11.17% 46	412	4.05
Ensure the utility and longevity of open spaces through good management.	9.40% 39	18.07% 75	20.24% 84	21.69% 90	15.66% 65	5.06% 21	9.88% 41	415	3.65
Provide a range of services and experiences for a diverse population.	9.42% 39	14.73% 61	17.39% 72	15.22% 63	15.94% 66	14.49% 60	12.80% 53	414	3.35
Utilize open space acquisitions as a growth management tool	8.92% 37	10.84% 45	13.49% 56	17.83% 74	15.18% 63	21.45% 89	12.29% 51	415	3.04
Educate the public about the values of open spaces.	6.87% 29	9.72% 41	10.19% 43	14.45% 61	22.75% 96	25.59% 108	10.43% 44	422	2.74

### Q14 On a scale from 1 to 10, using your own criteria, how would you "rate" Falmouth's current open spaces ? 1 = worst, 10 = best

Answered: 436 Skipped: 23



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Open Space Rating	1.6%	1.4%	2.3%	2.5%	11.7%	12.4%	17.7%	28.0%	15.4%	7.1%	436	7.11
	7	6	10	11	51	54	77	122	67	31		



## Appendix 7: References and Continued Reading

### **Town of Falmouth Studies and Planning Reports**

[The Greening of Falmouth](#), prepared by Open Space Committee, 2005/06

[2013 Comprehensive Plan](#), prepared by the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee +, 2013

[2016 Falmouth Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#), 2016

[The Greening of Falmouth, Ten-Year Progress Report, 2006-2016](#), prepared by the Land Management & Acquisition Committee, 2016

[Fall 2017 Open Space Survey Results](#)

### **Studies on the Environmental and Health Benefits of Open Space Conservation**

American Hiking Society. [Hiking Trails in America: Pathways to Health](#). 2016.

Louv, Richard. [Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder](#). 2005.

Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, Maine Bureau of Parks & Lands. [Maine State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\) 2014-2019](#). 2015

McCann, Barbara A. and Ewing, Reid. *Smart Growth America* and the *Surface Transportation Policy Project*. [Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl: A National Analysis of Physical Activity, Obesity, and Chronic Disease](#). 2003.

Sherer, Paul M. *The Trust for Public Land*. [The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space](#). 2006.

Stuart, Don. *American Farmland Trust*. [Environmental Benefits of Agricultural Lands](#). 2003.

### **Studies on the Economic, and Fiscal Benefits of Open Space Conservation**

Active Living Research. [The Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Walkable Community Design](#). 2010

Crompton, John L. *National Recreation and Park Association* [The Proximate Principle: The Impact of Parks, Open Space and Water Features on Residential Property Values and the Property Tax Base](#). 2004

Frisman, Paul. [Impact of Open Space on Property Values](#). 2006.

Gies, Erica. *The Trust for Public Land*. [Conservation: An Investment that Pays](#). 2009.

Maine Land Trust Network. [Land Trusts Work for Maine](#). 2017.

McConnell, Virginia and Walls, Margaret. [The Value of Open Space: Evidence from Studies of Nonmarket Benefits](#). 2005

Shoup, Lilly and Ewing, Reid. *Active Living Research*. [Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities, and Walkable Community Design](#). 2010.

The Trust for Public Land. [The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation](#). 2007.

### **Studies on the Impact of Climate Change**

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, Natural Choices and Waterview Consulting. [Casco Bay Climate Change Vulnerability Report](#). 2017

Maine Department of Environmental Protection. [People and Nature: Adapting to a Changing Climate - Charting Maine's Course](#).

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