**Town of Hatfield**

**Open Space and Recreation Plan**

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#### ***2023-2030***

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks to all the dedicated volunteers, committees, planners and citizens whose thoughtful participation in this update to the 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan has created an important planning tool to guide development for the protection of Hatfield’s natural and cultural resources.

Hatfield Open Space Committee, 2023

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Thanks also to those who participated in the open space survey, public forum, and/or submitted comments on the draft of this plan.

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**SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY**

Hatfield has unique historical, geographic, and ecological resources that provide much of the Town’s character. The abundant open spaces in Hatfield that include working farms, forests and streams, recreational fields and scenic vistas, provide immense value to the Town’s citizens, and if lost would change the character of the Town irreparably. This 2023 update to the 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is intended to provide guidance to the citizens and leadership of the Town of Hatfield about the protection of natural resources, access to recreational areas, and the long-term management of both. Although it addresses many of the same issues as did the 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan, it does so in light of evolving and changing community and environmental needs and circumstances, and seeks to build on the findings of its predecessor.

The broader goals of providing recreational opportunities and protecting the valuable natural resources and open spaces within Hatfield are consistent with those that were first put forth more than thirty years ago and are described in Section 8. The Town has made great strides in achieving these goals, but challenges and needs remain. Some of the themes and specific needs that arose during this planning process and that are reflected in the goals and objectives are the following:

* Agricultural lands and working farms contribute immensely to Hatfield’s character, scenic beauty, and economy, and preserving these continues to be a priority for the Town.
* Protection of aquifers, wetlands and floodplains is essential for health and safety, and for increasing the Town’s resiliency to the impacts of climate change.
* In order to meet the needs of all residents the Town needs to continue to improve and add more sidewalks and provide accessible facilities
* The OSC should prioritize education and outreach such as providing maps and descriptions of active and passive recreation opportunities in the Town, as many Hatfield residents are not aware of all that exist.
* There is a need and desire to provide more access to water resources in the Town for swimming, non-motorized boating, and fishing.
* There is significant interest in increasing safe bicycling and walking options such as bike paths and multi-use trails, and in adding more nature and hiking trails.

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**SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION**

## Statement of Purpose

Previous Open Space and Recreation Plans for the Town of Hatfield were completed in 1989, 2003, 2008, and 2014, and approved by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services. This current document constitutes an update to the 2014 Plan. It inventories open space and recreational resources, identifies the community needs for open space and recreation, and recommends possible ways to satisfy such needs in the form of a Seven-Year Action Plan provided in Section 9. Since the adoption of the 2014 Plan, the Town has accomplished a number of actions identified in the plan, including acquiring Horse Mountain parcels for woodland habitat and passive recreation, expanding the trail system in West Hatfield, obtaining funds to manage invasive vegetation, and redesigning and renovating Smith Academy Park.

## Planning Process and Public Participation

The Open Space Committee held five meetings that focused primarily on planning for the OSRP update. These occurred between the months of April and November 2022. All the meetings were held at Town Hall and were open to the public. The OSC widely distributed a digital survey using Survey Monkey as well as paper copies of the survey that asked residents for their input on open space conservation and recreation in Town. The survey was open from July 1 – August 31 and was publicized in numerous ways. A digital flyer with the survey link and a QR code was posted on the Town website and Facebook page. It was sent out with an announcement to email listserves through the Parks and Recreation Department and the School District, as well as to all of the boards and committees in Town. Hard copies of the flyer were posted at Town Hall, at the Hatfield Public Library, and at the Senior Center, and hard copies of the survey were also available at these locations. There were 250 responses, with almost all being responses to the online survey.

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A public forum was held at the Town Hall on October 19, 2022, from 6 – 7:30 pm. The agenda included an introduction by the Open Space Committee Chair, a presentation by Mimi Kaplan of PVPC about the components and purpose of an OSRP as well as a summary of the survey results, a presentation by two OSC members about the Committee’s accomplishments since the last OSRP update, and a group discussion about needs and priorities in Hatfield for open space conservation, passive recreation and active recreation.

# SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

## Regional Context

##### **Geographic Location**

Covering about 16 square miles, the Town of Hatfield is located in Hampshire County in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Hatfield is surrounded by the towns of Hadley to the east, Northampton to the south, Williamsburg to the west and Whately to the north. Major roadways through the Town are Interstate 91 and Routes 5 & 10.

##### **Hydrology**

The entire landmass of the Town of Hatfield is situated in the Connecticut River watershed. All naturally draining surface water eventually finds its way to the Connecticut River, which forms about 7.5 miles of the town's eastern and southeastern boundaries. Most of the Town's drainage stays within Hatfield proper before emptying into the Connecticut River, but two minor watersheds in West Hatfield drain first into Northampton. The three major watersheds that drain the approximate 10,000 acres of land in the Town include drainage from neighboring Northampton, Whately, and Conway. These watersheds are described fully in Section 4.

The limits of the 100-year flood plain are primarily located within the eastern and northern portions of Hatfield along the Connecticut and Mill Rivers, coincident with the majority of Hatfield wetlands. However, some 100-year flood plain also exists along Running Gutter Brook in West Hatfield.

##### **Development Overview**

Development is limited within both the 100-year flood plain and wetlands as defined under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Town of Hatfield Wetland Bylaw. With diligent application of the appropriate State laws and local bylaws, these areas can remain undeveloped. However, both floodplain and wetland development are potentially permissible under the law provided that certain conditions are met. As a result, protection of these lands as open space is not guaranteed. Nevertheless, both wetlands and floodplain development has been limited in Hatfield and these areas largely remain open space.

Hatfield’s location adjacent to the college towns of Northampton and Amherst, as well as its access to Interstate 91, have contributed to its development as a “bedroom community” both for these larger towns and the cities of Springfield, Greenfield, and others along the I-91 corridor.

Since the previous OSRP, Hatfield has become better known as a recreation destination in the Pioneer Valley, including among Hatfield residents. Local and area recreational cyclists frequent its flat, low-trafficked roadways during the spring, summer and fall months. Boaters use the Hatfield boat ramp to access the Connecticut River, and “The Shallows” section of the river near the Northampton line is heavily used by recreational motor boaters as an anchorage and picnicking destination. “Bashin Beach”, located at the end of Bashin Road on the Connecticut River, also draws a small number of residents and regional people during summer months. The beach is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation and is part of the Connecticut River Greenway State Park. Walking on the dike along the Connecticut River is a very popular activity, and the White Rock and Horse Mountain hiking trails have also become increasingly popular.

## History of the Community

***Pre-Colonial and Colonial History***

Hatfield was "first a frontier village, then a prominent colonial community which has been the home of educators and benefactors. It has long been known for the beauty of wide streets, sitting between hills and the river valley, the fertile fields, industry and prosperity." So wrote Colonel James Day, in the introduction to *Hatfield, Massachusetts 1670-1970.* A drive through Hatfield today shows the elegant homes mixed with the sturdy, functional New England farmhouses, newer homes, and tobacco barns.

The Native Americans who first occupied the area were the closely related Capawonks and Nonotucks groups, also likely affiliated at times with the Nipmucks to the east and the Pocumtucks to the north. The two Native American groups continued to fish, farm and hunt in the area after English settlers arrived in 1653 and later purchased the land that was to become Hatfield.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Hatfield, or "Hattfield’s," as it first was named by its settlers native to England, began its modern history in 1660, when the deed to the land was signed by Umpanchalla, a Nonotuck Indian chief and turned over to Hadley, Massachusetts. In 1670, Hatfield incorporated as its own Town. Its earliest European settlers were English puritan farmers. The major ethnic groups to migrate to the Town since that time are the Irish, Germans, French Canadians and Poles, the last being the largest nationality represented today.

Hatfield's early social and political history was marked by warfare between Europeans and Native Americans, including the King Phillip’s War (1670's) and the King William’s War (1690's). The Town's oldest burial stone, found in its first burial ground, "The Hill," dates back to this era (May 3, 1687). In the 18th century, 127 men out of a Town population of 600 served in the American Revolution. A three**-**day convention to prepare for Shay's Rebellion was held in the Town's meetinghouse (1786). In the 19th century, the Town was a concealment station for runaway slaves as part of the Underground Railroad.

With some of the richest land in Massachusetts, Hatfield has been the site of much agricultural as well as industrial activity. Its gristmill for grinding corn was the first in the region (1661); the mill became a sawmill at a later date. Its tall pines produced tar and turpentine (1600's). Flax produced linseed oil (1735). Broomcorn was grown and the broom building business flourished (1826-1860). Here, too, was located the putative first distillery in the state, which became a husk factory to make cornhusk mattresses, and the first creamery system in western Massachusetts. The Town became the state's center for growing tobacco, a crop introduced by the area's Native Americans. Current crops include tobacco, onions, cucumbers, potatoes, corn, asparagus, strawberries, pumpkins, winter squash, tomatoes, blueberries, beets, lettuce, eggplants, cabbage, string beans, gourds, herbs, and peppers. Cattle, horses and sheep have grazed in the fields. One of the old sawmills was turned into a button factory. Pistols and shotguns were manufactured, engine lathes and automatic knife blade polishers were introduced, and violins, guitars and banjos were tuned here.

Like all towns, Hatfield has developed through the efforts of all who labored in it. A few names, however, stand out in its recorded history: Israel Williams, the Town's first citizen and a selectman for 31 years; Partridge I. Williams, a Tory leader; Caleb Cooley Dickinson, a prosperous Hatfield farmer, who funded in 1886 the beginnings of our area's largest public hospital; Colonel Oliver Partridge, active in state government and the State’s delegate to the Stamp Act Congress; Colonel Ephraim Williams, whose will provided for the establishment of Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts (1755); Samuel Partridge; Oliver Smith, whose will provided funds for the establishment of an agricultural school in Northampton—now Smith Vocational High School—and for Smith Charities, a trust fund used to benefit "indigent boys, girls, young women and widows." Sophia Smith is the best**-**known woman in Hatfield's history. She provided the funds for the beginnings of Smith Academy (now the Town's public junior and senior high school) and Smith College in Northampton.

***Hatfield Today***

Hatfield has several distinctive areas reflecting the Town’s history, agricultural trends, localized development types and the underlying zoning. The entrance to Hatfield via the I-91 interchange at Exit 21 on Route 5 shows moderate density commercial and industrial development, and that quickly diminishes with distance from this corridor, and which itself splits the Town into its eastern and western sections. Towards the east, the land becomes a mosaic of residential areas broken by agricultural expanses and wooded floodplains, dotted with occasional small commercial enterprises. To the west, the wooded slopes of the “Rocks” area and Horse Mountain have frontage development with single and multi-family residential lots. Approaching the Main Street area are 18th and 19th century farmhouses, early 20th century clapboard homes and 1950's ranches. Behind the buildings are the agricultural fields, dotted with old, dark tobacco barns. Beyond the fields to the east are the dike, some woods and the river. Crisscrossing the floodplain fields and connecting Main Street to the dike are long dirt roads

Entering Hatfield Town limits from the north along River Road (which becomes Main Street), reveals a more rural character, with a long flat street edged with maples, houses, and farm-stands selling berries, onions, pumpkins, asparagus, Indian corn and the ubiquitous potato. Behind them are the fine, broad fields; across the river, the state university skyscrapers loom up from the plain. The road continues past occasional tobacco sheds, and then it becomes the main street of Hatfield’s “town center.” Here there are some new homes, a housing complex for the elderly, a convenience store, an elementary school, a brick Town Hall, a local library, great turreted Victorians, plain colonials, classic New England capes, a few Federal style houses, and spired churches. Behind and between them, once again, are the barns, croplands, horse paddocks, and, in the exact center of Town, playing fields, a few graveyards, and great expanses of lawn and gardens.

On the west side of Route 5-10, the landscape changes abruptly as it is dominated by rocky ledges and forests, some of which are actively worked. The Town-owned woodlands around the reservoir provide permanent protection for this vital water source while contributing to open space and providing habitat for wildlife. When driving up towards Horse Mountain along Linseed, Old Stage, and Mountain Roads, some older homes can be seen, but many more newer ones. Despite its rural appearance, Hatfield has changed a great deal in the past fifty years from the way it had been for generations. A confluence of factors contributing to this change include economic and housing trends in Massachusetts and the country as a whole, the nationwide dissolution of the family farm, and pressures placed on prime agricultural and forest land by building. The erosion of Hatfield's farmland and forests by increased residential and commercial development would be an especially grave loss for the rich and fertile river valley land. Solar development is also a potential threat to prime agricultural land as well as to forested areas. Hatfield also has many buildings with stunning architectural qualities from the 18th and 19th centuries that are important to preserve.

## Population Characteristics

***Demographics***

Hatfield’s geographic location between the Connecticut River and an interstate highway, its abundance of wetlands and floodplains, and the Town’s relatively old-fashioned infrastructure have worked together to insulate the Town from significant population growth, and some of the more overwhelming development pressures other Pioneer Valley communities have been facing in the last ten years. At the same time, the Town’s rich soil and healthy agricultural industry, combined with easy commute distances to many major regional employers, including the University of Massachusetts, have left Hatfield with functioning farmland and a relatively well- educated and well-employed population. While there is some economic diversity and growing racial diversity in Hatfield, there are no Environmental Justice communities in Hatfield that meet the state standard for income or minority populations.

As can be seen in Table 3.1 below, Hatfield experienced rapid growth between 1960 and 1970 of about 20%, and the population grew significantly again between 1970 and 1980. The rate of growth slowed after 1980, with the Town experiencing slow and steady growth every decade up until the present time. Similar to many towns in our region, the median age has continued to rise in Hatfield every decade since 1980 (there was no data available previous), as can also be seen in Table 3.1. The median age rose from 34.1 in 1980 to 49.5 in 2020 – a substantial increase of 45%.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3.1: Population Change in Hatfield | | | |
| Year | **Population** | **Percent Change Per Decade** | **Median Age** |
| 1960 | 2,350 | N/A | N/A |
| 1970 | 2,825 | 20.2% | N/A |
| 1980 | 3,095 | 9.5% | 34.1 |
| 1990 | 3,184 | 2.9% | 38 |
| 2000 | 3,249 | 2.0% | 43.2 |
| 2010 | 3,279 | 0.9% | 48.3 |
| 2020 | 3,352 | 2.2% | 49.5 |
| *Sources: Census Population Estimates Program, US Census Bureau 2000, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, US Department of Commerce Census of Populations 1960-1980* | | | |

Table 3.2 below shows the breakdown of Hatfield’s population by age group (based on 2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates). Not surprisingly, given that the median age is 49, over half the population (54.7%) is age 45 or older. Of that amount, 30.5% of the town’s population is over 60 years of age. On the other end of the age spectrum, almost 18% of the population is under the age of 20. While the needs of the middle aged and older residents of the Town need to be kept in the forefront while planning for open space and recreation in Hatfield, it will also be important to ensure that the needs of preschool, elementary aged, and teenaged youth are given primary consideration as well.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3.2: Hatfield Population by Age – 2019 Data | | |
| Age Group | **Total** | **Percent of Population** |
| Total Population | 3,274 | 100 |
| Under 5 years | 64 | 2.0% |
| 5 to 19 years | 516 | 15.7% |
| 20 to 29 years | 405 | 12.4% |
| 30 to 44 years | 496 | 15.1% |
| 45 to 59 years | 794 | 24.2% |
| 60 to 74 years | 794 | 24.2% |
| 75 years and over | 205 | 6.3% |
| *Source: U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles* | | |

Hatfield has a population density of 209.5 people per square mile according to 2020 Census data, as shown below in Table 3.3. That is significantly lower than the population density of Northampton, which abuts Hatfield to the South, at 863.6 people per square mile. However, it is very similar to Hadley’s population density of 230.5, which abuts to the east (across the Connecticut River), and it is higher than both Williamsburg and Whately at 97.8 and 79.5 people per square miles respectively, which abut to the west and north. As Hatfield continues to develop its open space and recreational resources, it is important to factor in the usage of these areas by people in more populous towns and cities nearby such as Northampton.

| Table 3.3: Population Density of Hatfield and Surrounding Communities | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Community | **2020 Population** | **Square Miles** | **Population/Sq Mile** |
| Hatfield | 3,352 | 16 | 209.5 |
| Northampton | 29,571 | 34.24 | 863.6 |
| Williamsburg | 2,504 | 25.6 | 97.8 |
| Whately | 1,607 | 20.2 | 79.5 |
| Hadley | 5,325 | 23.1 | 230.5 |
| *Sources: US Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census* | | | |

As noted above, Hatfield has experienced slow but steady growth over the past 50 or so years, and the Town has been fortunate in that it has not yet experienced a major crush of new residential development. However, regional growth trends, Hatfield’s proximity to I-91 and urban centers, its beauty and rural character, and its attractiveness as a good place to raise a family are all factors that could lead to a large increase in residential development in the near future.

***Economic Character and Employment Trends***

There are a total number of 1,419 households in Hatfield, and the average household size is 2.29 individuals. Of the total household units in Hatfield, 69.3% are owner occupied and 30.7% are renter occupied. The median household income is $66,975 according to 2020 ACS 5-year estimates. This is an increase over the 2010 median household income of $53,939, although not a significant increase.[[2]](#footnote-2) Hatfield is obviously not a self-contained economic unit. The large majority of Town residents work outside Hatfield. Conversely, many people from other towns work in Hatfield.

Hatfield’s local economy is generally healthy, with rising per capita incomes, a stable tax rate, and comparatively declining low rate of unemployment. Hatfield has substantial undeveloped land zoned for commercial or industrial use, although development of some of it is subject to environmental constraints. Businesses perceive Hatfield as a “business-friendly” community.

The median assessed home value in 2020 was $331,600 according to the 2020 ACS 5-year estimates. Similar to median household income, this is higher than Hampshire County as a whole and some surrounding towns. However, given that the median home value in 2011 in Hatfield was $297,126, home values have not risen significantly or at a fast pace.

Key economic trends in Hatfield include:

* Hatfield’s local economy is generally healthy, with rising per capita incomes, a stable tax rate, and comparatively declining low rate of unemployment.
* Hatfield has substantial undeveloped land zoned for commercial or industrial use, although development of some of it is subject to environmental constraints.
* Businesses perceive Hatfield as a “business-friendly” community.

***Business and Industry***

The business districts of Hatfield are centered around the Route 5 corridor, the industrial area east of I-91, and the Town center. There are additional businesses scattered in various locations throughout the Town. The main business districts are described below.The southern section of Route 5 is adjacent to the Northampton-Hatfield town line and has the Town’s largest concentration of commercial/industrial enterprises. The district includes businesses such as R.K.Miles Building Materials’ Supplier, Steibel-Eltron, G & S Industrial Inc., Danco Modern Furniture, and medical offices. Further north on the Route 5 corridor is a mixture of multi-family residential facilities, and commercial operations run by such companies as FedEx, DiamondRV Center, and Penske Truck Rental. A small commercial center along Route 5 in North Hatfield includes several retail outlets and a construction company.

The entire area just east of Interstate 91 in Hatfield has been zoned for industrial use. This area is home to Hatfield’s largest employers, including C&S Wholesale Grocers, (c. 1000 employees,) and Brockway-Smith (c. 110 employees,) and somewhat smaller firms such as Northeast Solar.

Hatfield’s historic Town center includes modest commercial uses combined with civic and residential uses. Across from Town Hall, the Town’s retail center is very small, consisting mainly of a convenience store, a Sports Travel and Tours business, and a restaurant. There is also a modest commercial area at Prospect and School Streets, which includes another convenience store, the Hatfield Market.

Other businesses such as Verizon, Keiter Builders, Paciorak Electric and the Hatfield public schools are scattered in locations throughout the Town.

## Growth and Development Patterns

***Patterns and Trends***

The Town of Hatfield has historically maintained its identity as a small and scenic agricultural community. People who live in Hatfield talk about the community’s “rural character.” This description refers to four primary aspects of the Hatfield community: agriculture, natural resource protection, open space and recreation, and historic preservation. Residential and commercial growth have been slow but steady. Figure 3.1 below shows the number of building permits that have been issued for both residential and business construction from 2011 – 2020.

Source: Town of Hatfield Annual Reports 2011- 2020

As the chart shows, the largest number of building permits have been for single-family residences. There was a small increase in single-family residential permits between 2011 and 2016, and since then the numbers have varied. There have also been a small but fairly steady number of multi-family residences built over the past 10 years, and in addition there have been between 1 and 3 permits issued every year for new business or commercial construction.

Although Hatfield has significant acreage of industrial and commercial zoned land, large amounts of this land either are already developed or are constrained from future development due to floodplains, wetlands, river protection lands, and other environmental constraints. Some of the land zoned for commercial and industrial uses is protected from development by the Rivers Protection Act 310 CMR 10.58 that restricts development of land within 200 feet of a river (25 feet in urban areas).

While this legislative protection is likely to exist into the future, other environmental constraints may not. For example, in today’s real estate market in western Massachusetts, it is not cost effective to develop land that exceeds a certain slope. In other parts of the country where land is scarce and growth pressures are much greater than they are here, developers routinely build on steep slopes. This could be a concern for future residential development as well.

***Infrastructure***

The Planning board, Redevelopment Authority, Capital Planning Committee and the Water Department, through the DPW and Board of Selectmen have assessed infrastructure throughout the town. Two big issues face the Town of Hatfield with respect to infrastructure and public facilities: (1) the age of existing infrastructure, and (2) the effect of new infrastructure on development. Originally, the Town was able to get by with allocating only minimal funds to maintain existing infrastructure and public facilities when the infrastructure was all relatively new. Now that the infrastructure is aging, it will no longer be cost effective to defer maintenance. The Town must address the probability that future upgrading of public facilities and infrastructure will lead to growth and development and will need to plan for this eventuality. As was noted earlier in this plan, the Town has accidentally avoided many of the growth pressures facing towns in the Pioneer Valley by having a relatively outdated infrastructure that has made Hatfield less attractive than surrounding communities to new development.

**Water Supply Systems:** Hatfield’s public water supply comes from three sources: the Town (Running Gutter Brook) reservoir (capacity of 500,000 gallons per day); the West Hatfield Well (capacity of 300,000 gallons per day); and the Omasta Well (capacity of 150,000 gallons per day). The Town relies on the reservoir as the primary source of water (70%) and the two wells as a secondary or back up supply (30%). The water treatment plant came online in 1997. It is located at the Running Gutter Brook Reservoir on Reservoir Road in West Hatfield. Although the capacity of the reservoir is 1.6 million gallons, the actual safe yield rate is 500,000 gallons per day.

*Usage* – In 2021, water usage was approximately 300,000 gallons per day. As in most communities, demand for water is highest during the warmest eight to ten weeks of summer. During this high use period, demand can reach a level of one million gallons per day, placing a severe strain on the system, particularly after summer storms render the waters of the reservoir cloudy with particulates from storm water runoff. Currently, approximately 95 percent of the community is served by the public water system. In 2006, the Town completed metering all residences, which has encouraged conservation because people are now paying for water based on their actual usage. The current rate for water usage is $4.911/100 cu.ft.

*Distribution* - Much of the current distribution system is composed of asbestos-cement (AC) pipe. In popular use from the 1940s through the 1960s, this material is susceptible to leaks. Small breaks or abrasions can become major pipe failures as the cementitious material disintegrates over time. Locations where new lines are tied into existing AC pipes are particularly threatened. As long as the pipe material remains intact, it is not believed to be dangerous to public health. However, because of its brittle nature, this piping material is being replaced as portions of the system are upgraded.

The size and the layout of the pipes delivering water to Hatfield residents and businesses are not fully adequate. The line serving Routes 5/10 however, was upgraded with a new larger pipe from the reservoir to Route 5/10 via Rocks Road in the last few years.

**Sewer Service:** The wastewater treatment plant began operation in 1987 and is in need of upgrading. The Town was awarded a USDA grant to help with the cost of upgrading the plant in March 2022, and in May 2022 the Town approved borrowing the full amount required for the upgrade. The wastewater treatment plant is located off Main Street on the Connecticut River and has a capacity of 500,000 gallons per day. Approximately one- half of the Town is currently served by this system. Current demand is 250,000 gallons per day. Billing for sewer usage is now based on water usage as determined by the metering program. The current rate for sewer use is $9.34/100 cu. ft. Expansion of town sewer service could spur secondary residential development along Linseed and Old Stage Roads, just as recent expansion on Bridge Street has increased pressure for significant development along the town’s unimproved Jericho Road. The town therefore needs to assess carefully the provision of sewer service in residential areas west of I-91 and to provide some means of controlling growth in this area. Such controls could include limitation on sewer flows via pipe size reduction, prioritized allocation of service, betterment zones favoring business use, or other techniques.

**Transportation:** The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) does not provide service in Hatfield. The closest PVTA bus line ends at the Big Y in Northampton south of the Hatfield town line. The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) runs a Greenfield to Northampton bus route that has stops along Route 5&10 in Hatfield.

Rail transport exists along this same north-south track, with freight transport, as well as passenger train travel. Amtrak passenger rail from Springfield north to the Vermont line on the Vermonter stops in Holyoke, Northampton, and Greenfield. Street-crossings occur in Hatfield, though no stop. The nearest stops are in Greenfield to the north and Northampton to the south.

There are sidewalks in a number of areas of Hatfield, particularly those most densely populated. Sidewalks run the length of Main Street in the center of Hatfield, and continue along Maple and Elm Street until the border with Northampton. There are also sidewalks on Prospect Street and School Street that meet up with those on Main Street. There are no bike lanes in Hatfield, although the Town sees significant numbers of bikers that ride from Northampton and up Elm, Maple, Main and River Road into Whately. Main Street has a wide shoulder; these other roads are fairly narrow but have limited traffic, with the exception of Elm Street. In May, 2022, the Town applied and received $56,641 in funding through MA Department of Transportation’s Shared Streets and Spaces Program to install 8 solar button-activated flashing crosswalk signals for the purpose of providing safety to all pedestrians crossing two main arteries. These signals will be placed on School Street, a school district area, the corner of School Street/Main Street (which will benefit Capawonk Housing for the Disabled and Elderly), Hatfield Senior Center and Smith Academy Park, corner of North Street and Main Street, and the Elm Street area. Construction work has begun and will be completed in the spring of 2023.

## Long-Term Development Patterns

***Zoning By-Laws***

During the Master Plan process undertaken by the town in 2000 to 2003 and updated in 2012, a critical evaluation of the town’s zoning was performed that resulted in recommendations for a major overhaul of the town’s zoning bylaws. According to the Master Plan for the Town of Hatfield published January 2001, “Regional pressures make it necessary for the town to take specific new actions to control its fate. Hatfield needs up-dated zoning regulations to preserve its rural character and enhance its economic base without overstepping private property rights. The town does not have adequate tools to attract new business to town while preventing over-scaled, poorly sited, or ill- designed commercial and industrial buildings.”[[3]](#footnote-3) The Master Plan also stated that Hatfield lacked housing opportunities for elderly residents and for children of Hatfield families who wished to buy their first homes here. It lacked standards for clustered residential development that might help preserve open space.

A number of changes to the Zoning Bylaws were made in 2003, some of which have added protections to the Town’s natural resources, such as the Floodplain Overlay District and Riverfront Protection Overlay District. There have been some amendments to the Zoning Bylaws since the 2014 OSRP, however the zoning districts have remained the same since 2003. They are the following:

DESIGNATION TITLE AND PURPOSE

RR Rural Residential District

OR Outlying Residential District

TC Town Center District

TCB Town Center Business District

B Business District

I Industrial District

LI Light Industrial District

AG Agricultural District

FP Floodplain Overlay District

WS Water Supply Protection Overlay District

RP River Front Protection Overlay District

The Town has received a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant to develop a climate-smart comprehensive plan. The Town of Hatfield will build on the groundwork established in the past year through Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) and Hazard Mitigation planning to develop a Climate Smart Comprehensive Plan that includes a future vision with the articulation of key adaptation and resiliency actions for the Town. The chapters will include the following: Planning Process and Engagement; Community Setting – Physical features, demographics, and climate change risks and vulnerabilities; Land Use; Housing; Health and Social Environment (to include age and dementia friendly action plan); Farming; Economic Development; Historic and Cultural Resources; Natural Resources, Open Space, and Recreation; Transportation and Circulation Facilities, Services, and Social Resilience; and an Action Plan.

**SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY**

## Geology, Soils and Topography

**Geology**

Hatfield hosts two different topographic relief forms, one being the fertile lowlands in the eastern two thirds of the Town, and the second being Horse Mountain and the Rocks, located just west of Interstate 91. Both relief forms and the associated soil types have been greatly influenced by the last glacial Ice Age which most recently shaped the Town’s geology a mere 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. The retreat of this two-mile high block of ice resulted in much of Hatfield being covered by a vast glacial lake known as Lake Hitchcock. The bottom of this lake marks the boundaries of the lowland which are characterized by thick varied lake bottom deposits that include glacial stream deposits of gravel and sand, outwash plains, deltas and terraces left by the retreating waters of the lake. More recently rich silt deposits are left by the Connecticut River as it periodically floods its banks during the high waters of spring while snaking across this primitive lake bottom. The edges of this lake are marked by a thin layer of sand, silt and gravel till left by the glacier on top of higher bedrock, which bounded the valley floor.

In close proximity to the rocky ledges (the Rocks) of West Hatfield is the abandoned Galena mine where tailings of barium sulphate (used as a lead substitute in paint) may still be found. The Hatfield lead vein is one of five similar accessible deposits in the central Connecticut Valley.

**Soils**

Soils within the Horse Mountain and Rocks region are very thin, generally poorly drained and wet, with shallow bedrock. The nature of these soils poses moderate to severe limitations on intensive development. The Town should use caution and carefully limit development in this region. In addition, this area is where the Town's reservoir is located and is also the aquifer recharge region for both of the Town's water wells.

The soils in the lowlands east of Interstate 91 are in sharp contrast to the rugged soils of West Hatfield. They are almost evenly divided between two predominant soils associations: (1) Hinckley-Merrimac-Windsor association, and (2) Hadley-Winooski-Limerick association. Each association has a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, drainage; each forms a unique natural landscape, and each consists of one or more major soils and some minor soils.

The Hinckley-Merrimac-Windsor association consists of about 25% Hinckley, 15% Merrimac and 10% Windsor soils. The remaining 50% minor soils are composed primarily of Agawam, Sudbury, and Walpole soils. The soils in this association are deep, nearly level to steep, excessively drained, both sandy and loamy, and formed in outwash deposits in outwash plains. These soils are suited best to tree growth and can be droughty. This vulnerability to drought could limit plant growth. The major soil groups in this association possess very rapid permeability; hence with current Title V Health Code regulations there are few limitations for private septic systems. The rapid permeability does create the possibility for ground water contamination. Walpole and Sudbury soils possess a high-water table. In Hatfield, this association is found predominantly in an approximately 2+-mile band along Interstate 91.

The Hadley-Winooski-Limerick association consists of about 35% Hadley, 15% Winooski and 10% Limerick soils. The remaining 40% minor soils consist of Pootatuck, Rippowam, Saco, and Suncook soils. These are deep, nearly level, well to poorly drained, loamy soils formed in alluvial materials on floodplains. They are found mostly in broad bands adjacent to streams and rivers. They are exceptionally suited for growing agricultural crops as well as for tree growth. These soils are subject to occasional flooding and seasonally high water, which could limit their use for private septic systems. This association is located from the Connecticut River westerly to the Hinckley-Merrimac-Windsor association mentioned above.

Hatfield has some of the most fertile agricultural soils in the state, the country, and possibly the world. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has defined a land capability classification that indicates the suitability of soils for most kinds of field crops. The soils are grouped according to their limitation for field crops, the risk of damage if they are used for field crops, and the way they respond to management. Capability classes are designated by Roman numerals, I-VIII, indicating progressively greater limitations and narrower choices for practical use. Generally, the soils best suited for agriculture are classes I-IV. Of the 21 soil classes found in the lowlands east of Interstate 91, 14 classes are class III or better. The dominant class is the Hadley silt loam, a class I soil. The Soils Map in Appendix A provides greater details on the Agricultural Soils and Topography of Hatfield.

Map

Description automatically generatedThe Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS), a division of the US Department of Agriculture, classifies soils in order to identify land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Prime farmland soils have “specific physical and chemical characteristics that make them well suited for growing crops.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Farmland of statewide importance are soils that fail to meet one or more of the requirements of prime farmland but are important for producing those agricultural crops mentioned above. Over one-third of the town’s acreage, is classified as Prime Farmland – 3,999 acres out of 10,750 total acres. Another 1,601 acres is designated as farmland of statewide importance. Almost all of these soils are located east of I91. Figure 3.2 shows all areas of Prime Farmland soils in the dark beige color, and Farmland of Statewide Importance in light beige. More information of Hatfield’s soils can be found in the Soils Map in Appendix A.

American Farmland Trust also identifies farmland in Hatfield as some of the most productive, versatile, and resilient (PVR) land in the nation for sustainable food and crop production, as well as identifying areas of PVR land that have been lost and developed for residential use.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Figure 3.2: Hatfield Agricultural Soils

These data objectively verify the commonly held perception that Hatfield is blessed with a large amount of the best soils in the country. A soils-based protection strategy would strive to retain the best soils, either prime or of state or local importance, for agricultural use and would guide growth and development toward the poorer quality soils. Unfortunately, however, the best agricultural soils often present the least impediments for development. The worst soils are often in the areas that are generally not suitable for large-scale development.

**Topography**

The section of Town west of Interstate 91 has the greatest relief as well as forested areas, with elevations reaching as high as 840 feet above sea level and steep slopes ranging from 5% to greater than 15%. This slope approaches the limits of readily developable land. In this densely wooded terrain, outcroppings of bedrock alternate with pockets of wetlands, most of which flow into Running Gutter Brook, the primary stream draining these western Hatfield hills. East of the Interstate the fertile Connecticut Valley lowlands are terrain with very little slope—elevations can be as low as 110 feet above sea level**.**

**Landscape Character**

The Town of Hatfield has diverse natural landscapes that have more or less formed natural boundaries for residential, industrial and agricultural development. The Connecticut River has cut a path in the bottom of a former glacial lake bottom, and its natural flooding cycles have contributed to rich farmland in the lowlands that border its banks. The early settlers recognized the value of this land, and thus built their homes on this land adjacent to the river more than 300 years ago. Today in the center of Town, there remain many grand old homes adjacent to vast farm fields that extend to the banks of the river where cash crops of potatoes, cucumbers, squash and other vegetables are grown.

The large expanse of former alluvial floodplain soils is a unique natural resource. In few places around the world are the soils of such high agricultural quality.Large tracts of farmland can still be found in North Hatfield - east of Bradstreet and Main,along StraitsRoad, east of Great Pond, and in the floodplain along the Connecticut River south ofTown**.** Located in the midst of the farmland is the remnant of a wayward ConnecticutRiver**,** the Great Pond and Cow Bridge Brook**.** The Great Pond, a Connecticut River oxbow, has approximately200 acres of open water, wooded swamp, and marshes, many rare plant species, and is an important refuge for migrating wildfowl.

Above the lower river valley, near the general north-to-south line formed by Prospect Street and Straits Road, is a plateau where farmland, residential, commercial and industrial development have been a part of the landscape for several decades, developing on the flat terrain which supported agricultural activities during the early history of the Town. The Mill River Falls at the Prospect Street dam dramatically mark the rapid change in topography between the lower floodplain terrain and the upper plateau. The railroad and state/interstate highway systems are located within these areas and have contributed to the more recent residential, commercial and industrial growth that is scattered among farm parcels.

Further to the west, the flat upper plateau is bounded by a rugged wooded hilly landscape whose primary value to the Town is its source of water and its recreational opportunities, with some limited residential development having escalated within the last twenty years. The area of Hatfield west of Routes 5-10 is dramatically different from the flatland of the eastern part of Town. Here, the steep, rocky wooded slopes contain three main natural features: “The Rocks”, Horse Mountain, and Chestnut Mountain.

Horse Mountain, rising approximately 840 ft. and covering approximately 3100 acres, is most easily accessed by a trail from Rocks Road. There is an additional trail access off of Coles Road, however it is impeded by overgrown vegetation. Horse Mountain can also be accessed by a trail that starts in Williamsburg. The mountain is mostly hardwood forestwith few conifers, and with large stands of mountain laurel. There are several impressive viewsamong the several steep slopes and vistas, with WhiteRock perhaps the most impressive. Providing a 180**-**degree view of Hatfield Center and the ConnecticutValley**,** it contains a limited amount of white quartz and is important for geologic study.

Chestnut Mountain is located in the northwest section of Town and has an elevation of approximately 740 ft. It can be reached via Chestnut Road off Rocks Road. Much of this area is part of the NorthamptonMountain Street reservoir and, as such is protected as open space. Horse Mountain and Chestnut Mountain provide the opportunity for hiking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and hunting, as well as providing important wildlife habitat.

The “Rocks” is a north to south ridgeline with much exposed bedrock between Route 5 and Linseed Road. It is a steeply rising, rugged section of terrain that forms the easterly boundary of West Hatfield. There is the potential for a series of trails to connect Horse Mountain, ChestnutMountain and the “Rocks”. A trail on Horse Mountain built by the Williamsburg Trails Committee in 2019 connects with the White Rock trail, an out-and-back trail which was also built in 2019. A trail on Chestnut Mountain was also recently built (2021) but does not yet formally connect with the other trails. The Three Bridges Trail was built in 2015.

The Hatfield Reservoir is located between theRocks and Horse Mountain. The area surrounding the reservoir is approximately 300acres of wooded land, mainly mixed stands of hardwood and softwood, and is an important wildlife area. Running GutterBrook, a clear, clean,brook flowing into and out of the reservoir, provides recreational and water supply functions alongwith endangered species habitat. It is designated by MassWildlife as a Coldwater Fisheries Resource. There are also small waterfalls in one section that further enhance the beauty of this stream.Broad Brook, near the southwest border, is another clear, fresh brook in this area.

**Water Resources**

**Rivers and Streams**

Hatfield is heavily influenced by watercourses. There are approximately 35 miles of stream and river channelwithin thetownboundaries, primarily consisting of the Connecticut River, the Mill River, Running Gutter Brook, Mountain Brook, and Broad Brook. The following is a brief description of these water resources and some of the important features of each.

Connecticut River

About 7.5 miles of the Connecticut River forms the eastern and part of the southern boundaries of Hatfield, providing approximately 450 acres of open water. The Connecticut River is one of the longest and largest rivers in the American northeast and it has influenced everything from settlement patterns to agricultural productivity.

The Connecticut River in Hatfield is rated as Class B status (designated as habitat for fish and other wildlife and recreation such as fishing and swimming), allowing the potential for recreational swimming and boating, fishing and wildlife propagation. The river supports over 30 species of fish including shad, walleye, northern pike, and catfish. It is also home to many other types of wild animals, such as ospreys, river otters, and herons.

The dike, adjacent to the river in the Indian Hollow section of Town,offers 2 miles for hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Hunting is also allowed, however that is a limited use as it is illegal to discharge a firearm within 100’ of a residence. Access to the dike can be gainedfrom Valley Street, South Street, Bridge Road, and the path directly across the street from Memorial Town Hall on Main Street, immediately to the south of the former Center School building.

Access to the riveris possible from Old Farms Road, Upper Farms Road, Bashin Road, at the state boat ramp, the dike, the Indian Hollow boat ramp near Kellogg Hill Road, and at the confluence of the Mill and Connecticut Rivers. Large and motorboat access is limited to the state boat ramp, while small watercraft such as canoes can enter at the Indian Hollow site and the confluenceof the Mill and Connecticut. Three sites along Bashin Road, Indian Hollow, and the confluence of the Mill and the Connecticut, are most suited for swimming. Canary Island, located near the Northampton border**,** offers the potential for limited access picnicking or boat camping.

Land use patterns along the Connecticut River in Hatfield show that most of the acreage within 2,000 feet of the riverbank is in agricultural use. At several points along the river, forestland provides a vegetated buffer to human activities although much of this forest area is quite narrow—less than 200 feet deep. Most of the floodplains along the river remain unprotected from development, although there are economic impediments that reduce the likelihood of major development. The Town center area parallels the river for approximately two miles, coming within 800 feet of the bank for much of this stretch.

The Mill River is a central geographic feature within Hatfield, draining from a watershed of five communities. The Mill River enters the Town along the northern boundary with Whately. In the northern portion of Town, the Mill River parallels the west side of Route 91, but then flows in a broadly meandering southeasterly path to its confluence with the Connecticut River. Once called Capawonk Brook, this meandering, approximately 7-mile river forms a natural green belt through the Town. With variable depth and width, containing dual channels, islands, and peninsulas, overhung with trees and lined with native shrubs, this enchanted wilderness is a haven for recreationalists, naturalists, hunters and fishermen.

The Mill River watershed has been the focus of increasing research over the past several years, showing the unique value of this riverine resource, with studies performed by Smith College, University of Massachusetts and Cornell University. It has become known as one of the most biologically diverse river systems in Massachusetts, supporting four of the state’s seven listed species of freshwater mussels, including the Federally endangered dwarf wedgemussel *Alasmidonta heterodon*. There are additional protected flora and fauna that inhabit this river corridor, including the wood turtle *Clemmys insculpta*. River otter live along the brook, the favorable water quality of which also supports brook trout. There areat least five access points to the Mill River (Plain Road, Chestnut Street, Bridge Street, off Elm Street, and off Farm Road) for fishing and other activities.

The Hatfield Dam on Prospect Street is close to the mouth of the Mill River at its junction with the Connecticut River. The dam is approximately 150 feet long, 15 feet high, is 300 years old, and was built on a 7-foot-high sandstone outcrop. The dam is the only one on the Mill River and blocks the movement of fish (Atlantic salmon, American shad, blueback herring and lamprey) and other aquatic organisms between the Connecticut River and the upper watershed.



A feasibility study for the removal of the Hatfield Dam to restore fish passage continuity was completed in 2007.[[6]](#footnote-6) A June 2019 report by the MA Division of Ecological Services found that the Mill River Dam is unsafe and either needs to be removed or repaired. However, dam removal is complicated by a number of factors. Removal of the dam could negatively impact the mussel population through the introduction of predatory species. It could also potentially impact the extensive upstream wetland system through a decrease in water levels. In addition, the old mill site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. The Town received a $185,000 grant several years ago to fund an engineering analysis of the bridge that would be used toward its eventual reconstruction, and also spent about $42,000 to determine its structural integrity. While there is interest in reconstructing the pedestrian bridge across the Mill River, moving forward on that project is being tabled until the future of the dam has been determined.

Major tributary streams to the Mill River include Running Gutter Brook and Mountain Brook, which drain much of West Hatfield. Running Gutter Brook drains most of the Rocks and Horse Mountain areas, feeds the Hatfield Reservoir and includes the tributary of Broad Brook, whose watershed extends into Northampton. Mountain Brook drains the northwest portion of Hatfield and extends into Whately. It originates at the Northampton water reservoir system, and a portion of its natural watershed contributions are diverted to other portions of the Northampton water system.

**100-Year Floodplain**

The 100-year floodplain is defined as an area with a 1 percent chance of flooding in a given year. The floodplain provides critical storage for flood waters, offers important habitat for many plant and animal species, and provides some of the richest agricultural soils in the Pioneer Valley. The Town has an overlay-zoning district for protecting floodplain areas in Hatfield. Areas in the 100-year flood zone in Hatfield are primarily those lands adjacent to the Connecticut River in the eastern part of the Town and along the Mill River in central Hatfield. A portion of the floodplains also extends northward along a section of Running Gutter Brook into West Hatfield. Much of this flood area is currently in agricultural production—cleared of wooded, habitat areas—and could be vulnerable to development.

Hatfield has not experienced substantial development of its floodplain areas and with the new Floodplain and Riverfront (or Agricultural) Overlay Districts, greater review is required in order for a structure to be built in this area. Neither of these zoning districts expressly prohibits residential or other development but rather require certain provisions for its occurrence which add costs to a project. Hence, these overlay districts do not prevent development but potentially make it more expensive. Other protective regulations and disincentives that limit development in the floodplain exist at several levels: 1) Lending institutions may require flood insurance for those structures built in the 100-year flood zone; 2) The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act limits the impacts of construction and alteration activities in the floodplain through its local enforcement by the Conservation Commission; and 3) The State Building Code requires the elevation of structures in the floodway, and also reinforces the overlay district regulations by prohibiting any change in the flood storage capacity of the area.

**Wetlands**

The Town of Hatfield includes about 3,100 acres of wetland, floodplain, and open water (including about 450 acres of the Connecticut River), which accounts for about 30% of the Town's total area. These wetlands include the open water of streams and ponds, shrub swamps, forested swamps, wet meadows, bogs, marshes, beaver ponds, and land within the flood water elevation of the 100-year storm, not all of which is currently considered true vegetated wet­land under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, Chapter 131, Section 40 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth. Wetlands have been identified using aerial photographs (Mass. Map Down, MacConnell et al., 1972), USGS topographic maps, and Flood Hazard Boundary Maps (Federal Insurance Administration) as presented in the Hatfield Land Use Planning Study (Almer Huntley, Jr., & Associates, Inc.).

Most of the wetlands are in the eastern and northern sections of Hatfield bordering the Connecticut River, the Mill River, Great Pond,and the old oxbow meander in the northeast section of Hatfield. The wetlands in West Hatfield are primarily narrow wetlands bordering Running Gutter Brook and its tributaries, with larger expanses within the Rocks area and at the base of Horse Mountain. Several small, isolated wetlands exist in this area as well, and also provide important wetland wildlife habitat. Wetland areas are home to frogs, fish, freshwater clams and mussels, beaver, muskrats, great blue herons, waterfowl, and bitterns, among other species.

Riparian areas are the vegetated lands adjacent to water sources. This juncture of land and water attracts a range of species and tends to mark a transition zone between habitats. As such, these wildlife corridors link one habitat to another. In Hatfield, riparian areas exist along the Connecticut River, Mill River, Running Gutter Brook, and Great Pond. Many of these riparian areas remain intact, aided by the Rivers Protection Act and regulations restricting floodplain development. However, floodplain regulations in Hatfield are not as effective as they could be. Revision or replacement of the current floodplain overlay district with a bylaw that can more effectively restrict inappropriate development should be considered if there is significant interest in the community to do so.

In 1996, Massachusetts amended its Wetland Act to include protection of a 200-foot buffer along all year-round streams and rivers in the commonwealth. Development within this “riverfront area” is severely restricted to protect the natural quality of the waterway, its adjacent wetland areas, and its habitat and wildlife resources. The Rivers Protection Act established that this additional resource area be considered by local conservation commissions who must enforce the wetlands regulations. However, even with the Rivers Protection Act in place, it is probable that there will continue to be some development along waterways. Single lots of record in existence at the time the law was passed in 1996 are held to a less restrictive standardthat allows development within the “outer riparian zone” (100’—200’). The Hatfield Wetlands Bylaw establishes additional protections beyond the State Wetlands Protection Act, particularly in terms of regulating activities within the protected zone around the reservoir as well as isolated wetlands.

**Watersheds**

The entire landmass of the Town is situated in the Middle Connecticut River Watershed Basin. All naturally draining surface water in Hatfield flows into the Connecticut River, with three sub-watersheds draining the 10,000± acres of land in the Town.

Running Gutter Brook in West Hatfield is one sub-watershed and originates in the upper reaches of West Hatfield along Mountain Road. It includes the Hatfield Town Reservoir. The brook is also fed by inputs from Whately and Northampton. Broad Brook feeds into Running Gutter Brook from Northampton. Two minor watershed areas in West Hatfield drain into Northampton, one of which includes Mountain Reservoir. About one-third of this 35-acre reservoir is in Hatfield’s far northwestern corner.

The second sub-watershed drains through the Mill River, a primary tributary of the Connecticut River with its headwaters in the Town of Conway. Running Gutter Brook joins this mature river just east of I-91 in south central Hatfield. The dam at Prospect Street, the site of former water-based industry, causes the watercourse to run deep upstream of the dam with wide meanders and broad marshes that are important wildlife habitats.

The third major watershed is within the northeast corner of Hatfield. This area drains the remnants of an old Connecticut River meander—once an “oxbow lake”—including Great Pond and Cow Bridge Brook, and eventually drains to the Connecticut River. This area was originally an oxbow lake, which, over the years, has aged due to sedimentation and eutrophication, and the oxbow is now a series of ponds and marshes. It remains a significant wildlife habitat and Connecticut River flood storage area.

**Public Water Supply**

There are three sources of drinking water in the Town of Hatfield, shown in Table 4.1, with the primary one being the Running Gutter Brook Reservoir. This surface water source provides most of the water reaching homes and businesses in the Town. A filtration plant prepares the water for distribution to users in the Town. Two public wells supplement the supply from the reservoir: the Omasta Well and the West Hatfield Well, neither source of which is treated with filtration or chlorination. Cost has dictated the choice of primary water supply from the reservoir, as the operation of the filtration plant remains less expensive than the electrical power used to operate the two wells. The wells are used primarily in two situations: 1) to provide adequate water supply during peak demand hours (summer months), and 2) to bypass the reservoir supply during times of high turbidity (primarily after heavy rainstorms).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Table 4.1 - Sources of Hatfield Public Water | |
| Water Source | Approximate Annual % Total Water Supply |
| Town Reservoir | 70 % |
| West Hatfield Well | 20 % |
| Omasta Well | 10 % |

This reliance on a surface water reservoir as the primary supply of water to Hatfield presents several problems:

1) Vulnerability and sensitivity to land use changes in the watershed:Changes in land use that result in a degraded water supply area can directly, and quickly, affect the quality of the water supply. The removal of forest lands, wetlands, and other naturally vegetated areas can result in increased storm runoff and increased sediment in the reservoir. This leads to the turbidity problem during heavy rains.

2) Vulnerability to contamination by human activity: Human activity, and development in particular, leads to an increased threat of contamination via failing on-site septic systems, hazardous waste spills (even motor oil and gasoline), increased use of lawn chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers), and increased pest waste. All of these threats can result in immediate contamination of the supply.

3) Capacity for growth: There are limits on the number of gallons that can be affordably and practically provided to users of the water supply system when surface waters are the primary source. The current safe yield of Running Gutter Brook Reservoir is approximately .5 million gallons per day (mgd), and up to 1 mgd with the two wells online. Water usage averages 300,000 gallons per day. The metering of all town residences on public water was completed in 2006. Metering generally creates a reduction in usage and can function as conservation or demand management measure. Water users are more likely to use less water when they are paying for their water based on their actual usage versus a flat fee, and don’t want to see their water bill go up.

Threats to the water resource follow closely those to the watershed areas and waterways. They include:

* Residential development in sensitive areas—particularly in the forested water supply area feeding the reservoir
* Clearing of vegetation that borders waterways
* Alteration of stream conditions such as temperature, velocity and volume of flow, and turbidity (amount of particulate matter in the water)
* Non-point source pollution from households, septic systems, roadways, agricultural operations, and industries
* Overuse or misuse of recreational resources
* Poor stewardship of forest lands through inappropriate timbering practices

The development of residential lots in the upper reaches of the Running Gutter Brook watershed in recent years endangers the health of the reservoir. Continued removal of natural vegetation and replacement of this natural landscape with human residences increases storm water runoff contaminated by lawn fertilizers, pesticides, de-icers, motor oil, and other damaging substances.

According to a 1999 report titled “Comprehensive Nonpoint Source Management in the Mill River Subwatershed, Hatfield, Massachusetts”:

“Many large agricultural land parcels are being converted to residential uses. This is evidenced by the number of withdrawals of Chapter 61A farm parcels from the farm use assessment tax programs. Several large, unused, easily developable agricultural parcels are located in the primary recharge area to Hatfield’s Omasta and Whately Wells. Without adequate land use controls, large subdivision development of this area could threaten the quality of Hatfield’s drinking water supplies….The watershed and recharge areas are extremely desirable locations for new homes.”

Threats to the aquifer recharge areas surrounding the Town wells are similar to those in the water supply area feeding the reservoir. The 1994 report Developing a Regional Wellhead Protection Program notes:

“…hazardous wastes and petroleum present one of the greatest threats to aquifers. Only a few parts per billion of these contaminants can ruin an aquifer for human use…Subsurface oil or gasoline storage tanks in service stations, private residences, and businesses present a serious threat to groundwater supplies. Stringent preventive measures are justified, due to the considerable impairment of groundwater supplies from the many leaks and spills from petroleum products. The cost to restore contaminated aquifers can reach millions of dollars.”

The report goes on to document the location of the primary and secondary recharge areas in Hatfield, illustrating that most of the land west of I-91 lies in the secondary recharge zone. The primary recharge zone covers a swath of land in the upper reaches of Running Gutter Brook. Land uses that pose a high risk to the water supply in this area of Hatfield include auto service and repair facilities, fuel stations, auto body and auto repair shops, general agricultural use, major highways, railway tracks, commercial greenhouses/nurseries, operational equipment storage, road and maintenance depots, fertilizer/pesticide storage and application, on-site septic systems, and underground storage tanks.

A Zone II study of the West Hatfield Well, completed in January 2000, provides a more detailed and accurate delineation of the recharge area. The new Zone II delineation was used to update the current Water Supply Protection District boundary on Hatfield’s zoning map and to ensure a safer source of public water. **Vegetation**

**Forest Land**

In terms of forest types, Hatfield is located in what is referred to as the transition zone. This transition area is a blending of the southern oak-hickory forests and the northern maple-birch climax forest types. Also found in association with this zone are eastern white pines. Forty-five percent of Hatfield's total acreage is forested land.

The forest resources and woodlands in Hatfield lie primarily west of the I-91 corridor. Extensive range of forestland encompasses approximately 4,800 acres, which consists of 45 percent of the total land area in the Town. There are approximately135 species of trees and woody shrubs naturally occurring in Hatfield.

Without forested areas, floodwaters from heavy storms would run off more rapidly, raising flood waters and assuring more property and crop damage. Other environmental impacts such as air quality degradation, reduction of visual buffers from adjacent uses, and elimination of habitat could ensue as well. West Hatfield forested land provides important absorption and filtration of water runoff before it reaches the Town’s water supply reservoir. Protecting this supply will be crucial to the future commercial and residential growth of the Town. Continued deforestation within the water supply recharge area could result in pollution of the supply as oil, fertilizers, and other chemicals are rapidly washed off developed areas to the surface waters.

Deforested areas in the hills also could cause impacts on down-gradient properties as the rapid runoff causes erosion of stream banks and hillsides, sending sediment onto farmland and other properties, and potentially causing greater damage to homes and businesses during major storm events. Erosion causes streams and rivers to fill with silt, resulting in oxygen deprivation to water plants and animal species, killing them and causing down-slope wetlands to deteriorate. This in turn would eliminate food sources for migratory birds and land animals. Finally, the loss of significant forested areas will visually alter the character of the community.

Riparian zones also provide important ecosystem services, including wildlife habitat and corridors, and maintenance of water quality. These “bordering vegetated wetlands” along streams, rivers and ponds in the Town provide wildlife habitat and play a critical role in maintaining water quality by serving as natural filters for nutrients, toxins, and sediment that would otherwise move directly into surface and ground waters.

**Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species - Flora**

A biologically diverse native ecosystem is important to ensure stability of all plant and animal species. On a global scale, it is essential for human health as well. As the number of species within an ecosystem decline, the remaining species become more dependent upon fewer resources for survival. In many cases, the elimination of one species leads to the demise of another or many others when such species cannot adapt to this change in their environment.

Because of its diverse terrain, Hatfield contains important habitats for plants as well as animals. Table 6 lists the endangered, threatened, and species of concern found in Hatfield. BioMap 2 cores (1932, 1955, 2015, 2083, and 2943), include five Exemplary or Priority Natural Community Cores, three Wetland Cores, four Aquatic Cores, three Vernal Pool Cores, and two Species of Conservation Concern Cores. *Core Habitat* identifies key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems.

Critical Natural Landscape areas include one Landscape Block (areas of predominately natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds), two Wetland Core Buffers, and two Aquatic Core Buffers. These areas are of great biodiversity importance. Bio-Map 2 Cores and Critical Natural Landscape areas were produced as categories by the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) to identify the areas of most importance for biodiversity: they are based on known locations of rare species and uncommon natural communities, and incorporate the habitats needed by rare species to maintain the local populations. Land protection that ties in with open space in other municipalities, and other protected open space, public or private is one way to provide important large areas of biodiversity protection.

The Hatfield BioMap2 report in 2012 stated that land in the Core Habitat category consisted of 4,581 acres, of which 315 acres, or 6.9%, was protected. The Critical Natural Landscape acreage totaled 2,566 acres, of which 79 acres or 3.1% was protected. [[7]](#footnote-7) The BioMap2 report is found in Appendix A.

According to Mass Audubon’s 2020 Losing Ground report, as of 2019 Hatfield had 1,462 acres of permanently conserved land, or 14% of the total. There were 638 acres of land newly conserved between 2012 and 2019, of which 247 acres were BioMap2 Core Habitat and 121 acres were Critical Natural Landscape. Hatfield is ranked 260 out of 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts for amount of permanently conserved land with 14% permanently conserved, so Hatfield could do better in this area.

Most of the rare plants in Hatfield are species of riparian areas – river and streamside specialists. Because floodplain areas are also prime agricultural lands, habitat for these species has diminished over the years. The remaining undisturbed and even moderately disturbed lands along the rivers provide important habitat for these rare species and more common native species, as well as helping to protect the waters of the rivers and streams. Other native plant species are found in pastures and other dry open areas as well as in upland forests.

Hatfield has several uncommon natural communities that are in the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) database, all but one associated with the rivers. The various types of floodplain forest are just small remnants of what would have been present in the past. An example is the small and degraded area of Major-river Floodplain Forest (located at Bashin Beach), which could be a core for restoration and river shore protection. The other uncommon type of natural community, the Black Gum-Pin Oak-Swamp Whit Oak” Perched” Swamp (located in North Hatfield between Route 5 and River Road and extending north into Whately) is very uncommon, forming only on glacial lake sediments, and seen in very few places in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Even though only a small part of this natural community is in Hatfield, with most being in Whately, protecting this area would contribute to maintaining the region’s biodiversity.

Old town-wide maps of Hatfield show areas of possible primary forest in the 1830s, most of which were untilled woodlots and wooded pastures. Primary Forest that has not been tilled contains soil fauna and flora, microorganisms and plants that often have greater biodiversity than areas that have been tilled, even though they are not old growth (as they have been harvested and pastured). Harvard Forest digitized these maps from the 1830s, and NHESP GIS staff took those data and combined them with information from MassGIS’ landcover data layer made from 1999 aerial photos. Although a great deal will have occurred in those areas since the maps were made, it is likely that some of the areas still forested have never been tilled. Surveys of the soil structure in the individual sites are necessary to determine whether those sites are Primary Forest. These areas of forest remaining since the 1830s on private land would be good targets for conservation acquisition due to their importance for biodiversity.

According to NHESP data on Mass Mapper (MassGIS), as of June 2022, there are 14 Certified Vernal Pools (CVP) and 73 Potential Vernal Pools (PVP) (identified from aerial photographs, needing verification on the ground) in Hatfield. Areas of swamps also provide habitat for vernal pool species. Certifying more of the PVPs would provide additional protection to these wetlands and the species that use them. There are several clusters of CVPs/PVPs - three identified Vernal Pool Cores - which provide extra habitat value for the species that use them since each pool is somewhat different and provides alternate habitats in different years and seasons.

**Hatfield Shade Tree Canopy**

Hatfield has lost dozens of trees since 2000. Most of the older street trees that have been lost were within Hatfield’s seven Historic Districts: Some were felled by disease, others by weather-related events, and in a smaller number of cases, for reasons of public safety. According to the Department of Public Works, in 2010-2011, 45-50 trees were removed due to disease and storm damage.

Sycamores (London Plane Tree) and sugar maples are still present in areas of Town, including the district from Memorial Town Hall to Maple Street. Some replacement plantings have included Liberty Elms. In 2012, twenty trees were planted using Community Preservation Act monies totaling $12,000. Additionally, twenty-three trees were pruned, and twelve were taken down as part of an ongoing effort to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate the shade canopy. An additional $2,500 has been identified toward producing a master street tree plan, status pending.

## Fisheries and Wildlife

**General Inventory**

Hatfield is home to a wide variety of wildlife due to its many habitat types. The wooded areas of West Hatfield are primary habitat for several upland mammal species including white-tailed deer, black bear, bobcat, eastern coyote, red and gray fox, porcupine, skunk, weasel, red and gray squirrel, flying squirrel, fisher cat, opossum, raccoon, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbit, mice, voles, moles, shrews, woodchuck, chipmunks and bats. These upland forests are contiguous with vast forest tracts of the Appalachian Range in the American northeast, and sightings of moose that move along these corridors have become more frequent in recent years. Upland birds include ruffed grouse, turkey, woodcock, turkey vulture, several species of hawks and owls, crows and ravens, woodpeckers, and deep wood songbirds such as wood thrush, scarlet tanager, and veery among others.

Lowland wildlife mammals are primarily beaver, muskrat, otter and mink, although mink can also be found in uplands. Lowland birds are primarily Canada geese, several species of ducks, osprey, green and blue herons and kingfishers.

Grasslands and open fields are habitat for grassland birds such as meadowlarks, bobolinks, vesper sparrows, and mammals such as mice. These areas occur generally in areas of Hatfield east of I-91 and include much of the Town’s agricultural lands. In general, the upland species occur west of Interstate 91 and lowland species east of it, although there are exceptions such as the ring-necked pheasant that primarily inhabits farm fields. Numerous species of insects, reptiles and amphibians inhabit both upland and lowland environments and form the basis for much of the food chain.

Fish range from warm water species like bass, pickerel, catfish, sunfish and walleye to cold-water species such as brook, rainbow and brown trout. Trout are found mainly in the Mill River and Running Gutter streams.

The Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) and the Hatfield Fish and Game Club annually stock trout in the Mill River. MassWildlife also stocks ring-necked pheasants 1-2 times per week on private property in eastern Hatfield that is open for hunting.

**Environmental Needs of Wildlife**

The various natural resources present in Hatfield provide a wide array of benefits for both the natural environment and the residential, farming, and business community at large. It is beyond the purview of this plan to provide an exhaustive description of the ecosystem services of these resources. However, it is widely documented that substantial degradation or elimination of resources such as forestlands, wetlands, floodplain areas, and riparian habitat has profound implications on the communities surrounding these areas. If wetlands and floodplain areas are unable to perform their intended filtering and absorption functions, impacts such as increased weed growth and algae blooms will occur. These blooms use a tremendous amount of oxygen during their natural cycles. This massive consumption of oxygen leaves little for fish and other plant life, causing “fish kills” and ultimately affecting the entire food chain from plants to birds and animals that depend on aquatic life for sustenance. Not only is the natural filtering and absorption eliminated, but also what replaces the wetland is generally impervious surface, which increases the velocity of runoff and often leads to erosion.

The extensive forestland in the hills and along river corridors provides vital resources for wildlife. These include:

* Protection and shelter for inland and water-based species such as bear, moose, and duck
* Nutrient and food source for land and water species
* Nesting areas for indigenous birds such as osprey, duck, and heron
* Seasonal shelter and food source for migratory birds
* Protected breeding areas

A great diversity of species is dependent upon the wetlands and riparian areas in Hatfield. If these corridors are disturbed or interrupted, damage to habitat and species population will result. This holds true for common species as well as rare and endangered species. Maintaining the integrity of wetlands and riparian corridors with vegetated cover is important to provide: Shelter for various species, protected corridors for movement between and among adjacent habitats, food sources for wildlife, permanently flowing water sources, and nesting and breeding places.

Wildlife populations are used often as indicators to assess the quality of the environment. Likewise, maintaining diverse and healthy habitats will help to ensure healthy wildlife populations. While agriculture is an extremely important land use in Hatfield, pesticide use can be harmful to many species of insects, fish and other wildlife, as well as to humans. The question of how best to balance productive agriculture while also protecting wildlife is a critical one for the Town.

**Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species – Fauna**

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program has mapped areas of critical concern for threatened and endangered species within the Town of Hatfield. The animals that fall within these classifications are identified in Table 4.2.

These species are dependent upon habitat provided by riparian, wetland and forest resources. There are over 5,000 acres that provide productive habitat for wildlife species in Hatfield, including forest, open waters, and wetland. Approximately 500 of these acres include areas that are priority sites for rare and endangered species. Preventing the extinction of these species is critical to maintaining biodiversity in the Pioneer Valley.

Most of the currently known rare animal species in Hatfield are associated with wetlands. A few, such as the Marbled Salamander and Wood Turtle, also use uplands for much of their lives, including for foraging for food. Marbled Salamanders breed in vernal pools in the fall and spend most of their time under the leaves in surrounding uplands forests (as a result, they and their relatives are called “mole salamanders”). Wood Turtles spend time in upland and riverside forests, but over-winter in stream banks.

Bald Eagles nest in old trees near water, along rivers and oxbows. Least Bitterns are reclusive marsh bird, nesting in tall grassy marshes in backwaters with patches of open water, where they hide their nests and raise their young in areas of little disturbance. Vesper Sparrows are species of upland grasslands, such as old fields and pastures. Although considered secure globally, they have declined significantly in eastern North America due to changes in agricultural land use.

Invertebrates such as freshwater mussels and dragonflies depend on the rivers and streams for habitat. The Mill River, in particular, provides exceptional habitat and is a hot spot for aquatic biodiversity, with four of the state’s seven listed species of freshwater mussels found there. Rare dragonfly species in Hatfield also depend on healthy aquatic conditions, as their young spend several years in the sediments of streams and ponds (depending on the species).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 4.2: Threatened, Endangered and Species of Special Concern in Hatfield | | | | |
| Common Name | Taxonomic Group | Scientific Name | Status | Most Recent Year Sighted |
| *Vertebrates* | | | | |
| Marbled Salamander | Amphibian | Ambystoma opacum | Threatened | 2010 |
| Wood Turtle | Reptile | Glyptemys insculpta | Special Concern | 2012 |
| Jefferson Salamander | Amphibian | Ambystoma jeffersonianum | Special Concern | 2009 |
| Bald Eagle | Bird | Haliaeetus leucocephalus | Threatened | 2019 |
| Least Bittern | Bird | Ixobrychus exilis | Endangered | 1991 |
| Eastern Whip-poor-will | Bird | Antrostomus vociferus | Special Concern | 2018 |
| Vesper Sparrow | Bird | Pooecetes gramineus | Threatened | 2012 |
| Eastern Silvery Minnow | Fish | Hybognathus regius | Special Concern | 1978 |
| Shortnose Sturgeon | Fish | Acipenser brevirostrum | Endangered | 2017 |
| *Invertebrates* | | | | |
| Spine-crowned Clubtail | Dragonfly/Damselfly | Hylogomphus abbreviatus | Special Concern | 2017 |
| Skillet Clubtail | Dragonfly/Damselfly | Gomphurus ventricosus | Threatened | 2001 |
| Brook Snaketail | Dragonfly/Damselfly | Ophiogomphus aspersus | Special Concern | 1998 |
| Riverine Clubtail | Dragonfly/Damselfly | Stylurus amnicola | Endangered | 2016 |
| Creeper | Mussel | Strophitus undulatus | Special Concern | 2014 |
| Dwarf Wedgemussel | Mussel | Alasmidonta heterodon | Endangered | 2016 |
| Eastern Pondmussel | Mussel | Ligumia nasuta | Special Concern | 2016 |
| Yellow lampmussel | Mussel | Lampsilis cariosa | Endangered | 2009 |
| *Plants* |  |  |  |  |
| Frank’s Lovegrass | Eragrostis frankii | Vascular Plant | Special Concern | 1984 |
| Green Dragon | Arisaema dracontium | Vascular Plant | Threatened | 1993 |
| Giant St. Johnswort | Hypericum Ascyron | Vascular Plant | Endangered | 1974 |
| Mated Spike-sedge | Eleocharis intermedia | Vascular Plant | Threatened | 1984 |
| New England Blazing Star | Liatris novae-angliae | Vascular Plant | Special Concern | 1860 |
| Sandbar Willow | Salix exigua ssp. interior | Vascular Plant | Threatened | 1984 |
| Shore Pygmy-weed | Crassula aquatica | Vascular Plant | Threatened | 1984 |
| Tussock Hairgrass | Deschampsia cespitosa ssp. glauca | Vascular Plant | Endangered | 1991 |
| *Source: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (Rare Species Viewer), 2022* | | | | |

**KEY TO MESA STATUS:** FE – Federally Endangered; E = Endangered. T = Threatened. SC = Special Concern. H = Historic, no longer present in state. WL = unofficial Watch List, not regulated. Delisted – species no longer protected under MESA. Natural Communities are not regulated. S (state abundance) ranks are on a 1 to 5 scale, with S1 being considered vulnerable, generally having 1 to 5 good occurrences, and S5 being demonstrably secure. Community types ranked S1, S2, and S3 are priority for conservation protection.

## Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

**Scenic Landscapes**

Hatfield abounds with landscapes that have much scenic value. The following landscape viewpoints have been identified to have particularly great scenic value, and efforts should be maintained to protect these areas:

* Open breath-taking vistas from wooded trails along the peak of Horse Mountain (in particular a location known locally as “White Rock”) that look over Hatfield toward Hadley and Amherst to the East, with views of the Holyoke Range to the south, and Mount Sugarloaf and Mt. Toby to the north;
* Similar but less expansive views at lower elevations seen from the northeast corner of Chestnut Mountain Christmas Tree Farm on Mountain Road, and points along Mountain Road as it descends to Pantry Road;
* Banks of Connecticut River, in particular the areas defined by public access points in the Bashin Beach area and along the dike from the Town center south and then west to the confluence of the Connecticut River with the Mill River;
* Canary Island beach in the Connecticut River near the Northampton Town line that is accessed from Little Neponsett Road.
* The Mill River itself, which has been identified as part of MA DCR’s “Commonwealth Connections, A Greenway Vision for Massachusetts”

**Major Characteristic or Unusual Geologic Features**

Some of the distinctive geologic features in Hatfield include the following which are described in detail earlier in this section:

* Fertile Connecticut River and its floodplains
* Great Pond (remnants of an oxbow lake) and its associated marshes
* Horse Mountain and Chestnut Mountain
* The “Rocks” area of West Hatfield, including some shallow lead mines used during the 1700 and 1800’s.
* Glacial outwash delta forming critical ground water recharge area for North Hatfield well.

**Cultural and Historic Areas**

Historic districts are commonly defined as areas possessing a concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, or structures united historically or aesthetically, whether by plan or spontaneous development. There are two types of designations of historic districts: National Register districts and districts designated locally.

A listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the nation’s official list of historic and cultural resources, provides properties with a degree of protection from federally funded projects or programs that could threaten or destroy historic character. Although National Register designation provides a high level of recognition and can qualify select property owners (commercial and rental property owners only) for certain beneficial tax credits or other preservation funding, it does not offer the same type of protection that a local historic district can provide. Hatfield has one single property listed on the National Register and eight nationally registered districts identified in Table 4.3.

Historic districts designated at the local level are those protected from major changes through the adoption and enforcement of a local historic preservation ordinance. Historic preservation ordinances are flexible tools that can facilitate preservation through a variety of means. They are often used to encourage a wide range of preservation activities in historic districts depending on local preservation goals. Many ordinances encourage preservation by regulating alterations to building facades, exterior building materials, exterior architectural detailing, and building mass. New construction in historic districts can be encouraged to complement the existing character through design that is sensitive in terms of size, style, and placement. Through the designation of a local historic district and adoption of an historic preservation ordinance, municipalities can accomplish many goals, including guiding alterations to privately owned historic buildings and delaying or preventing demolition of important resources.

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| Table 4.3 - National Register of Historic Districts and Places | | |
| Name | **Location** | **Date Registered** |
| Billings Way Tobacco Barn | Billings Way | 7/27/1994 |
| Bradstreet Historic District | Main Street and Bashin, Cronin Hill, Depot, Old Farms and Upper Farms Roads | 7/17/1997 |
| Elm Street Historic District | Elm, Sunset and Scotland Streets and Little Neponset Road | 12/7/2000 |
| Hatfield Center Historic District | Roughly bounded by the Connecticut and Mill Rivers and Day Avenue | 7/27/1994 |
| Mill-Prospect Street Historic District | Chestnut, Bridge and School Streets, Raymond Avenue and Prospect Court | 10/22/2002 |
| North Hatfield Historic District | 155-166 Depot Road, 178 North Hatfield Road and 273-336 West Street | 10/30/1997 |
| Old Mill Site Historic District | 48 and 50 Prospect Streets | 6/2/1982 |
| Upper Main Street Historic District | Main Street from 83 Main Street to Cow Bridge, 1-44 King Street and 6-70 North Street | 7/22/1994 |
| West Hatfield Historic District | 3-12 Church Ave, 2 Linseed Road and 23-42 West Street | 2/24/2005 |

**Unique Environments and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

As mentioned earlier, Hatfield has some of the most fertile agricultural soil in the state, country, and possibly the world. A significant percentage of the soil in the eastern section of Hatfield is designated as Prime farmland, according to the US Department of Agriculture. As only 10% of the soils in Massachusetts are designated as Prime farmland, these fertile areas of Hatfield are most certainly a unique environment.

Hatfield has not yet nominated any areas within the Town for the state’s Department of Environmental Management program for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This program was established to provide recognition and add protection to areas of land possessing multiple environmental attributes, such as wildlife habitat, water supply, rare species, historic resources, all of which combined to identify an area worthy of a higher level of protection. Some of the recent information gathered on the Mill River corridor and portions of West Hatfield suggest some areas of Hatfield may be worthy of consideration as part of this program.

**Environmental Challenges**

Hatfield is blessed with an abundance of open space, with broad, flat agricultural fields and expanses of forested hill country. The 2014 OSRP observed that the Town was beginning to see a development threat on the horizon that was greater than it had experienced before. Residential development has eaten into the Town’s forested western sections, its southern and central agricultural areas and along its eastern flood plain. Hatfield is a latecomer to development on this scale and thus the Town can learn from the experience of comparable towns that have been built out, and not always with desirable results.

**Fragmentation**

The Town still has numerous large parcels of property under the control of families or corporate entities that are vulnerable to sub-division. For years those large parcels were under the stewardship of the owners as agricultural resources. However, as the importance of farming and forestry in the region diminishes, those lands are becoming economically attractive for their one-time developmental potential. Thus, both the open space for which Hatfield is noted and the quality of wildlife and human life within its borders are potentially at risk.

While commercial enterprises such as crop cultivation and forestry kept large areas of the Town open, they also provided habitat and movement corridors for an abundance of wildlife. However, development of those formerly large parcels restricts both habitat and corridors, and at the same time causes resource management to be far more difficult. Outreach to multiple owners, rather than one owner/manager, is needed to encourage consideration of such factors in the disposition of their land. Utilization of existing tax reduction options such as Chapter 61A can make it easier for large landholders to keep their holdings intact. However, landowners can take land parcels out of Chapter programs at any time and sell them for development. Purchase of conservation restrictions and agricultural preservation restrictions through state programs would provide those owners some of the economic benefits of subdivision and development while conserving them for posterity, and also allowing them to maintain ownership and stewardship of the property.

**Floodplain Development**

Hatfield enjoys a lengthy, seven-mile shoreline along the Connecticut River with adjacent floodplains. This floodplain has increasingly been used for residential and commercial development. Such uses are allowed under current zoning bylaws on a case-by-case basis, allowing compensatory storage to be determined for limited areas each time. However, the cumulative effects of incremental development of the floodplain should be assessed to determine if it is being adequately protected, avoiding a gradual compromise and loss of its protective benefit to the citizens of Hatfield.. Development of the flood plain, even with restrictions, diminishes the resource’s capability to sustain its function within the overall ecosystem. This is becoming more critical due to the impacts of climate change, as higher levels of precipitation and stronger storms result in increased flooding. It is necessary for the Town to conserve enough undeveloped floodplain areas that can provide critical flood storage. In addition, construction of on-site wells and septic systems in floodplains places demands on the resource that impair its primary role and makes the eventuality of contamination a virtual certainty.

Allowing development in federally delineated floodplain areas also puts lives and property at needless risk. In the event of a 100-year storm, residential property people living in these properties will be in the path of potential destruction. The Town could be held liable for damage to property and danger to people by allowing continued development and habitation, and the assumed safety that the official sanction implies, in what is a clearly precarious area. As part of its zoning overhaul in 2003, the Town adopted a Floodplain Overlay Zoning District to better regulate floodplain development for the protection of public health and safety and this critical habitat.

**Land Use and Residential Development Trends**

Due to Hatfield’s rich agricultural heritage, much of the easily arable land remained under cultivation during the development boom of the 50s and 60s. At a time when flat, open areas were being developed into expanses of acre-or-more building lots for hundreds of small ranch style homes, the agricultural value of the land in Hatfield minimized the pressure for development of the land for other uses. However, current economic trends have diminished the importance of farming in the Pioneer Valley and are increasing the development pressure on the agricultural land that Hatfield is so widely known for.

Over the last 30 years or so the shift away from smaller lots and subdivisions, and toward larger homes and lots, has added to the developmental pressure on open space in Town and the fragmentation of forests and wildlife habitat. In addition, land in more wooded, steep, and rocky areas that was once thought of as unusable except for certain non-residential uses, such as forestry, is now seen as an ideal location for certain housing. Residential construction on such property brings with it the loss of areas that were formerly considered *de facto* areas of undevelopable open space. The zoning overhaul package of 2003 provided the town with better site plan review ability to properly manage growth in these areas, however additional regulatory oversight is necessary. According to the 2020 Mass Audubon Losing Ground Report, there were 40 acres of newly developed land in Hatfield between 2012 and 2017, which brought the total developed area to 1,476 acres (13% of total area) and the total of natural and open land to 9,206 acres (83% of the total).[[8]](#footnote-8)

Market pressures that do not factor in the environmental consequences of development can result in unbalanced development that does not serve the long-term interests of the Town. Education and voluntary compliance with best use practices will need to work hand in hand with improved land use controls and policies. It is incumbent on the Town to empower the land use boards to become the purveyors of best use practices in a well-coordinated process, rather than reactors to inappropriate use. All of Hatfield’s land use boards and committees should be charges to cooperatively create language that will be incorporated into the 2023 Hatfield Comprehensive Plan which will protect these above-mentioned long-term interests. Representative members of these boards and committees are already sworn members of the Hatfield Comprehensive Committee.

**Erosion and Sedimentation**

With 35 miles of streams and rivers running through Hatfield, there are potential erosion issues if development should increase in certain areas. Areas along the banks of the Connecticut River are mostly in agricultural use due to their valuable soils; however, these areas are also mostly not protected from development. Should significant floods scour topsoil (as occurred with Tropical Storm Irene in other areas of the region) and decrease the land’s agricultural value, development pressures could rise in this area. Increased development near the rivers could possibly create erosion issues due to changing drainage patterns and increased activity along the banks. Similar situations – where agricultural and potentially developable land comes close to the water’s edge – are found along the Mill River and Running Gutter Brook in West Hatfield.

Motorboat use in the river can also create erosion problems, as the frequent wakes created by boats impact the riverbanks. As access to the Connecticut River increases throughout the region, Hatfield’s riverbanks should be monitored to note any new areas of erosion.

The Mill River was assessed for stream bank stabilization in the early 2000s by the Mill River Watershed project. It noted some areas where cattle having access to the riverbank was causing erosion, but overall, the river’s predominantly vegetated banks prevented erosion in most areas. The Town should strive to maintain such conditions along the Mill River through its enforcement of the River Protection Act and associated local ordinances.

Finally, erosion and sedimentation are also potential concerns if unprotected forested areas around the reservoir are developed. Despite the stormwater management bylaw that regulates erosion and sediment control, deforestation in these higher elevations could lead to increased degradation of soil structure and sediment loading of waterways due to the loss of the forest’s infiltration functions.

**Ground and Surface Water Pollution**

There are currently no major issues related to ground and surface water pollution in Hatfield. However, the most recent MassDEP List of Integrated Waters (2018) showed one new impairment in Hatfield: The Mill River, from its headwaters in Conway to the mouth at the Connecticut River, is listed as requiring a “Total Maximum Daily Load” or TMDL for temperature. This means that the temperature in the river is higher than it should be to support the health of some Coldwater fishery trout species.

Perhaps the greatest threat to surface water pollution is from potential development in the forested areas around the reservoir. Land protection activities in this area, such as further acquisitions, could help mitigate this risk. Another possible threat to ground and surface water pollution is the application of pesticides and fertilizer to agricultural lands. While there have not been any major contamination issues reported, it is an issue to be aware of.

**Forestry Issues**

As previously mentioned, 45% of Hatfield’s land is forested. Virtually all of these areas are located west of Interstate 91, where Hatfield’s water supply is located. Continued deforestation within the water supply recharge area could result in pollution of the supply as oil, fertilizers, and other chemicals are rapidly washed off developed areas to surface waters. Without forested areas, floodwaters from heavy storms would run off more rapidly, raising flood waters and assuring more property and crop damage. Other environmental impacts such as air quality degradation, reduction of visual buffers from adjacent uses, and elimination of habitat could ensue as well.

Deforested hillsides can also impact down-gradient properties as the rapid runoff causes erosion of stream banks and hillsides, sending sediment downstream and potentially causing greater damage to homes and businesses during major storm events. Erosion causes streams and rivers to fill with silt, resulting in oxygen deprivation to water plants and animal species. The loss of significant forested areas will visually alter the character of the community.

**Climate Change**

Consistent with the entire Northeast region, Hatfield is expected to experience increasing temperatures, an increase in annual precipitation, heavier downpours, and stronger storms as a result of climate change. These changes will be accompanied by increased natural hazards that will pose additional environmental challenges for the Town. In June 2021, the Town held Community Resilience Building (CRB) workshops as part of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant program. The workshop participants identified both current and potential vulnerabilities in the face of climate change and ways to increase resilience. The top natural hazards and impacts from climate change that workshop participants identified were flooding, severe storms (storms in all seasons), ecosystem disruption, and extreme temperatures and drought.

Some of the areas of concern included the following:

* Hatfield’s historic center, which is within the 500-year flood zone and contains critical Town

facilities including Town Hall and the town’s historical records and archives, the police and

fire stations, and the Capawonk Housing for the Elderly.

* Low lying areas throughout the town currently flood during heavy rains. This includes the bridge over the Mill River, which is in poor condition and routinely overtops during floods.
* Flooding from the Mill River when the Connecticut River backs up into it.
* Agricultural ditches throughout the town. Some ditches are no longer maintained. The

result is that areas that used to be drained are now flooding more frequently.

Route 5 & 10, the town’s primary commercial corridor and primary connection to

communities north and south, would be impacted in the event of a dam failure upstream.

* Northampton Reservoir and Mountain Street Reservoir lie outside of Hatfield’s town lines,

but lie uphill in watersheds that flow through Hatfield including across Route 5 & 10, posing

a risk to Hatfield’s infrastructure in the event of a dam failure.

* Hatfield’s Connecticut River dike system protects much of the town from flooding. It is not

known whether it is designed to handle larger storm events due to climate change.

The MVP planning process identified the following top actions for building Hatfield’s climate resilience:

* Assess Conditions at the Connecticut River Dike and at the Wastewater Treatment Plant
* Plan for Relocation of Town Center Critical Facilities out of the Floodplain
* Conduct a Town-Wide Drainage and Stormwater Study and Strategy
* Incentivize Climate Resilient Farming
* Plan for Future Climate-Resilient Development
* Create a Climate Resilient Town Master Plan

As heavy precipitation and strong storms become more frequent with climate change, conserving floodplains will be critical for protecting the Town from flooding. Preserving farmland in Hatfield will also be critical for increasing climate resilience in the Town and the region. As climate changes such as increased temperatures and drought impact agriculture in other areas of the country and even the world, ensuring the viability of locally produced food will be increasingly important. In addition, conserving critical wildlife habitat will help to protect vulnerable species from the impacts of increasing temperatures and changes in precipitation.

**Open Space Equity**

Hatfield does not have any Environmental Justic communities, although there are lower-income residents in town, some of whom may lack reliable transportation to access open spaces. The majority of acreage of passive recreation and conservation land is located west of Interstate 91 in Hatfield. This includes interconnected areas around the reservoir as well as Horse and Chestnut mountains and the “rocks” area. On the eastern side of Interstate 91, there is less publicly accessible park and conservation land due to the predominance of agricultural and residential uses. Though there are numerous agricultural preservation restrictions, these areas offer recreation only in a scenic or informal manner. There are publicly accessible river access points to both the Mill and Connecticut Rivers east of Interstate 91, however, but currently no formal parks. The Hatfield Elementary School does have ball fields and playgrounds that are available to residents in an unofficial manner after-hours. The Town is also currently in the process of designing a new park space in the center of town on the grounds of the formal Smith Academy, which will add park space to an area that is walkable for many residents.

**Hazardous Materials and Landfills**

There is one 7-acre capped, unlined landfill in Hatfield on Straits Road. The site is the current Transfer Station. The landfill was closed in 1998 and is monitored by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). There are four active reportable release sites, at which there have not been either a permanent or temporary solution, according to the MassDEP database. These are shown below in Table 8. Reported contamination includes soil and hazardous materials and is limited to the release site locations.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 4.4 - Hazardous Release Sites in Hatfield | | | | | |
| DEP Release Tracking # | **Address** | **Site Name** | **Notification Date** | **Status** | **Chemical Type** |
| 1-0020236 | 126 Bridge Street | Former Tremblay Barrel | 4/20/2017 | Tier1D | Unknown |
| 1-0017204 | 317 West Street | Wolfram Property | 11/04/2008 | Tier1D | Oil |
| 1-0015925 | 43 and 59 Dwight Street | Turf Care Supply Corporation | 10/04/2005 | Tier 2 | Hazardous Material |
| 1-0000087 | 126 Bridge Street | Tremblay Barrel | 7/15/1988 | Tier1D | Unknown |

# SECTION 5: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

The inventory of lands of conservation and recreation interest describes ownership, management agency, current use, condition, recreation potential, public access, type of public grant accepted, zoning and degree of protection for each parcel. The degree of protection from destruction or degradation that is afforded to various parcels of land owned by private, public, and nonprofit owners is also evaluated.

Private lands can be protected in perpetuity through deed restrictions, or conservation easements (yet some easements only run for a period of 30 years and those lands are therefore not permanently protected open space).

Lands under special taxation programs, Chapter 61, 61A or 61B, are actively managed by their owners for forestry, agricultural, horticultural or recreational use. This is not any form of permanent protection. The town has the right of first refusal should the landowner decide to sell and change the use of the land, therefore, it is important to prioritize these lands and consider steps the community should take to permanently protect these properties.

Lands acquired for watershed and aquifer protection are often permanently protected open space, provided typically through a Town Meeting vote.

Public recreation and conservation lands may be permanently protected open space, provided that they have been dedicated to such uses as conservation or recreational use by deed. Municipal properties may be protected via the Town Meeting vote to acquire them.

Private, public and non-profit conservation and recreation lands can be protected under Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment to the State Constitution.

## Private Parcels

**Agricultural Preservation Restrictions**

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR) is a voluntary program that offers a non- development alternative to farmland owners for their agricultural lands who are faced with a decision regarding future use and deposition of their farms. The program, operated by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), offers farmers a payment up to the difference between the “fair market value” and the “fair market agricultural value” of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction, which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. Hatfield is one of 162 cities and towns in Massachusetts with APR protected farms. There are 397.29 privately owned acres under APR held by the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture. See listing **Table 9**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Table 5.1: Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) | | |
| FEE OWNER or SITE NAME | **ACRES** | **PARCEL ID** |
| Adamski | 11.21 | 205 -77 |
| Skawski / VLF | 19.28 | 205-61 |
| Burke / Burke William H and Maryann L | 14.79 | 215-21 |
| 24.84 | 215-20.1 |
| Duda Farm / Duda Robert M | 00.93 | 203-9 |
| 03.15 | 203-9 |
| 07.74 | 203-2 |
| 27.40 | 202-13.2 |
| 16.51 | 202-13.1 |
| 00.83 | 203-6 |
| 03.85 | 203-6 |
| Belden Family Trust | 45.00 | 205-38 |
| 04.80 | 205-37 |
| Belden / Luther Belden Inc | 06.55 | 211-57 |
| 20.99 | 212-10 |
| 08.39 | 206-106 |
| 15.83 | 205-9 |
| 01.95 | 205-8 |
| 11.56 | 205-51 |
| 13.13 | 205-53 |
| 19.65 | 213-6 |
| 09.13 | 204-1 |
| 06.15 | 204-3 |
| 50.68 | 204-16 |
| 13.35 | 204-7 |
| Regish, John | 15.54 | 206-110 |
| Zagrdonik, Joseph | 22.11 | 222-8 |
| TOTAL | 395.34 |  |

**Conservation Restrictions**

A Conservation Restriction (CR), sometimes called a conservation easement, is a legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or government agency that permanently limits a property’s uses in order to protect its conservation values. CRs can be flexible and written to meet the particular needs of the landowner while protecting the property’s resources. For example, the easement may allow for sustainable forestry practices, recreational uses such as the construction of trails, or management of the land for particular wildlife habitat or control of invasive species. The easement is permanently recorded with the deed, remaining in force when the land changes hand. There are 703.09 acres with Conservation Restrictions in Hatfield as listed in Table 5.2.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Table 5.2: Private Fee Owner with Conservation Restrictions | | |
| SITE NAME | **FEE OWNER** | **ACRES** |
| Terry A Blunt Watershed and Conservation Area | Kestrel Land Trust | 19.31860039 |
| Mountain Road Reservoir | Town of Hatfield | 105.7631967 |
| Reservoir Road CR | Blunt Terry A and Victoria M | 1.76669962 |
| D'Auteuil CR | D'Auteuil Paul J | 2.56307116 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 7.25183401 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 6.72506304 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 0.81075324 |
| Straits Road Conservation Area | Kestrel Land Trust | 21.452755 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 2.13812208 |
| The Jog CR | Marantz Michael and Isabelle | 1.95389355 |
| Horse Mountain Conservation Area | Town of Hatfield | 94.23271511 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 11.23494384 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 3.95589577 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 29.54237974 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 4.58070215 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 7.67218781 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 10.05038504 |
| WJK LLC (kogut) CR | WJK LLC | 61.10179831 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 36.12842585 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 12.69375678 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 8.01580629 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 11.50658591 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 53.31319033 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 5.33768723 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 112.0363842 |
| Town of Hatfield CR | Town of Hatfield | 24.73501928 |
| WJK LLC (kogut) CR | WJK LLC | 22.79901861 |
| Burk CR | Burk Carl J | 24.41041389 |
| Total |  | **703.0912849** |

*Source: Hatfield Assessors Office*

**Chapter Lands**

The Chapter 61 programs provide a means to assess land for taxes at its current use (forest, agriculture, or open space/recreation) as opposed to its development value.

*Chapter 61 -* Intended for landowners with long-term, active forest management. Assessment of forestland based on the land’s ability to grow timber.

*Chapter 61A -* Intended for landowners engaged in agricultural or horticultural use. Assessment based on the land’s ability to produce the agricultural or horticultural product being grown. Forestland may be enrolled and is based on the land's ability to grow timber.

*Chapter 61B*- Intended for landowners maintaining the land in a substantially natural, wild or open condition. Assessment of forestland under Ch. 61B is 25% of the current assessed value of the land.

There are 219 acres in Chapter 61, 2,309 acres in 61A, and 468 acres in 61B. It is important to recognize that enrollment in the Chapter 61 program is not a permanent form of protection from development. Towns have the first right of refusal on lands classified under Chapter 61 if such lands are sold for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes. In this case, the right of first refusal is a legal interest in the property that grants the town the right to match a bona fide offer for conversion of the property from its forest, agricultural, or recreational use.

## Public and Non-Profit Parcels Municipal Recreation Lands

There are 742 acres of municipally owned land in Hatfield. Below is an abbreviated list of some of the most prominent sites. See **Table 12** for a complete listing.

**Municipal Recreation Lands**

Smith Academy Park

The Town has renovated the Smith Academy Park which is a 1± acres parcel next to Town Hall. The park is being used for outdoor concerts and other passive recreation. A plan is in place to construct a pavilion in the park to further enhance passive recreation opportunities.

Hatfield Elementary School Grounds

There are two soccer fields and two baseball/softball fields behind the new school. There are also two playgrounds on school grounds: one for preschool and kindergarten age children and second for older elementary school children.

Smith Academy Fields

The 38 acres around Smith Academy, the Town's public High School, offer the opportunity for field recreational sports. There are 2 baseball diamonds, 2 softball fields, a soccer field, a field hockey field, and an outdoor basketball court. While most heavily used by the school system, which manages the areas, other groups may use the field with permission from the school committee. In the summer the Recreation Department uses the fields for summer programming. Construction has recently been started on a recreational walkway around the playing fields. There is undeveloped land available in this tract for field expansion if the need arises.

Former Center School Grounds

The fields around the former Center School in the center of town offer additional opportunity for field sports. This 6± acres parcel, owned and managed by the Town, has a baseball and softball diamond. The area also connects with the dike and thus is contiguous with the river.

Town Hall Basketball Courts and Playground

Completed in 2013, the new basketball courts and play structure are located next to the Fire Station behind town hall. This facility is managed by the Recreation Commission.

Town of Hatfield, Terry Blunt Watershed and Conservation Area

The Town has acquired since the beginning of the 20th century, land in the north-west corner of the town for the purposes of maintaining a drinking water reservoir and watershed. The area was recently, in Spring 2013, dedicated as the Hatfield, Terry Blunt Watershed and Conservation Area in memory of Terry Blunt. The conservation area contains approximately 600 acres. An approximately 1-mile long trail was built by the Open Space Committee on the southern portion of the area in 2013 and is open to the public for hiking. Access to the trail is on Rocks Road at the south end, and Reservoir Road at the north end. The unpaved path traverses some of the highest elevation in Hatfield under a high open forest canopy offering a unique outdoor experience in Hatfield.

**State Recreation Lands**

State Boat Ramp

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns 5.7± acres near Kellogg Hill Rd. for use as a public boat ramp. This ramp serves as one of the few access points to the river from the west bank in this area. Parking is provided and regional as well as local users use this area in the three seasons. The parcel is large enough to accommodate further picnic or recreational facilities.

Bashin Beach

Owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as part of the Connecticut River Greenway, this beach and swimming area has few amenities but is an important recreational facility in Hatfield. This area is not maintained and shows evidence of litter and the lack of sanitary facilities. Given its lack of development, it is not particularly safe or attractive as a swimming area and does not meet the outdoor recreational needs of many Hatfield families.

**Other Public Lands**

The City of Northampton owns 70150.84 acres of open space in Hatfield, shown in Table 5.3 below. The majority of those acres are for watershed protection of the City’s Mountain Road Reservoir located west of Hatfield’s Running Gutter Reservoir. A smaller almost 8-acre parcel was recently acquired along the southern boundary of Hatfield with Northampton for potential development of a rail trail.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Table 5.3: Open Space and Recreation Lands Owned by City of Northampton | | |
| OWNER | **ACRES** | **LOCATION** |
| City of Northampton | 31.20 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | 8.77 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | 7.92 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | 9.48 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | 9.11 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | 52.5 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | .32 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | 24.23 | Mountain Road Reservoir |
| City of Northampton | 7.3 | N/A |
| Total | 150.84 |  |

| Table 5.4: Inventory of Town-Owned Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Acres | Assessor’s Parcel | Street | Current Use | Public Access | Ownership / Management | Existing Condition | Level of Protection | Recreation Potential | Zoning | Funding for Acquisition | Funding & Date of Acquisition |
| 1.39 | 201-3-0 | West St | Omasta Well Field | N | DPW | Good | P | No | RR-WSP | N/A | 5/1/1985 |
| 1.31 | 205-54-0 | Depot Rd | Cemetery | Y | CEM | Good |  | No | RR | N/A |  |
| 0.50 | 205-55-0 | Depot Rd | Park/Cemetery Commission | Y | CEM | Good | L | No | RR | N/A |  |
| 0.87 | 206-16-0 | West St | Westbrook Cemetery | Y | CEM | Good | P | No | B | N/A |  |
| 6.27 | 206-35-0 | Mountain Rd | Omasta Well Field | N | DPW | Good | P | No | RR-WSP | N/A | 12/31/1981, $30,500 |
| 0.84 | 206-47-0 | West St | Omasta Well Field | N | DPW | Good | P | No | RR-WSP | N/A | 31212 |
| 13.60 | 207-8.1 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 6/30/2005, $30,000 |
| 30.00 | 207-25-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 11/13/2001, $198,000 |
| 23.00 | 207-28-0 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 2002, $34,500 |
| 5.27 | 207-29-0 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1985, $0 |
| 6.29 | 207-32-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A |  |
| 18.10 | 208-9-0 | Chestnut Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / Article 97 Deed | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 2010, $18,000 |
| 18.46 | 208-10 | Chestnut Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 2010, $27,135 |
| 11.72 | 208-16-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 2002, $17,500 |
| 2.84 | 208-17 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 2008, $1 |
| 12.93 | 208-18-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 2005, $26,000 |
| 2.14 | 208-19-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1919, $0 |
| 2.10 | 208-20-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P /CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1959, $1 |
| 2.51 | 208-21-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1959, $1 |
| 105.00 | 209-1-0 | Rocks Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR/Forest Legacy - USDA, Forest Service | No | OR | USDA Forest Service | USDA, Forest Service Forest Legacy, 1995, CR $220,000/ Fee $46,000 |
| 11.23 | 209-14-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1998 Fee-$20K, CR-$198K |
| 7.25 | 209-15-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A |  |
| 12.69 | 209-16-0 | Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1951 Fee-$1, CR-$198K |
| 10.15 | 209-8-0 | Rocks Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A |  |
| 3.95 | 210-10-0 | Rocks Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A | 1993 Fee-$46K, CR-$198K |
| 3.35 | 210-11-0 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1998 Fee-$20K, CR-$198K |
| 19.00 | 210-16-0 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A | 1931 Fee-$500, CR -$198K |
| 62.00 | 210-17-0 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A | 1931 Fee-$500, CR -$198K |
| 10.00 | 210-18-0 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A | 1991 Fee-$7000, CR-198K |
| 8.01 | 210-19-0 | Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A | 1993 Fee-$46K, CR-$198K |
| 0.19 | 210-3-0 | Rocks Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A |  |
| 3.07 | 210-59-0 | West St | Open Space | Y | DPW | Good | P | No | LI | N/A |  |
| 4.58 | 210-7-0 | 0 Mountain Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1972 Fee-$200, CR-$198K |
| 133.00 | 210-8-0 | 0 Reservoir Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1918-1955, 11 parcels, CR-$198K |
| 0.45 | 212-18-0 | Main St | Open Space | N | DPW | Good | N | No | A | N/A |  |
| 7.63 | 212-49-0 | 260 Main St | Sewer Treatment Plant | N | DPW | Good | N | No | I | N/A | 1978, $0 |
| 3.93 | 212-50-0 | Kellogg Hill Rd | Sewer Treatment Plant | N | DPW | Good | N | No | I | N/A | 1978, $0 |
| 1.00 | 214-97.1-0 | Little Meadow Rd | Connecticut River Access | Y | DPW | Good | N | Yes | I | N/A |  |
| 53.00 | 216-57-0 | Rocks Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A | 1920, $0 |
| 11.50 | 216-59-0 | Rocks Rd | Reservoir Watershed | Y | DPW | Fair | P / CR-DEM | No | OR | N/A | 1920, $0 |
| 6.40 | 218-12-0 | Old Stage Rd | Open Space | ? | DPW | Good | ? | Yes | OR | N/A |  |
| 1.04 | 219-22-0 | Linseed Rd | Water Dept. Facility | N | DPW | Good | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1944, $0 |
| 2.34 | 219-44.1-0 | Linseed Rd | W. Hatfield Well Field | N | DPW | Good | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 2000, $6500 |
| 7.76 | 219-44-0 | Linseed Rd | W. Hatfield Well Field | N | DPW | Good | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1965, $0 |
| 20.57 | 219-66-0 | West St | W. Hatfield Well Field | N | DPW | Good | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1999, $40,000 |
| 1.70 | 219-73-0 | Linseed Rd | W. Hatfield Well Field | N | DPW | Good | P | No | OR-WSP | N/A | 1965, $0 |
| 0.97 | 219-85-0 | West St | W. Hatfield Cemetery | Y | CEM | Good | P | No | RR | N/A | 1959, $0 |
| 0.35 | 220-210-0 | Chestnut St | Open Space | Y | DPW | Good | L | No | RR | N/A |  |
| 0.71 | 221-1-0 | 59 Main St | Town Hall | Y | DPW | Good | L | No | TC | N/A |  |
| 0.83 | 221-2-0 | 59 Main St | Police-Fire-Garage | Y | FD/PD/DPW | Good | L | No | TC | N/A |  |
| 0.49 | 221-4-0 | 1 School St | Fire Station | Y | PFD | Good | L | No | TC | N/A |  |
| 35.00 | 221-86-0 | 34 School St | Smith Academy | Y | SCH | Good | L | Yes | TC | N/A | 1978, $49,770 |
| 3.82 | 222-125-0 | Main St | Elem. School Grounds | Y | SCH | Good | L | Yes | TC | N/A | 1978, $2000 |
| 9.07 | 222-126-0 | 33 Main St | Elem. School | Y | SCH | Good | L | Yes | TC | N/A | 1959, $0 |
| 0.36 | 222-127-0 | 35 Main St | Library | Y | LIB | Good | L | No | TC | N/A |  |
| 2.73 | 222-129-0 | 0 Main St | Main Street Cemetery | Y | CEM | Good | P | No | TC | N/A |  |
| 1.08 | 222-90-0 | Elm St | Hill Cemetery | Y | CEM | Good | P | No | TC | N/A |  |
| 8.15 | 225-19-0 | Elm Ct | DPW Storage Yard | N | DPW | Fair | L | No | A | N/A | 1971, $0 |
| 15.61 | 216-47-0 | Linseed Road | Open Space | Y | Selectmen | Fair | P/CR Kestrel Land Trust | Yes | RR | N/A | 8/17/06, $100 |
| 10.00 | 217-19-0 | Linseed Road | Open Space | Y | Selectmen | Fair | P/CR Kestrel Land Trust | Yes | RR | N/A | 5/27/16, $0 |
| 0.98 | 221-3-0 | Main Street | Public Park | Y | Selectmen | Good | P | Yes | TC | N/A | 6/15/16, $1 |
| 20.45 | 217-15-0 | Old Stage Road | Open Space | Y | Selectmen | Poor | P/CR Kestrel Land Trust | Yes | RR | Comm/Mass | 6/29/17, $153,180 |
| 1.90 | 217-1-0 | Old Stage Road | Open Space | Y | Selectmen | Poor | L | Yes | RR | N/A | 12/31/18, $1 |
| 8.27 | 218-22-0 | Cole Road | Open Space | Y | Selectmen | Poor | P/CR Kestrel Land Trust | Yes | RR | N/A | 12/31/18, $1 |

*KEY: P=Permanent Protection; L= Limited Protection; Y=Yes; N=No; CR-DEM = Conservation Restriction held by MA Department of Environmental Management DPW=Hatfield Dept. of Public Works, SCH=School Committee, FPD=Fire/Police Dep., REC=Recreation Dept., CEM= Cemetery Comm., PR= Private Zoning: RR-Rural Residential, B- Business, TCB- Town Center Business, OR- Outlying Residential, I- Industrial, LI- Light Industrial A- Agriculture, TC- Town Center, WSP- Watershed Protection Overlay*

**SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION**

## Description of Process

The 2023 Hatfield Open Space and Recreation Plan was developed by the Hatfield Open Space Committee with technical assistance from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). The Committee met numerous times throughout the plan development process. These meetings were open to the public and properly posted in accordance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

The Town conducted public outreach for the OSRP in two formats: A community survey and a public forum. The community survey was conducted through the summer and early fall, and was available both electronically through Survey Monkey as well as in hard copy. Links to the survey were posted on the Town website and the Town Facebook page. Announcements with the survey link were sent to all Town boards, committees and the school department from the Town Administrator, and were then disseminated to their email lists. Announcements were also made in the local newspaper and on the community TV station. Flyers with the link and QR code were posted at Town Hall, the Library, and the Senior Center. Hard copies of the survey were also made available those locations.

The public forum was held on Wednesday, October 19 at the Hatfield Town Hall from 6 – 7:30 pm. Outreach and publicity for the public forum was similar to that conducted for the survey: A flyer and announcement were posted on the Town website and Facebook page, and the Town Administrator sent an announcement to all Town boards, committees and the school department. Boards and committees with email lists then sent the announcement out to those on their lists. Announcements were also made in the local newspaper and on Community TV. The flyer was also posted at Town Hall, the Library, and the Senior Center.

There were nineteen attendees at the public forum in addition to the committee members. The Town Administrator and a Select Board member also attended. Members of the committee and Mimi Kaplan from PVPC presented about the OSRP planning process, the results of the survey, and progress in meeting the goals and objectives from the previous plan. A substantive discussion followed about the needs and priorities for open space protection, active recreation and passive recreation in Hatfield. The meeting notes and presentation are included in Appendix C.

## Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

The residents of Hatfield strongly value its rural character, open space, and working farms. These features attract newcomers to Hatfield, and they are also very important and valued aspects of the Town for longtime residents. The community recognizes that growth is inevitable but there is widespread sentiment that growth needs to occur in a manner that is commensurate with the Town’s character. Commercial and particularly residential development are continuing at a steady pace, and developmental pressure may soon threaten open space in Hatfield that is not protected. An overarching goal is to continue to work to preserve those open spaces in the town that have been identified as important for agriculture, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, drinking water, and recreation.

The Town will continue to work to improve both passive and active recreation facilities and opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities. The Town will also work to educate residents about recreational opportunities. While much progress has been made in developing new trails, there is still a need and desire for more sidewalks, walking and biking paths, pickleball courts, and accessible public swimming areas. The Town and OSC will continue to explore access to the Mill River for fishing and kayaking/canoeing.

**SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS**

## Summary of Resource Protection Needs

As growth and development in Hatfield is likely to continue, there is a need to ensure that this occurs without jeopardizing the existence of the very things that make the Town an attractive place to live, namely its historic areas and roads, watershed, working farmlands, forested areas, wetlands, and flood plains. Over 80% of survey respondents felt that it was “very important” to conserve surface waters, groundwater and aquifers, wildlife habitat, and working farms and farmland. Over 75% of respondents also ranked farmland, forestland, and floodplains as very important to conserve in order to help the Town prepare for and be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Protection of farmland in Hatfield is critical for keeping the extremely fertile land in agricultural use, ensuring a local food supply, as well as maintaining the scenic views of farm fields and preserving the historic and bucolic character of the town. Much of the farmland in Hatfield is in floodplains as well, so protection of these farmland parcels would protect two critical functions. Most farms in Town are currently very profitable and the owners have no interest in selling, however that could change in the future when farmers pass on as well as if the impacts of climate change make farming in Hatfield more difficult and less profitable. Members of the Agricultural Commission have approached farmers in Town about putting their land into the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program but few have done so because of their concern about the program restrictions. Most farms in Town participate in Chapter 61A program, in which farmers with actively farmed land receive tax abatements. In exchange, the Town has right of first refusal if a farmer in the Chapter program decides to sell. It is critical that the Town be prepared to make an offer and purchase any of these parcels in this situation, in order to preserve them.

Protection of watershed land continues to be a priority in Hatfield. The Running Gutter Brook watershed is of critical importance for maintaining the integrity of Hatfield’s water supply. The Town has made significant strides in assuring that water quality in Running Gutter Brook is not jeopardized. Two additional forested parcels in the watershed have been permanently protected since the last OSRP plan was published. Protection of the remaining undeveloped land within the watershed to Running Gutter Brook remains a priority. Undeveloped land within the primary recharge area for the town’s two wells also is important to protect. The Mill River has been identified as an important wildlife corridor supporting endangered and rare species. The conservation of this area through land acquisition or restrictions is critical to maintaining this habitat.

There are no state designated scenic roads in Hatfield. There are, however, roads that are cherished for their bucolic charm and rural views that make them well qualified for such a designation: River Road and Main Street provide beautiful views of the Holyoke Range, Mount Warner in Hadley, and UMass, as well as the historic houses and public buildings of the town center, all surrounded by working farmland dotted with barns. Rocks Road, Old Stage Road, Straits Road, and Pantry Road provide a much more rural, forested landscape quite different from Main and River Roads. Maintaining the landscapes associated with any of these roads would be a worthwhile and related goal, possibly through a Scenic Byway designation.

## Summary of Community Needs

According to the survey responses, the most frequently used open spaces and recreational facilities in Hatfield are the sidewalks in the town center, the Dike Road that abuts the Connecticut River, the Elementary School playgrounds, and the Smith Academy athletic fields. Other popular open spaces and recreational facilities are the Lion’s Club Pavilion, the Trustees of Smith Academy Park, Bashin Beach (on the Connecticut River), Mountain and Rocks Road, the State Boat Ramp on the Connecticut River, and the former Center School fields. The most popular recreational activities among respondents are shown in Figure 7.1 below. Walking and jogging on sidewalks is the top activity, with hiking, road biking, swimming, and team sports rounding out the top five.

**Figure 7.1: Popular recreational activities in Hatfield**

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generated

The survey asked respondents if they go to nearby towns for recreation and what activities they do there. The top activities done elsewhere are hiking, swimming, kayaking/canoeing, tennis, pickleball, mountain biking, and playground use. These responses overlap somewhat with the responses to question #8 that asks what recreational opportunities respondents feel need to be added or expanded in Hatfield. The top responses were bike paths, public swimming access, nature trails, arts and cultural events, parks, pickleball courts, dog park, playgrounds and picnic areas. All of the responses can be seen in Figure 7.2 below.

**Figure 7.2: Recreational opportunities that need to be added or expanded in Hatfield**

Chart, bar chart

Description automatically generated

There are many similarities between the most popular recreational activities in Hatfield and those of the survey respondents for the Massachusetts State Comprehensive Outdoor and Recreation Plan (SCORP). The top recreational activities among SCORP respondents were also walking and jogging on streets and sidewalks, walking and hiking on trails or greenways, swimming and road biking. There are also parallels with the additional activities residents would like to see and those that are mentioned in the SCORP survey results. SCORP survey respondents most wanted to see improvements in the availability of hiking trails, paved multi-use paths, outdoor swimming and other water-based recreation, and park amenities such as playgrounds, dog parks, and community gardens. As discussed above, some of the additional recreational opportunities Hatfield residents would most like to see include bike and multi-use paths, public swimming areas and additional nature and hiking trails.

The OSC has been communicating with the City of Northampton on the possible design and installation of a multi-use path that would connect from Elm Court on the southern border of Hatfield to a multi-use path that is being developed to run alongside Damon Road in Northampton, and that would then intersect with the Mass Central Rail Trail. This would provide Hatfield residents with the opportunity for safe walking and biking within the Town as well the ability to link into other paths regionally. Over 73% of survey respondents said that they would use such a path if it were built. Some concerns regarding the proposed path were raised by residents during a fall 2022 Town forum. The Town will soon be deciding whether to support the proposed multi-use path.

The Town’s Open Space Committee (OSC) has made great progress since the previous OSRP on establishing new hiking trails in West Hatfield. These include the Three Bridges Trail, the completion of the Horse Mountain Trail (in collaboration with the Williamsburg Trail Committee), the White Rock Trail, with an interconnection to the Horse Mountain Trail spur, and completion of the first phase of the Chestnut Mountain Trail. While the survey indicated strong interest in more hiking trails in town, these trails have significantly increased the number of trails in Hatfield, and it is possible that some of the survey respondents were unaware of these new trails.

Hatfield residents’ lack of knowledge of recreational opportunities such as trails was one of the main themes that emerged from the survey. Many respondents commented that they were not aware of the hiking trails, swimming area at Bashin Beach, and tennis courts, in particular. Many respondents also commented that it would be very helpful to have both a map of the hiking trails in Town as well as a brochure and/or online listing of all the recreational facilities in Hatfield. The OSC will take on public education about recreational opportunities in Town as priority action items in the seven-year action plan.

The survey asked what improvements respondents would like to see for those who are mobility impaired. The top responses were more and better sidewalks, wheelchair accessible trails, benches along sidewalks, and accessible swimming areas. More sidewalks and safe walking options were mentioned elsewhere in the survey as well as improvements to prioritize, especially for children and for seniors. The OSC has completed phase one of the Smith Academy Park in the town center through the assistance of a PARC grant, and also completed plans for a pavilion for the park. Some of the features planned for the park will meet the needs for mobility impaired and senior residents mentioned above. Currently, there is some use of the park by town employees (the park abuts Town Hall) as well as by residents of Capawonk Senior Housing, which is across the street from the park. Designs for phase two of the park redesign include additional walking paths, benches, and the installation of a pavilion for concerts and other public events. It is still a goal to add more sidewalks on streets close to the town center that lack sidewalks but have a significant amount of pedestrian activity. Regarding accessible swimming areas, the OSC will coordinate with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), who owns the Bashin Beach property, about making the access to the water more level and universally accessible.

Other demographic groups that the Town needs to consider when making additions and improvements to active and passive recreation are teenagers, preschoolers and school age children. The only playground in Hatfield is at the elementary school, meaning the hours for use by the public are limited to non-school hours. A number of survey respondents indicated that they go to other towns for playgrounds, so an additional playground with equipment for younger children would be likely be well-used. There are basketball courts at the former Center School that can be used by teens, but other recreational facilities that would meet the needs of teens should be considered, such as a skate park and additional swimming areas.

Other improvements to active and passive recreation in Hatfield that the Town and the OSC plan to prioritize include the building of new pickleball/tennis courts and also increasing access to the Mill River above the dam for kayaks and canoes. Almost 73% of survey respondents said that they would be interested in and use access to the Mill River for either kayaking/canoeing and/or fishing, and 76% of respondents said that they would support using CPA funds to renovate the pedestrian bridge over the Mill River.

The Town has adequate recreation areas at present, but there is a demand for additional, varied opportunities for passive and active recreation at a wider variety of recreational venues, as well as better maintenance of facilities. Among the potential additions are pickleball/tennis courts at Smith Academy, a bike trail between Elm Court and Damon Road, pending continued negotiation with Northampton, improved access to the Mill River; striping of roads for bike lanes and wider shoulders; and creation of new sidewalks with a view to expanding the Town’s “pedestrian circuit.”

## Summary of Management Needs and Potential Changes of Use

It is clear that many lands valuable for habitat and watershed protection can also serve as resources for passive recreation. The Town needs to consider how best to meet both of these needs through a process that addresses not only conservation but also systematic, active management of conservation land and open space. Such management should involve the co-ordination of the work of Town boards that have in the recent past been involved in open space, conservation, and recreation issues. There may also be opportunities to link recreational or open space areas with in-town trails or better sidewalk networks, as walking/jogging on sidewalks is the activity in which most (over 90%, according to the OSRP survey) residents participate. Better pedestrian linkages among recreational and open space resources in the village center and other areas of town also serve as opportunities to improve accessibility for Hatfield’s senior and disabled residents. Without co-ordination among different Town entities, the Town is in danger of unintentionally losing the open space heritage that it has expended considerable energy and resources in building up over many years.

Does conservation commission and/or OSC receive right of first refusal notices along with the Select Board? Does the town have a process in place and funding set aside in the case of a farm in 61A program becoming available for example?

**SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

## Goal A: Protect Community Character

Objectives:

* Promote the value of the Town’s defining natural and man-made resources.
* Secure long-term protection of scenic landscapes and vistas.
* Support the protection and restoration of historic buildings and places.

## Goal B: Protect Farmland

Objectives:

* Promote the town’s agricultural economy.
* Promote farmland protection opportunities for all landowners
* Coordinate technical assistance to landowners to implement protection strategies
* Establish a local agricultural preservation program

## Goal C: Protect Wetlands and Floodplains

Objectives:

* Promoting the value of the wetlands and floodplains in the community.
* Prevent residential and non-agricultural development from occurring in the floodplains to ensure adequate flood storage capacity and prevent public hazards.
* Promote land protection tools and strategies
* Coordinate technical assistance to landowners to implement protection strategies

Goal D: Protect Water Supply

Objectives:

* Promote the value of continued drinking water protection.
* Prevent residential and non-agricultural development from occurring in the floodplains to ensure adequate flood storage capacity and prevent public hazards.
* Permanently protect open space within the primary recharge areas to the Omasta and West Hatfield Wells and Running Gutter Reservoir watershed.

Goal E: Protect Woodlands

Objectives:

* Identify and protect important forested wildlife corridors and other woodland habitat.
* Support sustainable forestry practices on private and town-owned lands to ensure healthy forest ecosystems and control of invasive species, and prevent down gradient erosion and flooding.
* Promote appropriate and responsible recreational use of town-owned forest land.

Goal F: Management of Protected Resources

Objectives:

* Establish or designate Management Entity(s) in the Town for protected Lands.
* Promote establishment of “*Friends of*” stewardship groups and/or build constituencies for protected resources.
* Create or establish funding sources for management needs.
* Create and post rules for use of Town owned lands
* Better delineate and enforce areas for motorized recreational use versus non-motorized uses.
* Promotion of responsible use of recreational resources in Town

Goal G: Provision of Adequate Recreation Spaces

Objectives:

* Establish new recreational opportunities and facilities for picnicking and social events, ice skating, bicycling, passive watercraft use, and hiking.
* Expand and improve existing recreational facilities such as playing fields and playgrounds.
* Better delineate and enforce areas for motorized recreational use versus non-motorized uses.

**SECTION 9: SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN**

| **SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN 2023 - 2029** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The Town of Hatfield’s Open Space Committee has identified the following Seven-Year Action Plan to meet the town’s goals and objectives for open space and recreation. A responsible board or committee has been identified for each of the actions as well as a prioritization scheme based on the recommended year of implementation. | | | | |
| **ACTION** | **RESPONSIBLE PARTY** | **YEAR** | **PRIORITY LEVEL** | **FUNDING SOURCES** |
| **Goal A. Protect Community Character** | | | | |
| *Objective*: Promote the value of the Town’s defining natural and man-made resources |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Continue promotion of farmland protection by meeting with farmers | Agricultural Advisory Commission | 2023-2029 | High | N/A |
| *Objective*: Secure long-term protection of scenic landscapes and vistas |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Promote the value of the Town landscape and vistas though photographic and other exhibits | Local Cultural Council | 2023-2029 | Low | LCC Grant |
| *Objective*: Support the protection and restoration of historic buildings and places |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Continue to promote listing of sites on National Register of Historic Places | Historical Commission | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| ▪ Seek funding for the preservation of significant Town artifacts | Historical Society | 2023-2029 | Medium | State Historical Commission Grants |
| Historical Commission |
| **Goal B. Protect Farmland** | | | | |
| *Objective*: Promote the town’s agricultural economy |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Support the buy local campaign | Agricultural Advisory Commission | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| *Objective*: Promote farmland protection opportunities for all landowners |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Continue promotion of farmland protection by meeting with farmers | Agricultural Advisory Commission | 2023-2029 | High | N/A |
| *Objective*: Coordinate technical assistance to landowners to implement protection strategies |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Apply for grants for technical assistance | Agricultural Advisory Commission | 2023-2029 | Medium | MA Department of Agricultural Resources Technical Assistance Grants |
| *Objective*: Establish a local agricultural preservation program |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Draft a local APR bylaw and present for a vote at Town Meeting | Agricultural Advisory Commission | 2023-2029 | Medium | N/A |
| **Goal C. Protect Wetlands and Floodplains** | | | | |
| *Objective*: Promote the value of the wetlands and floodplains in the community |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Advocate for the preservation of the Mill River dam to maintain the wetlands upstream on the Mill River | Select Board | 2023-2029 | High | N/A |
| *Objective*: Prevent residential and non-agricultural development from occurring in the floodplains to ensure adequate flood storage capacity and prevent public hazards |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Identify at risk parcels along public roads and acquire the properties or development rights | Agricultural Advisory Commission | 2023-2029 | Low | Land and Water Conservation Grant, LAND Grant |
| Open Space Committee | Community Preservation Act |
| Select Board |  |
| *Objective*: Promote land protection tools and strategies |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Work with owners in floodplain on South St. to implement APR’s on their parcels | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Medium | N/A |
| ▪ Continue conversations with landowners in impoundment area above Mill River dam about protection opportunities | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Medium | N/A |
| ▪ Continue with vernal pool investigations and certifications | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 |  | N/A |
| Conservation Commission | Low |
| **Goal D. Protect Water Supply** | | | | |
| *Objective*: Promote the value of continued drinking water protection |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Educate the public about the Towns’ water supply through signage at the Terry Blunt Watershed and Conservation Area | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Low | Community Preservation Act |
| Conservation Commission |
| *Objective*: Prevent residential and non- agricultural development from occurring within the drinking watershed area |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Acquire land or purchase development rights in threatened lands in watershed area | Department of Public Works | 2023-2029 | High | State Grant |
| Open Space Committee |
| Conservation Commission |
| *Objective*: Permanently protect open space within the primary recharge areas to the Town Wells and Running Gutter Reservoir watershed |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Prioritize and acquire land within the Town Well’s Zone II or other permanent conservation restriction | Department of Public Works | 2023-2029 | High | Land and Water Conservation Grant, LAND Grant |
| Open Space Committee |
| Select Board |
| **Goal E. Protect Woodlands** | | | | |
| *Objective*: Identify and protect important forested wildlife corridors and other woodland habitat |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Prioritize important forested wildlife corridors and other woodland habitat using BioMap2 | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| Broad Brook Coalition |
| City of Northampton |
| *Objective*: Support sustainable forestry practices on private & town-owned lands to ensure healthy forest ecosystems & control of invasive species, and prevent down gradient erosion and flooding |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Annually contract with a forest management consultant for the purposes of implementing best forestry practices on town owned lands | Department of Public Works | 2023-2029 | Low | Town |
| Select Board |
| ▪ Contract with forest management consultant to combat invasive plants on Horse Mountain | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | High | Community Preservation Act |
| ▪ Contract with forest management consultant to develop forest management plan | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Medium | Forest Stewardship Program, MassWildlife Habitat Management Grant Program |
| Department of Public Works |
| *Objective*: Promote appropriate and responsible recreational use of town-owned forest land |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Expand recently establish trail system to other woodland areas of town owned land | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | High | Community Preservation Act, MassTrails Grant |
| **Goal F. Management of Protected Resources** | | | | |
| *Objective*: Establish or designate management entities in the Town for protected lands |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Coordinate with DPW on management and investigate possibility of Conservation Manager position | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| Department of Public Works |
| Select Board |
| *Objective*: Promote establishment of “Friends of” stewardship groups and/or build constituencies for protected resources |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Establish "Friends of Hatfield Conservation", a volunteer organization | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| *Objective*: Investigate or establish funding sources for management needs |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Seek out grants for trails and forestry management | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Medium | MassTrails Grant |
| Select Board |
| *Objective*: Create rules for use of Town lands |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Bring proposed rules before appropriate town board to finalize them and then purchase and post | Select Board | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| Department of Public Works |
| Open Space Committee |
| Various Town Boards |
| *Objective*: Better delineate & enforce areas for motorized recreational use vs non-motorized uses |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Draw up maps with allowed use zones | Select Board | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| Department of Public Works |
| Open Space Committee |
| *Objective*: Promote responsible use of recreational resources in Town |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Continue to pursue Mill River access | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Medium | N/A |
| ▪ Promote & coordinate hikes | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | Low | N/A |
| ▪ Continue trail building | Open Space Committee | 2024-2029 | High | Community Preservation Act |
| MassTrails Grant |
| ▪ Promote increased use of trails by posting maps on Town website, printing maps to be available at Town Hall, and improve trail signage | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | High | N/A |
| **Goal G. Provide Adequate Recreational Spaces** | | | | |
| *Objective*: Establish new recreational opportunities for walking, jogging, ice skating, bicycling, passive water craft use, and hiking |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Construct a pavilion in the newly renovated Smith Academy Park | Open Space Committee | 2023 | High | Community Preservation Act |
| ▪ Construct tennis & pickle ball courts on town owned land | Recreation Committee | 2023-2029 | High | Community Preservation Act |
| ▪ Create multi-use pathway connecting Hatfield to Northampton - The Connecticut River Greenway | Open Space Committee | 2023-2029 | High | MassTrails Grant |
| City of Northampton |
| ▪ Expand the network of sidewalks in Town | Select Board | 2023-2029 | Medium | Complete Streets, Shared Streets Grant Programs |
| Department of Public Works |
| *Objective*: Expand and improve existing recreational facilities |  |  |  |  |
| ▪ Day Pond maintenance & improvements | Select Board | 2023-2024 | High | Community Preservation Act |
| Department of Public Works |
| ▪ Complete construction of Smith Academy recreational walkway | Recreation Committee | 2023 | High | Community Preservation Act |
| ▪ Maintenance of fields | Recreation Committee | 2023-2029 | Low | Town |

**SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENT**

This Open Space and Recreation Plan was submitted to the various town boards and officials for review.

The required letters of support are:

• Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

• Select Board

• Planning Board

**SECTION 11: REFERENCES**

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