

Section 2: Introduction

The Gill Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee began work with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments in the spring of 2011 to update the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which had expired in June 2010. The Committee was composed of the Gill Administrative Assistant and representatives from the town's Planning Board, as well as a member of the community. The Committee consulted other municipal officials and members of the community for expertise in the areas of agriculture, history, recreation, and property records. The Committee has produced an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan that embodies the town's commitment to protecting and enhancing its cultural, historical, scenic, archeological, and natural resources (including water resources, wildlife habitat, forests and farmlands), while promoting economic development.



One of Gill's many outstanding resources, Barton Cove, provides myriad functions including recreation and wildlife habitat.

Accomplishments

Since 2005, the Town of Gill has accomplished several Open Space and Recreation related goals including:

- Adoption of the Right to Farm bylaw
- Participation in the Connecticut River Streambank Erosion Committee
- Participation in annual Biodiversity Days as a means for building a comprehensive biological and geological inventory in Gill using community volunteers

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Open Space and Recreation Plan is to provide an accurate and thorough basis for decision-making involving the current and future open space and recreation needs of Gill residents in harmony with appropriate economic development. This Plan brings together and builds upon the planning efforts and accomplishments of the past years including the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan and the 2004 Community Development Plan. It also represents several months of consensus building on the most important community and natural resource needs of the Town and the best solutions for addressing them. The Seven-Year Action Plan, when carried out by the yet-to-be formed Gill Open Space Advisory Committee and other town boards and commissions, will successfully implement the Town's open space and recreation goals and objectives.

Planning Process and Public Participation

The process to update the 2005 Gill Open Space and Recreation Plan officially began with the kick off meeting in June 2011. Over the next six months, the Committee met 7 times and additional mapping meetings were held on 4 separate occasions. Staff from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) attended all of these meetings. The FRCOG staff supported the work of several people who contributed to the research and writing of this Plan, including Committees members, the Town Assessor's Clerk, and citizens. The agendas and sign-in sheets for each of these meetings are included as Appendix B. An online and paper Public Survey was developed and the results were used to help develop Sections 6 – 9 of this Plan. The Survey and a summary of the Survey results are included as Appendix C.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Public Forum was held on November 2, 2011 with very light attendance, due in part perhaps to the recent snow storm and long power outages. Advertising for the Forum included information in the online and paper versions of the Gill Elementary School Newsletter (See Appendix A), an announcement on Gill's website homepage, information in the Gill Newsletter, and via flyers posted at the Town Hall and at local businesses. Comments expressed at the public forum were recorded and included in Section 10: Public Comments.

Draft copies of the 2011 Gill Open Space and Recreation Plan maps were on display during the Public Forum and attendees were encouraged to review the maps and write down any comments or suggestions for improving the maps. A copy of Public Forum PowerPoint presentation given at the forum is included as Appendix C.

Preceding and following the Forum, copies of the draft maps and sections of the Plan were made available for public comment at the Gill Town Hall and on line at www.gillmass.org. All members of Gill boards and committees were also contacted via email and asked to review the draft sections of the Plan. After review and discussion by the Open Space and Recreation Committee, all ideas, comments, and corrections received during the public forum and comment period – and throughout the planning process – pertaining to the different sections of the plan, maps and the action steps have also been incorporated in the final version of the Gill Open Space and Recreation Plan.