

Section 2: Introduction

The Gill Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee began work with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments in 2017 to update the 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which had expired. The Committee was composed of the Gill Administrative Assistant, Town Clerk, and representatives from the town's Conservation Commission, Cemetery Commission, and Energy Commission, 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 2011, the Town of Gill has accomplished several Open Space and Recreation related goals including:

- Participation in the Connecticut River Streambank Erosion Committee;
- Participation in the FERC relicensing efforts for the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project and Turners Falls Dam;

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- Created a Conservation District Zoning Bylaw; and
- Conducted an ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan.

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 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the 2004 Community Development Plan, the 2020 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the 2018 ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan. It also represents 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 and Recreation 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 2011 Gill OSRP officially began with the kick off meeting in September 2017. Over the next several years, the Committee met eight times. 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 Clerk/Assessor, and volunteers. The agendas and sign-in sheets for these meetings are included as Appendix C. 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 D.

The OSRP Plan Public Forum was held on December 21, 2020 remotely over teleconference. The forum was advertised using an announcement on Gill's website homepage and emails to town committees. Draft copies of the 2020 Gill OSRP maps were available on the website and attendees were encouraged to review the maps and write down any comments. A copy of Public Forum PowerPoint presentation was also posted on the Town website for attendees to view and for residents not able to attend the forum.

Preceding and following the Forum, copies of the draft maps and sections of the Plan were made available for public comment on line at www.gillmass.org. 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 been incorporated in the final version of the Gill Open Space and Recreation Plan.