

TOWN OF CONWAY

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)



Photo:
Michele Turre

Public Forum

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

Public Forum Agenda

- Welcome
- Opening Presentation (7:05 – 7:30)
 - What is an OSRP
 - Key features of the new plan
 - Accomplishments since previous OSRP
 - Community, natural, recreational resources and needs
- Open Space and Recreational Objectives (7:30 – 8:20)
 - 7-Year Action Plan priorities
 - Your comments and input
- Next Steps + Public Comment period (8:20 – 8:30)
 - review the plan and provide comments by Friday, October 29th:
<https://townofconway.com/open-space-recreation-plan-update/>

Open Space & Recreation Plan Purpose

- Inventories natural, recreational and cultural resources in Conway
- Identifies open space and recreation needs
- Establishes Goals, Objectives, and Actions to meet these needs
- Enables the Town of Conway to apply for state grants for land conservation and recreation facility improvements

Fall-flowering witch hazel
Photo: Michele Turre



Contents of the OSRP



Photo: Michele Turre

1. Plan Summary
2. Introduction
3. Community Setting
4. Environmental Inventory & Analysis
5. Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest
6. Community Goals
7. Analysis of Needs
8. Goals & Objectives
9. Seven-Year Action Plan
10. Public Comments

Key features of the new plan

- ❑ Downscaled climate change data and impacts in Conway
- ❑ New ecological data and land conservation resources
- ❑ Relevant recent research and planning work:
 - ❑ 2013 Route 116 Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
 - ❑ 2017 & 2021 ADA Transition Plans
 - ❑ 2018 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan
 - ❑ 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - ❑ 2020 Forest Stewardship Plans
 - ❑ 2013 – 2021 South River Plans and Reports, including Mohawk Woodlands Trail Partnership Project Prioritization Summary Report
 - ❑ 2021 Pollinator Action Plan



Photo: Michele Turre

Plan Update Process

- The last update to the Conway OSRP was completed in 2013
- OSRP update committee includes members of the:
 - Open Space Committee
 - Friends of the South River
 - Community Preservation Committee
 - Cemetery Commission
- 12 meetings since October of 2020
- 1 Public Survey in June – July, 2021 (92 responses!)
- Public Forum – TODAY – October 19, 2021
- Comment period – now thru Friday the 29th
- Submission to the Department of Conservation Services for approval – December

Accomplishments Since 2013 Plan

- ❑ Renovated Town ballfield
- ❑ Allocated funds to improve the Grammar School playground
- ❑ Educational walks and events
- ❑ Invasives management
- ❑ Assessments, plans, and projects on the South River that increase flood resilience, improve habitat, and provide access to residents
- ❑ Culvert assessment
- ❑ Feasibility study for downtown sewage treatment
- ❑ Forest Stewardship Plans and Forest and Trails Committee
- ❑ Pollinator action plan
- ❑ Updated solar bylaw
- ❑ Floodplain protection bylaw update in process



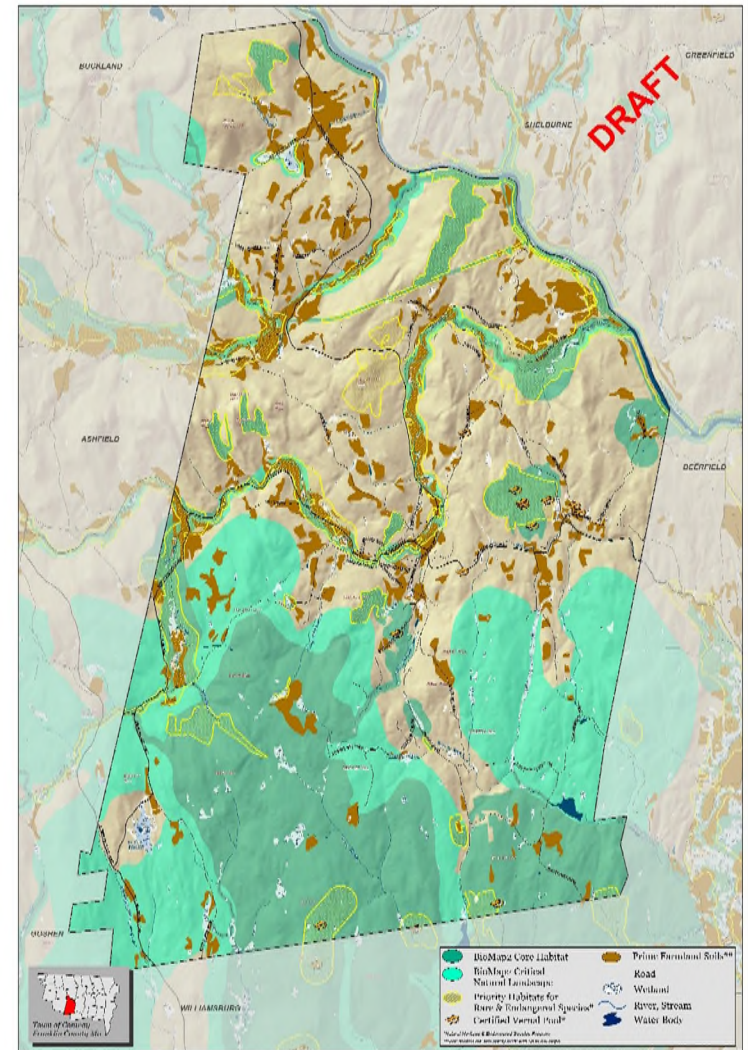
Community Findings

- Population has grown modestly since 1950, but stable over last decade
- People ages 65 to 75 fastest growing age cohort over last decade
- Population projections show possible population decline and aging
- 18 building permits for new homes issued 2010 - 2020



Environmental Findings

- BioMap2 Core habitat and Priority Habitats for Endangered Species:
 - Throughout south Conway: Conway State Forest and watershed land
 - South and Bear Rivers
 - South River State Forest
- Large blocks of contiguous forest in south Conway
- Important agricultural soils along South River and in Shirksire
- 13 certified vernal pools and over 50 potential
- South River
 - important to local ecology, agriculture, recreation, and sense of place
 - environmental challenges and opportunities



Town of Conway
Open Space &
Recreation Plan 2021

Plant & Wildlife
Habitat

0 0.5 1 Miles

Open Space Findings

Protected lands as a percentage of town area

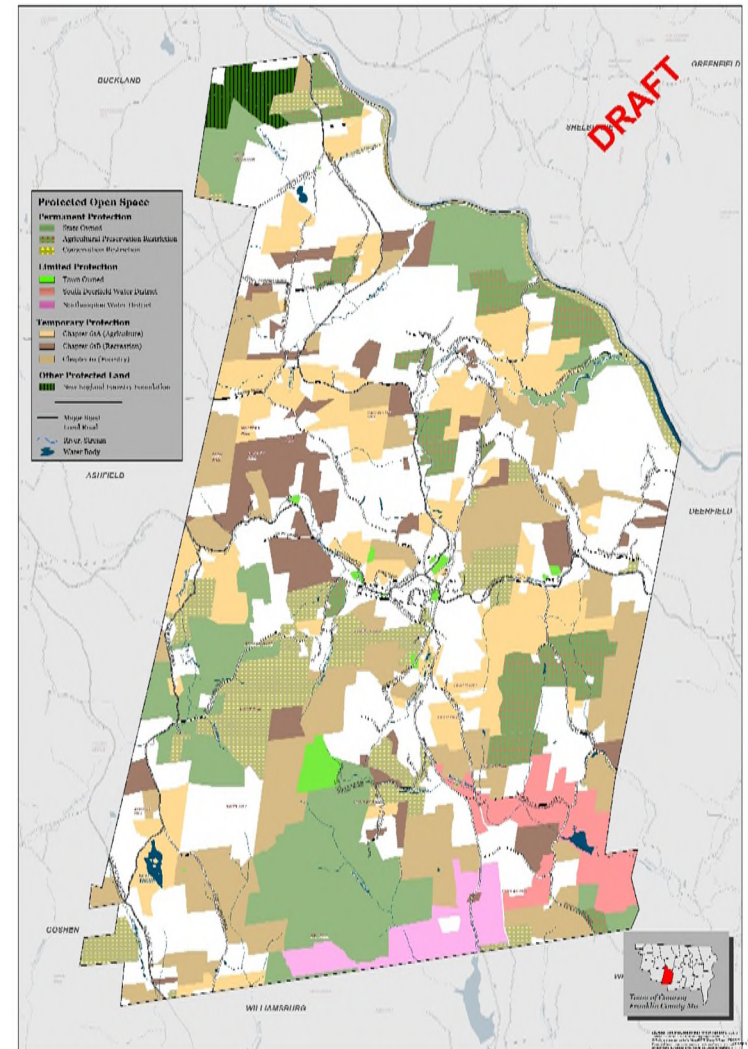
1% limited

34% permanent

+ 35% temporary

68% protected in some form

- No recent major land protection
- State and water districts lands may grow
- Important habitat areas in south Conway unprotected
- High amount of Chapter 61 temporary protection
- Need for a system when opportunities arise to protect high-value parcels



Town of Conway
Open Space &
Recreation Plan 2021

Open Space

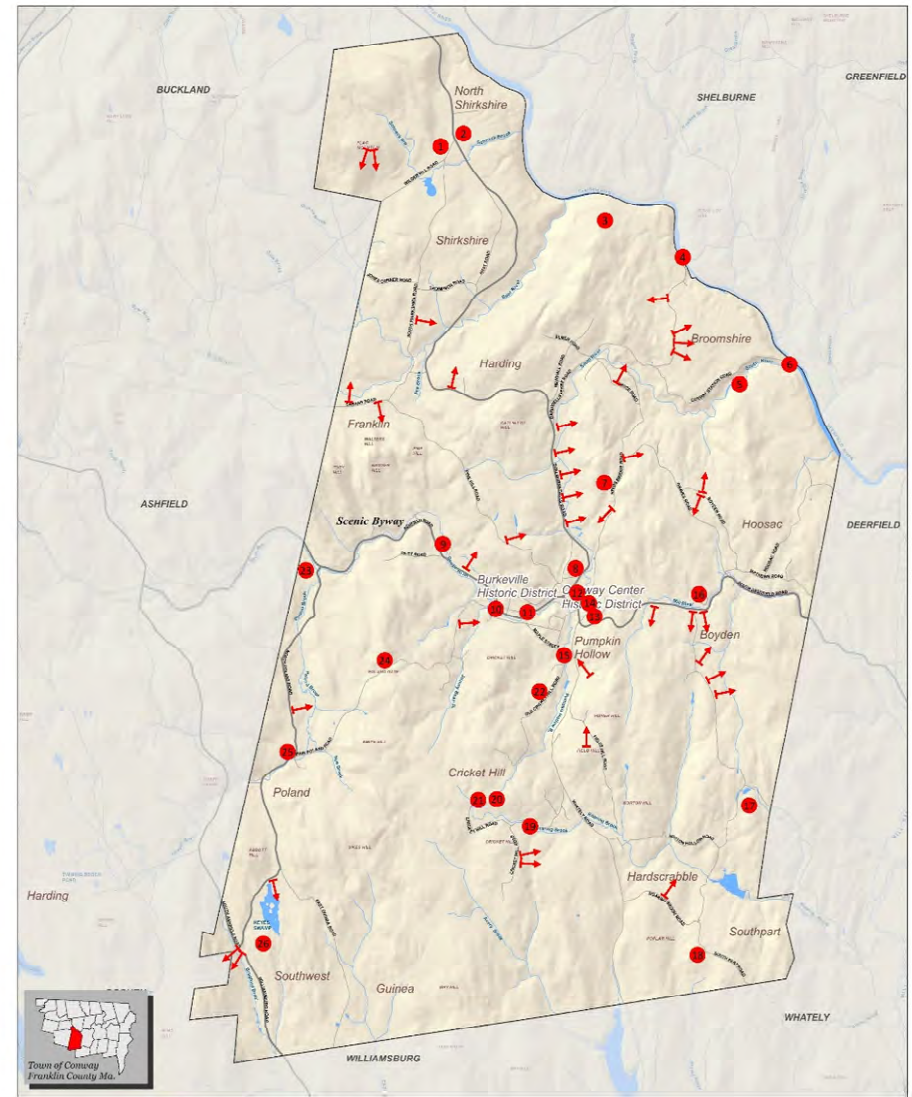
0 0.5 1 Miles

Franklin Regional
Council of Governments

Scenic and Historic Resources

- Scenic areas:
 - Farmland along Shelburne Falls, Bardwells Ferry, and Roaring Brook Roads
 - View from prominent hills: Flagg Mountain, Cricket Hill, Field Hill, Fisher Hill
 - Views of wetlands
 - Valley and ridgeline views

- Historic areas:
 - Village districts and historic architecture
 - Cemeteries
 - Abandoned sites in forests

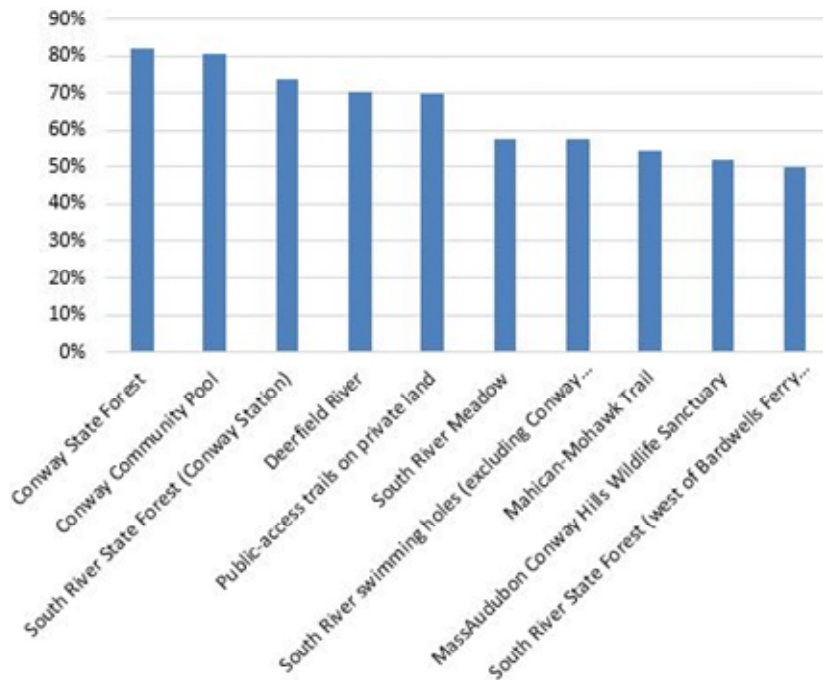


Legend ● Historic Resources → Scenic Road or View Neighborhood Name

Scenic and Historic Resources

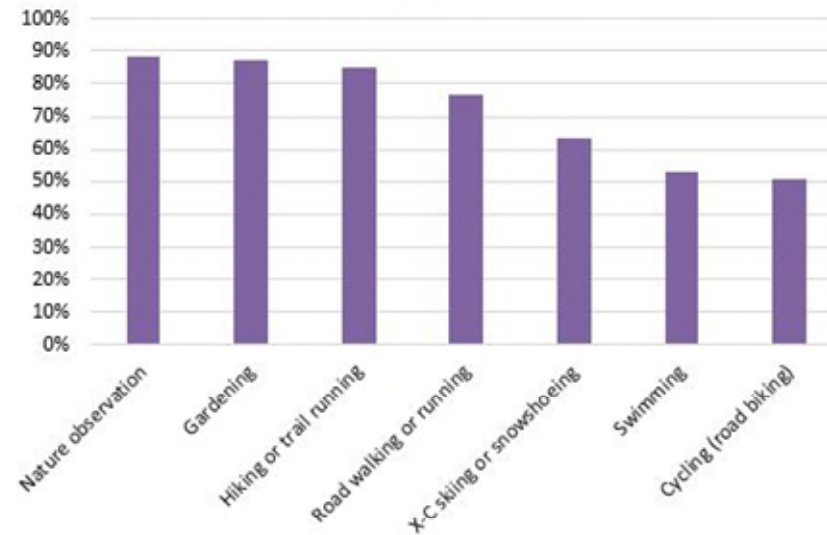
Open Space and Recreation Trends

Figure 2: Open Space and Recreation Areas in Conway
(Visited once a year or more by 50 percent or more of survey respondents)



Source: 2021 Conway Open Space and Recreation Survey

Figure 3: Popular Recreation Activities in Conway
(Activities done by 50 percent or more of survey respondents)



Source: 2021 Conway Open Space and Recreation Survey

Open Space & Recreation Resources

- Town-owned active recreation:
 - Town ballfield and playground
 - Conway Grammar School playground and fields
- Town-owned passive recreation:
 - South River Meadow
 - Bigelow Property
 - Fournier Forest
 - Town Forest
- Youth sports programs
- ADA assessment
- Volunteer committees:
 - Open Space
 - Friends of the South River
 - Forest and Trails
 - Parks and Recreation



Town Ballfield and Playground
Photo: FRCOG

Recreation Needs

- Trails:
 - More publicly accessible multi-use trails and better trail connections
 - More information about outdoor recreation options and expectations for use (digital and print), and on-site signage
 - A group responsible for public trail stewardship and planning
- Planned nature and guided hikes, historical walks
- Multi-functional outdoor spaces that accommodate families and those with limited mobility
- A focused study of river use and access options

FRIENDS OF THE SOUTH RIVER

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2013 3 pm

NATURE WALK



Meet at the Rose Field, behind Page's and take a leisurely walk along the South River, identifying interesting plants, wetlands and sights, noting both native and invasive species. We'll also indicate on-going and proposed habitat restoration projects. Approx. 1 hour.

Wear comfortable shoes and take the usual protections against ticks, poison ivy, etc.

Info: Polly Byers 369-4697 or info@friendsofthesouthernriver.org

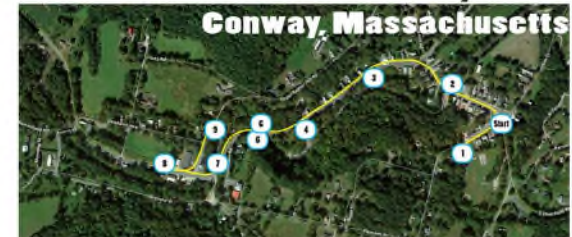
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2013 1:30 pm

A fascinating tour of historical mill and dam sites around downtown. River features impacted by this legacy will be visible, including a blocked floodplain.

Limited to the first 20 people who make a reservation on sign-up sheets during the Festival of the Hills at the Historical Society or Friends table at Town Hall. Or by phoning Janet Chayes 369-4697 or emailing info@friendsofthesouthernriver.org

RIVER WALK

South River, Conway Center
Conway, Massachusetts



Open Space/Natural Resource Needs

- Protect valued open space, including farmland, using land conservation tools and regularly reviewing and updating Town's zoning
- Implement Town Forest Stewardship Plans
- Continue to assess and implement water quality and flood resilience improvements
- Increase pollinator habitat
- Continue to manage for invasives
- Take necessary steps to make new development possible in Conway Center



Above: Bumblebee on joe pye weed
Below: South River Meadow
Photos: Michele Turre

Plan Goals & Objectives

Open Space

Ensure that the Conway maintains or improves the quality of its air and water, and the diversity and integrity of its various ecosystems through the conservation of locally important natural, open space.

Ensure that Conway retains its rural, safe, and quiet small town character and sense of community, and its agricultural, cultural, and historic resources.

Recreation

Ensure that Conway maintains or improves the current quality, quantity, and accessibility of its recreational resources.

Communication

Ensure that the Conway community has good access to environmental, open space and recreation information and opportunities.

[See Table 9-1, Section 9: Seven-Year Action Plan](#)

DRAFT Priority Actions

- Develop criteria that the Open Space Committee can use to **identify priority areas of conservation interest for the town to promote protection of**
- Implement **recommended actions from the Conway Pollinator Action Plan**
- Support the **Regional Water and Sewer Study currently underway and continue to seek funding to construct a flood resilient small-scale sewer system**, if feasible
- Collaborate with other Town committees and organizations to **sponsor outdoor programs** following the preferences expressed in the 2021 OSRP survey, particularly nature hikes, historical walks, and guided hikes
- Contribute **regular articles to Conway Currents** on a range of environmental/conservation topics

Discussion Topic

How do we best address the recreational needs of everyone in Conway?

Example Ideas:

- *Create trails for all types of users*

Discussion Topic

How do we maintain the town's character & open spaces we all love?

Example Ideas:

- *Prioritize parcels for protection*

Discussion Topic

How do we coordinate as a town to complete open space and recreation objectives?

Example Ideas:

- *Annual multi-committee meetings*

Next Steps

1. Pursue OSRP Seven-Year Action Plan priorities:
 1. Identify responsible committee
 2. Apply for grants identified in the OSRP action plan table
2. Apply for action grants identified in the 2020 HMP + 2021 MVP plans to improve the Town's resiliency

Public Comment period until October 29, 2021

*Review the plan on the
Town website:*

[https://townofconway.com/
open-space-recreation-plan-
update/](https://townofconway.com/open-space-recreation-plan-update/)

*Send comments to
tflanders@frcog.org*

THANK YOU!



Roaring Brook Road
Photo: Dave Chichester