

SECTION 9: SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Seven-Year Action Plan fulfills the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) objectives. The objectives are listed in the far left column of Table 9-1 and are followed by recommended actions, responsible board or group, start date, and potential funding sources. By implementing the recommended actions, each objective will be closer to realization.

Implementing the OSRP will not only require the participation of the Open Space Committee, but it will also necessarily involve many other town groups, including the Select Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Agricultural Commission, Highway Department, Board of Health, Parks and Recreation Committee, Community Preservation Committee, and Forestry and Trails Committee. In addition, Franklin Land Trust, the Historical Society, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation are listed as potential partners in this Action Plan.

Many of these actions may be constrained by a lack of volunteer time, in addition to funding limitations. Where money is required, such as with open space protection, it does not have to be provided by the Town alone. State and federal agencies, private non-profit conservation organizations, individual donors, and private foundations are potential sources of funding. Many are more likely to invest in projects that have a broad base of community support.

Two recent planning efforts undertaken by the Town provide important points of leverage and overlap with the OSRP. In 2018, Conway engaged in the planning process to become designated a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) community, producing a joint summary report with the Town of Ashfield. Conway also updated its five-year Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was approved by FEMA on April 1, 2020. Both the Hazard Mitigation Plan and the MVP Plan include a discussion of climate change and the natural hazards that are increasingly impacting Conway's natural environment and the important ecosystem services that floodplains, rivers, wetlands and forests provide. These plans include strategies and action items to address and mitigate the impacts from climate change and natural hazards and protect and restore the Town's natural resources.

A number of actions identified in the MVP and Hazard Mitigation Plans align with the OSRP's goals, illustrating the interconnectedness of the environmental challenges we face today. Efforts to improve the health of natural resources have numerous co-benefits with climate resilience, flood resilience, climate adaptation, and the ability to enjoy these resources. Projects to restore the health of Conway's South River are wonderful examples of these co-benefits: bank stabilization reduces hazards to roads, infrastructure, and reduces pollution entering the waterway; riparian corridors create habitat, filter stormwater runoff, increase bank stability, and help keep water cool for fish habitat; right-sized bridge and culvert replacements reduce the risk of flooding and infrastructure failure, and increase wildlife passage.

Relevant action items from the MVP and Hazard Mitigation Plans are included in the OSRP Seven-Year Action Plan. Thinking creatively and designing a project to achieve multiple objectives and provide multiple benefits can expand the opportunities for funding. Some OSRP projects could be funded by the MVP Action Grant program, the FEMA hazard mitigation grant program, or a grant program administered by the Division of Conservation Services if open space preservation and/or recreation amenities are included in the project design.

For an Open Space and Recreation Plan to succeed, it is important to establish priorities for the first seven years. Prioritized action steps are represented on the Seven-Year Action Plan Map and are outlined in detail in Table 9-1. The most important **DRAFT** action steps for Conway in the next seven years include:

- *Use the Criteria for Open Space Protection (Section 5.G), available land conservation tools, GIS data and analysis, and 2021 OSRP Survey results and other available conservation tools to develop criteria for Conway that the Open Space Committee can use to identify general areas of conservation interest and priority areas for the town to acquire.*
- *Implement recommended actions from the Conway Pollinator Action Plan.*
- *Support the current Regional Water and Sewer Study and continue to seek funding to construct a flood resilient small-scale sewer system, if appropriate. Conduct public education on the benefits of a community sewer system in Conway center that would allow redevelopment and infill development, improving business opportunities, tourism, river health, senior housing, and a thriving village center.*
- *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. Use guided hikes to familiarize residents with trails, meet landowners whose property trails may cross, and learn proper trail etiquette and maintenance techniques. Begin by generating a list of people to lead walks.*
- *Contribute regular articles to Conway Currents on a range of environmental/conservation topics informed by the 2021 OSRP survey.*

A. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Despite being a small town reliant on a small number of paid staff and dedicated volunteers, Conway has accomplished a number of action items that support the goals and objectives of the Town's previous OSRP. The following list summarizes Conway's accomplishments since the publication of the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Plan:

- Over the past decade, the Open Space Committee has sponsored numerous walks, hikes, and events, especially related to the South River.
- The Town obtained an "off-road" wheelchair that can be borrowed by Conway residents and visitors.
- In 2014, the Open Space Committee obtained funding to manage invasive Japanese stiltgrass along roadsides.
- In 2014, the Town contributed funds to the repair of tennis courts at Frontier Regional High School.
- In 2013-14, the Town installed drainage at the town ballfield, upgraded various sports and play facilities, and installed a parking lot.
- South River watershed
 - In 2013, the FRCOG and the Town applied for and were awarded a 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Implementation Grant for the floodplain restoration and bank

stabilization project at the site now known as the South River Meadow, completed in 2016.

- In 2016, with the Town’s assistance, the FRCOG and consultants completed *A Fluvial Geomorphic Assessment and River Corridor Planning for the South River Watershed, MA*—a geomorphic assessment and management plan for the South River and its major tributaries.
- In 2020, the Towns of Conway and Ashfield collaborated with consultants to prioritize implementation projects identified in the 2013 assessment that will address erosion and instabilities. This work was part of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Regional Adaptation & Resilience Project.
- In 2021, the FEMA-funded reconstruction of the Delabarre Avenue road drainage system commenced. The project will restore slope stability to the riverbank along approximately 450 linear feet of Delabarre Avenue above the South River.
- South River Meadow
 - From 2017 thru 2020, the Friends of the South River Meadow conducted an invasive species control program.
 - In 2020, the Friends of the South River installed trail signs.
- Conway Swimming Pool recreation area.
 - In 2012-13, purchased a conservation restriction on Conway Swimming Pool land.
 - In 2012-13 added parcels to the Conway Swimming Pool area.
 - In 2012-13, installed ADA-compliant accessible access to the Pool.
- In 2015, the Select Board adopted a Chapter 61 Right of First Refusal Policy for land coming out of Chapter 61.
- In 2016, the Conway Wastewater Committee completed a Downtown Wastewater feasibility study for sewage treatment technologies for Conway Center.
- In 2017, residents of Conway adopted a Right-to-Farm bylaw.
- In 2017, residents of Conway adopted an Age Restricted Housing Community Bylaw added that allows for the construction of higher-density affordable housing for persons over the age of 55, greater flexibility in site planning, and the preservation of open space and historic resources within the development.
- In 2018, residents of Conway adopted an Adult Use Recreational Marijuana Establishments bylaw that regulates the location, appearance, and water and energy use of marijuana cultivation, manufacturing, processing, and packaging facilities.
- In 2020, the Town conducted public outreach to develop Forest Stewardship Plans for Town-owned forests.
- In 2020, the Town, with the assistance of the FRCOG, completed a culvert assessment.
- In 2020, CPA funds were allocated to improve the safety and accessibility of the Grammar School playground.
- In 2021, the Town assisted the FRCOG in the creation of a Conway Pollinator Action Plan.
- In 2021, the Select Board designated a new Forestry Committee to hold the responsibilities of forest stewardship of Town-owned forests and public trail creation and maintenance.
- In 2021, residents of Conway adopted a updated solar bylaw that increased protections on natural resources and increased permit review of medium- and large-scale solar installations.

In addition, private non-profit entities have contributed to Conway’s open space and recreation goals:

- The Snowmobile Club has maintained trails throughout Conway and installed seasonal signage for snowmobile use.
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, through the Department of Fish and Game - Fisheries and Wildlife Division (MassWildlife) and Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) continue to protect land for their wildlife management areas and parks.
- Between 2012 and 2019, the Franklin Land Trust, MassWildlife, and New England Forestry Foundation have collectively worked to permanently protect over 600 acres on Flagg Mountain
- Private landowners in Conway worked with Franklin Land Trust to allow public trail access on their land through the Voluntary Public Access Program
- In 2020, Mass Audubon installed a half acre three-season food source habitat for bees and other pollinators at Conway Hills Sanctuary

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B. ACTION PLAN

HOW TO READ THIS TABLE:

- **Objectives** are milestones for achieving a goal.
- **Actions** are steps that must be taken to reach objectives.
- **Responsible Board/Group** suggests the Town group that would take the lead in working on the action, and be responsible for shepherding the project and coordinating with other involved groups.
- **Start Date** is the suggested start date, knowing that start dates will change due to staff capacity, volunteer availability, and funding.
- **Potential Funding Sources** are suggested starting places for funding; more details and web site links for each grant program can be found in **Appendix E** and should be applied for through the Community One Stop for Growth grant application portal.¹

Actions from the HMP or MVP plan are in light highlight.

Priority actions are in dark highlight.

Acronyms:

3C	MassDOT funding to FRCOG for continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3C) planning process	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	FRCOG	Franklin Regional Council of Governments
APR	Agricultural Preservation Restriction	LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
BMP	Best Management Practices	MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
CPA	Community Preservation Act	MassTrails	DCR funding for trail systems and trail experiences
DCR	Department of Conservation and Recreation	MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program
DCS	Department of Conservation Services	MTWP	Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
DFG	Department of Fish and Game	OSRP	Open Space and Recreation Plan
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance program	PARC	Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Grant Program
EEA	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	s.319	Grants funded through section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act, administered by MassDEP
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program		

¹ Massachusetts Community One Stop for Growth online grant portal: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth>

Table 9-1: Recommended Actions of the 2021 Conway Open Space and Recreation Plan

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
GOAL A: Ensure that the Town of Conway maintains or improves the quality of its air and water, and the diversity and integrity of native fauna and flora through the conservation of locally important natural, open space.				
A.1 Use Conway’s land use regulations to increase protection of valued natural and cultural resources and support climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.	Support the ongoing work of the Planning Board to periodically review and update Conway’s Protective Zoning Bylaw and General bylaws to ensure Conway protects the Town’s natural resources and increases resilience to climate change. Support revisions that include best practices for open space protection, stormwater management (using BMPs), habitat, water resource protection, drought tolerance, climate-resilient landscaping and road construction, and other open space priorities.	Planning Board; FRCOG	Year 2	DLTA; s.319
	Support the ongoing work of the Planning Board to review solar siting best practices and update the Town’s Ground-Mounted Solar Bylaw, including recommended zoning language from the Conway Pollinator Action Plan. Use the “Community Planning for Solar” Toolkit to understand community priorities for solar siting and bylaw/zoning needs.	Planning Board	Year 2	Community Planning Grant
A.2 Protect areas of Conway that are most important to preserve for ecosystem health, recreation, and climate resiliency.	Use the Criteria for Open Space Protection (<i>Section 5.G</i>), available land conservation tools, ² GIS data and analysis, and 2021 OSRP Survey results and other available conservation tools to develop criteria for Conway that the Open Space Committee can use to identify general areas of conservation interest and priority areas for the town to acquire. This will position the town to be responsive when land is offered as a donation or for sale in Town, when land trusts are working in town and/or when the town chooses to exercise its Right-of-First Refusal for land coming out of Chapter 61.	Open Space Committee;	Year 1	MVP; EEA Planning Assistance grants; DLTA
A.3 Manage forests for their many benefits, including forest health, biodiversity, habitat, stormwater management, and carbon sequestration.	Support the work of the Forests and Trails Committee to implement Forest Stewardship plans for the Fournier and Town Farm Forests. Assist with securing funding to implement plan recommendations.	Select Board; Forest and Trails Committee; Open Space Committee	Year 1	MassTrails; CPA; MTWP
	Conduct outreach and education about the Town-owned forests’ sustainable and climate resilient forestry plans and publicly demonstrate management practices.	Forests and Trails Committee;	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Continue to identify invasive species management needed in important habitat and recreation locations, including in riparian buffers. Consult the prioritized list of properties developed above to identify areas of overlap. Plant trees and pollinator habitat to replace invasive species when possible. Engage the state or community when needed to conduct invasives management. Develop a reliable base of volunteers.	Open Space Committee; DCR and DFG	Ongoing	Volunteer time; EQIP
	Promote active involvement of landowners to steward their property to control invasives through multiple avenues, including outreach and education in the Grammar School, articles in <i>Conway Currents</i> , and the development of neighborhood monitors.	Open Space Committee; Conway Grammar School	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Support the feasibility study for Conway’s participation in the Voluntary Carbon Market Program. If the project goes forward, support public outreach and education for enrollment and general community support.	Select Board; Open Space Committee	Ongoing	Volunteer time

² Land Conservation Tools available through UMass Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment: <https://ag.umass.edu/resources/land-conservation-tools>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
A.4 Promote watershed-wide planning to improve water quality, river health, flood resilience, and riparian habitat.	Support the NRCS agriculture-focused nonpoint source pollution assessment (to be conducted by FRCOG 2021 – 2023). Implement agricultural water quality protection BMPs identified in assessment.	Agricultural Commission	Year 2 – Year 7	s.319
	Implement flood resilience and river restoration projects prioritized in the Mohawk Woodlands Trail Partnership Project Prioritization Summary Report (Appendix G) starting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactivate abandoned oxbow meander along South River (Sites 16/17/18) • Culvert replacement at Main Poland Road over Johnny Bean Brook, paired with chop and drop wood addition along Johnny Bean Brook (Site 39) Incorporate trees along river's edge to stabilize banks, filter stormwater runoff, and shade the river at every opportunity.	Select Board; Conservation Commission	Ongoing	S.319; MVP; FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant
	Review and amend the Article 7 Floodplain District of the Town's zoning bylaw using the new state Model Floodplain District Bylaw to reduce the risk of flooding and damage to infrastructure and natural resources. Special consideration should be given to further restricting or limiting new development within the 100-year floodplain. Consider adding elements of a River Corridor Protection Zoning Overlay District to reduce the risk of flooding and fluvial erosion hazards and damage to infrastructure, agricultural land, habitat, and water quality from high flow and flooding events in the South River. Alternatively, adopt a standalone overlay district.	Planning Board; Select Board; FRCOG	In process	DLTA; MVP, Volunteer time
	Conduct outreach to residents about the flood mitigation and natural resource protection benefits of managing and protecting lands in the river corridor.	Planning Board; Select Board; Open Space Committee	Ongoing	Volunteer time; MVP
	Conduct membership drive to grow the size and impact of the Friends of South River Committee.	Friends of the South River	Year 1	Volunteer time
A.5 Protect pollinator species and pollinator habitat on private and public lands town wide.	Implement recommended actions from the Conway Pollinator Action Plan, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a dedicated group to coordinate with the Town and private landowners to implement recommendations in the Conway Pollinator Action Plan • Create pollinator habitat on the Bigelow Property following the concept design provided in the plan • Plant and manage riparian buffers as pollinator habitat in projects along the South River • Disseminate pollinator habitat information town-wide • Coordinate neighborhood groups to organize bulk purchases of native pollinator plants. • Install educational signage about native pollinator habitat in public spaces • Use local knowledge and neighborhood networks to provide site assessments of public and private parcels and identify opportunities for pollinator habitat • Identify opportunities to use pollinator friendly mowing practices in public gathering areas, including the Conway Swimming Pool and Grammar School • Work with private landowners and the Town to identify opportunities for expanding the riparian buffer on Pumpkin Hollow Brook with native plants • Support the Highway Department in adopting pollinator-friendly mowing on roadside edges and public properties • Work with the School Committee, teachers and parents to engage children in pollinator education and outreach opportunities at the Conway Grammar School • Support the Planning Board in adopting recommended changes to the Conway Protective Zoning Bylaws to protect and create pollinator habitat 	Open Space Committee; Conservation Commission	Year 1 – Year 5	MVP, CPA

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage other town maintenance, redevelopment and climate resiliency projects and private development projects to plant more pollinator habitat by including pollinator species in planned plantings or reseeded 			
GOAL B: Ensure that the Town of Conway retains its rural, safe and quiet, small town character and sense of community, and its agricultural, cultural, and historic resources.				
B.1 Protect agricultural land and the viability of farm businesses.	Complete requirements to qualify for the 5% “Local Match” in the APR program.	Agricultural Commission; Select Board	Year 1	Volunteer time
B.2 Increase pedestrian safety.	<p>Make pedestrian-friendly improvements for Conway suggested in the draft 2021 Regional Pedestrian Plan³:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh and enhance the visibility of crosswalks on Route 116 in the village center. Sidewalk connections from feeder roads/side streets that lead into the village center. Improved crosswalks and curb ramps at some locations for better ADA accessibility. Pedestrian level lighting in the town center. Snow clearing equipment. Incorporate shade trees into all roadwork projects. 	Select Board; Highway Department	Year 1 - 4	Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative grants; 3C grant
B.3 Encourage economic activity and infrastructure improvements that are compatible with the rural character of the town and that ensure the financial stability and economic health of the community.	Support the current Regional Water and Sewer Study and continue to seek funding to construct a flood resilient small-scale sewer system, if appropriate.	Downtown Wastewater Feasibility Committee; Select Board; Planning Board	Ongoing	MVP; DLTA
	Conduct public education on the benefits of a community sewer system in Conway center that would allow redevelopment and infill development, improving business opportunities, tourism, river health, senior housing, and a thriving village center.			
	If progress is made with creating a downtown sewer/septic system, continue to explore the possibility of adopting a village center overlay district that would increase densities in the town center as a way to diversify and strengthen the Town’s tax base.	Planning Board; FRCOG	Year 3	Volunteer time; DLTA
GOAL C: Ensure that the Town of Conway maintains or improves the current quality, quantity, and accessibility of its recreational resources.				
C.1 Create safe and sustainable public access to the Town’s rivers.	Consult with Town and regional officials on status of public access to the Town’s rivers. Study and conduct planning work on public access to the South and Deerfield Rivers for recreational activities, including swimming and scenic enjoyment, and for ecological improvements.	Select Board; DCR; Open Space Committee; Planning Board	Year 2	Community Planning Grant; MassWildlife Habitat Management Grant Program
C.2 Improve trail systems throughout Conway, ensuring useful trail connections, improving public access, and establishing universal accessibility where possible.	Assess existing public access trails and plan for maintenance and for opportunities for trail connections. Emphasize trail connections within Conway Center and top-ranking desired trail connections identified in the 2021 OSRP survey.	Forest and Trails Committee; Open Space Committee;	Year 1 - 3	MassTrails
	Work with landowners to establish public access to trails on private land where they enhance the existing trail network.	Open Space Committee; Forest and Trails Committee; Franklin Land Trust	Ongoing	Volunteer time; CPA
	For lands with 10-year public trail easements, develop a process by which the Town considers permanently protecting trail corridors for public use after the restriction expires.			
	Evaluate Town-owned or private properties for the potential for a wheelchair accessible trail with scenic vistas. Create wheelchair accessible trail.	Forestry and Trails Committee; Open Space Committee; Franklin Land Trust	Year 2	Volunteer time; MassTrails grant; MA ADA Improvement Grant Program

³ FRCOG, “DRAFT Regional Pedestrian Plan for Franklin County” (2021): <https://frcog.org/draft-regional-pedestrian-plan-for-franklin-county-available-for-review/>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
C.3 Improve Town recreation facilities and open space resources for better access and availability for all types of users.	Coordinate with the Select Board and Town Meeting to prioritize and implement the recommendations in the ADA Self-Evaluations from 2017 and 2021 (see Appendix B).	Select Board; Parks and Recreation Committee; School Committee; Open Space Committee	Year 1	MA ADA Improvement Grant Program
	Consider designing and developing the Fournier Forest, located at the Grammar School, into a family-oriented community forest with trail options, picnic and play areas, views, educational interpretive signage, and adequate trail entrance amenities.	Forest and Trails Committee; Open Space Committee; Select Board	Year 2	Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program; LWCF
	Reevaluate the Bigelow property (Town-owned land next to Howland Cemetery) for how it could be better used and conduct improvements, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove and manage invasive species Consider implementing concept design from the Conway Pollinator Action Plan Create mown access (regularly mown paths) Plant trees Install seating area 	Open Space Committee; Friends of the South River	Year 2	LWCF
	Consider the Town-owned property next to the Burkeville Bridge for a potential picnic area simultaneously with implementation of the South River flood mitigation project identified for the same site; conduct needed invasive species management.	Select Board; Open Space Committee; Friends of the South River	Year 5	LWCF; MVP
C.4 Provide Conway residents with structured programming that supports use and enjoyment of Conway's natural environment, open space resources, and history.	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. Use guided hikes to familiarize residents with trails, meet landowners whose property trails may cross, and learn proper trail etiquette and maintenance techniques. Begin by generating a list of people to lead walks.	Forest and Trails Committee; Open Space Committee; Cultural Council	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Develop a guided historical tour with interpretive signage of architecture and natural places in Conway, focusing on the land use history of the South River by publicizing existing materials, creating location markers, and managing permissions and visual access.	Open Space Committee; Friends of the South River; Historical Society; Field Memorial Library	Year 2	MassHumanities Grant; Mass Cultural Council
GOAL D: Ensure that the Conway Community has good access to open space and recreation information and opportunities.				
D.1 Ensure access to information about open space, recreation, and multi-use trail opportunities from a variety of print and digital sources.	Post information about public-access trails, open space parcels, and recreation facilities and expectations for use in an easy to find place on the Town website.	Town Administrator; Open Space Committee; Trails and	Year 1	Volunteer Time
D.2 Ensure access to information about natural resources, environmental protection, and climate change resilience from a variety of print and digital sources.	Contribute regular articles to <i>Conway Currents</i> on a range of environmental/conservation topics informed by the 2021 OSRP survey, to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife habitat and biodiversity, Flood resilience, Climate resilience, Forest stewardship, including specific objectives and opportunities for forest stewardship plans (e.g. DCR Forest Stewardship Program, Forests for the Birds, Forests for the Fish), Land protection assistance, Land protection news, and Drinking water protection. 	Open Space Committee; volunteers	Year 1	Volunteer time