

5. Creation of Accessible Conservation and Recreation Facilities

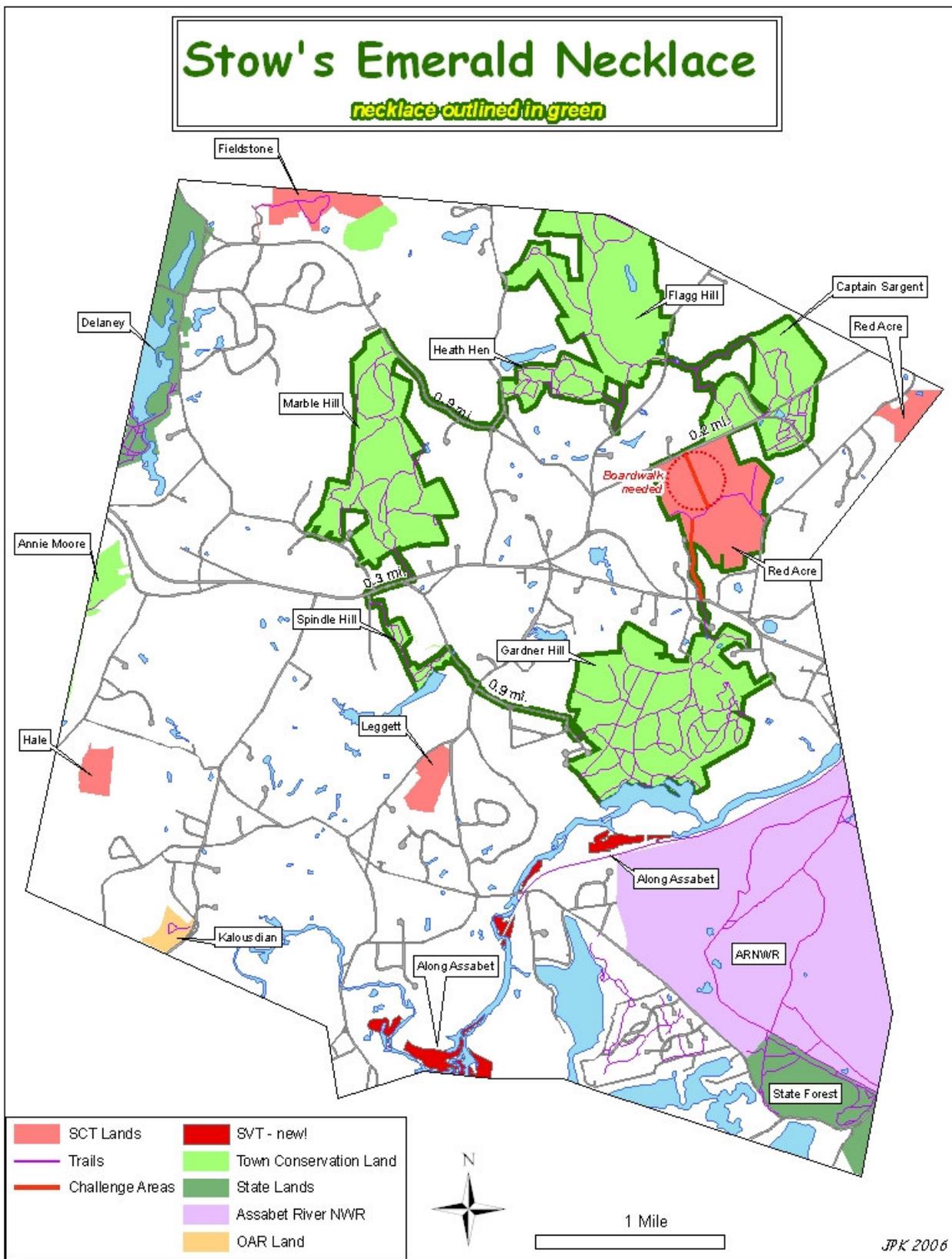
This Open Space and Recreation Plan includes an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation in the Appendix. The Committee evaluated each of Stow's major conservation and recreation facilities to determine the level of accessibility that exists at present for individuals with disabilities. Many of the town's facility have steep grades – for example, Marble Hill, Spindle Hill, or Flagg Hill, but several areas were identified and prioritized for follow up to explore the feasibility of improving access. It should be noted that such improvements would also help those pushing carriages or strollers. The areas with the greatest promise for improvement include:

- A. Pine Bluffs Recreation Area – where minor improvements would provide access to the picnic area overlooking the lake and the bathrooms.
- B. Town Forest – where a one-way trail might be able to be created from the parking lot over, and then alongside the river.
- C. Captain Sargent Conservation Area – where a short Loop Trail might be created from Tuttle Lane; although it will need to be designed so as to avoid conflict with ongoing agricultural use of this land.

The Plan recommends that the Conservation Commission and Recreation Commission work together to evaluate these opportunities further and design a plan for improvements, and that any new recreational field complex be designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.



Playground at Pine Bluffs/Town Beach



C. Highest Priority Management Needs

1. Education Regarding the Community and Fiscal Importance of Open Space

Stow has done a good job protecting open space over the years. The community is now facing increased needs for land to meet other municipal needs that are the result of growth and development, including schools, playing fields, a senior center, affordable housing and other uses. Inevitably there are some who look to conservation land as a “free” solution to meet these needs. In addition, there remains a misperception that conservation land “costs” the town money since it does not generate tax revenue. It is hoped that this Plan will be a good first step in highlighting the continuing need to protect open space in Stow. However, the plan also recommends that there be additional community education and outreach led by the Stow Conservation Trust and Conservation Commission on these issues.

2. Improved Coordination among the various Agencies and Organizations involved in Open Space Protection

Stow is fortunate to have many organizations and agencies involved in open space protection. These include the Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board, Stow Conservation Trust, Sudbury Valley Trustees and state and federal agencies. The Plan recommends increased coordination and communication among these entities to ensure that the Town is making the most of the next ten to fifteen years – by which time most important land use decisions will have been made in Stow. The Plan recommends a variety of actions to improve coordination among various organizations and agencies involved in open space protection in Stow.

