

## Section 8

### Actions for Meeting These Needs

As a result of analysis of the information contained in this plan, the following Needs and Actions have been identified. The timetable for the completion of these actions is contained in the next section.

#### **A. Preserve, protect and enhance Stow's open space and important natural resources using both traditional and creative open space protection tools.**

##### **Goals:**

1. Protect agricultural lands to preserve and enhance Stow's agricultural base, and maintaining its viability for the long term.
2. Protect lands that provide areas for active and passive recreation including ball fields and trails.
3. Protect lands that link existing conservation holdings in Stow and surrounding communities.
4. Protect lands in areas of town currently underserved by protected open space.
5. Protect land with significant surface and groundwater resources.
6. Protect land that will preserve Stow's Small town nature.
7. Protect important natural habitats and wildlife corridors.
8. Protect important scenic vistas.
9. Protect land with significant historical or cultural resources.

##### **Actions:**

1. The Open Space Committee should continue to evaluate parcels of open land and assist the town in working proactively to protect the most important areas and in making decisions about priorities as parcels become available to the town. Consideration should be given to the factors above, as well as other elements of the existing parcel ranking methodology which is included as Appendix 1 of this report and which should be updated by the Open Space Committee. Parcel ranking should include lands in preferential tax programs as well as other priority parcels identified in this Plan.

*Responsibility: Open Space Committee*

*Priority: High*

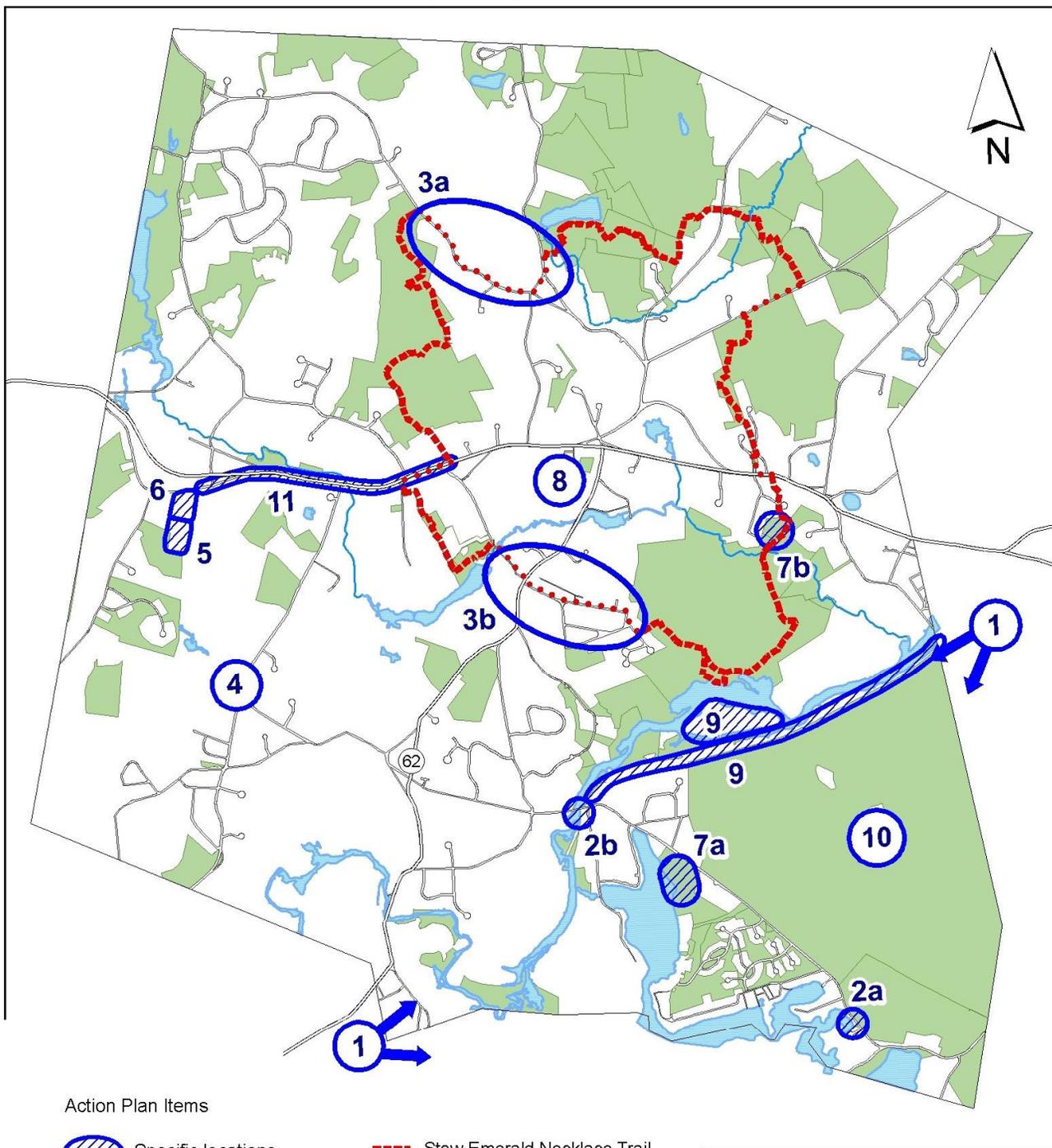
2. Encourage the creation of a town committee, perhaps the Agricultural Commission, or a new nonprofit organization, possibly working in cooperation with the Stow Conservation Trust, that will focus on promoting Stow's "green" tourism potential including the promotion of local products. Consider the potential for marketing "Stow Apples" as a recognized "brand" in Massachusetts and New England markets.

*Responsibility: Board of Selectmen; Open Space Committee, Agricultural Commission, Stow Conservation Trust*

*Priority: High*

3. The town should complete a Scenic Resource Inventory, which highlights important landscapes and prioritizes them for protection. This Inventory should build on the scenic priorities identified in this plan and in the Freedom's Way Landscape Inventory. Special attention should be given to

## Stow - Open Space Action Plan



Action Plan Items

-  Specific locations
-  General locations

 Stow Emerald Necklace Trail

- 1. Assabet Rail Trail Completion
- 2. Canoe Access Improvement
  - 2a. Lake Boon boat ramp
  - 2b. Assabet R. access near bridge
- 3. Completion of Emerald Necklace
  - 3a. Complete trail section
  - 3b. Complete trail section
- 4. Additional land protection in Underserved Area
- 5. Agricultural land protection - Snow property
- 6. Additional Playing Fields - Snow property
- 7. AWD Accessibility
  - 7a. Pine Bluff access
  - 7b. Memorial Field access
- 8. Town-wide Chapter 61 policy
- 9. Track Road / Crow Island Protection
- 10. Extend National Wildlife Refuge boundary
- 11. Expand sidewalk network along Great Road

0 1 Mile

Stow Emerald Necklace data provided by Stow Conservation Trust.  
Map produced March 2008.

small, yet visually prominent parcels along roadsides, at intersections, and along navigable waterways.

*Responsibility: Historical Commission, Open Space Committee*

*Priority: Medium*

4. When high priority parcels are proposed for development, the Planning Board should take advantage of the provision of Section 81U of the Subdivision Control Law which allows the temporary set aside of park and open space that the town may be interested in purchasing in the future. The town should also consider adopting a bylaw which provides greater incentives for – or mandates – open space residential development on lands that have been identified as priorities in this Plan.

*Responsibility: Planning Board*

*Priority: Medium*

5. The Planning Board should work with the Conservation Commission to develop standard procedures for the provision of open space and conservation restrictions in conjunction with development projects and should develop a list of cases where applicants have not met their requirements to transfer land to dedicated open space and work with the landowners to complete these conveyances. A “model” conservation restriction and deed should be developed and provided to applicants.

*Responsibility: Planning Board, Conservation Commission*

*Priority: High*

6. The Conservation Commission should continue to seek opportunities to lease existing appropriate parcels of conservation land for agricultural purposes.

*Responsibility: Conservation Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

7. The town should maintain its existing Recreation-Conservation zoning, and assess the feasibility of expanding it to include important surface water resources.

*Responsibility: Planning Board*

*Priority: Medium*

8. The town should map important wildlife corridors and connections between protected areas and adopt a Wildlife Habitat Corridor overlay zoning district.

*Responsibility: Planning Board (bylaw), Conservation Commission (mapping)*

*Priority: Medium*

9. The Conservation Commission should update its wetlands regulations to create standards for bylaw provisions relative to wildlife habitat, wetland buffers and vernal pools.

*Responsibility: Conservation Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

10. The town should actively seek to protect land in the southwest quadrant of Stow and create a network of trail linkages in this part of town. The Planning Board should consider an overlay zone in this area that encourages or requires planned conservation development with a land conservation “master plan” for the open space designed to foster such linkages. The Open Space Committee should develop a land conservation master plan for this area.

*Responsibility: Open Space Comm., Community Preservation Comm., Planning Board, SCT*

*Priority: High*

11. The town should continue to encourage the use of Green Building Design and “Low Impact Development” techniques to minimize the impact of new development on natural resources, maximize groundwater recharge, and foster connectivity of wildlife habitat.

*Responsibility: Planning Board, Conservation Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

**B. Increase public use and awareness of the value and importance of Stow’s open space and recreational lands through increased public access and educational forums in order to increase funding available for protection of open space and recreational lands in Stow.**

**Goals:**

1. Educate Stow residents about the importance and fiscal benefits of open space protection.
2. Help Stow residents understand the implications of build out and the anticipated timeframe for change.
3. Maintain strong partnerships between town boards, and among boards and the Stow Conservation Trust
4. Maintain support for continued town funding (through CPA and general appropriations as needed) for protection of important parcels and continued protection and stewardship of existing conservation holdings.

**Actions:**

1. Advocate for continued enrollment in the Community Preservation Act and continue to demonstrate a good track record of identifying and recommending projects that address Stow’s needs for open space, affordable housing, historic preservation and recreation.  
*Responsibility: Community Preservation Committee* *Priority: High*
2. Provide high quality, credible information to municipal leaders, civic organizations and residents about the property tax implications of various growth scenarios. Enlist the assistance of the Stow Conservation Trust in such an outreach effort where appropriate.  
*Responsibility: Open Space Committee, Stow Conservation Trust* *Priority: High*
3. Encourage joint affordable housing-open space projects where appropriate to the site in order to foster support for both of these important municipal needs.  
*Responsibility: Community Preservation Committee, Open Space Committee, Stow Conservation Trust, Housing Partnership and/or Trust* *Priority: High*
4. The town should continue to make an annual appropriation of funds to the town’s conservation fund to provide seed money for land acquisitions and assist with land management and maintenance.  
*Responsibility: Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen* *Priority: High*

5. The town should seek EOEA Self Help funds and other outside funds for open space projects where they are consistent with the goals of this plan.  
*Responsibility: Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen* *Priority: Medium/As Needed*
6. Priority for the open space portion of CPA funds should be given to acquisition of land and rights in land and to projects that are consistent with the Open Space and Recreation Plan. Projects that leverage funds from other sources should be given additional priority.  
*Responsibility: Community Preservation Committee, Board of Selectmen* *Priority: High/Ongoing*

**C. Better coordinate public and private efforts in order to effectively accomplish open space protection goals given the limited window of opportunity for land conservation in Stow.**

**Goals:**

1. Improved inter-board communication on issues important to open space protection
2. Incorporation of open space values in capital project planning and siting.
3. Continue to emphasize small scale solutions to the affordable housing issue (e.g. deed restrictions on existing units, small town-sponsored projects) as an alternative to large 40B developments.

**Actions:**

1. The Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee and Stow Conservation Trust should work to build stronger and more effective working relationships and seek to employ the strengths of each body in a coordinated fashion. An Open Space Coordinating Council should be formed that is comprised of representatives from each body that will work to ensure coordination and meet as needed – perhaps twice a year.

*Responsibility: Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission,  
Community Preservation Committee, Stow Conservation Trust*

*Priority: High/Year 1*

2. The Board of Selectmen and Capital Planning Committee should be proactive in working with the Open Space Committee, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and others to identify and secure sites to meet future (long-term) municipal needs.

*Responsibility: Board of Selectmen; Capital Planning Committee;  
Planning Board, Conservation Commission*

*Priority: High*

3. In contemplating taking and disposition of tax title lands, the Board of Selectmen and Treasurer should consult with the Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and other key municipal boards. Lands that are important for conservation should be transferred to the control of Conservation Commission; other lands important for other uses should be transferred to the control of the appropriate Town Board.

*Responsibility: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee,  
Planning Board, Board of Assessors*

*Priority: Medium/As Needed*

4. The Planning Board and Conservation Commission should develop clear procedures for the conveyance of land to be set aside as open space as part of the development approval process. Where necessary bylaws and/or rules and regulations should be amended to make clear that the

preference for the set aside of open space should be (in order): the Town, under the custody and control of the Conservation Commission; the Stow Conservation Trust (or other private conservation organization); and only if neither are interested, a private homeowners/condominium association, provided that the land is subject to a permanent Conservation Restriction held by the Town or the Trust. Locally-adopted regulations should address timing of these conveyances and payment of due diligence costs (survey, title, etc.) should be the responsibility of the applicant.

*Responsibility: Planning Board and Conservation Commission*

*Priority: High/Year 1 or 2*

5. The Open Space Committee should work with the Board of Selectmen to develop a formal policy for processing notices of withdrawal or sale of lands enrolled in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B that ensures that such parcels are given due consideration for municipal needs.

*Responsibility: Open Space Committee/Board of Selectmen*

*Priority: High/Year 1*

6. Stow should consider adding additional staffing capacity in both the planning and conservation departments to focus on implementation of the actions in this plan as well as in the master plan. We have many great volunteers and staff, but given the urgency, we need additional professional planning and conservation capacity to guide us through this important period in Stow's growth.

*Responsibility: Board of Selectmen; Planning Board, Conservation Comm.*

*Priority: Medium*

#### **D. Provide additional opportunities for active and passive recreation**

##### **Goals**

1. Provide additional playing fields to meet municipal needs
2. Encourage completion of Assabet River Rail Trail to link with Maynard and Hudson
3. Encourage completion of "Emerald Necklace trail" linking conservation areas with walking trails.
4. Provide additional public access points to Lake Boon and improve Sudbury Rd. Assabet River access.
5. Ensure that existing protected land is adequately maintained/managed
6. Enhance handicapped accessibility at selected conservation and recreation lands

##### **Actions:**

1. Complete protection of the remainder of Crow Island/Track Road for conservation and recreational purposes.

*Responsibility: Board of Selectmen; Stow Conservation Trust*

*Priority: High*

2. Identify and secure sites for the provision of additional active recreational fields as identified in Section 7. In addition, make provision for recreational fields to accommodate future town needs within any future school site.

*Responsibility: Board of Selectmen, School Building Comm, Recreation Comm*

*Priority: High*

3. Seek opportunities to protect additional open land around Lake Boon and to improve the boat ramp to the lake.

*Responsibility: Open Space Committee, Recreation Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

4. Complete a more detailed evaluation of the feasibility of improving access for persons with disabilities and the conservation and recreational areas identified in Section 7. Build accessibility into any new recreational facility development.

*Responsibility: Conservation Commission; Recreation Commission*

*Priority: High*

5. Continue to coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the review and implementation of their management plan for the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge. Encourage expansion of the Refuge boundary to allow for important future acquisitions.

*Responsibility: Board of Selectmen; Open Space Committee*

*Priority: Medium*

6. Identify and work to protect or secure easements over missing links in the Emerald Necklace walking trail network.

*Responsibility: Stow Conservation Trust, Open Space Committee; Conservation Comm. Priority: High*

7. Continue to expand the network of volunteers that assist with trail maintenance and land management.

*Responsibility: Conservation Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

8. Update and improve the recreation portion of Stow's Community Preservation Plan.

*Responsibility: Community Preservation Committee, Recreation Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

9. Continue to expand the town's sidewalk network in appropriate locations – such as an extension of the existing sidewalk westward from Harvard Road toward the Bolton line.

*Responsibility: Planning Board; Highway Supervisor*

*Priority: Medium*

10. Improve the current Assabet River boat ramp at Sudbury Road and secure this site permanently through acquisition by the Town or conservation restriction/easement.

*Responsibility: Conservation Commission; Recreation Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

### **E. Work to maintain important elements of town's rural and historic character.**

#### **Goals:**

1. Maintain and enhance roadside shade trees
2. Preserve the character and integrity of Stow's winding scenic roadways
3. Preserve stone walls

**Actions:**

1. Identify scenic roads and support and adopt a Scenic Roads Preservation General Bylaw that limits alteration of trees and stone walls along the town's scenic roadways.

*Responsibility: Planning Board, Historic Commission*

*Priority: Medium*

2. The town should seek to replace any shade trees that must be removed along public ways.

*Responsibility: Highway Supervisor, Tree Warden*

*Priority: Medium*

**F. Slow the pace of buildout in order to give the town more time to respond to the need to provide municipal services, protect key lands and provide additional affordable housing, and work to reduce the town's overall projected build-out by 25-50% through changes in zoning and additional land protection.**

**Goals:**

1. Minimize the impact of additional development on Stow's winding scenic roadways to avoid proposals to widen these roadways or increase the number of traffic lights.

2. Minimize the impact on additional development on Stow's schools in order to maintain a high quality education and reduce expenditures for increases in school capacity

3. Minimize the impact of additional development on Stow's municipal infrastructure and services.

4. Maintain the current "small-scale" pattern of residential and commercial development to maintain the town's rural character.

5. Protect one additional acre of land for every additional acre that is developed in Stow to maintain the balance between developed and protected land.

**Actions:**

1. Consider adoption of a bylaw that would provide for a temporary annual building permit cap as needed to provide time to plan for desired growth and development.

*Responsibility: Planning Board*

*Priority: High*

2. Consider adoption of a bylaw that would provide for submittal of a open space development plan ('cluster' or planned conservation development (PCD) plan) for developments of greater than 5 units (including ANR), with the Planning Board given the discretion to determine whether a PCD or conventional plan should be developed, given site conditions.

*Responsibility: Planning Board*

*Priority: High*

3. Continue to investigate the feasibility of a transfer of development rights bylaw that will concentrate development in appropriate areas with infrastructure and reduce development in areas that are a high priority for conservation, as identified in this Plan. In any TDR proposal, maintain equitable distribution of density (i.e. receiving areas) within neighborhoods or sections of the community and ensure that "sending areas" are permanently protected.

*Responsibility: Planning Board*

*Priority: Medium*

4. Ensure that any proposals to modify zoning to promote economic development, affordable housing or compact development either will minimize net increases in build out.

*Responsibility: Planning Board*

*Priority: High/Ongoing*

5. Report annually on progress toward the 1:1 land protection to land development goal identified above. Included in the protected category should be land permanently set aside as open space through the development review process.

*Responsibility: Conservation Commission & SCT*

*Priority: High/Ongoing*



Marble Hill Conservation Area & Pompositticut Fields, Off Rt. 117