
SECTION

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PLAN SUMMARY

The 2010 Montague Open Space and Recreation Plan is a comprehensive inventory of the Town's natural, agricultural and recreational resources and a plan for their stewardship and protection. It contains an analysis of the Town's needs and goals and objectives designed to guide important decisions about the use, conservation and development of the town's land and resources. A Seven-Year Action Plan provides real steps that the Town can take towards achieving these goals.

The Plan emphasizes the remarkable wealth of the Town's resources, including:



- Large blocks of contiguous forest
- Prime farmland and working agricultural businesses
- Abundant supplies of high-quality ground and surface waters
- Three major rivers, other perennial and intermittent streams and wetlands
- The Montague Plains, with its unusual flora and fauna
- Public parks, playgrounds and recreational programs
- Scenic and historic landscapes

These resources provide residents with clean air and water, jobs, and abundant and varied recreational opportunities. Montague's forests and farmland give the Town its rural character, contribute to the local property tax base, and are at the heart of what residents love about living here.

The Seven-Year Action Plan, developed from the results of the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Survey and discussions at six public meetings and a public forum, identifies priority objectives for the Town to focus on over the next seven years. These priority objectives are:

- Encourage permanent protection of large blocks of contiguous forest and establishment of corridors between existing protected forest parcels.
- Encourage permanent protection of land along the banks of the Connecticut, Sawmill, and Millers Rivers and support ecological restoration efforts in these watersheds.

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- Promote cleanup and redevelopment of abandoned and underutilized industrial and commercial properties.
 - Develop water conservation strategies.
 - Promote conservation of valuable agricultural soils and permanent protection of farmland through the APR program, consistent with the plans and desires of landowners.
 - Explore the feasibility of developing a park in Montague City.
 - Support the formation of a volunteer “Friends of the Montague Plains” group to assist in stewardship and management of the Plains.
 - Revise Montague Zoning Bylaws to direct development to appropriate areas without devaluing the land and, where possible, to allow clustering of homes on smaller lots to protect open space when land is developed.
 - Consider adoption of a local wetland protection bylaw.
 - Investigate funding mechanisms for Town acquisition of open space, including adoption of the Community Preservation Act by Town Meeting with at least a 1% property tax surcharge.
 - Develop a Right to Farm Bylaw to protect farmers from complaints about odors and sounds due to normal farming activities.
 - Ensure affordability and accessibility of recreational areas and programs to all Montague residents, including development of at least one ADA-accessible facility.
 - Promote environmental education in Montague schools, with a special focus on local resources.
 - Partner with the state Department of Fish and Game to improve management of the Plains.

Montague is fortunate in comparison to many towns in Massachusetts, in that thousands of acres of land with important natural resources have been permanently protected from development, and that private property owners continue to maintain their land as farms and forest and practice good stewardship. If there is one message to take away from this plan, however, it is that residents should not take Montague’s natural, agricultural and recreational resources for granted. Thousands of acres of farm and forest lands remain highly vulnerable to potential development. Conservation of these lands will require increased public awareness of their value and a concerted, cooperative effort on behalf of landowners, elected officials, municipal boards and committees and resident volunteers.

