



**Massachusetts
Statewide Comprehensive
Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023**

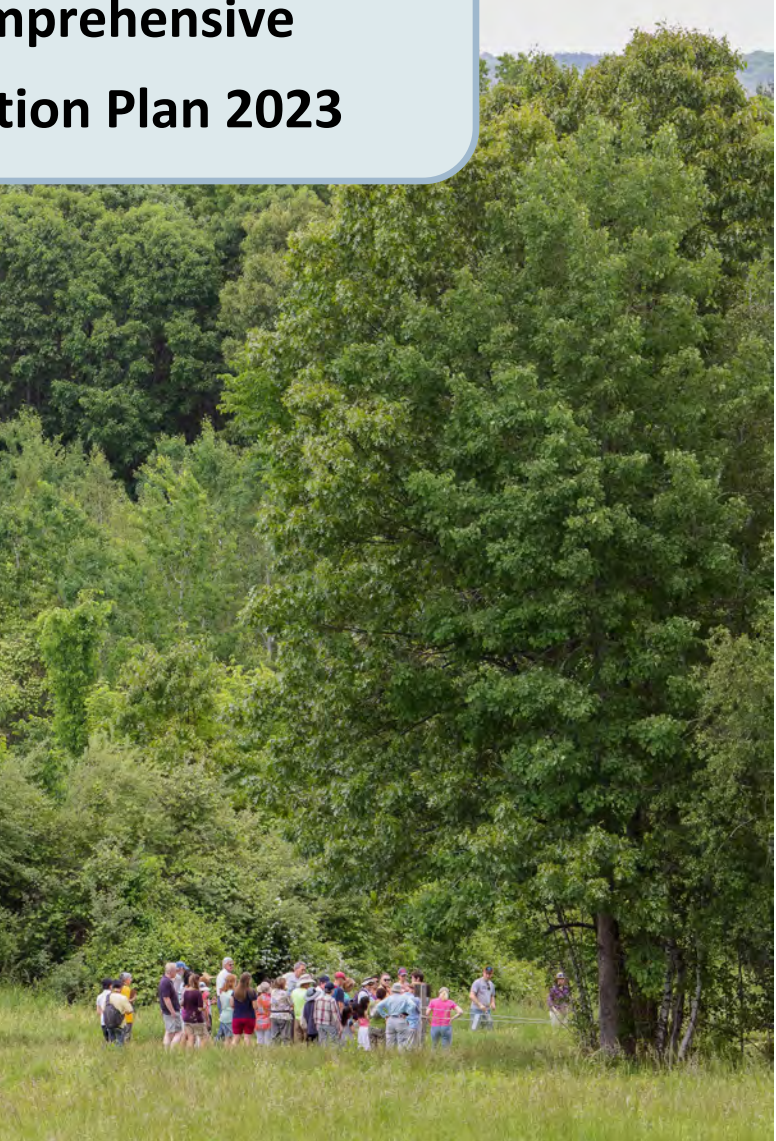
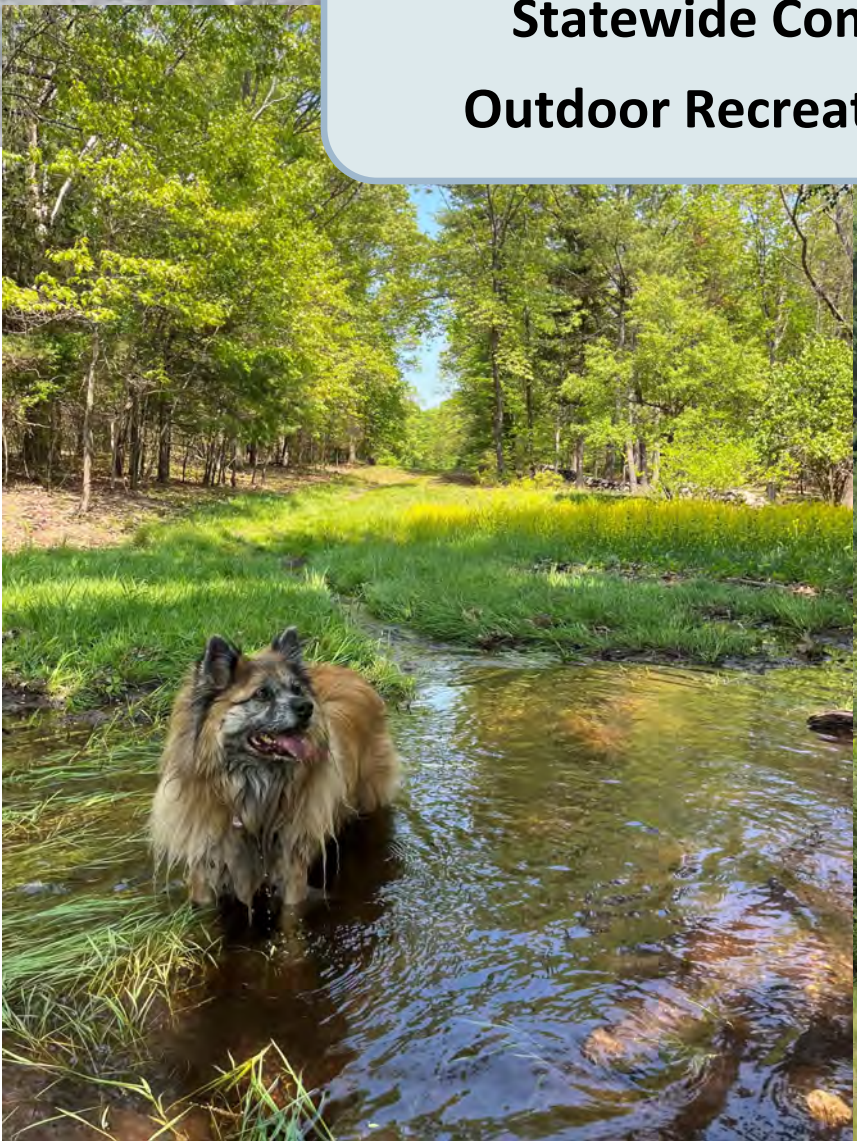


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Table of Contents

Letter from Governor Healey	Page i
Chapter One—Introduction.....	Page 1
Significance of Open Space to Massachusetts’ History.....	Page 1
Benefits of Parks and Open Space.....	Page 2
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans	Page 2
Land and Water Conservation Fund	Page 4
State-funded Open Space and Recreation Grant Programs	Page 7
Massachusetts SCORP 2023	Page 9
Outdoor Recreation Planning at the Local Level	Page 12
Chapter Two—Massachusetts Outdoor Recreation Setting	Page 15
Biogeography	Page 15
Population Trends	Page 23
Economic Profile	Page 25
Development Impacts	Page 27
Chapter Three—Outdoor Recreation Supply	Page 29
Public Land	Page 30
Private Non-Profit & For-Profit Land Owners	Page 33
EEA Online Survey Results—Recreation Users	Page 34
EEA Online Survey Results—Land Trusts Results	Page 35
Chapter Four—Outdoor Recreation Demand	Page 38
EEA Online Survey Results—Recreation Users	Page 38
EEA Online Survey Results—Municipal Recreation Providers..	Page 39
ERG Survey Results	Page 40
Chapter Five—Goals and Objectives	Page 47
Appendix A—Wetlands Component	Page 55
Appendix B—Executive Summary from the ERG Survey	Page 60
Appendix C—Massachusetts Open Project Selection Process	Page 64



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MAURA T. HEALEY
GOVERNOR

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

June 23, 2023

Residents of the Commonwealth:

It is with great excitement that I present to you the Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023 (SCORP). The SCORP helps guide the distribution of federal money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to state agencies and municipalities for the acquisition of open space, renovation of existing parks, development of new parks, and trail development. I would like to thank all of you who responded to online surveys and attended meetings on this subject. Your responses underscore the importance of beaches and other water-based recreation, trails, and neighborhood parks, and provided the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Division of Conservation Services with the building blocks necessary to construct our goals for open space and recreation spending over the next five years.

Since the 2017 SCORP was completed, the federal government enacted the Great American Outdoors Act to permanently fund the LWCF program at \$900 million annually. Combined with these federal funds, the Commonwealth has increased its commitment in funding and programming to advance outdoor recreation and land conservation. This includes the launch of the Office of Outdoor Recreation to advance equity and access to outdoor recreation opportunities, creation of the Forests as Climate Solutions Initiative to invest in forest conservation, and reinvestment in our state parks system.

As we look ahead, the Healey-Driscoll Administration is committed to ensuring that everyone in Massachusetts can experience all that the outdoors have to offer. The climate crisis means rising temperatures, especially in our urban communities, and strains on our natural environment. Equitable access to swimmable waters and shady areas is critical for public health. Moreover, all of our residents deserve access to the fulfillment that can only come from enjoying the beautiful outdoors. These public spaces belong to all of us, and the SCORP will help us to deliver on this goal in the coming years, while building on Massachusetts' established national environmental leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. T. Healey".

Maura T. Healey
Governor

Chapter One – Introduction

Significance of Open Space to Massachusetts' History

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a proud and rich history of recognizing the importance of open space and recreation to its people. In 1634, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts purchased the land that now makes up the Boston Common from a settler to use the land for livestock grazing, establishing the nation's first public park. Massachusetts also boasts the nation's oldest land trust, The Trustees of Reservations, which was established by an act of the legislature in 1891. The Trustees' founder, Charles Eliot, was a landscape architect concerned about the rapid development of the land in and around Boston. He proposed that land be set aside for the enjoyment of urban residents to be used as a respite from the noise and crowded living conditions of the city. Even with our small size, Massachusetts has the most land trusts of any state in the nation.

Since the 1630s, Massachusetts has allowed public access to land, such as tidelands and great ponds, for fishing. The establishment of the Metropolitan Parks District by the state legislature in 1892 gave state government the authority to own land for conservation purposes and administer its use. The acquisition of Mt. Greylock State Reservation in 1898 was the first land owned by the Commonwealth to be used solely for forest preservation.

Federal government programs have benefited the state for almost a century. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933. The CCC was a public works program that opened the state forests and parks to Massachusetts residents by building campgrounds and picnic areas. Until then, most of the state-owned land was inaccessible.

In 1972, the Massachusetts legislature and electorate voted to add Article 97 to our state's Constitution. This amendment guarantees that "the people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of their environment. Lands and easements taken or acquired for such purposes shall not be used for other purposes or otherwise disposed of except by laws enacted by a two-thirds vote taken by yeas and nays, of each branch of the general court." Both state- and municipal-owned land acquired for conservation or recreation purposes are protected by Article 97. In addition to the legislative two-thirds vote, municipal conservation or recreation commissions must approve the conversion, as well as the town meeting or city council.

Replacement land of equal value and utility must also be found and dedicated to recreation or conservation purposes. Article 97 was strengthened in November 2022 when Governor Charlie Baker signed the Public Lands Preservation Act, which codifies into law the requirement that land converted for other use be replaced with open space land of equal value and utility.

Benefits of Parks and Open Space

For generations, residents of the Commonwealth have appreciated the benefits of parks and open spaces. Open spaces give our residents a place to gather with friends and family, to be outdoors, to have fun, and for physical fitness. With the impacts of climate change becoming clearer every day, parks provide a respite to increasingly frequent heat events with water-based recreation and shade structures. Forested conservation areas help capture and sequester carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

The benefits bestowed by parks and open space make Massachusetts a competitive state in other industries. The tourism sector has stated that the outdoors is one of the top reasons people visit the state. Businesses state that the availability of outdoor amenities is one of the reasons that they locate here. Perhaps most importantly, parks and open spaces convey the character of a community and lend a sense of place – a picturesque Town Common is quintessentially New England.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans

The National Park Service (NPS) requires states to complete a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every five years to remain eligible for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant Program. It is a document that is created through a planning process that identifies the outdoor recreational needs of residents, the outdoor recreational opportunities available within the state, and the gap between them.

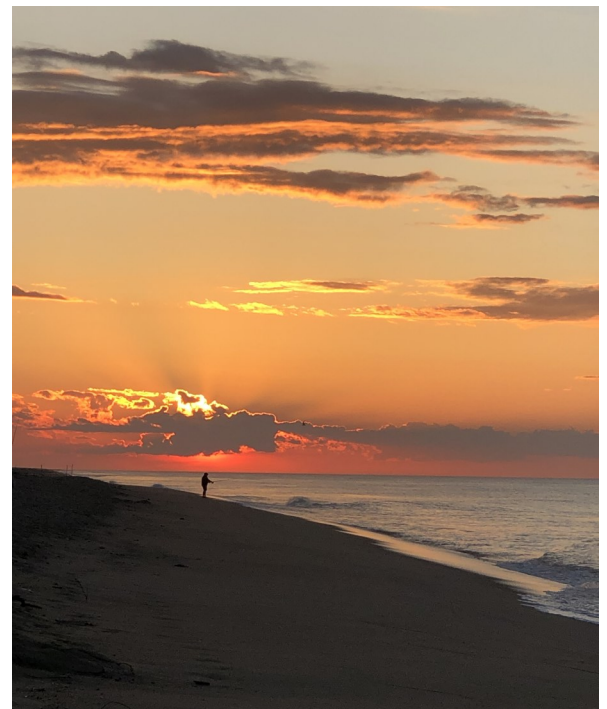
The SCORP is required by Section 6(d) of the LWCF Act of 1965. At minimum, according to the LWCF Federal Financial Assistance Manual Volume 71, the SCORP must include:

- a. The name of the State agency that will have the authority to represent and act for the State in dealing with the Secretary for purposes of 54 U.S.C. § 200305;

- b. An evaluation of the demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities in the State;
- c. A program for the implementation of the plan;
- d. Certification by the governor that ample opportunity for public participation has taken place in plan development; and
- e. Other necessary information as may be determined by the Secretary.

The minimum requirements of a SCORP are:

- a. The plan must describe the process and methodology(ies) chosen by the state to meet the guidelines as set forth in this section.
- b. The planning process must include ample opportunity for public participation involving all segments of the State's population.
- c. The plan must be comprehensive. The plan will be considered comprehensive if it:
 - 1. Identifies outdoor recreation issues of statewide importance based upon, but not limited to, input from the public participation program. The plan must also identify those issues the State will address through the LWCF and those issues which may be addressed by other means;
 - 2. Evaluates demand, i.e., public outdoor recreation preferences, but not necessarily through quantitative statewide surveys or analyses; and
 - 3. Evaluates the supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities, but not necessarily through quantitative statewide inventories.
- d. The plan must have an implementation program that identifies the state's strategies, priorities, and actions for the obligation of its LWCF apportionment. The implementation program must be of sufficient detail for use in developing project



Truro, Photo by Amy Singler

selection criteria for the state's OPSP so projects submitted to the NPS for LWCF funding will implement the SCORP.

- e. The plan must contain or reference a wetlands priority component consistent with Section 303 of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986.
 - 1. Be consistent with the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan, prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
 - 2. Provide evidence of consultation with the state agency responsible for fish and wildlife resources;
 - 3. Contain a listing of those wetland types that should receive priority for acquisition; and
 - 4. Consider outdoor recreation opportunities associated with its wetlands resources for meeting the state's public outdoor recreation needs.
- f. In accordance with 54 U.S.C. S 200350(d)(1)(D), the Secretary may determine other necessary information the plan should contain, which will be conveyed through other means such as the annual apportionment letter.
- g. The plan may consist of a single document or may be comprised of multiple documents as long as the guidelines as set forth in this section are met.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was authorized by the federal Land and Water Act in 1965 with the intention of preserving, protecting, and assuring the availability of close-to-home outdoor recreation areas and conservation land for all current and future citizens of the United States. By establishing a steady source of funding through offshore oil and gas receipts, Congress ensured continued state and federal investment in outdoor recreation. Congress distributes the funds to the states on an annual basis. Through the first 49 years of the program, \$16.7 billion had been awarded to more than 40,400 projects, protecting over three million acres of land across the country. Nearly 30,000 grants have been awarded to development/renovation projects, including those that have improved accessibility for people with disabilities. Almost 11,000 grants have been awarded nationally for land acquisition.

The LWCF program has two components — the federal program and the stateside program. The federal program funds the acquisition of land and water conservation areas by federal agencies, such as the National Park Service (NPS), the Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The funds are directly appropriated to these agencies by Congress. The stateside program funding is awarded to each state and territory by formula. States award grants through a competitive process to communities, state agencies, or federally recognized tribes for the acquisition of land, the development of new parks, renovations to existing parks, and the development of trails. The LWCF grant program requires a 50% contribution from the awardee.

The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program was established in partnership with Congress in 2014 by NPS. It is a nationally competitive LWCF program with the projects being selected by the agency and a team of reviewers. The goal of ORLP is to provide new or significantly improved recreational opportunities for economically-disadvantaged communities in larger urbanized areas currently underserved by recreation resources. So far, Massachusetts has been the recipient of two ORLP grant awards – a \$995,647.50 award for the City of Worcester’s Tacoma Street Playground in the FY20 grant round and a \$1.5 million award for the City of Springfield’s Neal Park in the FY22 grant round.

LWCF in Massachusetts

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs’ (EEA) Division of Conservation Services (DCS) administers the LWCF program on behalf of the NPS for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Secretary of EEA is appointed by the Governor to act as the State Liaison Officer for the grant program and the Director of EEA’s DCS is the Alternate State Liaison Officer. Also serving as an Alternate State Liaison Officer is the LWCF Stateside Coordinator. Liaison officers are authorized to represent and act for the state to the Director of NPS on all LWCF matters. Accepting and administering funds from the NPS on approved LWCF projects is also under their purview.

Any municipality in the Commonwealth with an up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan is eligible to apply for LWCF grants.

LWCF Apportionment by Federal Fiscal Year	
2007	\$617,517
2008	\$508,388
2009	\$598,743
2010	\$841,858
2011	\$812,191
2012	\$917,810
2013	\$869,752
2014	\$919,127
2015	\$906,468
2016	\$2,014,153
2017	\$2,001,040
2018	\$2,122,220
2019	\$3,623,566
2020	\$4,671,930
2021	\$6,219,386
2022	\$5,758,425
2023	\$6,091,269

The Commonwealth's Department of Fish and Game and Department of Conservation and Recreation are also eligible applicants. Massachusetts' two federally recognized tribes, the Mashpee Wampanoags and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head – Aquinnah, may also apply for LWCF grants. Projects are selected using the NPS-approved Open Project Selection Process, which is included in Appendix C.

All LWCF-funded park and conservation areas are protected from development in perpetuity through Section 6(f)(3) of the LWCF Act, as well as Article 97 of the Amendments to Massachusetts' State Constitution. Any land subject to a LWCF grant cannot be converted to non-recreation or non-conservation use without the approval of the state legislature and NPS. Section 6(f)(3) of the LWCF Act and Massachusetts'

A Sample of Our 577 LWCF Projects

In May 2022, the Commonwealth's Department of Fish and Game was awarded a \$497,500 grant to acquire 186 acres that added acreage to its Ashby Wildlife Management Area. The land abuts a previous LWCF grant (Mt. Watatic, 25-00458) and provides additional trails and parking, along with protecting important wildlife habitat and historic and cultural resources. Visitors to the property can hike, hunt, fish, observe wildlife, and study the environment.

The Town of Arlington received a \$306,940 grant to make improvements to its Arlington Reservoir recreation area in September 2021. This park was a previously funded LWCF site (25-00305). The town used the grant funds to make improvements to the existing trail system and boat ramp, renovate the parking lot and entrance pathways, develop a new overlook seating area adjacent to a senior housing facility, implement erosion control measures to protect the reservoir's water quality, install interpretive signage, and plant native landscaping.

The \$1,000,000 Coes Reservoir project in Worcester, awarded in September 2019, built on previously state-funded work undertaken by the city. The grant constructed a fully accessible trail that abuts city-owned low-income housing, built a new overlook, and assisted in wetlands redevelopment.

McConnell Park in Boston received a \$1,000,000 grant in September 2019 to help the city construct new outdoor recreation opportunities to strengthen the health and vitality of citizens and visitors to the park. This was accomplished by renovating, upgrading, and developing facilities throughout the park, including realigning the old ball fields to better serve the public by adding a new little league/softball field, a new little league practice field, a Challenger/T-ball accessible field with artificial turf and surfacing, lighting and amenities for all the field, utilities, site furnishing, and signage.



Coes Reservoir, Worcester, Photo by M.J. Cataldo

Public Lands Preservation Act requires that land of equal value and utility be found and dedicated to outdoor recreation use to replace any converted land. This ensures that LWCF funding supports projects used for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

LWCF has funded 577 projects and awarded over \$130 million in Massachusetts since the program's inception. Some of Massachusetts' most iconic landscapes and recreation areas have been funded in part through the LWCF program. From the Appalachian Trail in the Berkshires to the Cape Cod National Seashore to the United States' first public park, the Boston Common, LWCF money has been used to protect and improve land across the state. The diversity of projects reflects well the flexibility inherent to the LWCF program.

State-funded Open Space and Recreation Grant Programs

Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Program

The LAND Grant Program was established in 1961. It is a municipal grant program for Conservation Commissions and Agricultural Commissions to acquire conservation land. Grants are awarded through a competitive grant program annually. The grant reimburses anywhere between 52% and 70% of the total project cost up to that year's grant award maximum, which is \$500,000 for the FY24 grant round. Land acquired with funding from this program must be open to all Massachusetts residents for appropriate passive recreational use and remains protected in perpetuity.

Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program



Paul C. Jones Working Forest, Leverett and Shutesbury, Photo by Kristin DeBoer

The PARC Grant Program was established in 1977. It is a municipal grant program that funds the acquisition of parkland, the renovation of existing parks, and the development of new parks. Grants are awarded through a competitive grant program annually. The grant reimburses anywhere between 52% and 70% of the total project cost up to that year's grant award maximum, which is \$500,000 for the FY24 grant round. Land purchased or parks improved with funding from this program must be open to all Massachusetts residents for active recreation and remains protected in perpetuity.

Drinking Water Supply Protection (DWSP) Grant Program

The DWSP Grant Program provides financial assistance to public water systems and municipal water departments for the purchase of land or conservation restrictions for the protection of existing or planned, future public drinking water supplies. The grants are awarded on an annual basis and reimburse 60% of the total project cost, up to that year’s grant award maximum, which was \$350,000 in FY23. Protection is permanent and public access required where appropriate.

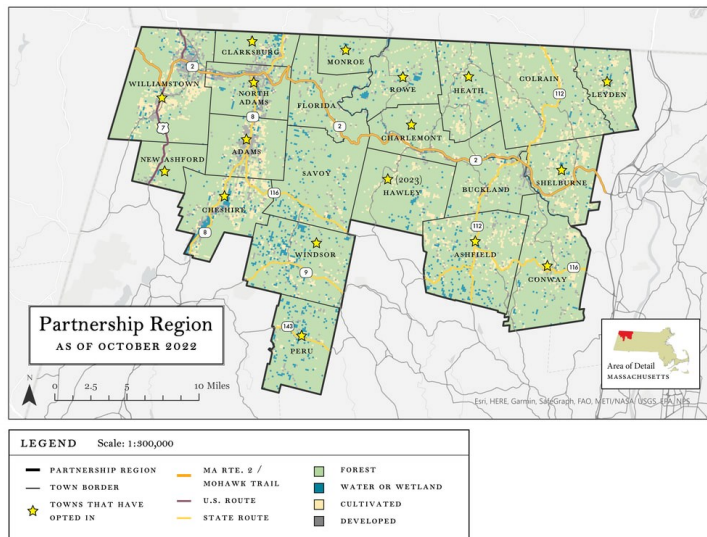
Landscape Partnership Grant Program

The Landscape Partnership Grant Program protects landscape-scale blocks of conservation land. Local, state, and/or federal agencies partner with non-profit groups to protect at contiguous land totaling a minimum of 100-500 acres, depending on the

The Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts

The Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts (formerly Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership) is a unique, homegrown effort to conserve and steward forests and enhance the region’s rural, forest-based economy and help the economic viability of these small towns. Since 2015, a group of towns, local nonprofit organizations, and planners from Franklin and Berkshire Counties have worked cooperatively with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the U.S. Forest Service to develop and begin implementing the vision and goals of the Woodlands Partnership. Authorizing legislation was passed by the State Legislature in 2018 to establish the Woodlands Partnership, its governing body, its purposes, and an investment trust fund. Municipalities in the Partnership region can vote to opt in if they would like to join the Partnership.

A 31-member Board of Directors includes the 17 communities that have voted locally to join the Woodlands Partnership (two other eligible communities plan to vote in the spring of 2023). The Board also includes land trusts and regional planning, economic development and watershed organizations and a forest and public health expert from UMass Amherst. The Board has five committees that plan and develop programs for outreach and education, forest conservation, natural resources-based economic development, finance and budgeting, and municipal finance sustainability. The Partnership has received several federal and state grants to develop climate-smart and wildlife-focused forestry programs, launch a tree planting program, create a “virtual forest center”, and acquire trail easements. The MA Energy and Environmental Affairs Office has supported a grant program to the small towns which have completed a wide range of forest conservation, trail improve-



ments, and support of tourism and forest-based business projects.

project's county. A 50% match is required from the grantees. The grant maximum is \$1,250,000. Land acquired through this grant program must allow for appropriate public access for passive recreation. The land is protected in perpetuity.

Conservation Partnership Grant Program

The Conservation Partnership Grant Program is for non-profit organizations to acquire land for conservation or passive recreational use. The grant can be used to acquire the fee interest in land, a conservation restriction, or to help fund the due diligence costs associated with a gift of land. The grantee must award a permanent conservation restriction to a state or local government agency or another land trust. Appropriate public access must be provided. The reimbursement rate is 50% up to the grant award maximum of \$175,000.

Gateway City Parks Grant Program

The Gateway City Parks Grant Program funds the creation or restoration of significant urban parks and trails in 26 designated Gateway Cities. These are often projects that would otherwise be difficult to build and secure funding for. Gateway Cities are midsize urban centers that anchor regional economies around the state. Priority is given to projects that support broader urban revitalization efforts in Gateway Cities; are ineligible for other funding sources; address critical park infrastructure needs; have strong support from city leaders; engage local businesses, neighbors and others in park financing, programming, and stewardship; or are accessible to Environmental Justice populations.



Northern Strand Bike Trail, Nahant, Photo by The Item Live

Massachusetts SCORP 2023

Massachusetts SCORP 2023 is a planning document that discusses the available recreational resources in the Commonwealth, along with the needs of its residents, and identifies the gap between them. Over the next five years, the SCORP will inform

the distribution of LWCF monies, as well as state funding, to projects that will narrow the gap between available recreation resources and residents' demand for resources through a competitive application process. The SCORP, developed with thorough public participation, ensures a focus on meeting the state's top recreational needs.

SCORP Planning Process

To ensure data from respondents were demographically and geographically representative of

Massachusetts was analyzed as part of its SCORP update, EEA contracted with Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) to conduct a survey of Massachusetts residents to:

1. Understand current and expected use of outdoor recreation areas and facilities,
2. Identify barriers to the use of available resources,
3. Identify desired improvements in outdoor recreation areas and facilities provided by the state and local communities.

This report is based on an online survey of 801 adults living in Massachusetts. The sampling design included stratification by race, county, gender, and age. This stratification was intended to assure representation of all areas and groups of people in the state. Racial minorities were oversampled to allow appropriate analysis of results with respect to race. In addition, the results were weighted to mirror the actual distribution of the adult population with respect to age and race. The survey was

SCORP Survey Distribution

- Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition e-newsletter
- Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association membership
- Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commission e-newsletter
- Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management e-newsletter
- Distributed by all Massachusetts' Regional Planning Agencies
- Appalachian Mountain Club e-blast to Massachusetts members
- Mass in Motion e-newsletter
- Mass Audubon promoted availability on social media
- The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Chapter promoted availability on social media
- Posted on Massachusetts Environmental Justice website
- Participants in DEI forum Massachusetts hosted with partners to increase participation in LWCF from more diverse communities
- Unpaved Trails for All
- Riverside Industries
- All Out Adventures
- Massachusetts Open Space Committees
- Greening the Gateways Communities
- Youth Enrichment Services
- Big City Mountaineers
- Outdoor Afro
- City of North Adams employees, including school department
- Easthampton Commission on Disability

administered by Qualtrics, beginning on February 6, 2023, and ending on March 3, 2023. The Executive Summary of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

In addition, EEA made available on its website three surveys: one for residents that use outdoor recreation facilities, one for municipal recreation providers, and one for land trusts, which are important stewards of open space used for passive recreation across Massachusetts. The survey of residential users was translated into the three most commonly spoken non-English languages in Massachusetts (Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish) as recommended by EEA's Deputy Director of Environmental Justice. While responses don't yield statistically significant data, they do provide valuable information not only from residents throughout the Commonwealth, but also from municipalities and land trusts about the types of recreation resources provided. The surveys were advertised widely by partners.

Increasing Awareness of LWCF to DEI Populations

After the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020, which permanently fully funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million annually, staff from the Appalachian Mountain Club, The Nature Conservancy, and MassAudubon came together with the people responsible for administering the LWCF grant for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to determine next steps for the grant program.

In 2021, the group reached out to several audiences through listening sessions, webinars, and in-person meetings. The goal was to encourage more LWCF applications (particularly from EJ communities), to better understand community needs, and to learn about barriers to those wanting to apply.

Two statewide listening sessions were held: (1) Staff from municipalities and regional planning agencies and (2) Staff from conservation, recreation, and EJ organizations. Participants were asked a series of questions to gather information on their needs, barriers, and how they may be better supported in applying for funds. A series of additional presentations on LWCF were made throughout the state.

Since outreach was completed, in 2022, eligible grant applications increased from the 10 received in 2021 to 23 total. Of the eligible applications received, 65% were from EJ communities, representing all regions of the Commonwealth – from Cape Cod to Western Massachusetts. Thirteen of the 23 had not applied for a LWCF grant in the recent past, with some never having applied in the history of the grant program.

While a great step in the right direction, improvements still need to be made. A lack of municipal capacity has decreased the number of applications that are able to be submitted, as well as the ability to pay for site designs and appraisals. This is exacerbated in the most under-resourced communities, which also tend to be the most underserved.



Lawrence, Manchester Street Park, Photo by Sue Fink

Outdoor Recreation Planning at the Local Level

The Commonwealth's 351 cities and towns are encouraged to plan for their outdoor recreation amenities by completing an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). An OSRP is, more or less, a community-level SCORP. DCS reviews and approves OSRPs, which contain nine required sections and must provide evidence of thorough public participation to ensure that feedback from residents is incorporated. DCS requires enhanced outreach to Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhoods. EJ neighborhoods are those Census tracts that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The annual median household income is not more than 65% of the statewide annual median household income;
- Minorities comprise 40% or more of the population;
- 25% or more of households lack English language proficiency; or
- Minorities comprise 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income.

Communities must have an up-to-date OSRP prior to pursuing the DCS administered grant programs addressed previously. An approved OSRP gives a community seven years of eligibility for DCS grant programs, including LWCF.

Additionally, Massachusetts has thirteen regional planning agencies (RPAs) that act as resources for their member communities, especially small towns that do not have professional staff to assist with local planning, including the development of OSRPs. The RPAs are public organizations made up of any number of municipalities. Each RPA has a regional council that works cooperatively on issues that are relevant

SCORP 2017

The four goals of Massachusetts' 2017 SCORP were:

1. Access for Underserved Populations
2. Support the Statewide Trails Initiative
3. Increase the Availability of Water-based Recreation
4. Support the Creation and Renovation of Neighborhood Parks

Of the 44 grants awarded since the plan's approval in December 2017, recognizing that some projects accomplished multiple goals, 34 projects increased access for underserved populations, 25 trails were developed with LWCF funds, 32 new water-based recreational amenities were constructed, and 33 neighborhoods now have a newly built or renovated park in their backyard.



Mount Watatic, Ashby, Photo by Becky Harris

across municipal boundaries by coordinating efforts and facilitating communication. This can include regional open space and recreation planning since many recreational amenities benefit residents outside of one community's borders.



Mount Greylock Reservation, Lanesborough, Photo © Troy Gipps

Chapter Two – Massachusetts Outdoor Recreation Setting

Biogeography

At 10,554.57 square miles, Massachusetts is the seventh smallest state in the country and its third most densely populated. Even though it is small in size, it has a diverse landscape. From the mountains in the west, to the coasts of Cape Cod and the islands of Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard in the east, residents of our state can enjoy any number of scenic landscapes, as well as the recreational opportunities they offer.

Starting in the western most part of the state, the Berkshires is known for its mountainous terrain and expansive protected open space, most of it used for passive recreation, with a high concentration of state parks and forests and wildlife management areas. There is world-renowned hiking available through the Appalachian Trail, river and lakes that provide kayaking and canoeing access, and campgrounds at state parks and forests. The elevation of this area provides for the highest snowfall totals in the state, making it a winter recreation destination. The Berkshires are equidistant from both Boston and New York City, and is a summer draw for both cities’ residents with its cultural institutions, such as the Clark Museum, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Tanglewood, and Jacob’s Pillow.



Mount Greylock Reservation, Lanesborough, Photo © Troy Gipps

The Connecticut River Valley is just east of the Berkshires. The southern part of the region is heavily urbanized. The cities of Springfield, Westfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee are located here and host a higher percentage of active recreational facilities than the rest of the region. There are field-based sports found here, along with playgrounds, and other similar types of amenities. However, the region becomes more rural heading north along the Route 91 corridor. The Quabbin Reservoir, which serves as metropolitan Boston’s drinking water supply, is a key feature of the region. Much of the land around the Quabbin is protected from development to ensure the quality of the drinking water supply. The Quabbin Reservoir and surrounding protected lands support hiking, fishing, snowmobiling, biking, and walking.

Central Massachusetts has a similar dichotomy. Worcester, the second most populous city in New England and home to the WooSox, the Red Sox AAA affiliate, is here, along with two other drinking water supplies — the Wachusett and Sudbury Reservoirs. The protected lands surrounding these reservoirs are open for hiking, skiing, hunting, and fishing, along with other recreational pursuits. The manufacturing centers of Leominster and Fitchburg are in the northern part of the region. While densely developed, both cities are fortunate to have large, protected drinking water supply areas, which are also available



Anglers at Wachusett Reservoir, Photo by Troy Gipps for MassWildlife

for recreation, and allows for a good mix of active and passive recreational amenities for residents.

% of Outdoor Recreation Land with Public Access, by Region

Region	Percent
North	14.7%
Boston	1.3%
South	25.9%
Central	23.8%
West	34.3%
TOTAL	100.0%

Boston and its suburbs in the Metrowest, North Shore, and South Shore, share a variety of open space and recreation resources. These include state and municipally owned land, along with non-profit conservation land. In the northeast, Essex County is defined by its regionally important protected open space, including the federally owned Parker River National Wildlife Refuge that provides over 4,700 acres of upland and wetland habitats, including sandy beach and dune, maritime forest, cranberry bogs, salt marsh and associated tidal flats.

More opportunities for active recreation are found as population density increases south towards Boston. Boston itself is a National Historic Site, with numerous federally designated sites, including the Boston Harbor Islands – a unique partnership between the Commonwealth and federal governments, which is designated as both a state and national park. Lastly, southeast of Boston, Bristol and Plymouth Counties are defined by their coastal amenities.

Cape Cod and the islands of Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket are known world-wide for their abundance of coastal resources and recreational amenities. Tourism, as well as second home construction and fishing, is critical to the area’s economy. Due to development pressure, land protection is critical to ensure the protection of the rare species found in the rare and fragile ecosystems of the Cape and Islands. Federal, state, and local resources are found here, including the Cape Cod National Seashore, a LWCF recipient, which was visited by 4,017,239 people in 2021, making it the 17th most visited of NPS’s 423 units.

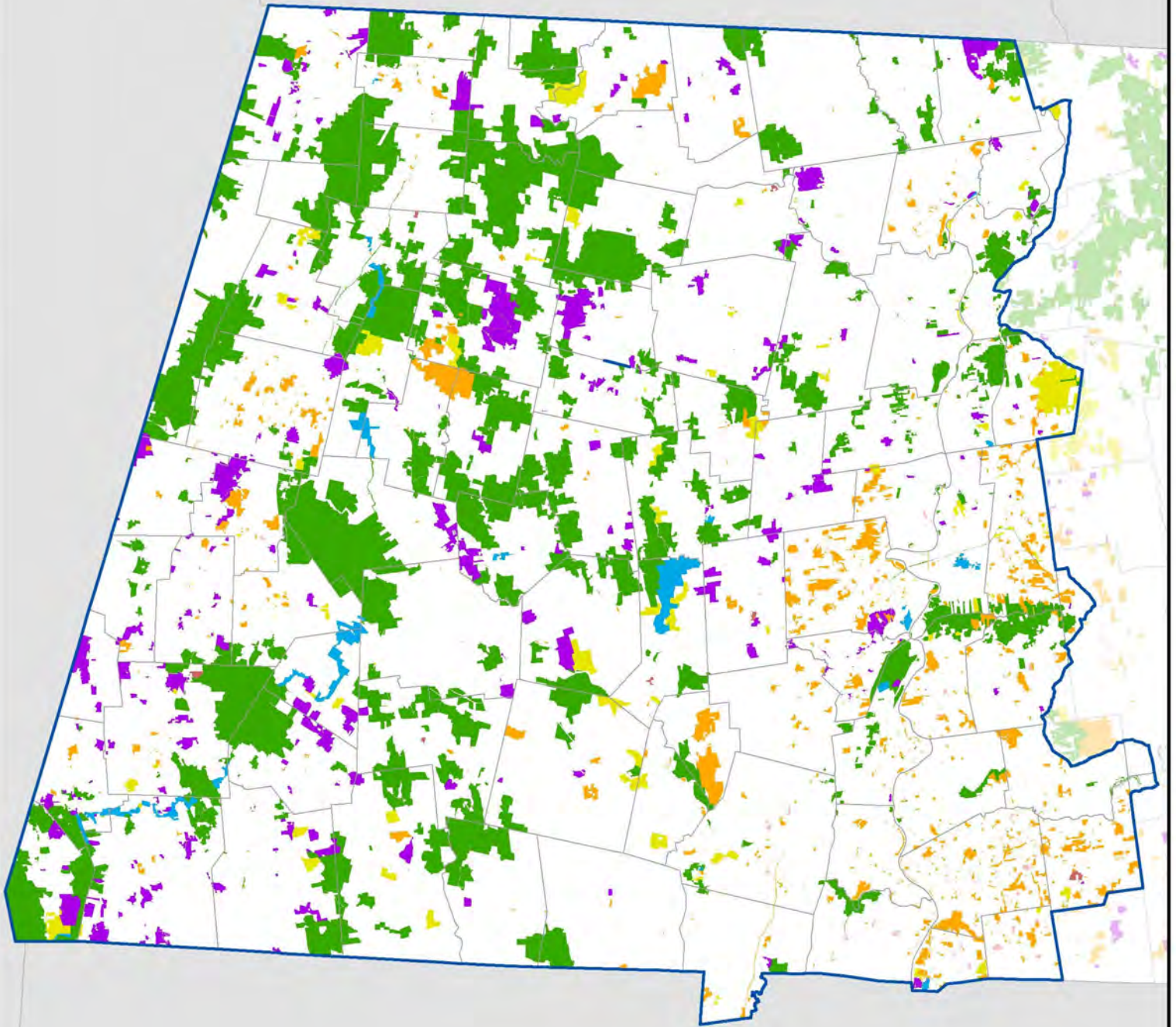
**Outdoor Recreation Land with Public Access,
by Owner**

Owner Type	Acres
Federal	47,812
State	480,316
Municipal	240,059
Land Trust	113,558
Conservation Organization	7,533
Public Non-Profit	4,312
Private Non-Profit	2,579
Private	36,722
County	593
Other	2,350
Unknown	39
TOTAL	935,871





Truro, Photo by Amy Singler

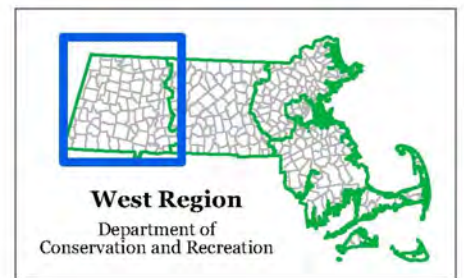
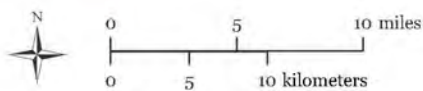
Publicly Accessible Outdoor Recreation Areas - West Region



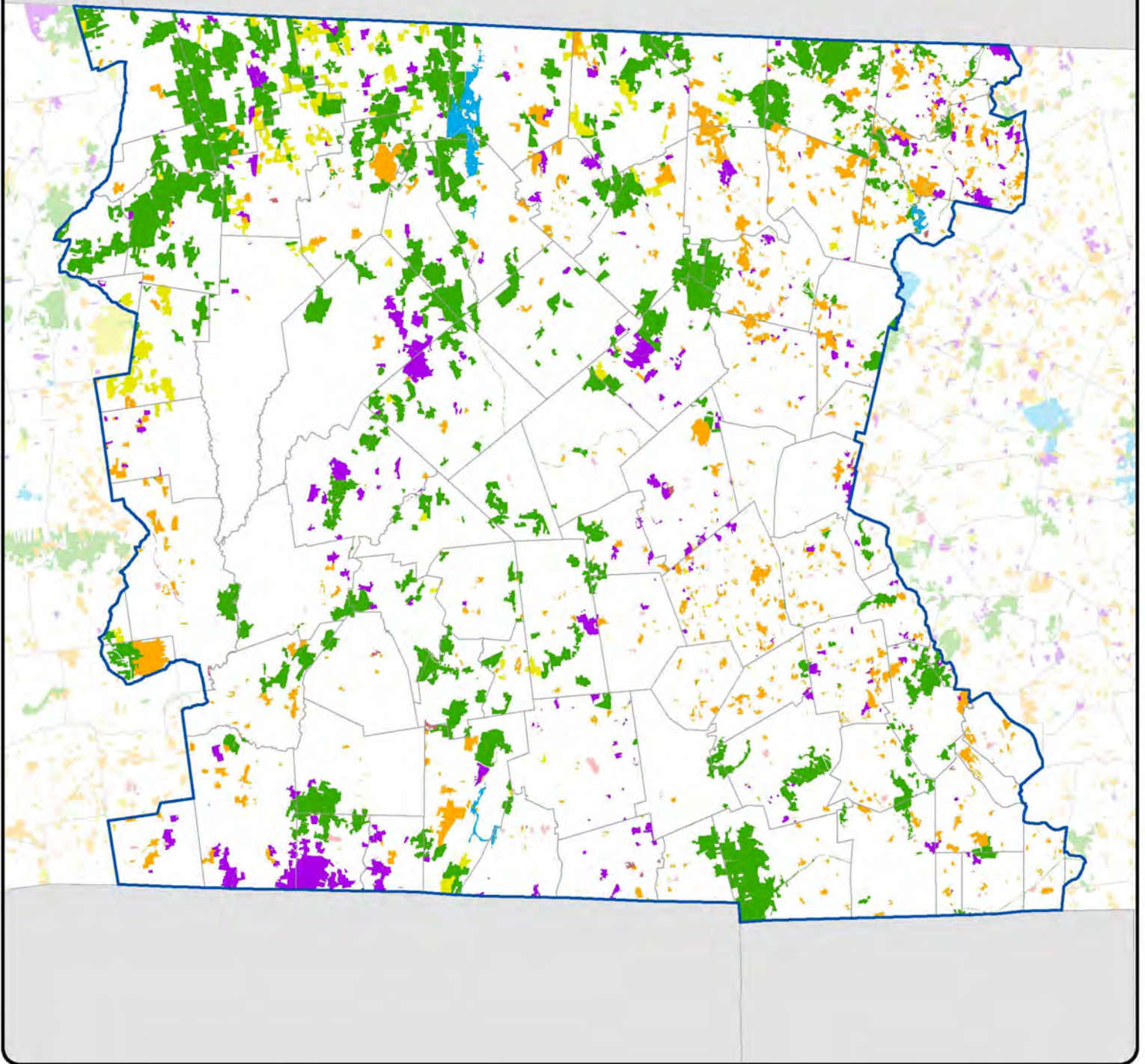
Outdoor Recreation Areas

-  Federal
-  State
-  County or Municipal
-  Conservation Org. or Land Trust
-  Private
-  Other
-  Public School District

-  Municipalities
-  DCR region boundary



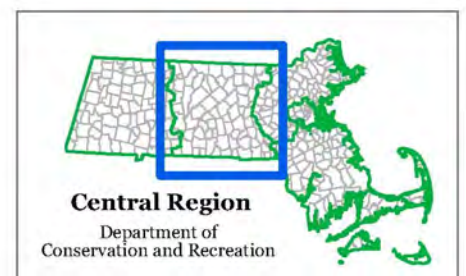
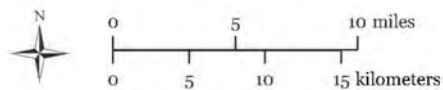
Publicly Accessible Outdoor Recreation Areas - Central Region



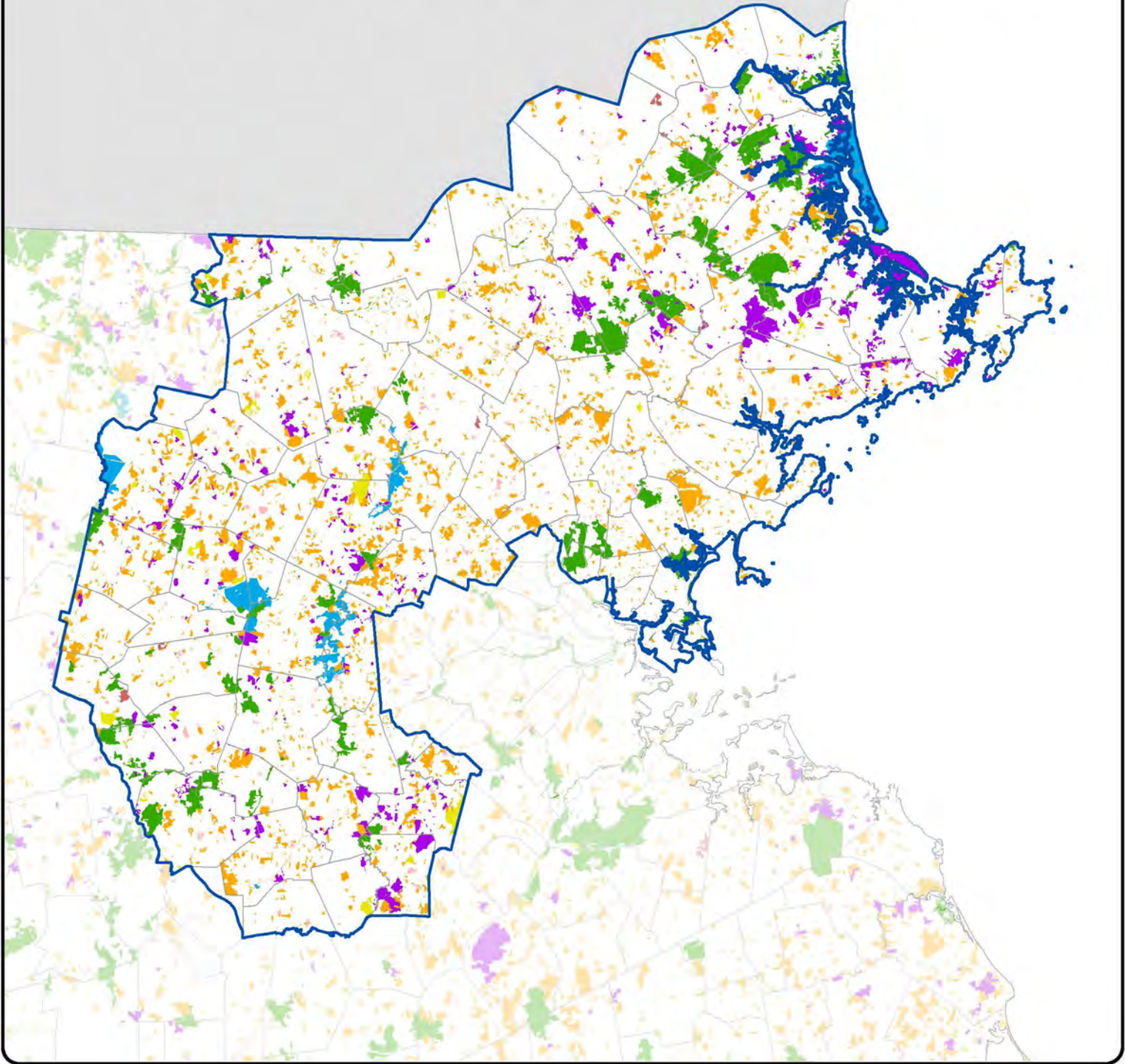
Outdoor Recreation Areas

- Public School District
- Federal
- State
- County or Municipal
- Conservation Org. or Land Trust
- Private
- Other

- Municipalities
- DCR region boundary



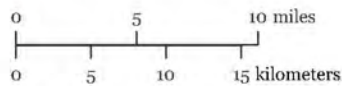
Publicly Accessible Outdoor Recreation Areas - North Region



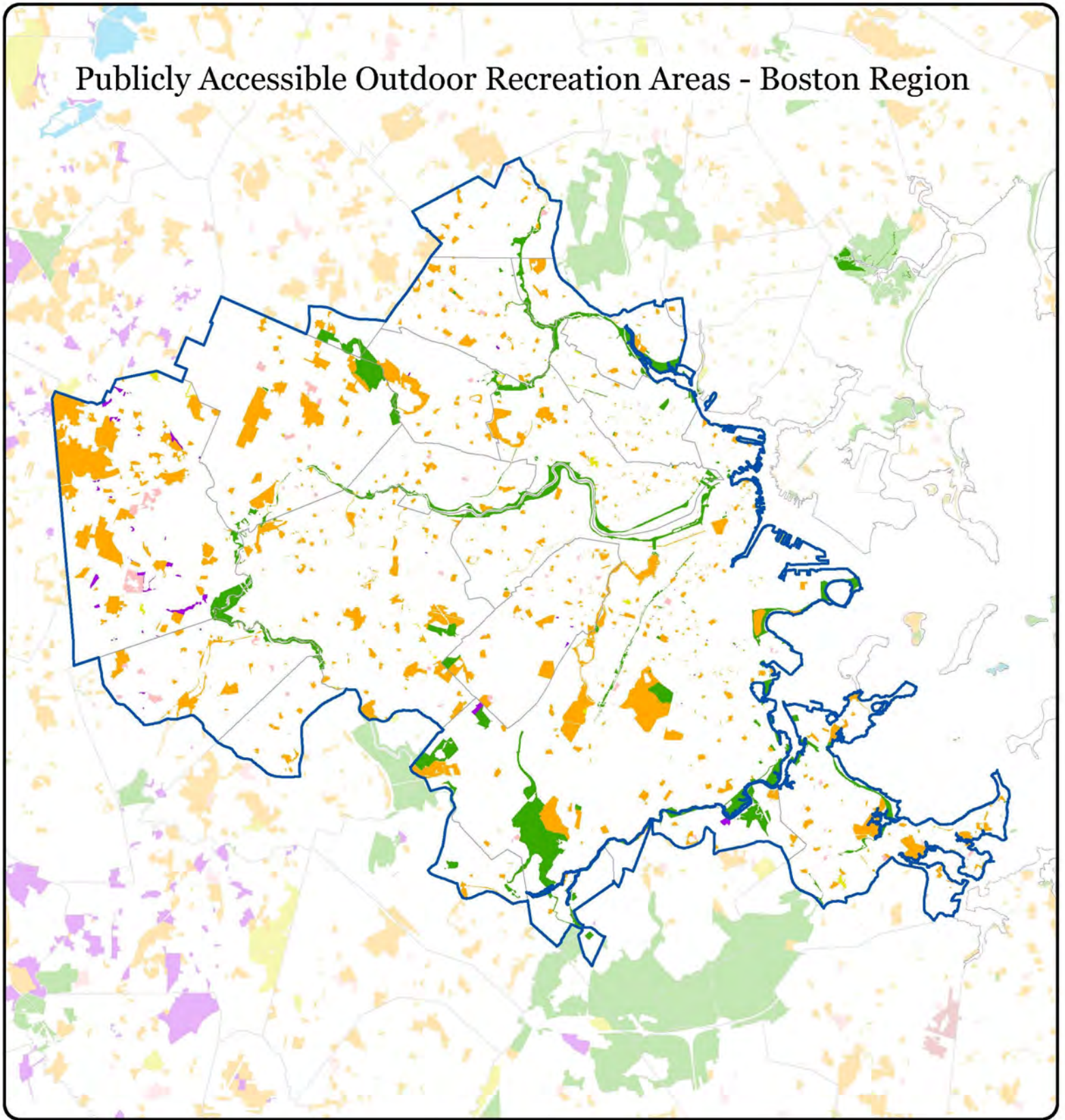
Outdoor Recreation Areas

- Public School District
- Federal
- State
- County or Municipal
- Conservation Org. or Land Trust
- Private
- Other

- Municipalities
- DCR region boundary



Publicly Accessible Outdoor Recreation Areas - Boston Region

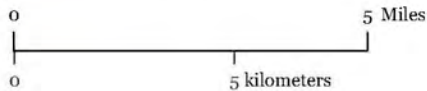


Outdoor Recreation Areas

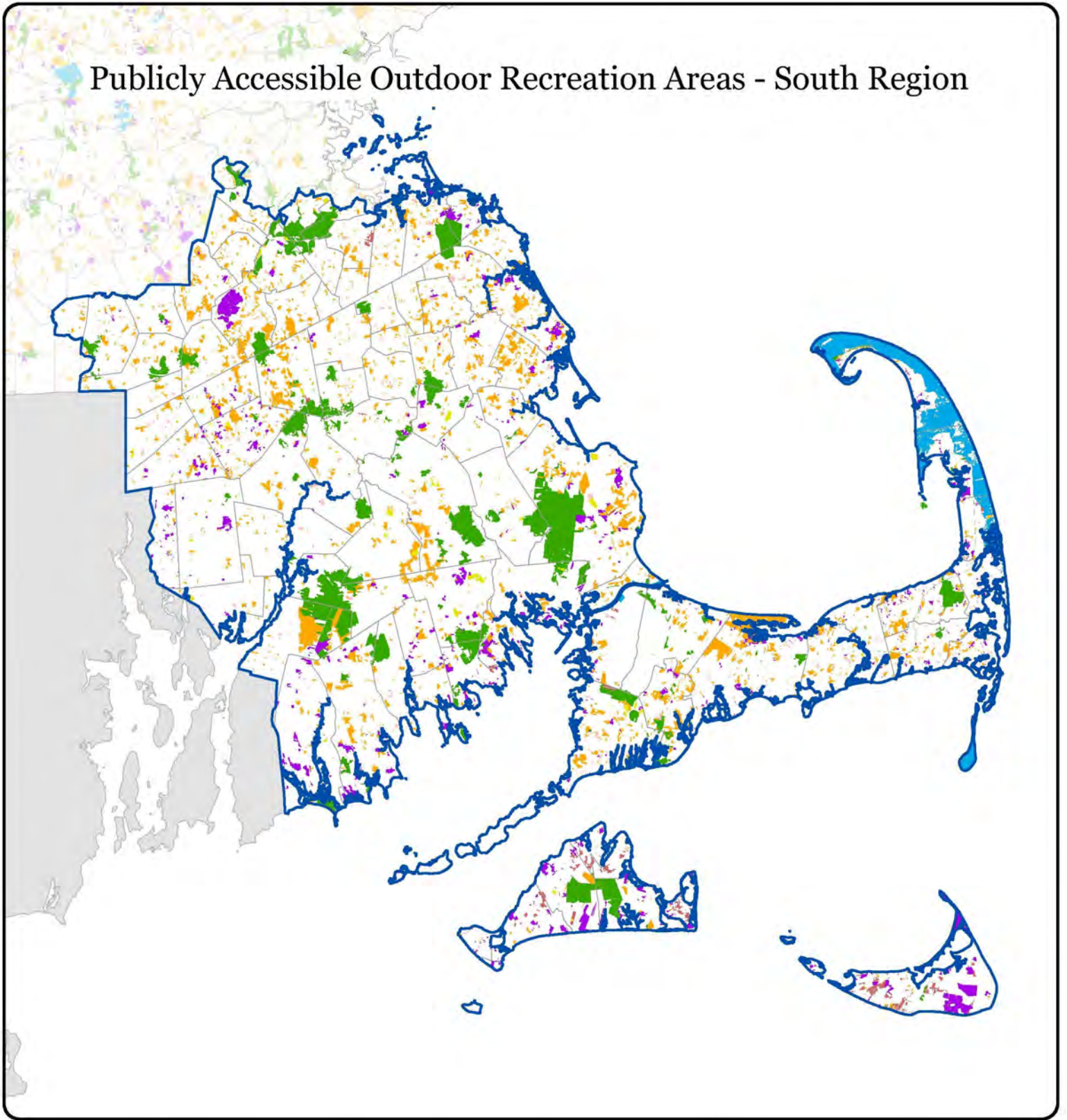
- Public School District
- Federal
- State
- County or Municipal
- Conservation Org. or Land Trust
- Private
- Other

Municipalities

DCR region boundary



Publicly Accessible Outdoor Recreation Areas - South Region



Outdoor Recreation Areas

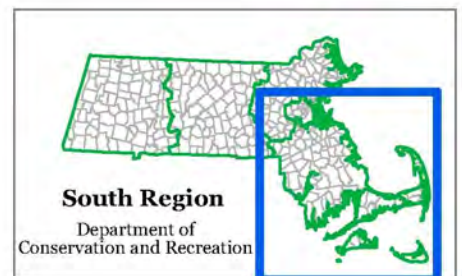
- Public School District
- Federal
- State
- County or Municipal
- Conservation Org. or Land Trust
- Private
- Other

Municipalities

DCR region boundary



0 5 10 miles
0 5 10 15 20 kilometers



Population Trends

Demographics

According to the 2020 Census, Massachusetts’ population increased 7.1% from the 2010 Census to 7,029,917 residents. With 839 people per square mile, only Rhode Island and New Jersey are more densely populated than Massachusetts, making the availability of open space critically important to our residents. Massachusetts’ increase in population is mostly from new immigrants moving into the state. As of the 2020 Census, there were approximately one million foreign born residents in the state, or

17.6% of our population. The five largest immigrant populations in Massachusetts are from China (7.8%), the Dominican Republic (7.6%), India (5.9%), Brazil (5.9%), and Haiti (5.0%). According to a study conducted by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, Massachusetts’ population is projected to expand by 10.9% by 2040 – an increase of 760,536 people.

Race	% of total
White alone	61.6
Hispanic/Latino	18.7
Asian alone	6.0
Black alone	12.4
American Indian & Alaska Native alone	1.1
Native Hawaiian & other Pacific Islander alone	0.2
Some other race alone	8.4
Two or more races	10.2

Overall, 61.6% of Massachusetts residents identify as non-Hispanic white. Comparatively, non-Hispanic whites represent 57.8% of the rest of the country. The most diverse county in Massachusetts is Suffolk County, which includes Boston, with only 44.2% of its population identifying as white. The least diverse county in Massachusetts is Franklin County, in western Massachusetts, where 86.5% identify as white. Norfolk and Middlesex Counties, abutting Boston, are also more diverse than the Massachusetts average.

Populations Living within 1/4-Mile (10-Minute Walk) to Outdoor Recreation Land with Public Access, by Region

Region	Total 2020 Census	Population Served	Percent	Total Environmen-	Population	Percent
North	2,125,741	1,665,782	78%	875,978	716,435	82%
Boston	1,313,822	1,242,136	95%	881,578	816,255	93%
South	1,843,679	1,239,056	67%	558,986	386,057	69%
Central	952,145	577,184	61%	365,311	255,492	70%
West	752,281	508,033	68%	388,900	293,034	75%
TOTAL	6,987,668	5,232,191	75%	3,070,753	2,467,273	80%

The percent of population aged 18 and over in Massachusetts is 80.6%, with the 65+ group the fastest growing between 2010 and 2021 with its population increasing by 34%. The 35-40-year-old group declined the most, dropping 6.4% since 2010.

Massachusetts' median household income is \$89,026, compared to \$70,784 nationally. Income levels vary widely across the state. Middlesex and Norfolk Counties are both within commuting distance of Boston and have the highest median household incomes in the state.



Two Boys with Kestrel Falcon Chick, Photo © Troy Gipps

Statewide, 90.0% of Massachusetts residents have a high school diploma and 45.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Both figures are higher than national averages. The percentage of Massachusetts' residents with degrees varies widely based on region. For example, more than half of Middlesex County's residents (59.05%) have a bachelor's degree, while just over a third (35.62%) of Bristol County's residents do.

Demographic factors are important to consider in outdoor recreation planning. As previously referenced, the survey performed by ERG was intended to solicit responses reflective of Massachusetts demographics to

better assess the needs and recreational pursuits of different age groups and communities, and to better assess disparities among age, gender and/or race. People's national origins may inform the types of recreational pursuits they engage with. Similarly, an aging demographic may require a shift in park design with recreational amenities that accommodate a diversity of physical abilities and incorporating more passive recreational opportunities than active. Residents with limited income may be more dependent upon public recreational amenities as they may not be able to afford private facilities or equipment. Planners should be looking to site new facilities in areas of the state where demographic data reflects people have the most need.

Disability

In 2019, 11.5% of Massachusetts residents self-identified as having a disability. The national average is 12.5%. In Massachusetts, 27.8% of individuals with disabilities

were below the poverty line, compared to 10.5% of individuals without disabilities. Most people with disabilities (51.1%) have a cognitive disability, followed by 39.6% of residents with an ambulatory disability. It is important that accessible outdoor facilities consider not only the individuals with physical or other disabilities, but the caretaker that facilitates their use of such facilities, such as creating a wide enough path for two people to be side-by-side and areas for respite.

EEA has prioritized funding projects that focus on providing access to people with disabilities. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) runs the Universal Access Program. It provides outdoor recreation opportunities in Massachusetts State Parks for visitors of all abilities. Accessibility to the parks is achieved through site

improvements and providing specialized adaptive recreation equipment and accessible recreation programs. Prior to COVID, DCR averaged 120 Universal Access programs per year, serving around 3,500 people. About 40% of the participants have disabilities. Since the program also serves family members and caregivers, the total served programmatically is actually 5,000 people. The program is steadily building again since COVID restrictions have loosened and is getting closer to pre pandemic levels of programming.

Supporting Access for All

The Town of Canton originally purchased the Williams Estate to provide all residents access to Reservoir Pond. A thorough public input process occurred to have an understanding as to what the town's residents were looking for at the property while protecting wildlife habitat and wetland resources. Once the plan was finalized, the town applied for and received a \$239,130 LWCF grant for the Earl Newhouse Waterfront Improvements project. The project improvements include enhanced ADA accessibility to allow a larger group of citizens to fully utilize the site with an expanded trail system, paved parking, and accessible picnic seating, kayak launch and fishing platform. This project provides both water and trail access to people of all abilities.



Economic Profile

Massachusetts benefits from a diverse economic base. Traditionally, the state has been known for its health care and higher education sectors. Today, the top six

industries in the state are drug, cosmetic, and toiletry wholesaling; life insurance; college and universities; hospitals; real estate and investment trusts; and health and medical insurance. The quality of our higher education, as well as our elementary and secondary schools, has helped Massachusetts sustain a successful economy. The quality of life provided by our more than 1.3 million acres of conservation land and parks draws companies and prospective workers to the state.

Tourism

In 2017, tourism was the third largest employer in Massachusetts and accounted for 130,000 jobs. According to the state Office of Travel and Tourism, 26.2 million tourists visited the state in Fiscal Year 2020. Boston is one of the top 10 destinations in the United States. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data shows that value added for outdoor recreation as a share of the state's Gross Domestic Product is

1.5% in Massachusetts. Outdoor recreational employment increased 11.6% between 2020 and 2021.

Home Values

Home values increase when they are located near parks and other open spaces. According to work done by Crompton and Nicholls, there is a premium of 8-10% on properties adjacent to a passive park. The increase in home values also helps to generate more local tax revenue. Retirees are looking to relocate to areas that are rich in outdoor

recreational resources. Based on the aging population of our state, it is realistic to assume that more open space amenities will be needed for what will be an increase in the number of retirees. The National Association of Realtors says that living near trails and greenways will likely raise property values an average of 3.5%.

Outdoor Recreation Industry

In 2021, the Outdoor Industry Association completed a study on the economic impacts of outdoor recreation across the country. It found that in 2020, 53% of Americans ages six and over participated in outdoor recreation at least once. Massachusetts ranked 17th among all states in ORSA employment and 14th in compensation. The report found that in Massachusetts, the outdoor industry created:

- \$9.5 billion in total outdoor recreation value added
- 93,422 jobs
- \$5.1 billion in wages and salaries
- 1.5% share of the state's GDP



Duck Hunter with Dog, Photo by Troy Gipps for MassWildlife

Attracting Businesses

The availability of quality open space and recreation resources in the state helps to attract businesses. Many workers are choosing a job based on an area's quality of life, which is improved by access to open spaces. Furthermore, the National Recreation and Park Association has found that for some companies, high-quality park amenities can be pivotal in their final location decisions. Small- and medium-sized, entrepreneurial or family-owned companies often seek places that reflect their corporate culture or values. This includes companies that emphasize outdoor recreation—either because they specifically produce or sell products for that market or their brand is well aligned with an active outdoor lifestyle. This demonstrates the importance of the investment of parks and open space is to the future economic well-being of Massachusetts.

Development Impacts

While Massachusetts' population growth rate is not as rapid as some other states, but protecting land important to state conservation and recreation priorities remains critical. New home development in Massachusetts is taking place further from existing cities, which causes a greater impact on open space. MassAudubon's *Losing Ground: Nature's Value in a Changing Climate* report, published in 2020, states that from June 2012 through June 2017, 24,700 acres were converted to development, which is about 13.5 acres per day. During this timeframe, 100,000 acres of land were protected, or about 55 acres per day. This is a four to one ratio of land protected to developed.

In all, 22% of Massachusetts is developed (1.1 million acres). Just over 25% of the state is protected (1.3 million acres). While there is a need for housing and other development in the state, it is critical for planners to determine where this happens so that the recreational needs of Massachusetts' residents are met.



Fisk Farm, South Deerfield, Photo by Michele Padula

Chapter Three — Outdoor Recreation Supply

Massachusetts residents are fortunate to have 935,871 acres of outdoor recreation land available to them, offering different types of amenities. This includes lands managed by federal, state, and local agencies, including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, the Commonwealth's Departments of Fish and Game (DFG) and Conservation and Recreation (DCR), local Conservation Commissions and Recreation Departments, and local, regional, and statewide land trusts and conservation organizations. All this land provides outdoor recreational resources for residents, as well as where additional facilities could be developed to satisfy the demand that will be discussed in Chapter Four.

There are currently nearly 300 facilities on coastal waters, great ponds, and rivers throughout the state run by the Office of Fishing and Boating Access managed by DFG. The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife manages over 450 recreational areas, which include Wildlife Management Areas, Wildlife Conservation Easement Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, and River Access Areas.

DCR owns a diverse portfolio of recreation facilities. Statewide, they manage 90 hard court areas (with a total of 153 individual hard courts), 79 playgrounds, and 3,272 campsites. They have 15 saltwater ocean beaches and 31 fresh water inland beaches, as well as 53 swimming pools, wading pools, and spray decks. Two downhill ski areas, two golf courses, and 12 shared use paths are also available for use thanks to DCR. Forty-two ice skating rinks are owned by the agency, as well as many parks and forests. DCR has roughly 3,350 miles of natural surface trails and over 200 miles of improved surface trails for hiking, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle, and equestrian use; paved and unpaved accessible trails in a variety of state parks, forests, and reservations.

Local community's Open Space and Recreation Plans include a chapter on the supply of outdoor recreation facilities (conservation land, ball fields, etc.), but do not always include a thorough list of amenities at each site. DCR and DFG's websites include a list of facilities available at each of their properties, including trail maps. Information on outdoor recreation amenities available at land trust properties vary by organization. A database providing all the services available at each state and locally owned facility developed with local municipalities and state agencies would help identify opportunities for developing additional amenities, as well as gaps in supply. Over time, private and non-profit facilities could be added. A well-built database could

be made accessible to residents searching for a particular activity by region, whether they are looking for a place to play pickle ball or to kayak. Just over 18% of the survey respondents said that they use the internet to identify outdoor recreation facilities and activities, with another 13.3% using social media for this purpose.

Public Land

State

The Commonwealth is the largest recreation and conservation landowner in the state. DFG and DCR, within the EEA Secretariat, are the two state agencies that own and manage land for outdoor recreational purposes. DFG's mission is to preserve the state's natural resources and people's right to conservation of those resources. DFG has jurisdiction over the Commonwealth's marine and freshwater fisheries, wildlife species, plants, and natural communities, as well as the habitats that support them. DCR works to protect, promote, and enhance the Commonwealth's natural, cultural, and recreational resources by improving outdoor recreational opportunities and natural resource conservation and restoring and improving facilities. DFG manages 230,314 acres of land and DCR manages over 485,000 acres.

DCR Trail Work

Examples of signature natural surface trails include trail networks at the Blue Hills, Middlesex Fells, Wachusett Mountain, and Mount Greylock State Reservations, Beartown, Erving, and Freetown/Fall River State Forests, and Mount Holyoke Range State Park, as well as portions of long-distance trails such as the New England Trail and Appalachian Trail.

Nickerson, Robinson, and Wompatuck State Parks, Myles Standish and Manuel Correllus State Forests, Breakheart State Reservation, and Chestnut Hill Reservoir are just a few of the DCR facilities with extensive internal pathway systems that accommodate walkers, runners, cyclists, and others.



Nickerson State Park, Brewster, Photo by Trail Link

DCR manages roughly a dozen freestanding shared use paths on former rail corridors, from the 22-mile Cape Cod Rail Trail to the 11-mile Nashua River Rail Trail in central Massachusetts to the 11-mile Ashuwillticook Rail Trail in the Berkshires and the expanding Massachusetts Central Rail Trail, an ambitious attempt to connect Boston to Northampton along 104 miles of former rail corridor with a variety of ownership and management.

In addition, Massachusetts is home to numerous river corridor greenways, notably along the Charles, Mystic, and Neponset Rivers in the Boston area, with improvements and expansions underway. DCR is launching a master planning process to re-envision the Southwest Corridor Park, a 4.5-mile linear park with shared use paths in the City of Boston.

DCR/DFG Land with Public Access by Region

Region	Acres
North	35,716
Boston	3,692
South	82,103
Central	129,517
West	222,459
TOTAL	473,486

State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are managed primarily to provide habitat for wildlife and to give people a place to connect with nature and explore the great outdoors. For the most part, wildlife lands are open to hunting, fishing, trapping, birdwatching, and other wildlife-related recreation. Users will find unimproved trails or woods roads with simple, unpaved parking lots. WMAs keep wild places wild while giving people access to nature and an off the beaten path experience. WMAs are found from the Berkshires to the Cape and Islands and include river corridors, wetlands, forested and grassy uplands, habitat for state-listed endangered and threatened species, and high-quality parcels of other important habitat types. State WMAs are owned in partnership with DFG and are managed by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife). Many of these properties are actively managed through mowing, cutting, prescribed burns, or other activities that benefit of wildlife. Regulations govern the activities allowed on these lands and

focus on passive recreation. Motorized vehicles, for instance, are not permitted on state WMAs.

Two other branches of EEA that work to facilitate land protection are the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) and Division of Conservation Services (DCS). DAR oversees the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, which was the first of its kind in the country. The program purchases permanent agricultural restrictions over private farmland to ensure the property remains in agricultural use, and that farmers are compensated for the non-agricultural development value of the property that is extinguished. DAR holds more than 965 APRs on over 75,000 acres of farmland.



Lindquist-Maloney Farm, Upton, Photo by Michele Padula

DCS is responsible for the approval of Conservation Restrictions (CR), known as conservation easements in other states, implemented on private lands. CRs restrict or extinguish specific development rights to ensure the conservation values of the property persist. Massachusetts is the only state that requires both municipal

approval, as well as signature by the Secretary of the EEA to ensure land is permanently protected in the public interest. Over 6,300 CRs have been executed and recorded since 1969, permanently protecting more than 195,000 acres of land. DCS also administers multiple federal- and state-funded grant programs for municipalities and land trusts for the protection of conservation and water supply land, as well as for the acquisition, development, and/or renovation of parkland. These grant programs were discussed in Chapter One, State-funded Open Space and Recreation Grant Programs.

Cranberry Bog Renovation Tax Credit Program

Massachusetts Cranberry bog owners planning to renovate and improve their bogs can receive a state tax credit towards the cost associated with that work. The credit is for 25% of up to \$400,000 dollars of qualified renovation expenses. The credit is refundable, which means that the bog owner could get a one-time, direct payment of up to \$100,000 at the end of the year when they file their state tax return.

Expenses need to be for either renovation work like laser leveling, new irrigation systems, drainage, or new vines; or for restoring an abandoned bog to full production. Such work improves productivity and provides for significant benefits to us all such as water conservation, reduced energy inputs and improved water quality. Currently, the program is authorized retroactively for work done from calendar 2020 through the end of 2024.



Duxbury Cranberry Bog, Photo by NSRWA

Municipal

The 351 municipalities across the Commonwealth are the second largest owner of permanently protected open space with municipalities collectively holding the largest number of individual protected properties. Municipal Conservation

Conservation Commission Land with Public Access

Region	Acres
North	37,855
Boston	2,638
South	60,446
Central	23,374
West	16,075
TOTAL	140,388

Commissions were created by the state legislature in 1957 to ensure resource conservation across the state. Each municipal Conservation Commissions holds land for conservation purposes within their community, much of which is open for passive recreation, such as hiking and nature study. Today, municipal Conservation Commissions own more than 140,000 acres of land across the Commonwealth. Park and recreation commissions, as well as some school departments, hold land for active outdoor recreation purposes. Municipal water departments and other public water suppliers are also major landowners,

holding more than 97,000 acres for drinking water supply protection. These lands generally have restrictions on public access to protect water supply.

Federal

The federal government owns and manages nearly 48,000 acres of conservation and recreation facilities in Massachusetts. This includes the Cape Cod National Seashore, the Parker River, Great Meadows, Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuges, and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The Army Corps of Engineers provides important recreational facilities, such as boat ramps, fishing, and hunting, at sites across the state, including at the Cape Cod Canal and Tully Lake, and several other flood control impoundments. The federal government has also been a valuable partner in land conservation and management, including the Boston Harbor Island National Recreation Area.

The National Park Service’s website provides a useful “By the Numbers” handout that reflects that there are 16 National Parks in Massachusetts, which were visited by 5,861,938 people from October 2020 through September 2021. In addition, there are five National Heritage Areas, along with four Wild & Scenic Rivers and three National Trails managed by NPS. The National Register of Historic Places Listings includes 4,403 places, along with 189 National Historic Landmarks and 11 National Natural Landmarks. There are 5,801,044 objects in National Park Museum collections, almost one for every national park visitor.



Williamsburg, Photo by Amy Singler

Private Non-Profit and For-Profit Land Owners

With more than 140 land trusts, Massachusetts has the most land trusts per capita in the nation. Land trusts own properties across the state that are open for various outdoor pursuits. Most of the land is protected for conservation, habitat protection, environmental education, and passive recreation. The land trust community often partners with the state’s environmental agencies to complete landscape-sized projects. Such

efforts are encouraged by the Landscape Partnership Grant Program administered by DCS as mentioned in Chapter One, State-funded Open Space and Recreation Grant Programs. Altogether, land trusts have protected over 248,500 acres, including 146,700 acres in fee and 101,800 acres in CRs. While nearly all the fee lands are open for passive recreation, the accessibility of the CRs vary widely, depending on the wishes of the landowners but contribute to public benefits, including water supply protection, scenic vistas and protecting working landscapes, such as agricultural lands.

Privately held recreation land in Massachusetts also include golf courses, ski areas, marinas, and campgrounds. While most private facilities charge a fee for service, they do help to provide recreational facilities that often cannot be maintained by government, provided costs of operation. They also compliment recreational amenities available at public facilities and increase capacity for recreational enjoyment. For example, private campgrounds can help to better address demand for camping when state campgrounds are at capacity during peak times. There are currently over 73,300 acres of privately held recreation land in the state.



Dunes Edge Campground, Provincetown, Photo by Outdoor Project

EEA Online Survey Results – Municipal Recreation Providers

The online survey disseminated to municipal recreation providers included questions about the current open space and recreational resource availability and services these areas provide their residents. Two hundred and four responses were received from 117 municipalities or 33.3% of the Commonwealth’s 351 cities and towns. Four responses representing organizations were also received. Survey responses from municipal Conservation Commissions were the most frequent, at 31.8%, followed by the Parks and Recreation Department (15.6% of responses). The Planning Department and Selectmen or Mayor’s Office provided 12.7% of responses.

Most respondents (41.2%) had more than eight parks in their community, 47.0% had more than eight conservation areas. Additionally, 47.0% of the respondents' communities identified they offer more than nine programs annually at their conservation and recreation sites. Many communities (71.0%) offer programs that connect children to the outdoors, but these are offered less frequently, with 0-4 programs annually. There is also limited programming designed for people with disabilities; only 16.7% of respondents offer this type of amenity.

Respondents were also provided with a list of 50 activities and asked to identify those supported by their municipally owned facilities. The top 10 activities were walking or jogging, baseball/softball, playgrounds, basketball/volleyball, hiking, birding/wildlife viewing, dog walking, soccer, picnicking, and boating (by canoe or kayak). Municipalities indicated that the highest funding priority over the next five

years are to acquire and protect open space, maintain existing park and recreation areas, and increase usage of existing parks and conservation areas (improved outreach and access for new users).



Kendrick Park, Amherst, Photo by Nate Malloy

EEA Online Survey Results – Land Trusts

Land trusts own 146,700 publicly accessible acres of land across the state. Therefore, understanding the recreational amenities provided by these properties is critically important to understanding the outdoor recreation opportunities in

Massachusetts. Seventy-six responses were received, which represents just over half of all land trusts in Massachusetts (54%). Of interest, while land trusts themselves cannot apply for LWCF grants, in Massachusetts it is commonplace for a land trust to partner with a local municipality on an application. In fact, 22.3% of respondents had been involved in a LWCF project.

The three most popular groups of activities facilitated by land trust properties are walking/jogging/hiking, dog walking, and nature study. Sanctioned off-road vehicle use, swimming, and other water dependent uses are the three least common activities on land trust properties. The top three challenges facing land trusts properties are

adequate funding for property stewardship, accessibility for people with disabilities, and tied for third are providing access to the land (e.g., parking, accessible entry points) and engaging/attracting diverse users.

Chapter Four – Outdoor Recreation Demand

In addition to evaluating recreation opportunities and amenities are in Massachusetts, SCORP 2023 identifies the recreational demands of Massachusetts residents. As previously described in this document, EEA contracted with Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) to conduct an online survey of Massachusetts residents to evaluate their recreational needs, barriers to recreation, and future recreation trends. EEA also created and disseminated three surveys: one for residents that use outdoor recreation facilities, one for municipal recreation providers, and one for land trusts. These additional surveys were made available on the EEA website and distributed through a variety of partners and networks.

EEA Online Survey Results – Recreation Users

The online survey for recreation users had 4,895 responses. The overwhelming majority of respondents said that outdoor recreation is extremely important to them (95.1%). When asked which five activities they personally participated in most often during the past 12 months, the most popular included, in order: hiking, walking or jogging, swimming at the beach, lake, or river, boating (by canoe or kayak), birding or wildlife viewing, dog walking, off road bicycling (rail trails/bike paths), visiting historic sites, on road bicycling, and fishing. Sixty-two percent of respondents said that their use of parks and conservation areas increased during the pandemic, with 99.0% saying they would continue to visit these spaces over the next five years.



Monument Mountain, Great Barrington, Photo © Troy Gipps

When asked which activities that a member of the respondent's household, including themselves, would like to do more of over the next five years, the top responses included: hiking, walking or jogging, boating (by canoe or kayak), swimming at the beach, lake, or river, off road bicycling (rail trails/bike paths), visiting historic

sites, camping, birding/wildlife viewing, visiting farms, and backpacking. There is much overlap between activities people are currently doing and the demand for those activities in the future.

People were generally quite happy with the quality of their city or town's outdoor recreation facilities, with 77.5% stating that the facilities were in excellent or good shape. State facilities fared slightly better, with 80.2% rated as excellent or good.

When asked why they participated in outdoor recreation activities, the number one response was for physical fitness, followed closely by mental well-being, and being close to nature. When asked why they visit their most frequented outdoor conservation or recreation facility, the top reasons given were that it is the closest to home, it is beautiful, it has the activities respondents enjoy, and it is quiet. The lack of

time to recreate is the number one reason people said they do not use outdoor recreation facilities more frequently (1,801 responses). Respondents also cited overcrowded facilities or facilities that are in use by others as a barrier to recreating more frequently (923 responses), as well as concerns the site is too far away (850 responses).



Hovey Field, Lowell, Photo by Crowley Cottrell

When provided a list of seven priorities and asked on a scale from one through five how important each were for outdoor recreation and conservation, “acquire and protect open space (such as undeveloped, conserved land with trails)” was most important with 72.6% giving it a five, closely followed by “protect fish and wildlife habitat” with 68.9% at a five rating. Rounding out the top three is

“maintain and improve existing park and recreation areas” at 50.4%. The top three funding priorities were listed as

“acquire and protect open space (such as undeveloped, conserved land with trails)”, “protect fish and wildlife habitat”, and “maintain and improve existing park and recreation areas”.

EEA Online Survey Results – Municipal Recreation Providers

Municipal employees are familiar with the recreational needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth as many of them serve in roles designed to identify and address the needs of their community members. The online survey completed by municipal

employees included questions about the needs of their residents in addition to the recreational amenities present in their community. Respondents were asked what outdoor recreation activity(ies) have shown an increase in popularity in the last five to 10 years. The top nine results were pickleball, walking or jogging, hiking, off road bicycling (rail trails/bike paths), dog walking, mountain/trail bicycling, birding/wildlife viewing, boating (by canoe or kayak), and community gardening. Hand in hand with this question is which outdoor recreation activity(ies) have shown a decrease in popularity in the last five to 10 years. The top vote getters are baseball/softball, hunting/trapping, tennis, and football.

To estimate the type of facilities that will be in demand in the next five years, respondents were asked what outdoor recreation activity(ies) they expected to increase in popularity in the next five years. The top responses were pickleball, off road bicycling (rail trails/bike paths), walking or jogging, hiking, birding/wildlife viewing, mountain/trail bicycling, community gardening, dog walking, boating (by canoe or kayak), and playgrounds.

The vast majority of respondents said that funding for both conservation (61.2%) and recreation (53.1%) projects has stayed the same in their communities over the last three years. The single most important funding priority in their community was most frequently identified to be acquiring and protecting open space, followed by maintaining existing park and recreation areas. To balance these municipal priorities with the needs of residents, towns and cities can strategically acquire new open space that provides recreational amenities that cannot be sited on existing municipal land.



Kestrel Box Installation, Grafton,
Photo © Troy Gipps

ERG Survey Results

As previously referenced in Chapter One, EEA hired ERG to conduct an online survey of adults living in Massachusetts with sampling designed to ensure responses were representative of all areas and groups of people in the state. Such sampling helps to ensure that recreational needs identified in this SCORP are representative of all. The survey was designed to:

1. Understand current and expected use of outdoor recreation areas and facilities,
2. Identify barriers to greater use of available resources,
3. Identify desired improvements in outdoor recreation areas and facilities provided by the state and local communities.

Racial minorities were oversampled to allow appropriate analysis of results with respect to race. In addition, the results were weighted to mirror the actual distribution of the adult population with respect to age and race. The survey was administered from February 6 to March 3, 2023. While the Executive Summary of the survey can be

Survey Results of Note:

- 80% identify outdoor recreation to be important.
- Families (households with children <18) are more likely to identify outdoor recreation as 'extremely important' than households without children.
- Walking, visiting the beach and hiking are the three most popular activities.
- Walking and Running are activities respondents participate in most frequently.
- Respondents anticipate engaging in a similar suite of activities in the next five years. 50% of respondents anticipate increasing the amount of outdoor recreation they pursue.
- 26% of respondents take advantage of outdoor areas and facilities.
- 46% of respondents identify they live within 5 miles of a recreation area or facility.

found in Appendix B, key findings of the report are presented here. ERG performed an analysis of the differences in responses by different demographic groups (age, gender, race, county and children under 18 in household) for each survey question to identify any informative patterns useful for decision-makers and note where such patterns were found.

Forty-four percent of respondents indicated that outdoor recreation is “extremely important” and 37% indicated it is “somewhat important.” This means that over 80% of respondents provided a higher-than-neutral response, highlighting how outdoor recreation has substantial importance to Massachusetts respondents. Respondents of all age groups under 65

most frequently identified that outdoor recreation was “extremely important”. Respondents with children under 18 years of age in the household were more likely to identify outdoor recreation to be “extremely important” (54%) than respondents without children in the household (40%).

Walking was the outdoor recreation activity the greatest number of respondents reported pursuing in the past 12 months; walking was selected as among the top ten most popular outdoor recreation activities by 9.6% of respondents, followed by visiting the beach (6.1%), hiking (5.7%), visiting farmers markets (4.7%),

visiting outdoor historic sites or museums (3.9%), swimming in outdoor pools (3.6%), swimming in natural water bodies (3.6%), camping (3.3%), bird-watching or wildlife viewing (3.2%) and running or jogging (3.0%) and basketball (3.0%). Walking remains the most popular outdoor recreation activity for the majority of racial categories, however, the mix of activities in the “top 10” varies by race. Respondents indicated that they anticipate pursuing similar outdoor recreation activities in the next five years to those ranked as their present “top 10” outdoor recreation activities. Overall, the three activities respondents anticipate doing the most in the next five years are walking (8.3%), visiting the beach (6.5%), and hiking (5.4%)

Walking is also the activity that respondents reported doing most frequently. For respondents that identified walking as a “top ten” activity, 68% report walking multiple times a week. Running is also a high-frequency activity, with 47% of respondents indicating that they ran multiple times a week. Bird-watching or wildlife viewing and fitness classes are the third most frequently enjoyed with 37% of respondents participating more than once a week.

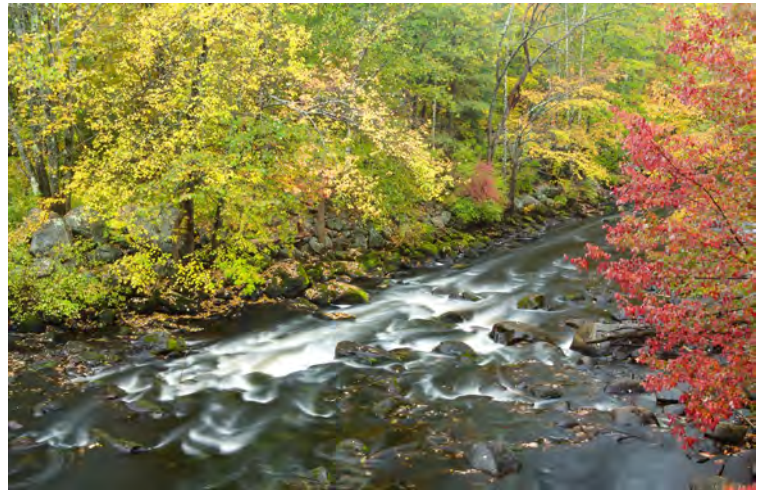
Top 5 Outdoor Recreation Activities in Past 12 Months by Race

Rank	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black/African American	Hispanic/Latino	White/Caucasian
1	Walking	Walking	Walking	Walking
2	Running or jogging	Running or jogging	Hiking	Visiting the beach
3	Hiking	Basketball	Basketball	Hiking
4	Visiting the beach	Dance	Visiting the beach	Visiting farmers markets
5	Dance	Visiting the beach	Visiting farmers markets	Swimming in natural water bodies

Twenty-six percent of respondents reported visiting an outdoor recreation area or facility in Massachusetts a few times a month, 19% reporting visits a few times or less a year, and 18% reporting visits more than once a week. The proportion of Black/African American respondents reporting that they visit an outdoor recreation area or facility more than once a week was higher than other race categories. For other race categories (Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino and White/Caucasian), the highest proportion of respondents reported visiting an outdoor recreation area or facility a few times a month.

Half of respondents expect to increase their outdoor recreation activities over the next five years, compared to 38% who expect their outdoor recreation activities over the next five years to stay the same. Some interesting patterns in respondents' expectations with respect to demographic variables were identified. Younger respondents (18–29 years, 30–39 years and 40–49 years) reported that they expected to increase their participation in outdoor recreation in the next five years, while older respondents (50-64-years and 65+ years) expected their participation to stay the same. A larger proportion of Asian/Pacific Islander and White/Caucasian respondents indicated that they expected their participation in outdoor recreation in the next five years to stay the same, compared to other race categories, which would remain the same.

Nearly half of respondents (46%) live within five miles of the outdoor recreation area or facility they use most often, while another 35% of respondents live between five and ten miles away. Again, some interesting patterns with respect to race were noted; Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino respondents were more likely to live further from the outdoor recreation area or facility they use most often than other racial groups. This may reflect a lack of suitable outdoor recreation facilities accessible to



Autumn River, Royalston, Photo © Troy Gipps

communities with Hispanic or Latino populations. Relatively few respondents use public transportation most of the time (10%) to get to outdoor recreation areas or facilities; more respondents indicated that they walk, jog or wheel/roll most of the time (31%), followed by driving or using a shared ride (29%).

Beaches top the list of outdoor recreational areas that respondents would like to see more of in Massachusetts (10.6%), followed by nature preserves or wildlife watching areas (8.1%), and hiking trails (7.4%). When the type of outdoor areas of facilities that respondents would like more of were broken down by race, picnic facilities are at the top of the list of facilities that Asian/Pacific Islander respondents identified they would like to see more of.

Outdoor recreation areas and facilities owned and operated by the state were most commonly rated as satisfactory (41%), followed by very good (35%), with 10% giving an excellent rating. Local community-owned and -operated outdoor recreation areas and facilities received very similar ratings (satisfactory (40%), very good (31%) and excellent (9%)).

The most frequently reported reason for participating in outdoor recreation was to be outdoors (15.5%), followed by having fun (14.8%), physical fitness (13.9%), mental well-being (13.8%) and relaxation (13.8%). The most frequently chosen factor that limits use of outdoor recreational areas and facilities is a lack of time (15%), followed by a lack of restrooms/locker rooms (12.3%), lack of parking (11.1%) and fees that are too high (9.6%). The 18- to 29-year-old age group most frequently cited a lack of time as a limiting factor compared to other age groups, while lack of time was less

important to respondents 65 years and older.

Protecting wildlife habitat was most chosen as among the three most important services provided by state and local outdoor recreation areas and facilities (19.0%), followed by improving quality of life in communities (17.4%) and protecting drinking water (14.8%).

ERG's survey results affirmed the findings of the online survey distributed by EEA to recreational users. The types of

Resilient Lands Initiative

The Resilient Lands Initiative (RLI) was drafted over the course of eighteen months, over the course of 12 Steering Committee meetings attended by about 40 individuals with "land values" expertise, and 14 focus groups that included 270 advocates, volunteers, field practitioners, farmers, foresters, and landowners. The ideas generated from this process focused on how the forests, farms, parks, and other open spaces across Massachusetts can help improve the quality of life for residents, especially in Environmental Justice neighborhoods. RLI will guide actions aimed at conserving, restoring and caring for the land – to help both nature and people.

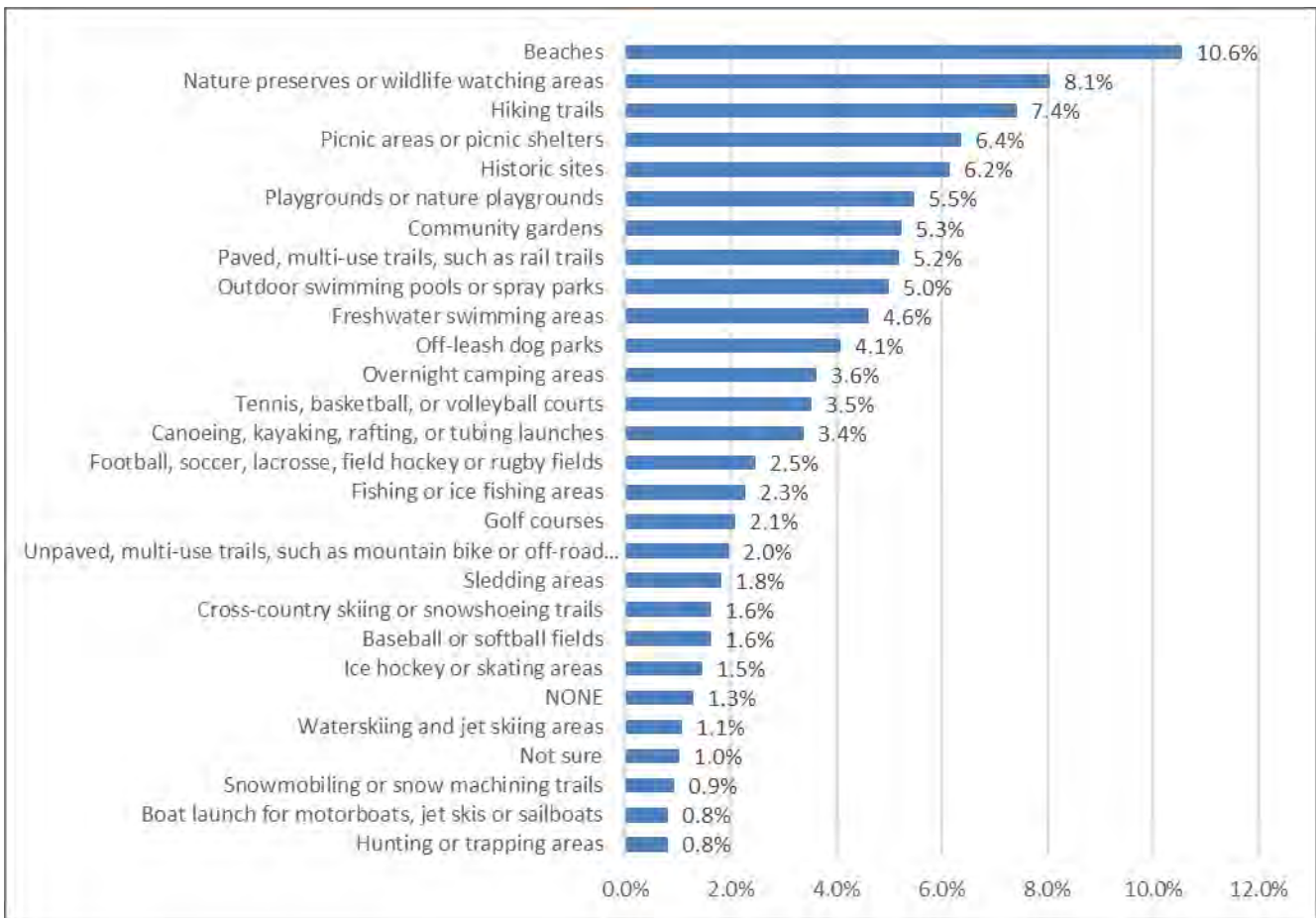
The University of Massachusetts Amherst Donahue Institute facilitated 14 focus group meetings and developed eight topical research and policy briefings on land values. In addition, two open public listening sessions were held to receive feedback on the final draft iteration of this plan. Visioning and future implementation of the RLI will be approached through two lenses: 1) justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and 2) climate change.

The RLI is a broad-based effort to select the most effective land conservation, stewardship, and restoration policies and programs to 1) reduce the impacts of climate change on residents, particularly in EJ neighborhoods; 2) make more local, fresh food available, especially in food deserts; 3) provide new jobs greening EJ neighborhoods, 4) plant river and stream buffers to reduce flooding and improve water quality; 5) implement climate-smart farming and forestry practices; 6) enhance the resilience and carbon storage capacity of farms and forests; and 7) protect the Commonwealth's best remaining habitats, watersheds, and water supplies.



facilities people are looking for, the current most popular recreational pursuits, and some of the barriers to spending more time recreating were all similar. Given that the ERG survey was explicitly designed to solicit a pool of respondents statistically representative of Massachusetts residents, this helps ensure the information being used to inform the Goals and Objectives included in Chapter Five is more representative of Massachusetts’ residents.

Types of Outdoor Recreation Areas or Facilities that Respondents Want More of



Chapter Five – Goals and Objectives

The goal of any SCORP is to identify existing outdoor recreational facilities available for residents' use, and what types of additional recreational amenities residents are looking for to ensure funding is directed to projects that can fill that gap. LWCF and state sources of funding will be focused on the needs of residents identified through the previously described public participation processes.

A particular concern is provision of recreational opportunities to underserved populations. Underserved populations include specific groups that are not generally considered when designing local parks and conservation areas. These populations include people with disabilities, teenagers, and senior citizens. Underserved can also refer to areas of a community that are lacking in outdoor recreation facilities.

While finding the time to recreate can be difficult for anyone, people with disabilities may face a greater challenge than most if facilities are not designed with their needs in mind or programming is not accessible to them. People participate in outdoor recreation first and foremost for physical fitness. Having a disability should not prevent someone from using a park or open space to achieve their health goals. It is also important to note that people with disabilities are not the only ones affected by the lack of resources for this group — family and friends of people with disabilities may not be able to participate in outdoor recreation if their loved one cannot.

The goals and objectives of the 2023 SCORP are below.

Goal 1. Improve Access to Beaches and Other Water-based Recreation Facilities



Truro, Photo by Amy Singler

Water-based recreation is as important as it has ever been to the recreational needs of Massachusetts residents. In a time of a changing climate, water in parks and open spaces provides a respite in hot summer months, critical to the health of our citizens, not only as a recreational amenity, but as a cooling feature. Some of the most popular activities listed in the surveys include the need for water (both manmade and natural), such as visiting the beach, swimming in pools and natural water bodies, water spray parks, and fishing (both fresh and saltwater). Just over 24% of the top 10 activities participated in over the past 12 months were water-based, as are 25.3% of the top 10 activities that respondents hope to undertake in the next five years.

When asked what the top three types of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that they would like to see more of in Massachusetts, beaches were the number one response overall. It was also the top response for Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White/Caucasian respondents. (Asian/Pacific Islanders listed it second.) Beaches also top the list of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that respondents would like to see improved in Massachusetts (10.7%), regardless of race, demonstrating the need for funds to be spent on this goal.

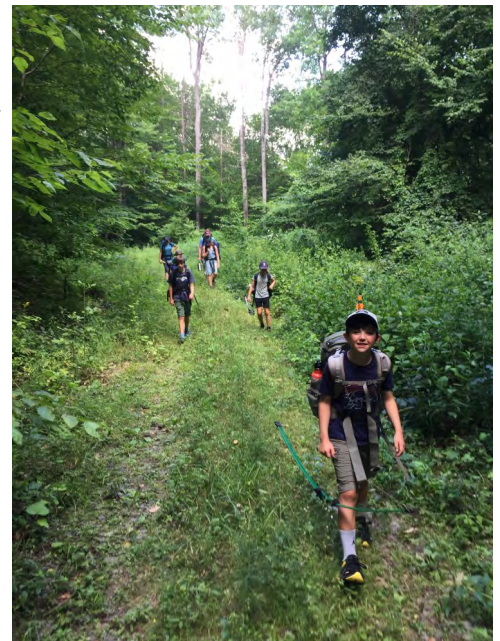
Objectives:

1. Prioritize the acquisition of land that will increase access to freshwater or ocean beaches
2. Support park development projects that involve water-based recreation, such as water spray parks, pools, kayak/canoe launch areas, fishing, etc.
3. Support the acquisition of land that will protect water supply and also be open for recreation

Goal 2. Support Trail Projects

Trails, and the types of recreation they support, continue to be extremely popular in Massachusetts. Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported walking more than once a week, and 47% said they ran more than once a week, which were the top two most popular activities. Trails are varied in type, whether it is a paved trail used for walking, biking, or transportation to work, or a wooded trail used for hiking or off-highway vehicle use. Twenty-two percent of the activities respondents chose were trail-based. These include walking/hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.

Hiking trails ranked number three in both the top three types of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that you would like to see more of in Massachusetts, as well as the top three types of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that you would like to see improved in Massachusetts. The survey completed by municipal



Williamsburg, Photo by Markelle Smith

officials cite trails as the number three outdoor recreation activity that has increased in popularity in the last five to ten years, with off road bicycling (rail trails/bike paths) coming in fourth. These same activities are ranked numbers two and three for the activities these officials expect to increase in popularity in the next five years.

Not only do trails provide a recreational amenity to a community, but they have also been shown to improve public health by providing a free place to walk or ride a bike, provide economic benefits to neighborhood businesses abutting trails, and increase community pride. When asked, “Other than outdoor recreation, what are the three most important services provided by state and local outdoor recreation areas and facilities,” respondents answered “Improving quality of life in communities” 17.4% of the time.

Objectives:

1. Acquire land that will facilitate trail connections to local parks and recreation areas, as well as connect and/or complete existing trail networks
2. Acquire land that will create new opportunities for trails or walking paths, particularly in Environmental Justice Census blocks
3. Construct trails on previously acquired land that are accessible to people with disabilities



Lawrence, Community Gardens, Photo by Sue Fink

Goal 3. Create and Renovate Neighborhood Parks, Especially to Benefit the Underserved

Additional and improved neighborhood parks continue to be a top need of Massachusetts’ residents. The bulk of activities cited in the top 10 activities participated in over the past 12 months (35.4%), as well as the top 10 activities that respondents hope to undertake in the next five years (34.9%), occur in parks. Top activities include basketball, dance, fitness classes, and dog parks. Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported participating in outdoor fitness classes more than once a week, making it the third most frequently participated in activity. Also of note, when asked what

the top three types of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that they would like to see more of in Massachusetts, Asian respondents listed picnic areas. Picnic areas were also listed in the top three types of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that you would like to see improved in Massachusetts by all respondents.

Focusing on neighborhood parks is key to getting more people out recreating given that lack of time, along with a need for certain site amenities, such as parking and restrooms, were listed as barriers for recreating more frequently. Providing high quality neighborhood parks to more residents will give them a close-to-home place to recreate in, only requiring a short visit. This could also eliminate the need for restroom facilities, as well as parking facilities, if people could walk to and from home easily. Since most respondents walk, jog, or wheel/roll most of the time (31%) to the recreational facility they visit most of the time, neighborhood parks are highly needed.

Park Access Study

In 2021, Weston & Sampson was hired by EEA to analyze 100 distinct pedestrian routes of travel to 43 parks located mostly within or near Environmental Justice areas in the cities of Chelsea, Fitchburg, Lawrence, and Worcester. There was a concern that investments were being made in park infrastructure that was not accessible to people by foot or bike due to the sidewalk and/or road conditions leading to them.

Weston & Sampson found that a high percentage of the travel routes contained significant impediments creating challenges to pedestrians seeking access to the parks. Criteria were established by which the deficiencies could be measured, such as lack of code compliant handicapped ramps, missing crosswalks, poor pavement conditions, and missing lengths of sidewalk.

Once evaluated, suggestions were made to address the deficiencies, such as:

- Adding conditions to existing grant programs to require applicants to analyze surrounding streets and contribute their own funds to make them more accessible;
- Create a separate, new grant program, aligned with the PARC Grant Program, to target infrastructure improvements;
- Modify the Community Preservation Act legislation to allow funds to be spent on these types of projects; and
- Encourage PARC applicants to survey the condition of streets, sidewalks and crosswalks adjacent to parks that are the subject of their request and to pursue public works funding at the same time.



Racial disparities in the proximity of recreational facilities most frequently used emerged from data showing that Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino respondents were more likely to live five to 10 miles away from the outdoor recreation area or facility they use most often. This differs from the 46% of respondents that live within five miles of the outdoor recreational facility that they visit most frequently. The proportion of Black respondents reporting they visit their favorite outdoor recreation area more than once a week is the highest of all race categories. Priority should be given to siting parks in Census tract areas that have a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic/Latino residents.

Objectives:

1. Prioritize funding neighborhood parks in Environmental Justice Census tracts, especially new parks
2. Continue to promote park design as a tool for climate change resilience
3. Support the development of neighborhood park-type amenities, such as water spray parks, dog parks, community gardens
4. Add to the network of parks that provide space for community gatherings, such as farmers' markets and community festivals

Goal 4. Create Opportunities, Especially for the Underserved, to Enjoy Protected Natural Areas

People have various reasons why they enjoy going outside to recreate. When asked what the most important reasons are they participate in outdoor recreation, the top responses are to be outdoors (15.5%), to have fun (14.8%), physical fitness (13.9%), mental well-being and relaxation (both at 13.8%). Much of what people like to do when outside require a passive recreational environment. Activities such as hiking, camping, and bird/wildlife viewing totaled to 16.6% of the



Mt. Watatic, Ashburnham, Photo by Becky Harris

responses to the survey. Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported bird watching or wildlife viewing more than once a week.

The need for natural areas is emphasized by the response to the question, “Select the top three types of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that you would like to see more of in Massachusetts.” Nature preserves or wildlife watching areas garnered 8.1% of the response. Protecting wildlife habitat (19%) and creating open

space (13.9%) were listed as numbers one and four, respectively, as the responses to, “Other than outdoor recreation, what are the three most important services provided by state and local outdoor recreation areas and facilities?” Preserving tracts of open space is also critical from a climate mitigation perspective.

While this data demonstrates the need for the inclusion of this goal in the 2023 SCORP, the original intent of the LWCF Act cannot be ignored: “Its purpose is to stimulate a nationwide action program to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility to all citizens of the United States of present and future generations, and visitors who are lawfully present within the boundaries of the United States, such quality and quantity of outdoor

BioMap

BioMap, produced through an ongoing collaboration between the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) and Massachusetts chapter of The Nature Conservancy, is an online resource that identifies critical lands and waters throughout Massachusetts most in need of conservation. BioMap’s comprehensive synthesis of biodiversity data guides the strategic protection and stewardship of these habitats for rare species, fish, and other wildlife, and identifies

intact and climate resilient ecosystems and landscapes. If effectively conserved, the natural areas within the new BioMap are designed to support the long-term re-



silience of both nature and people.

BioMap’s conservation targets are organized into 1) Core Habitat, which identifies areas critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and a wide diversity of resilient ecosystems and 2) Critical Natural Landscapes, which identifies large landscapes and habitat buffers that enhance resilience, maintain connectivity, and support ecological processes. A key innovation in this BioMap (there have been two previous editions) is the addition of local habitat data specifically designed to support municipal decisions and funding. BioMap also includes new regional data that connects habitats and communities and identifies priorities relevant beyond the borders of Massachusetts.

While land protection is critical, it is often not enough. Over 40% of rare and declining species in MA require active management of their habitats. Therefore, habitat restoration and management are key elements of the Commonwealth’s BioMap conservation strategy. BioMap now also includes a Habitat Restoration Resource Center that provides recommendations and resources for stewardship actions to promote habitat resilience, restore ecological processes, and allow communities to adapt to climate change.

recreation resources as may be available and are necessary and desirable for individual active participation in such recreation; and to strengthen the health and vitality of U.S. citizens.” As much as possible, opportunities for land acquisition will be prioritized near Census designated Urban Areas, especially in Environmental Justice areas.

Objectives:

1. Make previously acquired natural areas, whether they be municipally owned conservation areas or state-owned parks or wildlife management areas, more accessible by creating campsites, kayak/canoe launches, trailheads, overlooks, and turnouts, etc. with attention paid towards amenities that accommodate people with disabilities
2. Acquire new blocks of land with preference to those parcels that are designated as an Urban Area by the 2020 US Census, in Environmental Justice Census blocks, or the trailhead is within a half-mile of a transit stop
3. Acquire land mapped as Core Habitat, Critical Natural Landscape, and Local and Regional Components in BioMap where habitat-compatible public access can be accommodated



Connecticut River, Williamsburg, Photo by Amy Singler

Appendix A – Wetlands Component

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Manual states that SCORPs must contain a wetlands priority component consistent with Section 303 of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986. The wetlands priority component must, at minimum, show evidence of consultation with the state agency responsible for fish and wildlife resources, include a list of wetland types given priority status when acquiring land, and discuss outdoor recreation opportunities that utilize wetland resources.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), wetlands are found throughout the state, from the Atlantic coast to the Berkshires. Wetlands help clean drinking water supplies, prevent flooding and storm damage, and support a variety of wildlife. In Massachusetts, the following types of wetlands can be found: coastal wetlands, which are directly adjacent to the ocean and include beaches, salt marshes, dunes, coastal banks, rocky intertidal shores, and barrier beaches; inland wetlands, which are areas where water is at or just below the surface of the ground; and inland wetlands, which include marshes, wet meadows, bogs, and swamps.

Many birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, insects, and plants depend on wetlands for their survival. Migratory birds like the red-winged blackbird find food and shelter in wetlands during their seasonal migrations. Shorebirds, such as sandpipers, use wetlands for food and shelter. Even bald eagles depend on wetlands. In addition, wetlands provide breeding areas for birds, such as the wood duck. Mammals depend on wetland habitats, too. Black bear, deer, and other large mammals often feed on wetland plants. Beavers and muskrats make their homes in ponds and streams, while weasels and otters find their food in marshes. Wetlands provide habitat for many rare and endangered species, such as the wood turtle, piping plover, blue-spotted salamander, and the Plymouth gentian flower.

In addition to health and safety benefits, wetlands offer natural beauty and recreational opportunities. These resource areas are available to everyone who enjoys the outdoors, such as hikers, hunters, sport fishermen, artists, and bird watchers. Wetlands also contribute to tourism and offer educational opportunities for adults and children. For many landowners and communities, wetlands represent open space - a valuable resource in urban and suburban landscapes.

While we now recognize the benefits of wetlands, that recognition has come late. Since Colonial times, almost one third of Massachusetts' wetlands have been

destroyed. Concerned about the loss of wetlands in the early 1960s, Massachusetts adopted the nation's first wetlands protection laws. Today, wetlands are protected by state and federal laws.

The Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 131, Section 40) protects wetlands and the public interests they serve, including flood control, prevention of pollution and storm damage, and protection of public and private water supplies, groundwater supply, fisheries, land containing shellfish, and wildlife habitat. These public interests are protected by requiring a careful review of proposed work that may alter wetlands. The law protects not only wetlands, but other resource areas, such as land subject to flooding (100-year floodplains), the riverfront area (added by the Rivers Protection Act), and land under water bodies, waterways, salt ponds, fish runs, and the ocean.

At the local level, the community's conservation commission administers the Wetlands Protection Act. The commission is a volunteer board of three to seven members appointed by the selectboard or city council. On the state level, the MassDEP oversees administration of the law. MassDEP develops regulations and policies and provides technical training to commissions. MassDEP also hears appeals of decisions made by commissions.

MassDEP's Wetlands Conservancy Program is mapping the state's wetlands using aerial photography and photointerpretation to delineate wetland boundaries. The Program produces maps identifying wetlands that are one quarter acre or larger in size. MassDEP uses these maps to document the extent and condition of the state's wetlands and to improve coordination among regulatory programs on wetland and water quality issues.

The Program supplies this vital resource information to communities. When the maps for a city or town have been completed, MassDEP gives a set to the conservation commission. Commissions have found the maps useful in creating local wetland inventories, cross-checking permit application plans, and assisting in enforcement. The wetland maps also are a valuable planning tool for other municipal boards, planning agencies, landowners, and consultants.

The Program also is mapping eelgrass beds along the coast. These important wetland resources serve as nursery areas for finfish and shellfish, filter pollutants, and buffer the shoreline from waves. Since these habitats are negatively affected by pollution, they are good indicators of water quality along the coast. This valuable resource information is being shared with communities and other state agencies.

Permanent restriction orders have been placed on selected wetlands in over 50 communities under the Inland and Coastal Wetlands Restriction Acts (MGL Chapter 131, Section 40A, and MGL Chapter 130, Section 105). The restriction orders provide added protection for selected wetlands by prohibiting certain activities in advance of any work being proposed. The restriction orders have been recorded at the Registries of Deeds in the counties where the properties are located to inform future landowners of the restriction.

Restriction orders are implemented through the Wetlands Protection Act permitting process. A landowner proposing work in a restricted wetland must file a Notice of Intent and check the appropriate box on the form. Upon receipt of the NOI, the conservation commission and MassDEP regional office should check their copies of the restricted wetlands plans and restriction orders to determine if work is proposed in a restricted wetland and if the work is allowed under the restriction order. Orders of Conditions must not allow work that is prohibited by a restriction order.

Massachusetts' Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), within the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), works to restore and protect the Commonwealth's rivers, wetlands, and watersheds for the benefit of people and the environment. DER works in partnership with landowners, municipalities, non-profit organizations, and state and federal agencies to plan and implement restoration projects. DER also builds the capacity of regional and other organizations to lead and support restoration.

DER staff have extensive experience and qualifications in all aspects of river and wetland restoration planning and project management. In addition, DER frequently collaborates with other state and federal agencies that support restoration efforts, including the Division of Marine Fisheries, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Office of Coastal Zone Management, MassDEP, and the state's two National Estuary Programs. Massachusetts can have such a successful restoration program due to strong technical, outreach, and funding partnerships with municipalities, landowners, nonprofits, private companies, academic institutions, and government agencies.

On average, state investment in restoration leverages three to five times its initial value from non-state sources and delivers important social and environmental benefits to Massachusetts' communities. Restoration funding also supports local and regional economies by generating an average employment demand of 12.5 jobs and \$1,750,000 in total economic output from each \$1 million spent on these projects.

DER has helped partners restore over 3,000 acres of wetlands and remove over 70 dams, opening 380 river miles across Massachusetts. As of December 2022, over

147 ecological restoration projects and culvert upgrade grants have been completed, and over 130 restoration projects and culvert upgrade grants are underway.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation and DFG, the two state agencies that acquire land for conservation and recreation use in the Commonwealth, consider wetland resources when determining what land to acquire. DCR identifies any wetlands on the site as a resource attribute in its analysis given that they often provide habitat for rare species, filter surface water and help to improve water quality, and store large amounts of carbon in the soil, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Wetlands are also a part of BioMap's Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape designations, both of which are priority protection areas for DCR. A relatively intact wetland system in a more urbanized environment is critical in maintaining certain natural communities, so is also looked at favorably by DCR land acquisition staff.

DFG identifies wetlands that provide habitat for rare species that are dependent upon them and prioritizes that land for acquisition, as well as lands designated as BioMap Wetland Core, Aquatic Core, Wetland Buffer, or Aquatic Buffer. In addition, land with certified or potential vernal pools are important priorities for land for acquisition. Wetlands are considered when choosing sites for fishing and boating access as well.

Appendix B – Executive Summary from Eastern Research Group Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Division of Conservation Services (DCS) undertook this survey of adults in Massachusetts to inform planning related to outdoor recreation facilities, areas, and activities. The survey was administered online in February and March of 2023 to 801 respondents who are representative of the state’s demographic composition in terms of age, gender, race and county. The results underscore the importance of outdoor recreation to residents of Massachusetts, with walking being the most popular activity that is also done most frequently. Lack of time is the most often cited factor for not making more use of outdoor recreation facilities, followed closely by a lack of certain amenities at facilities, such as restrooms and parking. Most respondents rated Massachusetts outdoor recreation facilities and areas as satisfactory or better, and provided useful feedback on where improvements could be made, especially with respect to disabled access and safety. The findings of the report include the following:

- **Importance of outdoor recreation:** Overall, 44% of respondents indicated that outdoor recreation is “extremely important” and 37% indicated it is “somewhat important.”
- **Top 10 activities:** Walking was identified as the most popular outdoor recreation activity in the past 12 months, selected as among the top 10 outdoor recreation activities participated in by 9.6% of respondents, followed by visiting the beach (6.1%), hiking (5.7%), visiting farmers markets (4.7%), visiting outdoor historic sites or museums (3.9%), swimming in outdoor pools (3.6%), swimming in natural water bodies (3.6%), camping (3.3%), bird watching or wildlife viewing (3.2%) and running or jogging (3.0%) and basketball (3.0%).
- **Frequency of activities:** Walking is also the activity that respondents reported doing most frequently. Sixty-eight percent of respondents for whom walking was a top-10 activity in the past 12 months reported walking

more than once a week. Running is the second most frequent activity, with 47% of respondents indicating that they ran more than once a week. Outdoor fitness classes and bird-watching or wildlife viewing are activities enjoyed with regularity, with 37% of respondents reporting participation in each of those activities more than once a week.

- **Proximity:** More respondents (46%) live within 5 miles of the outdoor recreation area or facility they use most often, while another 35% of respondents live between 5 and 10 miles away.
- **Transportation:** More respondents indicated that they walk, jog or wheel/roll most of the time (31%), followed by driving or using a shared ride (29%). Relatively few respondents (10%) indicated that public transportation was an important means of transportation to get to outdoor recreation areas or facilities.
- **Preferences for more areas/facilities:** Beaches top the list of outdoor recreational areas or facilities that respondents would like to see more of in Massachusetts (10.6%), followed by nature preserves or wildlife watching areas (8.1%) and hiking trails (7.4%).
- **Satisfaction:** State-owned and -operated outdoor recreation areas and facilities were most commonly rated as satisfactory (41%), followed by very good (35%), with 10% of respondents giving them an excellent rating.
- **Reasons for participation:** The most frequently reported reason for participating in outdoor recreation was to be outdoors (15.5%), followed by having fun (14.8%), physical fitness (13.9%), mental well-being (13.8%) and relaxation (13.8%).
- **Factors that limit participation:** The most frequently chosen factor that limits the use of outdoor recreational areas and facilities is a lack of time

(15.0%), followed by a lack of restrooms/locker rooms (12.3%), lack of parking (11.1%) and fees that are too high (9.6%).

- **Safety issues:** Respondents who selected safety as a factor that limits their use of outdoor recreational areas and facilities provided comments with the most common themes being harassment, crime, and drugs.
- **Access for disabled:** Suggestions from respondents with disabled household members for making outdoor recreation areas and facilities more accessible most commonly included improved design, parking, ramps, trails/paths and wheelchair accessibility.
- **Information sources:** Respondents identified that they learn about outdoor recreation facilities and activities through word of mouth (21.0%), followed by internet/websites (18.1%) and social media (13.3%).
- **Services provided by outdoor recreation areas:** Protecting wildlife habitat was most commonly chosen as among the three most important services provided by state and local outdoor recreation areas and facilities (19.0%), followed by improving quality of life in communities (17.4%) and protecting drinking water (14.8%).
- **Concern about climate change:** The largest proportion of respondents indicated that they were somewhat concerned about the impact that climate change will have on outdoor recreation in Massachusetts (42%), with another 31% indicating that they were very concerned.
- **Impact of pandemic:** Slightly more respondents indicated that their use of outdoor recreation areas and facilities had stayed the same during the pandemic (36%) than decreasing (33%) or increasing (31%).

Appendix C – Massachusetts Open Project Selection Process

Introduction

Per the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Manual, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has developed an Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) to, “better assure equal opportunity for all eligible project sponsors and all sectors of the general public to participate in the benefits of the LWCF State Assistance Program.”

The OPSP clarifies how Massachusetts will educate the public about the availability of LWCF funding, as well as how to apply for and receive LWCF grants. The goal is to award grants to projects that directly implement SCORP goals and objectives. Most importantly, the OPSP should ensure that LWCF grants are distributed in a fair and equitable manner to minority, low income, elderly, disabled, and other underserved populations. Massachusetts accomplishes this through its fair and open grant selection process, including the project rating system in the grant application package.

Public Participation Process

After the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020, which permanently fully funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million annually, staff from the Appalachian Mountain Club, The Nature Conservancy, and MassAudubon, along with Commonwealth of Massachusetts staff to determine next steps for the grant program.

In 2021, the group reached out to several audiences through listening sessions, webinars, and in-person meetings. The goal was to encourage more LWCF applications (particularly from Environmental Justice [EJ] communities), to better understand community needs, and to learn about barriers to those wanting to apply.

Two statewide listening sessions were held: The first was made up of staff from municipalities and regional planning agencies and the second of staff from conservation, recreation, and EJ organizations. Participants were asked a series of questions to gather information on their needs, barriers, and how they may be better supported in applying for funds.

A series of additional presentations on LWCF were made throughout the state, including at the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commission’s Spring

Conference and a virtual Lunch and Learn session, Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors Annual Meeting, a webinar hosted by the Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge featuring LWCF Stateside Coordinators from Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, and a webinar “Funding Open Space, Trails, and Active Transportation Across the Commonwealth”.

To ensure that the public’s recreational needs were gathered in a statistically valid way as part of its SCORP update, EEA contracted with Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) to conduct a survey of Massachusetts residents to:

1. Understand their current and expected use of outdoor recreation areas and facilities,
2. Identify barriers to greater use of available resources,
3. Identify desired improvements in outdoor recreation areas and facilities provided by the state and local communities.

The report is based on an online survey of 801 adults living in Massachusetts. The sampling design included stratification by race, county, gender, and age. This stratification was intended to assure representation of all areas and groups of people in the state. Racial minorities were oversampled to allow appropriate analysis of results with respect to race. In addition, the results were weighted to mirror the actual distribution of the adult population with respect to age and race. The survey was administered by Qualtrics, beginning on February 6, 2023, and ending on March 3, 2023. The Executive Summary of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

EEA made available on its website three surveys: one for residents that use outdoor recreation facilities, one for municipal recreation providers, and one for land trusts. The residents’ survey was translated into the three languages most frequently spoken other than English (Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish) as recommended by EEA’s Deputy Director of Environmental Justice. While not statistically valid, the vast number of responses provided valuable information not only from recreational users throughout the Commonwealth, but also recreation provided. The availability of the surveys was advertised by partners.

Eligible Applicants and Projects

Any municipality in the Commonwealth with an up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan is eligible to apply for LWCF grants. The Commonwealth’s Department of Fish and Game and Department Conservation and Recreation are also eligible applicants. Massachusetts’ two federally recognized tribes, the Mashpee Wampanoags and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head – Aquinnah, may also apply for LWCF grants.

Grant Application Process

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires that all grants are posted on its state procurement website, www.commbuys.com. The Division of Conservation Services, which administers the LWCF grant program on behalf of the National Park Service for the Commonwealth, also posts the grant announcement on its website. The grant posting is also announced through multiple listservs, including the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions, Massachusetts Park and Recreation Association, and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, and email blasts from sister state agencies, including the Municipal Vulnerability Program and Coastal Zone Management.

Grant applications in Massachusetts are written in the form of a BID document, which contains a description of eligible project types and includes the project rating system by which grants are selected. BIDs are posted for, generally, a minimum of 90 days to provide sufficient time for application development and completion. The LWCF Stateside Coordinator hosts two grant workshops, one virtual workshop through Microsoft Teams and one in person, where the grant requirements are discussed. Potential applicants are welcome to ask questions about the grant program and, more specifically, their project. The PowerPoint presentation and questions and answers from the workshops are posted on the grant’s website and on [commbuys](http://commbuys.com). All applicants, especially first-time applicants, are encouraged to attend one of the workshops.

In Massachusetts, the LWCF grant is offered annually, depending on funding availability.

The typical funding schedule is as follows:

October	Grant announcement posted on DCS website, public informed through method described above
Early December	Grant workshops held
Mid-January	Grant application deadline

January/February	Site inspections; project applications reviewed and rated by staff
March/April	Project selection/grant approval meeting with State Liaison Officer, applicants informed of grant decisions (both selected and unselected project applicants)
April	Selected projects submitted to NPS for initial review and approval
June/July	NPS approved projects entered into grants.gov

Rating System

All eligible project applications are reviewed and rated according to the LWCF project rating system based on the information provided in the application and gathered at the pre-award on-site inspection. All applications will receive a total point score and be ranked from highest to lowest score. The total apportionment amount available will determine which grants are recommended for funding.

The SCORP project rating system includes the following criteria (rating system follows):

- **Relevance to Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan** – how well does the project fit into the four goals of the SCORP? Points awarded on the number of goals met by the proposed project.
- **Relevance to Open Space and Recreation Plan** (for municipalities) – how well does the project fit into the goals and objectives of the community’s OSRP. Points awarded on the specificity of project reference in the plan.
- **Relevance to agency’s land acquisition or recreation capital plan** (for state agencies) – how well does the project fit into the agency’s land acquisition plan.
- **Environmental Justice** – does the project provide access to Environmental Justice populations?
- **Access for people with disabilities** – does the project provide access for people with disabilities? Points awarded based on thorough and creative accessibility plans are for people with disabilities.

- **Water-based recreation** – does the project provide access to water-based recreation, most importantly, beaches of all kinds, or protect a water resource that allow for recreation? Most points awarded to projects with beaches.
- **Trails** – does the project facilitate the connection or completion of existing trail networks or create new trails or walking paths in a community/region? Points awarded based on the increase in availability of trails/paths in the community.
- **Climate resiliency** – does the park’s design incorporate resilient design standards (for recreation projects)? How much of the parcel is mapped as resilient for climate change or BioMap Core, Critical Natural Landscape, or a Local or Regional Component (for conservation land acquisition projects)?
- **Access to open space** – is the land in a Census-designated Urban Area or the trailhead is within a half-mile of a transit stop (for conservation land acquisition projects)? Does the park design facilitate community gatherings, such as community gardens, dog parks, Farmers’ Markets, etc. or makes previously acquired state/municipal conservation land more accessible to the public by creating amenities, such as campsites, kiosks, trailheads?
- **Stewardship** – does the applicant have a proven record of stewardship capacity and ability to currently steward the property? Points awarded based on demonstrated staff, volunteers, and/or financial capacity.
- **Application quality** – how thorough is the application? Points awarded to well organized and complete BID responses.
- **Project quality** – how well does the proposed project meet the goals of the Land and Water Conservation Fund?

Please note that any changes to the state's LWCF Rating System will be made with the public’s awareness and be included the LWCF funding announcement and the grant’s BID document.

LWCF Rating System

Conservation Projects	Recreation Projects
Relevance to Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – how well does the project fit into the four goals of the SCORP? Points awarded on the number of goals met by the proposed project.	Relevance to Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – how well does the project fit into the four goals of the SCORP? Points awarded on the number of goals met by the proposed project.
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