

Recreation

Conditions & Trend

- (1) *The community's Comprehensive Planning Recreation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Conservation, and the Office, or their designees.*

See the map titled Public Facilities and Services for recreational facilities included in the state-prepared data set and additional facilities as identified by the Town.

- (2) *A description of important public and private active recreation programs, land and water recreation areas (including hunting and fishing areas), and facilities in the community and region, including regional recreational opportunities as appropriate, and identification of unmet needs.*

Inventory of Physical Assets

- The Bowdoinham Community School (BCS) was built in 1955, with additions in 1968, 1977, and 1991 /1992. It has an attached auditorium/gymnasium with a small stage. The facility has a poured rubber floor and a regulation-sized basketball court. The School District and the Town have an agreement for access to the building for community use.
- A Little League baseball/softball field, built in 1992, is on school property. Two additional ball fields for baseball and soccer are at the recreation complex. The Town owns the batting cage, a pitching machine, and soccer goals.
- A community playground for small children was constructed behind BCS. The construction was supervised by the Bowdoinham Parent Teacher Club members.
- The outdoor regulation basketball court was built in the summer of 1993. A regulation tennis court was built in 1993. The school is responsible for maintaining the basketball court while the town is responsible for maintaining the tennis court. In the summer of 2023, both courts were resurfaced and repainted to include lines for one pickleball court on the basketball court and two pickleball courts on the tennis court. The basketball court also received new backboards, rims, and nets.
- The outdoor ice-skating rink is situated in the parking area for the ball fields along Ridge Road. The rink is approximately 30 feet by 100 feet and is weather dependent and maintained by volunteers and the Bowdoinham Fire Department.
- There is also a nature trail adjacent to the ball fields and a one-kilometer strip mowed on the fields for cross-country running and skiing.
- Volunteers constructed a snack shack and storage building with water and electricity, at the athletic field on Ridge Road in 1999. Extensive repairs were made to the snack shack in the spring of 2022, including a new roof covering and new plumbing. Two picnic tables were purchased, and an electronic scoreboard was installed at the community school for basketball season.
- In 2011 the Army National Guard built a garage in the parking lot of the Recreational facility on Ridge Road. This will replace the green storage shed.
- The State of Maine manages the Merymeeting Bay Wildlife Area, located at the tip of Wildes Point Road. Area and State level field dog trials occur here on a regular basis, but the State discourages camping and many other activities often associated with the outdoors.
- The Masons, The Knights of Pythias and The Historical Society all have buildings in the Village. These social clubs are a recreational asset for their members and are potentially available for community use.

- In June 2017 a skateboarding park was constructed in memory of Matthew Parker. The park is located across the railroad tracks from Maily Park and is open to the public from dusk to dawn during the spring, summer, and fall.
- Bowdoinham has many East-West discontinued roads. The public right of way to these roads has often been retained when the road was discontinued. These provide public access for snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding. These are not part of an established recreation program but should be identified and maintained for public uses.

Bowdoinham Waterfront Park / Philip Maily Park and Town Landing / Boat Launch

The Bowdoinham Waterfront Park, also known as the Philip Maily Park, is on two acres purchased in 1992 following years of informal town use. Volunteers, the Merrymeeting Yacht Club, and Public Works have assisted with maintenance at the Park with the town budget providing the funds for maintenance. Facilities include picnic benches, horseshoe pits, fishing area, public restrooms and a gazebo for outdoor entertainment and concerts.

The Town Landing, located within Philip Maily Park, is primarily a boat launch jointly owned by the Town and the Department of Conservation. It consists of a boat ramp and two docks, one for handicapped use, where the public may launch and board boats. It is located on the Cathance River, just east of the Route 24 Bridge at the foot of Main Street. This public right of way was completely rebuilt with town and Department of Conservation funds and a federal grant, which provided the assistance of the Navy Seabees. The Waterfront Committee supervised the renovation.

The Landing is a full-tide ramp, so that boats can be launched at any tide. There is a mean low tide of 4 feet, 8 inches at the site. The 13 and 1/2-degree ramp angle makes it easier to launch large boats at any tide. Kayak racks are located at the landing with spaces available to rent seasonally.

Down river from the landing are spaces for 49 moorings. Thirty-three were used in 2023, were reserved by non-residents and 21 by residents. These moorings are registered with the Town and supervised by a paid Harbormaster, who reports to the Town manager.

Recreation Programs

The Town approved a full time Director of Recreation and Community Services in June 2023.

Baseball/Softball - This is the largest recreation program in the town, serving approximately 130 players: on average 35 T-ball players (grades K & 1st), 60 Baseball players (2nd grade -6th grade) and 40 softball players (2nd grade-6th grade). The Baseball Program is part of the Ararat Cal Ripken League which includes the towns of Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Harpswell, and Topsham. The Softball Program is part of the Ararat Babe Ruth Softball League which includes the towns of Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Harpswell, Richmond, Bath, and Topsham. Babe Ruth Baseball teams are available for baseball players ages 13-15 for "pool" and "draft" interested players from all the towns in S.A.D. #75. Senior Babe Ruth and American Legion teams are available for players 16-18 years of age.

Basketball - The season begins in November and runs through February. Third and fourth graders have 25 players on average. Fifth and sixth grades have on average 25 players, usually enough for 1 team of each. These teams are part of the Ararat Youth Basketball League (AYBL) and consists

of the towns of Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Harpswell, and Topsham. Some players choose to tryouts for “travel teams” and play in leagues overseen by the AYBL Board. There is also a kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade basketball program which runs in the winter and is a skills development program.

Ice Skating - The town maintains an outdoor ice-skating rink and has ice skates available for residents to rent (at no charge). The Recreation Department holds after-school ice skating sessions for both hockey and free skating.

Cross Country Running – Two sessions of cross country running is offered for grades 1 – 6 in the spring and fall seasons. Teams average about 25 runners in the fall and 10 in the spring. Competitive meets each week are held throughout the region as part of the Coastal Running League.

Soccer - During the fall soccer season, interested Bowdoinham children participate in the Topsham Recreation soccer leagues. Many children participate in other local club and camp offerings throughout the year.

Skiing - A downhill skiing program is offered beginning in January and running through mid- February. This program takes place at Lost Valley in Auburn and consists of six one-hour sessions (one hour of which is instruction if needed) and a seventh half day session. This program has been in existence for several years and has been attended by as many as thirty children plus a handful of adult chaperones. The town rents out (at no charge) snowshoes and cross-country ski equipment for residents. A 1-km cross-country loop trail has been maintained around the athletic fields.

Tennis - People who play tennis arrive at the courts and play on a first come first serve basis. The tennis court was resurfaced, painted, net reset and new perimeter drainage installed in the summer of 2023.

Swimming - Farley Field House at Bowdoin College hosts Family Swim. There are two sessions of Sunday free swim for families that live in the SAD #75 towns. One Session runs September – December and the other begins in January and runs through April.

Village Seniors - Lunches, socials, bingo and other events are planned on a monthly basis through the Age Friendly Bowdoinham Committee. Other activities for seniors include weekly cribbage, bridge, yoga, line dancing and pickleball.

Library - The library offers a variety of reading, activity, and workshop programs throughout the year.

Events

The Town sponsors community events including:

- The Bowdoinham Summer Concert Series is held in Maily Waterfront Park. The free outdoor concerts begin at 6pm and go until at least 8pm every Sunday starting in late June to late August. This popular concert series features a wide range of rock, folk, county, and acoustic music from local and regional musicians.

- Celebrate Bowdoinham is the Town's annual celebration in September in and around the Waterfront Park.
- Open Farm Day in July gives people a chance to meet their local farmers and tour the local farms.
- Holiday Festival is an opportunity for our local artisans to showcase their goods on the first weekend in December.
- Ice & Smelt Festival is a February event coordinated by the Merrymeeting Arts Center the Library and Bowdoinham Recreation Department.

Other and non-municipal programs

Other recreation is available through organizations such as Scouts, the Bowdoinham Snowmobile Club (the “Snowbirds”), as well as the Parent Teacher Club, and local churches. While these are not town supported activities, they do provide opportunities for free or inexpensive recreation. Again, volunteers are vital to their success.

With its rural character, rivers, and Merrymeeting Bay, the Town has had many opportunities for these kinds of private recreational activities: Hunting, fishing, walking, boating, bicycling, horseback riding.

Richard Ferrier Scholarship - The Richard Ferrier Scholarship Fund is for students between the ages of 13 and 18 who are residents of Bowdoinham and provides financial assistance so that they may pursue artistic, academic, athletic and vocational or interests outside of the traditional school environment (including but not limited to: music lessons, tuition for summer programs or studies, or special athletic instruction). The Maine Community Foundation administers this fund.

Recreational Businesses

The following recreational businesses are located within Bowdoinham:

- Ackers Acres Disc Golf: disc golf course: 30 holes, 2 courses with 4'x8' cement T-pads a small clubhouse with snacks and drinks available. Host weddings, anniversaries, company parties, etc., 60 acres, open year round, Dingley Rd.
- Dragonworks Kayaks: Manufacture whitewater and sea touring kayaks, accessories, offer tours of Merrymeeting Bay and instruction, Stevens Rd.
- Jim’s Smelt Fishing Camp. Cathance River, 24 camps, Route 24.
- Leighton’s Smelt Fishing Camp Abagadasset River, 10 camps, Brown’s Point Rd.
- Point of View Helicopter Services: Scenic sightseeing of Merrymeeting Bay and region, aerial photography, aerial surveying, wildlife tracking, pipeline patrols and cargo. Stevens Rd.

(3) *An inventory of any fresh or salt water bodies in the community determined locally to have inadequate public access.*

Bowdoinham has miles of frontage on the Kennebec, Cathance, and Abagadasset Rivers and Merrymeeting Bay, but it has no organized swimming areas and only limited points of access.

See the map titled Public Facilities and Services for the location of shorefront access points. There are four “Paddle Put-ins” shorefront access points:

- Maily Waterfront Park (Town Landing) on the Cathance River
- CMP Carry-in (CMP property) on the Lower Abagadasset River
- Gallant Carry-in (State Inland Fisheries and Wildlife property) on the Upper Abagadasset River
- Unnamed off Porkpoint Rd (State agricultural property) on the Kennebec River, below Swan Island

No public access is available to the West Branch of the Cathance within Bowdoinham.

(4) *A description of local and regional trail systems, trail management organizations, and conservation organizations that provide trails for all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiling, skiing, mountain biking, or hiking.*

Local trails

The Bowdoinham Community School has an indoor and outdoor waking paths. The Cathance River Walk (3/4 mile) follows the river on town owned property opposite the Philip Maily Park. The Detweiler/Leyman property on Carding Machine Rd (3/4 mile) has a trail to the Abagadasset River.

See the maps titled Public Facilities and Services and Bowdoinham Constraints for the location of conserved and town properties with trails. The State of Maine holds two significant parcels that total 485 acres. Reed's Point and the Bachman Property are managed as wildlife preserves and are accessible by trails. On State Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) property in Bowdoinham (Wildes Rd), the following uses are allowed:

- Snowshoeing, skiing, bird watching
- Hunting (portable tree stands only), fishing, trapping,
- Water access at designated points or at road crossings, carrying in canoes across open land is allowed
- Snowmobiles and ATV's on designated trails only
- Walking on existing trails is allowed but. IFW do not plan to establish any additional trails.

The following are not allowed on State Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) property in Bowdoinham:

- Camping
- Fires
- Cutting trees or vegetation without written permission
- New trails established or marked without written permission

Regional conservation organizations such as the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay and the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust hold several conservation easements of lands near or adjacent to State properties, connecting habitats and ecosystems. Most of the areas attract recreational visitors. The Cathance River Education Alliance, based in Topsham, promotes ecological awareness and nature-based learning among students, educators and the public in order to foster wise use of the Cathance River Preserve. The Bowdoinham Snowbirds, a snowmobile club, maintain over 50 miles of trails throughout Bowdoinham. For the locations of these trails, see the map titled Recreation: Trails. These trails also connect to Bowdoin, Richmond, Litchfield, and Merrymeeting Bay, which link to other trail networks beyond Sagadahoc County.

Proposed Regional Trail

The goal of the proposed Merrymeeting Trail is to use the existing railroad corridor to create a thirty-two mile regional rail-with-trail from Topsham through Bowdoinham and Richmond to Gardiner. The Merrymeeting Trail would connect the following locations:

- Androscoggin River Pedestrian Bike Path in Topsham that links Brunswick to Topsham;
- the village area in Bowdoinham;
- the village area in Richmond;
- the village area in Gardiner; and
- Kennebec River Rail Trail that links Gardiner, Farmingdale, Hallowell, and Augusta.
- East Coast Greenway

Regular meetings on the Merrymeeting Trail Initiative have been held since 2008 to develop the project and grants have been obtained to fund planning. A feasibility study with preliminary engineering and cost estimates was completed in 2011.

Recreational benefits of the trail would include enhanced connections to several major water bodies like Merrymeeting Bay, which is a world-renowned recreational area with significant natural habitat, popular with locals and tourists for sailing, kayaking, swimming, walking, bird watching, fishing and duck hunting. The trail would support healthy communities by providing healthy outdoor activities for area residents. Additionally, it would:

- Serve as an alternate/additional route for the East Coast Greenway (a planned trail system from Canada to Florida)
- Create economic development opportunities and support downtown revitalization
- Allow for future rail use (transportation & shipping) along the corridor, while accommodating safe bicycle and pedestrian routes
- Provide potential cultural/historic education opportunities for communities along the trail
- Provide potential environmental and natural resources education opportunities for local and regional natural resources groups

(5) *A map or list of important publicly-used open spaces and their associated facilities, such as parking and toilet facilities.*

See the map titled Public Facilities and Services for the location of open spaces. See the responses to question #2 above for a description of these recreational facilities.

Analysis

(1) *Will existing recreational facilities and programs in the community and region accommodate projected growth or changes in age groups in your community?*

The natural resources of Bowdoinham and the region provide numerous recreational opportunities like hiking, hunting, horseback riding, ATV, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing,

fishing, canoeing, kayaking, boating, and cycling. Open space includes parks, reserves, certain shoreland areas, athletic fields, farms, forestlands, wetlands, and rivers, as described in this plan. Existing recreational facilities generally meet the projected needs of the community over the next ten years. Allocating sufficient resources for the ongoing maintenance of all facilities will be crucial. With our population of adults over age 60 at 30% (and growing). An increase in the number and frequency of programs to meet the growing senior population might be warranted.

- (2) *Is there a need for certain types of services or facilities or to upgrade or enlarge present facilities to either add capacity or make them more usable?*

The need for a permanent home for the Senior Center, expanded senior activities and a community center have been discussed. Another common desire is a place for public swimming or “splash pad” area.

- (3) *Are important tracts of open space commonly used for recreation publicly-owned or otherwise permanently conserved?*

Several important open spaces used for recreation are conserved. See the Condition and Trends section in this chapter for a listing of town-owned and permanently conserved lands and facilities, and see the maps titled Public Facilities and Services and Bowdoinham Constraints.

- (4) *Does the community have a mechanism, such as an open space fund or partnership with a land trust, to acquire important open spaces and access sites, either outright or through conservation easements?*

The Town has worked with area land trusts on the preservation of open spaces and access. The adoption of a formal municipal policy and mechanism might prove beneficial.

The Town does not have a dedicated open space fund to receive donations from private sources and from government grants to support the acquisition of open spaces for recreation, conservation, forestry or agricultural uses.

- (5) *Does the public have access to each of the community’s significant water bodies?*

There is public access to the major water bodies in Bowdoinham. However, as noted below, these points are limited.

- (6) *Are recreational trails in the community adequately maintained? Are there use conflicts on these trails?*

Yes, the current trails are adequately maintained and no conflicts have been identified. However, an accessibility study by Enoch Glidden of Community Geographics in the summer of 2023 showed that our trails are not easily accessible for everyone.

- (7) *Is traditional access to private lands being restricted?*

A few property owners post their land to restrict hunting, for privacy, to reduce illegal dumping, or for other reasons.