

Open Space Plan Q&A
by Bill Stanton

What is the difference between a Comprehensive Plan (CP) and an Open Space Plan (OSP)?

- A comprehensive plan is an overarching document guiding a town's overall development. It addresses all aspects of a town's future: housing, economic development, transportation, historical places, as well as land use.
- An OSP is more specialized. It focuses specifically on preserving natural areas and recreational spaces like forest tracts, farmland, wildlife habitat, scenic views, water bodies, parks and trails.
- An OSP is a call to action, more so than a comprehensive plan. It has an urgency about it, because valuable land is irreplaceable and the pressure of growth is relentless.
- An OSP includes maps showing the location of the town's most valuable natural and scenic resources.
- An OSP includes an inventory and ranking of the town's important open spaces.

What is the purpose of an OSP?

- Determines the best places for new development and the most important places to conserve.
- To carry out the land use goals in the comprehensive plan.
- Empower landowners to be land stewards.
- Educate citizenry of the value of open space.
- To enable the public to access desirable open spaces.
- Identify priorities in what land areas to protect and where.
- Prevent the town's irreplaceable resources from being lost.
- Retain large blocks of undeveloped land for wildlife.
- Preserve farmland and working forests.
- Ensures a balance between development and conservation.
- Help the town be proactive rather than reactive to the pressures of growth .

How does an OSP support the comprehensive plan?

- Addresses the general goals with specific actions.
- Zeros in on the stewardship of the town's important land areas.
- Serves as the town's conservation blueprint.
- Preserve things that give a town character.
- Increases property values.

What is the definition of Open Space?

- Undeveloped or lightly developed land areas.
- Land with special qualities worth preserving.

What types of areas does Open Space include?

- Parks and playgrounds.
- Cemeteries.
- Trails.
- Scenic views.
- Farmland.

- Wildlife habitat.
- Large forest tracts.
- Fields and pastures.
- Water bodies.

Why does a small town such as Bowdoinham need an OSP?

- Because desirable open space is limited and growth uses it up.
- The loss of valuable open space is inevitable, unless there are strategies for protecting it or making it unavailable.

What kinds of mechanisms described in an OSP are used to preserve valuable resources and land?

- Conservation easements.
- Land trusts.
- Agreements with land owners.
- Property taxes based on current use rather than highest use.
- Outright land purchases.
- Ordinances.

What is a conservation easement?

- A voluntary, legally binding instrument between a landowner and land trust that restricts future land use to protect its conservation values. It allows the landowner to continue to use the land for compatible uses like farming, forestry, or recreation.

What's the hardest thing to do in preserving valuable spaces?

- Competing with and staying ahead of the purchase and development by private interests.
- Getting landowners to cooperate in preservation efforts.
- Finding sources of funds to finance easements and outright purchases.
- Interesting Land Trusts to take control of special areas.
- Convincing landowners to limit development of their land.

What determines valuable farmland?

- The fertility, depth of topsoil, and arability of the land.
- Ease of access, tilling, and irrigating.

What determines the most valuable wildlife habitat?

- Varies widely by wildlife species.
- Easy access to food, water, and cover.
- Size of the tract of land and the existence of safe corridors to adjacent tracts

What determines the most valuable scenic resources?

- Beauty, interest, and uniqueness.
- What's visible from roadways.

What determines the most valuable recreation resources?

- Nearness to population center and ease of access.
- Can be used in many ways by all ages.
- Inexpensive to maintain.

What determines the most valuable forest resources?

- Types of tree growth.
- Size of the tract.
- Accessibility.

Why is a system of trails important?

- They greatly affect the livability of a town like Bowdoinham.

Where are the trails in Bowdoinham located?

Are there any roads in Bowdoinham that could be considered scenic corridors and why?

- Yes, River Road, the entire length.
- There are nice fields, historic homes, farms, and scenic water vistas along the route.
- The curving, hilly road alignment makes it enjoyable and interesting to drive.

How can the scenic nature of River Road be enhanced and maintained?

- By spacing out homes or building them on side roads.
- Not letting fields revert to bushes and woods.
- Not allowing subdivisions to be constructed in fields.
- Cutting growth along the roadside that blocks views of fields,
- Opening up potential water views.

Are there places where scenic views of Merrymeeting Bay could be created or enhanced by selectively cutting bushes and trees?

- Yes, along River, Pork Point, and Browns Point Roads.

What can be considered the most valuable open space in Bowdoinham?

- Water frontage on the Bay or Cathance River.

What maps should be included in Bowdoinham's OSP?

- Separate maps for agriculture, wildlife, scenic views, trails, forests, subdivisions, best subdivision and commercial sites.

What open spaces in Bowdoinham are controlled by trusts and the state?

- The DIFW areas along Pork Point Road.
- Center Point Preserve.
- Bowdoinham Wildlife Management area.

Why do large open space tracts need undeveloped connecting passageways?

- To enable large wildlife to safely pass between the large tracts.

MMB and the Cathance River are prominent bodies of water in Bowdoinham, but there are few places where they can be viewed from the road. Where are locations where these water bodies could be viewed if bushes and trees were thinned out?

- Along Pork Point Road.
- On Browns Point Road at the Abby

- River Road just beyond Brickyard Way
- Opposite Bay View Cemetery
- At intersection of River Road and Pork Point Road

List of properties in Bowdoinham that are protected from development.

- Maily Park and new expansion.
- Shoreland from Maily Park to West Branch.
- DIFW land along Pork Point Road.
- Elementary School.
- Cemeteries.
- Center Point Preserve.
- Wildlife Management Area at end of Wildes Road.
- Stonecipher Farm.
- Harvest Tide Farm.
- Six River Farm.
- Tree growth and farmland in current use tax programs.
- Trails.

Significant open space in Bowdoinham that is not protected.

- Land upriver from new waterfront park.
- Scenic vistas, farmlands, and fields along River Road.

Open space in Bowdoinham with high priority for protection.

- Undeveloped shoreland.
- Significant wildlife habitat.
- Farmlands and working forests.
- Large forested tracts.
- Scenic vistas.