

**Appendix 8**  
**Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions**  
**For Harpswell Open Space Plan Based on**  
**2005 Harpswell Comprehensive Plan**

**Background**

In 2007, the Harpswell Conservation Commission was asked to develop a draft Open Space Plan for the Town of Harpswell. The development of a vision, goals, policies and actions to achieve this Open Space Plan was guided by and be based on the Harpswell Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan was prepared and approved by Harpswell citizens in 2005. The Comprehensive Plan outlines a vision for the development of Harpswell and a set of goals, policies and actions for achieving this vision.

**A Vision for Open Space in Harpswell**

A vision for open space in Harpswell is based on the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and was developed based on the suggestions of the participants at the 2007 Open Space Forums and respondents to the 2007 Recreation and Open Space Survey. The vision of the residents for the open space of Harpswell includes:

- 1. Preservation of Open Space:** The key open spaces that make Harpswell a desirable place to live and give it its quality of place shall be conserved for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.
- 2. Preservation of Water Quality:** The quality of the bays, rivers, ponds, vernal pools, wetlands and groundwater will be preserved in healthy condition for future generations.
- 3. Preservation and Stewardship of its High Value Natural Areas:** The animals, birds and other wildlife will continue to have habitat in which to live and prosper.
- 4. Preservation of Community Character:** The character of Harpswell will continue to be defined by the Town's coastal, small town, rural to village pattern and its natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational assets.
- 5. Management of New Residential Development:** New residential development will preserve the natural features of the land, provide buffers along our roads, wetlands and streams and shoreline and include open space.
- 6. Collaboration:** Community organizations, town government, landowners, developers, the public and representatives of adjacent towns will work together collaboratively to plan for, protect and manage the open space resources of the town.

## **Goals -Policies-Actions for Open Space Outlined in the 2005 Harpswell Comprehensive Plan**

### **1. Community Character (page 17)**

**Goal:** Manage the growth and development to maintain Harpswell's community character (i.e. preservation of the physical and cultural character of the town which includes a marine economy, historic villages and structures, coastal vistas and rural character)

**Policies:**

- Maintain diversity and abundance of wildlife, protect habitat from the adverse effects of development
- Sustain traditional connection to the land, preserve rural character of landscape, our farming and forestry environment and open spaces
- Maintain relationship to sea, protect our scenic vistas and protect and improve public access to the water
- Sustain our connection to the past by protecting historical structures and scale of neighborhoods
- Protect our groundwater from contamination and overuse

**Actions:**

- Amend land ordinances to protect essential wildlife habitat from development
- Develop an Open Space Plan to preserve and connect open space. Amend land ordinances to support preservation and connection of open spaces.
- Identify critical scenic water vistas and adopt methods to preserve them
- Develop materials to educate and inform the owners of undeveloped lots of their options for preservation and conservation under state law and through land trusts

### **2. Public Services (pages 47-48): Recreation and Public Access to Sea**

**Goal for Recreation:** To enhance the quality of life and well-being of Harpswell citizens by continuing to preserve and develop its natural environment for outdoor recreation.

**Policies for Recreation:**

- Encourage availability of and access to traditional inland recreation opportunities such as hunting, hiking and cross country skiing

**Goal for Public Access:** Provide safe and convenient access to the ocean, including landings, docks, beaches, scenic waterfront areas, island and waterways with access points distributed throughout Harpswell

**Policies for Public Access:**

- Provide access throughout Harpswell to the ocean, including landings, docks, beaches, scenic waterfront areas, islands, and waterways

**Actions for Public Access:**

- Identify access points most threatened by development and prioritize for protection

**3. Natural habitat (page 31)**

**Goal:** Preserve and protect sufficient habitat in order to maintain the current diversity and health of wildlife

**Policies:**

- Ensure that new development does not encroach upon critical natural areas or essential wildlife habitats
- Require setbacks for wetlands and streams of 5 acres or more that drain into the ocean to protect their ecological value and functions and their integrity as wildlife habitat
- Encourage landowners of wetlands, vernal pools and other essential wildlife habitats to use their property in a manner to not jeopardize the habitat value of their land

**Actions:**

- Identify and map critical natural areas and essential wildlife habitats and travel corridors
- Create and adopt an Open space Plan
- Develop ways for critical natural areas and essential wildlife habitats to be preserved, while allowing landowners the beneficial use of their property
- Revise the land use ordinances to protect the functions and values of the town's larger wetlands and streams that drain into the ocean
- Develop and implement a plan for protection of critical upland habitat, wildlife travel corridors and vernal pools. Explore the use of conservation easements, land acquisition, transfer of development rights and managing the location of new roads to help accomplish this.

**4. Marine environment (page 24)**

**Goal:** Maintain a high quality marine ecosystem

**Policies:**

- Increase public knowledge of how to protect the marine environment from harmful human activities

**Actions:**

- Restrict use of herbicides, fertilizers, toxins, etc. near shoreline
- Commit resources to develop educational material for residents and schools on how to maintain marine environment

**5. Ground water resources (page 29)**

**Goal:** Protect the Town's groundwater in order to provide safe, adequate water supply

**Policies:**

- Protect groundwater quality from growth and development

**Actions:**

- Preserve open space to protect groundwater

**6. Future Land Use Plan (pages 66 and 68)**

**Policies:** An assortment of tested and productive management strategies exists to guide community development. Harpswell has used some of these for some time, including Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, a Basic Land Use Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, Road Ordinance, and Site Plan Review Ordinance for businesses. The Comprehensive Plan recommends changes to some of these to accomplish the Plan’s goals.

**Density and Lot Size.**

A low density of development in Rural Areas accommodating a modest amount of the town’s overall projected growth could be achieved in several ways:

- In subdivisions with minimum lot sizes of half an acre but a great majority of the subdivision land in open space
- In subdivisions with maximum lot sizes of perhaps an acre or an acre and a half with the great majority of the land in open space

**Subdivision Regulations**

Much of remaining developable land consists of larger parcels some 10 – 200 acres in size. It is likely that as these parcels are sold for development, they will require subdivision review. The following recommendations will help accomplish this Plan’s goals:

- Require some percentage of land in all subdivisions to be dedicated open space.
- Plan proposed open space in subdivisions to preserve desirable natural features and coincide with town-wide open space needs as identified on a town-wide open space plan.
- Permit the use of dedicated open space for location of advanced community wastewater systems and community wells.
- Research possible use of dedicated open space for location of individual residential wastewater systems and wells, subject to state standards for soils, construction, and setback requirements.
- Moderately reduce the amount of required open space in the current cluster subdivision regulations to make this development alternative more viable.
- Devise a standard to preserve open space along waterfronts in new subdivisions.
- Devise standards for landscape buffers between new subdivisions and adjacent uses.

**Public Incentives**

To encourage development to locate where designated in this Plan, the town will provide incentives as follows:

- Seek grants for and invest in acquisition and development of public open space and parks, as proposed in a town-wide open space plan, that enhance new residential development and preserve rural areas.

- Promote enrollment in current use taxation programs (Tree Growth, Open Space and Farmland) in Rural Areas.

### **Open Space Plan**

- Create a town-wide Open Space Plan based around open space and natural resources and their interconnection.
- Develop protection mechanisms, funding sources and priorities for implementation of the open space plan.
- Develop a capital investment program with periodic funding into a sinking fund to be used for purchase of critical open space as identified by the open space plan