

## **Appendix 10**

### **Summary of 2007 Open Space Workshops**

The Harpswell Conservation Commission was given the task of producing an open space plan for the town of Harpswell. In April 2007, the town hired FB Environmental Associates (FBEA), based in Portland, Maine to consult with the Commission on the implementation of its charge. This was made possible by a grant from The William P. Wharton Trust. The task facing the consultant covered four major responsibilities:

- Update the open space resource inventory and the 1987 Critical and Scenic Areas map
- Develop long- term strategies to preserve and protect key open spaces, as well as define a system for prioritization
- Promote and plan workshops for public participation
- Promote and enhance public awareness of the importance and value of open space

Open Space Forums were held May 30 and July 9, 2007 at the Harpswell Island School. Prior to the forums, they were advertised in newspapers, local TV and by mail to promote public input and discussion of Harpswell's open space resources. Fred Dillon from FB Environmental and Mitch Razor and his associates designed the sessions. They asked participants to identify their highest priority water resources, natural habitats, cultural and civic resources, scenic views, and recreational resources in town. These five categories included the following sub-categories.

#### **Water Resources**

- (a) Access points (marine economy)
- (b) Surface waters (streams, ponds, wetlands)
- (c) Shore habitat
- (d) Groundwater recharge
- (e) Water quality

#### **Natural Habitat (Biodiversity)**

- (a) Open Lands (meadows, fields)
- (b) Forests
- (c) Stream corridors, wetlands and vernal pools
- (d) Special or threatened nesting areas
- (e) Marine habitats (tidal mud flats)

#### **Cultural and Historical Resources**

- (a) Working landscapes (forestry, agriculture)
- (b) Civic buildings and spaces.
- (c) Traditional settlement patterns
- (d) Historical resources (buildings, lands, cemeteries)

### **Scenic Character**

- (a) Scenic views (water, landscape)
- (b) Scenic village areas
- (c) Scenic corridors (roads)

### **Recreational Resources**

- (a) Water access (for boating, swimming)
- (b) Trails
- (c) Facilities (ballparks, open fields)
- (d) Hunting / fishing
- (e) Camping / picnicking

In both forums, participants received an overview of the goals of the workshop. Afterwards, they separated into four to five groups, led by a facilitator whose task it was to direct and record the results. Each of the five open space resources categories was accompanied by a thematic map of Harpswell in order to locate the critical areas cited. Group members were then directed to place up to 10 dots each on any of the resource maps on the basis of relative importance. The workshops ended with an account of each group's findings and rankings by a designated leader to the full audience of participants.

Attendance for the combined workshops was 97 persons with 52 attending the first forum, and 25 repeats, plus 10 new, in the second. All who participated felt the exercises were productive and informative.

## **Workshop Findings**

**The participants in the two public forums placed water resources as top priority for preservation at 44% and habitats as second in importance at 23.5%.** All locations inventoried are listed below. (Please see the **Open Space Plan Archive** in the Planning Office of the Town Hall for a detailed report of the workshop by Fred Dillon) The ownership and conservation status of each piece of land were not taken into consideration in making choices of open spaces. In fact, many of the high priority sites are already protected, which reflects well on resident awareness of these valuable public resources.

While the choice of priority locations was important information, the sentiments that the participants expressed was equally useful. Their comments have been tabulated under each of the 5 resources categories and are described below.

### **Water Resources**

Issues ranged from the need to preserve the quality of all coastal waters and fresh / salt water wetlands to potable water problems at numerous locations. Pollution problems were noted in many clamming areas, notably Harpswell Harbor, Mill Cove, Dingley Island narrows, Lowell Cove, south end of Long Reach, Strawberry Creek and Buttermilk Cove. Various environmental problems were aired pertaining to silting up of coves and contamination of marshes, vernal pools and headwaters. Dan's Ice Pond, streams into Harpswell Cove, and the northern end of Bailey Island were mentioned. The

need for improved public access to the shore throughout the town was a common complaint, as well as access to Land's End, Pebble and Cedar Beaches.

### **Natural Habitat**

In regard to natural habitat, choices were made principally on the basis of the presence of bird species which reside, breed, nest, feed, swim or fly over or within an area. The list includes a variety of habitats: fresh water and shoreline wetlands, marshes, woods / scrub inland areas, open fields, and roadsides. There were 6 locations harboring seals, 2 deer yards, 4 nesting sites of bald eagles, 11 osprey nesting sites, 1 for roseate terns and 1 for guillemots, as well as various other sea and song bird sites. Clams, alewives and eel habitats were noted, as were migratory flyways for birds and monarch butterflies. Under this category, many of the offshore islands were noted as supporting a richer variety of bird species than found on the mainland.

### **Scenic Resources**

Though it was pointed out that the entire town is scenic, highest priority was given to views of the coastal waters. Most of the views are vehicular-centric, but other vantage points singled out were:

- **Bridges** – Erwin Narrows, Gurnet, Orr's Island and the Cribstone
- **Points** – Potts, Stover's, Lookout, Bethel town landing, Bowdoin Coastal Center, Land's End.
- **Ponds** – Dan's Ice Pond, Wilson Pond, and Stuart Pond.
- **Coves** – Cundy's Harbor, Harpswell Harbor, Ash Point, Basin Cove, Sandy Cove, Mackerel Cove, Lowell Cove and Middle Bay.

Also deemed important were numerous vistas which reflect the village character of Harpswell, including Harpswell Center, Cundy's Harbor, and Bailey and Orr's Islands. Open fields and wooded areas which exemplify the rural character were mentioned along all the major roads with special importance given to Merruconeag Farm, located on the northwest gateway to Harpswell.

### **Recreational Resources**

Locations mentioned included the following:

- **Trails for walking** – Cliff, Giant's Stairs, Bowdoin Mitchell Field, Land's End, Middle Bay Cove, Liberty farm fields, Austin Cary preserve
- **Beaches for swimming** – Cedar Beach, Mackerel Cove, Mitchell Field, Land's End and Pebbly Beach
- **Small boat launch sites** – Lookout Point, Stover's Point, Pott's Point, Bethel Point, South tip of Orr's Island, Dingley Cove, Dan's Ice Pond.
- **Fishing** – Erwin Narrows, Gurnet, Orr's Island and Cribstone Bridges.
- **Skating** – Dingley, Wilson, Dan's and Stuart Ponds.
- **Camping** – Strawberry Creek Island, Little Snow Island, and Orr's Island private camp ground.
- **Hunting** – Yarmouth Island, Dan's Pond, Long Reach.
- **Other** – Rte. 123 tennis courts and Truffant – Summerton Ball Field.

Specific concerns and ideas included the following:

- better beach access to Cedar Beach
- limited opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing and tenting
- Bailey Island needs a playground
- limited public sites for launching boats and parking cars
- sidewalks needed on Mountain Rd.
- safer, wider bike and walking paths Rte. 123
- develop a trail on the Folke property in Cundy's Harbor

### **Historic and Cultural Resources**

These include the village of Cundy's Harbor and Holbrook Wharf, Harpswell Center and its historical buildings, including the Old Town Hall, Union Church, Bailey's Store, Union Hotel, Meeting and Carriage House, and Grange Hall. The Auburn Colony was cited for its architecture. A number of notable landscape features were singled out – Admiral Peary's home on Eagle Island, the monument on Flash Island, the Cribstone Bridge, WW11 Lookout Tower, and the Giant's Stairs.

Other historic sites included:

- **Old tide mills** located at Basin Cove, Bethel Point and Cundy's Harbor;
- **Old shipyards** at Skolfield
- **Farms** of Merrucooneag, Liberty, Thalheimer and Dunning
- **Garrison Hill, Truffant House and Earthart Gardens** (world-class collection of irises.)
- **Churches**- E. Harpswell Baptist Church and Parsonage, and the Elijah Church and House
- **Libraries** at Cundy's Harbor and Bailey Island.
- **Cemeteries** – Cranberry Horn, Harpswell Village and Orr's Island
- **Mitchell Field**