

Open Space and Recreation

4. Open Space and Recreation

Chatham's dramatic beaches and quiet harbors began attracting summer visitors in the late 1800s. The town soon became a Mecca, not so much for the day tourist, but for families who returned year after year, often purchasing their own summer houses. Today, approximately half of the houses are used only seasonally. In the summer, the town's population swells to five to six times its year-round number with seasonal residents, occupants of rental houses and hotel and motel rooms as well as day tourists. Many of those who summerved here returned to Chatham for their retirement.

Chatham has abundant resources for coastal recreation with over 1,000 acres of public ocean beaches, not including Monomoy Island, and over 30 town landings and public access points. Chatham Harbor, Pleasant Bay, Stage Harbor, the Oyster River and Oyster Pond, the Mill Ponds, Nantucket Sound, and several smaller coastal inlets provide scenic enjoyment and recreational opportunities. Inland recreational resources are also available but are less well known. The town has seven great ponds, three with usable public access, but only one with a public beach. Trails on the town's 600 acres of open lands are discontinuous, unmarked and not maintained. After long years of planning, a bike trail is under construction.

The town has a handful of public parks which are small in size and limited in facilities. Active recreational facilities require attention. The community building, Veterans Field, the nearby little league field and tennis courts and playgrounds, Volunteer Park and Seaside Links comprise the only town-owned recreation facilities although school facilities are available on a limited basis for public use.

The 1985 Open Space and Recreation Plan emphasized open space. In the late 1980s, the town carried out the Plan's recommendations regarding open space and watershed protection with the purchase of an additional 155 acres of open land and in 2000 purchased the former RCA/MCI properties on Nantucket Sound and Ryders Cove to add another 17 acres with both salt and fresh water frontage. The focus now turns to upgrading and expanding active recreational facilities. A questionnaire survey in 1995 and a public forum in 1996 showed support for walking trails and outdoor exercise areas, a public swimming pool, indoor exercise and playing courts, and bike trails. In a 2002 survey, respondents have expressed the need for a community center located in the Main Street School for the use of citizens of all generations.

The purpose of this section is to identify the recreational facilities now in the town and to suggest ways to maintain open spaces while providing townspeople and visitors with seasonal and year-round active and passive recreational opportunities.

4.1 Goal

High quality recreational facilities, including beaches, parks, active and passive recreation facilities, and adequate open space to meet the needs and desires of Chatham residents and visitors.

Town owned lands are classified for future use in the *Community Facilities Element*. Lands classified for recreation are as follows. Map numbers refer to the Map of Town Owned Lands.

Conservation/Passive Recreation Lands - 550.62 acres

<u>Property</u>	<u>Map #</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Location</u>
Absegami Run	51	3.24	Oyster Pond Furlong
Cedar Swamp	53	28	Stage Neck
Forest Beach Conservation	3A	73	Forest Beach Rd
George Ryder Rd. Forest	31	8	George Ryder Rd.
Goose Pond, upper portion*	16	49	South of Old Queen Anne Rd
Hardings Beach Marsh ¹	25		
Honeysuckle Lane	104	0.6	Honeysuckle Lane
Indian Hill well site	28	10	Indian Hill Rd.
Ivy Lane	101	1.8	Ivy Lane
Lovers Lake	38	1	Old Queen Anne behind cemetery
McClure Property	103	0.4	Rte. 28 East of Pleasant St.
Middle Rd - 2 parcels	13/18	4	Middle Rd. near Sam Ryder Rd.
Mill Hill Property	100	4.1	Mill Hill Rd. & Meetinghouse Rd.
Mill Pond area	7	18	South of Old Queen Anne Rd.
Morris Island Dike	90	18	Morris Island Rd., Stage Harbor
Morris Island Marsh	106	6.6	Morris Island Rd.
Muddy Creek	20	1.75	North of Old Queen Anne Rd.
Old Cranberry Bog	14	6	Rte. 137 at Old Queen Anne Rd.
Orleans Rd	67	17	North side of Orleans Rd.
Red River property	4	2	Rte. 28 (next to S. Chatham Cemetery)
Red River Swamp	1	1.5	S. Chatham at Red River
Sam Ryder Rd., upper	22A	24	Sam Ryder Rd. north of Volunteer
Stage Harbor Point	89	1.93	Off Morris Island Rd.
Stage Island Rd. Property	66	0.7	Stage Island Rd.
Strong Island Marsh	69	68	Strong Island, Pleasant Bay
Town Forest	6	148	North of Rte. 28, S. Chatham
Training Field Triangle	29	40	Training Field Rd.
Training Field well	30	14	Training Field Rd @Lovers Lake

** Purchased with state Self-Help funds for conservation.*

¹ Hardings Beach Marsh acreage is counted under Beaches (228 acres total)

Park and Active Recreation Lands - 167.81 Acres

<u>Property</u>	<u>Map#</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Location</u>
Chase Park	82	3	Off Cross Street
Doc Keene House	83	0.3	Stage Harbor Road at Cedar Street
Goose Pond, lower	15	42	North of Middle Road
Kate Gould Park	78	2.25	Main @ Chatham Bars
Kolb Property	102	2	Rte. 28 West Chatham
Mack Monument	94	0.55	Lighthouse Overlook
Nickerson Park	59	0.66	Rotary
Ryder's Cove property (frm MCI)	44A	17	Old Corners & Rt. 28/Stillwater Pd.
Samuel Hawes Park	32	10	South of Airport, Geo. Ryder Rd.
Sears Park	61	0.25	Main @ Seaview St.
Seaside Links	74/76	43	Seaview St.
S. Chatham Tennis Courts	8	0.8	Bobby's Lane
MM Center/Tennis Cts./RR/Mus. ¹	63		Depot Road
Veterans' Field	64	10	Depot & Main
Volunteer Park	22	36	Sam Ryder Rd.

¹Acreege for these facilities is included in General Lands with the Police and Fire Station.

Beaches - 828.27 Acres

<u>Property</u>	<u>Map#</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Location</u>
*Cockle Cove	19	0.72	Cockle Cove Rd.
Forest Beach ¹	3B		Forest Beach Rd.
*Hardings Beach	25	228	Hardings Beach Rd.
Jackknife Harbor	40	3.5	Rte. 28, Pleasant Bay
North Beach	99	250	Pleasant Bay
Old Corners Rd.	44B	11.5	Old Corners at Lover's Lake
*Oyster Pond Beach	58	2	Stage Harbor Rd.
Pleasant St. Beach	2	0.25	Pleasant St.
*Ridgevale Beach	21	27	Ridgevale Rd.
South Beach	91	300	Chatham Harbor
**School House Pond (fresh)	23	1.3	Off Sam Ryder Rd.
White Pond	36	4	Wilfred Rd.

* *Indicates an official beach*

¹ *Acreage for Forest Beach (73 acres) is counted under Conservation/Passive Recreation*

Total Open Space, Recreation and Beaches 1546.70 Acres

Town Landings and Water Access

Note: Town Landing acreage does not include town right-of-way. If a landing contains no land other than road right-of-way, no acreage is shown.

Key Facilities - those landings or access points which provide major access to a coastal water body and are heavily used. (See policies under "Town Landings" below.)

<i><u>Property</u></i>	<i><u>Map#</u></i>	<i><u>Acres</u></i>	<i><u>Location</u></i>
Barn Hill Landing	26	0.41	Barn Hill Rd., Oyster River
Bridge St. Boatramp*	87		Bridge St., north side
Fish Pier	75	2	Shore Rd., Aunt Lydia's Cove
Lighthouse Overlook	93		Main St./Bridge St.
Morris Island Dike	90		Morris Island Rd., Stage Harbor
Old Mill Boatyard	57	3.5	Stage Neck Rd., Stage Harbor
Oyster Pond Furlong	52	0.42	Oyster Pond Furlong, Oyster Pond
Ryder's Cove Landing	44	0.31	Ryder's Cove Rd.

** Leased Land*

Secondary Facilities - those landings or access points which provide additional access to major waterways or primary access to embayments.

<i><u>Property</u></i>	<i><u>Map#</u></i>	<i><u>Acres</u></i>	<i><u>Location</u></i>
Battlefield Landing	54	0.13	Battlefield Rd, Stage Harbor
Cotchpinicut Landing	70	0.19	Cotchpinicut Rd., Pleasant Bay
Cow Yard Landing	73	0.37	The Cow Yard, Chatham Harbor
Crow's Pond Landing	42	0.45	Fox Hill Rd., Pleasant Bay
Forest Beach Landing*	3	0.3	Forest Beach Rd., Nantucket Sound
Jackknife Harbor**	40		Orleans Rd., Pleasant Bay
Mill Pond (dock)	84		So. of Old Queen Anne
Taylor's Pond	12	1.74	Taylor's Pond Rd
Vineyard Ave.	35	2.07	Vineyard Ave., Oyster Pond River

* Acreage counted with Conservation/Passive Recreation lands.

**Acreage counted with Beaches.

Low Usage Landings - those landings whose utility is limited because of physical problems or constraints

<i><u>Property</u></i>	<i><u>Map#</u></i>	<i><u>Acres</u></i>	<i><u>Location</u></i>
Clafin's Landing	77	.23	Off Shore Rd., Chatham Harbor
Cockle Cove (beach)	19		Cockle Cove Rd.
Eliphamets Landing	85		Eliphamets Lane, Mill Pond
Goose Pond Land (freshwater)	16		South of Old Queen Anne Rd.
Hardings Beach	25		Hardings Beach Rd.
Holway Street	98		Holway St., Chatham Harbor
Lovers Lake (Old Comers Rd.) (fresh)	44B		Old Comers at Lover's Lake
Mill Creek	11	0.7	Mill Creek Rd., Mill Creek
Pleasant St. (beach)	2		Pleasant Street
Port Fortune	56	0.13	Port Fortune Ln., Stage Harbor
Ridgevale South	24		Ridgevale South Rd., Buck's Creek
Ryder's Cove Overlook	43	1.0	Orleans Rd., Ryder's Cove
Scatteree Landing	71	0.22	Scatteree Rd., Pleasant Bay
Sears Point	34		Sears Point Rd., Stage Harbor
Stage Harbor Point	89		Off Morris Is. Rd., Stage Harbor
Stillwater Pond (freshwater)	44A		Off Old Comers Road
Strong Island Landing	68	0.22	Strong Is. Rd., Pleasant Bay
White Pond (freshwater)	36		Wilfred Rd.

Pedestrian Access Only - footpaths to the water or landings which are severely restricted because of physical problems or constraints.

<i><u>Property</u></i>	<i><u>Map#</u></i>	<i><u>Acres</u></i>	<i><u>Location</u></i>
Andrew Hardings Lane	97		Andrew Hardings La., Chat. Har.
Bearse's Lane	92		Off Morris Is. Rd., Chatham Harbor
Bridge St. East	88		Bridge St. At Mitchell River
Champlain Rd.	55		Champlain Rd., Stage Harbor
Lovers Lake (behind cemetery)(fresh)	38		Old Queen Anne behind cemetery
Mistover Lane	96		Off Main St., Chatham Harbor
Ridgevale Beach	21		Ridgevale Rd.
Water Street (west)	86		Water Street, Mill Pond
Water Street Ext.	95		Off School St., Mill Pond

A. General Policies

1. Maintain parking areas unpaved except at major facilities. (OP1)
2. Keep signage to a minimum while devising tasteful, standard signage for all town landings and other recreation area. (OP2)
3. Maintain natural habitats where possible while combating invasive vegetation. (OP3)
4. Provide for periodic maintenance and upgrading of all town recreational facilities. (OP4)
5. Interfere with Nature as little as possible while keeping in mind needs of townspeople and visitors. (OP5)

B. Open Space and Conservation

1. The use of lands classified as "open space and conservation" is limited to passive recreation such as walking, biking, swimming, and picnicking. Structures and paved areas shall be limited to those necessary to protect resources and provide public access and passive recreational use. (See also Natural Resources section for information on the management and protection of natural resources on conservation lands.) (OP6)
2. Allow passive recreational use of town open space and conservation lands, including walking, picnicking, boat launching and boating, fishing, and other activities which are compatible with preservation of the land's natural resources. (OP7)

3. Develop a system of trails on conservation lands for public use and provide trail maps and information on protection of natural resources to the public. Utilize existing trails as the basis for the system and develop extensions and links to other public trails. Pursue partnerships with private organizations, such as the Chatham Conservation Foundation, on development of the trail system. (OP8)
4. Allow limited facilities to support the enjoyment of conservation lands, such as small, unpaved parking areas and access roads, small boat launching facilities, fishing docks, benches, and picnic facilities in keeping with the management program for the property. (OP9)
5. Make necessary provisions for passive recreational use of the upland portion of the Forest Beach Conservation area. (OP10)

C. Lands classified for parks and active recreation are to be upgraded to provide additional use, while maintaining a “park like” character.

1. Make provision for restrooms, locker facilities and showers for teams using Veterans Field. (OP11)
2. Provide public restrooms in the Depot Road area to serve the playground and Veterans’ Field. (OP12)
3. Strive to maintain and protect Chase, Kate Gould, Sears, Nickerson Parks as open space parks. (OP13)
4. Provide additional recreational facilities at Volunteer Park including picnic tables, restrooms, playing field irrigation, and a connection to the Bike Trail. (OP14)
5. Insure completion of the Chatham extension of the Cape Cod Bike Trail to the Depot Road area and provide for the maintenance of the trail. (OP15)
6. Operate Seaside Links as a town managed 9 hole golf course upon expiration of the concessionaires contract. (OP16)
7. Consider acquiring or trading property with Chatham Bars Inn to gain a suitable site or building for a Pro Shop/Starter’s cabin, snack bar and storage facility. (OP17)
8. Construct a park and an active sports complex using the landfill cap at the Transfer Facility, Lower Goose Pond property and Volunteer Park for such facilities as; a picnic area, possible future skateboard park, street hockey/ice rink, Parcourse, a driving range and a dog walking park. (OP18)
9. Consider development of a revenue producing Town managed golf course/driving range on Town owned land.

D. Create a Community Center

1. Expand the community center facilities, preferably in the Depot Road area, through renovation of the Main Street School or new construction, with ample multipurpose rooms to meet the needs of all segments of the population. (OP19)
2. Consider inclusion of a swimming pool in plans for the community center. (OP20)

E. Upgrade the town's beaches in terms of access and usage facilities.

1. Monitor the conditions at Lighthouse Beach to explore the possibility of future conversion to an official beach with restrooms and lifeguards. (OP21)
2. Provide permanent public restrooms at all official town beaches and a second set of restrooms at Hardings Beach. (OP22)
3. Complete and execute a plan which will restore the beach at Cockle Cove and protect Ridgevale Beach for the future. (OP23)
4. Meet increasing popularity of beaches staffed with lifeguards through alternative means of public transportation such as shuttle buses, rather than expanding parking. (OP24)
5. Adjust the level of Lifeguard compensation to attract enough staff to adequately patrol town beaches. (OP25)
6. Maintain the lifeguard protected beach at Schoolhouse Pond. (OP26)
7. Maintain the lifeguard protected beach at Oyster Pond. Build restroom and changing facilities there. (OP27)

F. Increase Access to Freshwater Ponds

1. Provide public access to all great ponds through improvements to town lands or through land acquisition. Great ponds: Emery Pond, Goose Pond, Lover's Lake, Mill Pond (West Chatham), Schoolhouse Pond, Stillwater Pond and White Pond. Provide adequate supervision to minimize impact on surrounding neighborhood and natural resources. (OP28)
2. Establish White Pond Landing as a freshwater swimming area with limited improvements to provide access and preserve the quiet nature of the area. Expand the unpaved parking to accommodate a maximum of 20 vehicles. Expand the beach to obtain 50 yards of water access. (OP29)
3. Establish swimming and boating areas on newly acquired land on Stillwater Pond and Lovers Lake using White Pond as a model. (OP30)

G. Upgrade town landings and salt water access.

1. Usage and improvements to town landings shall be in keeping with their classification and shall be guided by the policies of this plan, including the following:
 - a. Landing classified as key facilities under this plan shall be considered major points for fishing and public access to the water for residents and visitors. Facilities such as boat ramps, docks, parking areas, restrooms, and other fishing and recreational support facilities shall be considered appropriate and desirable. Upgrades and expansions of these landings shall be undertaken to accommodate fishing and recreation, provided such plans mitigate to the extent possible the impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. (OP31)

- b. The secondary landings shall be considered as back-up facilities, to supplement key facilities. Facilities such as docks, boat ramps, parking areas, restrooms, and other fishing and recreational support facilities shall be provided as appropriate, given the land area and location of the landing. Upgrades or expansions of such landings shall be undertaken with careful consideration of the impacts to surrounding neighborhoods. (OP32)
 - c. Low usage landings shall be considered constrained facilities which provide pedestrian and limited vehicle access. Land acquisition to expand such landings shall be encouraged. Upgrades to facilities should be undertaken with careful consideration of the impacts to surrounding neighborhoods. Parking shall be provided where feasible. (OP33)
 - d. Pedestrian access only landings shall be considered very limited in use. Limited parking and drop-off areas shall be provided where feasible. Facilities at these landings shall be limited to those necessary to allow public access to the water for pedestrians. (OP34)
2. Restore public access to the extent possible at landings along Chatham Harbor.
- a. Build a stairway over the revetment for pedestrians on Holway Street. (OP35)
 - b. Allow pedestrian usage of Water Street Extension and Mistover Lane for viewing, regardless of the lack of beach access. (OP36)
 - c. Explore having the Town, by itself or together with other local conservation/preservation organizations, acquire the beach between Andrew Harding's Lane and Holway Street for continuing public use. (OP37)
 - d. Explore options for increasing parking capacity at the Cow Yard. (OP38)
 - e. An historical pathway exists between Morris Island Road and Chatham Harbor which provides access to the stretch of beach between Outermost Marine Harbor inlet and the south tip of Morris Island. The Town should seek to clarify and confirm its right of access and further explore the possibility of acquiring the land (some 22 acres) from the Association. (OP39)
 - f. Explore the acquisition of land at Battlefield Landing to allow for parking along the road. (OP40)
 - g. Consider the purchase of Bridge Street Landing to insure future public access. (OP41)
 - h. Explore options for adding public access points for the launching of small boats on Muddy Creek. Petition the state to alleviate the congestion in the culvert under Rte. 28 to provide a constant water flow between Muddy Creek and Little Pleasant Bay. (OP42)
 - i. Include provision for access and use by the disabled in any plans for town landing improvements. (OP43)
3. Provide boat launching facilities on all major waterways to serve both residents and visitors.
- a. On newly acquired land adjacent to Ryder's Cove Landing, construct a public parking area for vehicles and boat trailers and public restrooms. (OP44)

- b. Maintain Ryder's Cove and Barn Hill Road landings for general public use. (OP45)
 - c. Add a dock adjacent to the ramp at Crow's Pond and improve the parking area. (OP46)
 - d. Expand parking areas at key facilities and secondary facilities which serve as alternatives to key facilities. (OP47)
4. Maintain the character of lands.
- a. Maintain parking areas unpaved except at major facilities. (OP48)
 - b. Keep signage to a minimum and devise tasteful, standard signage for marking landings. (OP49)
 - c. Continue removal of invasive vegetation while maintain natural habitats at Ryder's Cove Overlook and other landings. (OP50)
5. Allow for and manage multiple uses at landings, particularly key facilities.
- a. Maintain Old Mill Boatyard parking for residents only, but consider a shuttle service to allow for usage by non residents. (OP51)
 - b. Develop management policies for uses at landings, particularly at Old Mill Boatyard and the Fish Pier, giving priority to fishing uses and general public access over recreational business or specific user group use. (OP52)
6. Provide for regular maintenance and upgrades to town landings.
- a. Maintain access channels at landings, particularly the Fish Pier. (OP53)
 - b. Establish an annual maintenance fund for small repairs, improvements and clean up of landings. (OP54)

H. Public Information

- 1. Mark all town landings and access points with clear and consistent signage. (OP55)
- 2. Ensure that landings and access points are shown on maps available to the public. (OP56)
- 3. Print rules and regulations pertaining to the use of town landings on maps and brochures. (OP57)

