

Chapter 12 – Open Space Policies and Strategies

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan's Open Space Policies and Strategies describe goals, policies, standards and implementation strategies related to open spaces for agriculture, forestry, public congregation and recreation, wildlife habitat, and water resource protection.

Goals

State Goal:

1. Safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development that threatens those resources. (Growth Management Act)
2. Promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters. (Growth Management Act)

Regional Goal:

(None specified)

Wells Goals:

1. Work actively to retain the rural character of Wells as defined, in large measure, by its open land, marshes, fields, farms, and woodlands.
2. Conserve ample open space, to protect, preserve and maintain our natural resources including the ecological integrity of native plant and wildlife species.
3. Promote and expand neighborhood conservation areas and parks throughout the Town such as Fenderson Wildlife Commons to protect public access for traditional outdoor recreation and to protect critical wildlife habitat.
4. Promote environmental education opportunities and produce public information materials related to Wells' natural history and the benefits of protecting open space areas.
5. Minimize conflicts between natural-resource based industries and outdoor recreation uses.
6. Connect large blocks of conserved open space with open space corridors or "greenways" that allow recreators and wildlife to travel from block to block.
7. Provide open space and recreation opportunities to all geographic areas of Wells.
- 5-8. Provide open space for upward migration of coastal landforms and habitats,

such as sand dunes, beaches, and salt marshes, in response to sea level rise.

Policies

To implement these goals, it is the policy of the Town of Wells to:

1. Identify key land areas that contribute to Wells' rural character and work with the landowners to preserve the qualities of these areas through support of creative uses and exploring conservation options.
2. Encourage the continued use of lands for forestry and recreation with special attention to financial incentives to property owners to maintain their land's open character including State programs for current use assessment and other cooperative approaches.
3. Provide access to open spaces that meet various public recreational needs such as parks inbuilt-up village areas, ensuring that all geographic areas of Wells are served by open spaces, and support greenways for biking and hiking paths as human and wildlife corridors connecting neighborhoods and large blocks of conserved land.
4. Work with local outdoor clubs and individual landowners to encourage the availability of public access to open land with the consent and cooperation of landowners to preserve traditional outdoor uses such as snowmobiling, hunting, and cross country skiing.
5. Promote the use of clustering techniques that require significant land area to be set aside as open spaces.
6. Protect open space including critical wildlife habitat areas including vernal pools.
7. Maintain information necessary for decision-making related to the protection, development, or use of the open areas whether publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands such as vernal pools, beaches, uplands, fields, and farmland related to the proper protection, development, or use of the open areas.
8. Coordinate conservation activities with land owners and other preservation groups, such as the Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Wells Water District, Great Works Regional LandTrust, The Nature Conservancy and the State, to leverage existing funding for open space in areas of mutual concern such as the Great Heath and the Tatnic region.
9. Coordinate Town planning and Conservation Commission activities to protect and promote open space.
10. Promote and strengthen the Wells Land Bank sinking fund, a unique resource

that allows Wells to invest in open space as opportunities arise.

9.11. Ensure that cluster subdivision rules are effective in preserving open space that is useful for a combination of values such as recreation, wildlife habitat, scenic value, etc. while still allowing for practical building and development in appropriate areas.

Standards

~~(To be developed in future update)~~ To guide the implementation of these policies, the Town of Wells has the following standards in place:

1. Wells Town Code, Chapter 145, Land Use Ordinance, § 145-49 Residential cluster development.
2. Wells Town Code, Chapter 202, Subdivision of Land

Implementation Strategies

1. Continue to support the Conservation Commission's use of the Town of Wells' Land Ranking System to identify and prioritize lands with significant wetlands, groundwater sources, scenic view sheds, wildlife habitat, agriculture and forestry uses, outdoor recreation, and other values; and to make recommendations for their protection through the development of an open space plan. The plan will contain input from community recommendations to identify large land tracts throughout the Town within which a conservation area of significant size could be located.
2. Employ the classification system for existing and future Town owned lands for the purposes of conservation, recreation and facility needs.
- ~~3.~~ Expand funding of the Town's Land Bank Fund to provide for adequate public openspace in the Town of Wells.
- ~~4.3.~~
- ~~5.4.~~ Charge the Conservation Commission to work with land owners and other reservation groups such as the KKW Water District, Great Works Regional Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, and the State and Federal Government to leverage existing funding for open space in areas of mutual concern such as Fenderson Wildlife Commons, the Great Heath, ~~and~~ the Tatnic Region, and upland areas adjacent to sand dunes, beaches, and salt marshes that may serve as migration areas in response to sea level rise.
- ~~6.5.~~ Enable the Conservation Commission to review and comment on public or private plans involving open space areas identified via natural resource data, as high value wildlife habitat, before the Town's reviewing authority makes any decision on the plan.
- ~~7.6.~~ Enable the Conservation Commission to continue to review foreclosed properties and other land proposed for public auction to determine its suitability for retention as conservation land.

- ~~8.7.~~ Work with landowners with high value habitat to protect these areas using tools such as acquisition, education, collaborative management, as well as economic incentives such as Tree Growth, Open Space and Critical Habitat Programs.
- ~~9.8.~~ Produce public education and outreach materials that inform the public about their conservation options and the natural history of Wells.
- ~~10.9.~~ Use Fenderson and other Wildlife Commons for environmental education opportunities for the students of the Wells/Ogunquit School District and the public.
- ~~11.10.~~ Use up-to-date State Inland Fisheries and Wildlife maps of wetlands and Threatened and Endangered species (See Appendix) as well as open space priorities as identified by the Wells Conservation Commission, when evaluating subdivision applications. In the event the proposed subdivision is in an area where such resources exist, the Conservation Commission will make recommendations for the building and open space locations.
- ~~12.11.~~ Work with the KKWWD to acquire key parcels of land with high value for ground water protection through fee simple acquisition or conservation easement.
- ~~13.12.~~ ~~Establish a~~ Assign to the Implementation Committee the responsibility to review and assess the quality of current wetland management and regulations within Wells including consistency with state and federal laws and regulations, and, if deemed appropriate, establish guidelines for a local wetland regulation.
13. Establish a program to identify and prioritize and protect high value freshwater wetlands including vernal pools.
14. Assign to the Implementation Committee the responsibility to review cluster subdivision rules and the results of existing cluster subdivision projects, to determine whether the existing rules are successfully preserving valuable open space.