## TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN October 1, 2013 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

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## Section 1

## **PLAN SUMMARY**

The 2013 Belchertown Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) update is a statement of the current priorities of Belchertown's Town boards, officials, and citizens for natural resource protection and recreation. The original OSRP plan was completed in 1986. The purpose of this plan is to update the 2008 OSRP and reassess the open space, recreation, and natural resource protection needs and priorities for the next seven years (2013-2020), to carry Belchertown well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Central to the development of the OSRP is an evaluation of the impacts from the rate of growth in Belchertown during the past twenty years and growth projections for the next seven years. Uncontrolled growth in Belchertown can result not only in environmental damage and loss of open space, but threatens its financial security and quality of life. This plan will articulate a vision of desirable growth within the context of natural resource and open space protection and will propose resource and recreation planning, management, and direction of growth, recreation and strategies to realize that vision.

The 2013 updated Open Space and Recreation plan seeks to realize the following goals for the community:

- 1. to protect natural resources and community character through management strategies;
- 2. to develop land use and natural resource protection plans;
- to manage groundwater and surface water supplies for public consumption, wildlife habitat, and recreation;
- 4. to develop programs for public recreational activities;
- 5. promote sound management of our natural resources;
- 6. manage and promote appropriate use of public lands;
- 7. protect unique natural and cultural features, scenic areas and resources; and
- 8. to develop and manage recreation resources for all residents of Belchertown.

## Section 2 INTRODUCTION

## A. Statement of Purpose and History

In the Spring of 1984, the Belchertown Conservation Commission initiated a study of the Town's natural and cultural resources in an effort to determine the actions needed to ensure the long term protection of these resources. The result of this study was the 1986 Open Space and Recreation Plan for Belchertown, Massachusetts (OSRP). This report contained a detailed compilation and analysis of resource data, an extensive review of resource protection needs and priorities, and a series of management actions designed to realize Belchertown's open space and recreation goals. The OSRP was submitted to the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services in 1986, thereby allowing Belchertown to apply for LAND grants, to become eligible to apply for LAND grants, PARC grants (Urban grants), and Land and Water Conservation Funds as well as other grant programs administered by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services. Copies of the original 1986 Open Space Plan for Belchertown are on file in the Conservation Commission Office at Lawrence Memorial Town Hall.

The purpose of this document is to revise the 2008–2012 OSRP, based on an updated needs assessment, public comments, survey results and prioritization. In February 2012, the Town conducted an extensive public participation program, asking residents how they feel about certain issues, (see attached Survey Results in Appendix B). Approximately 70% of all hard copies, (our best guess because we printed out about 125 surveys and 99 were returned), this demonstrates that the residents of the Town are concerned about growth within their community. Hard copies of surveys were well distributed throughout the Town, in public libraries, senior center and senior living communities. In addition, there were a large number of citizens attending our March 1, 2012 public forum. (Please see Planning Process and Public Participation Section B, Page #5.) The updated open space and recreation goals and objectives for 2013-2020 will continue to incorporate this data reflecting community concerns for the Town and provide Belchertown with resource and recreational management guidelines and strategies for the next seven years.

The updated 2013 OSRP Plan presents a brief description of Belchertown - its history, character, and natural and cultural resources. Priorities for preservation of open space, recreation and protection of natural resources as viewed by Town Boards and citizens are presented. The goals and objectives for open space and recreation have changed somewhat over the last seven years. Due to the slow down of single-family home development in Belchertown, residents seem to be concerned with the quality and quantity of recreational opportunities within the Town. This subject is discussed in further detail in our action plan. The Plan concludes with a Seven-Year Action Plan to implement these goals and objectives for open space, natural resource protection and for recreation.

Belchertown is at a crossroads - decisions made now will determine the character of the Town for years to come. Will Belchertown remain a community of rural character - with agricultural and forestlands providing employment, recreation, and open space? Or will it become a densely populated bedroom community with irreversible losses and damage to the Town's land and water resources, open space and rural character?

## LAND AREA and TAX BASE

Acres Square Miles	34,668 54
2009 Vehicle Registrations (autos and light trucks)	12,783
2011 Property Tax Rates	
Residential Commercial/Industrial	\$15.65 \$15.65

Belchertown can take pride in its accomplishments of past years; since the original plan was written, many of the goals and objectives cited in that plan have been met, (See Appendix A).

During 2007- 2012, the Town has protected over 1000 acres of open space. The main goals of these land acquisitions were to protect drinking water supplies, provide habitat protection for wildlife, protect scenic vistas and maintain the rural character of the Town. A large majority of this land protection area was acquired by the LAND Grant program through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. In June 2008, 57 acres of additional property were added to the existing Topping Farm Conservation Area, (224 acres) which was purchased in 3 phases to protect local Town aquifers. The main benefit to the community was for drinking water supply protection. The purchase of this property also provided a wildlife corridor, endangered species protection, protected scenic and community character in the area and provided additional recreational opportunities for all the community. In June 2011, the Town purchased 290 acres, located off Amherst Rd., (Route 9), now named the Holland Glenn Conservation Area and in March 2013, the Town will be closing on 88 acres for the Meads Corner Conservation area. Acquisition of this property will help protect drinking water supplies, protect endangered species, protect threatened biodiversity, and reduce fragmentation of our remaining undeveloped lands.

Additionally, the Town has improved existing open space areas for recreation at the Jabish Brook Conservation Area, and trails were cleared and marked. Work has also been completed at the Reed Conservation Area with the creation of a new trail. The Scarborough Brook Conservation Area has also had a botanist conduct a vegetative survey of the open fields on the property. Finally, the Town is working with private landowners, the Agricultural Commission and local land trusts to preserve agricultural land. In May 2012, the Town purchased 16 acres of prime farmland with an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). This is the first APR that Belchertown has completed within the last fifteen years and we are encouraged to see this program continue. The Belchertown Agricultural Commission was created in December 2005 with the purpose of promoting agricultural-based economic opportunities; preserve, revitalize, and sustain the Belchertown agricultural industry. The Town is also actively working with the Belchertown Land Trust, The Kestrel Land Trust and other local lands trusts and private foundations in protecting open space within the community.

## **B. Planning Process and Public Participation**

The update of the 2013-2020 OSRP was developed by LeeAnne Connolly, the Conservation Administrator, with assistance from the Open Space Plan Subcommittee, Michele Nowak, Conservation Clerk, Doug Albertson, Town Planner, the Recreational Director, Robert Opalanik and the supervision of the Belchertown Conservation Commission. Members of the 2013 OSRP Plan Subcommittee, which convened in 2012, include representatives from the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, recreation department and the public.

In winter 2012, the committee designed a citizen participation process to be carried out for Belchertown. An Open Space Plan survey was distributed throughout the town (see Appendix B) and was distributed via email to all Town Boards and Committees, placed on the Town webpage, published in the local paper and also announced on the local television channel. In addition, copies of the survey were placed in the Senior Center, the Clapp Memorial Public Library, the Belchertown Police Station, Pine Valley Plantation Senior Community and the Town Hall. Over one hundred surveys were returned. Following this procedure, a public forum was held to allow the community to respond to the survey and make any additional comments. This public forum was held at the Belchertown Board of Selectman's meeting room on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. This hearing was well attended by members of Town boards, officials, and local citizens and provided a forum for discussion of open space, recreation, and natural resource issues and concerns within the Town. This information is being carried over into the 2013 - 2020 OSRP. In May and June of 2012, public meetings were held in the Conservation Commission office and the public was invited to attend said hearings, however there was no additional public response or attendance.

Following the public forum process, this plan incorporates the goals and objectives, as presented in the OSRP within the context of the 2012 survey results and discussion at the public meeting, (see Appendix B). The result was an extensive list of objectives and action steps that were distributed to all Town boards for their review and prioritization. Based on responses, the Committee formulated final objectives and developed a Seven-Year Action Plan. The Conservation Commission conducted formal hearings regarding this 2013 update. The Committee also worked extensively with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) who prepared all revised 2013 Open Space maps. The draft copy of the 2013-2020 Belchertown OSRP was presented on January 14, 2013 at the Conservation Commission meeting. Public notice was placed around town buildings and in the local paper. The plan has been submitted for review by Town Boards and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, (please see there comments). The plan was also submitted to the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services in February 2013 for their review and their comments in the March 20, 2013 letter, written by Melissa Cryan, Grants Manager, have been addressed.

# Section 3 COMMUNITY SETTING

## A. Regional Context

Belchertown is a residential community of 14,649 people, (2010 population estimates data, 2010 Census, see Table 1) with a land area of 55.4 square miles. In land area, it is one of the largest communities in Massachusetts. Located in the eastern portion of the Pioneer Valley region, it flanks the fertile Connecticut River Valley and stretches 12 miles north to south, extending approximately five miles at its widest distance. The Quabbin Reservoir, one of the largest publicly owned water-supply systems in the country, defines much of the Town's eastern border. The communities of Pelham to the north, Amherst, Granby and Ludlow to the west, Palmer to the south, and Ware to the east, border the Town. To the southwest is the Springfield metropolitan area. Northampton and Amherst are two other main population and employment centers.

Belchertown is rich in natural resources. Belchertown's resources and open space are important to the Town and to the region for public drinking water supplies, scenic and recreational opportunities, and important wildlife habitat. Located in the Chicopee River watershed, Belchertown has three major aquifers supplying water to Amherst, Bondsville, Springfield, and Belchertown. The Quabbin Reservoir, covering 24,705 acres, is Boston's major water supply and is partially located in Belchertown.

Containing the large numbers of forested acres in Hampshire County, Belchertown's forests and agricultural lands contribute to the region and surrounding communities. Aside from providing economic benefit, farming and forestry aid the environment by protecting watersheds, supporting wildlife habitat, and conserving the landscape. With over 7,000 acres of agricultural land and close to 23,000 acres of forest land (see Forest Lands Map #9), Belchertown represents an economic, environmental, and aesthetic benefit for a region that is becoming increasingly urbanized.

Belchertown's proximity to urban and academic centers, and thus to jobs, makes it a desirable place to live. It is one of the fastest growing communities in western Massachusetts. Belchertown and East Longmeadow were the top two communities in the Pioneer Valley in terms of the number of additional housing units, adding a combined 1,532 units. These two towns accounted for about 15% of the entire region's new housing units from 2000 to 2010.

Following an increase in population of 4,643 residents from 1970 - 1990 (78% increase in population), the population of Belchertown rose by more than 1,135 residents between 2000 and 2006, an 8.75% increase over 6 years. Even though it appears that the rate of growth has declined somewhat, Belchertown is still a desirable place to live and the population continues to increase. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission estimates a projected growth of 15,398 by the year 2020, (see Table #1).

Table #1 Population Projections for Hampshire County 2010 and 2035

Pioneer Valley Region Municipal Population Projections Adjusted for 2010 Census Counts Completed April 2011

		Decennial Census	Census Bureau Estimates	Decennial Census	PVPC Projection	PVPC Projection	PVPC Projection	PVPC Projecti	
COUNTY	TOWN	2000	2009	2010	2017	2020	2025	1	
Hampshire	AMHERST	34,873	36,246	37,819	38,779	39,031	39,411	39,7	
Hampshire	BELCHERTOWN	12,968	14,141	14,649	15,215	15,398	15,689	15,9	
Hampshire	CHESTERFIELD	1,201	1,270	1,222	1,285	1,307	1,342	1,3	
Hampshire	CUMMINGTON	1,004	972	872	893	898	906	913	
Hampshire	EASTHAMPTON	15,994	16,324	16,053	16,450	16,553	16,707	16,8	
Hampshire	GOSHEN	903	957	1,054	1,081	1,089	1,100	1,1	
Hampshire	GRANBY	6,132	6,305	6,240	6,443	6,504	6,600	6,6	
Hampshire	HADLEY	4,793	4,753	5,250	5,386	5,423	5,478	5,5	
Hampshire	HATFIELD	3,249	3,262	3,279	3,361	3,382	3,414	3,4	
Hampshire	HUNTINGTON	2,192	2,233	2,180	2,275	2,306	2,357	2,4	
Hampshire	NORTHAMPTON	28,978	28,370	28,549	29,145	29,280	29,472	29,€	
Hampden	PALMER	12,497	13,124	12,140	12,523	12,637	12,814	12,§	
Hampshire	PELHAM	1,403	1,399	1,321	1,353	1,361	1,374	1,3	
Hampshire	SOUTH HADLEY	17,196	17,387	17,514	17,885	17,970	18,092	18,2	
Hampshire	SOUTHAMPTON	5,387	5,991	5,792	6,065	6,158	6,309	6,4	
Hampshire	WARE	9,708	9,888	9,872	10,252	10,374	10,569	10,7	
Hampshire	WILLIAMSBURG	2,427	2,522	2,482	2,569	2,597	2,640	2,6	

Minimizing growth damage and preserving key natural resources must be the main focus of the Town in developing an effective open space and recreation plan. Aside from the loss of open space and natural resources, unmanaged growth also results in overcrowded schools, overburdened public services, and loss of community character.

## **B.** History of the Community

The present land use patterns in Belchertown record a long history of human presence in the area, and human interaction with the environment. Pre-settlement history is traced along the Old Bay Road, the route used by the native Indians on their hunting expeditions into the forests of Belchertown, which were widely known for the wealth and variety of animal species. The aboriginal inhabitants are reported to have built great fires to surround the game, burning large areas of forest to bare ground. In this open land grew dense wild grass, and the settlers later claimed the land for pasturage.

Originally known as "Cowls' Spring" for an early settler, the name was soon altered to "Cold Spring." On the "highway of travel" between Northampton and Boston, Belchertown was incorporated in 1761 by homesteaders from Northampton, Hatfield, and Hadley. Its population reached 1,000 by 1775, with most residents practicing subsistence agriculture. During the next 100 years, the Town experienced slow, but steady growth. Tourism and a significant carriage industry along with small industries like Bond Grist Mill, Haskell's Cider and Vinegar Works, the Belchertown Woolen Company, and Hawkes, Smith and Company's Carriage Shop supplemented the farm economy. The 1887 Town census showed a population of 2,400 with farming as the principal occupation of the community, an activity that proved to be the Town's stable industry well into the last century.

As Belchertown entered the 20th century, its population decreased due to the closing of local industries and the relocation of workers to neighboring industrial Towns such as Holyoke and Springfield. However, the 1950's and 1960's brought a steady and substantial increase in population. In 1960, the population was 5,186 and by 1970, 5,936 people resided in Belchertown, representing a 30% increase in 20 years.

POPULATION	on trends			
1970	5.936			
1980	8.339			
1990	10.593			
2000	13,015			
2010	14,649			
2011	14.621			
2010 Race a	and Latino Population			
White	95.4%			
Black	2.2%			
Asian	2.5%			
Other	1.9%			
Latino (of any race)	2.6%			
Note: Race %s can be greater than 100% because of multiple race persons.				

While employment opportunities within the Town have increased slightly, the majority of new citizens work elsewhere (82%); in the last twenty years, Belchertown has increasingly become a bedroom community for greater Springfield, Amherst, Northampton, greater Hartford, and greater Worcester.

	e residents Work	2000
17.3%	work in Belcherton	

## C. Population Characteristics

Originally a farming community, rapid growth since World War II has established Belchertown as a bedroom community. Though the population has more than doubled since 1970, this rapid growth has not resulted in a high population density because of the Town's large geographic area (sixth largest in the state). Rather, according to the 2000 census, the population density is 246 persons per square mile or approximately 2 1/2 acres for every person.

(The information in both the following charts was provided by the PVPC community profile data).

RESIDENTS IN THE LABOR FORCE			HOUSEHOLD INCOME	2010
Year 2000 2001	Labor Force 7,629 7,765	Percent Unemployed 2.1% 2.6%	\$0 - \$9,999 \$10,000 - \$14,999 \$15,000 - \$24,999 \$25,000 - \$34,999 \$35,000 - \$49,999 \$50,000 - \$74,999 \$75,000 & over	4.1% 3.8% 6.8% 7.0% 10.0% 17.4% 51.0%
2002 2003 2004 2005	7,916 8,019 8,148 8,303	3.6% 4.4% 4.6% 5.1%	Median Household Income: 2010	
2006 2007 2008 2009 2010	8,398 8,298 8,409 8,223 8,259	4.5% 3.9% 4.2% 6.3% 7.1%	Persons Below Poverty 2010 Level:	5.7%

The 2010 census figures indicate that approximately 23% of the population is school age (17 or younger). An additional 8% fall in the age 18 - 24 category. Many of these are college students living in Town and commuting to the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. The largest population groups are the 35 - 44 year-olds, approximately (15%) and the 45 - 54 year-old group (19%). Only about 10% of the Town's population is aged 65 or older, (please see chart below).

Percent	of Popu	lation by	y Age	EMPLOYERS and EMPL	2011	
Age	1990	2000	2010		Number	Percent of Community Total
0 - 4 5 - 9	8.0 7.9	6.9 8.1	5.5 7.3	Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries	0	0.0%
10 - 14	6.6	7.9	7.5	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	217	8.29
15 - 19	5.5	6.5	7.0	Construction	99	3.89
20 - 24	6.2	5.1	4.9	Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	82	3.19
25 - 34	19.1	12.9	9.5	Health Care and Social Assistance	213	8.19
35 - 44	21.2	20.4	15.0	Information	0	0.09
45 - 54	8.9	16.7	18.7	Manufacturing	99	3.89
55 - 59	3.4	4.2	8.2	Services	1,001	37.99
60 - 64	3.2	2.7	6.2	Transportation, Comm. & Utilities	530	20.19
65 - 74	6.3	4.6	5.9	Wholesale and Retail Trade	397	15.09
75 & over	3.7	4.2	4.4			
				Average Weekly Wage	\$633	

(The information in both charts was provided by the PVPC community profile data).

Belchertown has about 5.7% of the population living below poverty level, (see 2010 Household Income Chart on page #9). The majority of this population is located near the center of town and consists of one low income neighborhood, Lord Jeffrey apartments, 2 mobile home parks and elderly housing. Environmental justice (EJ) is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution, and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits.

Historically, the environmental justice movement has been one of grassroots activism focusing on the rights and liberties of people of color and low-income communities relative to the environment and particularly, in response to the disproportionate burden of industrial pollution and lack of regulatory enforcement in these communities. In 1994, President William Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," directing federal agencies to address environmental injustices in their operations and in communities across the country. Since, and in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, states and municipalities have developed policies and programs to proactively address environmental equity concerns to help ensure that minority and low-income communities are not disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards.

## **Belchertown Housing Authority**

The Belchertown Housing Authority consists of 48 elderly/disabled apartments; 12 family housing apartments; and 3 DMR houses. The elderly/disabled apartments are located at 41 Everett Avenue. Each apartment has a living room/kitchen combination, bedroom and bath. On site parking is available and there is a laundry room located in the office/community room building. Heat, electric. and trash pick up are included in rent. Apartments are located on first and second floors. There is on site maintenance and a 24 hour answering service. The family housing is located at State Street and George Hannum Road. Each apartment has a living room, kitchen/dining room combination, bedrooms, laundry room, full bath on second floor and half bath on first floor. Off street parking is available. Trash pick up is included in the rent. The rent for the above apartments is determined on your net annual income. The apartments are managed by an Executive Director appointed by the Authority Board and are operated according to the policy of the Belchertown Housing Authority and the guidelines and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. The DMR housing is located at State Street, George Hannum Road, and East Walnut Street. The houses on State Street and George Hannum Road are administered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; the East Walnut Street location is administered by the Western Massachusetts Consortium.

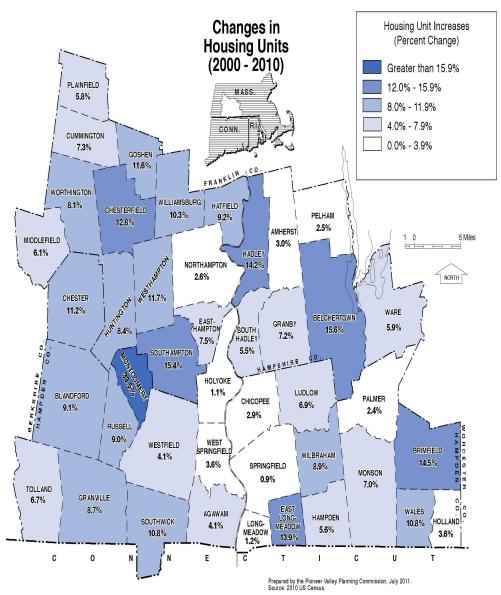
The center for Massachusetts Data reports that over one-half of the employed residents of Belchertown work in some professional capacity, including education. The remainder of the employed population relies on manufacturing, construction, and wholesale and retail trade as the primary sources of income. The largest employer within the Town had been the Belchertown State School. Since its closing in December 1992, citizen groups and officials within the Town are actively investigating potential uses for its large acreage and many buildings. In May of 1992, the Town created the Belchertown Economic Development Industrial Corporation (BEDIC) to research potential development options for this property. Formed under Mass. General Law Chapter 121C, the BEDIC's mission is to develop and implement a Town Meeting approved economic development plan on the former Belchertown State School property creating real estate investment and jobs. The fate of the facility and its property has widespread implications for the open space and

recreation resources of Belchertown because of possible impacts on the Town's scenic beauty, water supplies, traffic flows, and historic value. At this present time, no final determination has been made regarding the fate of this property.

## **D. Growth and Development Patterns**

## PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Belchertown originated as a dispersed agricultural community, focused on the three-acre common and surrounding churches and stores. Summer residents discovered Belchertown in the early 1900s, establishing a few homes built around the lakes. The manufacturing village of Bondsville, most of which is in Palmer, came about during the late nineteenth century. As in the past, Belchertown is today primarily a community of detached residences, created from subdivision and road front lots on former farmlands. Belchertown's proximity to urban and academic centers, and thus to jobs, makes it a desirable place to live. According to the Assessors Office, 3,674 parcels are detached residences, out of a total of 5,917 parcels for the whole Town. It is one of the fastest growing communities in western Massachusetts. Belchertown and East Longmeadow were the top two communities in the Pioneer Valley in terms of the number of additional housing units, adding a combined 1,532 units. These two towns accounted for about 15% of the entire region's new housing units from 2000 to 2010. The town is experiencing one of the highest regional growths in housing units, greater than 15.6 %, (see Figure #3).



Since 2010, Belchertown has issued approximately 35 single-family building permits. Even though the rate of development for single-family homes has dropped significantly over the last few years, this cumulative population increase places stress on natural resources and sensitive areas. Additional protected open space is needed to preserve buffer areas between centers of major development, to protect natural resources, protect drinking water supplies, to provide both active and passive recreation, and to maintain the less-developed rural character of Belchertown.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Both sewage disposal and water supply systems have influenced growth patterns in Belchertown. Town sewer - primarily in the center of Town and north along Route 9, currently serves 20% of the Town. The remaining 80% of homes have on-site sewage systems. The sewage treatment plant is located on the former Belchertown State School property. A new wastewater treatment facility has been installed and went on line in September 2000. This treatment plant can handle 1 million gallons per day. The Town extended sewer lines down Springfield Road to Pine Valley Plantation, a mobile home park with approximately 386 residences. This extension includes the high school, which opened in September 2002. In 2012, sewer lines were also extended along route 21 to the new Cold Spring Golf course.

A new sewer line has also been extended down Bay Road and extended out to the Tri-lakes area. The Tri-lakes area has been experiencing an ongoing history of poor water quality and drinking water quality due to poorly functioning and failed septic systems. As stated by Rollin Dewitt, Supervisor of the Waste Water Treatment Plant on January 7, 2013, of the 277 sewer connections available, it is estimated that approximately 62% of lake residents have connected to Town sewer. The Town is developing ways to encourage 100 % connection to the sewer in the Tri-lakes region.

Future growth in areas not served by the sewer will require on-site septic systems. Proper placement of these private systems is necessary to avoid potential environmental problems. Belchertown is part of the Quabbin Health District. The Quabbin Health District is a regional health department serving the communities of Belchertown, Ware, and Pelham. It was established in 1980 and is the joint effort of the local Boards of Health to provide their towns with public health professionals and services. They also provide technical assistance and educational services to residents and other municipal departments. The Quabbin Health District serves a total population of approximately 25,000 residents in an area of about 120 square miles in Hampshire County.

Whether by private wells or by Town water, Belchertown's residents rely 100% on local groundwater for drinking water supplies. Approximately 65% of the residences have private wells, while 35% are connected to a public-water supply. Protection of the three major aquifers supplying public water supplies to Belchertown, Amherst, Springfield and Bondsville is critical. Despite an Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone and Bylaw, pollution from private septic systems and other non-point sources may threaten these groundwater supplies.

Over 180 miles of roadways provide access from Belchertown to other communities and urban areas. Route 9 is the major link to Amherst, Northampton and Ware, while Route 202 leads to Holyoke, Chicopee and Springfield beyond. According to studies by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, both major roads and feeder roads are capable of handling existing and future traffic. However, the study cautioned that the development of high-volume traffic generators such as fast food restaurants and convenience stores might lead to unacceptable levels of traffic congestion at major intersections within the Town.

## LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Several land use controls have been developed to protect natural resources in Belchertown. Overlay protection districts are provided for flood plains, wetlands, groundwater aquifers, and the historic village center. The Open Space Community Development Bylaw provided under the Zoning Bylaw, allows for lots to be sized approximately one half the minimum square footage allowed in exchange for land set aside for undeveloped open space.

However, these zoning controls have not been adequate to manage and direct growth in an environmentally sensitive manner. Since 1995, 320 ANR lots and 95 lots in subdivisions have been created, resulting in approximately 415 new lots. Some of this development has resulted in the loss of productive resources - farmland and forestland. Some development has harmed wetlands and may damage groundwater supplies. Most have resulted in a loss of open space. Only four subdivisions have been developed under the Open Space Community Development Bylaw.

The Belchertown Planning Board has estimated that, under current regulations, approximately a total of 17,400 dwelling units are possible; at present, approximately 4000 have been built; this scenario leaves approximately 13,000 units that could be built as a maximum potential build-out.

LAND USE		2005
Total Square Miles Total Road Miles	2009	54 159
Land Use		Acres
Residential		3,730
Commercial		142
Industrial		105
Urban Open/Public		284
Transportation		76
Outdoor Recreational		362
Agricultural Land		2,607
Undeveloped Land		26,064
Water		1,786

Residential development reduces the amount of contiguous, undeveloped open space. Additional potential environmental impacts from realization of the maximum potential residential build-out under current zoning include:

- threat to groundwater from septic systems, lawn chemicals, road salt, etc;
- deforestation and resulting alteration of natural drainage patterns;
- further loss of agricultural lands and forest fragmentation;
- blight of visual aesthetics (ridge lines, view-scapes, scenic roads etc.);
- wetlands and water pollution;
- soil erosion and sedimentation;
- loss of wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors;
- alteration of Town character; and
- loss of informal, as well as managed, trail systems

## **Section 4**

## ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

## A. Geology, Soils and Topography

Belchertown's present day landscape - its bedrock and soil conditions and its topography - is largely the result of the carving, molding and deposition of debris, which occurred during the last glacial period from twenty thousand to fourteen thousand years ago.

## BEDROCK GEOLOGY

The geology and topography of Belchertown is typical of the New England uplands, where the ancient volcanic landscape was carved and molded by the glaciers, and later refined by erosion caused by wind and water. The remnants of the ancient landscape form the bedrock core of Belchertown, which is blanketed with a thin layer of sediment - from boulders to fine particles of sand - left when the last glacial retreat was completed 10,000 years ago.

Much of the bedrock in Belchertown consists of metamorphic and intrusive igneous formations (schist's, gneisses, and quartites), most are located in the steep hills in northeast Belchertown and southwest of the Town center. In southwest Belchertown are also found the sedimentary and igneous rocks of the Holyoke Range; these and the Pelham Hills are the highest and steepest formations in Belchertown.

A prominent fault in Belchertown, separating the metamorphic and intrusive igneous from the sedimentary and volcanic rocks, is the Triassic Border Fault which enters the Town just north of Boardman Street and trends northeast to Hamilton Street, then north through the lakes area and into Pelham. This fault forms the boundary between the Pelham Hills and the Holyoke Mountain Range.

## SURFICIAL GEOLOGY

Belchertown's surficial geology was formed during and after the glacial periods (the last ending about 14,000 years ago) depositing till, ice-contact deposits, outwash, and swamp and lacustrine deposits.

Till is an unstratified and unsorted mixture of gravel, sand, silt and clay which was deposited directly by the glacier. Approximately 36% of Belchertown's land area (excluding the MDC land) is comprised of till, according to the SCS Soil Survey, and large concentrations are located in both northern and southern Belchertown.

Outwash was deposited on 30% of Belchertown's land area by glacial melt water, which left a highly variable, but well-sorted composition of sand and gravel. These deposits are very porous and permeable, and are generally excellent aquifers and recharge areas. In Belchertown, outwash deposits include: deposits in the area of Jabish Brook, deposits along East Street and the Swift River, and deposits in the area of Batchelor Brook.

Sand and gravel deposits that were left as the glacier melted resulted in many ice-contact deposits found in Belchertown. Kames and eskers are ice-contact deposits left either on the ice, at the edge of the ice, or under the ice in melt water streams. Examples of ice-contact deposits are found in the kame deposits in South Belchertown in an area bounded by the Boston and Maine and Central Vermont Railroads; in an area just east of the village, near Jabish Brook and its wetlands; and in an area northwest of North Washington Street, where Broad Brook and numerous wetlands are located.

Swamp and lacustrine deposits were laid down in post-glacial lakes, and are the youngest geologic units. The most prominent example of this formation occurs in northwest Belchertown and the Town of Amherst, in what was once the shoreline of glacial Lake Hitchcock, now the Lawrence Swamp.

Soils have characteristics that exert a strong influence upon the kinds of uses land may be subjected to without environmental deterioration. Information on soils can provide clues to a community for the best uses of the land, by indicating suitability for different kinds of development. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has identified and mapped six soils associations in Belchertown and determined the limitations and suitability of each soil for both urban activities and open space, including agricultural uses, (see Map #4, Soils and Geological Features Map).

The six soils associations include:

- 1. Millis-Situate-Essex soil area which occupies 23% of Belchertown and is characterized by deep, fairly well drained glacial till underlain by hardpan at about 2 feet. These soils have severe limitations for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- 2. Hinckley-Merrimac-Windsor soil area, which occupies 17% of Belchertown. These are well-drained mineral soils developed in stratified sand and gravel deposits, and have slight to moderate limitations for commercial, industrial and residential uses. These highly permeable soils can contribute to contamination of shallow wells where septic systems are used.
- 3. Ridgebury-Muck-Whitman soil area, found in 15% of Belchertown, is characterized by stony, poorly drained mineral soils with hardpan, and poorly drained organic soils. This group has severe limitations for residential, commercial, and industrial uses due to extreme wetness.
- 4. Hollis-Canton-Gloucester soils cover 10% of the Town and are generally very well drained soils ranging from shallow to deep-to-bedrock. These soils are common in north Belchertown. The bedrock condition yields severe limitations for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- 5. Canton-Gloucester-Hollis soils also covers about 10% of Belchertown, mainly in the southern half of the Town, and are made up of deep, well-drained soils with hardpan and also shallow-to-bedrock soils. The limitations for residential, commercial and industrial uses are moderate to severe.
- 6. Paxton-Woodbridge soils area is found in only 5% of the Town, mainly in the northern and central sections. These are deep, fairly well drained soils with hardpan at a depth of three feet. They present no limitations for most types of land use, although wetness due to hardpan may be a problem.

Since residential development represents the primary potential threat to open space and natural resources in Belchertown, this report includes a map of soils that pose limitations to development of home sites, (See Map #4B). The severity of the limitation is expressed in degrees based upon the physical constraints imposed on given use of land by soil characteristics, and the difficulty or price a community would face in order to overcome the constraint.

Generally the major factors considered in determining the limitations on land use due to soils suitability are:

- 1. Soil permeability
- 2. Depth to seasonal high water table
- 3. Depth to bedrock, hardpan or clay with silt layers
- 4. Slope of the land
- 5. Flooding by stream overflow
- 6. Surface rockiness
- 7. Surface stoniness
- 8. Texture of the subsoil
- 9. Natural soil drainage
- 10. Soil reaction

## 11. Kinds of soil material below 40" from the surface

As Town sewer services only 20% to 30 % of Belchertown, development of many new home sites will require on-site septic systems. Successful functioning of septic systems depends in part on absorptive ability of the soil and the level of the water table during wet seasons. Generally in Belchertown severe limitations are imposed by bedrock/hardpan in areas northeast of Route 9. Hardpan continues to be a problem in the southeastern part of Town near the Granby border. The other major constraint is severe wetness, which is found throughout eastern and southern Belchertown. Slope is a severe limit east of the Town village and also along the western boundary of the Town south of Rt. 202. Slight limitations are found mainly near the lakes in the northwest, and the central southwestern part of Town.

## **TOPOGRAPHY**

Topography or the shape of terrain includes two elements - elevation (from mean sea level) and the slope or grade. The most important factor in relation to community development is that of land slope. Slope gradient can be a limiting factor for many uses. As the slope of the land increases, the installation costs of roads, homes or industrial parks increases.

The landscape in Belchertown varies from steeply sloped wooded hills in the northern part of Town to more gentle slopes in the remaining areas. The highest elevation in the Town is 1050 feet. The Holyoke Range and the Pelham Hills in the northern-one third of Belchertown are areas where slopes in excess of 15% have prevented both widespread urban development and agriculture. Here, forestry is the most common activity, and recreational opportunities (hiking, hunting, nature study) abound. Much of the remainder of Belchertown has slopes of less than 15%, although there are some small areas from 15-25% slope.

## **B.** Landscape Character

Belchertown's landscape is composed of a mixture of dominating hills, small lakes, woodlands, farm fields, quiet residential and small commercial areas, and a typical New England Town Common, which forms the core of a Registered Historic District. Throughout the Town, the pattern of forested land alternating with farmland and urban land gives the Town a rural flavor that attracts many new residents. This rural character is, perhaps, the Town's most important resource. It not only serves as a reminder of the Town's agricultural history, but also provides the special ambiance of a small New England Town. Because of its large land area, the Town has not lost its rural charm despite its rapid growth during the last twenty years. The large acreage of state-owned lands has benefited the Town by providing many contiguous areas of land protected from development.

Abundant forested lands in the northeastern hills and the many farms of the gently rolling southern portion of Town have contributed to the rural character of the Town. The central portion of the Town, with its village common, has experienced rapid growth. Despite this loss of open space and visual amenity, the many existing tree-lined and stonewalled roads have helped to preserve the rural character of the Town. Developing mechanisms to preserve the rural character and open feel of the Town, including preservation of farm and forest lands, protecting stone walls and trees along scenic roads, as well as discouraging cookie cutter-like development on frontage lots, are again important issues the Town must consider.

## C. Water Resources

Belchertown's water resources are critical factors to consider in its community planning. Lakes and streams are attractive for recreation and provide aesthetic value for residential development. Greenbelts along streams, wetlands, lakes and ponds provide a variety of functions - wildlife habitat, pollution attenuation, passive recreation, and open space for the Town, (see Map #6).

Water availability for domestic use is a prime determinant for development. Underground sources in Belchertown, found most everywhere in Town, can provide good quality drinking water for years to come if the recharge areas are protected. However, once contaminated, groundwater sources may take years to naturally purify themselves.

## SURFACE WATERS

The pattern of rivers, streams, lakes and ponds reflect the geologic history of Belchertown, for the flow of water is determined and controlled by the topography and soil conditions. Belchertown's complex topography yields five distinct drainage basins or watersheds, (see Water Resource Map #6):

- 1. Scarborough and Hop brooks drain an area in northwest Belchertown, flowing west and northwest into and through the Lawrence Swamp;
- 2. Lampson Brook, Weston Brook and Batchelor Brook, the outlet of Metacomet Lake, flow generally west into Forge Pond located in Granby;
- 3. Roaring Brook/Broad Brook watershed in southwest Belchertown is traversed by the Jabish Canal, which diverts water from Jabish Brook to the Springfield Reservoir;
- 4. Jabish Brook is the major stream in the Town with its headwaters in Knights Pond, a reservoir owned by the Springfield Water District. Jabish Brook flows south to the Swift River. A portion of its flow is diverted at the pond just north of Mill Valley Road; and
- 5. The Swift River is the major watershed in Belchertown, including most of the land in Belchertown owned by the Metropolitan District Commission as part of the Quabbin Reservoir Reservation. The reservoir itself occupies 1,575 acres in Belchertown alone.

The Town's glacial history is also seen in the numerous ponds and wetlands and, most notably, in the three kettle-hole lakes - Metacomet, Arcadia, and Holland - northwest of the Town center. The largest and deepest of these is Lake Metacomet, at 65 acres and about 15 feet deep.

These lakes are experiencing the serious negative impacts from human activity. The newly formed Belchertown Lakes Committee held its first meeting on Tuesday June 14, 2011. Responsibility for this Committee is to protect public health, environment and the general welfare of the lakes within the Town. The purpose of this committee is to addresses the annual and long-range management strategies needed to meet recreational, habitat, aesthetic, water quality and other agreed-upon goals. A 604B grant application was awarded to the Town in 2012. The purpose for these funds is to investigate water quality issues and identify any potential stormwater runoff issues surrounding the lake regions. The Committee is working with the PVPC to send this project out to bid for 2013 so the problem areas can be identified, solutions recommended and work to begin to solve these problems. Once a bid has been accepted, the Contractor will analyze the water quality samples using DEP and EPA approved methods as specified in the QAPP. Samples will be analyzed for E. coli, Nitrate, Nitrite, Ammonia, Total Phosphorus, and surfactants. Results will be tabulated and a

summary analysis prepared. The Contractor will review all water quality monitoring results with comparisons to state standards; identify locations with water quality problems; and rank problem locations in priority order. The Contractor will also evaluate the most effective Best Management Practices for removal of target pollutants, and produce conceptual design plans and cost estimates for 3 to 4 priority locations. This work will be based on the site constraints for each location identified, and the nature of water quality issue(s) to be addressed.

The Town has been working with the Tri-Lakes Association to develop along term management plan for these Lakes. The Tri-Lakes Association works to educate residents on the need to reduce phosphate use, sponsor clean-up days, monitor water quality, and other critical functions. The Tri-Lakes Association offers a broad base of public support in its efforts to preserve the lakes area and their monthly newsletter entitled Ripples, is circulated throughout the town.

The objective of the management plan is to reduce the amount of aquatic vegetative growth to that which is considered a viable pond level, compatible with those recreational activities occurring at the Lakes. The Tri-lakes Association, for 2010 had received Community Preservation funding to conduct water quality studies within the Tri-Lakes Watershed. The objectives of this management plan are three fold:

- 1. to identify and address non point sources of pollutant loading into the Arcadia and Metacomet Lakes through water quality investigations, sub-watershed surveys, and preliminary BMP design;
- 2. recommend local regulatory tools for watershed protection; and
- 3. work with watershed residents, PVPC and the Tri-lake Association to share results and to promote better management practices.

Although various methods of reducing the plant growth (mechanical, biological, dredging) were evaluated, in 2010-2012, it was determined that use of EPA registered and state-approved herbicide, (Sonar) for reduction of aquatic nuisance growth was consistent with the overall restoration program for the lakes and would not adversely affect water quality. The purpose for this herbicide was to control the excessive growth of non-native aquatic vegetation, specifically Cabomba caroliniana (fanwort) and Myriopyhllum heterophyllum (variable milfoil). Aquatic Control Inc. conducted a whole lake treatment for both Lake Arcadia and Lake Metacomet in June –August in 2012. The herbicide treatment program for the both lakes consisted of one annual treatment using USEPA/State registered herbicides labeled as Sonar AS (active ingredient fluridone) plus follow-up booster treatments to maintain fluridone concentrations within the Lacusterine system.

The remaining surface waters of Belchertown have generally high water quality and are considered clean enough for both contact recreational activities (e.g. swimming) and fishing. However, isolated problems may exist, particularly in streams which receive excess nutrients from agricultural runoff or which are recharged by groundwater and runoff containing septic or landfill leachate.

## FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

Floodplains in Belchertown, as mapped by the National Flood Insurance Program total approximately 5300 acres, or 14 percent of the land in Town. The major flood plains are found along the Swift River; the Jabish Brook, from the center of Belchertown east of the village to Ware; the Broad Brook west of North and South Washington Streets, east of Chauncey Walker Street and

Springfield Road, and north of West Street in southwest Belchertown; the Hop Brook from west of Federal Street to Amherst; and along the lakes region and Batchelor Brook running southeast of Stebbins Street to the Granby border, (See Map #6B).

In 1981, Belchertown adopted a Floodplain Overlay District ordinance to protect the community against costs which may be incurred when unsuitable uses occur along water courses, wetlands, ponds and reservoirs, or in areas subject to flooding. This bylaw has added another layer of protection to wetlands and floodplains, in particular the 5,300 acres of floodplains along the Swift River, Jabish Brook, Broad Brook, Hop Brook, Batchelor Brook, and the lakes region. The protection of flood-storage areas in the community wisely anticipates future development and its increased runoff, higher flood levels, and greater likelihood of flooding.

## WETLANDS

Wetlands are land areas that are dominated by plant species that require particularly abundant supplies of water. They are often found in low-lying areas or adjacent to rivers and streams, and store excess water during spring freshets and floods. Wetland vegetation acts as a sponge to absorb floodwaters, acts to hold, store, and degrade pollutants, and provides wildlife habitat. Wetland types vary according to the type of vegetation, the amount of water present, and the duration of the water's presence. Wetland types found in Belchertown include shrub swamps and beaver ponds, shallow and deep marshes, wet meadows, bogs, forested swamps and seasonally flooded areas, as well as lands within the l00-year floodplains of rivers and streams. In addition, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has identified twenty-one soil types in Belchertown that have a seasonally high water table and are very poorly drained. These wet soils present severe limitations to development and for the purpose of this open space plan are considered a wetland type. Map #6A, (Wetlands Map) shows the extent and location of wetlands and wet soils in Belchertown.

According to aerial studies conducted by the University of Massachusetts, Belchertown leads Hampshire County in the number of acres of wetlands, totaling more than 3000 acres or 11% of the total landmass of the Town. Large areas of central and southern Belchertown are wetlands. Where they occur within glacial outwash deposits, these wetlands may indicate true water table or perched water tables. These deposits make up approximately 30% of the Town's area.

Despite adoption of the Wetlands Protection Overlay District, which complements and reinforces the provisions of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the update of the Belchertown Wetlands Wetland Regulations dated May 23, 2006, impacts to wetlands within the Broad Brook, Batchelor Brook, Hop Brook and Jabish Brook watershed remain a special concern. Most of the land within these watersheds is zoned for general residential use, permitting agriculture, forest cutting, and, with a special permit, mining of sand and gravel, as well as residential construction on one-acre lots. A major exception to this zoning is a large area off Old Springfield Road, where a system of wetlands eventually feeds into Broad Brook; this land is zoned for industrial use, though it is currently in agriculture. The potential for contamination of these wetland areas exists from both residential development and inappropriate land use activities within the drainage area.

## **AQUIFERS**

Nearly half of all wetlands may be associated with productive groundwater supplies, according to hydro-geologists at the University of Massachusetts. The same geological formations, which serve as aquifers-glacial outwash, (which underlies 30% of Belchertown) and ancient lakebeds, present ideal conditions for the formation of wetlands. These aquifer-associated wetlands function as giant water purifiers, filtering pollutants through the wetland sediments as the water trickles into

underground storage areas. In this regard, the flood storage function of wetlands serves a dual purpose: collecting surface runoff and routing it into the ground to recharge the aquifer, while reducing downstream flooding.

Three large wetlands systems are particularly critical to Belchertown's groundwater supplies:

- In northwest Belchertown, wetlands in the Scarborough Brook watershed recharge a major aquifer which underlies the Lawrence Swamp and serve as a water source for Belchertown, Amherst, and Pelham.
- A second system of wetlands, in east-central Belchertown, augments the flow of Jabish Brook and recharges both groundwater and surface water supplies. The aquifer, which underlies this system, provides drinking water drawn from two municipal wells, and water diverted from Jabish Brook into the Jabish Canal serves the Springfield Water and Sewer District.
- The last system of wetlands is located in the lower Jabish Brook watershed in South Belchertown; here, the underlying aquifer supplies South Belchertown and Bondsville (Town of Palmer) with drinking water.

The boundaries of these three recharge areas are shown on Map #6, (Water Resources Map).

Despite passage of the Aquifer Protection Bylaw in 1984, protection of groundwater from contamination by leachate from private septic systems, infiltration of road salt, the accidental introduction of petroleum's, chemicals, toxic wastes, or hazardous materials, and significant reductions in the quantity of recharge to groundwater from loss of natural cover, and the increase in impermeable surfaces will demand the attention of the Town. Protection of the watersheds for Zones I & II for all public water supplies must be addressed on a local as well as a regional level. Belchertown's aquifers also serve their neighboring towns. The Town is actively working with the EEA and is currently applying for grants to purchase property located within aquifer recharge areas, to better protect drinking water. Additional goals for the coming year include reviewing road salt policies, researching best management practices for road salt policy improvements, and researching resources for the DPW to work on road drainage improvements.

## D. Vegetation

Belchertown is located on the interface of a transitional forest zone: Oak/Hickory common to Connecticut and Rhode Island, and Northern Hardwoods (birch, maple, and associated hemlock, spruce and white pine) found in the Berkshires and Northern New England. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the total acreage of the Town is forested, (see Map #6C), of a mixed age and diversity. Human activity has altered the forest in Belchertown over time. Areas once cleared for agricultural use or for timber are in various stages of ecological succession, returning to the climax forest cover. Different communities of trees and plant life are associated with each of these successional stages, so the vegetative cover may vary within short distances. In Belchertown, people have introduced open spaces, created edge between forest and field where wildlife flourish, have made shade intolerant species viable, such as birch, and brought in early successional pine communities.

Vegetation communities in Belchertown vary from the mixed hardwood and softwood forests found in the northeastern part of Town and along the Quabbin Reservoir, hydrophilic vegetation found in wetlands surrounding the Town's major stream systems, pockets of state-listed rare and endangered plants, all interspersed with vegetation associated with agricultural enterprises and urban development. Flora and Fauna studies conducted in the 1970's identified 62 species of trees, 214 species of wildflowers, flowering shrubs and vines, and 42 introduced species.

Belchertown has one of the largest numbers of forested acres in Hampshire County, with approximately 23,126 acres, forests comprise nearly three-quarters of the Belchertown landscape, and 80% of these lands are classified as prime forestland, (See Map #6C). The largest tract of forestland in Belchertown is managed by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), which owns nearly 3,000 acres of Quabbin Reservoir watershed lands in northeast Belchertown. Contiguous with the MDC land are the forested uplands of the Pelham Hills, bounded in Belchertown by Route 9 and extending northward into Pelham. These varied, hilly forests contain part of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail and the New England National Scenic Trail (NET) for hiking and the recharge areas for the Lawrence Swamp and Jabish Brook aquifers, (See the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Map #7).

Forestland continues south along the Swift River, where the State Division of Fisheries and Wildlife manages the 975-acre Swift River Wildlife Management Area. The Swift River Sportsmen's Club owns approximately 300 acres of forestland adjacent to the State land. Other large areas of forest can be found west and southwest of the Town center, primarily in the Turkey Hill area. Since 1990's residential development has diminished the Town's woodlands; forest cutting and roadwork, which accompany development, disturb the soil as well as a sense of rural place.

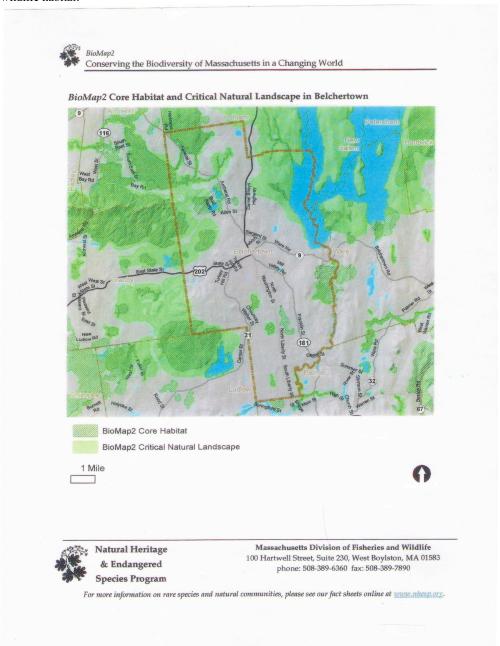
Numerous rare, endangered and state-listed species of plants can be found in Belchertown, (see Species of Conservation Concern, P.25). Rare species reported in Belchertown include a rare climbing fern, Lygopodium plamatum; Arethusa bulbosa, (rare orchid); Downy Wood Mint (listed as critically endangered); Black Maple; Thread food, an aquatic plant of special concern that may be found growing on rocks in stream rapids and waterfalls. The Town purchased over 700 acres of property in the last 5 years to protect certain species located on the Topping Farm, Scarborough Brook Conservation Area, Holland Glen Forest and the Reed Conservation Area. The need for special protection of these habitats is reflected in the goals, objectives and action items of the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

## E. Fisheries and Wildlife

Wildlife in Belchertown is dependent upon, and flourishes in, the rich and varied habitats provided by various landscape types - including meadows, dense underbrush, and open woods - from which it obtains food and shelter. Interfaces between landscape types encourage a great abundance of wildlife habitat. Forest management programs encourage diverse vegetative and landscape types and are a necessary tool in the protection of wildlife habitat. Large undeveloped tracts of land between developed areas still remain for foraging, browsing and nesting areas. Because of the variety of elevations and habitat types, a good representation of wildlife found in central New England can be found in Belchertown. Among these are white tail deer, moose, coyote, bobcat, black bear, wild turkey, pheasant, waterfowl, and aquatic life including trout and bass. The Conservation Commission is actively involved in the 2012 Fish & Wildlife's Wild Turkey Brood Survey.

The forests, which surround the Quabbin Reservoir Reservation, are inhabited by uncommon and rare wildlife species, including the American bald eagle, the golden eagle, bear, moose, bobcat and fox. Since animals pay no attention to property boundaries, their habitat extends well beyond the MDC holdings and onto privately owned Belchertown land. The marshes adjacent to Lake Arcadia and Lake Metacomet reported to be the nesting habitat for the osprey, the raptor species that was nearly extinguished by DDT contamination. A bald headed eagle is often seen fishing in Lake Metacomet.

The DEP Priority Resource Map dated January 30, 2013 listed Wetland Wildlife Habitat Areas in Belchertown and the Bio Map II shows eight areas in the Town that support important wetland wildlife habitat.



## Town Overview

Belchertown lies on the border of the Connecticut River Valley, the Lower Worcester Plateau, and the Worcester Plateau Ecoregions. The Connecticut River Valley Ecoregion, the borders of which are primarily defined by the bedrock geology, has rich soils, a relatively mild climate and low rolling topography. The valley floor is primarily cropland and built land. Central hardwoods and transition hardwood forests cover the ridges. The Lower Worcester Plateau Ecoregion is comprised of open hills and transition hardwood and central hardwood forests. Most parts drain to the Chicopee and Quinebaug Rivers. The Worcester Plateau Ecoregion is an area that includes the most hilly areas of the central upland of Massachusetts with a few high monadnocks and mountains. The dominant forest types present are transition hardwoods and some northern hardwoods. Forested wetlands are common. Surface waters are acidic. Many major rivers drain this area



## Belchertown at a Glance

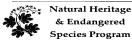
- Total Area: 35,376 acres (55.3 square miles)
  Human Population in 2010: 14,649
- Open space protected in perpetuity: 7,363 acres, or 20.8% percent of total area\*
- BioMap2 Core Habitat: 5,024 acres
- BioMap2 Core Habitat Protected: 2,414 acres or 48.0%
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape: 8,966
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape Protected: 4,104 acres or 45.8%.

## Core Habitat

- 3 Exemplary or Priority Natural Community Cores
- 2 Forest Cores
- 9 Wetland Cores
- 7 Aquatic Cores 1 Vernal Pool Core
- 17 Species of Conservation Concern Cores\*\*  $\circ$  3 birds, 4 reptiles, 4 amphibians, 1 fish, 1 insect, 1 mussel, 1 plant

## Critical Natural Landscape

- 5 Landscape Blocks11 Wetland Core Buffers
- · 4 Aquatic Core Buffers
- \* Calculated using MassGIS data layer "Protected and Recreational Open Space-March, 2012"
- \*\* See next pages for complete list of species, natural communities and other biodiversity



Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230, West Boylston, MA 01583 phone: 508-389-6360 fax: 508-389-7890

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at www.nhesp.org.

Several of these areas are located in areas where past and future development may threaten habitat for these important species. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program has noted Town-owned areas that should be preserved for rare species habitat, and the need for proper management and protection is recognized in Town goals and objectives.

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## Species of Conservation Concern, Priority and Exemplary Natural Communities, and Other Elements of Biodiversity in Belchertown

### Mussels

Triangle Floater, (Alasmidonta undulata), Non-listed SWAP species

#### Insect

## Damselflies

New England Bluet, (Enallagma laterale), Non-listed SWAP species

## Amphibians

Blue-spotted Salamander, (Ambystoma laterale), SC
Marbled Salamander, (Ambystoma opacum), T
Four-toed Salamander, (Hemidactylium scutatum), Non-listed SWAP
Spring Salamander, (Gyrinophilus porphyriticus), Non-listed SWAP

## **Fishes**

Bridle Shiner, (Notropis bifrenatus), SC

## Reptiles

Eastern Box Turtle, (Terrapene carolina), SC
Eastern Hognose Snake, (Heterodon platirhinos), Non-listed SWAP
Eastern Ribbon Snake, (Thamnophis sauritus), Non-listed SWAP
Northern Black Racer, (Coluber constrictor), Non-listed SWAP

#### Birds

American Bittern, (Botaurus lentiginosus), E Bald Eagle, (Haliaeetus leucocephalus), T Least Bittern, (Ixobrychus exilis), E

#### Plants

Climbing Fern, (Lygodium palmatum), SC

## F. Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

Belchertown has an impressive array of unique natural and cultural features, yet few, except the Historic District, Holland Glen and the public cemeteries, are officially recognized and protected from the impacts of development. As development continues, some treasured pieces of Belchertown's landscape will be lost forever. Unique natural and cultural features contribute to a community's sense of history and of place, and provide visual diversity to the local and regional landscape. A "sense of history" and a "sense of place" are intangible qualities, which nevertheless, are important to protect.

Unusual plant and animal communities, scenic vistas and roads, and historical sites are included under the term "scenic resources and unique environments." In the determination of a community's open space resources and needs, unique natural and cultural features - those elements that contribute to the distinctive character of the Town - figure prominently. Map #5, (Unique Natural and Cultural Features) identifies generalized locations of scenic roads, vistas, streams and trails, unique plant and animal habitats, and historic sites.

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The Scenic Roads Act, G.L. Ch. 40 S 15C, and the Public Shade Tree Act, G.L. Ch. 87, S 1, provide for a public review of proposed activities along public ways. The Public Shade Tree Act is limited in its scope of protection, applying only to maintenance of trees within the public way (whether or not the road is "scenic"), but enforcement of its provision does not require prior formal designation of applicable roads. The Scenic Roads Act addresses a greater variety of concerns and provides greater protection to the landscape quality of a roadway. However, its provision applies only to roads, which have been formally designated as Scenic Roads by a majority vote at Town Meeting. To date none have been so designated.

Many of Belchertown's original farm roads and inter-Town "highways" retain their 19th century character, with stone walls, shade trees, and picturesque farmhouses bordering the narrow lanes. These walls mark the location of former fields and pastures, perhaps long since grown up to woodland. Some of these roads wind through woodland to hilltops, suddenly opening to a long vista across farms and forests to the hills across Town and beyond. Many pass by old cemeteries, sometimes the only remnant of a long vanished neighborhood, crossroads, or parish center.

The Town center, too, recalls the past in its architecture and it's Town Common, where the village and the farmer met annually at the Belchertown Cattle Show, and where, to this day, it is still used for public gatherings. The annual Belchertown Fair is one of the oldest, continuously operated fairs in the country, including handicraft exhibits, horse and oxen pulls, and a church supper held on the Common.

The Town center has been incorporated into a Historic District, and encompasses the area that has been the social, political, religious, cultural, and economic center of Belchertown since the early 19th century. The Town Common, deeded to the Town by Col. Elijah Dwight in 1791, is the focal point of the Historic District. The sixty-six structures - houses, businesses, religious and political buildings - within the District include a house built of native fieldstone, several Greek Revival and Neo-Classical structures, and examples of Federal, Victorian and Queen Anne architecture.

Other historic structures, though not officially designated as such, are found throughout Belchertown, particularly along the old roads. Mead's Corner in north Belchertown, Allen Street, Jabish Street, and the old neighborhood of Bardwell's Village in south Belchertown are but a few locations of well-preserved homes. The 800+- acre former Belchertown State School property has been declared eligible for nomination to the National Historic Register. This site in central Belchertown is included in a 12 site thematic nomination, highlighting the significant cultural and historic contribution this institution has made to the Town and to the State. The site includes 44 structures on the park-like campus. The adjoining farmstead contains the 1824 Town Poor Farm and state constructed farm buildings. This property is now owned by the Town and is currently being considered for development.

Scenic areas in Belchertown include roads and trails, rivers and vistas - all elements in the landscape that are, for the most part, privately owned. Nevertheless, the public "uses" the visual landscape, so, in a sense, scenic areas are part of the public domain, (See Map #5).

Belchertown's extremes in topography yield many vantage points from which one may view a fine vista of the surrounding countryside. Scenic viewpoints in Belchertown include:

- Rockrimmon Road, an elevation nearly 200 feet above the center of Town;
- Orchard Street, looking northwest toward the Amherst hills;
- Warren Wright Road at North Street, looking toward the Holyoke Mountain Range;

- Michael Sears Road, looking across Town to Rockrimmon and beyond;
- Springfield Road, which affords a view of the University of Massachusetts Orchards on Sabin Street;
- Turkey Hill and Barton Ave. with views of the Holyoke Mountain Range; and
- The Jackson Street view of the Holyoke Mountain Range, which has received "Special Place" designation in 1987 (located on cover).

Belchertown has numerous scenic roads. Although not officially designated as "scenic roads", their landscape quality is derived from those lands-uses immediately adjacent to the road, as well as from the layout of the pathway. Their architectural features, vegetation, contrasts of open fields and enclosing woodlands, and miscellaneous site features, such as stone walls, all contribute to the aesthetic quality of a scenic way. In Belchertown, such routes include:

- Rt. 202, from Sargent Street northwards;
- Gulf Road, particularly from its intersection with North Street to Gold Street;
- Portions of Michael Sears Road:
- Rockrimmon Road;
- Cold Spring Road to Sabin St.; and
- Portions of George Hannum Road and Jackson Street looking northwest.

Views of the countryside from roads are difficult to regulate. Belchertown has many examples of spectacular panoramic views across the valleys between the hills, and especially views of the Holyoke range (See Map #5). These views may become obstructed by the growth of thick vegetation along roads and along fence lines, or buildings may restrict them. The most comprehensive way of maintaining these views is to maintain the land in agriculture, a goal set by the Agricultural Commission. The Town is also applying for APR funds from the State to preserve our local farmlands.

Another possibility for maintaining the more spectacular views is to obtain conservation easements to the property, or a portion of the property, to restrict building on the land. Land placed under a Conservation Restriction under the Aquifer Lands Acquisition program - the Walas property located on Federal Street - preserves a vista of open field along Route 9. Finally, the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, under the MA Department of Agriculture, is one program, which helps to retain the agricultural character of these farms in Belchertown. Currently, three properties - Cole Farm, Land Farm and Atkins Farm - have restrictions under this program.

Scenic trails differ from scenic roads in that they more often link unique natural, rather than cultural, areas and provide access to areas which are beyond the reach of the automobile. The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, known now as the New England National Scenic trail, (NET) winds its way across 220 miles of trail from Connecticut to New Hampshire. Entering Belchertown south of Bay Road and passing through the Topping Farm Conservation Area, Wentworth Conservation area and now following Gulf Rd. to the Scarborough Brook Conservation Area, continuing through

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Cadwell Memorial Forest and the Pelham Hills. Nearly 2 million people live within 10 miles of the trail, which travels through a classic New England landscape with stunning scenery and rich natural resources. This section of the NET Trail running through Holland Glen is currently being re-routed up Gulf Rd. until a new trail can be blazed.

Private landownership is one of the few characteristics shared by the majority of the unique natural and cultural features in Belchertown. Private ownership does not necessarily preclude public use of a unique feature; the public is free to view the distant landscape, to travel along scenic by-ways whose character is derived from the private lands on either side. On the other hand, unless specifically prohibited by State or local law or ordinance, the landowner has the right to alter his/her property, disallow certain activities and, by doing so, may destroy the historic, cultural, or ecological uniqueness of the site. Therefore, if the public wishes to maintain and protect the unique features of the Town, then it must either use existing law to designate historic and scenic sites, regulate for protection, or acquire the sites outright.

Belchertown is at a crossroads - decisions made now will determine the character of the Town for years to come. Will Belchertown remain a community of rural character - with agricultural and forestlands providing employment, recreation, and open space? Or will it become a densely populated bedroom community with irreversible losses and damage to the Town's land and water resources, open space, destruction of historic areas and Town character?

## G. Environmental Challenges

Belchertown's rapid growth rate of the past ten years has resulted in many environmental problems associated with land use change and development. These include ground and surface water pollution, solid waste disposal, sewage and septage disposal, development impacts such as flooding, erosion and sedimentation, and loss of agricultural and forested lands and the loss of open space. Often these issues, particularly groundwater protection, open space and solid waste disposal, carry regional implications and will require regional solutions.

Given the geological history of Belchertown, groundwater may be found nearly everywhere within the Town. This abundance has contributed to the public drinking water supplies for Springfield, Bondsville, Pelham and Amherst. According to the 2010 census 61% of houses in Belchertown have private wells and all public water supplies are dependent upon groundwater supplies. Thus, Belchertown is 100% dependent on its groundwater resources for all consumptive uses. Hence, the assured long-term availability of high quality groundwater is a very critical issue for Belchertown and the region. Future land use changes in each of the three major aquifer zones (Lawrence Swamp, Jabish Brook, and South Belchertown) may impact the availability of this source of groundwater.

Unmonitored use of pesticides and herbicides, and other agricultural and backyard practices, may introduce chemicals or undesirable organics into the aquifer system. Leaks from underground storage tanks or spills of hazardous materials during transport along major truck routes are another potential source of contamination of groundwater supplies. Finally, Belchertown's high reliance on subsurface sewage disposal, in areas with a high percentage of soils with moderate to severe limitations for such use, leads to the third major potential source of contamination. Other activities such as herbicide spraying along railroad and utility lines, use of road salt, improper storage of manure and the potential for illegal dumping of hazardous materials in primary recharge areas constitute additional sources of potential groundwater contamination.

The Aquifer Protection Zoning Bylaw passed at Town Meeting in 1984 was an important first step in insuring protection of Belchertown's groundwater supplies. However, given groundwater movement, maintaining a high quality, unpolluted source of groundwater for public drinking water is an issue that does not follow Town boundaries. The Town is actively working with both EEA regional watershed leaders to help address groundwater protection strategies on a regional level and develop protection strategies for watershed areas to zones of contribution in order to ensure long-term protection and supplies for Belchertown and the region.

There are presently three mapped aquifers in Belchertown located in the northwest corner, the center of the Town and in the southeast corner. The northernmost, the Lawrence Swamp aquifer, totals approximately 4600 acres; the central Jabish Brook aquifer covers 2800 acres; and the smallest, in South Belchertown, covers 1750 acres. Major highways, making them particularly vulnerable to accidental spills of hazardous waste, cross all recharge areas. Together this primary and secondary aquifer recharge areas cover a total of approximately 9,150 acres or about one quarter of the Town. Because the exact consequences of septic leachate on water quality is not documented, rapid growth in residential development occurring on land within the primary and secondary recharge areas may put water resources at risk.

Identifying Lands of Highest Priority (See Map #8) shows areas of farms and forests under Chapter 61 in Belchertown. The area of combined farm and forestland in Chapter 61 deserves early attention and protection. These farms and forests function as valued buffers between the larger development areas nearly surrounding them. This farm/forest district is a logical place to protect the rural landscape, to conserve farms and forests for outdoor recreation, as well as to provide food and forest products. It is important to mention that these properties currently in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B are only protected for as long as they remain in the Chapter and can be taken out of this protected status at anytime. These properties should be targeted for APR properties or other land protection programs to permanently protect these valuable resource areas. The Pelham Hills area, the northeastern-forested area that contains large managed forests under Chapter 61, deserves attention for its scenic quality and wildlife habitat. Portions of this area include and surround the Jabish Brook Watershed Area and have already been protected, including the 93 acre Reed Conservation Area, 88 acre Meads Conservation Area and the 69 acre Scarborough Brook Conservation Area are now protected in perpetuity through the LAND Grant program

Belchertown is an expanding community close to a large university and five colleges. Families are moving in and demands for recreation activities are increasing. As inter-state roads become more crowded, the availability of recreational opportunities close to home becomes more important. Outdoors recreation not only provides healthy outlets for physical energy at all ages, but open spaces allow contact with the natural world. Recreation lands that are easily accessible to a majority of Town residents, are distributed throughout the Town, and/or are close to other open space areas are lands that have a high priority for conservation, (See Action Map #8). Belchertown is located within a designated State Environmental Justice area and all open space and recreational areas are accessible and available to all town residents, regardless of social and economic situations, (please see Environmental Justice Map #2).

Solid waste disposal is another local issue that may have regional implications and solutions. The Belchertown Sanitary Landfill, located off Hamilton Street south of Bay Road, was ordered by the state to shut down in 1994 and the landfill closure and capping was completed at the end of 1997. Reduction of the waste stream, recycling, municipal composting, and additional landfill space and location are challenges that the Town is considering. Belchertown could be an important player in any future negotiations about regional approaches to waste management. The Town needs to ensure

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that it protects its natural resources from any deleterious impacts that may result from the possible locating of any regional facilities.

Town sewers are currently serving approximately 1,332 families, all public schools and municipal buildings in Belchertown. A new wastewater treatment facility has been built and went on line in September 2000. This treatment plant has the capabilities to handle 1 million g/day of influent. In the past 5 years, the Town has also expanded the sewer lines to the High School on Springfield Road and in June 2001 the Town sewer was also extended out to Pine Valley Plantation, a mobile home park. In the Spring of 2002, the Town extended the sewer line to the Tri-lakes area, (Information provided by Rollin Dewitt, Waste Water Treatment Plant Operations Supervisor on May 22, 2012). The Tri-Lakes (Lakes Holland, Arcadia, and Metacomet) are experiencing eutrophication and water quality problems from inadequately sized and poorly functioning septic systems originally designed for seasonal cottages. With the increase in development in this area and the change over to year-round homes, these water bodies will need to be monitored and managed for water quality.

The remainder of housing in the Town employs private on-site sewage disposal. In some areas, on-site sewage disposal has resulted in environmental problems. Construction of large residential developments has resulted in areas of erosion with resulting sedimentation of surface waters and wetlands. The Town established a Stormwater Bylaw and Regulations on January 2008. The purpose of these regulations is to protect the public health, safety, environment and general welfare by establishing requirements and procedures to control adverse impacts of stormwater runoff from new development and re-development. The enforcement of these new regulations will help control erosion and sedimentation, as well as prevent chronic flooding as a result of improperly designed or malfunctioning of drainage systems.

Conversion from land in agriculture and forestry to residential and/or commercial development not only results in lost productive natural resources and of open space, but also diminishes the rural character of the Town. For example, large tracts of agricultural land are being converted into low-density housing subdivisions and this rapid growth places our land and water resources at great immediate risk! In addition, the loss of family farms and increase in population, due to housing development, contributes to the shift in community character from rural in nature to suburban. Belchertown takes pride in its rural flavor, which is largely dependent upon the presence of its many forests and farms. How to maintain these productive resources despite the repeated cycles of growth and economic downturn is a problem faced by Belchertown and other rural New England towns

## Section 5

## LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

The Belchertown Open Space and Recreation Map revised for 2013 (see Map #7, Lands of Conservation and Recreation), incorporates protected open space, public lands and private recreational facilities. The term "open space" is defined as conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation. For this plan, open space will be defined as including all town owned conservation areas and recreational areas, open space set aside as a requirement for subdivision development, State owned lands, University of Mass owned properties, Land Trust owned parcels, APR properties, private recreational facilities and local trails. All properties purchased through the EEA LAND Grant program as conservation land, the recorded LAND Project Agreement and the force of Article 97 of the State Constitution protect these parcels in perpetuity against conversion or re-sale.

The largest tract of state-owned land is the Quabbin Reservation, with approximately 3000-forested acres, which lie along the eastern border of the Town protecting one of the major supplies of drinking water for the greater Boston area - the Quabbin Reservoir. At its southern border, the Quabbin Reservation lands are contiguous with other state-owned lands: the 916 acres of the Swift River Wildlife Management Area, the 50 acres of the McLaughlin Fish Hatchery operated by the State Department of Game and Fisheries, and the 127 acres of the University of Massachusetts Orchards. The smallest tract of state-owned land in Belchertown is a 35-acre portion of the Holyoke Range, held by the Department of Natural Resources, on the western border of the Town. Public access to these lands is quite limited. Hiking is allowed in parts of the Quabbin Reservoir and in the Holyoke Range. Fishing and hunting are permitted on the Wildlife Management Area.

Open land in Belchertown occupies approximately three quarters of the total landmass in the Town. Of this, 12.5% is forestland in Chapter 61, 13% is agricultural land under Chapter 61A, and 3% is open and under Chapter 61B, recreation. 9% of the Town is comprised of Quabbin Watershed lands owned by MDC; the Commonwealth owns another 6%, including the Swift River Wildlife Management Area, the University of Mass Orchards, the McLaughlin Fish Hatchery and a portion of the Holyoke Range. The Town of Belchertown owns approximately 2.5%, while other municipalities hold approximately 1.5% of area. Privately held sports clubs own approximately 2% of the land area. 18% of the Town is currently populated, mostly residential and wetlands represent approximately 10% of the total land mass. This leaves approximately 23% of the total land mass in private control and available for development, as displayed in the chart below.

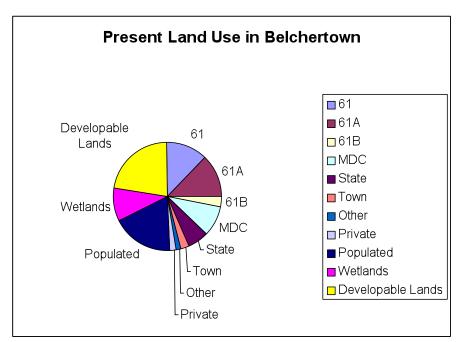


Figure 4.

The future of the centrally located former Belchertown State School site is currently being negotiated. This 800 acre parcel has unique and significant natural resource and recreational opportunities: it is within walking distance of the Town center and it includes the demonstration

farm of the New England Small Farm Institute and the scenic Lampson Brook Valley. In addition, there are several trails winding through the grounds that are presently not open to the public. Approximately 400 acres containing the farmstead of the former state school facility will remain in agriculture and passive recreation through a long-term lease with a private non-profit organization. The ownership and use(s) of the remaining built campus and open lands remain uncertain. Because of the location, natural beauty and economic potential of the site, special care should be taken to assure uses, which enhance and protect its natural features. Mass Development is currently in charge of this property.

Municipally-owned land in Belchertown is on 99 scattered tracts - all but 30 of these tracts are owned by Belchertown and include three fields available for organized sports and active recreation, nine conservation areas for nature study and passive recreation, and the Piper Farm, a 68 acre parcel acquired by eminent domain in 1987 for municipal and recreational purposes.

Three Towns, primarily for the protection of their water resources, own thirty other tracts of land. Scattered along a twelve-mile stretch of the Jabish Brook are 19 owned by the City of Springfield. The Town of Amherst owns seven parcels in the northwest portion of the Town, and the Town of Bondsville owns four others at the southern tip of Belchertown.

All but one of the privately owned sports clubs is located on the periphery of Belchertown: The Fairview Fish and Game Club (20 acres) are on the western border; and the Swift River Sports Club is in the southern part of the Town. The Swift River Sports Club, lying along a one-mile stretch of the Swift River, is contiguous with the state-owned Wildlife Management Area. There are two golf clubs in Town, the 38-acre Mill Valley Club, located centrally and flanked on three sides by government-owned lands. The second is the Cold Spring Golf Course, located on Chauncey Walker Road, Belchertown, MA. The golf course opened in May 2012, consisting of an eighteen-hole golf course, associated clubhouse, driving range, 150 parking spaces and an access roadway.

The relationships of these open spaces to each other and to other natural resources is important to note because of their buffering effects, for the potential extension of wildlife habitats, and because the privately-held clubs could decide to sell their land for development at any time. All but two of the sports clubs are adjacent to state-owned lands.

Residential or commercial development of the Belchertown State School or the sports clubs would represent a considerable reduction in the amount of open space remaining in Belchertown. Because of the closing of the Belchertown State School, its undeveloped and unprotected acres deserve the urgent attention of the Town. Many municipal open spaces not presently being used optimally for public recreation could be made more accessible. The Town could approach organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, Land Trusts, State agencies and private foundations with a request for assistance in acquiring lands adjacent to these areas, (please see Action Plan #8).

Results of the 2012 survey (See Appendix B) confirmed these priorities for open space protection. Thus, lands with a priority for future protection efforts include:

- 1. Aquifer and watershed lands,
- 2. Productive farms,
- Forest lands in the northeast section of Town particularly those lands identified in the area designated as Forest Legacy lands,

 Lands for active/passive recreation with public access and accessibility for all population groups

Lands, which assure safe drinking water, specifically, lands over aquifer recharge areas, have a high priority for conservation, (See Map #8). An adequate supply of safe drinking water is of urgent importance to every member of the community. Water for three neighboring communities (Amherst, Springfield and Bondsville) also comes from within the Belchertown borders, so it is clear that the quantity and quality of Belchertown water is of regional importance.

## Inventory of Town-owned conservation lands and recreation lands:

## **CONSERVATION AREAS:**

## 1. Cold Spring School

Cold Spring Conservation Area, situated behind the Cold Spring School on South Main Street, is home to a two-acre nature loop trail. The trail's small size and wide array of plant species affords educators a unique classroom and provides a variety of passive to active recreational opportunities.

Handicap access to, and parking for, the area is limited because there is a low area adjacent to the only potential car drop-off area. Although it would be possible to fill and level off the area, it would require extensive construction (and installation of a railing and ramp). However, because of its central location and relatively flat trails, it is a priority for the Town, particularly for senior citizen use.

## 2. Arcadia Bog

The Arcadia Spruce Bog Conservation Area, accessible via Town Beach Road, is one of the finest examples of a glacial kettle bog in Western Massachusetts. Noted for its uncommon and unusual botanical and zoological resources, human activity is restricted. Because this area's main value is as a unique vegetative community and habitat, no plans are proposed to provide public access to this area.

## 3. Jabish Brook Conservation Area

Jabish Brook Conservation Area is entirely forested. It is centered on upper Jabish Brook, a pristine stream that flows through the length of Belchertown to meet the Swift River. The land slopes eastward toward the Quabbin Reservoir. There is a well-developed set of trails, and a footbridge crossing the brook. A small Boy Scout hut is also located on this property. The area exhibits a unique variety of wildflower habitats. Jabish Brook Conservation Area has potential for handicap accessibility to an overlook area near the entrance for picnicking and visual amenity. Also an area is possible for handicap parking. The steep slope leading to the stream limits access to the rest of the property.

## 4. Wentworth Property

The Wentworth property was also purchased by the Town with Aquifer Land Acquisition funding and is located off Route 9 across from Holland Glen. A portion of the Metacomet/Monadnock Trail traverses this property. An alternative access is located on Federal Street. Access from Route 9 exhibits a flat area near the road - where a possible pullover could be located. However, this entrance is very noisy and access to the M/M trail is very steep. At another location, there is a

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wooded road, which includes a possible turn-around, descending gradually to the brook. This area is very quiet and deserves priority status for handicap accessibility improvements. Access to this area from Route 9 is swampy around but there may be possible access from the other side of the brook.

## 5. Warner Road Conservation Area

This 12 acre parcel located off Warner Rd., has remained relatively unchanged since its purchase in 1990. This a large forested parcel with no public access. Work was proposed in May 1990 to develop trails and a small parking area but due to strong neighborhood objections, this work was never completed. Near the Quabbin Reservation, this area is largely forested wetland with a stream running through it. This area is a low priority for Town expenditures to provide accessibility to disabled persons at this time.

## 6. Topping Farm Conservation Area

This 224-acre property is located in the northwest section of the town. It was purchased primarily because of its significance as aquifer protection land, benefiting the towns of Amherst, Pelham, and Belchertown. Hop Brook and its adjacent wetland bisect a major portion of the property. They recharge a major aquifer that underlies Lawrence Swamp and serves as a public water source for Belchertown and Amherst. The Topping Farm parcel is BioMap Supporting Landscape, buffering and almost connecting two large BioMap core habitats for the Lawrence swamp and the Holyoke Mt. Range. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program's list of endangered and rare species documents numerous species to be found on the site. Two small parking lots are located on Goodell St. and Orchard Rd. for public access and old logging roads traverse the property for hiking.

## 7. Reed Property Conservation Area

This 93-acre parcel, located on Gold St., was purchased on May 7, 2002. The main goal for this land acquisition was to protect the Jabish Brook, to maintain the water quality and wildlife habitat capacity of this brook. This property is adjacent to Knights Pond, which are the headwaters for the Jabish Brook.

This property already contains an extensive network of trails throughout the entire parcel that can be utilized for hiking, skiing and other passive recreation activities. A 2-acre pond is located on Lot #10.00, easily accessible by car, which is located within the area the Conservation Commission wants to develop into a picnic and fishing area. This property is contiguous with other open space areas and will provide a greenway, connecting lands owned by Springfield Water District and the Cadwell Memorial Forest, located in Pelham, which is owned by the University of Massachusetts and is home to Mt. Lincoln.

## 8. Scarborough Brook Conservation Area

This 69-acre parcel, located on Gulf Rd., was purchased in June 2007. These 69 acres of forestland, fields and 2 small ponds contain the headwaters of Scarborough Brook, which feeds directly into the Lawrence Swamp. The main goal for this land acquisition was to protect and maintain this property as open space, primarily because of its significance as aquifer protection land, benefiting the towns of Amherst and Belchertown. Scarborough Brook discharges directly within the aquifer recharge area (ZONE 11) for the **Daigle Well**, a primary source of drinking water for Belchertown. In addition, rare plants are also located within this property. This is also a critical wildlife corridor connecting the Holyoke Mountain Range to Quabbin Reservoir.

## 9. Old Apple Farm Conservation Area

This 53-acre property is located on the west side of town and at the foothills of the Holyoke Mountain Range. This was a gift to the town from the developer of Emily Lane, Partyka Partners,

LP. This property used to be an old apple farm back in the 1900's. This conservation area has a substantial beaver pond/bog and hiking trails linking to the Holyoke Range State park. There is public parking at the end of Emily Lane, however present access to this property from this parking lot has been flooded due to beaver activity.

## 10. Holland Glen Conservation Area

Belchertown acquired this conservation area in 2011 with the assistance of a LAND grant from the State for \$500,000. This 290 acre property located within Holland Glen, is located off Route 9, contains a steep hillside with waterfalls, scenic vistas and a popular place for hiking. The Holland Glen, named in honor of the famous poet, journalist, historian, novelist and editor J. G. Holland, has been described as "one of the most beautiful sylvan waterways in the County". The Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program's list of endangered and rare species documents the following; wood turtle, a species of special concern to be found on or near the site. More importantly, the Holland Glen forest parcels are Bio-Map Supporting Landscape, buffering and connecting two large BioMap core habitat, the Quabbin Reservoir and the Holyoke Mountain Range. Rolling terrain of unbroken upland forest including stands of mature oak, white pine, maple and hemlock cover the vast majority of this property. As such, the property provides habitat for more common species of wildlife, such as black bear, moose, deer, turkey, otter and bobcat. The conservation goal for this property is to protect and manage this large tract of contiguous forestland as a town forest. This property is also adjacent to about 120 acres of already conserved land, including Holland Glen, owned by the Belchertown Historical Society and Wentworth Conservation Area, and several hundred acres owned by W. D. Cowls, Inc., which are currently under Chapter 61.

## 11. Meads Corner Conservation Area.

The Town of Belchertown will acquire in March 2013, a large tract of land—88 acres adjacent to the University of Massachusetts Cadwell Memorial Forest, Quabbin Reservoir and adjacent to existing town conservation areas, Knights Pond, scenic vistas and a popular place for hiking, cross country skiing and horseback riding. The conservation goal for this property is to protect a large tract of contiguous forestland and watershed property which contains wildlife habitat and connectivity between the 1,200 acre Cadwell Memorial Forest, Pelham Mass and the Quabbin Reservoir. This property is also adjacent to about 72 acres of Springfield's watershed lands, Knights Pond and the Reed Farm Conservation Area, (93 acres). This land acquisition will result in a direct link and wildlife corridor to the Quabbin Reservoir, consisting of 38.60 square miles of continuous open space. This project is a collaborative effort between the Kestrel Land Trust, a non-profit land trust, Belchertown, Pelham, Springfield Water District and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

## **RECREATION AREAS:**

## 1. Old Town Hall

Located adjacent to the Town Common in the center of Town, the Town places a high priority on improving this facility to make it accessible to persons with physical disability. Ten parking spots presently exist; and two have been made handicapped accessible, in order to comply with guidelines, and a ramp has been provided for access at the entrance. Nothing in the building is currently handicapped accessible - the Town has compiled a listing of necessary improvements to render the inside of the building handicapped accessible.

## 2. Town Beach

The Town beach is also a high priority area for the Town and has been brought into compliance with 504 guidelines. Two handicapped parking spaces have been designated and a drop-off area with a paved pathway along the east side of the parking area, and a wooden ramp with guardrail to

the sandy area has been constructed. A small fee is charged to access this property.

## 3. Parsons Field

Parsons Field is a baseball/softball field and play area located on Jabish Street within the center of Town. A drop off area and handicapped parking spaces can be constructed along Jensen Street. Play equipment is traditional and not accessible to all. For total accessibility, play equipment must be located elsewhere in the field and additional play equipment is needed.

## 4. Chestnut Hill Central Recreation Complex

Area l. This is a large recreational area located at the Chestnut Middle School and includes four tennis courts, two basketball courts, two baseball/softball fields and one soccer/football field. One handicapped space located within 200 feet of an accessible entrance is designated but it is not van accessible. The surface meets requirements for accessibility. Improvements to telephones, signage, bathrooms, and water fountains are necessary to meet 504 compliance guidelines.

Area 2. This is the playground area and includes wooden playground equipment. There are no handicap parking spots, though a drop-off area could easily be constructed as well as an accessible path (though a railing and bridge may be needed). Portions of the playground were specifically designed for persons who are physically challenged.

In order to make programming accessible, specific assistance on an individual basis should be developed; for example - a learn to swim program.

## 5. Austin Gaughan Field

Located near the center of Town off George Hannum Road, this area is one of the frequently used playing fields by the Town Recreation Department. Presently, 15 parking spaces exist. At least two of these should be designated as handicapped parking. Because the area is at the same level as the parking, there is no need for a ramp and railing.

## 6. Foley Field

Located near the center of Town on the old Belchertown State School property, this area is one of the frequently used playing fields by the Town Recreation Department. Presently, parking spaces exist. At least five of these should be designated as handicapped parking. Because the area is at the same level as the parking, there is no need for a ramp and railing.

## 7. Lake Wallace

This 66 acre parcel will be maintained in its current condition for conservation purposes, in a natural, open, scenic and undeveloped condition, and to prevent any use or change that would materially impair or interfere with its conservation and preservation values. These values include the following:

- A. Lake Wallace and Wetlands area will be utilized to create a living laboratory to be utilized by the Belchertown Public Schools to provide a learning environment for the students of Belchertown and the public to study the interrelationships between numerous plant and animal organisms and promote natural resource stewardship.
- B. Open Space Preservation for the purposes of passive recreation, habitat preservation, education and public visitation
- C. Protection of Wildlife Habitat. The entire parcel has been designated as a wildlife protection area. The educational component is intended to establish and maintain a learning

environment for school children and the public and, as such, to preserve and enhance the habitat for flora and fauna within the premises.

- D. Currently accepted organic management practices will be utilized whenever possible.
- E. The property will be maintained in as "unmanaged" a state as possible.
- F. All efforts will be made to make the property handicap accessible in accordance with currently accepted ADA standards.
- G. Acceptable sustainable forestry management practices will be utilized whenever possible.

## **Recreation Space and Facilities Tables**

Below is a list of space and facilities currently overseen by the Belchertown Recreation Department and/or available for use by the Belchertown Recreation Department (All are handicapped accessible and are owned by the Town)

## INDOOR FACILITIES:

NAME	DESCRIPTION	AVAILABILITY
CHCS Pool	Indoor pool located in Chestnut Hill Community School	Managed by Recreation Dept.
CHCS Gym	Indoor gym located in Chestnut Hill Community School	Managed by Recreation Dept after school, weekends and school vacation times
Old Town Hall	Small indoor gym	Managed by Recreation Dept
Belchertown High School	Indoor gym, indoor walking track	Managed by School Dept.
Recreation Office	Conference room and staff offices, storage areas	Managed by Recreation Dept.
Teen Center	Game room, sitting room, kitchen, office, study & computer rooms	Managed by Recreation Dept.

### **OUTDOOR FACILITIES:**

NAME	DESCRIPTION	
State School	Fields in front of Berkshire and Meadow School, also by old Carousel Building 3 acres on Parcel B	Land not owned by the Town of Belchertown.
Chestnut Hill Fields	All fields, tennis court and basketball courts (2)	Managed by Recreation Dept.
Austin-Gaughan Field	Softball diamond	Managed by Recreation Dept.
Parsons Field	One softball and one baseball diamond	Managed by Recreation Dept.
Constantino Field	18.06 acres-a lot of wetlands, 1 diamond, 1 soccer field	Managed by Recreation Dept.
Swift River Elementary	Lower small soccer fields	Managed by Recreation Dept.
Belchertown High School	Soccer fields and baseball diamond, Tennis courts, Indoor & Outdoor walking track	Managed by School Dept.
Jabish Middle School	Land next to old high school,	Managed by School Dept.

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	soccer fields, outdoor picnic area	
Town Beach	Located on Lake Arcadia	Managed by Recreation Dept.
Foley Field	Soccer fields and baseball diamond, located at the old Belchertown State School property	Managed by School Department
Lake Wallace	Open Space Preservation for the purposes of passive recreation, habitat preservation, education and public visitation	Managed by Lake Wallace Committee

Memo: from Robert Opalenik, Recreation Director (1/08/13)

## PRIVATELY OWNED SPORTS CLUBS

NAME	DESCRIPTION
Fairview Fish and Game Club	20 acres on the western border. Shooting
	range.
Swift River Sports Club	Southern part of town, one mile stretches
_	on Swift River. Contiguous with state-
	owned Wildlife Management Area.
	Shooting range.
Mill Valley Country Club	38 acres located centrally. Bordered on
	three sides by government-owned land.
	Golf.
Cold Spring Golf Course	200 acres located off Route 21
	18 hole golf course, clubhouse and driving
	range

## **LANDS IN CHAPTER 61**

Belchertown has over 421 parcels in the Chapter 61 status. Approximately 3,227 acres are in Ch. 61A, 2,639 acres are in Ch. 61B and 2,639 acres are in Ch. 61, forestry. Please see the following list for fiscal year 2014 provided by the Town Assessors Department on 9/3/13.

For Chapter 61A properties with Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) they are identified third column. Belchertown has 4 existing properties with Agricultural Restrictions for a total of 394 acres. The Wenzel Farm, located in southern Belchertown will be closing the month of October. Belchertown has had great success with APR acquisitions within the last 2 years and are currently working on protecting future farm lands.

- 1. Cole/Walsh APR 112 acres
- 2. Elkalai Farm APR 53 acres
- 3. Atkins Farm APR 214 acres
- 4. Land APR 15 acres
- 5. Wenzel Farm 88 acres (soon to close this month)

## 149 TOTAL PARCELS IN CH. 61 – FORESTRY 2,638.016 TOTAL ACRES

DADGEL ID	LOGATION	" OF A CDEC OF A COPPED
PARCEL ID	LOCATION	# OF ACRES CLASSIFIED
248-19	Aldrich Street	89
248-20.1	Aldrich Street	8.5
248-18	Aldrich Street	13
248-2	221 Aldrich Street	19
231-45	Allen Street	40
226-37	Allen Street	41
107-27.01	Allen Street	6.036
215-23	Amherst Road	10.3
215-22	Amherst Road	.93
215-17	Amherst Road	1.11
272-14	3 Barrett Street	36
106-90	267 Bay Road	53.6
236-66	Blue Meadow Road	28
236-16.1	Blue Meadow Road	71
245-10	125 Blue Meadow Road	28.54
245-10.01	141 Blue Meadow Road	11.497
259-3	Cold Spring Street	8.7
259-38	Cold Spring Street	7.18
259-29	Cold Spring Street	1.23
259-4	Cold Spring Street	32.65
270-13	Cold Spring Street (rear)	62
270-14	Cold Spring Street (rear)	6
213-8	Daniel Shays Highway	.74
213-7	Daniel Shays Highway	.367
214-22	Daniel Shays Highway	17.54
226-46	Daniel Shays Highway	9.6
219-31.2	Daniel Shays Highway	90.1
232-185	Daniel Shays Highway	17
219-21	Daniel Shays Highway	7.02
226-45.01	Daniel Shays Highway	72.67
219-20	575 Daniel Shays Highway	74.3
213-10	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	54.49
213-10.01	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	4.82
219-4	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	102
226-36	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	22
237-107	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	16
214-32	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	42
214-31	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	5.4
214-33	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	9.7
214-30	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	6.3
214-25	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	64
219-5	Daniel Shays Highway (rear)	50
258-10	241 East Street	14.35
252-18	Eskett Road	67.39
205-31	Federal Street	1.43
102-17	Federal Street	28
203-15	Federal Street (rear)	1.557
203-14	Federal Street (rear)	10.5
203-13	Federal Street (rear)	71
203-12	Federal Street (rear)	.95

242-4	480 George Hannum Street	65
242-3	494 George Hannum Street	12
241-18	701 George Hannum Street	25.7
202-27	Gold Street (rear)	26
266-15.1	Green Avenue	45
206-11	Gulf Road	24
206-13	Gulf Road	8.8
206-26	Gulf Road	5.4
206-27	Gulf Road	3.6
215-4	Gulf Road	48
215-5	Gulf Road	.029
215-21	Gulf Road	48
215-29	Gulf Road	50
215-31	Gulf Road	7.7
215-36	Gulf Road	59
215-35	Gulf Road	16
215-34	Gulf Road	5.9
215-32	Gulf Road	14
215-28	Gulf Road	42
206-33	Gulf Road	130
202-1	674 Gulf Road	105.8
202-25	721 Gulf Road	46
206-9	Gulf Road (rear)	38
206-12	Gulf Road (rear)	3.1
270-3	Keith Avenue	3.4
270-4	Keith Avenue (rear)	31
270-6	Keith Avenue (rear)	14.8
270-5	Keith Avenue (rear)	9.2
213-9	Kimball Street	1.8
213-14	Kimball Street	5.8
213-14	21 Kimball Street	25.84
213-12	40 Kimball Street	67.731
220-4	62 Kimball Street	
		10.42
213-13	75 Kimball Street	17.6
220-2	Kimball Street (rear)	10.9
220-1	Kimball Street (rear)	83
220-3	Kimball Street (rear)	26
201-12	Knight Street	25
225-4	Kopiac Avenue	19.6
225-18	Kopiac Avenue (rear)	59
266-41	250 Ludlow Street	23.55
266-42	Ludlow Street (rear)	25
103-5	Metacomet Street	10.8
104-31	Metacomet Street	.34
257-1	Mill Valley Road	26.47
249-51	Mill Valley Road	39
248-32	Mill Valley Road (rear)	14.67
214-14	Munsell Street	3.82
214-28	Munsell Street	4.1
214-9	Munsell Street	1.305
206-44	Munsell Street	102
215-33	Munsell Street	47
214-10	110 Munsell Street	47
214-3.2	220 Munsell Street	21.5
215-27	Munsell Street (rear)	26
214-57	Munsell Street (rear)	40
214-58	Munsell Street (rear)	20
214-59	Munsell Street (rear)	4
214-60	Munsell Street (rear)	8.1
214-61	Munsell Street (rear)	11.9
214-62	Munsell Street (rear)	27
217-02	manaen bucet (rear)	

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203-16	North Gulf Road (rear)	154
205-82	North Street (rear)	31
205-85	North Street (rear)	9.5
205-86	North Street (rear)	7.9
205-87	North Street (rear)	8.1
205-88	North Street (rear)	13.7
206-10	North Street (rear)	6.2
256-27	North Washington Street	39
268-16	North Washington Street	22.9
268-15	588 North Washington Street	1
228-46	Old Bay Road	41
105-3	12 Old Bay Road	47.15
228-54	162 Old Bay Road	1.63
228-56.1	Old Bay Road (rear)	14.63
237-21	Old Enfield Road	.925
237-19	Old Enfield Road	1.07
237-17	Old Enfield Road	1.01
237-16	Old Enfield Road	9.2
237-23	141 Old Enfield Road	.75
237-25	143 Old Enfield Road	13.09
237-26	155 Old Enfield Road	10
227-2	Old Farm Road (rear)	19.72
227-1	Old Farm Road (rear)	17
232-174.13	Pondview Circle	.34
263-61	Rockrimmon Street	12.7
263-59	118 Rockrimmon Street	55.615
263-80	135 Rockrimmon Street	16
248-16	Sabin Street	8.9
271-14	255 Shea Avenue	15
206-42	South Gulf Road	74.705
206-28	South Gulf Road (rear)	4.706
280-22	South Street	3.45
280-21	365 South Street	6.77
251-54	250 State Street	33.63
251-64	273 State Street	53.3
240-38	159 Stebbins Street	39.28
236-16.2	Warner Street	3.44
236-14	199 Warner Street	13.58

## 131 TOTAL PARCELS IN CH. 61A 3,279.439 TOTAL ACRES

PARCEL ID	LOCATION	# OF ACRES CLASSIFIED
273-46	Bardwell Street	45.49
272-5	Bardwell Street	13.42
272-6	Bardwell Street	.191
272-67	Bardwell Street	18
272-28	Bardwell Street	28
273-49	241 Bardwell Street	36.57
273-27	Barrett Street	48.97
273-25	Barrett Street	2.7
275-12.10	Barrett Street	5.25
272-18	42 Barrett Street	20
275-11	211 Barrett Street	9.8
273-26	234 Barrett Street	9.9
273-27.1	Barrett Street (rear)	36.61
106-64	148 Bay Road	14.195
254-75.111	Chauncey Walker Street	13.57
274-1	Chauncey Walker Street	4.5
262-20.1	230 Chauncey Walker Street	33
274-2	621 Chauncey Walker Street	54

260-33	Cold Spring Street	51	
260-34	Cold Spring Street	25	
260-35	Cold Spring Street	38	
260-36	Cold Spring Street	4	
259-1	245 Cold Spring Street	9	
257-24.3	Cordner Road	40.71	APR
244-36.011	Cottage Street	7.726	/ <b>11</b> IC
226-50	Daniel Shays Highway	11.9	
226-46	Daniel Shays Highway	17	
226-45.01	Daniel Shays Highway	28.33	
216-101	Federal Street	12.375	
218-4	723 Federal Street	27.93	
216-105	881 Federal Street	7.16	
260-19	Franklin Street	56	
260-27	Franklin Street	4.8	
272-75	Franklin Street	52	APR
269-108	Franklin Street	.63	AIK
272-77	Franklin Street	2.1	APR
	Franklin Street	30	AFK
260-26.01	191 Franklin Street	27	
260-29	270 Franklin Street	89.5	
269-13	400 Franklin Street		
272-68		173	APR
272-83	540 Franklin Street	4.55	APK
269-5	Franklin Street (rear)	22	A DD
271-36	Franklin Street (rear)	40	APR
241-17	George Hannum Street	23	
241-16	630 George Hannum Street	29.3	
241-10	734 George Hannum Street	21	
266-37	Green Avenue	10	
215-7	Gulf Road	17.36	
215-6	124 Gulf Road	1.4	
239-28	Hamilton Street	2.6	
239-29	Hamilton Street	.3	
239-31	Hamilton Street	.921	
238-289	Hamilton Street	5.5	
238-288	Hamilton Street	9	
239-34	30 Hamilton Street	19	
225-4	Kopiac Avenue	10.61	
267-27	51 Ludlow Street	8.162	
267-59	211 Ludlow Street	61	
260-32	Michael Sears Road	68.05	
260-39	Michael Sears Road	24	
270-1	Michael Sears Road	3	
260-30	Michael Sears Road	47	
272-92	Michael Sears Road	12.9	APR
269-91	91 Michael Sears Road	2	
214-43	Munsell Street	3.5	
214-40	Munsell Street	.382	
214-29	Munsell Street (rear)	49	
202-11	North Gulf Road	.919	
202-7.12	577 North Gulf Road	36	
202-17	606 North Gulf Road	24	
268-34	North Liberty Street	28.87	
275-9	North Liberty Street	27	
276-19	North Liberty Street	31	
275-10	North Liberty Street	14.8	
261-92	45 North Liberty Street	5.7	
276-15	491 North Liberty Street	24	
276-14	500 North Liberty Street	28.89	
261-80.01	North Washington Street	10	
256-5	North Washington Street	2.05	

256.4	20034 4 W 1: 4 G	22.0	
256-4	288 North Washington Street	33.9	
217-48	Orchard Road	48.05	
241-19	Rural Street	10.28	
241-35	Rural Street	9.685	4 DD
248-14	Sabin Street	27	APR
247-1	Sabin Street	8	APR
248-15	Sabin Street	77	APR
257-25	Sabin Street	59.16	APR
257-21	Sabin Street	2.9	APR
257-22	Sabin Street	9	APR
245-48.01	Sabin Street	9.09	APR
247-2	Sabin Street (rear)	33	APR
271-18	Shea Avenue	69	
278-23	South Liberty Street	16	
281-4	South Liberty Street	6.9	
281-2	South Liberty Street	26	
281-3	South Liberty Street	5.2	
281-14.02	South Liberty Street	11.9	
281-19	227 South Liberty Street	55	
278-59	South Street	4.5	
280-41.1	South Street	67	
280-46	South Street	36	
280-1	South Street	1.5	
278-28	248 South Street	9.7	
280-20	440 South Street	50	
280-48	631 South Street	20	
273-21	South Washington Street	7.04	
273-8	South Washington Street	109	
279-1	South Washington Street	31.71	
279-10.01	South Washington Street	8.4	
273-12.01	134 South Washington Street	35.5	
275-6	208 South Washington Street	16.24	
275-6.01	270 South Washington Street	30.19	
275-53.01	404 South Washington Street	21.48	
279-2.1	570 South Washington Street	8.64	
280-7	619 South Washington Street	15.819	
255-124	Springfield Road	33	
255-127	Springfield Road	8.35	
255-126	Springfield Road	108.81	
250-54	Springfield Road	27	
255-125	Springfield Road (rear)	13	
280-54	Sylvan Circle (rear)	7.6	
254-75.2	Turkey Hill Road	4.34	
254-72	226 Turkey Hill Road	24.73	
263-162	368 Turkey Hill Road	40.17	
217-5	Warren Wright Street	15	APR
275-1	West Street	8.3	
275-17	West Street	7.164	
275-47	West Street	29	
275-21	150 West Street	32	
275-14	270 West Street	63	
275-55	415 West Street	30.1	

## 144 TOTAL PARCELS IN CH. 61B 2,683.093 TOTAL ACRES

PARCEL ID	LOCATION	# OF ACRES CLASSIFIED
279-33.01	Alden Avenue	27.509
279-33	90 Alden Avenue	22.264
248-18	Aldrich Street	16

240.2	221 411:1 0	_
248-2	221 Aldrich Street	6
232-172	Allen Street	8.21
232-131	43 Allen Street	28.774
226-30	Amherst Road (rear)	8.32
226-31	Amherst Road (rear)	25
247-3	50 Ballou Street	20
253-8.011	Barton Avenue	3.092
253-8.012	Barton Avenue	3.652
253-8.013	Barton Avenue	3.766
253-40	150 Barton Avenue	5
253-29	200 Barton Avenue	28.18
241-24	Boardman Street	10
241-23.4	Boardman Street	19.7
262-17	Chauncey Walker Street	16
262-17	Chauncey Walker Street	80.34
	330 Chauncey Walker Street	152.35
262-19	200 Channer Waller Street	
262-16	399 Chauncey Walker Street	39
261-12	Chauncey Walker Street (rear)	1.3
261-67	Chauncey Walker Street (rear)	37.85
259-28.2	300 Cold Spring Street	6
270-15	350 Cold Spring Street	30
237-106	Daniel Shays Highway	12.6
213-6	680 Daniel Shays Highway	13.95
253-4	111 Dressel Avenue	16.8
252-19	50 Eskett Road	25
238-49	111 Federal Street	81
108-24	146 Federal Street	19
218-1	795 Federal Street	13.31
205-49	Federal Street (rear)	28
260-24	Franklin Street (rear)	103.272
242-1	594 George Hannum Street	45
241-10	734 George Hannum Street	35.36
207-12.02	143 Gold Street	6.42
217-44.01	Goodell Street	6.992
267-67	Granby Road	.949
267-68	Granby Road	1.04
	Green Avenue	
266-27		35.85
266-37	Green Avenue	10.5
266-19	50 Green Avenue	51
206-14	Gulf Road	13.02
249-27	Jensen Street	20
269-54	Kennedy Road	7.6
269-20	Kennedy Road	2.31
269-56	Kennedy Road	7.757
260-1.015	Kennedy Road	.14
260-1.001	Kennedy Road	17.3
260-1.051	Kennedy Road	8.13
269-6	Kennedy Road (rear)	29.45
269-32	Kennedy Road (rear)	1.41
262-19.06	Ludlow Street	1.79
240-65.1	22 Mercier Street	24
269-100	Michael Sears Road	68.19
269-96	209 Michael Sears Road	16.28
269-99	231 Michael Sears Road	9.53
269-104	273 Michael Sears Road	19
249-56	92 Mill Valley Road	56.5
257-34	380 Mill Valley Road	110.9
279-6	20 Mills Road	31
214-47	Munsell Street	
214-47	67 Munsell Street	29.21 21
202-16	621 North Gulf Road	
202-10	021 NOITH GUIL KUAU	3.84

275-20	North Liberty Street	10.446
261-89.03	15 North Liberty Street	5
273-37	348 North Liberty Street	23.3
276-16	503 North Liberty Street	7.47
276-16.02	515 North Liberty Street	5.003
273-29	North Liberty Street (rear)	16
269-110	81 North Liberty Street (rear)	40
261-79.01	351 North Washington Street	6.17
256-48	North Washington Street (rear)	14.65
256-47	North Washington Street (rear)	7.61
261-11	North Washington Street (rear)	16
228-42	111 Old Bay Road	14.23
237-50	Old Enfield Road	3.8
244-55.1	Old Enfield Road	12.6
237-15	73 Old Enfield Road	4.07
237-43	86 Old Enfield Road	29
218-23.05	55 Orchard Road	3.47
232-174.02	Pondview Circle	1.66
232-174.01	Pondview Circle	1.32
281-42	195 Railroad Street	13.1
110-3	111 River Street	14
110-47	134 River Street	10
264-3	Rockrimmon Street	23
263-77	Rockrimmon Street	20.66
265-6	Rockrimmon Street	27.02
265-7	Rockrimmon Street	19
263-107.01	Rockrimmon Street	19.81
263-161	38 Rockrimmon Street	13.389
263-107	290 Rockrimmon Street	7.49
263-88	315 Rockrimmon Street	25.9
265-4	423 Rockrimmon Street	
	Rural Street	5.634 10
241-22	Rural Street	5
241-23.3		
241-23	34 Rural Street	.75
238-109	Sargent Street	9
271-3	Shea Avenue	5.5
109-16	81 Shea Avenue	13.9
271-20.1	162 Shea Avenue	30
271-11	169 Shea Avenue	18
225-41	130 Sheffield Drive	6.24
206-31	South Gulf Road	1.98
206-30	463 South Gulf Road	1
278-19	South Liberty Street	4.51
278-19.02	South Liberty Street	2.18
278-20	67 South Liberty Street	12
278-25	121 South Liberty Street	9.77
281-48	210 South Liberty Street	16.01
281-14.01	256 South Liberty Street	7.182
281-10	294 South Liberty Street	20
281-11	South Liberty Street (rear)	5.3
280-19	South Street	57
278-33.03	South Street	5.344
278-60.01	311 South Street	8.0014
278-61	339 South Street	7.257
279-26	South Street (rear)	16
280-20	440 South Street	46
275-52	South Washington Street	9.5
279-12	South Washington Street	37
273-14.05	South Washington Street	1.664
273-14.01	76 South Washington Street	14.38
275-51	391 South Washington Street	1.9

279-33.02	447 South Washington Street	28.347
252-57	State Street	10.8452
251-66.02	313 State Street	7.38
251-2	480 State Street	6.193
239-6	Stebbins Street	59
239-5	Stebbins Street	21
240-39	Stebbins Street	1.42
239-3.01	Stebbins Street	15.26
240-46	195 Stebbins Street	37.86
239-7	Stebbins Street (rear)	17
250-33	Turkey Hill Road	10
254-72	226 Turkey Hill Road	13.77
254-27.1	324 Turkey Hill Road	10.647
262-28.3	370 Turkey Hill Road	5.805
237-56.02	Ware Road	7.544
237-56	51 Ware Road	5
244-156.28	80 Ware Road	5.01
244-139	121 Ware Road	9.034
245-44	351 Ware Road	6.1

## Section 6 COMMUNITY VISION A. Description of Process

#### TIME TABLE

- ♣ January, 2012 Open Space Subcommittee formed.
- February, 2012 Meetings with community Plan Open Space Subcommittee
- → March, 2012- Open Space Plan Survey, Survey Results shown in Appendix B April 2012- Review of Open Space Plan by the Conservation staff
- ↓ June 2012 Review of goals and objectives
- ♣ September December, 2012- Work with PVPC on plans
- ♣ January 14, 2013 Submission of Belchertown Draft Open Space plan to Commission
- February, 2013 Submission of OSRP Plan to Town Boards and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- February, 2013- Plan to Division of Conservation Services
- February, 2013 Update of Open Space Map
- February March, 2013 Public Hearings and Public Response
- March 20, 2013 Letter from DCR listing Final Items to be addressed in OSRP
- ♣ May-September, 2013 Comments and plans modified to address DCR'S comments
- ♣ September, 2013 Submission of final plan to DCR for review and/or approval

## B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

Protecting its abundance of natural resources, preserving adequate open space for use by its growing population, and maintaining its rural New England flavor, while providing for balanced residential, commercial, and industrial growth will be a difficult balancing act for Belchertown. Additionally, because of its wealth of space and resources, Belchertown needs to re-define its position as an important regional player in the Lower Pioneer Valley so that it can balance being a "good neighbor" with protecting its resources from overuse, degradation, and exploitation.

The rapid population growth in Belchertown during the last twenty years has resulted not only in environmental impacts and loss of open space, but has threatened the financial security of the Town.

Residential development constitutes an increasingly large drain on Town financial resources. Belchertown must articulate a vision of desirable growth, within the context of natural resource and open space protection, and explore all mechanisms to realize that vision. The following discussion represents a step toward the goal of integrating growth with resource and open space protection for Belchertown during the next seven years.

## Section 7 ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

In order to assess the resource protection, open space and recreation needs of Belchertown, several steps were taken to involve citizens, Town Boards and other interested Town groups. The 2012 Open Space Plan survey results were distributed to identify natural resource, open space, and recreation priorities in Belchertown. Results of the survey indicated that 97% of all respondents stressed the need for open space protection, ranking protection of drinking water supplies as the most important value of open space protection, (See Appendix B). Following the public forum process, this plan incorporates the goals and objectives, as presented in the OSRP within the context of the 2012 survey results and discussion at the public meeting, (see Appendix B). The following, in descending order of importance are priorities for open space protection:

- 1. Natural resource protection
- 2. Protection of rural character
- 3. Protection of scenic character
- 4. Space for active recreation
- 5. Space for passive recreation
- 6. Protection of agricultural and forestry lands, and
- 7. Protection of wildlife habitat

Results of the 2012 Town survey confirmed these findings by stressing the three most important priorities for open space/natural resource protection to be:

- 1. The protection of water resources both groundwater and surface waters
- 2. The need to direct growth in an environmentally sensitive direction
- 3. The promotion of recreational opportunities for the Town and the community

Over 83% of the survey respondents stated the reason they lived in Belchertown is for its small town rural atmosphere. Another 79% stated the protection of the Town's natural environment as being either important or very important to them. In addition, 77% of the survey respondents also stated the town common was of value to them.

#### A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Belchertown has an abundance of natural resources: the largest amount of forest land in Hampshire County, uncontaminated groundwater resources that supply Belchertown and three other communities, and farmlands that contribute to the Town's productive resource base and appealing rural character. These natural resources constitute perhaps the Town's most important opportunity for realizing the goal of preserving adequate open space for use by its growing population, and maintaining its rural New England flavor, while providing for continued residential, commercial and industrial growth.

However, because Belchertown is the largest Town in the region, other cities and Towns look to Belchertown to provide needed space for water for public drinking water supplies, passive and

active recreational opportunities, and moderate income housing for the region's growing population. Development and its effects threaten these abundant natural resources - the Town must identify and address the effects of growth on its resources.

Protection of these resources is the highest priority for the Town - particularly protection of surface water and groundwater for public consumption, wildlife habitat, and recreation. The water supply of Belchertown is threatened by contamination from a variety of land uses. Perhaps the greatest threats fall under two main categories - development and the vulnerability of water resources to contamination from any part of the hydrologic system. Surface waters, wetlands, and floodplains are intricately linked to the quality and quantity of ground water. Thus contamination of surface water through uncontrolled use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, improper storage of manure on farms, accidental spills of hazardous materials, possible illegal dumping of hazardous materials and improper use and storage of road salt could result in catastrophic or irreversible damage to the quality and quantity of potable water.

Protecting these three aquifers is of critical importance to the drinking water quality of Belchertown and three neighboring Towns. Recommendations for protection of these lands include:

- 1. Restricted zoning which could include expanding the minimum lotsize from one to two acres, thereby reducing the number of septic systems;
- 2. Enticing development, (Smart Growth), into areas at much less risk for containination of groundwater; by, for example, extension of the Town's sewer system into less sensitive lands;
- 3. Work with the Agricultural Commission, encourage more responsible use of pesticides, fertilizers and the APR program;
- 4. Continue to utilize the LAND Acquisition Program and other grant opportunities to fund critical land acquisition and/or restriction in the recharge areas.

Protection of agriculture and forestry lands is important to provide food and forest products and to safeguard aspects of the environment and rural landscape. The pattern of open fields and forests, which are typical to New England, is a resource that enhances the quality of life. The view of farms, fields, and forests offer a visual buffer to development. The southern part of Belchertown, with its many farms and large base of prime soils, should be designated as an agricultural district. The Town is currently in the process of purchasing the development rights on 83 acres of the Wenzel Farm, located on Bardwell St., in southern Belchertown. The anticipated closing date for this APR is late calendar year 2013.

Other tools such as cluster/open space development on all farmlands and parcels with prime soils and transferable development rights can also be used to assure a source of food for the future and to protect valuable agricultural lands. Working with regional lands trusts could provide a vehicle whereby lands could remain in agricultural production and the potential of prime soils could be safeguarded for the future.

The effect of conserving forests is protection for the environment, provision for timber and the forest industry, buffers to residential development, and resources for recreation. Protective efforts should be concentrated in the northeast portion of Belchertown, particularly the varied, hilly forests in the Pelham Hills. High priority should be given to long-term protection and public access to the woods located close to the Town's center, owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which are managed by the New England Small Farm Institute. Cluster/open space requirements for development on critical forestlands would prevent complete loss of the amenities provided by them.

#### **B. Summary of Community Needs**

Belchertown falls within the Connecticut Valley Region, the largest of the SCORP Planning Regions which contains the largest drainage basin in Massachusetts, the Connecticut River Watershed and also the Holyoke mountain range. The majority of open space in this region is owned and/or protected for water supply protection, for example the DCR Quabbin Reservoir. However, the Quabbin is managed primarily for water-shed protection and most recreational activities are discouraged. Belchertown has purchased numerous properties over the last 7 years for water quality protection but the Conservation Commission has also developed land management plans that incorporate low impact recreational activites. However the majority of this land is not accessible to the public. The Belchertown 2013 OSRP should incorporate these needs and develop conservation areas for passive recreational use open to the public. We also allow hunting and fishing, open to the community, in all are conservation areas.

More passive recreation areas are needed for walking trails, picnicking, and nature study. All areas should reflect a variety of interactive styles and needs, thus accommodating the elderly and handicapped. Exciting possibilities exist for regional recreation and open space planning in the form of bike paths and routes between Belchertown and its neighbors as well as interconnection for greenways for hiking. Development and maintenance of various types of trails must be a priority for the Town. Trail construction provides low cost recreation activities, by developing trail systems that are accessible to all population users, including the elderly and handicapped.

#### C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

Due to the increase in population during the past 20 years, and the projected increase for the coming 20 years, providing recreation activities has been, and will continue to be, a high priority for the Town. Population and economic characteristics should influence the manner in which a Town provides outdoor recreation and open space opportunities. It appears that many of Belchertown's residents do **not** have a large disposable income for recreational pursuits that are outside the area of the Town. This suggests an increased need to provide more outdoor recreational opportunities close to home. Traditional recreational areas such as playgrounds, playing fields and water-based recreation areas are important to families with children as well as to individuals of all ages. Belchertown is located within a designated State Environmental Justice area and all open space and recreational areas are accessible and available to all town residents, regardless of social and economic situations, (please see Environmental Justice Map #2). No fees are charged for use of all outdoor recreational areas, (except for Town Beach).

Belchertown has a high number of families with children. They may have moved to the community because of its rural look and feel but this creates a high demand for facilities. Although most respondents describe the Town as a bedroom community, they hope to retain as much of its rural character as possible. In planning for this we need to keep in mind one of reasons people found to live in Belchertown, the low crime rate, (66% respondents valued favorably), followed closely by privacy. Both of these go hand in hand with a rural small town atmosphere. These issues can be addressed in the type of growth we encourage, and the use of Smart Growth techniques when planning for both residential and business development.

77% of the survey respondents strongly supported protecting the open space of the Town Common, (see survey results). This area is of high value due to the traditional New England character and historic homes, residents hope to maintain. As businesses and residential development seek to locate closer to the heart of Town, more requests will be made for locations around the Town Common. Consider reviewing present zoning regulations in this area to determine if preserving its open space is not in conflict with the vision decided upon for business around the common.

The Town has a significant number of recreational areas located close to the Town center but almost none, near town borders. With the enormous geographic region of the Town, and acknowledging there are already significant residential developments near town borders, consider establishing recreational fields in these areas. Privately held clubs own a significant amount of land adjacent to state-owned land on the borders of Town. Presently, they provide a buffer for the potential extension of wildlife habitats. These clubs could decide to sell their land for development at any time. Consider negotiating for an option on these lands to conserve open space and provide for recreation to these outlying communities.

Belchertown has an extremely active Recreation Department with approximately 2,700 children in the sports programs. Town facilities are used to their maximum capacity, but still activities must be canceled or rescheduled for lack of space. A recreation office with administration space was relocated to the old Belchertown State School, located on State St., Building #1 in 1999. The location of this office is located near schools and the senior center, making it accessible to the elderly and the schools for education purposes.

The Recreation Department estimates that since the last Open Space and Recreation Plan was distributed in 2008, both the user population and the number of programs offered by their department have increased by over 25% and forecast that both will continue to increase as the Town continues to grow. The Recreation Commission considers that the primary active recreation need is for additional playing fields, particularly fields located near the center of Town. Therefore, the Recreation Commission encourages the Town to look aggressively at large, centrally located properties that may become available or existing Town-owned properties - such as the old Belchertown State School property - for development of both active and passive recreation. This property has the potential for additional development of hiking trails, picnic areas, as well as possible areas for additional playing fields.

#### D. Summary of Administration/Management Needs

Limited resources of staff, budget, and time prevent or limit the planning and oversight necessary to protect, maintain, enhance, and manage open space and recreation land in Belchertown. Limited financial resources are due, in part, to the rapid growth experienced by Belchertown during the past twenty years. While the tax base increases each year as new homes are completed and fully assessed, the dollar contribution is more than offset by the demand for increased Town services, especially schools, necessary to accommodate the new growth. Developing a consensus on what constitutes optimal growth, and exploring the options for achieving that desired rate, is mandatory for an open space plan to be effective. For this to happen, improved communications within Town government and between Town government and the citizenry is essential. Additionally, increased public education about the values and functions of open space protection is necessary to change attitudes that minimize the importance of this protection and fear the regulation and control that such protection may require.

The Town possesses an energetic citizenry, both young and old, eager for involvement in deciding their Town's future. Marshalling this energy and developing a consensus of desired growth are imperative for the implementation of the seven year action plan in this updated 2013 OSRP. The presence of public access cable TV and a free, weekly newspaper in the Town are important in promoting increased communication between Town government and providing public education programs to increase awareness of the importance of open space protection. The Conservation Commission has held numerous hikes at our conservation areas, which have been well attended. In addition, the Commission is working with Channel Five, Community TV to tape conservation area walks to be displayed on local television.

However, money and staff constraints within the Town have limited recreational events and improvements to existing conservation and recreation lands. For the last 7 years, the Town has been working with eagle scouts on conservation area projects. In addition, the Conservation Commission has been able to engage the volunteer services of residents from the area; the Commission must actively seek this help in order to complete management plans for each of its Conservation lands.

The region presents many opportunities for open space and natural resource protection. Proximity to the University of Massachusetts provides a source of information, expertise and interns for studies and planning for the Town. The Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS) is an ecosystem-based approach for assessing the ecological integrity of lands and waters and subsequently identifying and prioritizing land for habitat and biodiversity conservation. CAPS, as mentioned before, is a computer software program and an approach to prioritizing land for conservation based on the assessment of ecological integrity for various ecological communities (e.g., forest, shrub swamp, headwater stream) within an area. There are numerous services offered by the University of Massachusetts to assist Belchertown. The Town has worked with the Water Research Center at the University regarding lake issues. This department is an integrated water resources management facility, from cutting-edge research on the assessment and remediation of impaired water resources, to policy for water use, reuse, conservation, and balance. The program provides an interdisciplinary forum for scientists, practitioners, and policy makers to discuss current critical water research; foster greater collaboration among scientists and practitioners; and strengthen the connection between research, extension, and policy. Forestry and wildlife students can also be called upon to assist with town stewardship activities. This is an un-tapped resource that the Town should be utilizing.

Other sources of information and possible assistance include the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Hampshire County Conservation District, and the regional offices of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), local Land Trusts, National Park Service for the NET and the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC).

Time is a critical issue in protecting the open space and natural resources of Belchertown. Because of the recent economic recession, growth in Belchertown, though faster than most other communities in Massachusetts, is slower than in 2008 - 2010, providing the Town with an opportunity to develop growth management strategies and open space and natural resource protection policies.

Problems and opportunities, along with potential solutions and actions, must be evaluated to develop objectives and actions to achieve the community goal of natural resource protection and growth management. Problems and opportunities may result from fiscal or natural conditions, such as a lack of financial resources or an abundance of natural resources, or may be an outgrowth of attitudinal or regulatory conditions within the Town. The following list summarizes both the problems and opportunities present in the Town:

## **ATTITUDINAL**

Problems:

- Need for increased public knowledge and support for environmental values
- 2. Lack of concensus or shared vision of optimal growth
- 3. Fear of regulation by landowners

Opportunities:

1. Citizen support for land protection, (i.e. Town meeting support)

## 2. Community television and local newspaper information

#### REGULATORY

Problems:

- 1. Subdivision regulations need to be updated
- 2. Creative land use controls need to be developed

Opportunities:

- 1. Local floodplain, aquifer and wetland regulations
- 2. Open space fund
- 3. Stormwater Bylaw and regulations

## **FINANCIAL**

Problems:

- 1. Budgetary constraints resulting in reduced staff and monies available for studies and public outreach
- No Town monies available for purchase of lands or conservation restrictions to preserve open space
- 3. Lack of budgeted monies for upgrade of infrastructure within the Town
- No long-term budgeting for maintaining conservation lands and on-going recreation programs

Opportunities:

- 1.. Some funding available for land protection (i.e.LAND Grant Program, and some monies available for regional watershed protection)
- 2. CPA Funds
- 3. Updated 2013 OSRP allows Town eligibility for State grants

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Problems:

- 1. Insufficient staffing numbers
- 2. Lack of organization to mobilize volunteers

Opportunities:

- 1. An energetic citizenry eager for involvement
- 2. Local land trusts, stewardship accounts

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Problems:

- 1. Incomplete management plans for conservation lands, need signage and staff
- 2. Increased need for stafftime to implement action items outlined in 2013 OSRP

Opportunities: 1. CPA Funds

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Problems:

- 1. Degraded resources from adjacent land use activities, (i.e. ATVS)
- Pressures from neighboring Towns to utilize abundant open space and resources
- 3. Development pressure on forest and farm lands
- 4. Many areas remaining for residential growth are not conducive to on-site septic systems

Opportunities:

1. Abundance of natural resources, open space and productive resources

- 2. Low population density leading to rural and scenic character of town
- 3. Community support very favorable
- 4. Conduct more public forums with the Ag. Commission

#### REGIONAL CONTEXT

Problems:

 Much of the region's growing population is moving to Belchertown and regional transportation routes are located near or in aquifer protection areas possibilities of oil spills

## Opportunities:

- 1. Proximity to University of Massachusetts and DEP
- 2. Proximity to new Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- 3. Abundance of protected state owned land within Town

## **TIMING**

Problems:

- Poor economy resulting in lack of state and federal funding for resource protection and open space protection
- 2. Little time left to protect scenic and rural character of the Town

Opportunities:

- 1. Atmosphere is favorable within the Town for land protection
- 2. Money is available through State funded programs

#### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Problems:

- 1. Improved communication and coordination among Town boards
- 2. Improved communication between Town government and Town citizens

Opportunities:

- 1. Presence of weekly newspaper in Town
- 2. Presence of public access cable TV, (channel 5)

## RECREATION

Problems:

 Active and passive recreational opportunities have not kept pace with increases in growth

Opportunities:

- Work with private organizations and all town departments to increase active and passive recreational opportunities
- 2. Hold more Town-sponsored activities

## **Section 8**

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the 2013 Belchertown Open Space and Recreation Plan Update is to encourage the Town to take an in-depth look at the current status of its open space and recreation resources and provide a basis for the continued protection, use, and development of these resources in serving the community's needs. In developing the 2013 Open Space and Recreation goals, the Open Space Committee began by reevaluating the Open Space and Recreation goals of the 1995 Plan, determining what had been accomplished, what connolly 1/31/13 3:01 PM remained to be accomplished, what was no longer relevant. Following the public forums, the 2013 OSR Promatted: Right: 0.25"

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update of goals and objectives, as presented in the OSRP within the context of the survey results was discussed at the public meetings. The result was an extensive list of objectives and action steps that was distributed to all Town boards for their review and prioritization. Based on responses, the Committee formulated final objectives and developed a Seven-Year Action Plan. A draft update of the Belchertown 2013 OSRP was distributed for review by Town Boards and following a comment period, was submitted to the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services in February 2013. This process resulted in the formulation of the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Goals to provide concrete initiatives and planned actions that will enable Belchertown to meet future demands upon its resources more effectively.

# <u>Goal I</u> Protection of Natural Resources and Community Character through Growth Management Strategies:

- **Objective 1.** Establish growth management strategies that address the present and future needs of the community.
  - 1. Establish a growth strategy committee
  - 2. Conduct a growth survey
  - Determine where land use changes will occur and promote creative alternatives
  - 4. Study zoning options for protection of agriculture, forestry, lake area, and cultural resources
  - 5. Develop a comprehensive land use plan
  - 6. Review and update site plan approval

**Objective 2.** Establish economic incentives and strategies to promote open space conservation.

- 1. Study and evaluate options for open space preservation:
  - Tax relief for open space
  - Transfer of development rights
  - Development rights swap for ANR lands
- 2. Promote greater participation with regional and local land trusts
- Develop process for impact analysis review by all Town boards for subdivisions and commercial developments

# **Goal II** Development of Land Use and Natural Resource Protection Information and Programs for the Public, Town Boards and Town Employees:

- **Objective 1**. Increase public understanding of natural resource values, protection laws, and protection techniques through brochures, media presentation and public meetings/seminars.
  - 1. Conduct semi-annual public education programs about natural resource and open space issues and conservation areas
  - 2. Promote involvement of community organizations, schools, and businesses in natural resource and open space protection
  - 3. Provide public education about growth and its impacts
  - 4. Print and distribute public version of open space plan
  - 5. Conduct more Town sponsored nature walks
  - 6. Showcase conservation areas on local cable station- Channel 5

**Objective 2.** Establish a process by which members of all boards or committees are aware of and are actively involved in issues related to land use and natural resource protection.

1. Work with newly appointed Stormwater Committee

- 2. Appoint Conservation Commission members to stewardship conservation areas
- 3. Yearly update of accomplishments and new priorities of 2013 OSRP with distribution to various Town boards, committees, and Belchertown Sentinel
- 4. Commissions Annual Town Report, report resource area protection

## **Goal III** Management of Groundwater and Surface Water for Public Consumption, Wildlife Habitat and Recreation:

**Objective 1.** Upgrade surface water to improve the recreation and wildlife habitat values.

- 1. Enforcement of the Stormwater Bylaw, effective January 2, 2008
- Conduct water quality studies at three lakes and Jabish Brook to establish baseline information and to promote water quality for recreational purposes
- Implement the recommendations for the lake management plan to improve water quality
- 4. Promote conservation restrictions and other land protection stratagies
- 5. Management tools along Jabish Brook corridor

Objective 2. Protect critical watershed lands for groundwater and surface water quality

- 1. Develop local tools for surface and groundwater watershed protection
- Study donor and funding opportunities for conservation restrictions and/or purchase of watershed lands –acquisition of land grants/funding
- Purchase and protect additional property in critical watershed and aquifer areas

## **Goal IV** Management of Local and Regional Waste Products:

Objective 1. Plan for local waste management.

- 1. Encourage recycling
- 2. Hazardous waste day

Objective 2. Plan for regional waste management.

1. Participate, as appropriate, in regional waste management initiatives

## **Goal V** Promotion and Protection of Productive Natural Resources:

**Objective 1.** Promote farmland preservation and agricultural production.

- 1. Develop methods to maintain existing agricultural lands
- 2. Working with the Agricultural Commission to promote sustainable agriculture
- 3. Update Farmland Preservation Plan with possible land use/land management strategies
- 4. Promote Belchertown agriculture through informational handouts and by maintaining a booth at the Town Fair
- 5. Support the locals Farmers Market

Objective 2. Promote wise forest management practices and forestland preservation.

Develop forest management plans for Town conservation areas and other Town lands

- 2. Apply for funding to purchase conservation restrictions on priority forestlands
- 3. Promote participation in Stewardship Incentive Program on private forestlands

### **Goal VI** Management of Open Land:

- **Objective 1.** Develop programs for the acquisition and management of Town-owned lands.
  - 1. Acquire conservation easements for both multiple use trails system and passive use
  - 2. Develop management plans for all conservation areas and post signage

#### **Objective 2.** Develop programs to enhance public use of Town-owned lands.

- 1. Organize a citizen group for Conservation Lands, trails groups and friends groups
- 2. Organize yearly clean-up days
- 3. Develop pamphlets with a map of trails for conservation areas
- 4. Hold Town sponsored Nature Walks

## **Goal VII** Protection of Unique Features and Resources:

#### Objective 1. Protect unique habitats.

- 1. Develop program to certify vernal pools
- 2. Develop program to identify and protect habitats of rare and endangered species

### Objective 2. Preserve rural character.

- 1. Develop a mechanism to protect scenic views, rural roads and stonewalls
- 2. Establish review process for protection of trees in street tree belt

## **Goal VIII** Management and Development of Recreational Resources:

#### **Objective 1.** Promotion of active recreation.

- Implement a strategy for the siting of additional playing fields for baseball, softball, and soccer
- 2. Promote neighborhood playground areas
- 3. Develop a Fitness Trail (Par Course)

### **Objective 2.** Promotion of passive recreational opportunities for all user groups.

- Provide accessibility to trails for all populations groups (including handicapped and senior citizens) at Cold Spring, Reed property, Piper Farm, Scarborough Brook Conservation area & Meads Corner Conservation area
- 2. Promote neighborhood open space areas for walking and picnicking
- 3. Support regional efforts, work with Land trusts

### Section 9

## **SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN**

The following Seven-Year Action Plan groups the action items presented in Section 8 by Town Board initiative and priority, with those action items proposed for 2013, having the highest priority, (see action plan Map #8).

The <u>1995 Open Space and Recreation Plan</u> proposed many actions - such as development of information bases for wetlands, floodplains, surface waters, agriculture, forests, unique natural and cultural areas, flora and fauna

for wetlands, floodplains, surface waters, agriculture, forests, unique natural and cultural areas, flora and fauna
- that required expenditure of funds to accomplish. The current Plan has focused on action items translated in the surface of the

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implement the recommendations proposed in these studies and builds upon the maps and data generated since the original plan.

During 1991 to 1993 when much of the new plan was developed, Belchertown was experiencing a slow-down in growth and development. The new OSRP includes many action items that require no additional funding, instead emphasizing inter-board communication and joint endeavors, possible during periods of slow growth and development. However, from mid-1993 to the 2007, development once again began to increase, with increased workloads for Town Boards and staff. Viewed from the perspective of current levels of staff, funding, and workload, the following Action Plan appears ambitious. However, for 2008, the housing market has slowed down considerably, freeing up time to accomplish some of these goals. Since the 2008 OSRP the town has accomplished many goals, please see attached Appendix A: Accomplishments since last Open Space and Recreational Plan.

Funding for the 2013 OSRP goals will have to come from a variety of sources. Some of these goals will be accomplished by utilizing existing department budgets, ex: Planning Board, updating Zoning Bylaw and Master Plan. The Conservation Commission will also utilize existing budget and staff to manage conservation areas and develop additional signage and management plans. Community Preservation Funds (CPA) will continue to be utilized for open space protection, recreational fields/playground improvements and tri-lakes water quality studies. Belchertown has also partnered with local land trusts, (The Kestrel Trust, Belchertown Land Trust) and has applied for and received numerous State grants and grants from foundations, (Wharton Trust, Fields Pond Foundation). All of our land protection efforts within the last 6 years have occurred with the financial assistance of the EOEA (EEA) Land Acquisition programs. The Commission intends to continue this symbiotic relationship.

In addition, the Commission is working with developing a group of volunteers for individual conservation areas, (ex: friends group) to help manage existing conservation areas and to hold fundraising events. These additional funds can be used to make needed improvements to these areas. The Department of Public-Works is utilizing their existing budget to mow and maintain conservation-parking areas and to pick up trash and debris as needed. It is important to mention that fiscal year 2014 budget has incorporated level service funding for town departments, however it is impossible to predict what future budgets may or may not provide for. Goals and objectives may have to be revised to incorporate the current and future economic status of municipal and state budgets.

The value of the Seven Year Action Plan, (see attached action plan Map #8), becomes, then, not only a blueprint for action but also a guideline for prioritizing the expenditures of time, money, and energy necessary for the protection of natural resources, open space, and recreation lands within the Town.

## **Goal I** Protection of Natural Resources and Community Character through Growth Management Strategies.

Initiative: Planning Board

- 1. Review and update Zoning Bylaw as related to Site Plan Approval (2013-2020, ongoing)
- Determine where land use changes will occur and promote creative alternatives (2013-2020, ongoing)
- 3. Study zoning options for protection of agriculture, forestry, scenic and cultural resources (2013-2020, ongoing)
- 4. Revise current Master Plan under MGL Chapter 41 Sec.81D, (2013-2017)

Initiative: Open Space and Recreation Committee

1. promote greater participation in regional land trusts, (2013-2020, ongoing)

Joint Initiative: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

- 1. Study and evaluate options for open space preservation and protection
  - tax relief for open space
  - transfer of development rights
  - APR's on agricultural lands
  - conservation restrictions and land acquisitions
  - Regional Forest Legacy designation

# **Goal II** Development of Land Use and Natural Resource Protection Information and Programs for the Public, Town Boards and Town Employees.

Initiative: Conservation Commission

- 1. Promote involvement of community organizations, schools, and businesses in natural resource and open space protection (2013-2020, ongoing)
- 2. Conduct semi-annual public education programs about natural resource and open space issues and conservation areas (2013-2020, ongoing)
- 3. Print and distribute public version of open space plan (2013 and ongoing)

Initiative: Planning Board

- 1. Provide public education about growth and its impacts (2013, ongoing)
- 2. Update Master Planand Community Plan (2013-2017)

# **Goal III** Management of Groundwater and Surface Water for Public Consumption, Wildlife Habitat, and Recreation.

Initiative: Conservation Commission

- 1. Promote conservation restrictions and other land management tools along Jabish Brook corridor (2013, ongoing)
- Study donor and expanded funding opportunities for conservation restrictions and/or purchase of aquifer lands (2013, ongoing)

Joint Initiative: Conservation Commission, Planning Board

1. Update Earth Removal Bylaw (2013-2015)

Joint Initiative: Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Tri-Lakes Association

- 1. Encourage Lake Residents to Hook up to Town Sewer
- 2. Implement the Recommendations of the Lakes Management Plan, (2013, ongoing)
- 3. Conduct water quality studies at the Tri-lakes region, 604B grant money to establish baseline information (2012-2014, ongoing)

Initiative: Watershed Protection Committee

- 1. Develop local tools for surface watershed protection (ongoing)
- 2. Develop local tools for groundwater protection (ongoing)

Joint Initiative: Board of Health, Fire Department

1. Develop emergency response measures for hazardous spills (2013)

### **Goal IV** Management of Local and Regional Waste

Joint Initiative: Board of Health, Fire Department

1. Develop program for hazardous waste management & disposal (2013-2020)

Initiative: Board of Selectmen and others

- 1. Develop strategies for solid waste management (ongoing)
- 2. Maintain strategies for continued operation and increase user connections to the new sewage treatment plant (ongoing)

## **Goal V** Promotion and Management of Productive Natural Resources

Initiative: Conservation Commission

- 1. Promote Belchertown agriculture through informational handouts and by maintaining a booth at the Town Fair (2013, ongoing)
- 2. Promote sustainable agriculture (2013, ongoing)
- 3. Promote participation in Stewardship Incentive Program on private forest lands (ongoing)
- 4. Apply for funding to purchase Conservation Restrictions on priority forest lands, (2013, ongoing)
- Develop forest managment plans for Town Conservation Areas and other Town lands (2013- 2020)

Joint Initiative: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Agricultural Commission

- . Develop methods to maintain and protect existing agricultural lands (2013, ongoing)
- 2. Work with Agricultural Commission to update farmland Preservation Plan with possible land use/land management strategies (2013-2020)
- 3. Work with Agricultural Commission to educate public, (2013, ongoing)
- 4. Maintain a booth at the farmers market (2013-2020)

### **Goal VI** Management and Use of Open Land

Initiative: Conservation Commission

- 1. Acquire conservation easements for both multiple use trails system and passive use (2013, ongoing)
- 2. Develop management plans for all conservation areas (2013-2020, ongoing)
- 3. Organize a citizen Conservation Lands and Trails Group (2013-2020)
- 4. Organize yearly clean-up days (2013, ongoing)
- 5. Develop pamphlet with a map of trails for conservation areas (2013, ongoing)

## **Goal VII** Protection of Unique Features and Resources

Initiative: Conservation Commission

- 1. Identify and certify vernal pools (ongoing)
- 2. Identify and protect habitats of rare and endangered species (2013, ongoing)

Joint Initiative: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

1. Explore mechanisms to protect scenic views, rural roads, and stonewalls (2013, ongoing)

Initiative: Department of Public-Works

1. Establish review process for protection of trees in tree belt (2013-2020)

## **Goal VIII** Management and Development of Recreational Resources

Initiative: Recreation Commission

- 1. Implement a strategy for maintaining and improving existing fields and facilities as well as developing additional playing fields for softball, baseball, football. Soccer, lacrosse field hockey and other popular sports (2013-2020, ongoing)
- 2. Preserve and restore the Chestnut Hill tennis and basketball outdoor complex to be utilized by all town residents for sports as well as own functions (2013-2020, ongoing)
- 3. Develop a fitness trail (2013-2020, ongoing)

Initiative: Conservation Commission

1. Provide accessibility to trails for all populations groups (including handicapped and senior citizens) at Cold Spring Conservation Area, Topping Farm Conservation Area and portions of Jabish Brook Conservation Areas Reed Conservation Area and Piper Farm (2013-2020)

Joint Initiative: Planning Board, Recreation Commission, School Committee

1. Promote central playground needs, (Jessica's Boundless Playground) (2013, ongoing)

Joint Initiative: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

1. Promote neighborhood open space areas for walking and picnicking (2013-2020)

#### Section 10

# PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE 2012 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN.

The following are all the comments written on the returned Open Space and Recreation Plan surveys from 2012. "Q1" means Question 1 from the survey etc. All comments are listed below the section where they appeared on the survey.

Question #1 to #6 were demographic questions.

Q7. – To what extent do you support the town of Belchertown preserving /protecting the following types of open space?

- d. Swift River
- f. People do not want more fences removed from the common.
- h. Other:
  - · Historic bldgs & cemeteries
  - Dog Park
  - Stone walls! Brook bridge railings wood-not metal. Metal guard railings are overkill
    and ugly.
  - Old railroads/trails
  - · Wildlife corridor
  - Swift River
  - We must preserve all of our natural surroundings
  - Active/passive recreation land

Q8. – How important to you are the following types of recreational facilities in Belchertown?

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- a. Bike trails Want one!
- n. Town beaches Should be free!
- i. Hunting access no

#### Q9. – To what extent do you value each of the following reasons to live in Belchertown?

Vague question, valuable for me living here or as someone planning to live here.

- a. The rural small town atmosphere
  - · Not exist anymore
- d. Recreational opportunities
  - hiking, etc.
  - Swift River
  - More, please!
  - Rail trail, please!

#### f. The town common

• People do not want more fences removed from the common

#### m. Family Ties

• I have no family – but others do and this town allows families to maintain ties.

## Q10. – <u>In your opinion</u>, how important is it that Belchertown?

- a. Preserve the rural character
  - We don't have a 'rural' character!
- d. Increase commercial development
  - Businesses that do not impact environmental quality
  - Small business centralized downtown-not big box!
  - Small business development, not mall (big box) type business development, centralized downtown
  - · Appropriate development
- g. Improve its infrastructure
  - Sidewalks! Bike trails on Route 9/202 etc.
  - Integrated, less auto dependent planning. Sidewalks and trails connecting
- i. Have more recreational facilities
  - Playgrounds, basketball courts, all around town!
  - Throughout Belchertown with sidewalks
- j. Provide quality cultural facilities
  - Using High School/Jabish is fine, we could just have more community cultural events?
  - Retrofit existing space (development)
- k. Increase residential development
  - Enough with the McMansions!

- Develop more modest housing that is environmentally sensitive, incorporating green spaces (parks, children's play area, sidewalks) "Presently McMansions seem to be the norm in an economy that doesn't justify such development, if ever such development is justified."
- LID development

## Q12. – To Preserve open space in the town would you:

Donate money to buy land?

- · Yes If I had any.
- No Retired-on fixed income

Would you support a real estate tax to acquire land?

- No- No more taxes!
- Yes- Under CPA
- Yes Already do CPA

Rewrite your deed to limit development of your land?

- If development rights could be sold
- · Already have!

Do you favor requiring developers set aside open space?

Yes- Severely limit developers

Would you sell land to the town at a bargain price?

• Yes- I would if I could afford to.

## Q13. – Do you favor preserving farmland?

No:

NESFI exists

## Q15. – Do you utilize Belchertown's recreational facilities? If not, why?

#### No:

- New to area, still learning what is available.
- None that appropriate for me are free
- Cost town beach used to be free
- Pool- Should be free
- No Bike Trail!
- No time
- · Hiking only
- No need
- I belong to a gym
- Have our own acreage to recreate on
- · Health issues/use Swift River but in not Belchertown recreation facility
- Don't know of any for what I do
- What's included in recreational facilities?
- I cross country ski, hike, and roller blade no space for most of those
- Too old/kids gone
- Not often

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- Too far from where I live, use the M & M trail
- Not really aware of what they are
- I don't play soccer

#### Yes:

- Some, but we don't have a lot of what I want. Can't take my dog where we go! She's CGC qualified.
- Bike path
- Conservation areas
- Sometimes

## Q17. – How would you describe the town of Belchertown today?

#### 1- Small Rural Town

- In danger of becoming #2
- Used to be that is gone forever
- #2 emerging

## 2 – Suburb/Bedroom Community.

- Emerging
- But still with qualities of a small rural town

## 4 - Other.

- Both #1 and #2
- Belchertown has been growing and unfortunately the picturesque quality is slowly vanishing as unsightly development occurs.
- Large Rural town

## Q18. – How would you like to see Belchertown 15 years from now?

#### 1- Small Rural Town

- Too late!
- Though I don't think we can turn back the clock

### 2 - Suburb/Bedroom Community

- (not more developed)
- with more commercial
- but with more business
- Get some business tax base.

## 3 - Small City

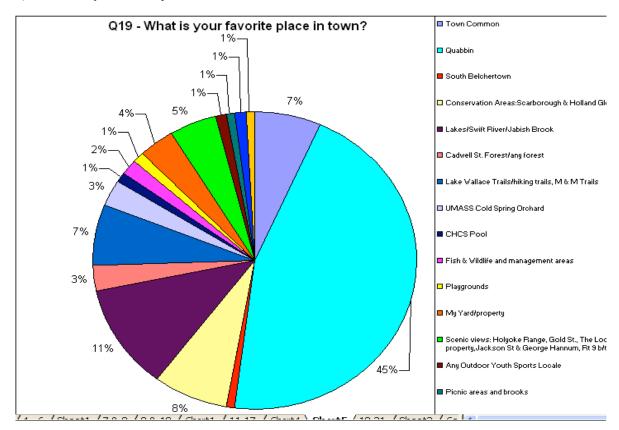
- Well-planned central development interconnected neighborhoods
- With centralized small business development interconnected by sidewalks. (paths leading to the center)

## 4 - Other:

- Maintain the status quo with increase in number of small businesses that have no impact on environment
- Bigger and better agricultural operations
- More employment opportunities
- Large town with JOBS

- Better organized and diverse compact development with large areas of protected woods and farms
- Large rural town
- More business and jobs

## Q19. – What is your favorite place in Belchertown?



Q20. – Are the town's scenic views important to you?

Yes:

- Also land for proposed solar farm
- State School/NESFI

## Q21. – What is your favorite place to show visitors when they come to Belchertown?

• I used to love the stone walls on our rural streets, but they are being stolen and are disappearing, including on George Hannum before the intersection of Jackson. I

actually saw a woman and a teenage boy stealing some of those stones. Stone walls are part of our heritage and I would love to see those that are remaining stay intact.

- People do not want more fences removed from the common.
- A small tour boat could be used to tour part of the Quabbin and provide talks on the history and area values.
- Swift River most used recreation area in Belchertown and most inclusive, fishing, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, etc.
- Especially concerts! (the town common)

#### Miscellaneous Comments:

I would like to see the Conservation Commission publish a comprehensive guide to open spaces in Belchertown which would include a listing of spaces, access to the spaces, regulations for use, etc.

We must keep the upper Bondsville Dam in place to preserve the wetlands and wildlife that have developed along the Swift River during the last 112 years. This also provides a wonderful recreation spot.

I think that the State property should be turned into a nice park with sidewalks, picnic tables, etc.

Dog Park (or "Bark Park", as they are sometimes called) is really needed for our pets! It would be relatively inexpensive (fencing) and easy to maintain. (Empty trash barrels and re-supply the poop bags dispenser.) Land could be available at any of our conservation areas or the state school property.

I moved here to Belchertown – the Quabbin – 1983. Fell in love with it stationed at Westover AFB in the 1970's.

## **2013 OPEN SPACE SURVEY RESULTS**

Questions 1-6 were demographic.

#### Question 7

The community's response indicated what they most supported the Town of Belchertown preserving. The top 4 out of 7 areas of support: Rivers and Streams - 84% Town Lakes - 82% Wooded Areas - 78% Farmland - 78%

### **Question 8**

The community's response to recreational activities that are important to them resulted in these top 5 out of 17 areas:
Quabbin Reservoir Access - 83%
Hiking Trails - 75%
Town Beaches - 65%
Town Parks - 63%
Bike Trails - 56%

### Question 9

The community's response to what they value as a reason to live in Belchertown resulted in these top 5 out of 17 areas:

The rural small town atmosphere - 83%

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Environmental Quality - 80% Open spaces - 77% Forests - 77% Privacy - 75%

#### Question 10

The community's response as to what they feel is important for Belchertown to do resulting in the top 5 out of 11 areas:

Protect environmental quality - 82% Protect its rural character - 80% Preserve its natural environment - 79% Preserve open space - 77% Encourage historic preservation - 59%

#### Question 11

53% of the community's response fell into the Most Important category, in favor of preserving Open Space in the Town. 25% of the response fell into Very Important category.

#### **Question 12**

The community's top 3 out of 7 responses from the options to preserve open space were: Vote for Town supported land acquisition -90% Favor requiring developers to set aside open space -86% Donate money to buy land -57%

#### **Question 13**

The community's response to preserving farmland was 91%.

#### **Question 14**

Of the community's responses to what actions are favored to preserve farm land: Property tax reduction programs  $-\,87\%$  Purchase of development rights  $-\,55\%$  Outright purchase of land  $-\,48\%$ 

#### **Question 15**

71% of the community's response indicated that they utilized Town's recreational facilities. 26% of the community's response indicated that they did not utilize the Town's recreational facilities. The reasons given are notated in Section 10 of the Open Space Plan.

#### Question 16

51% of the community's response indicated that they did not know the kinds of activities that can be done on/in conservation areas: 41% said that they did. 38% were unsure.

#### **Question 17**

The community's response to how they would describe the town of Belchertown: 60% felt the Town is a suburb/bedroom community. 30% felt the Town is a small rural town.

#### **Question 18**

The community's response as to how they would like the future of Belchertown to look: 48% would like to see it as a small rural town. 33% would like to see it as a suburb/bedroom community.

#### **Question 19**

The town's response to their favorite outdoor place in Belchertown resulted in these top 2 out of 20 chioces: Quabbin – 52%

Lakes. Swift River. Jabish Brook – 13%

Lakes, Swift River, Jabish Brook – 13%

Other responses are notated in Section 10 of the Open Space Plan

Question 20

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94% of the community's response finds the town's scenic views important to them.

#### **Question 21**

The top responses for a favorite place to show visitors: Quabbin – 78%
Town Common 19%
Swift River 12%

### Other responses are notated in Section 10 of the Open Space Plan

This report is being circulated by the Conservation Commission for comment, review and approval by Town committees and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. A draft copy was also submitted to the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services for review and comments for acceptance by the DCS.

## **Section 11**

## **REFERENCES**

Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements, March /2008
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