

Town of Washington, New Hampshire

Master Plan 2015

6. RECREATION

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION:

Growth within the region and the Town of Washington is due in large part to the high quality of the environment, scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of the area. Washington is in the center of an extensive system of well maintained trails used by hikers, snowshoers, cross country skiers, snowmobilers, hunters, fishermen and horse riders. Washington has a fairly large number of lakes and ponds of various sizes, with much development surrounding these water bodies. Boaters/fishermen have access to water on all the great ponds (10 acres or more in size) at public boat ramps. Public beaches are maintained at Mill Pond in East Washington and at the east end of Millen Lake at Camp Morgan. Recreational use is an important activity in Town, so it is important for the Town to continue to recognize the significance of the recreational opportunities that exist, and to guide growth and development in such a manner as to protect the high quality of the environment and maintain the recreational potential.

One of Washington's most important recreational amenities is Camp Morgan, owned by the Town since 1980. It is located on the east end of Millen Pond, not far from the center of Town. The major facilities there include a beach, swim floats/docks, designated swim area, raft, playground, tetherball and volleyball courts, softball field/soccer field and a heated handicapped-accessible building (Camp Morgan Lodge) that includes a kitchen. This facility is used for dances, public meetings, elections, meetings and activities of various Town groups, as well as being used as a shelter during Town emergencies and natural disasters. It is also available for rental to the public for private events. During the winter months lunches are served in the lodge to seniors by volunteer seniors twice a month for a nominal fee, and bingo games are held. The Parks and Recreation Commission oversees the Camp Morgan property and runs the summer camp program each year for more than 100 local children. The summer camp program gives town children access to swimming instruction, leading to Red Cross certification and boating safety and watercraft skills (including canoeing and kayaking). There is public access to the Town's trail network from the property as well as access to the Camp Morgan Town Forest. The Forestry Committee oversees the Town Forest portion of the Camp Morgan property and maintains the trails.

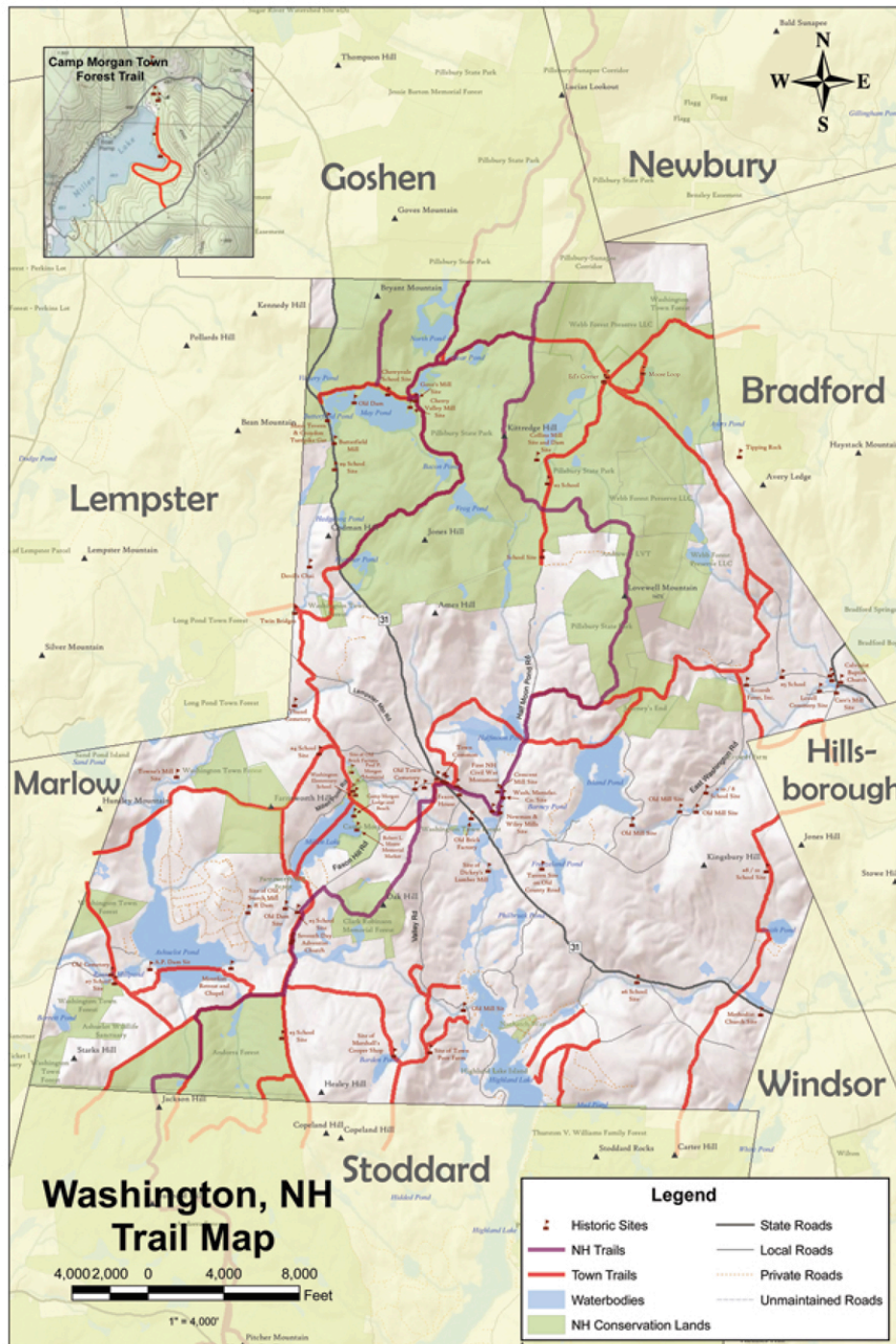
Recreational Resources:

Trails: An impressive network of hiking, skiing and snowmobile trails crisscrosses the Town of Washington. There are 57 miles of established snowmobile trails and 60 miles of hiking/skiing trails in Town. Through-hikers and day hikers on the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway and snowmobilers on the trails maintained by the Washington Snowriders utilize these trails heavily. Lovewell Mountain, the highest point in Town with a commanding view of much of Washington and surrounding towns, is accessible by the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway and other trails.

Picnic areas and Playgrounds: Waterfront picnic areas are available at Mill Pond in East Washington and at Camp Morgan Beach, with tables, trash barrels and grills. Playgrounds are found behind the Town Hall and at Camp Morgan, with swings and some climbing apparatus.

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Water Access: Numerous lakes and ponds in Washington provide opportunities for swimming, boating, paddling and fishing. Town-owned public access for most of these activities is available at Mill Pond in East Washington and at Camp Morgan beach at the eastern

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end of Millen Lake. For boating, the State of NH maintains a public ramp at May Pond in Pillsbury State Park and other public access points (boats ramps) at Smith Pond, Island Pond, Ashuelot Pond and Millen Lake.

Pillsbury State Park and Trails: Pillsbury State Park is a valuable asset and is one of the more primitive and lesser-known gems of the New Hampshire State Park system. Heavily wooded and sprinkled with several ponds and wetlands, its diversity of habitats makes it home to a great variety of wildlife, including moose and loons. Crossed by a network of hiking and mountain bike trails, the park is an important link in the **Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway**, a 51-mile hiking trail that connects Mount Monadnock with Mount Sunapee to the north. It is a place to camp with 41 campsites including 20 pond-side tent sites, or picnic, canoe, kayak or hike. History buffs enjoy exploring the park's long-abandoned and overgrown cellar holes, remnants of early farm settlement and lumbering of the late 1700s and early 1800s when the area was called Cherry Valley.

Hunting and Fishing: Large tracts of uninterrupted vegetation cover the diverse topography of this region creating suitable habitat for a wide range of game animals. The most common upland game species are white-tailed deer, bear, moose, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbit, bobcat, fisher, fox, gray squirrel, grouse, woodcock, pheasant and turkey. Aquatic species include beaver, otter, muskrat, raccoon, mink and waterfowl, such as ducks, teals and the hooded merganser. Due to the variety of water body sizes, depths and elevations, fishing enthusiasts have access to both warm water and cold-water fisheries. Cold-water fish found in this area include brook, rainbow, lake and brown trout, salmon, northern pike and smallmouth bass. NH Fish and Game stocks several ponds with trout. The warm water species include pickerel, largemouth bass and walleyes. Ice fishing is enjoyed by many in the winter months. There is river fishing available in the Contoocook River and North Branch River in Hillsboro.

Winter Recreation: Pillsbury State Park has logging roads suitable for cross-country skiing; these are, as a rule, not groomed or patrolled and are shared with and groomed for snowmobiles. Two publicly owned facilities for downhill skiing and snowboarding are located nearby. They are Mt. Sunapee at Mt. Sunapee State Park in Newbury, NH, and Pat's Peak located in Henniker, NH. There are 57 miles of snowmobile trails maintained and groomed by the Washington Snowriders Club. These trails also connect to an extensive trail network that crosses town lines. A public sledding hill is available just west of the Camp Morgan Lodge.

Sightseeing: The Town has many sights worth visiting year round. There are numerous historic sites including;

Washington Common Historic District:

The Meetinghouse, 1787

Washington Center School, 1883

Washington Congregational Church, 1840

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War Memorials:

- Brigadier General Sylvanus Thayer, The Father of West Point
- Civil War Memorial
- Spanish American War
- World War I Memorial

Other:

- The birthplace of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Sabbath Day trail
- Two Historic Town Centers: Washington Village and East Washington Village
- Shedd Free Library, 1881
- East Washington Baptist Church, 1878
- Purling Beck Grange Hall, East Washington, 1859
- Schoolhouse #5, East Washington, 1849
- Historic graveyards in Washington Village and East Washington Village
- Historical Society Barn/Museum
- Eccardt Farm, an East Washington working dairy farm and Farm Museum that welcomes all visitors
- Quintessential New England landscape and fall foliage, winding country roads
- Sugarhouses
- Historic Dam sites, ruins of many water-run mills and manufacturing sites

Sports: Local children can join the Hillsboro Youth Athletic Association for organized league baseball, softball, basketball, soccer and cheering for age groups starting at age six through 15. When they enter high school, they are eligible to join the Hillsboro-Deering school teams.

Sponsored and other Cultural Events:

The Shedd Free Library holds many events including exhibits of local artists' work, a book club and children's story time and activities, to name a few. The Historical Society offers periodic programs and presentations of historic significance. The Senior group, with support from P&RC, hosts lunches, bingo games and bus trips for seniors and an end of summer picnic. The churches offer hymn sings, music performances and fellowship. A community garden has plots available to those wishing to grow their own vegetables. Conservation Commission sponsors hikes and educational programs on nature and conservation. The Parks and Recreation Commission (PR&C) holds many recreational and cultural programs throughout the year for citizens of all ages including band concerts, Easter egg hunts and Christmas carol sings. They display flags and bunting in the Town Center for special occasions and celebration of patriotic events and provide free ice cream to the public on Memorial Day to honor veterans. The Snowmobile Club has several dances each year and a yearly yard sale on the Town Common. Periodic Old Home Days are held bringing large crowds out to celebrate the Town's history. St. Benedict's Center, with PR&C, holds band concerts, tours and BBQ lunches for the public. The Fire Department and Auxiliary hold a chicken barbeque each summer and breakfasts during the year.

Associations/Clubs/Organizations/Offerings:

Recreational and cultural opportunities in or near Washington, NH, can be found on the town's website: www.washingtonnh.org. There is an opportunity for starting new activities; contact Parks and Recreation Commission with your ideas.

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SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT:

Our vision statement for Washington's future encourages us to expand our recreational and cultural offerings to the public, preserve our natural resources and open space, keep land available for outdoor recreation, protect our water resources and perpetuate the rural character our townspeople cherish. Many new activities were suggested including art shows, outing clubs, lectures and activities that bring together year-round and summer residents.

Through the **2013 Community Survey**, the following input was received relative to Recreation:

- **More land should be protected for recreation:**

Includes hunting, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, etc.	86% agree
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- **The Town should promote:**

Use of Pillsbury State Park and Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway	88% agree
Public access to trails	83% agree
Public access to lakes, rivers and ponds	66% agree

- **Cultural Resources/Local Community Events:**

There are adequate cultural opportunities/events available in Town	59% agree
Promotion and communication of Town cultural and recreational opportunities/events are sufficient	46% agree

The **Community Workshop** generated the following strengths/weaknesses/opportunities relative to Recreation in the breakout groups:

STRENGTHS: Camp Morgan activities and camp program; beach; Memorial Day Event; Old Home Days; Band Stand; Pillsbury State Park; Washington hiking trails; Monadnock Sunapee Greenway ("we should capitalize on these somehow"); camping at Pillsbury State; great walking; snowmobile trails; kayaking; protected land.

WEAKNESSES: Camp Morgan Lodge is highly booked and often unavailable for Town functions; public access to Highland Lake, Island Pond and Ashuelot limits use for fishing, boating and recreational visitors; activities lacking to attract young folks/families; lack of marketing of our local assets using flyers, ads, etc.; lack of communication of activities; lack of initiative to start groups (hiking, crafts, kayaking); few social opportunities that cross socio-economic boundaries; lack of services to support seniors; no coordinated network for transportation, etc.; recreational and cultural services are lacking year round.

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OPPORTUNITIES: Continue summer band concerts; improve communication regarding historic events and Town events; promote or sponsor event; offer well-rounded activities for families and young adults: year-round, sports and arts; offer more social events in Town—dances, hikes, movies, square-dancing; guided tourism: sugarhouses, hiking, mountain biking, snowmobiles, x-country skiing, kayaking; offer continuing education for all ages, i.e., classes in nature, dance, arts, crafts, technology, photography; make Pillsbury State Park free to our residents; increase Town events to bring people together to bring summer and permanent residents together; provide before and after school and camp care; encourage more recreational and cultural services to meet the needs for Washington people.

The **Community Workshop** priorities included the following Recreation priorities:

- Activities which bring together "summer" and year round folks;
- Protection of land for future generations;
- Better communication and publicity (promote events through library, Town wide event such as to promote ancestry);
- Local newsletter and community website for marketing social events and businesses.

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GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Goal A: As one of the most important recreational amenities, continue to maintain the physical assets of Camp Morgan and provide a summer camp program for youth.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that the summer camp program continues to be funded at an appropriate level to provide a quality day camp experience.
2. Provide funding to adequately maintain physical assets: buildings, basketball court, softball field, beach, swim floats, lifeguard stand, equipment sheds, playground, etc.
3. Ensure appropriate balance of use between private and public events.

Goal B: Link existing trails to the larger regional network of trails creating more trail options for multi-use purposes.

Recommendations:

1. Create several loop trails of varying length (6/12/18 miles) by linking existing trails where possible.
2. Create trails in Town Forests in conjunction with Forestry Committee, Conservation Commission and private organizations.

Goal C: Protect existing recreational opportunities and work to expand offerings to the public ensuring a variety of activities suitable to various age brackets.

Recommendations:

1. Coordinate "continuing education" event planning (nature classes, dance, art, crafts, technology, photography, quilting, kayaking, etc.) with P&RC, Library, Conservation Commission, Historical Society and public volunteers.
2. Encourage the development of new activities and programs by Parks and Recreation Commission, utilizing volunteers to help achieve success.

Goal D: Improve communication and promotion of recreational and cultural opportunities and events offered by ALL organizations (in conjunction with Goal E of Cultural and Historical Resources).

Recommendations:

1. Encourage and coordinate communication from all Town organizations to promote recreational, historical, cultural and artistic events.
2. Create/maintain a new webpage and calendar linked to the Town website, that shares event information in a creative and timely way.
3. Establish a part-time communications position to promote these events through a variety of media and channels with appropriate funding for the communications.