

# Wilbraham MA Open Space and Recreation 2022 – 2031 Action Plan

## Overview

The following action plan is the result of a careful evaluation of all data. The Committee is keenly aware of the types of goals that are realistic and achievable in light of time and financial constraints. At the same time, by focusing on a few major goals each year (and continuing to build community support for the Committee's work through a variety of means), the Committee believes that its action plan will be best fulfilled.

## Action Plan Order of Priority

In order to assure that the goals and objectives included in the Action Plan have the proper amount of time and effort applied to them, each is listed below on a timeline with the most urgent goals and objectives handled in 2022, and subsequent goals and objectives handled in ensuing years based on their importance and the amount of lead time needed to prepare for them.

What follows is a brief explanation of the priority rationale for each OSRP goal followed by the 2022-2031 OSRP Action Plan timeline with the priorities for each year listed in detail.

### *For the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee:*

- **Maintain a full working committee:** The Open Space Committee enters 2022 with a full complement of members. We must discuss how to maintain a full committee, how to attract younger members, and ways to keep each member actively involved. We also need to create a transition plan to make new members ease into their position more smoothly and to help them to be more effective.
- **Expand relationships with other Town boards, committees and groups:** As in the past, liaisons with various Town committees that Open Space is linked with will be a priority. The 2022-2031 Plan update continues to foster inter-committee involvement in open space and recreation issues. Therefore, we must continue to strengthen the relationship of the Open Space and Recreation Committee to our Conservation and DPW administrators, our Town Planner, the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the Minnechaug Land Trust, the Community Preservation Committee, and the Recreation Committee, as well as other Town groups, as warranted. We need to have Open Space Committee members serving as liaisons or following the deliberations of these groups so that we can discuss and act on pertinent issues that come up. Finally, we need to continue to participate in creating and executing the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan.
- **Complete projects already in process:** Finish up work on the re-blazing of trails, the erecting of new kiosks and restoration of older ones; continue with web page creation and posting information on our trail work and various other endeavors on social media and in newspapers.
- **Strengthen, and add to, methods of communication with the public:** With many new social media communication opportunities in place, getting out information to the public accurately and promptly must be a priority. At the same time, we need to revise our Town survey to assess "customer satisfaction" and to guide future needs assessments. We need to discuss, plan and hold more public events like guided hikes, story walks and school learning activities. We also need to brainstorm more creative ideas for the future.
- **Revise, distribute and publicize our pamphlet on land protection and create one with**

- open space/recreation information:** We need to revisit our pamphlet on land protection, add in the latest information, make it clearer, and make it available to the public. We need to work with Conservation on creating a map/brochure of all of our open space/recreation areas and make it readily available.
- **Come up with a better system to monitor the condition of our trails year-round:** We need to discuss how to beef up our system of “trail buddies,” Open Space members who monitor the various Town lands and report issues to the committee. We also need more ways to get immediate information and develop a workable system for trail maintenance alerts.
  - **Get the funding, equipment, volunteers and signage to create, and maintain, our trail system:** A major goal is to build a set of trails that each have clear, visible signage both to, and at, each venue along with clear, easy to follow trail markings. We need to discuss a funding process with appropriate groups for open space tools and supplies that allow the committee to get its hands on what it needs as it is needed, especially after disaster events such as tornados and damaging storms. Also, as our trail systems get bigger, we need more volunteers and need to come up with a system that provides us a ready supply.
  - **Join with the Conservation Commission, DPW, and other relevant bodies to deal with climate control issues through forestry management:** A lot of forest management and other resilience work took place in the last 7 years, and it has produced beneficial results in terms of preserving our land. With climate change issues becoming more prevalent, we need to encourage and support resiliency efforts in the future and keep updated on their progress so that we can help.
  - **Make monitoring of Town development a priority and establish a system to track it:** We need to continually be updated on, track, and discuss carefully, land development not just in individual parcels, but also in the bigger picture so we don’t get unfortunately surprised later. We need to make the appropriate responses to the Planning Board or other committees as needed to further our goals. This log could also help us with future OSRP updates.
  - **Participate in state-wide and regional conferences and workshops:** When possible, we need to attend regional and statewide open space conferences to learn about the latest issues and learn about available assistance.

*For the Recreation Department and Recreation Committee:*

- **Continually evaluate and solidify the recreation department programs:** The recreation department has so many programs, it needs to periodically re-evaluate them to make sure each is still viable, to figure out what is needed to make each program more effective and efficient, and to decide on what new programs need to be added.
- **Review and expand the Recreation Master Plan:** With so many venues and activities leading to future expenses for expansion and refurbishing, the Recreation department needs to constantly discuss where it is at and where it has to go to accomplish its mission. If necessary, it needs to be ready to think outside the box to accomplish goals as it did during the pandemic.
- **Come up with a viable plan for maintaining staffing and volunteers for recreation programs:** The department needs a viable plan to replenish volunteers as they depart. The department needs to evaluate and modify volunteer orientation to assure good transitions from previous volunteers. It also needs to evaluate and modify its management plan to best utilize those currently on staff.
- **Work to improve full access to recreation information by the public and work towards full pedestrian access to Town recreation areas:** Explore better ways to reach

out to all of the community so that residents get a chance to participate in programs and enjoy facilities in their neighborhood or elsewhere in Town. Discuss how pedestrians can get to its venues safely on foot or via bicycle and seek better ways to make access easier.

- **Evaluate current relations with other Town committees and seek ways to bolster them:** As with the OSRPC, the Recreation Committee needs to seek out help from other committees that deal with similar issues and evaluate the ways it communicates across committees to better get cooperation towards its goals.

## **Prioritized Action Plan Timeline of Goals with Objectives**

----- **2022** -----

### **Goal 1: OSRPC: Complete major projects already in process from the 2014 – 2021 Open Space Recreation Plan:**

#### **Objectives:**

- Establish a timeline and plans to finish all current OSRP projects not yet completed.
- Continue to participate in creating and executing the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan.
- Do a review of all trail areas for signage, blazing and maintenance needs.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Selectmen

**Funding:** CPC funds

### **Goal 2: Both OSRPC and Recreation Committee: Maintain a full working committee:**

#### **Objectives:**

- Discuss how to maintain a full committee and discuss ways to keep each member actively involved.
- Create a transition plan to make new members ease into their position more smoothly and to help them to be more effective. Also have transition plans for Chair, Recording Secretary and Trail Manager.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Recreation Committee, Selectmen

**Funding:** none

### **Goal 3: OSRPC: Make monitoring of Town development a priority and establish a system to track it:**

#### **Objectives:**

- Continually track, and discuss carefully, land development not just of individual parcels, but also discuss the bigger picture implications so we don't get unfortunately surprised later (for example: the rash of solar farms springing up).
- Make the appropriate responses to the Planning Board and other committees as needed to further our goals.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Planning Board

**Funding:** none

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## 2023

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**Goal 1: OSRPC: Discuss how to stabilize the funding, equipment, volunteers and signage needed to maintain, our trail systems:**

**Objectives:**

- Build into each trail clear, visible signage with a readily noticeable logo, both to, and at, each venue along with clearly, easy to follow trail markings.
- Discuss a practical funding system with appropriate groups for open space tools and supplies that allow the committee to get its hands on what it needs as it is needed, especially after disaster events such as damaging storms.
- Come up with a system that provides us a ready supply of volunteer trail workers to maintain our growing trail systems year round.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Conservation Commission, Selectmen

**Funding:** Conservation Fund, Town funds, CPC

**Goal 2: OSRPC: Strengthen, and add to, methods of communication with the public:**

**Objectives:**

- Make getting out timely, accurate information about OSRPC trails and activities to the public a priority.
- Continually update our Facebook, Instagram and the OSRPC Town webpages.
- Revisit our survey, create an updated one, and get it available to the public as soon as possible.
- Discuss planning more public events such as guided hikes, story walks and school learning activities, but also research and brainstorm more creative ideas for the future.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Recreation Committee, Selectmen

**Funding:** TBD

**Goal 3: OSRPC: Revisit goals and objectives addressed last year for effectiveness.**

**Responsible Party:** OSRPC

**Funding:** none

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## 2024

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**Goal 1: OSRPC: Evaluate, and seek to improve, our system of monitoring the condition of our trails year-round:**

**Objectives:**

- Discuss ways to supplement our system of open space members who monitor the various Town lands and report issues to the committee, so we can get more regular information.
- Revisit the disaster plan for tackling hard hit areas after severe weather in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Conservation Commission

**Funding:** none

**Goal 2: OSRPC: Revisit goals and objectives (bike, ADA trails, etc.) not viable in the last OSRP**

**Responsible Party:** OSRPC, Recreation Committee

**Funding:** if needed - Conservation funds or CPC funds

**Goal 3: Recreation Department/ Recreation Committee: Do a thorough evaluation of all the recreation department programs and make changes as needed:**

**Objectives:**

- Periodically re-evaluate all existing programs and venues to make sure each is still viable and figure out what is needed to make each program more effective and efficient.
- Discuss and decide on what new programs need to be added and which need to be ended.

**Responsible Parties:** Recreation Department, Recreation Committee

**Funding:** none

----- **2025** -----

**Goal 1: Both OSRPC and Recreation Department: Discuss how to expand relationships with other Town boards, committees and groups:**

**Objectives:**

- Continue to foster intra-committee involvement in open space and recreation issues.
- Build on the relationships of the Open Space and Recreation Committee to the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the Minnechaug Land Trust, the Community Preservation Committee and the Recreation Department/Recreation Committee.
- Continue to participate in executing the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan.
- Form, and work to maintain, relationships to other Town groups as warranted.

- Continue to have committee members serving as liaisons or following the deliberations of key groups so that we can discuss and act on pertinent issues that come up.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Recreation Committee, Various Other Town Committees

**Funding:** none

**Goal 2: OSRPC: Discuss how to better monitor, advise, support and assist the Conservation Commission with forestry management and other land concerns:**

**Objectives:**

- Devise a method of keeping better updated on the plans and progress of forestry management by the Conservation Commission.
- Discuss areas needing forestry management and ways for the OSRPC to have more input into forestry management issues in the future.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Conservation Commission

**Funding:** none

**Goal 3: OSRPC: Revisit goals and objectives addressed last year for effectiveness**

**Responsible Party:** OSRPC

**Funding:** none

----- **2026** -----

**Goal 1: OSRPC: Revise, distribute and publicize our pamphlets on land protection and on open space/recreation information:**

**Objectives:**

- Revisit our pamphlet, “Estate Planning and your Land,” on land protection via bequests, gifts, chapter 61, 61A, 61B, etc. and add in the latest information, make it clearer, then make it easily available to the public.
- Work with Conservation on creating a map/brochure (similar to our “This Land is Your Land brochure),” of all of our open space/recreation areas and make it readily available.

**Responsible Parties:** Conservation Commission, OSRPC

**Funding:** Conservation funds

**Goal 2: Recreation Department: Evaluate and expand the Recreation Department Master Plan:**

**Objectives:**

- Discuss and evaluate how the Wilbraham recreation system is doing with respect

to the master plan and accomplishing its mission.

- Revise the plan where needed and update the plan for the future.
- In light of the 2020 – 2021 pandemic, prepare alternative plans to address unexpected future issues that may temporarily alter what the Recreation department can offer.

**Responsible Parties:** Recreation Department, Recreation Committee

**Funding:** none

**Goal 3: OSRPC: Revisit goals and objectives addressed last year for effectiveness**

**Responsible Party:** OSRPC

**Funding:** none

----- **2027** -----

**Goal 1: Both OSRPC and Recreation Department: Evaluate participation in state-wide and regional conferences and workshops:**

**Objectives:**

- Discuss and formulate a policy on attending regional and statewide open space and recreation conferences and workshops to learn about the latest issues and learn about available assistance.
- Discuss researching and utilizing available state and regional services.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Recreation Committee, Conservation Commission, Selectmen

**Funding:** if needed - Conservation funds or CPC funds

**Goal 2: OSRPC: Take a preliminary look at the materials and sources needed for the upcoming new Open Space and Recreation Plan:**

**Objectives:**

- Compare the items in our current plan with those in the new plan format.
- Determine which items can remain and which will need to be changed.
- Divide up the sections of the plan among OSRP members and have them begin preliminary research into what resources they may need to complete their jobs.
- Make sure that the OSRPC ends the year with a good idea of who is doing what and where their best sources are so they will be able to “hit the ground running when the OSRPC starts preparing the new plan in 2029 - 2030.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRPC, Conservation Commission, Conservation Liaison

**Funding:** none

**Goal 3: Recreation Department and Recreation Committee: Come up with a viable plan for maintaining staffing and volunteers for recreation programs:**

**Objectives:**

- Create a viable plan to increase volunteers and replenish volunteers as they depart.
- Evaluate and improve volunteer orientation to assure good transitions from previous volunteers.
- Evaluate and adjust its management plan to best utilize those currently on staff.

**Responsible Parties:** Recreation Department, Recreation Committee

**Funding:** none

**Goal 4: OSRPC: Revisit goals and objectives addressed last year for effectiveness and continue work on what wasn't completed.**

**Responsible Party:** OSRPC

**Funding:** none

----- **2028** -----

**Goal 1: OSRPC: Begin planning for a new OSRP survey:**

**Objectives:**

- Review the effectiveness of the last OSRP survey, how it was rolled out and tallied, and what its statistics tell us.
- Discuss any new issues that may have come up recently or will be coming up that may need to be added and tweak as needed.
- Come up with a timeline from start to finish that will result in the new OSRP survey completed with plenty of time to get it out to the public, compile and analyze statistics and prepare for creating the goals in our next OSRP Action Plan.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRPC, Conservation Commission, Conservation Liaison

**Funding:** none

**Goal 2: OSRPC: Discuss the effectiveness of current projects in-process and how they align with public feedback in our last survey:**

**Objectives:**

- Examine in-process “actionable, on-the-ground projects” such as repair/maintenance of kiosks, trail signs and blazes.
- Revisit and address the feedback from our last survey such as trail access directly from sidewalks.

**Responsible Party:** OSRPC

**Funding:** none

**Goal 3: Parks and Recreation Department: Work to improve full access to recreation information by the public and work towards full pedestrian access to Town recreation areas:**

**Objectives:**

- Explore proactive ways, beyond the passive venues already in place, to actively reach out and communicate with all of the community so that all get a chance to participate in programs and enjoy facilities in their neighborhood or elsewhere in Town.
- Discuss how pedestrians can get to recreation venues safely on foot or via bicycle and seek better ways to make access easier (sidewalks, bike trails, ADA trails).

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Recreation Department, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Selectmen

**Funding:** CPC funds, Town funds

----- **2029** -----

**Goal 1: OSRPC: Revisit the responsibilities of all parties involved with Conservation and Open Space and work out a coordinated plan to restructure the responsibilities to best achieve our goals:**

**Objectives:**

- Brainstorm the complete list of specific tasks needed to be accomplished by Conservation and Open Space to achieve our Action Plan Goals.
- Have all parties discuss all ongoing issues, such as how to recruit younger participants and how to best divide the responsibilities for carrying out our goals.
- Come up with an operational plan to coordinate efforts and to assure that all tasks are regularly completed effectively and efficiently.
- Set up liaisons among the parties involved that will report regularly back and forth on progress.

**Responsible Parties:** Conservation Commission, OSRPC, Conservation Liaison, DPW Liaison and Town Planner

**Funding:** None

**Goal 2: Parks & Recreation Department and Playground & Recreation Commission: Prioritize property from a Parks and Recreation development standpoint:**

**Objectives:**

- Rank potential properties that could be developed to further enhance recreational opportunities for the Town of Wilbraham.
- Upon ranking, recommend to Town of Wilbraham to explore renovation, purchase and or sale of potential properties.
- Explore funding and creation of master plans for parcels that could be further developed.

**Responsible Parties:** Parks & Recreation Department, Playground & Recreation Commission

**Funding:** Town Funds, CPC, Grants

**Goal 3: OSRPC: Review the goals and objectives addressed in the Wilbraham Municipal Vulnerability Plan:**

**Objectives:**

- Explain the purpose of the MVP for new OSRPC members and review it for veteran members.
- Brainstorm the role that the OSRPC plays in the MVP.
- Discuss ways the OSRPC can be best prepared to provide help in the instance of an emergency situation.

**Responsible Party:** OSRPC

**Funding:** if needed - Conservation funds or CPC funds

----- **2030** -----

**Goal 1: OSRPC: Assemble all responsible parties and do a climate change examination and resiliency update of all Conservation/Open Space areas:**

**Objectives:**

- Do a complete audit of all existing and potential future climate change projects and issues and determine possible workable resiliency solutions.
- Come up with a plan, timeline and funding proposal to complete the restoration efforts in the various parcels.
- Determine which parties will be responsible for which areas and apply for funds as needed.
- Set up a monitoring system to detect future problems early on.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRP Committee, Conservation Commission, Conservation Liaison, DPW Liaison and Town Planner

**Funding:** if needed - Conservation funds, CPC funds, State Grants

**Goal 2: OSRPC: Prepare to create the 2032 – 2042 Open Space and Recreation Plan:**

**Objectives:**

- Promote the upcoming OSRP update creation process in social media and in the press, and get public input.
- Post OSRP creation information on the OSRPC Facebook/Instagram pages and in the Town newspaper and update as appropriate.
- Have OSRPC members previously assigned to do preliminary OSRP research review their plans for the completion of their parts to the OSRPC.
- Assign other committee member responsibilities as needed.
- Set a specific, timeline for the presentation of each part of the plan and its completion.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRPC, Conservation Commission, Conservation Liaison  
**Funding:** none

**Goal 3: *Parks & Recreation Department and Playground & Recreation Commission: Create the five year vision for the Parks & Recreation Department:***

**Objectives:**

- Meet with all key stakeholders to plan out the vision for the next five years as it relates to Parks & Recreation in the Town of Wilbraham.
- Develop a timeline for getting the vision researched, written, edited and finalized.
- Determine and assign Commission and Department member responsibilities.

**Responsible Parties:** Parks & Recreation Department, Playground & Recreation Commission  
**Funding:** none

----- **2031** -----

**Goal 1: *OSRPC: Create the 2032 – 2042 OSRP, present it to the appropriate bodies and officials, and submit it to the State DCR for approval.***

**Objectives:**

- Create the Action Plan for the new OSRP from survey data, from the research of members, and from existing needs.
- Meet regularly to discuss, edit and piece together the new OSRP sections.
- Utilize local media to feature what is happening as the plan is created month by month. Also, use social media to inform the public and get feedback.
- Present the completed OSRP to the relevant committees and the Town Administrator.
- Submit the 2032 – 2042 OSRP to the State DCR for approval.

**Responsible Parties:** OSRPC, Conservation Commission, Conservation Liaison, DPW Liaison and Town Planner  
**Funding:** none

**Goal 2: *Parks & Recreation Department and Playground & Recreation Commission: Explore further opportunities/venues to offer Adult Education Programs:***

**Objectives:**

- Department research potential Adult Education offerings to provide to the Town of Wilbraham.
- Commission evaluate and discuss potential Adult Education offerings.
- Move forward securing locations to offer preferred Adult Education programs and marketing programs to the general public.

**Responsible Parties:** Parks & Recreation Department, Playground & Recreation Commission

**Funding:** none

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## **Action Plan Map**

The Action Plan Map following lists all of the Open Space, Conservation and Recreation land in Wilbraham. These sites are the ones referred to in detail throughout this document and explained in our “This Land is Your Land” Public Lands Brochure (2026 Goal 1).

The Recreation programs referred to mostly take place on the Town’s Spec Pond fields shown in the northern part of the map in green or at the school areas in blue.

# 2022-2031 WILBRAHAM OSRP ACTION PLAN MAP

