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## Section VII: Analysis of Needs

The information and goals outlined in the previous sections have been analyzed to determine specific areas where additional improvement may be necessary or desirable.

### A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The citizens of Falmouth have shown exemplary leadership in protecting land and water resources through careful regulatory controls and acquisition policies. However, as stated in the open space goal, there is consensus to increase the amount of open space to 30% of the dry land area; therefore the town needs to add 2,766 acres to the inventory of protected land.

The town is grateful to have the dedicated volunteers of The 300 Committee to assist with finding and negotiating to purchase land in the context of a comprehensive land acquisition strategy. As state and municipal budgets become increasingly strained, partnering, leveraging and using limited funds in the most efficient and effective manner will become even more important. In planning for future acquisition, the town needs to concentrate its efforts to: protect the most sensitive natural resources and habitats; obtain as many of the remaining large tracts as possible; strategic acquisition of parcels that provide links between existing open space parcels; and explore increased use of less-than-fee acquisition.

In order to increase access to, and appreciation for the existing supply of open space, Falmouth needs to consider a formal policy to plan for, and acquire, green belt connections throughout town. There continue to be critical gaps in the Moraine Trail that runs north and south from Woods Hole to the Crane Wildlife Management Area that need to be filled. A 6-mile extension of the Shining Sea Bikepath has been completed, but now attention needs to be focused on getting cyclists around in other parts of town. The town has partnered with the Cape Cod Commission to plan bike lanes throughout the community. Major pieces are in place to create a new greenbelt in the eastern part of town running along the Coonamesett River from the Crane Wildlife Management Area to Great Pond and Vineyard Sound, however a concentrated



*Along the Quashnet River  
Source: The 300 Committee*

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planning and implementation effort is needed to make this a viable corridor. Finally, a greenway along the Childs and Quashnet River to the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge needs to be given serious consideration and attention. A greenway from Little Pond to the Teaticket School is also under consideration and a scope of work with the Cape Cod Commission is nearing completion.

One of the most long-standing and entrenched needs in Falmouth is to improve water quality in the coastal ponds and estuaries. The high levels of Nitrogen in the groundwater, caused partly by the prolific use of on-site septic systems, is leading to very poor water quality that has resulted in loss of eelgrass, fish kills and limited use of the coastline for recreational pursuits such as swimming and fishing. The town has completed its comprehensive wastewater planning efforts, including phased sewer expansion and treatment plant options; however. The realization of a municipal-level sewer system will require millions of dollars in funding, and unending maintenance. A ballot question at the May 2014 election will determine funding and the state has committed to zero percent loans.

The town also needs to continue to work to limit land use conflicts within the drinking water protection overlay districts to protect the quality of the groundwater flowing to the wells and Long Pond surface supply. While residential development certainly impacts groundwater quality, special attention needs to be paid to abandoned landfills, preexisting industrial uses and ongoing contamination from the Massachusetts Military Reservation. Planning to meet increased future demands for drinking water requires careful regulation and land protection measures to be in place long in advance.

#### B. Summary of Community's Needs

The large number of summer visitors heavily influence forecasts of recreational demand for towns on Cape Cod. There is an increased use of the region's coastline, hiking and biking trails and playgrounds in the summer months. The regional need for increased summer recreational-activities are also noted by the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Many of the issues and priorities identified in the Draft 2012 SCORP apply to Falmouth and the Cape as a whole.

The Cape's coastal beaches are well used by residents and visitors. As previously noted in Section V, Falmouth is fortunate to have 9 public coastal beaches and 1 public fresh water beach, however, during the height of summer there is demand for more beaches and beach amenities. In addition to the land itself, there is a need for parking lots, staff, concession stands and comfort stations to serve the beach users. Although beaches may meet the summer needs of some swimmers, Falmouth does not have a municipal pool to serve those who would prefer to swim indoors or throughout the winter, or use such a facility for physical therapy and rehabilitation. There are private pools at some of the hotels in town, but the construction of a public, indoor pool continues to be one of the most important recreational goals for Falmouth.

The remaining four identified needs, bike lanes, sidewalks and paths, and parks (including playgrounds and tennis courts) function best when they are organized as part of a larger system. The Recreation Department has advocated for pocket parks to be

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distributed throughout the numerous neighborhoods in Falmouth. Fine-grained, neighborhood parks, some with tennis courts, playgrounds, playing fields, or dog parks would allow residents to access recreation areas close to home, instead of driving to one of the large areas, such as Beebe Woods or the Coonamessett Reservation. A network of neighborhood parks, connected by sidewalks, bikeways, or trails would be even more useful by meeting the demand for parks and safe places to walk. An interconnected network would give children and adults a safe alternative to driving and would allow for recreation and exercise along the route to and from the park.

Needs identified for the elderly or handicapped include a public indoor swimming pool, additional and improved sidewalks, upgrades to the public beaches to facilitate access and movement, and a new senior center. Additional improvements to all the parks, playgrounds and conservation areas could be undertaken to enhance the experience of the elderly or disabled population and the development of a comprehensive work plan has been identified later in the plan as an action to be undertaken.

Another area identified for special consideration is protecting, preserving and increasing the agricultural resources in the community, including exploring the possibility of establishing community gardens throughout the neighborhoods. Efforts should be taken to protect important agricultural land from development and provide incentives to maintain the land as working farms. In addition to providing visual relief from the man-made world, agriculture may allow more residents to obtain locally grown food and provides farming jobs. By promoting working farms and farmers markets, additional attention will be drawn to the important issues surrounding the food supply that feeds Falmouth families and increasing the public awareness of the important role of agriculture.

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

After land is acquired or a park constructed, the long-term maintenance and management needs demand constant attention and resources. If any purchase or improvement is to become a treasured community resource, the attractiveness, cleanliness, safety, and maintenance are of utmost importance. The town's parks and open spaces have to be accessible and safe for a multitude of users, such as children, elderly, disabled, bicyclists, runners, walkers, organized teams and our pets, among many others.

Furthermore, the human demands have to be balanced by the need to protect important natural resources and systems. The town's open spaces are called upon to recharge and filter the groundwater, provide plant and animal habitat, and clean the air. The environmental assets and the need for human enjoyment of the space do not have to be mutually exclusive, but must be designed and programmed to provide the most benefit with the least amount of harm.

The Town of Falmouth has begun looking at how town-owned land is used and distributed through the planning process for the Local Comprehensive Plan and the Housing Production Plan. It is abundantly clear that the land has to be used as

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efficiently and judiciously as possible if housing, infrastructure, facility, recreation and habitat needs are to be met.

The Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Conservation Commission completed a Land Use Priority Report in January 2009, to take a comprehensive and systematic look at the land owned by the town, its location, qualities and strengths. The result of this process is to identify optimal sites for capital investments, such as a treatment plant, affordable housing, new parks and forests, playgrounds, tennis courts, and a senior center, among many other needs. The goal will be to have sites for intensive uses located away from sensitive environmental resources such as wetlands, vernal pools and areas of endangered habitat. Likewise, the Land Use Priority report identifies unprotected land of high environmental value that should be protected as open space, and note any parcels of low value that may currently be protected, but may be better suited for other use.

Falmouth is committed to increasing both the amount and quality of land devoted to open space preservation and recreation, but to do so in the most efficient and effective manner possible that balances the need for growth and development with the strong protection of the natural world. The people of Falmouth and our visitors need houses, roads, schools, jobs, and shops, but they also need a viable and vigorous natural environment to provide rest and solace from ever more stressful lives.

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## Section VIII: Goals & Objectives

Falmouth's previous Open Space and Recreation Plans, and Local Comprehensive Plan update form the basis for the goals and policies listed below. The Conservation Commission, the Recreation Committee and The 300 Committee have been active participants in the Comprehensive Plan update and that public process heavily influenced the following goals and policies.

**Goal 1: Priority 1** – To acquire 30% of Falmouth's total land area as high quality, permanently protected open space.

*Policy 1:* Identify, and then restrict, unprotected, environmentally valuable town-owned land as part of the Land Use Priority Report.

*Policy 2:* Increase the use of less-than-fee ownership tools to restrict privately owned property, especially those with wetlands resources, agricultural land, rare and endangered species, and outstanding habitat.

*Policy 3:* Open space acquisitions should be targeted to create a town-wide system of habitat reserves connected by trails, including a Coonamesett River Greenway.

*Policy 4:* The Planning Board will strongly encourage landowners to utilize the cluster subdivision special permit when reviewing subdivision plans. Preserved open space shall be designed as contiguous, shall connect with adjacent open space parcels where available, and shall be permanently restricted.

*Policy 5:* All open space owned by the town shall allow for public access; furthermore, less-than-fee ownership shall allow for public access to the greatest extent possible.

**Goal 2: Priority 2** – Increase the number and type of passive and active recreational opportunities that may be pursued by Falmouth residents and visitors.

*Policy 1:* Fulfill the recommendation of the Recreation Committee to construct neighborhood-scale parks throughout town, including playgrounds, tennis and basketball courts, playing fields, and fitness stations.

*Policy 2:* Increase indoor recreation opportunities, to include swimming.

*Policy 3:* After the property is acquired for a trail system, provide walking, biking, hiking, ski & snowshoe paths for year-round use.

*Policy 4:* Increase both fresh and saltwater beach areas.

*Policy 5:* Encourage new roadways be designed and constructed with bike lanes; retrofit existing roads to include dedicated bike lanes.

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**Goal 3: Priority 3** – To maintain and expand the use of existing open space and recreational opportunities.

*Policy 1:* The land management program shall be expanded to serve all town-owned open space parcels and forests. The 300 Committee’s land stewards and the Conservation Commission are instrumental in ensuring the long-term health of the town’s open spaces.

*Policy 2:* Accessibility will be improved to the greatest extent possible at all recreation and open space areas to better serve those with physical, visual, auditory, and other disabilities.

*Policy 3:* The town shall improve the condition of existing parks by adequately budgeting for staffing and capital improvements, as well as expand use through programming for off-season activities and adding lights to extend playing time.

*Policy 4:* Increasing public access (including parking), improving safety and increasing maintenance at existing open space and recreational facilities shall be taken into consideration when discussing allocation of money for adding acreage to the inventory of town-owned resources.

*Policy 5:* Map, monitor and enforce all Conservation Restrictions on a regular schedule.

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## Section IX: Five-Year Action Plan

Establish a multi-jurisdictional, accountable, working group responsible for oversight, management and implementation of the 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Responsible Party: Board of Selectmen  
Schedule Range: Immediate  
Funding: None  
Status: On-going

A. *Acquisition of permanently protected open space*

1. Adopt a strategy to acquire coastal plain ponds (kettle ponds) and surrounding buffers, which are among the most rare wetland community types. This resource should be provided the highest level of protection and shielded from groundwater withdrawal and pollution.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission  
Schedule Range: Year 1-5  
Funding: Local Acquisitions Natural Diversity (LAND),  
Conservation Partnership Grants (CPG),  
Community Preservation Act (CPA)  
Status: Ongoing

2. Adopt a strategy; including acquisition and less-than-fee restrictions, to protect riparian wetland systems in order to provide trail corridors, flood storage, shoreline stabilization and wildlife habitat.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission  
Schedule Range: Year 1-5  
Funding: Department of Interior Grants  
Status: On-going

3. Work with neighboring communities and the Cape Cod Commission to create the corridor for a regional long-distance trail system - Cape Cod Pathways

Responsible Party:  
Schedule Range: Year 1-5  
Funding: Parkland Acquisition & Renovations for  
Communities (PARC), CCC, CPA  
Status: Cape Cod Pathways Scope of Work completed with  
CCC, with pathways linkage ongoing.

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4. Develop a clear, concise handbook for residents interested in donating land to the town outlining the different types of transfers and restrictions available.

Responsible Party: Legal Department/300 Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 1-5  
Funding: Town, Private donations  
Status: TBD

5. Establish criteria to evaluate Chapter 61, 61A or 61B lands as they become available so that the right of first refusal may be exercised in a timely manner.

Responsible Party: 300 Committee and Agricultural Commission  
Schedule Range: Year 3-5  
Funding: None  
Status: TBD

6. Determine if any Ch. 61, 61A, or 61B right of first refusals should be transferred to a non-profit organization in the event that the town is unable to act within 120 days.

Responsible Party: Board of Selectmen, Agricultural Commission, Conservation Commission, DNR  
Schedule Range: Year 3-5  
Funding: None  
Status: TBD

7. Evaluate the status of the town's tax title land and preserve those properties that are valuable for open space purposes.

Responsible Party: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission  
Schedule Range: Year 4-5  
Funding: None  
Status: Land Use Priority Report 2009 completed.

8. Develop strategic land acquisition plans with state agencies that own land within Falmouth, along with neighboring towns to build upon the region's existing green infrastructure.

Responsible Party: Board of Selectmen, Cape Cod Commission Representative  
Schedule Range: Year 1-5  
Funding: None  
Status: On-going

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9. Monitor property that fronts on fresh and salt water bodies, or is adjacent to existing public beaches, or provides points of access to the water; initiate and maintain communication with the property owners.

Responsible Party: 300 Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 5  
Funding: Private  
Status: TBD

10. Finish access acquisition for the "Moraine Trail," then start building lateral connections to the east and west.

Responsible Party: 300 Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 1-5  
Funding: Private, CPA  
Status: On-going

*B. Increase the number and types of recreational opportunities available.*

1. Evaluate all existing parks to determine what additional uses may be accommodated on existing land (i.e. tennis courts, playgrounds, basketball courts, dog parks, lighting). Provide a comprehensive plan of improvements to the Board of Selectmen.

Responsible Party: Recreation Committee, Parks Department  
Schedule Range: Year 1  
Funding: None

2. Transfer the football program to Falmouth High School and dedicate the space at the Guv Fuller complex for use by the community at large.

Responsible Party: School Committee and Recreation Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 1  
Funding: None

3. Establish a route for a town-wide system of bikeways and outline necessary improvements to public ways.

Responsible Party: Engineering, Highway Division, Bikeways Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 2  
Funding: None

4. Identify existing town-owned land that is able to support a disbursed, neighborhood-scale system of parks and community gardens; begin design and construction.

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Responsible Party: Recreation Committee & Parks Division  
Schedule Range: Year 2  
Funding: None

5. Begin design and construction of a trail along the Coonamesett River Greenway as a high priority project and finalize route with neighboring towns for a regional network.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Engineering & Parks Division  
Schedule Range: Year 1  
Funding: PARC, Town

6. Identify a site for a municipal swimming pool and issue an RFP for its completion.

Responsible Party: Board of Selectmen, Recreation Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 3  
Funding: Town, Donations

7. Initiate a multi-year, sustained effort to provide sidewalks along public ways to meet a variety of needs, including transportation alternatives, active recreation, and to improve public health. Expand the program to include healthy routes to school.

Responsible Party: Director of Public Works  
Schedule Range: Year 4  
Funding: Town, Chapter 90, CCC mitigation funds

8. Expand town-sponsored youth and adult sports leagues to include activities not previously available.

Responsible Party: Recreation Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 4  
Funding: Town, User fees

9. Communicate with all the private recreational groups in town (i.e. youth hockey, track club, curling club, hunting clubs, etc.) to compile an exhaustive list of available activities, and locations. Continue to strengthen the public private relationship to meet institute policies that meet the needs of private recreational groups.

Responsible Party: Recreation Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 5  
Funding: None

*B. Improve the condition of existing resources and expand the public's use.*

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1. Develop a resource-based management plan for all town-owned open space to identify and mitigate conflicts and establish the long-term operation for each parcel. Such plans should include:
    - a. Complete assessment of the condition of the parcel
    - b. Opportunities to improve the resource
    - c. Guidelines to control the use and minimize adverse impacts
    - d. Opportunities for the development of appropriate recreational facilities such as trails, signs, parking, picnic areas, nature study, and observation points
    - e. Increased access for disabled, elderly or the very young
    - f. Expansion of the stewardship program
    - g. Utilize wildlife and forestry management practices to ensure the long term health of the habitat and animal population

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, The 300 Committee, Commission on Disabilities  
Schedule Range: Year 1  
Funding: Town, CCC

2. Commission an infrastructure condition survey for all town-owned beaches, parks, playgrounds and other recreation facilities to develop a detailed and comprehensive list of improvements that leads to a capital budget and list of priorities. Evaluate the staffing needs to ensure adequate upkeep of the town's resources.

Responsible Party: Board of Selectmen, Beach Committee, Parks Department, Facilities Maintenance  
Schedule Range: Year 1  
Funding: Town

3. Adopt enhanced universal access provisions at all town-owned recreation facilities and open space parcels to ensure the highest level of access for disabled members of the Falmouth community. Develop a detailed list of improvements for parking lots, walkways, sidewalks, paths, play surfaces and a uniform system of signs to increase accessibility for the disabled, elderly and very young.

Responsible Party: Human Services Department, Commission on Disabilities, Parks Division, and Board of Selectmen  
Schedule Range: Year 1  
Funding: Town, CCC

4. Continue and strengthen the public information program to educate residents, school children and visitors about water supply protection and

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water conservation. This program should include brochures and workshops on water conservation practices and on the proper disposal of household hazardous wastes. Integrate this action into the school curriculum and possibly expand it to include: solid waste, electricity conservation and carbon footprints.

Responsible Party: Director of Public Works, Board of Health, School Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 1  
Funding: Town

5. Develop a wetlands restoration program for tidally restricted former salt marsh now dominated by common reed or other non-salt marsh plants. Develop a mitigation procedure that can be utilized on both public and private land.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission  
Schedule Range: Year 2  
Funding: CPA, Town, Private donations

6. Overhaul the Town of Falmouth's storm water regulations to integrate Low Impact Development practices. Begin to retrofit municipal properties and require new private development to follow best practices for bio-retention and filtration.

Responsible Party: Engineering Division, Conservation Commission, and Planning Board  
Schedule Range: Year 2  
Funding: None

7. Develop a program to partner with school science programs to explore biodiversity, watershed protection, and ecosystem integrity.

Responsible Party: School Department & Conservation Commission  
Schedule Range: Year 3  
Funding: None

8. Develop a series of guides and maps so that residents and visitors are able to find the town's hiking trails, ponds and open spaces. Include details about parking, facilities, hours of operation, directions, ADA access, and tips on how to be an appropriate steward of the resource.

Responsible Party: The 300 Committee, Planning Department, GIS Department, and Conservation Commission, Commission on Disabilities  
Schedule Range: Year 3  
Funding: Town, Private

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9. Provide public transportation access to major beaches, open space and recreation areas in Falmouth during the summer months.

Responsible Party: Transportation Management Committee, Planning Board, CCRTA Representative, Beach Committee  
Schedule Range: Year 4  
Funding: CCRTA, Town

10. Develop plans for the use of selected freshwater ponds for recreation facilities such as beaches, docks, parking and restrooms. Additionally, assess the needs of water-based recreation groups including swimmers, windsurfers and boaters.

Responsible Party: Beach Committee, DPW, Harbormaster  
Schedule Range: Year 5  
Funding: None