

CHAPTER 6

RECREATION

1. Introduction

This recreation chapter is prepared in compliance with recently revised state statutes dealing with the completion of municipal master plans [RSA 674:2 III (F)]. This enabling statute requires, as appropriate, the preparation of "A recreation section which shows existing recreation areas and addresses future recreation needs." This is an appropriate component of the town's master plan because recreation is an important part of Conway's quality of life and the taxpayers contribute over a quarter of a million dollars to recreation annually. Furthermore, the recreation facility and service needs addressed in this chapter provide a framework that may be required in order to secure funding for recreation infrastructure and programs.

Recreation facilities and services in Conway are provided by a number of different agencies. Some are private commercial enterprises, a few are private not-for-profit organizations and others are governmental agencies. This chapter will focus on town owned facilities and services administered by Conway's Parks and Recreation Department. Still, references may be made to other recreation resources when they are of significance to the town and its recreation program.

This chapter is a revision of the Recreation chapter (referred to as Report #11) adopted as part of Conway's Master Plan in April 1994. This revision includes the relevant information contained in the 1994 report, as well as new information and data that have been realized over the past decade. This chapter also addresses the goals and visions that were expressed in various public workshops held throughout the public participation process dedicated to the preparation of this master plan.

2. Summary of Findings and Conclusions

- As a recreation resort destination, the provision of recreation facilities and services in Conway is spread among a myriad of public and private agencies.
- Conway is rich with recreation resources.
- The only significant recreation deficiency in Conway is the absence of an integrated greenway and multipurpose trail system.
- Conway should consider developing a Greenway/Trail Master Plan and implementation strategy.
- The town should be especially mindful of the recreation potential around Pequawket Pond and the rehabilitated Kearsarge site in Conway Village.
- Upon completion of a Greenway/Trail Master Plan, the town should consider amendments to its regulations that would facilitate the development of the greenway/trail system.
- Future enhancements to Conway's recreation resources should incorporate funding and land resources associated with the schools and other units of local governments.
- The Board of Selectmen, through the Recreation Department, should study the feasibility of establishing a skateboard/roller blade park for the community.

3. Recreation Resource Administration

Due to the nature of Conway's governmental structure the administration of recreation resources and services is spread among a myriad of agencies. Along with federal and state agencies, units of local government include the town, School Board (SAU 9) and precincts. There are also not-for-profit organizations, such as the North Conway Community Center, that provide recreation facilities and programs in the community that are administered by Conway's Parks and Recreation Department. This department is also responsible for maintenance of active play services, passive parks and cemeteries. A key function of the Recreation

Department is coordination with the various agencies that share facilities and services with the department.

4. Inventory of Recreation Resources

Conway's recreation resources vary in size, type of facility and intensity of use. Some serve local neighborhoods, some serve the community at large, while others draw users from the Mount Washington Valley and visitors from away. These facilities are represented on Map 6-1. A summary of the types of uses of each facility is outlined in Table 6-1 at the end of this chapter.

As these exhibits illustrate, Conway has a diverse system of parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities. There are more than 25 facilities comprising Conway's recreation system ranging from tot-lots and sitting parks to multi-use town-wide facilities and natural environmental areas. Although this chapter focuses on town owned facilities, other facilities are also included in this inventory of recreation resources that are available in the community and/or affiliated with the Parks and Recreation Department.

- *Conway Lake Beach - 1 Acre - Town Owned*
This is one of Conway's two municipal beach facilities. It is comprised of two small parcels of land adjacent to the dam at the north end of Conway Lake. The beach itself is located on the south side of Brownfield Road and provides approximately 3,500 square feet of beach area and 150 feet of water frontage. This parcel also includes a boat launch. The second parcel is located on the north side of Brownfield Road and provides 25 public parking spaces and portable toilets (seasonal).
- *Pine Tree School - 16 Acres - School Park*
This park is associated with Pine Tree Elementary School on Mill Street in Center Conway. It is school property administered by SAU 9, however its use is scheduled by the Parks and Recreation Department. This facility provides two little league baseball fields, a soccer field, a gymnasium with an indoor basketball court, a half basketball court and a newly constructed playground. There are 50 parking spaces and restrooms are located in the school.
- *Mill Street Park - 0.1 Acre - Town Owned*
Mill Street Park is a tiny space at the intersection of Mill Street and East Main Street (Routes 302/113). Although it has very limited recreation potential, it does serve as a focal point for Center Conway Village.
- *Conway Recreation Center - 5 Acres - Town Owned*
The Conway Recreation Center includes recreation facilities, administrative space for the Parks and Recreation Department and supplemental office space. It includes a multipurpose ball field that can accommodate little league baseball, soccer, field hockey and football, a gymnasium with an indoor basketball court, an outdoor basketball court, and a playground. The site also includes an indoor gymnasium (with a basketball court), library, art room, game room, computer lab, kitchen and restrooms. There are 50 public parking spaces.
- *Smith-Eastman Park - 1.5 Acres - Town Owned*
This park is located on the north side of the Saco River at the old bridge site south of the Police Station on East Conway Road. It provides a picnic area along with access to the Saco River and a canoe launch. There are 20 public parking spaces and a portable toilet (seasonal).
- *Nasby-King Field - 4.5 Acres - Privately Owned*
This multi-purpose ball field can accommodate Babe Ruth baseball, softball, soccer, field hockey and football. The field is owned by American Legion Post 46, a private not-for-profit organization. Although it is privately owned, the town benefits from a long-term lease agreement. The Parks and Recreation Department maintains and schedules the use of the field. This facility has 30 parking spaces and a portable toilet (seasonal).
- *Conway Library Park - 1.5 Acres - Town Owned*
This passive green space is adjacent to the library and serves as a focal point in Conway Village. There are 28 parking spaces adjacent to the park and restrooms are available in the Library.
- *Washington Street Park - 0.3 Acre - Town Owned*
Washington Street Park is a tiny space at the intersection of Washington Street and East Side Road. Although it has very limited recreation potential, it does serve as a focal point for Conway Village. There are five parking spaces on the street adjacent to the park.
- *Davis Park - 4 Acres - Town Owned*
Davis Park is adjacent to the Saco River on East Side Road at the Covered Bridge. The facility includes three tennis courts, two basketball courts, swings, river access and a 5,000 square foot beach. The site also has 18 parking spaces and a portable toilet (seasonal).
- *Swift River Bridge Park - 0.5 Acre – Town Owned*
This park is adjacent to the Swift River on West Side Road at the edge of Conway Village. It is passive park space with a scenic view of the Swift River, river access, picnic tables and eight parking spaces.
- *Kennett Fields - 13 Acres - School Park*

This recreation facility is adjacent to the Kennett High School/Conway Elementary School complex that is administered by SAU 9. Only the use of the ball field at Conway Elementary is scheduled by the Parks and Recreation Department. It hosts nine ball fields that accommodate a variety of sports including soccer, football, field hockey, baseball and softball. It also has a grass running track. The school complex includes two gymnasiums and restroom facilities. A playground, little league baseball field and a half basketball court is located adjacent to the Conway Elementary School. There are over 120 parking spaces associated with the complex.

- *Conway Village Park - 2.5 Acres - Conway Fire District Owned*

This facility is located on Main Street in Conway Village adjacent to the Fire Station. It reaches back to Pequawket Pond and Lake Street. The District has been awarded a substantial grant to redevelop the property in accordance with a recently approved park master plan. Upon completion, the park will provide both passive and active recreation spaces including a walking path that meanders along Pequawket Pond, a large greenspace, accommodations for outdoor festivals, a bandstand and an outdoor skating rink. The facility also includes 40 parking spaces accessed from Main Street.

- *Saco Valley Overlook - 12 Acres - Town Owned*

The Saco Valley overlook provides a small pullout area with eight parking spaces along Route 16 just south of the intersection of Routes 16 and 302. It hosts a spectacular view of the valley.

- *Redstone Park - 0.1 Acre - Town Owned*

Redstone Park is a tiny space at the intersection of Eastman Road (Rte. 302) and Mountain Street. Although it has very limited recreation potential, it does serve as a focal point for Redstone.

- *Pudding Pond - 207 Acres - Town Owned*

This land is located on the east side of the North/South Road half a mile south of Artist Falls Road. The Pudding Pond property is under the stewardship of the Conway Conservation Commission. Its improvements, relative to recreation, are limited to a segment of trail that leads to the pond. This parcel, in accordance with a forest management plan, has outstanding potential for recreational trails.

- *North Conway Community Center - 4.5 Acres - Privately Owned*

This facility is owned by a private not-for-profit organization. Although it is not a town administered facility, a significant amount of its funding (\$70,000 in 2002) is appropriated by the town through the town meeting process. The facility includes a bandstand, a gymnasium with an indoor basketball court, an outdoor basketball court, a mini-water (spray) park, a picnic area, a game room, office space and restrooms. The town provides six public parking spaces.

- *Schouler Park - 3 Acres - Town Owned*

Schouler park is located in North Conway Village adjacent to the Conway Scenic Railroad. It includes a large open green area with a multipurpose ball field that hosts little league baseball, girls softball, soccer, field hockey, football, an outdoor skating rink and outdoor festivals. There are 40 parking public spaces and portable toilets (seasonal).

- *Whitaker Homesite/Woods - 192 Acres - Town Owned*

This facility is located in North Conway on Route 16 at the north end of the Village. It reaches eastward all the way to Kearsarge Road. The facilities include a new building with meeting rooms, office space and restrooms. Outdoor uses include a multipurpose ball field that accommodates Babe Ruth baseball, softball, soccer, field hockey and football, as well as over 45 kilometers of trails for walking, biking and Nordic skiing. There are 32 parking spaces and supplemental portable toilets (seasonal). Parking is also available next to the facility at John Fuller School on weekends and during school vacation periods.

- *John Fuller School - 11 Acres - School Park*

This park is associated with John Fuller Elementary School on Pine Street in North Conway. It is school property administered by SAU 9. The Parks and Recreation Department has no administrative role related to this facility. There is a little league baseball field, a gymnasium with an indoor basketball court and a newly constructed playground. There are 50 parking spaces and restrooms located in the school building.

- *Hussey Field - 18 Acres - Town Owned*

This facility is located on River Road in North Conway and borders the Saco River. The site includes a multipurpose ball field that accommodates little league baseball, girls softball, soccer, field hockey and football. It also has a large open field that accommodates outdoor festivals. The site provides six parking spaces, but can be expanded to accommodate larger volumes of vehicles during scheduled events.

- *First River Bridge Park - 4 Acres - Town Owned*

This facility is located on River Road in North Conway. It is across the river from Hussey Field. The facility includes an open field that accommodates a variety of activities including picnics as well as a small beach area with river access. The site also has 20 parking spaces and a portable toilet (seasonal).

- *Shedd Woods - 13 Acres - Town Owned*

Shedd Woods are located between the Saco River and Route 16 adjacent to the Memorial Hospital. The facilities at Shedd Woods are limited to cross country skiing and hiking, along with mountain bike trails and a picnic area. The site also provides

a scenic view of the valley.

- *Artist Falls Park - 0.1 Acre - State Owned*

Artist Falls Park is located in the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT) right-of-way at the intersection Route 16 and Artist Falls Road. Even though the park has very limited recreation potential, it does provide some passive green space. Although the property is state owned, it is maintained by the town.

- *Depot Street Park - 1 Acre - Town Owned*

Depot Street Park is located at the intersection of Route 16 and Depot Street. Although it has very limited recreation potential, it does provide some passive green space, 29 parking spaces and a bus pull-out area.

- *Walker's Pond- 13 Acres - Town Owned*

Walker's Pond is located on Mill Street adjacent to the Conway Town Beach parking lot. This is a wild preserve area. It includes historic resources and significant trail enhancements that were completed by the Conway Conservation Commission in 2001.

- *Town Common Lands - 900 Acres - Town Owned*

The Town Common Lands are located off Hurricane Mountain and provides a critical link between the State Forest, land owned by the Nature Conservancy and Pudding Pond for a total contiguous protected area of over 4,500 acres. These lands offer tremendous recreation potential.

- *Echo Lake State Park - 390 Acres - State Owned*

Echo Lake State Park is located on West Side Road. Covering over 390 acres, this park is adjacent to pristine Echo Lake, and offers visitors locations for swimming and fishing. In addition, there are hiking trails and a scenic drive that leads to Cathedral Ledge. The ledge offers scenic views and opportunities for rock climbing. Approximately 150 acres of the Park are located in Conway. The site also includes 58,000 square feet of beach area on Echo Lake. Although this is a state facility, it is an important resource to the community.

[Map 6-1 Recreation Facilities](#)

- *White Mountain National Forest - 800,000 Acres - Federally Owned*

Approximately 350 acres of the White Mountain National Forest are located within Conway. Biking, hiking, camping, fishing and skiing are just a few of the recreational opportunities that this tremendous resource provides. Although it is not administered by the town, it is the community's most important recreational resource.

- *Mount Cranmore - 740 Acres - Privately Owned*

Mount Cranmore is a privately owned commercial alpine skiing facility. It includes a private sports complex and multipurpose trails that are enjoyed by Conway's citizens and visitors year round. It is particularly important to the town's recreation resources because it provides an opportunity for linking Conway's conservation lands and existing trails to North Conway Village. It also has infrastructure that, through appropriate agreements, can be a cornerstone for a town-wide greenway system.

5. Future Recreation Needs

The most outstanding needs and foremost recreation goals that emerged from numerous public meetings associated with the master planning process were related to greenways and multipurpose recreational trails. It was proposed that the use of such a greenway system should accommodate cycling, walking and Nordic skiing. However limited facilities for snowmobiles and roller blades were also discussed. There was also a request for a skateboard park to be added to the town's recreation inventory.

The issue of trails was also discussed in the Recreation Chapter, adopted in 1994, of the previous master plan. At that time it was noted that the Conway Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (CPRAC) had "established the beginnings of a multi-use trail network which offers walking, jogging, bicycling and cross-country skiing opportunities throughout Conway." That initiative was consistent with the goal for a greenway/bikeway trail network currently expressed by the public. Unfortunately, the progress made by the CPRAC was diminished when CPRAC was dissolved in the mid 1990's.

Many miles of trails already exist in Conway. Unfortunately they are disconnected and access is precarious. Map 6-2 at the end of this chapter presents an inventory of some of these trails. This map indicates two classes of existing trails; secured trails which are owned by the town or are subject to a formal agreement with the town for continued public access and unsecured trails over which the town has little or no influence.

Fortunately there is still a dedicated group within the town, the Conway Recreational Access Committee (CRAC), which is attempting to secure access to lands for a trail system. They have no resources or staff, however, to support this initiative. There is

tremendous potential for establishing a greenway/bikeway system in Conway. If the people of Conway want to realize a greenway network that can accommodate multiple uses, it is going to require community support in the form of a clear mandate and resources. Map 6-3 (at the end of this chapter) presents a conceptual layout for a greenway system. *The next appropriate step is the development of a formal Greenway Plan that will illustrate where, when and how this goal can be realized.*

The following discussion revisits specific recreation activities and blends the views expressed during the preparation of this master plan with some of the issues and goals represented in the Recreation Chapter of the previous master plan.

Cycling is an important activity in Conway. It provides many benefits relative to both recreation and transportation. The community has expressed a desire for bikeways and cycling infrastructure enhancements. This has been demonstrated by several major road improvement projects that have included bicycle lanes. Public input indicates that continuing these enhancements is encouraged. Moreover, a review of the state designated bike routes reveals that significant sections of the state's roads need to incorporate bicycle lanes. Map 6-3 presents State identified bike routes and the roadways that have designated bicycle lanes. *It is recommended that the town continue to insist that all state road enhancement projects accommodate bicycle lanes.* This is especially important along the designated state bike routes.

The public participation process also recognized an important distinction between the recreation and transportation benefits of bicycle lanes that are adjacent to roads and those that are separate from automobile traffic. Although both types of bikeways are encouraged and provide transportation benefits, the recreation benefits of a bikeway systems that are free of automobiles enhances recreation opportunities. The elimination of potential automobile/bicycle conflicts makes the cycling experience safer and more enjoyable. *It is recommended that the town prepare and adopt a bikeway plan that accommodates both roadside bikeways and off-road bikeways.*

Skiing, particularly Nordic skiing, is one of the most popular winter amenities of the Mount Washington Valley. Currently the Town of Conway provides an extensive system of groomed trails in Whitaker Woods. These trails connect with other trails that are outside town lands. Expanding skiing opportunities to multi-use trails within a greenway system will enhance the benefits to the community. Of course, maintenance and grooming will be important considerations to any expanded trail system. *It is recommended that Nordic skiing be considered a principal winter activity for the greenway system.*

Hiking is an extremely popular pastime in the Valley and proximity to the White Mountain National Forest is a significant contribution to this popularity. Access to the national forest, as well as the other resources in Conway, is of paramount importance. Any greenway system must incorporate hiking and access to these amenities. *It is recommended that hiking be considered a principal activity for the greenway system.*

Tennis requires significant infrastructure. The town currently provides three tennis courts at Davis Park. These courts are used by the public as well as the Kennett High School tennis program. Unfortunately, when the school uses the courts they are not available to the general public. If additional courts are to be constructed, the school system should participate in providing land and financing.

Basketball also requires dedicated infrastructure. There are six functional indoor basketball courts, four full outdoor courts and two outdoor half-courts. The Recreation Chapter in the previous master plan indicated that there was no apparent deficiency regarding the number of basketball facilities in Conway. However, it did suggest a desire for additional basketball facilities in North Conway Village.

Swimming was not raised during public meetings relating to the preparation of this master plan. Moreover, at the 2002 Town Meeting funds that had been set aside for a municipal swimming facility were reassigned. The 1994 recommendation that the town seek a new location for recreational swimming or consider construction of a pool has not been fulfilled. *It is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Department investigate the feasibility of additional municipal swimming facilities.*

Skating/Hockey is supported by two outdoor rinks in Conway. Also, after the adoption of Recreation Chapter in 1994 of the previous master plan, a new arena was constructed. The 2002 master planning forums revealed no indications that there is a deficiency in this area.

Baseball, soccer, football and other field sports are well supported by existing facilities.

Skateboarding, discussed in the Recreation Chapter of the previous master plan, emerged again during the 2002 master planning forums. The 1994 recommendations, however, have not been addressed. Still there remains a need to provide recreational opportunities that are attractive to each user group and skate boarding is one such activity. Rather than simply prohibiting skateboarding on sidewalks and in the streets, the town should consider providing a skateboarding facility. *It is recommended that the*

Parks and Recreation Department investigate the feasibility of a municipal skateboard park.

[Map 6-2 Recreation Trails and Bike Routes](#)

