

## SECTION 9

### SEVEN – YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Seven-Year Action Plan fulfills the Open Space and Recreation Plan objectives. The objectives address open space, natural resources, recreation, and community development needs because the quantity and quality of accessible open space relates directly to the state of Northfield’s environment; the Town’s recreational opportunities; and the quality of future development in Northfield. The objectives are listed in the far left column of Table 9-1 and are followed by recommended actions, responsible board or group, start date, and potential funding sources. By implementing the recommended actions, each objective will begin to be realized.

Implementing the Open Space and Recreation Plan will not only require the participation of the Open Space Committee, but it will also necessarily involve many other town groups, including: the Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board, Highway Department, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and the Historical Commission. In addition, Mount Grace and Franklin Land Trusts are listed as active and necessary partners in this Action Plan.

Many of these actions may be constrained by a lack of volunteer time, in addition to funding limitations. Where money is required, such as to permanently protect open space, it does not have to be provided by the town alone. State and federal governmental agencies, private non-profit conservation agencies, and foundations are potential sources of funding. These sources are more likely to invest in land protection projects that have a broad base of community support.

Northfield is working to become a state-designated Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community in 2021, which will make the Town eligible to apply for funding from the Massachusetts MVP Action Grant program. MVP Action Grants target climate resiliency projects, which often have strong intersections with Open Space and Recreation planning objectives. Several action items identified in this OSRP align well with MVP grant opportunities, including land protection prioritization methods, protecting upland watershed open space and habitat, mitigating invasive species, and engaging residents and landowners in the stewardship of natural resources. Actions with these intersections represent opportunities to leverage work with MVP funds.

A successful Open Space and Recreation Program, under the primary stewardship of an Open Space Committee, can achieve all of the action steps listed below over time. However, it will be important to establish priorities for the first seven years. The Open Space Planning Committee has prioritized action steps by the goals and objectives listed in the previous chapter. Prioritized action steps are represented on the Seven-Year

Action Plan Map and are outlined in greater detail in Table 9-1. The most important action steps for Northfield in the next seven years include:

- Organize private land management educational events, perhaps in coordination with library, such as presentations or workshops on forest carbon offsets, pollinators, habitat management, forever wild, etc;
- Promote the execution of the Pioneer Valley Regional School Land Management Plan that encourages conservation, open-air educational options, and recreation on the school's 90-acre parcel;
- Promote increased funding of the Community Preservation Act (CPA);
- Identify scenic views, roads and byways, and special places;
- Discuss ways to provide land protection and estate planning information to landowners in the region (Northfield, Gill, Erving, Bernardston);
- Update and maintain the OSC document describing priorities of chapter 61 areas for the town to preserve should the land be removed from chapter 61;
- Protect: Mill Brook area between Main Street and Birnam Rd and South of Mill Brook; Crag Mountain access to the New England National Scenic Trail; any areas along the river that become available; and the Bald Hills Area: ecologically important as wildlife corridor, scenic views;
- Post updated trail maps, opportunities for stewardship volunteers, and educational events on Nextdoor or other local forums;
- Maintain the printed Northfield Trails brochure and the Northfield Trails website;
- Maintain the Mill Brook trail, repairing the crossing of Mill Brook east of the library at the corner of Dickinson Road, and manage for invasive species;
- Build a canoe/kayak launch at Bennett Meadows Wildlife Management Area.;
- Propose accessible river-front walkways and river-viewing stations;
- Improve the shoreline access just north of the boat ramp at Pauchaug Brook for kayak/canoe launching;
- Increase access for swimming in the Connecticut River, working toward a riverside park; and
- Build a path connecting the Schell Pedestrian Bridge to Pauchaug Boat Ramp.



Schell Bridge on the Connecticut River; site of future pedestrian bridge *(Jerry Wagener)*

**Table 9-1: Recommended Actions of the 2020 Northfield Open Space and Recreation Plan**

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
Open Space Goal: Ensure that Northfield protects farmland, forest land, scenic views, and other open space vital to sustaining the town’s historic rural character and maintaining the quality of air, water, and wildlife habitats.				
<b>OS1. STEWARDSHIP</b> Develop effective means for Northfield citizens to become engaged in the care of the natural and recreational resources of the town.	Recognize outstanding citizen stewards.	Open Space Committee (OSC)	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Conduct a workday for people of all ages to participate in the care of public conservation land and recreational areas.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
	Work with Stewardship Advisory Subcommittee to plan outreach activities for the Town Forest, King Philips Hill, Brush Mountain, and other conservation areas.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Encourage town residents to participate in the Keystone forest management program sponsored by UMass, and other conservation management programs.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Organize private land management educational events, perhaps in coordination with library, such as presentations or workshops on forest carbon offsets, pollinators, habitat management, forever wild, etc.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time
<b>OS2. COORDINATION</b> <b>Work with town committees and other organizations to achieve this open space goal.</b>	Discuss conservation goals with area land trusts.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Bring land trust representatives to Northfield with programs on the value of land conservation, wildlife protection, etc.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Promote the execution of the Pioneer Valley Regional School Land Management Plan that encourages conservation, open-air educational options, and recreation on the school's 90-acre parcel.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Work with the Planning Board to explore updating solar & wind bylaws.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time
	Work with organizations and agencies that are protecting water resources.	OSC	Ongoing	Volunteer time

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
<b>OS3. FUNDING</b> Set aside municipal funding each year to be used as a town match to help enable landowners to protect their land through the APR and other appropriate programs.	Promote increased funding of the Community Preservation Act (CPA).	OSC, Community Preservation Committee (CPC)	ongoing	volunteer time
	Use CPA funds for conservation proposals; Apply for relevant state LAND and other grants for funding activities associated with preserving open space (matching to come from CPA funds).	OSC, CPC	ongoing	volunteer time
	Request town funds to be set aside to pay to exercise the town’s right-of-first refusal on high-priority properties being taken out of Chapter 61.	OSC, CPC	ongoing	volunteer time
	Provide information for residents about different estate planning/ conservation funding or land-holding options such as Conservation Restrictions, APR, land trusts owning land in fee, state ownership, donated town conservation land, etc.	OSC, CPC	ongoing	volunteer time
	Provide information to residents about the cost of community services.	OSC, CPC	ongoing	volunteer time
<b>OS4. CONSERVATION</b> Work to preserve areas of Northfield that are most important to protect, recognizing the reality of climate change.	Identify scenic views, roads and byways, and special places.	OSC, Conservation Commission (CC)	ongoing	volunteer time
	Promote the conservation priorities identified in the Trust for Public Land Greenprinting of Northfield.	OSC, CC	ongoing	volunteer time

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
	Work with landowners to improve and preserve for public enjoyment natural environments such as scenic views and other landscape features.	OSC, CC	ongoing	volunteer time
	Discuss ways to provide land protection and estate planning information to landowners in the region (Northfield, Gill, Erving, Bernardston).	OSC, CC	ongoing	volunteer time
	Support the Historical Commission and the Historical Society in efforts to preserve the historical character of the town.	OSC, CC	ongoing	volunteer time
	Update and maintain the OSC document describing priorities of chapter 61 areas for the town to preserve should the land be removed from chapter 61.	OSC, CC	ongoing	volunteer time
<b>OS5. MANAGEMENT Assist the Conservation Commission Stewardship Advisory Subcommittee in managing town-owned and town-managed conservation areas and conservation restrictions held by the town.</b>	Discuss with the Conservation Commission Stewardship Advisory Subcommittee ways the Open Space Committee can assist with the stewardship of the Northfield Town Forest, King Philips Hill, Brush Mountain, and potential protected land.	OSC, CC	ongoing	volunteer time
	Arrange for briefings on the management of wetlands and protected land, and promote attendance at stewardship monitoring workshops.	OSC, CC	ongoing	volunteer time

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
<p><b>OS6. CONSERVATION AREAS</b>  <b>Work on protecting areas identified by residents and/or BioMap2/ the Northfield Greenprint as high priority.</b></p>	<p>1. Mill Brook area between Main Street and Birnam Rd and South of Mill Brook.</p> <p>2. Crag Mountain; access to the New England National Scenic Trail.</p> <p>3. Any areas along the river that become available.</p> <p>4. Any land along Louisiana Brook that becomes available.</p> <p>5. Beers Mountain historic/ scenic viewpoint area.</p> <p>6. Bald Hills Area: ecologically important as wildlife corridor, scenic views.</p>	<p>OSC</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>volunteer time</p>
<p>Recreation Goal: Ensure that Northfield maintains and improves the variety, quality, and accessibility of recreational facilities important in the twenty-first century for health and well being of all residents, and promote the use of these facilities and any organized programming thereof.</p>				
<p><b>R1. COMMUNICATION</b>  <b>Work collaboratively with town boards, committees, and community organizations to achieve the Recreation Goal.</b></p>	<p>Members of the OSC will include representatives of related Town boards and commissions, including from the Conservation Commission, Stewardship Advisory Subcommittee, Planning Board, Historical Commission and Recreation Commission.</p>	<p>OSC</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>volunteer time</p>
	<p>Maintain regular contact with each group.</p>	<p>OSC</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>volunteer time</p>
	<p>Keep an OSC mailing list.</p>	<p>OSC</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>volunteer time</p>
	<p>Post things like updated trail maps, opportunities for stewardship/ volunteers, and educational events on Nextdoor or other community websites or online groups.</p>	<p>OSC</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>volunteer time</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
<b>R2. TRAILS</b> <b>Promote the use of new and existing trails in Northfield, and develop and/or improve trail systems throughout the town.</b>	Maintain the printed Northfield Trails brochure and the Northfield Trails website.	OSC, Northfield Trails Association (NTA)	ongoing	volunteer time, Town funds
	Assist in evaluating and acquiring trail signage, trailhead parking signage, and kiosks.		ongoing	DCR grants, CPA funds
	Work with the Northfield Highway Department to design, create, and install parking signage for trailheads and hiker safety signs where the trail crosses the road.		2024	volunteer time, Staff time, Town Funds
	Monitor existing trail systems and respond to needs as they arise.		ongoing	DCR grants, CPA funds
	Create new trails on public lands or private lands with permission, including plans for their maintenance and management.		ongoing	Town funds
	Maintain the Mill Brook trail, repairing the crossing of Mill Brook east of the library at the corner of Dickinson Road, and manage for invasive species.		2026	Town funds, DCR grants, F&W?
	Organize a trails weekend to promote local trails, historic, farm resources.		2023	Town Funds, state funds
<b>R3. RECREATION</b> <b>ACCESS TO THE CONNECTICUT RIVER</b> <b>Increase the number of public access points on the Connecticut River.</b>	Facilitate the building of a canoe/kayak launch ramp at Bennett Meadows Wildlife Management Area.	OSC Recreation Commission	2024	DCR grant, FLP
	Propose accessible river-front walkways and river-viewing stations.		2022	volunteer time

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BOARD/GROUP	START DATE	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
	Advocate to improve the shoreline access just north of the boat ramp at Pauchaug Brook for kayak/canoe launching.		ongoing	volunteer time
	Increase access for swimming in the Connecticut River, working toward a riverside park (such as West River Park in Brattleboro).		2024	volunteer time
<b>R4. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES</b> <b>Work with the Community Park Committee and Recreation Commission to create recreational facilities of public interest.</b>	Work with landowners to develop a swimming area and town beach on the south side of Mill Brook, between Main Street and Birnam Road.	OSC, Recreation Commission	2026	DCR grant
	Build a bikeway connecting to the Schell Pedestrian Bridge.		2026	CPA funds
	Work with the Community Park Committee to find space for a community park including playing fields, play areas, and public gathering facilities.		ongoing	
	Work with interested parties to establish play areas in town.		ongoing	DCR grant