Agenda
Joint Town Council and Conservation Commission Workshop
Tuesday, July 12, 2016
Council Chambers – Municipal Building
93 Cottage Street
6:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. EXCUSED ABSENCES

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

IV. DRAFT OPEN SPACE PLAN

a. Revision efforts working toward adoption of the plan.

b. Strategy for Validating Goals from Draft Open Space Plan.

c. Assignment of responsible party for tasks.

V. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The Town Council and Conservation Commission strives to hold meetings that are accessible to all. Please contact the Bar Harbor Planning Department by calling 288-3329 or by e-mail to planningdirector@barharbormaine.gov if you have any questions about this process or to let us know what you may require to facilitate your participation.

MEMORANDUM

To: Cornell Knight, Town Manager

From: Bob Osborne, Planning Director

Subject: Questions for Joint Town Council – Conservation Commission Workshop

Date: July 8, 2016

The purpose of this memo is to suggest some questions to discuss regarding the ongoing Open Space Plan revision efforts that the Conservation Commission has been making

Do you agree that the Open Space Plan is overall well researched, provides a useful inventory of the town's natural, cultural and working land resources upon which to create an Open Space Plan?

Do you agree that the Open Space Plan could do a better job of helping the average citizen of Bar Harbor understand how the plan will manifest, and the plan should communicate that it is a resource and tool for landowners of Bar Harbor to use, if they wish, to maximize their involvement in the town's shared vision of open space?

Do you agree that the Open Space Plan could benefit from the suggested edits as detailed below chapter by chapter and do you have other suggestions as well?

Chapter 1- Introduction: The Commission recommend edits to better articulate why the Open Space Plan was developed, giving reasons and providing some history about the uniqueness of our town. We want this chapter to explain that the prescribed actions described in the plan are voluntary, as well as the utility of having a plan.

<u>Attached is a draft edit of the Chapter 1: Introduction which will demonstrate the new focus that the Commission has in mind for the entire document.</u>

Chapter 2 – Natural Habitats: The Commission want to articulate the human benefits of protecting natural habitats (ecosystem services, etc.). The main changes we'd like to see in this chapter are in the goals and strategies section: for example, we'd like to provide more detail in Goals 1 & 2, where various programs and plans are discussed (fish passage, wildlife corridors, possibilities for tax programs, forest management plans, etc.).

Chapter 3 – Water Resources: The Commission would like to elaborate on the goals and strategies in this chapter as well. At the moment, there are impacts to water resources that are not articulated (leaching from roads and homes, nutrient enrichment/soil amendment use, septic tanks, etc.). There are important considerations about the materials and methods of land and property management that we would like to see presented in the plan.

Chapter 4 – Scenic & Cultural Resources: The Commission would like to better articulate the value of protecting scenic and cultural resources in Bar Harbor. One way to do this would be to talk about what would be lost if these resources disappear. There are historical sites in Bar Harbor already referenced in the Comprehensive Plan in important scenic vistas, and they should

be referenced in the OSP. We would also like to clarify goals and strategies that commission members found ambiguous, for example, by articulating how landowners can protect "scenic assets."

Chapter 5 – Recreational Resources: Areas in Bar Harbor that are important recreational resources (particularly to pedestrians and bicyclists) should be identified for opportunities for enhancement. There are certain cited examples in the goals and strategies (e.g. Development District) that need more vetting, and should either be revised or taken out completely. The Commission would like this section to be vetted by the Parks and Recreation Committee to ensure the goals and strategies in this chapter are in line with their mission.

Chapter 6 – Working Lands: The Commission would like to better justify and clarify some of the goals and strategies that some of the commission members found vague.

Chapter 7 – Implementing the Plan: This important chapter needs some rewording to really emphasize the voluntary nature of landowner's participation in the Town of Bar Harbor's open space goals. This section should reference other documents/resources, as well as exhibit material from other community's open space plans to give more examples of how open space plans manifest in other Maine towns. It may be useful to have an inset in this section that illustrates a hypothetical landowner's participation in the Open Space Acquisition Program or the Conservation Lease Program, etc. This may also be a good section to identify an area of priority moving forward for Bar Harbor, such as the Northeast Creek watershed or the Crooked Road corridor.

Overall: The Commission want to insert relevant examples of how the actions described in the Open Space Plan are already happening in our community (e.g. the Thorndike family conservation easement in Chapter 4). We recommend that our strategies align and/or consider the global views of our partners (Acadia National Park, College of the Atlantic, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, etc.) and their visions of open space.

Appendix A. Finally, there are a wide range of Open Space Planning Goals stated in Appendix A. List of Open Space Goals by Chapter (see page 64). As a potential chapter of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan The Open Space Plan should have a mechanism to prioritize such goals and identify the responsible party and assign short, medium and long-term time frames to the stated goals.

Development of a Community Open Space Plan

Why and How Was This Plan Developed?

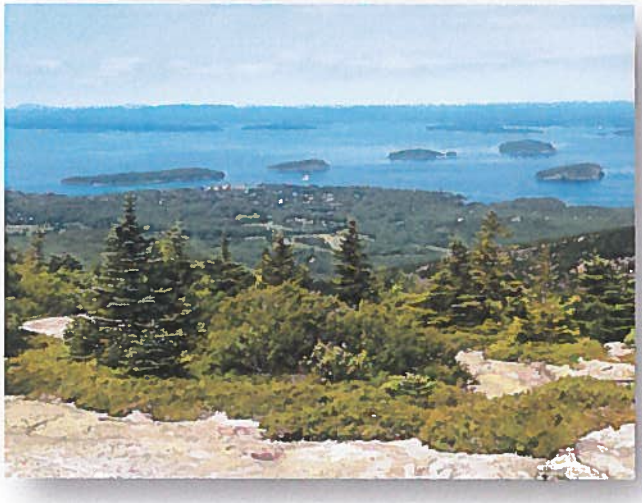


Photo: National Park Service

A scenic view from Cadillac Mountain.

After receiving input from citizens, town staff and consultants, the residents of Bar Harbor approved the 2007 Comprehensive Plan at town meeting. As an intermediate task within its 10-year life, the comprehensive plan calls for the Bar Harbor Conservation Commission to develop an open space plan for the town, "*To encourage voluntary protection of Bar Harbor's important natural, scenic, and cultural resources as well as establish an open space lease and acquisition program*"[1]. The town council asked the Conservation Commission to complete this task, supported the commission's pursuit of grants to move planning forward, and helped to ensure plan completion by voting to fund the work in the FY2014 budget: a move approved by Bar Harbor's citizens at the June 2013 town meeting.

Open space is undeveloped or minimally developed land and water areas that have special value to the community. These areas may be large or small, publicly or privately owned.

The Plan Development Process

The Bar Harbor Conservation Commission, sought the assistance of partners, found willing participants, and established the Open Space Partners, a group comprised of the Conservation Commission members and representatives of the following partner organizations:

- *Acadia National Park, John Kelley*
- *Friends of Acadia, Stephanie Clement*
- *Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Misha Mytar*
- *Maine Farmland Trust, Stacy Benjamin*
- *Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory, Jane Disney*

The Conservation Commission worked with the town planning department to hire a consultant with expertise in open space development, and eventually hired FB Environmental Associates (FBE). FBE collected existing information and relevant data regarding Bar Harbor's open spaces, and began analyzing the data to determine what types of land were in shortest supply or most in peril of disappearing.

This open space plan is a culmination of not only the work completed during the development of the plan, but factors in previous citizen feedback from the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, and for some sections, one-on-one interviews with community members. The list of actions described in the plan provide recommendations for encouraging the citizens of Bar Harbor to consider the future of our important natural, scenic, and cultural resources, and to be proactive in helping to protect these valuable spaces for the posterity of our town.

How Do We Define Open Space?

The town of Bar Harbor defines open space as "Undeveloped or minimally developed land and water areas that have special value to the community, in one or more of the following categories:

- Natural Habitats

- Water Resources
- Scenic and Cultural Resources
- Recreational Resources
- Working Lands

Open space may be large or small, publicly or privately owned."

Who Benefits From This Plan?

Two motivations: 1) The town's needs, 2) environmental/ecological concerns, values

1) Bar Harbor town staff and planning committees will be able to use this plan as a collection of open space resources and identified areas of high conservation value to help guide land use decision making. Town residents and landowners may also use this plan to aid them in voluntary land conservation measures on their property..

2) Bar Harbor is characterized by the interplay of its beautiful natural setting, cultural institutions and vibrant business community, including working farms and marine livelihoods. Ours is a town that has long valued the preservation of its unique character and priceless open spaces, exemplified nowhere more clearly than the development of Acadia National Park–an initiative spearheaded by citizens, and the first and only national park established through land donation, rather than government purchase. Few towns have a resource like Acadia National Park that protects and provides stewardship of important natural and cultural resources. In addition, Bar Harbor established town parks to provide areas for community gathering and enjoyment, and the Village Improvement Society provided money, labor and knowledge to create and maintain additional parks and walking paths. As land use has transformed, our understanding of natural processes has increased, our needs have changed, and a new vision of open spaces uses and needs has emerged.

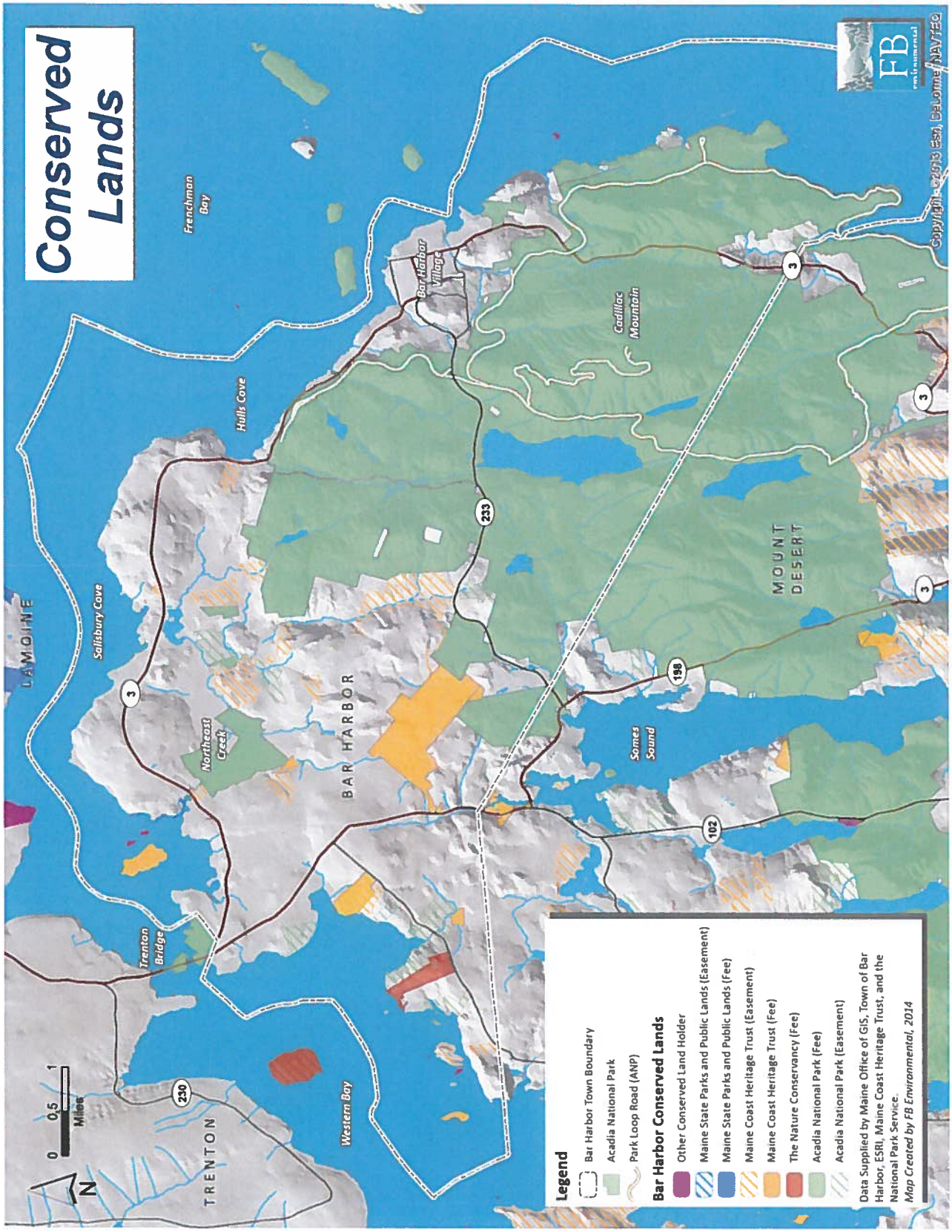
Since the implementation of the Comprehensive plan, Bar Harbor's citizens have become aware of new pressures on our open spaces and challenges we face in planning for our town's future. Citizen's concerns about the health of the Northeast Creek watershed have resulted in Town-funded cooperative surveys, the results of which have indicated threats from pollution and development pressure. Pollution, development, and increased tourist visits are affecting our open spaces. The people of Bar Harbor have also expressed an interest in planning for the challenges brought by a changing climate: sea-level rise, establishment of invasive plant and animal species, and storms with greater intensity and altered timing. Open Space Planning is a way to address these concerns and decide how to meet these challenges.

Table 1. *Summary of conserved land by landholder in Bar Harbor.*

Name of Holding	Landowner	Area (ac)
Federal Land		
	Acadia National Park (fee)	12,926
	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (fee)	7
State/Regional		
	Maine Coast Heritage Trust (fee)	708
	Maine Department of IF&W (Management Transfer Agreement)	6
	The Nature Conservancy (fee)	102
Privately-Owned Land Under Conservation Easement		
	Acadia National Park (easement)	617
	Maine Coast Heritage Trust (easement)	746
	Maine State Parks & Public Lands (easement)	11
Town/Local		
	Town of Bar Harbor (Town Recreational Land)	33

Source: FB Environmental

Figure 1. Conserved lands in Bar Harbor.



A current inventory of conserved lands in Bar Harbor indicates that 15,143 acres of land are currently protected in Bar Harbor, 89% of which are part of Acadia National Park. (Figure 1, Table 1).

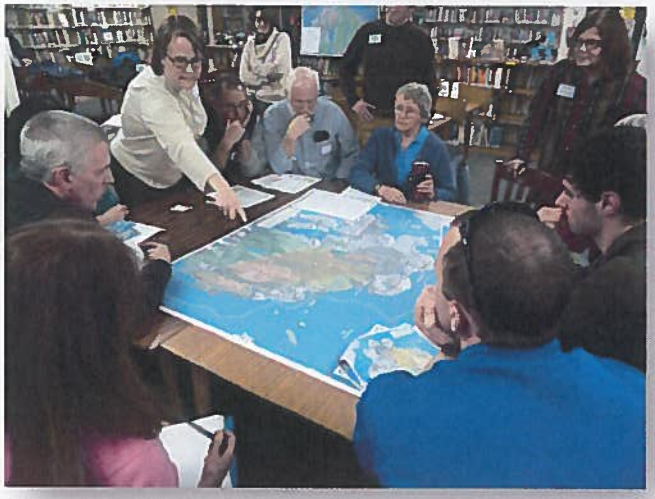


Photo: National Park Service

More than fifty Bar Harbor residents participated in the open space planning process.

What Does This Plan Do?

This plan summarizes the open space lands already protected, open spaces desired by the citizens of Bar Harbor, and strategies for how to meet Bar Harbor's open space needs in each of the above categories.

A section of the open space plan is devoted to each of the open space land types—*natural habitats, water resources, scenic and cultural resources, recreational lands and working lands*—with a description of relevant characteristics and inventories, opportunities and potential challenges for each, both past and present. Each section includes a list of lands that would fill present gaps, and goals and strategies designed to accomplish that task.

Each chapter includes a vision for the future of Bar Harbor. If recommended goals and strategies to protect open space are successfully implemented, some visions may be reached in just a few years, or take 20 years or more, depending on citizen effort and project complexity. Vision statements are specific to each of the open space resources, and provide a standard to help drive the plan, and by which the community can strive.

The Conservation Commission has sought to create a tool for town government, property owners, stakeholders to inform future decisions about land use in the Town of Bar Harbor. We have strived to create a readable document that citizens will also use to celebrate the rich history of open space in the town, to plan for the future, and as a toolkit to help individuals, groups and the town meet the goals of that planning.

Necessarily, we have made recommendations about strategic priorities and land use. We used the results of this analysis to identify regions of high-priority for open space protection, and presented the results of the prioritization process to the public on April 17, 2014 to get citizen input (Appendix C). We then refined our protection priorities, sought validation from the citizens, and finalized the priority list.

These are recommendations only, and the mechanisms by which the plan is enacted are voluntary. We hope that this plan will serve as a springboard to encourage strategic and coherent preservation and utilization of open space by individuals and stakeholder organizations.

Not every open space has a special value to the citizens of Bar Harbor, or a special ecological value. Indeed, there are many places that are extremely special to families or individuals that did not emerge as priority areas in our Open Space plan. Sites that were suggested, but which don't appear on our priority list do not make them less special, and the love of place felt by our citizens is part of what makes our town so special.

References

[1] *Town of Bar Harbor (2007). Comprehensive Plan Update: Bar Harbor, Maine. June 2007. Online:* http://www.barharbormaine.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/95.