

Warwick Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Project

Public Forum
October 14, 2009

Public Forum Presentation Outline

- What is the purpose of the Plan?
- What has been accomplished since 2002?
- Why update the Warwick Plan?
- How was the Plan updated and who participated?
- What are the key findings of the 2009 Plan?
- What do residents value and what can we learn from the Plan?
- What are the Plan's Goals and Objectives?
- What is in the Draft Five-Year Action Plan?
- Comments and feedback from the audience.





What is the Purpose of the Plan?

- To provide a comprehensive inventory of the town's natural, cultural, agricultural, and recreational resources.
- To create a blueprint for the stewardship and conservation of these resources.
- To provide an analysis of the Town's open space and recreation needs.

What is the Purpose of the Plan?

- To outline real steps the town can take to achieve its open space and recreation goals.
- To help guide future decisions about the use and development of the town's land and resources.
- To make the Town eligible for state and federal grants for open space and recreation projects.

What Has Been Accomplished Over the Last 7 Years?

- A lot! – 5 of the 6 First Tier (most important) Action Steps identified in the 2002 Plan have been done!
 - ☑ Form an Open Space Committee.
 - ☑ Adopt a cell tower bylaw.
 - ☑ Develop a rapport with local land trusts.
 - ☑ Create a plan for benign disposition of the Warwick Prison Camp.
 - ☑ Explore zoning revisions or adoption of measures to encourage small business development without detracting from Warwick's rural character.

What Has Been Accomplished Over the Last 7 Years?

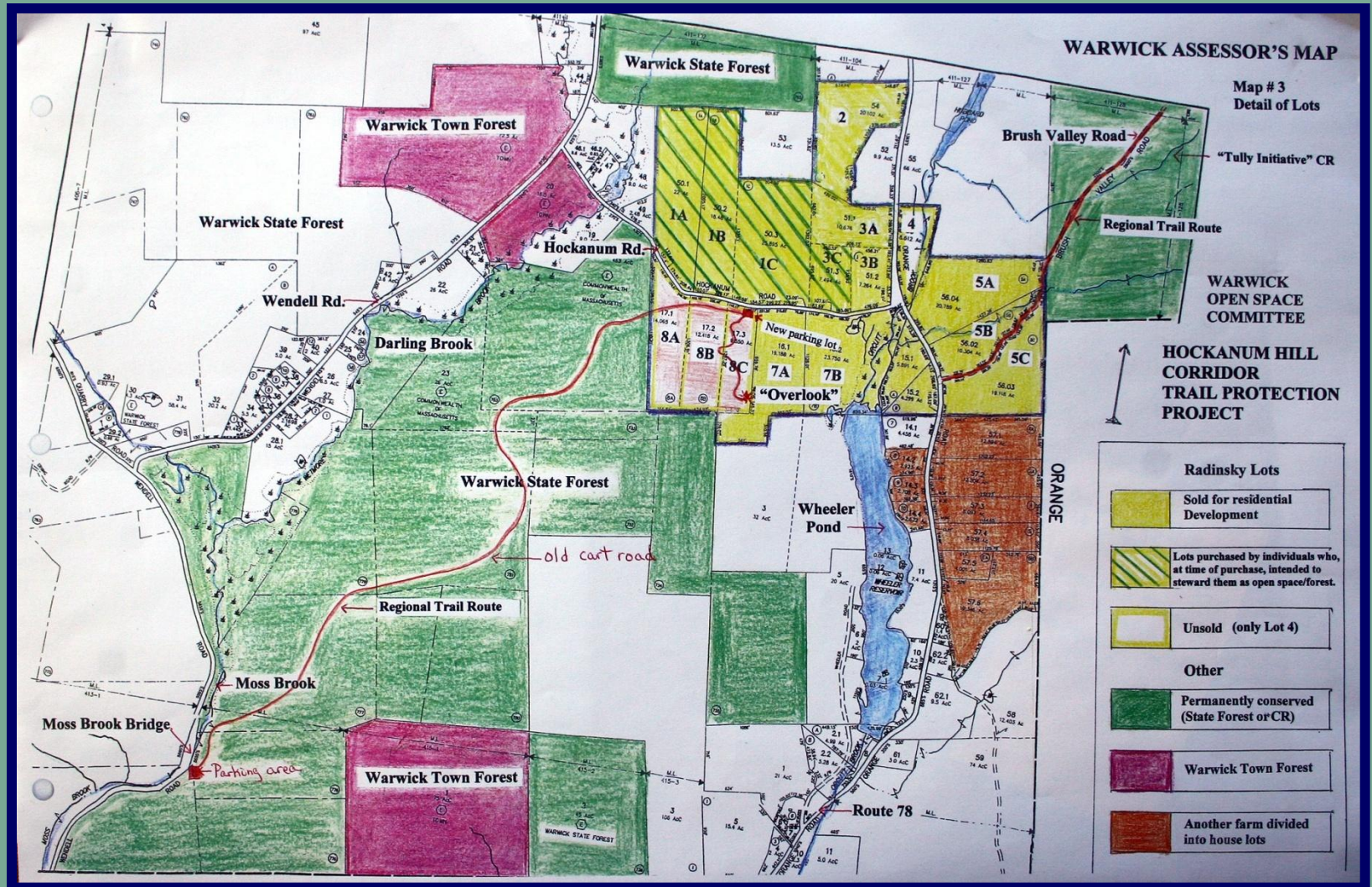
- 5 of the 7 Second Tier Action Steps identified in the 2002 Plan have been completed or substantial progress has been made to complete these action steps
 - ☑ Appoint a Liaison to the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership.
 - ☑ Determine the best process for assigning the Town's right-of-first-refusal to a third party if appropriate (when a Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B parcel is put up for sale).
 - ☑ Develop a Master Calendar for community events.
 - ☑ Identify parcels of land in need of protection.
 - ☑ Assess specific facilities and programming needs of Warwick seniors.

What Has Been Accomplished Over the Last 7 Years?

- Hockanum Hill Corridor Trail Protection Project



What Has Been Accomplished Over the Last 7 Years?



Why Update the Warwick Open Space and Recreation Plan?

- Open Space & Recreation Plans (OSRPs) are valid for 5 years. Warwick's expired in 2007.
- The Franklin Regional Council of Governments received money from the state to help several towns update their OSRP.
- The state has specific requirements for updating an OSRP.

How was the Plan Updated?

- A group of Warwick residents representing different town boards and interests came together as the *Warwick Open Space Plan Committee* to update the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Since March 2009, the Committee has held 14 Public Meetings.

How was the Plan Updated?

- Committee Members:

- Developed the Open Space Survey
- Developed the Goals and Objectives
- Reviewed all draft sections and maps in the Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Created the Five-Year Action Plan

How was the Plan Updated?

- The Committee worked hard to solicit input from other groups in Town
 - Teen Subcommittee
 - Students from Warwick Community School
 - Senior citizens
- Awesome expertise of some Committee members
 - Species Space Cadets

Who Else Participated?

- An Open Space Survey was mailed to the 325 recipients of the Warwick Newsletter and posted to the Warwick L chat room in May 2009.
 - The Survey results (with a 17% rate of return) became the basis of the Plan and all of the action plan steps.
- You, the audience of this public forum.
- Maps and copies of the Final Draft Plan will be made available for review around town.

Key Findings

- Large Blocks of Contiguous Forest
 - Approximately 90% (21,693 acres) of the 24,103 acres of land in Warwick is forested land (according to 2005 land use data from MassGIS)
 - Provides wildlife habitat
 - Offers scenic views and recreational opportunities
 - Recharges streams and aquifers

Key Findings

- Of the 21,693 acres of forested land in Warwick
 - 13,456 acres are *permanently protected* by a Conservation Restriction, state conservation agencies, private non-profit organizations, or Warwick Conservation Commission.
 - Approximately 3,703 acres have *limited protection* through the Ch.61 program.

Key Findings

- Of the 21,693 acres of forested land in Warwick
 - Approximately 279 acres are owned by the Town and have *limited protection* from development.
 - Over 4,255 acres of forested land with no protection from development.
- Approximately 17,931 acres (74%) of the total land area in Warwick has some level of protection from development.

Key Findings

- **Wetlands, streams, ponds, which sustain**
 - Viable populations of rare species and other wildlife
 - Surface and ground water quality and quantity
- **Farmland and Working Farms**
 - Approximately 204 acres in Ch. 61A program
 - Approximately 289 acres in Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program
- **Scenic and Historic Structures and Landscapes**



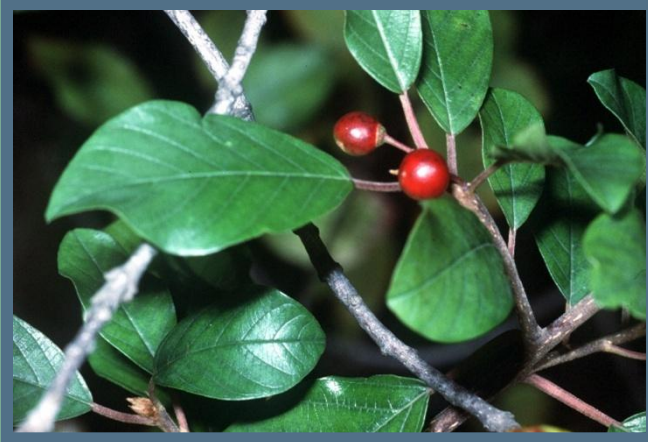








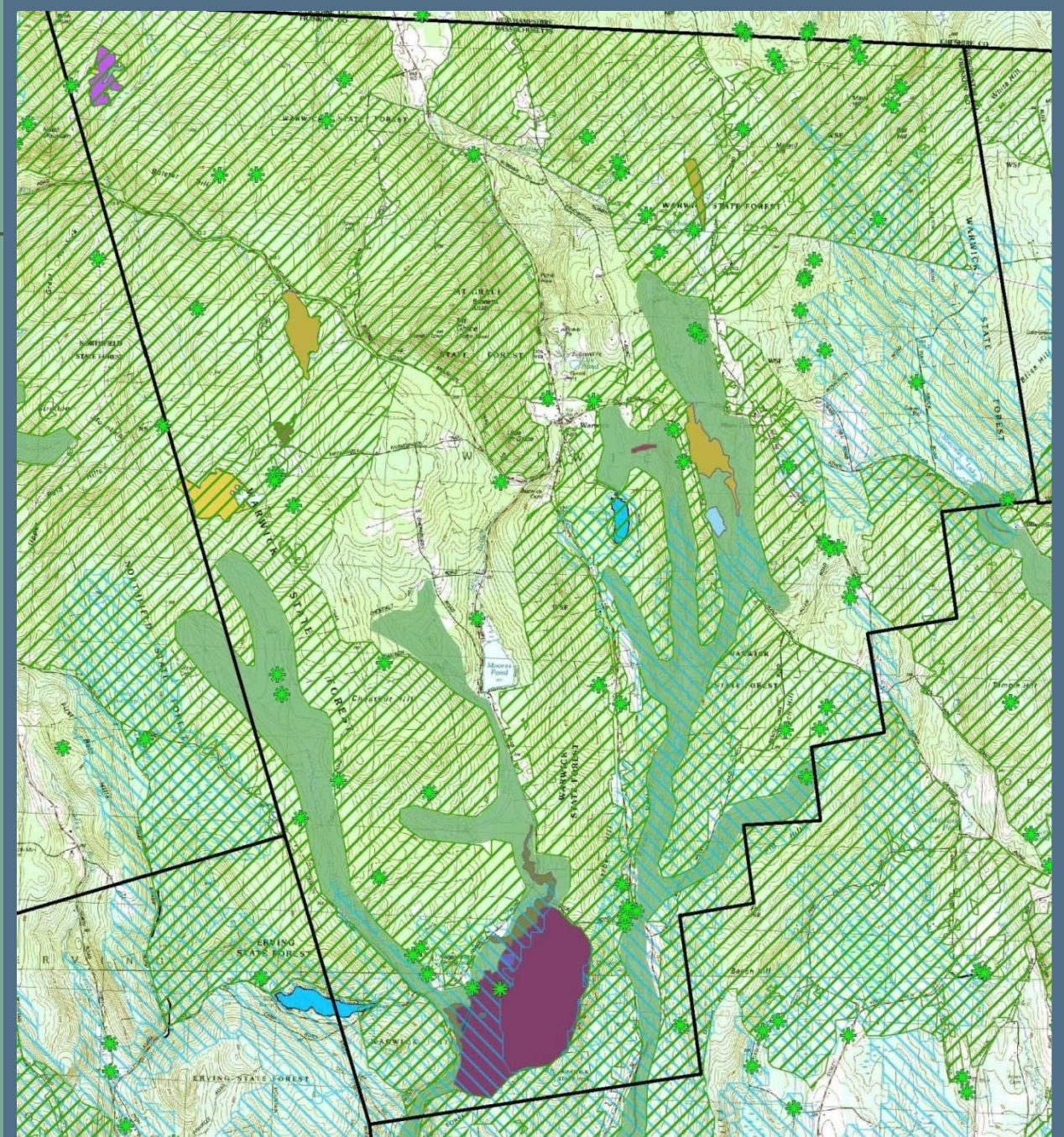
Key Findings



■ Invasive Species

- Warwick is fortunate in having a limited number of non-native, invasive species.
- Non-native invasive species become a problem when they out-compete our native plants or animals and disrupt our ecosystems.

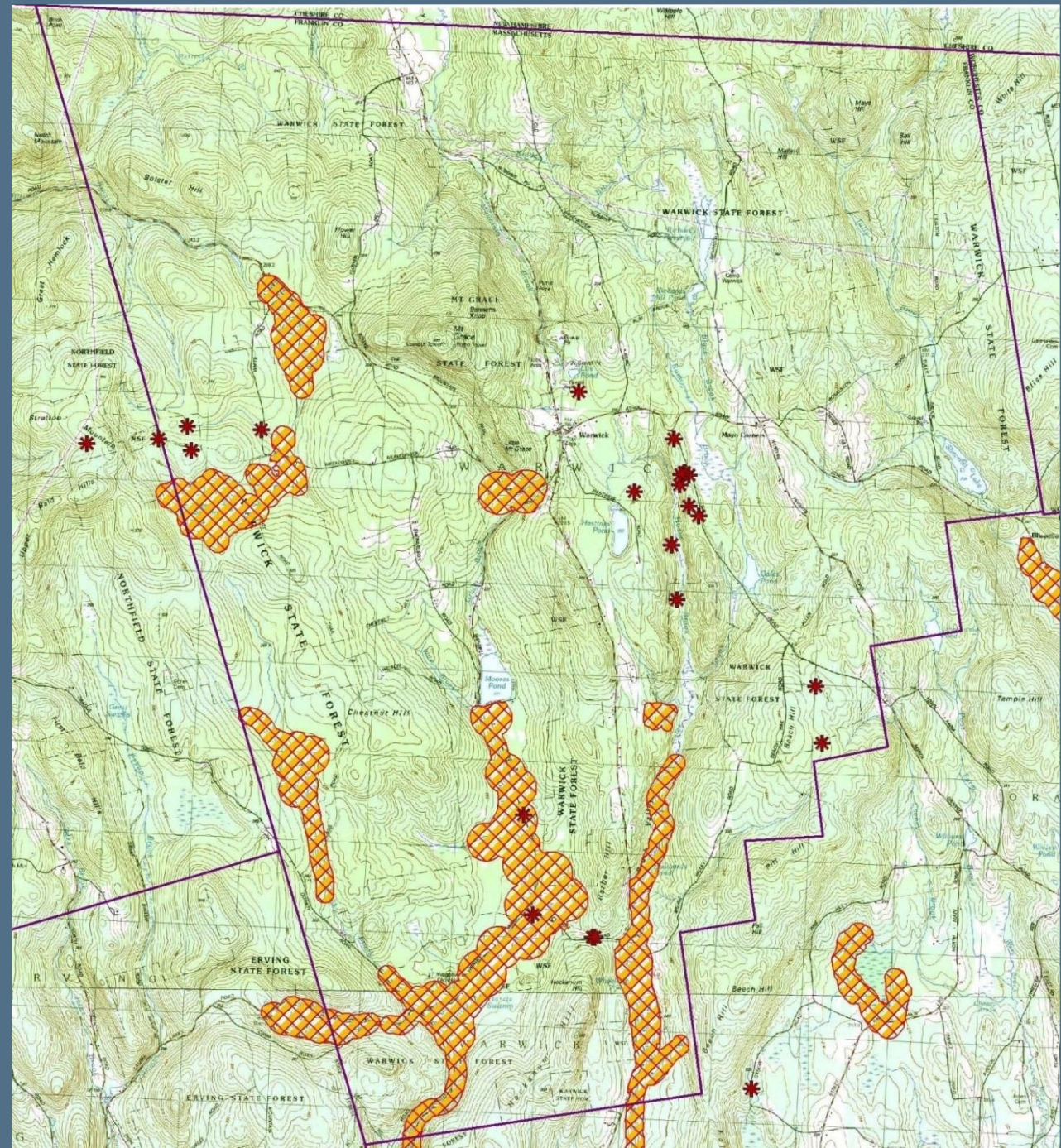
Key Findings



- Natural Communities

Key Findings

- Rare Species Habitat















What Do Residents Value?

- Rural Character of the town
- Air and water quality
- Scenic & Historic Resources – Warwick's Sense of Place
- Farms, farmland, and pastures
- Forests
- Wetlands, lakes, and streams
- My/our perception of town values
- Safety from crime and vandalism









What Can We Learn From the Plan?

■ Opportunities

- To protect large blocks of contiguous forest
 - Warwick's wildlife habitat, scenic and recreational areas are aligned with state and regional conservation targets
- To protect and promote local farms
- To protect scenic and historic resources
- To promote Warwick's own recreational resources

What Can We Learn From the Plan?

■ Challenges

- Farm and forest parcels remain vulnerable to development.
- Recent development trends impact roadside pasture lands and scenic roads.
- Increase awareness of and enjoyment of local recreational opportunities.
- No existing management plans for Town lands
- Gaps between blocks of open space and special places.



What Can We Learn From the Plan?

- Top 5 Environmental Challenges
 - ATVs
 - Beavers & flooding
 - Maintenance of fire ponds
 - Trail maintenance
 - Invasive species

What Can We Learn From the Plan?

- Warwick's youth want to be involved!



What Can We Learn From the Plan?

- Warwick teens have a lot of great ideas!
 - Teen gathering spot (store, Olson Field), Swimming place, Internet and cell phone service
 - Tennis courts, Basketball court
 - Zipline
 - Rock-climbing wall and Trail map/book –showing GPS coordinates and noting access for fishing and canoeing
 - Fix Fire tower on Mt. Grace for viewing, Dirt bike (mountain bike) park
 - Trailhead journals, Zen peace garden, Camping area (Olson field, other)

What Can We Learn From the Plan?

- The Wish List prepared by Warwick Community School students was long and creative! Some examples include:
 - Basketball & tennis courts at old school
 - Playhouse/cabin at the school
 - Letterboxes, geo-caching on trails
 - Food Pantry
 - Covered pavilion with picnic tables at school
 - Access trail/boardwalk to Lily Pond
 - Trail guides and maps

What are the Goals and Objectives of the Plan?

- The Open Space and Recreation Plan has 5 Goals that were based on the community survey results and brainstorming sessions held by the Committee.
- Each goal has multiple objectives that are implemented through Action steps.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

Goal A:

Ensure that the Town of Warwick retains its rural, safe and quiet, small town character and sense of community, cultural, and architectural resources.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

Goal B:

Ensure that the Town of Warwick maintains or improves the quality of its air and water, and the diversity and integrity of native fauna and flora through the conservation of locally important natural, open space.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

Goal C:

Ensure that the Town of Warwick maintains or improves the current quality, quantity, and accessibility of its recreational resources.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

Goal D:

Ensure the economic stability of the community by developing supportive infrastructure and encouraging economic activity compatible with the rural character of the town.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

Goal E:

Involve youth in the implementation of the Open Space & Recreation Plan.

The Draft Five-Year Action Plan

- The Draft Action Plan identifies concrete action steps that will, when accomplished, implement the goals and objectives
- The Committee identified 10 priority actions that it felt were important to work to accomplish over the next five years.

The Draft Five-Year Action Plan

1. Utilize teens and other volunteers to GPS and where appropriate make more accessible significant archaeological, geological and historic sites.
2. Explore options for creating a meeting place for residents especially teens and seniors.

The Draft Five-Year Action Plan

3. Continue the inventory of ecological resources including certifying vernal pools.
4. Develop a trail map of Warwick utilizing GPS and GIS with assistance from youths and other volunteers and establish a hiking club at the Community School.

The Draft Five-Year Action Plan

5. Eliminate ATV damage to natural resources and trails.
6. Minimize the impact of invasive species.
7. Minimize the impact of beavers.

The Draft Five-Year Action Plan

8. Mark the boundaries of town owned land.
9. Encourage big and small farming and adopt a Right-to-Farm bylaw.
10. Construct dry hydrants and rehabilitate or build new fire ponds throughout town.

**Comments and feedback
from the audience.**