

# Montague Open Space and Recreation Plan

*Public Forum 1*



Town of Montague, MA

12.10.2025

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# Meeting Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Plan Overview**
- **Existing Conditions**
- **Breakout Discussion Groups**
- **Next Steps**



# Introduction



# What is open space?



**Conservation land**

**Forested Land**

**Public Amenities (Road green buffers,  
Undeveloped land, brownfields, etc.)**

**Agricultural Land**

**Recreation Land**

## Open space use: Passive recreation



*Low-impact activities that require no to minimal disturbance of natural/cultural resources, such as walking, hiking, and birdwatching*

## Open space use: Active recreation



*Recreational activities that require areas that have been significantly modified from their natural condition such as athletic fields and playgrounds*

# Poll #1



# What is an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)?

- Community-driven document
- Assesses existing open space and recreation resources
- Engages with community members about their open space priorities and needs in the town
- Sets long-term goals for conservation and recreational areas
- Set strategies to protect, conserve, and preserve natural resources as well as sustain town character
- Guides town investments and planning processes relative to the community resources and climate resiliency
- Allows municipalities to maintain and implement open space improvement projects
- Town becomes eligible for grants administered by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), Division of Conservation Services (DCS)



# OSRP State Requirements



1. Plan Summary
2. Introduction
3. Community Setting
4. Environmental Inventory & Analysis
5. Inventory Of Lands Of Conservation & Recreation Interest
6. Analysis Of Needs
7. Goals and Objectives
8. Ten Year Action Plan
9. Public Comments
10. References

## 2017 OSRP Plan Goals

- Promote and protect our rivers and waterways for improved habitat and recreation opportunities
- Provide access to high quality parks in each village
- Develop a comprehensive trail network for walking and cycling that connects the villages to open space
- Preserve farming as a way of life in Montague
- Preserve our pristine drinking water resources, habitat corridors, and special places
- Green our villages
- Get organized for Open Space and Recreation

2017 OSRP: **7-year** timeline

2026 OSRP: **10-year** timeline

# TOWN OF MONTAGUE 2017 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN



Prepared by the  
MONTAGUE PLANNING AND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT AND  
MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
with assistance from the  
FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

# Timeline

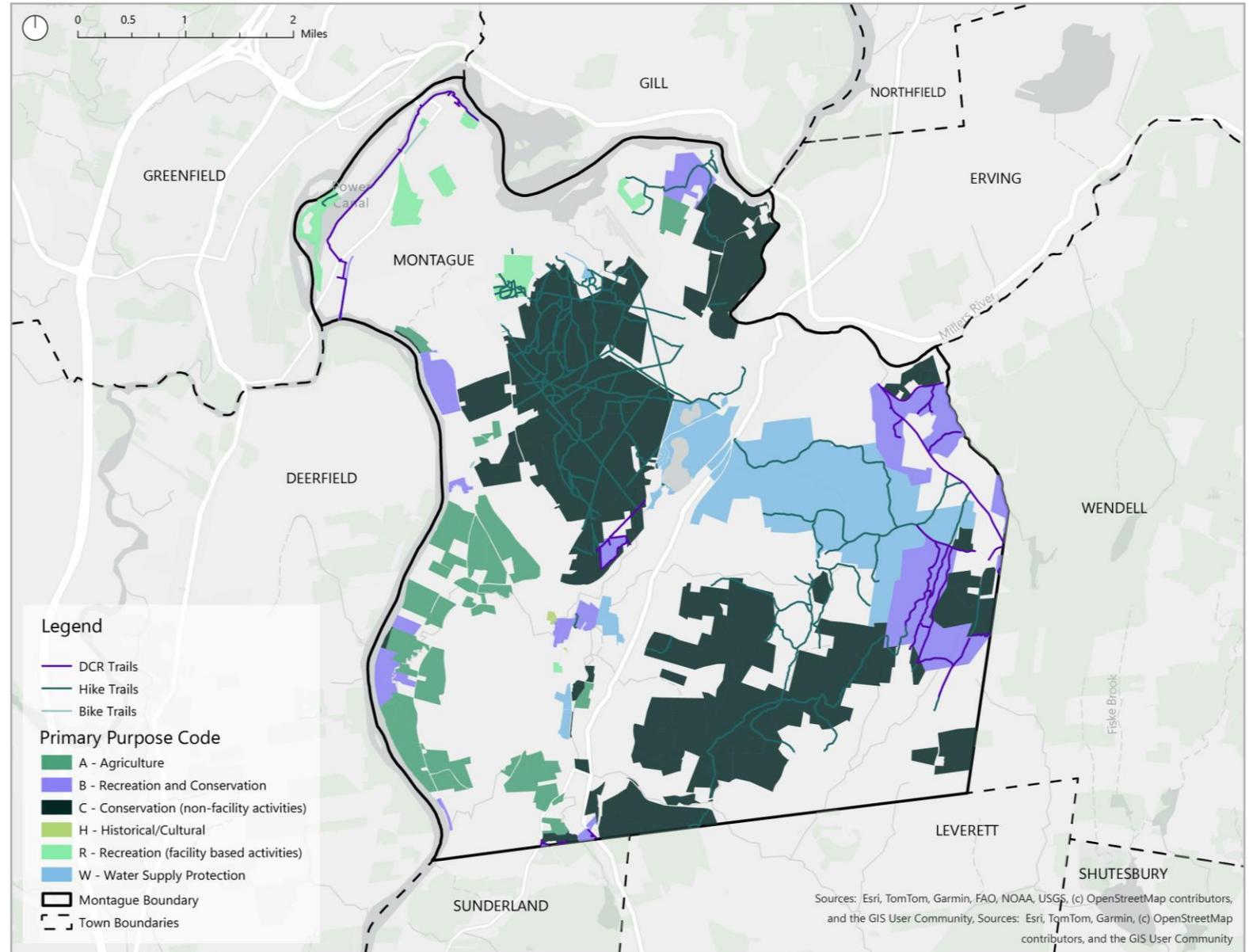
	Task	Sep '25	Oct '25	Nov '25	Dec '25	Jan '26	Feb '26	Mar '26	Apr '26
<b>Project Initiation</b>	1.1 Kickoff Meeting and Community Tour								
	1.2 Data Review								
<b>Community Engagement</b>	2.1 Focus Group Interviews (x3)								
	<b>2.2 Public Workshops (x2)</b>								
	2.3 Online Survey								
	2.4 Presentation to Local Boards/Committees (x2)								
<b>Needs Analysis</b>	3.1 Needs Analysis								
<b>Map Production</b>	4.1 Map Production								
<b>Plan Production</b>	5.1 Draft Plan								
	5.2 Final Plan								

## Existing Conditions



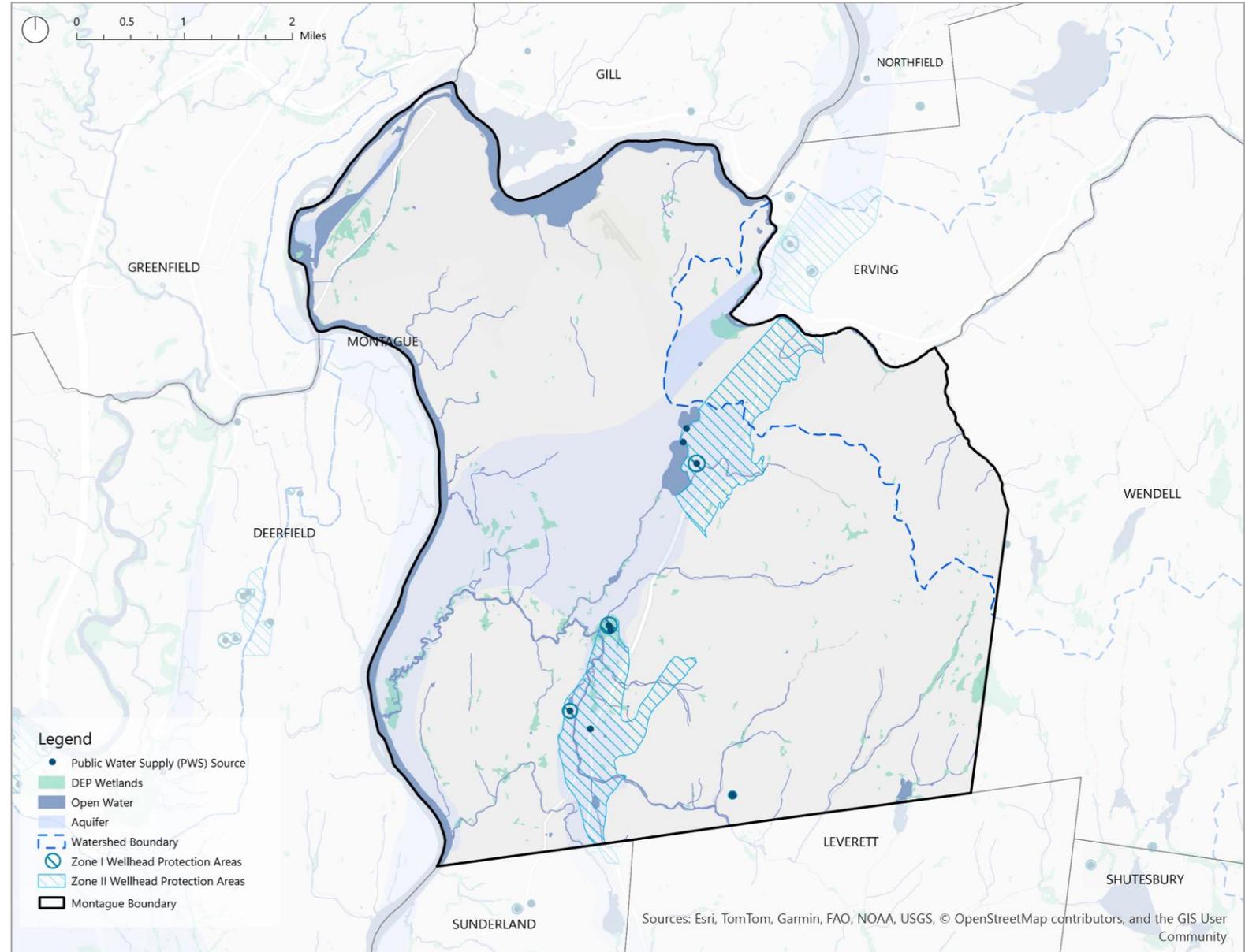
# Montague's open spaces

- Variety of open spaces, including agriculture, recreational areas, conservation lands, and public facilities
- Montague Plains is the largest open space in Montague and encompasses a significant number of trails



# Montague's open spaces

- Montague encompasses several public water supply points as well as open water surfaces, streams, and wetlands
- The Connecticut River bounds Montague's Northern border, but river access is limited



# Key Projects: Before and After Conditions



**Montague Center Park**

# Key Projects: Before and After Conditions



**Rutter's Park**

## Poll #2



# Focus Groups

## Conservation & Recreation Landowners & Stewards

- First Light Power
- Mount Grace Land Trust
- DCR West & Central Regions
- DCR Chief Fire Warden
- Franklin Land Trust
- Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation
- Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
- Turners Falls Water Department
- MassWildlife's Division of Fish & Game
- Turners Falls Fire District
- Montague Tree Advisory Committee

## Access and Equity

- Brick House Resource Center
- Montague Public Health Director
- Board of Health member/Montague resident
- Montague resident
- UMass student

## Local Officials

- Director of Planning & Conservation
- Director of Parks & Recreation
- RiverCulture Program Director
- Clean Water Facility Superintendent
- DPW Superintendent
- Turners Falls Municipal Airport Manager
- Public Health Director

# Focus Group Key Takeaways

## Habitat Protection

- Protect rare and endangered species and landscapes, such as pitch pine scrub oak forests.
- Montague Plains is a globally significant ecological area requiring fire-dependent management.
- Balance recreation with ecosystem conservation.

## River Access

- Improve access points along the Connecticut River while addressing erosion and safety concerns.
- Potential for ecotourism and cultural programming near the river and Discovery Center.

## Climate Resilience

- Incorporate native and drought-tolerant plants in landscaping policies.
- Address extreme weather impacts on outdoor recreation (e.g., shade structures, cooling centers).

## Maintenance Challenges

- DPW is understaffed, making it difficult to maintain existing open spaces.

## Equity in Open Space Distribution

- Underserved areas like Montague City and Millers Falls need more open spaces, while Turners Falls and Montague Center have better access and variety of open spaces.
- Desire for open spaces near homes to reduce reliance on cars.

## Connectivity and Wayfinding

- Improve pedestrian and bike connections between villages and key locations like schools and open spaces.
- Interest in a bike-share program to connect villages and open spaces.
- Implement wayfinding and signage to improve navigation and awareness of open spaces.

## Partnership Opportunities

- Collaborate with organizations like Mount Grace Land Trust, FirstLight Power, and DCR to enhance conservation and recreation efforts.
- Work with nonprofits and schools to address food insecurity and expand community gardens.

## Programming

- Expand programming for seniors, teens, and people with disabilities.
- Consider cultural programming at open spaces, including art and educational events.
- Market Montague as a birding destination with educational programming.
- Focusing on destination recreation to draw visitors to Montague and support the town's economy.

## Recreational Facilities

- Desire for community swimming pools, splash pads for all ages, and cooling centers during hot days.
- Expand community gardens to all villages.
- Desire for indoor recreational spaces.

## Inclusivity in Recreation

- Ensure programming and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities and older adults.
- Provide multilingual signage and centralized information about open space resources.

## Poll #3



## Breakout Discussion Groups



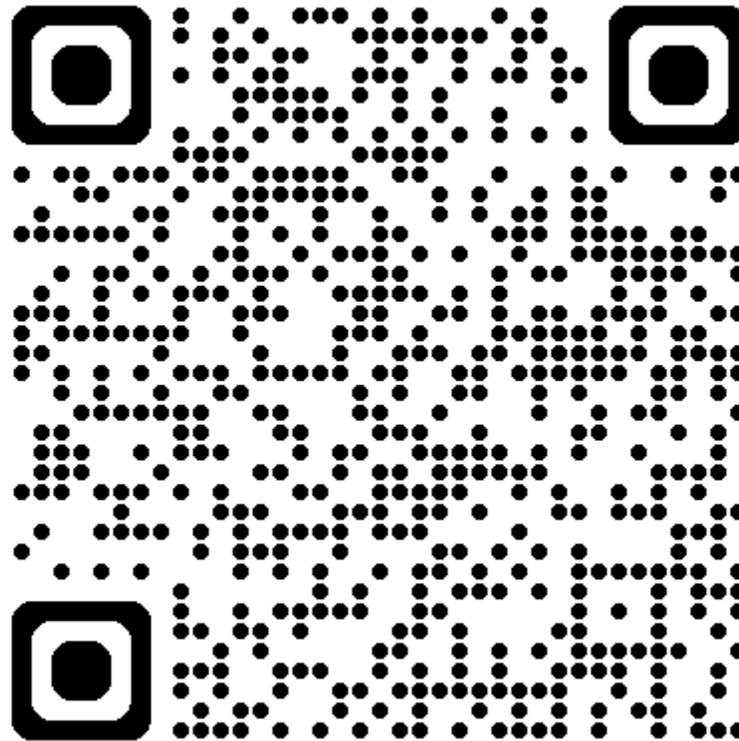
- **Are there types of recreational opportunities or open spaces that you would like to see more of?**
- **Are there types of resources or specific areas that should be a priority for conservation?**
- **What concerns do you have related to open space and recreation in Montague (safety, maintenance, diversity of options, access, etc.)?**
- **What types of programs, events, or activities would you like to see?**
  - **Are you interested in volunteer opportunities or community-led conservation projects? If so, what types of activities would you be interested in volunteering for?**
- **How should the town communicate about current projects and future opportunities to get involved?**

## Next Steps



## Participate in the Montague OSRP Survey

*Scan to access the Community Survey!*



**<https://tinyurl.com/7vnncw95>**

Thank you!  
Q&A

For more information, please visit the  
Montague OSRP Project Page: <https://montague-ma.gov/p/1589/>

For questions/comments, please email  
Maureen Pollock, Planning Director at [mpollock@montague-ma.gov](mailto:mpollock@montague-ma.gov)  
or Jon Dobosz, Parks & Recreation Director at [recdir@montague-ma.gov](mailto:recdir@montague-ma.gov)

