



**TOWN OF FREETOWN**  
**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN**  
**2023 - 2030**

**Prepared by the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee**

Throughout this planning process, Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee members have included Jeffrey Amaral, Amanda Barlow, Lynn Furtado, Brian Almeida, Ellen Lima, Brian Miller, and Linda Fournier. Additional organizational and technical assistance was provided by Lu-Ann Souza, Victoria D'Antoni, Michael McCue, Keven Desmarais, and Chris McKay.

**Technical Assistance provided by:**

Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)

Special thanks to the many individuals, organizations, and agencies who gave their time and shared their knowledge of the Town and its surroundings.

## Introduction

The Freetown Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC) in conjunction with the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) is pleased to present this first ever Freetown Open Space Plan. Over the past two years many hours have been invested by this committee collaborating with local boards and representatives, partnering with external agencies, and most importantly, soliciting input from the residents of Freetown. Valuable input and support have been received from the Selectmen, Freetown Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historic Commission and Cemetery Commission. The support of the community has been vital in preparing this document.

Since forming in 2021, the focus of the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee has been on defining short-term enhancements, developing long-range plans for our recreational areas and facilitating community use of our shared spaces in order to best serve our community, as specified in our mission statement. The development of Freetown's first Open Space and Recreation Plan is a significant milestone in ensuring that our mission is accomplished. As a team we persevered through this process because of a shared vision, contributing to the preservation and enjoyment of the open spaces that Freetown offers.

Respectfully submitted,

Freetown Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee:

Jeffrey Amaral, Committee Chairperson	Brian Almeida, Committee Member
Amanda Barlow, Vice Chairperson	Linda Fournier, Committee Member
Lynn Furtado, Committee Clerk	Ellen Lima, Committee Member
Brian Miller, Committee Member	

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## **Section 1: Plan Summary**

The 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan represents the results of approximately three years of locally led public planning efforts leading to the creation of **the first Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Town of Freetown**. It was the desire of our Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee to create a plan with utility, something that would and could be addressed in a timely and efficient manner.

Given its location in proximity to Routes 24 and 140, and the soon to be completed South Coast Rail, Phase 1 commuter rail line, Freetown will continue to change. Growth will continue to occur. The preparation of a community to deal with growth and change is critical. This plan addresses the needs of a rural community as it transitions in the face of man-made and natural changes to its character and environment.

The work, analysis and vision that has helped to produce this plan, has resulted in a seven-year Action Plan agenda which addresses such items as: the need to look at Freetown in a more regional context; the need to prioritize areas of town for conservation, preservation, recreation and related needs; the need to plan for the responsible management of our natural and cultural resources; the need to integrate natural resource management, growth management, and climate resiliency planning as a standard practice, and; the need to be prepared administratively, in terms of the capacity and ability, to work together in stewardship with the public and our external partners, to implement the goals, objectives and actions identified in our public plans.

## **Section 2: Introduction**

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Freetown Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee is composed of nine members working under the direction of the Board of Selectmen, serving in the best interest of Freetown by providing clean and safe recreational areas and activities. The focus of this committee is to generate short-term enhancements, develop long-range plans for our recreational areas and facilitate community use of our shared spaces to best serve our community.

The Freetown Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee functions to enhance our quality of life by providing safe, well-maintained recreational areas while preserving open space and historic resources. We appreciate the natural beauty that is Freetown. Our efforts aim at preserving and enriching that beauty by working with groups within Freetown supporting the ideal that we are a "community and not just neighbors" and we will act to strengthen the bonds of our community.

Our efforts will be in support of four major areas: encouraging responsible protection, use and maintenance of publicly accessible lands, improving communication among town boards, departments and the community concerning open space and recreational items, identifying strategic enhancements where open and recreational areas are involved, and engaging community, civic groups and individuals to build a comprehensive "Open Space and Recreation Plan" that will enhance our properties and thereby increase the participation of all of our citizens to take advantage of and enjoy our parks and open spaces.

### **Planning Process**

In the summer of 2019, the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) was asked to provide technical assistance to the Town to complete an Open Space and Recreation Plan.

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SRPEDD worked with Chris McKay, then the Town Planning Technician, to draft a public survey questionnaire on open space and recreation related issues and facilities. The initial survey was made available to the public, by the Planning Board, online through Survey Monkey, with a link provided on the town's website as well as SRPEDD's website, in the winter and spring of 2020 (coincident with the COVID-19 outbreak). In addition to mailings, hard copy surveys were also to be made available at Town Hall. The survey was publicized at board and commission meetings, via cable, and other media outlets.

In the spring of 2021, the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee held initial meetings to address the preparation of the first Freetown Open Space and Recreation Plan. The information obtained in the 104 total responses was used as one of the primary means of gauging the public's needs and concerns. In addition to the surveys, all Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee planning meetings were posted and open to the public, and held in an accessible, large meeting room in the Freetown Police Station. Members of the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee also hosted and participated in an issue-specific public meetings in 2021 and 2022, including with the Board of Selectmen, and representatives from the Planning Department and the Conservation Commission for the purpose of gathering comments germane to the "Environmental Challenges," "Needs Analysis," "Goals and Objectives," and "Action Plan" sections of the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan. These meetings were also held in the large, accessible meeting rooms.

Besides meeting with local groups, the Open Space and Recreation Committee members also attended Assawompset Ponds Management Committee meetings, Taunton River Stewardship Council meetings, and broke up into teams to visually survey the town's public recreation facilities. These meetings and Committee activities informed several sections of this plan.

## **Enhanced Outreach and Public Participation**

Freetown does not contain a federal or state designated environmental justice (EJ) community. In order to ensure meaningful involvement in the planning process, special attention was given to efforts to reach out to the entire community in the best ways possible. Enhanced outreach in these areas included local cable access postings of meetings and events, as well as postings on the Town website (including the survey with a link to complete it online if desired), and other forms of social media through affiliated partners and organizations.

## **Section 3: COMMUNITY SETTING**

### **A. REGIONAL CONTEXT**

Freetown is located on the southeastern edge of Bristol County in southeastern Massachusetts. The town is bordered by Berkley and Lakeville on the north, Rochester on the east, Acushnet, New Bedford, and Dartmouth on the south, and Fall River on the southwest. Freetown is approximately twelve (12) miles northeast of Fall River, thirty-seven (37) miles south of Boston, and twenty-three (23) miles east of Providence, Rhode Island. Freetown is connected to the larger southeastern Massachusetts region via two parallel north-south limited access highways, Routes 24 and 140. Route 24 is located on west side of town and is the principal route between Newport, Rhode Island and Boston, whereas Route 140 is located on the east side of town and is the principal artery between New Bedford and points north. Freetown encompasses 38.3 square miles, approximately 24,512 acres and lies entirely within the Taunton River watershed.

### **B. HISTORY**

The presence of the Pocasset, a sub-group of the Wampanoag tribe, in the Freetown area is documented by many confirmed native sites, with concentrations, near the Assonet and Taunton Rivers and Long Pond. North and South Main Streets (Route 79, historically known as Rhode Island Road) are believed to follow the route of a Native American trail.

In 1659 a group of English settlers purchased a large tract from the Wampanoags which encompassed much of present-day Freetown and Fall River. Initially the area was used primarily as farmland by the 26 original owners of the Freeman's purchase. Freetown was established as a town in 1683. Boundaries with Tiverton (RI), Fall River and Fairhaven fluctuated as late as 1815.

Early English settlement was initially concentrated near the mouth of the Assonet River where there was a diverse food supply, a convenient waterway and waterpower to operate a mill. By the Revolutionary War there were two distinct village centers, Assonet and East Freetown. Rivers remained important regional transportation routes although roads were also established in the 18th century. Around 1764 Old Freetown had a native population of 59, probably on the Indian Reservation established in the eastern portion of present-day Fall River. Old Freetown, which included Fall River until 1803, had a population of 1,492 descendants of European settlers in 1765. Agriculture was the mainstay of the colonial economy, with several small mills and a tannery along the Assonet River as well as mills in East Freetown. There was also a Quaker community in the Friend Street area of Berkley and Freetown, with a surviving Quaker cemetery.

A shipbuilding and shipping industry was established at Assonet Village in the western part of Freetown after the Revolutionary War. In the 19th century the forge established in East Freetown in 1704 grew into a major foundry that produced scythes, axes and other tools, and later machine castings for the textile industry.

Freetown's shipbuilding and shipping industry declined by the middle of the 19th century, in part because of the arrival of the railroad and also because ships were becoming too large for the upstream location. During this period Freetown reverted to an agricultural base with produce now easier to ship to urban markets via railroad. The population remained largely stable through the 19th century, then

rose with an increasing number of immigrants towards the turn of the century, many of whom came to work in the mills in nearby Fall River.

By the late 19th century a major part of Freetown's economy was producing bleach used for processing cloth made in Fall River. Forest production was important in the early 20th century, as was poultry, milk production, cranberry growing, and hatchery grown trout. A small summer colony was established on the east side of Long Pond in East Freetown in the late 19th century. Freetown- Fall River State Forest was established in 1934 and now occupies over 5,000 acres, primarily in Freetown, including an outstanding collection of Civilian Conservation Corps waterholes.

Construction of Route 24 through the western part of town and Route 140 through the eastern part of town in the mid-20th century made Freetown much more accessible from the north and the south. The industrial base of the community also changed with the closure of the bleachery and other industries by the mid-20th century. Like most other southeastern Massachusetts communities, Freetown saw a dramatic increase in population in the second half of the 20th century, and has a current population of roughly 9,200.

## **C. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**

### **FREETOWN STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Planning for Open Space and Recreation is best undertaken with due consideration to the community's varied characteristics: demographic, socio-economic, economic, housing profile and school enrollment. These factors help provide the direction in the preparation of the plan for the maximum benefit to town residents, the neighboring communities, and the surrounding environment for several years to come.

The following brief summary serves as a guide to the detailed statistical analyses in this section.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

The Open Space and Recreation Plan for Freetown necessitates the recognition of the town's population growth, population density, age structure, racial and ethnic composition, and household characteristics.

- From 1960 to 1990, Freetown experienced a tremendous increase in growth, where its population almost tripled. Since 1990, however, Freetown's growth has stabilized, with a moderate increase in population expected through 2030.
- Freetown has a very sparse population density, with only 240 persons per square mile in 2020, a slight increase over its 2000 population density of 221 persons per square mile.
- From 2000 to 2020, Freetown experienced slight decreases in the population of the youngest age groups (0-19 years) but saw larger decreases in the population constituting the majority of the labor force (25-54 years). Increases in population were experienced in all age groups above 54 years of age.
- While Freetown's population remains predominantly White, between 2000 and 2020, all other ethnic groups saw increases in population, with the largest increases in the Hispanic and Other Races population groups.
- While conventional family households remained stable in Freetown from 2000 to 2020, non-conventional household types, such as householder living alone, became more common in Freetown.

Generally, the Open Space and Recreation Plan for Freetown will be well-served if it includes a comprehensive grasp of the town's demographic situation: its population growth, density, age, racial and ethnic composition, as well as household types. In this way, the resulting plan will be most useful in accommodating and anticipating the types and styles of indoor and outdoor amenities and facilities that are responsive and accessible to all of the town's residents.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE**

Freetown residents' socio-economic characteristics, such as educational attainment and income measures, have significant implications on their choices and preferences for open space and recreation.

- Over the span of twenty years (2000-2020), the number of Freetown adults (aged 25 years and older) attaining higher educational degrees increased. As of 2020, approximately 36.3% of the town's adults possessed either a Bachelor's or graduate degree.
- In both 2000 and 2020, Freetown's median household income and median family income were both higher than the state averages.

Planning for Open Space and Recreation in Freetown will be most responsive to the community's needs when the socio-economic characteristics of the town's residents are carefully considered. Both education and income are important factors that affect the residents' likes and dislikes for the health facilities, recreational amenities, and infrastructure.

### **ECONOMIC PROFILE**

Consideration of the economic base of Freetown may provide insights into the open space and recreation interests and needs of employed residents.

- Freetown's employment levels declined for the first time in recent years in 2020, in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented occurrence has put employment levels in Freetown at the lowest point since pre-2015. However, Freetown has already begun to see signs of recovery in 2021.
- Freetown's dominant type of employment is transportation and warehousing, due to the presence of a 1.3 million square feet Stop & Shop distribution facility located in the Assonet section of Freetown.
- The unemployment rate for Freetown closely mirrored that of the Commonwealth over the past two centuries. However, in 2020, unemployment levels hit a high not seen since the economic downturn of the mid-to-late 2000s, now due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Freetown has already begun to see signs of recovery in its unemployment levels in 2021.

Residents employed in various types of industries may possess differing taste and preferences for open space and recreation. A challenge for the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan will be to anticipate choices and incomes.

### **HOUSING PROFILE**

The rural atmosphere and suburban character of Freetown may be facing a threat from housing development, especially if Freetown continues to be considered a viable choice as a bedroom community, accessible to the job centers of Boston and Providence.

- Freetown's housing stock increased moderately during the 2000-2020 period.

- The number of building permits issued for single-family homes in Freetown has fluctuated since FY2012.
- The median price of a single-family home in Freetown, as is the case in the much of the state, has risen to its pre-housing downturn level of 2005.

### SCHOOL PROFILE

The range of facilities and amenities in the town’s open space and recreational environment are also dependent on the number of school children who will enjoy these conveniences.

- Commensurate with the decline in the number of residents in the younger population cohorts, the number of children attending school has also decreased. Consequently, planning efforts should recognize the trend of reduced enrollment in the town’s schools.

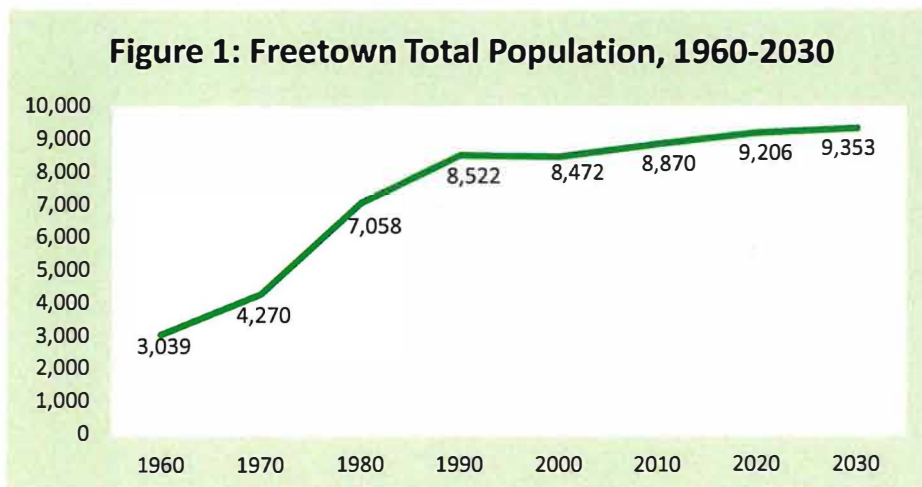
An Open Space and Recreation Plan for Freetown that considers the school district may involve acknowledging the need to refocus and reuse rather than acquire more resources for new facilities designed for a large number of schoolchildren. The planning efforts should recognize the impact of some economic factors in the area that will affect the general character of the town but be flexible enough to shift gears or direction.

## D. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

### POPULATION TRENDS: TOTAL POPULATION

Freetown’s population almost tripled from 3,039 in 1960 to 8,870 in 2010 and is projected to increase in the coming decades. Once a sparsely populated agricultural and industrial town, its increase in population over the past five decades has transformed it into a suburban community. Freetown’s growth can be attributed to its rural country setting and its access to major roadways, including Routes, 24, 79 and 140.

Freetown’s population growth from 1960 to 2020, and its projected population to 2030, is displayed in Figure 1 below.



Note: Post-2020 numbers are population projections

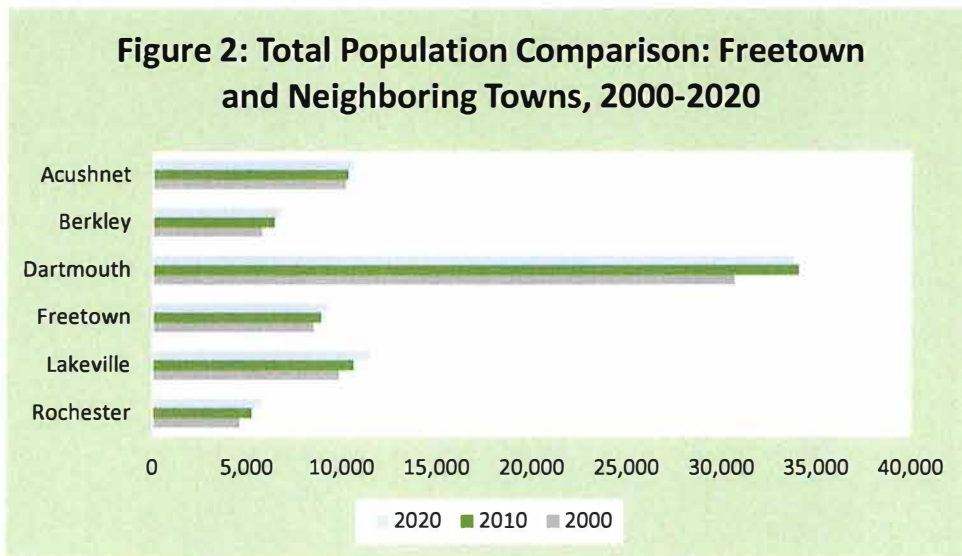
Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 1960-2020 Census, UMass Donahue Institute, MassDOT, SRPEDD Regional Transportation Plan

Freetown’s population grew dramatically from 1960 to 1990, increasing more than 20% each decade, but has slowed considerably from 1990 to 2020. Regionally projected population numbers to 2030 suggest that Freetown can expect moderate growth in the coming decades.

<b>Table 1: Population Growth Rate: Freetown, 1960-2020</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Numerical Increase</b>	<b>Percentage Increase</b>
1960	3,039	-	-
1970	4,270	1,231	40.5%
1980	7,058	2,788	65.3%
1990	8,522	1,464	20.7%
2000	8,472	-50	-0.6%
2010	8,870	398	4.7%
2020	9,206	336	3.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 1960-2020 Census

Figure 2 shows a comparison of population growth in the towns neighboring Freetown.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, UMass Donahue Institute, MassDOT

Between 2000 and 2020, the moderate population growth experienced by Freetown was also apparent in the adjacent towns, as Figure 2 reveals.

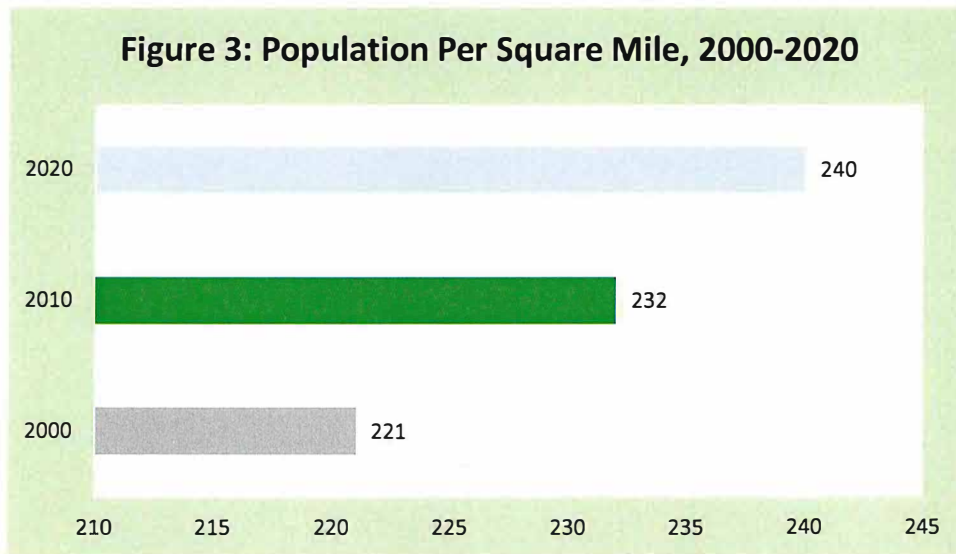
Table 2 below examines how Freetown’s future population growth is viewed regionally, comparing the projected total population to the year 2030 for Freetown and its neighboring towns.

<b>Table 2: Population Projections: Freetown and Neighboring Towns, 2010-2030</b>				
<b>Community</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>Change 2000-2030</b>
Acushnet	10,303	10,559	10,238	-0.6%
Berkley	6,411	6,764	7,544	17.7%
Dartmouth	34,032	33,783	39,280	15.4%
Freetown	8,870	9,206	9,353	5.4%
Lakeville	10,602	11,523	11,882	12.1%
Rochester	5,232	5,717	6,274	19.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2010 and 2020 Census, UMass Donahue Institute, MassDOT, SRPEDD Regional Transportation Plan

The data in Table 2 shows that Freetown is expected to experience one of the slowest growths amongst its neighboring communities in the coming decade.

In Figure 3, the number of persons per square mile in the last two decades are shown. Freetown’s population density in 2000 was 221 persons per square mile. By 2020, the town’s population per square mile increased to 240 persons per square mile, an addition of 19 more people per square mile.



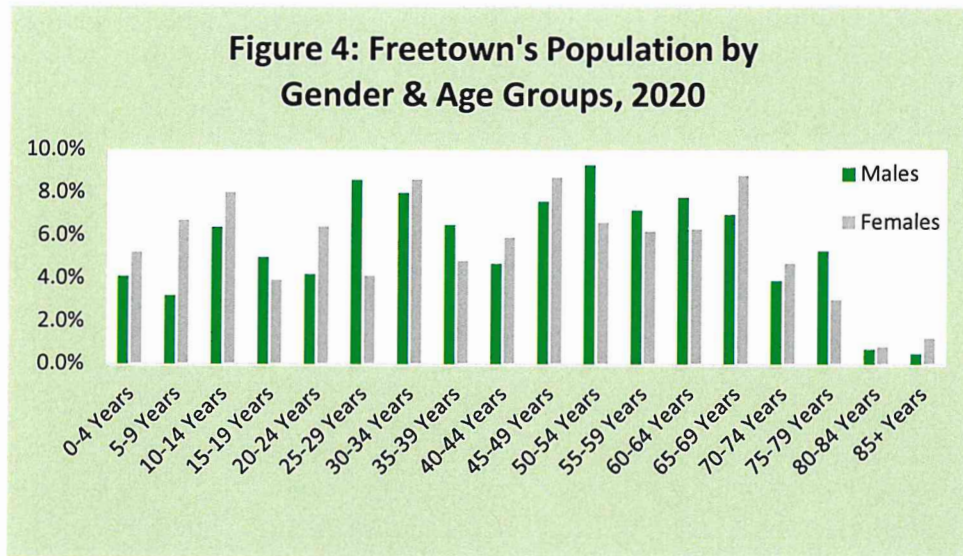
Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000, 2010, and 2020 Census

The consideration of the status and direction of the growth of its population is of vital importance for the preparation of Freetown’s Open Space and Recreation Plan. Attention to the town’s population density is just as critical. Only then can the plan be responsive, accommodating and provide for all of the varied needs and demands of the community.

**POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE**

A comprehensive grasp of the age profile of the town’s population is a good guide in the preparation and assessment of the respective community members’ needs.

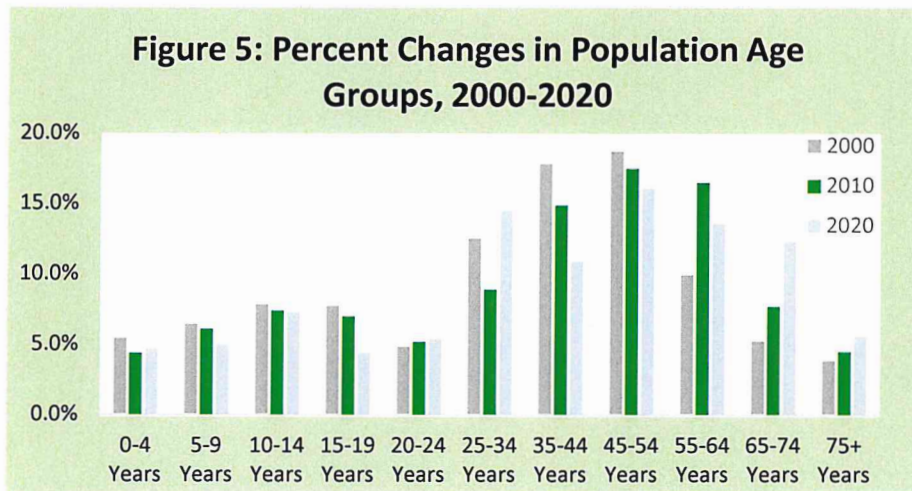
The age composition of Freetown’s population in 2020 can be seen in Figure 4.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

As of 2020, a deficit in the youngest age groups (under 5 years old) is evident from the data in Figure 4. The same is also true for the young adult's cohort (20-34 years old). The great bulk of the middle-aged and older workforce of both sexes (40-64 years old) implies a robust labor force available to support the town's economy. However, the oldest age cohorts will be retiring in the coming years, and the town may then be economically dependent on Freetown's reduced younger age groups.

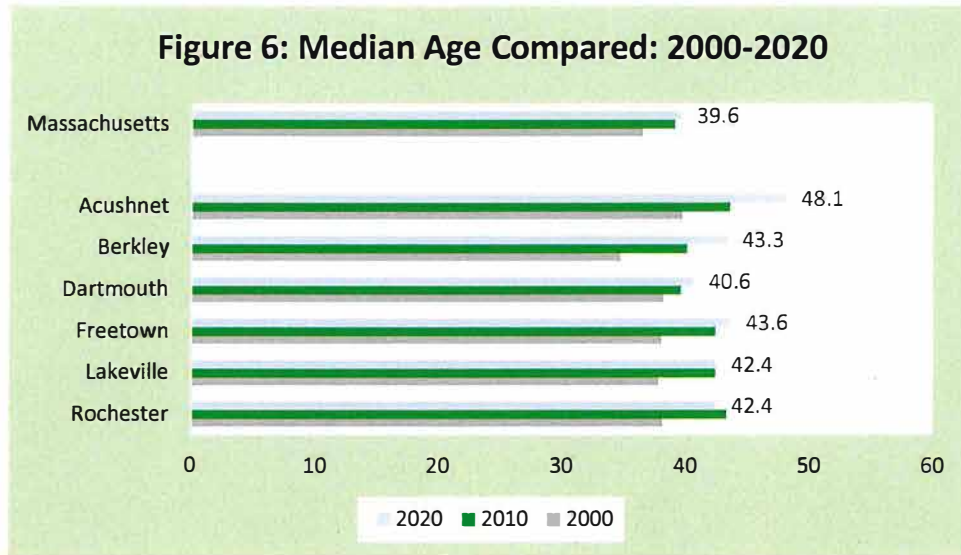
The data in Figure 5 shows a two decade-long change in Freetown's age groups.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000 and 2010 Census; 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 5 above further demonstrates changes in the population by age groups. Between 2000 and 2020, the youngest age cohorts (0 to 19 years) in Freetown decreased while conversely, there was a slight rise among the young adults (20 to 34 years). The figure also shows that there has been a noticeable decrease in the majority of the working age population (35 to 54 years) and an increase in the older working age population (55 to 64 years). The latter age cohort will soon be joining the town's growing elderly population.

To assess how Freetown’s aging population compares with its neighboring towns and the Commonwealth, a comparison of median ages is in Figure 6.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000 and 2010 Census, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

The data in Figure 6 points to Freetown as having the third oldest population amongst its neighboring towns, as well as a higher median age than the Commonwealth as a whole.

Familiarity with the town’s population age groups and the rate by which the town is aging, serves planners well in choosing and deciding the types of open space or styles of outdoor and indoor amenities and facilities that are responsive and adaptable to the needs of various population cohorts.

### RACE AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION

Categories of race and ethnicity have changed the composition in cities and towns across the Commonwealth and the country over the years.

In Table 3, Freetown’s race and ethnic population from the 2000, 2010, and 2020 Census are illustrated below.

Race/Ethnic Groups	2000	2010	2020	Change 2000-2020
Total	8,472	8,870	9,206	8.7%
White	96.2%	96.4%	92.2%	4.1%
Black	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	40.7%
Asian	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	21.6%
Other Races	2.5%	2.0%	6.7%	190.6%
Hispanic	0.7%	1.2%	2.1%	227.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000, 2010, and 2020 Census

During the two decades, Freetown’s population remained predominantly White, but changes occurred in the town’s various racial and ethnic population composition. While high percentage changes of some non-white populations of the town from 2000 to 2020 (Table 3) far exceeded the overall rate of increase in the town’s total population, the high percentage change does not represent a significant change in the numbers of the specific ethnic and racial groups in town relative to the overall population.

The diversity of racial/ethnic population in Freetown may indicate varying interests and appetites for open space and recreational choices. Therefore, the planning exercise for the town has to acknowledge the changes in racial and ethnic composition of the town, in order to project the trajectory for future growth among these sub-populations.

**HOUSEHOLD TYPES**

Freetown household types have blended with the global trend of the rise in non-conventional household structures. From the traditional nuclear and extended family households, new household configurations have evolved.

The household types and changes occurring in Freetown covering the two decades from 2000 to 2020 are featured in Table 4.

<b>Table 4: Household Types: Freetown, 2000-2020</b>				
<b>Household Types</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Change 2000-2020</b>
Total Households	2,932	3,162	3,372	15.0%
Family Households	2,391	2,534	2,631	10.0%
Female Householder, with children under 18 years	113	124	118	4.4%
Householder Living Alone	413	465	741	79.4%
Household 65+ Years Living Alone	153	193	165	7.8%
Household Size	2.85	2.78	2.75	-3.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000, 2010 and 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates

Households headed by females with under-aged children remained stable in Freetown from 2000 to 2020, while conventional households became slightly more common in the town (Table 4). Moreover, between 2000 and 2020, there was a significant rise in residents preferring to live alone, and this mode was increased among the town’s elderly (65+ years).

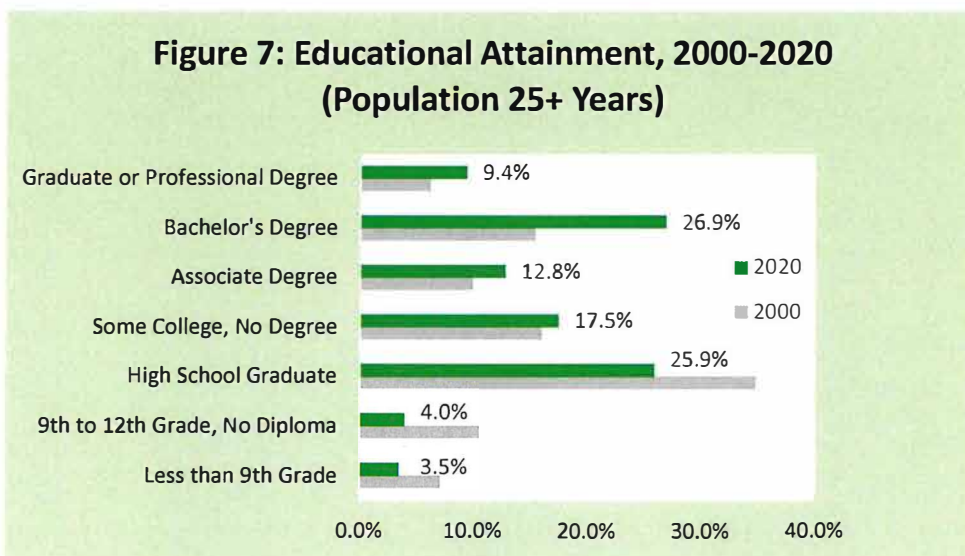
Overall, the conventional nuclear households (consisting of parents and their children) and those with extended relations within the households, have given way to the present-day types of household structures. A great challenge for town open space and recreation planners includes anticipating the demands and sustenance of adults living by themselves. Furthermore, the elderly person who lives alone may need alternative arrangements for recreation in the coming years.

## E. SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

People’s socio-economic status, most notably, education and income, tend to govern tastes and preferences for any choices in daily life. This is also true for their inclinations and fondness for certain recreational activities.

### EDUCATION

Educational data estimates for Freetown are available for 2020. Figure 7 presents the educational attainment of Freetown adults for 2000 and 2020.

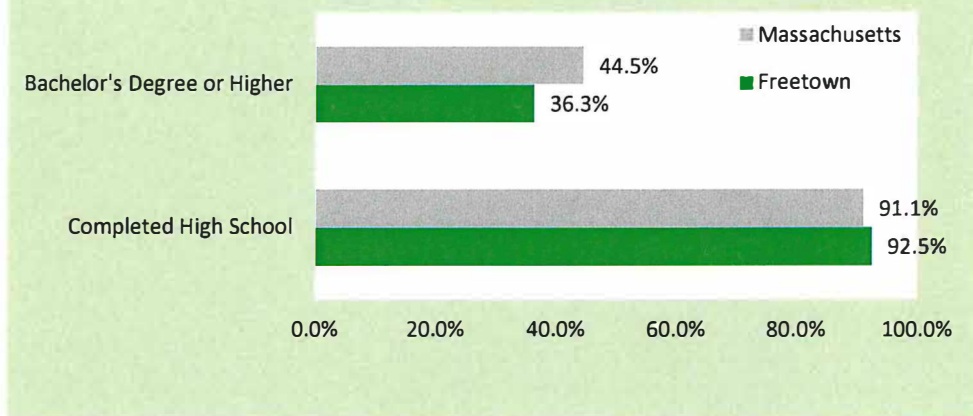


Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2000 U.S. Census and 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

The percent of Freetown adults (aged 25 years and over) attaining post-high school degrees increased between 2000 and 2020 (Figure 7). Those who had attained Bachelor’s degrees along with those who proceeded to obtain graduate degrees comprised approximately 36% of the town’s adult population in 2020.

Figure 8 compares the educational levels of Freetown adults with the state averages.

**Figure 8: Comparing Educational Levels: Freetown vs. State, 2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

The data in Figure 8 shows that in 2020, a slightly lower percentage of adults in the Commonwealth had completed high school compared to Freetown and a higher percentage of adults in the Commonwealth had a Bachelor’s degree or higher compared to Freetown.

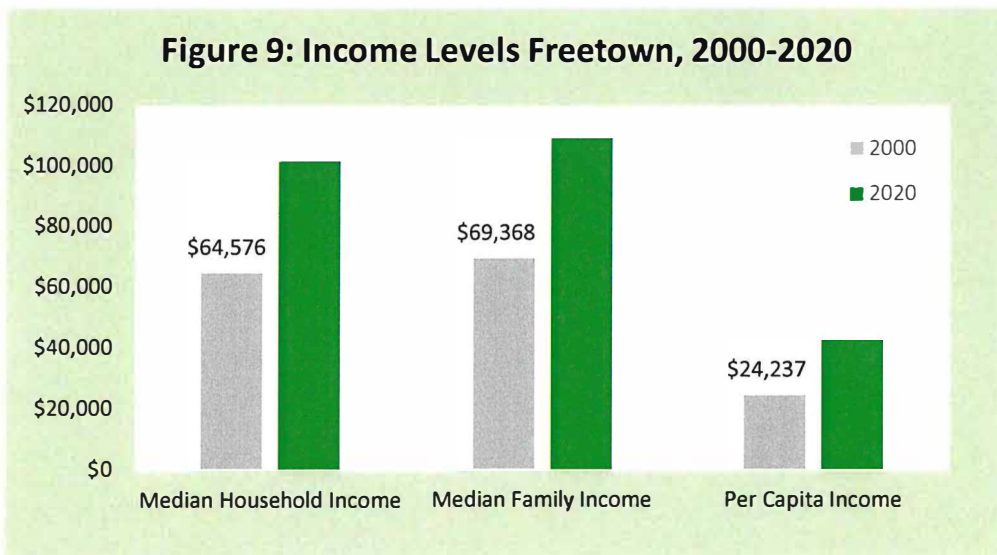
In general, planning for open space and recreational activities should consider the implications and effects of the town members’ educational achievements in order to anticipate their recreational preferences.

**INCOME**

Median household income, median family income, and per capita income are the most common types of income measures for a community.

In Figure 9, the income levels for the town of Freetown in 2000, 2016, and 2020 are shown.

**Figure 9: Income Levels Freetown, 2000-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates

Increases in all levels of income for Freetown within the 20-year period from 2000 and 2020 are evident in the data (Figure 9), despite the economic downturn in the late 2000s, and taking into account inflation (\$1 in 2000 = \$1.50 in 2020).

Table 5 below presents a comparison of income levels between Freetown and the state from 2000 and 2020.

<b>Table 5: Income Levels: Freetown vs. Massachusetts, 2000-2020</b>						
Income Level	2000		2020		Change 2000 - 2020	
	Freetown	Mass.	Freetown	Mass.	Freetown	Mass.
Median Household Income	\$64,576	\$50,502	\$101,574	\$84,385	57.3%	67.1%
Median Family Income	\$69,368	\$61,664	\$109,162	\$106,562	57.4%	72.8%
Per Capita Income	\$24,237	\$25,952	\$42,606	\$45,555	75.8%	75.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000 Census; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2016 and 2020

As the data shows (Table 5), Freetown households and families had median incomes higher than statewide averages. From 2000 to 2020, Freetown had higher percentage increase in median household income, but a lower percentage increase in median family income compared to the state. Additionally, Freetown had a lower per capita income compared to the statewide averages, however, Freetown had roughly the same percentage change in per capita income over the two decades when compared to the state.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

According to current Census 2020 block group data, Freetown has no federal or state certified environmental justice (EJ) population. The criteria for determining EJ populations include income - those making 65% or less than the statewide median household income; minority – where 25% of the residents identify as a race other than white; and English language isolation – where 25% of households have no one over the age of 14 who speaks English only, or very well.

The nearest EJ population to Freetown is found near the downtown area of neighboring Fall River.

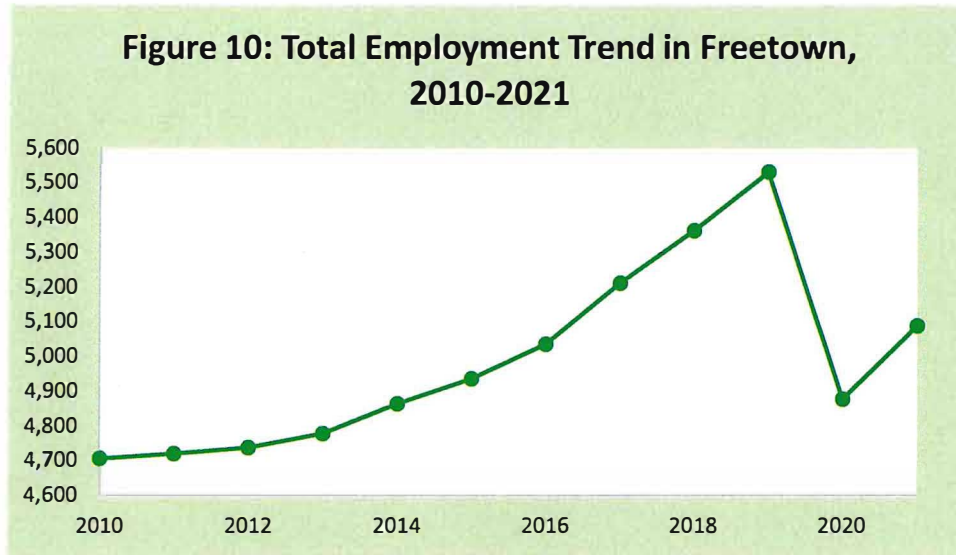
Planning for Open Space and Recreation can only be most effective when the socio-economic characteristics of the town residents are carefully considered. Both education and income are factors that determine and guide the residents’ taste and preferences for the health facilities, recreational amenities, or infrastructure that they may utilize.

### **F. ECONOMIC PROFILE**

The source of employment and revenue in a community serve as its economic base. A vital part of the planning process is to recognize the availability and types of jobs and employment in which the residents of Freetown are engaged.

## EMPLOYMENT

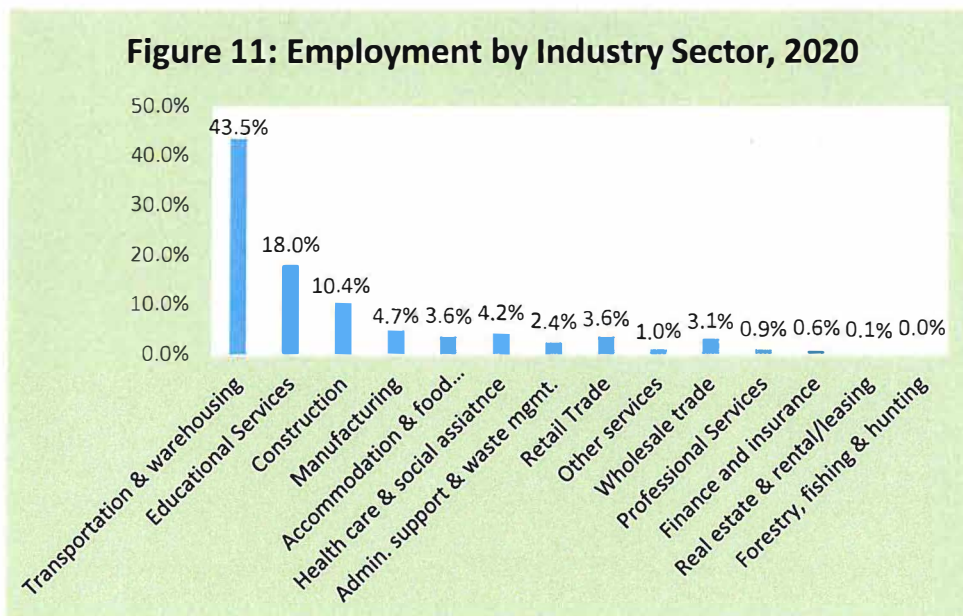
Freetown's trend in total employment from 2010 to 2021 is on display in Figure 10.



Source: MA EOLWD

There was a huge impact in employment in Freetown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, Freetown saw the lowest level of total employment since pre-2015 in 2020, after which it began to increase again.

Figure 11 presents a breakdown of employment by industry from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development for 2020 in Freetown.

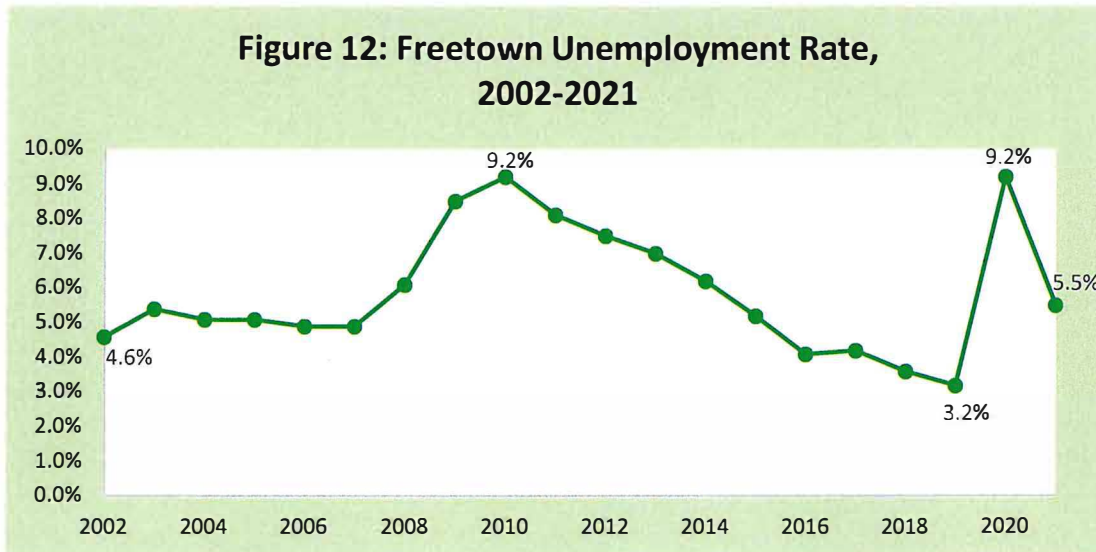


Source: MA EOLWD

The dominant type of employment in Freetown is in the Transportation and warehousing sector, which is due to the presence of the 1.3 million square foot Stop & Shop distribution facility located in the Assonet section of Freetown.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

The unemployment rate in Freetown from 2002 to 2021 is presented in Figure 12 below.

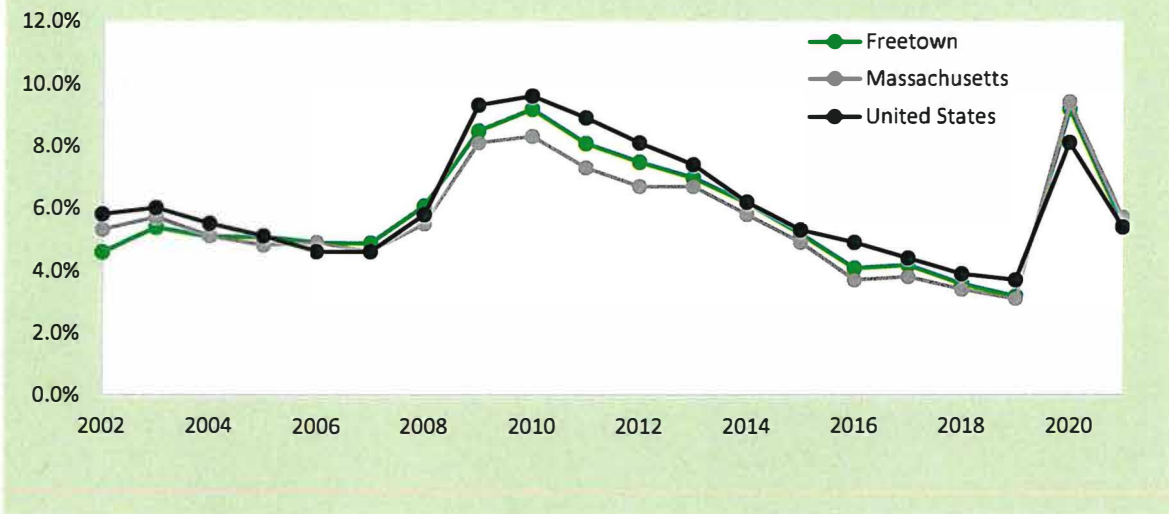


Source: MA EOLWD

The sharp rises in Freetown's unemployment rate in 2010 and 2020 coincided with the economic downturn in the mid-to-late 2000s, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Freetown's unemployment rate has already begun to see signs of recovery in its unemployment levels in 2021.

A comparative view of Freetown's unemployment rate with that of the Commonwealth and the United States is featured in Figure 13.

**Figure 13: Comparing Unemployment Rates, 2002-2021**



Source: MA EOLWD

Freetown's unemployment rate from 2002 to 2021 closely mirrored the trends of both the Commonwealth and the nation, with peaks in both 2010 and 2020. After the unemployment rates peaked in 2010, the rates for Freetown, the Commonwealth and the nation had all gradually declined, until quickly peaking again in 2020. Freetown, the Commonwealth, and the nation all show signs of recovery in 2021.

Overall, the economic features of Freetown should be considered in planning for the community's open space and recreation. Not only do these features influence residents' needs and demands for pastime activities and leisure facilities, but also their affordability and preference for their own and their children's recreational options as well.

## G. HOUSING

The Open Space and Recreation Plan for any community is closely linked with the housing status of the residents therein, as this reflects available land and space that provide options for spending time outdoors and indoors. Likewise, the residents' involvement in the community's social and cultural activities based on their housing arrangements also deem serious consideration.

### HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

The housing characteristics for the town of Freetown within a 20-year span appears in Table 6.

<b>Table 6: Freetown Housing Characteristics, 2000-2020</b>			
<b>Housing Characteristics</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Change 2000 - 2020</b>
<b>Housing Units</b>			
Total	3,029	3,485	15.1%
Occupied	2,932	3,356	14.5%
Vacant	97	129	33.0%
<b>Housing Tenure*</b>			
Owned	2,611	3038	16.4%
Rented	321	334	4.0%

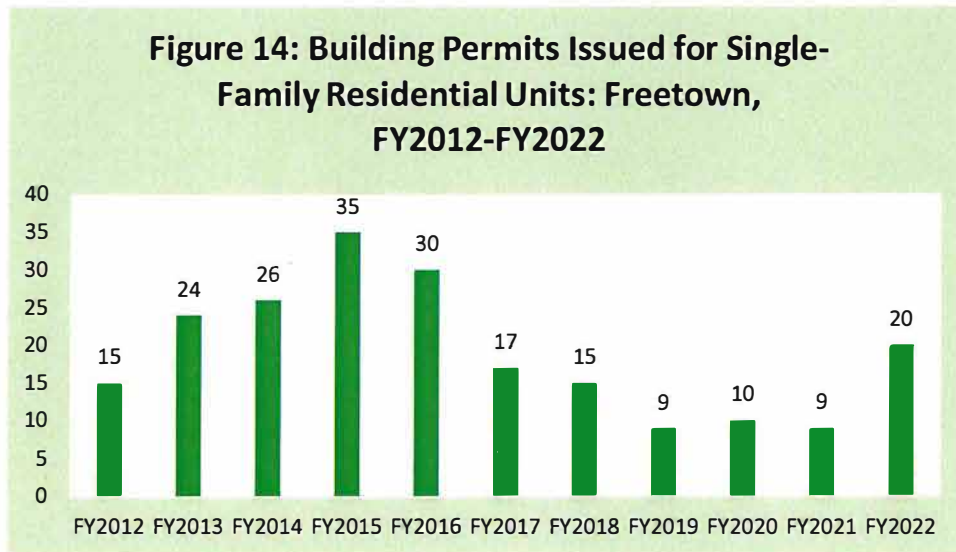
\*Of occupied housing

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000 Census; 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

The housing crises of the mid-to-late 2000s is highly evident in the astronomical increase of vacant housing from 2000 to 2020 (Table 6). Despite the housing crises, the town's overall amount of housing stock increased as did the town's homeownership rate.

### ISSUANCE OF BUILDING PERMITS

A good indicator of the housing situation in an area is the issuance of building permits for new residential units. Figure 14 shows the number of single-family residential building permits issued by the town of Freetown from FY2012 to FY2021.



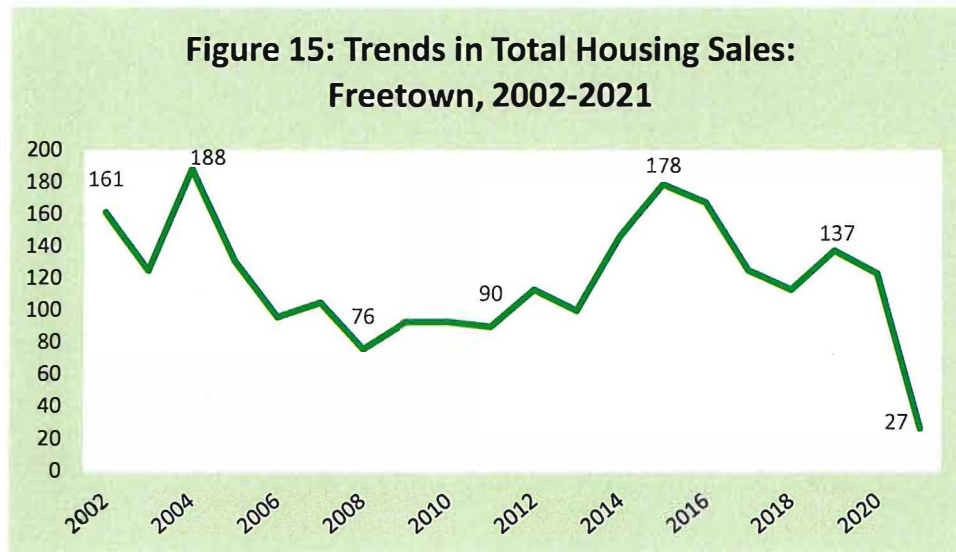
Source: Town of Freetown

The number of single-family building permits issued in Freetown has fluctuated widely between FY2012 and FY2022. Since FY2012, the highest number of building permits issued was in FY2015 (with 35 permits issued), and the least number of permits issued were issued in FY2019 and FY2021 (with 9 permits each).

## HOUSING SALES

The sale of residential homes in a community is a reflection of the status of the housing market in the area: whether there is an oversupply or a greater demand of some type of housing therein.

Figure 15 presents the trend of total housing sales from 2002 to 2021 in Freetown.



Source: The Warren Group

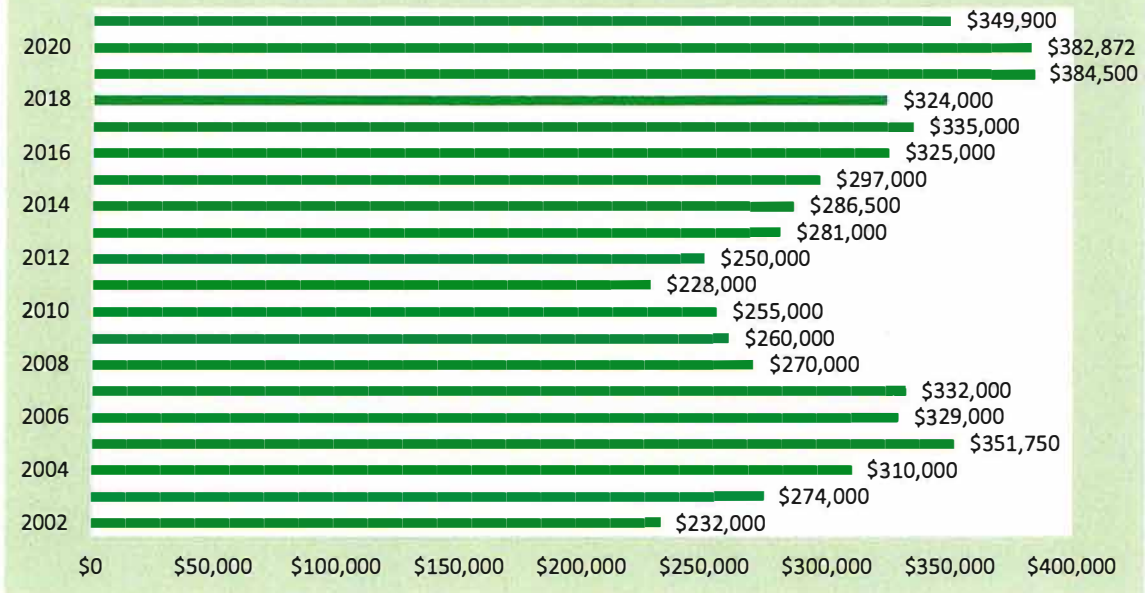
After the impact of the economic downturn in the mid-to-late 2000's, housing sales began to climb steadily. However, sales bottomed out again in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic still impacting the housing market.

## HOUSING COSTS

The cost and affordability of housing are important factors in the relocation choices of families and may be relevant, given that Freetown is a bedroom community for both the Boston and Providence metropolitan areas.

Figure 16 presents the median price of a single-family home in Freetown from 2002 to 2021.

**Figure 16: Cost of Single-Family Housing in Freetown, 2002-2021**



Source: The Warren Group

The data shows that the median price of a single-family home in Freetown has not been linear. The cost peaked at \$384,500 in 2019, after bottoming out to \$224,500 in 2011.

For comparative purposes, Table 7 shows the median price of a single-family home in Freetown's neighboring towns in both 2002 and 2020.

<b>Table 7: Changes in the Cost of Single-Family Homes: Freetown and Neighboring Towns, 2002-2020</b>			
<b>Town</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Change 2002-2020</b>
Acushnet	\$185,250	\$329,400	77.8%
Berkley	\$264,525	\$418,000	58.0%
Dartmouth	\$225,000	\$380,000	68.9%
Freetown	\$232,000	\$382,872	65.0%
Lakeville	\$269,750	\$425,000	57.6%
Rochester	\$250,000	\$481,500	92.6%

Source: The Warren Group

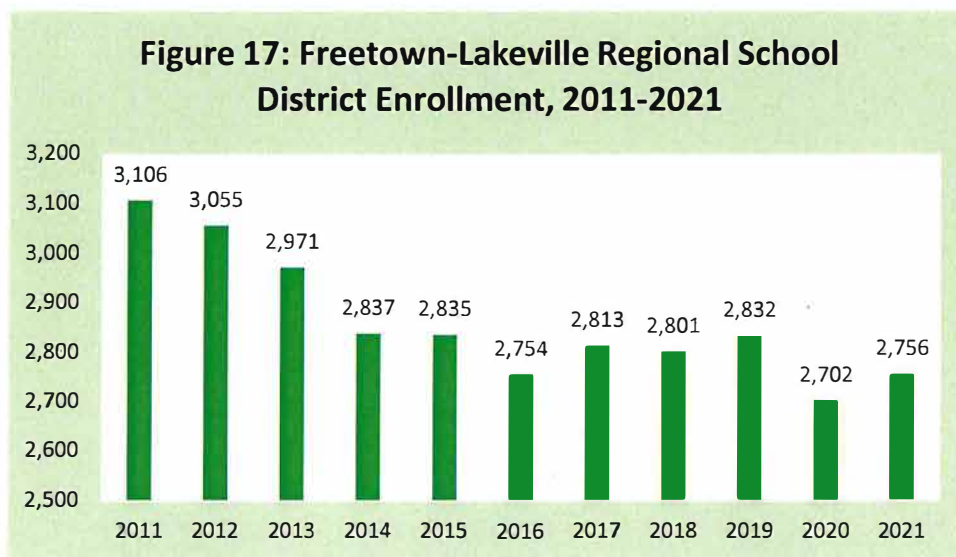
The 65.0% increase in the price of a single-family home in Freetown between 2002 and 2020 was the third lowest amongst its neighboring towns, above only Berkley and Lakeville.

In order to provide established town residents with their open space and recreation needs, Open Space and Recreation Plans must have a satisfactory grasp of the town's overall housing market. Factors, such as a supply of adequate types of housing to shelter all types of households and family structures and the costs involved need considerable attention in this plan.

## H. PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

The town's number of schoolchildren coming from young families contributes to the ebb and flow of the school district's total enrollment.

The Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District's enrollment for grades K-12 from 2011 to 2021 appear in Figure 17 below.



Source: MA DESE

The Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District has seen its enrollment decline 11.3% from 2011 to 2021, despite the fact that both Freetown and Lakeville experienced an increase in population during this time period. The decline in school enrollment can be attributed to many factors, including smaller household sizes, more people living alone, and the aging of the population.

Overall, planning for Open Space and Recreation in Freetown is of the utmost benefit to the town if its demographic composition, economic profile, and housing characteristics are considered. This will help guide the direction of all aspects of the plan, thereby advancing both the quality of life of its residents, but also the quality of the community and the environment.

## I. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

### PATTERNS AND TRENDS

The Massachusetts Audubon Society's (MAS) Losing Ground: Nature's Value in a Changing Climate report, (2020), contains a statistical profile of land use trends in all 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts between 2012 and 2017. In the context of the Audubon report, natural land is defined as forest, wetland, and water; open land is defined as agricultural areas, bare soil, or low vegetation; and

developed land includes low density residential and commercial/industrial/high density residential development. Most of the recent development has occurred throughout town, with proposed solar field development becoming more prominent in recent years (part of a growing trend in southeastern Massachusetts more rural and agricultural communities). The 222 acres developed between 2012 - 2017 represented a slight increase in comparison to the amount of land consumed by development during the previous MAS report published in 2014 (up 55 acres from the 167 acres reported in 2014). It should also be noted that land permanently protected in Freetown increased by approximately the same amount (up 51 acres from the 761 acres reported in 2014).

Presently, about 17% of the land in Freetown (3,867 acres) has been developed for residential, commercial, agricultural, or other purposes. Forest, wetlands, and open space presently account for about 82% of the land in Freetown (18,274 acres). Of Freetown's total of 22,652 acres, 6,003 acres (27%) are permanently protected.

The decline in the amount of active agricultural land in Freetown and communities throughout southeastern Massachusetts reflects the region's aging farming population and the trends in the lifestyle choices of their heirs. Many older farmers are retiring, and their farms are not being retained for agricultural purposes by their heirs. For those who do continue to farm the land, diversification, value-added products, and specialty crops have made agriculture an economically viable pursuit.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **A) Transportation**

**Roads:** Two parallel north-south limited access highways, Route 24 (to the west), and Route 140 (to the east), serve Freetown. Route 24 is the principal route between the Newport, Rhode Island area, and points north including the City of Fall River, the City of Taunton, and ultimately to Metro Boston. There are three interchanges connecting Route 24 to Freetown. Route 140 is the principal route between the city of New Bedford and points north, and it connects to Route 24 in Taunton. These roads provide Freetown residents with easy access to nearby shopping areas, services, and places of employment.

North and South Main Streets (Route 79, historically known as Rhode Island Road) are believed to follow the route of a Native American trail and provide a more rural route connection to the village area and Town Hall, as well as to neighboring Middleboro and Fall River.

Routes 18 and 105 run south from Lakeville and Middleboro, and converge in Lakeville, then running south into East Freetown. This route provides connections to the state boat ramp on Long Pond in Freetown as well as to the City of New Bedford.

East-west traffic in Freetown has a much lower flow than the north-south routes, particularly when compared to the demand for travel to and from the Fall River and New Bedford areas. Travel between East Freetown and Assonet is facilitated by Slab Bridge Road and Chase Road.

**Rail:** The MBTA, since the mid 1990's, has engaged in a very long, studied, and at times, controversial planning process to restore commuter rail service between Fall River, New Bedford, and South Station in Boston. This process took shape in the form of the South Coast Rail (SCR) Corridor Plan (2009). The route alignment plan has been vetted publicly through two extensive federal, state, and local review processes. The preferred alignment (now referred to as the Full Build) would bring the rail from Boston,

through Stoughton, Easton, and Taunton before splitting off to New Bedford and continuing to Fall River. Some preparation work for the proposed rail expansion has been done in New Bedford and Fall River, at the ends of the line, but the entire project may not be realized until 2030 due to environmental permitting associated with a proposed Stoughton electrification alternative.

In the interim, the SCR has proposed a Phase 1 alternative to provide more immediate service to the Greater New Bedford and Fall River areas. Phase 1 would allow commuter rail service to begin in the South Coast by 2022, but without a stop in Back Bay. Passengers would be able to have a single-seat ride from New Bedford/Fall River into Boston. As part of Phase 1, there will also be a new stop constructed near the Freetown Stop & Shop that would serve residents of Freetown and North Fall River.

Extending the Stoughton commuter rail is still the preferred alternative but extending the Middleborough/Lakeville line in Phase 1 would allow for service to begin much sooner. Phase 1 would extend the existing Middleborough/Lakeville service. The trains used will be diesel-powered and extend service into New Bedford and Fall River.

The Freetown Station is located on the Fall River Secondary line, off South Main Street. There will be 107 parking spaces, which will accommodate the projected ridership necessary for the Full Build. Other proposed Phase 1 improvements to local roadways and infrastructure will address items such as at-grade crossings, culverts, drainage, and safety features. Reconstructed grade crossings include Chace Road, Braley Road, East Chipaway Road, Beechwood Road, Richmond Rd – North, Richmond Rd – South, Forge Road – North, Forge Road – South, and Brightman Lumber. Equipment upgrades will be made at Elm Street, High Street, and Copicut Road.

**Transit:** The Southeastern Regional Transit Authority, SRTA, headquartered in neighboring New Bedford, is the local transit agency. SRTA provides Fixed Route Bus Service and Demand Response Service for persons with a disability. Transportation for Seniors is provided by the Freetown Council on Aging.

**Bicycle and pedestrian:** Bicycle and pedestrian connections and improvements have been more frequently discussed in Freetown recently, largely in conjunction with the Freetown-Fall River State Forest and the trail system within the Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve. These areas have been part of SRPEDD's recent multi-use trail mapping and planning efforts in its 27 city and town planning district. Because of its geography, development patterns, rural character, including the Route 79 and Route 18/105 corridors, narrow local roads, and densely forested areas, safety issues present a major hurdle to development of interconnected sidewalks and shared use pathways/bike lanes in some areas.

## **B) Water**

The residents of Freetown get their drinking water primarily from onsite wells. Aside from this, the Freetown Water Department oversees services provided by neighboring cities, New Bedford, and Fall River, to parts of Freetown. The Freetown Water Department's service area consists of two separate water systems, one in Assonet and one in East Freetown. Water supplied to Assonet comes from the City of Fall River to service 384 residential and 45 commercial customers. Water supplied to East Freetown comes from the City of New Bedford to service 209 residential and 29 commercial customers. The Freetown Water & Sewer Commission (FW&SC) manages approximately 17 miles of water supply lines and a booster pump station located on East Chipaway Road in East Freetown.

## **C) Sewer**

In Freetown, a majority of the residents depend upon onsite septic systems for wastewater treatment. The FW&SC has two (2) industrial properties and one (1) private road (Birch Road) on the sewer system, for which they are responsible. Wastewater from these properties is sent to the Fall River Wastewater Treatment Plant.

## **LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

### **A) Zoning**

Freetown has significant unbuilt land area in the southwest quadrant of the Assawompset Ponds Watershed. Much of this unbuilt area may be constrained by wetlands. Freetown is largely zoned as Residential (single family or duplex, and multi-family by special permit) and General (mixed use residential/business). There are some areas zoned as Open Space, Industrial, and a concentrated area of Business, Village Business, and Village Residential uses in the East Freetown downtown area.

Freetown is subject to the state's new MBTA Multi-Family Zoning Requirement as a commuter rail adjacent community, and it is unclear at this point how future multi-family housing development may impact Freetown. This condition is further complicated by the fact that Freetown is targeted for a future South Coast rail station located on the west side of town.

### **B) Priority Protection/Priority Development Areas**

Another effort undertaken by the Town, in conjunction with the South Coast Rail Project, and tied to local zoning and planning protocol, is the designation and mapping of Priority Development (PDA) and Priority Protection Areas (PPA) within the community. This community driven planning exercise was originally conducted in 2008 by the three regional planning agencies serving the thirty-one (31) communities addressed in the South Coast Rail Corridor Plan. In 2013, the regional planning agencies, including SRPEDD, revisited the original process and choices as part of a five-year update process.

Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are areas that are appropriate for increased development or redevelopment due to several factors, including: good transportation access; available infrastructure (primarily sewer and water); an absence of environmental constraints, and local support. PDAs can range from a single parcel to many acres, and can include small scale infill, commercial, industrial, mixed-use, transit facilities, or other such projects.

Priority Protection Areas (PPAs) are areas that are important to protect due to the presence of significant natural or cultural resources, including, but not limited to: rare and endangered species habitats; areas critical to water supply; historic areas; scenic vistas; and agricultural areas. PPAs can also vary greatly in size, from small, species dependent areas, to large expanses of intact habitat. These sites may be candidates for protection through acquisition, conservation restriction, or other means. In Freetown, these PPAs occur largely around fairly intact water, wetland, forest, and water supply protection areas, some of which are important to the City of Fall River natural resources as well.

A community's Priority Area designations can guide municipal decisions about zoning revisions, infrastructure investments, and conservation efforts. In addition, these Community Priority Area designations are used as the foundation for developing Regional and State Priority Area designations.

Finally, in the fall of 2010, the Patrick Administration issued Executive Order 525 (E.O. 525) providing for the implementation of the South Coast Rail Corridor Plan and Corridor Map (including PPAs and PDAs) through state agency actions and investments. These state actions have the potential to help leverage local and private investments in the priority areas. (See, PPA-PDA: Freetown Community Priority Areas, Appendix C)

## **Section 4: Environmental Inventory**

### **Geology, Soils and Topography**

#### **Geology**

The Taunton River-Mount Hope Bay area was formed during the Pleistocene Period, 10,000 to 100,000 years ago. Glaciation modified the topography, drainage, and general relief of the surrounding basin. The drainage basin of the Taunton River is typically dendritic, which resembles a treelike pattern.

Bedrock outcrops are not common here, however, and there is an extensive covering of glacial till and outwash plains deposits. The western and northern boundaries of the ecoregion are tied closely to geology and topography, while the southeastern boundary with Cape Cod, coincides more with changes in vegetation and soils. Coarse-loamy and sandy, well-drained soils are common on the low hills, ridges, outwash plains, kames, and eskers, with some poorly drained soils formed in glacial till.

During the last Ice Age, a massive glacier cut across New England. As the climate warmed, the glacier receded, each time depositing loss soil, gravel, and rocks at the end moraine. When the glaciers melted, one of the features that formed was an esker. An esker is a sinuously curving, narrow deposit of coarse sand and gravel that forms along a meltwater stream channel, developing in a tunnel beneath the glacier. Eskers have long been valued for their gravel however, most have been mined/destroyed within the last century. One of the last remaining eskers in Freetown extends into the Taunton River, north of the mouth of Mother's Brook at Barnaby's Cove.

#### **Soils**

Freetown's soils are the result of the geological and glacial history of the area, the under-lying bedrock, surface and subsurface water, and the interaction of these factors with the flora and bacteria that live on or in the soil. These factors result in soils with different characteristics that influence land use and open space character. For example, soils that have high groundwater levels may preclude the development of conventional underground septic systems. Soils that are extremely stony or that have many large boulders can present difficulties for construction and can increase the cost of development. Deep, loamy soils generally good for agriculture. The predominant soil types in Freetown are discussed below.

#### **Soils of Freetown**

The following is a general profile of the predominant soil associations found within the Town of Freetown. Detailed information on parcels as small as three acres can be obtained from the Soil Survey of Bristol County, Massachusetts, United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Services.

Paxton-Woodridge-Whitman Association- This association consists of upland hills and Ridges dissected by many small drainage ways. Stones and boulders cover more than three percent of the surface of many areas. The association is composed of about 25 percent Paxton soils, 15 percent Woodridge soils, 10 percent Whitman soils and 50 percent minor soils. This association covers over 50 percent of the town's land area.

The Paxton, Woodbridge and Whitman soils range from nearly level to moderately steep. They are generally well drained but also have a firm substratum at depths ranging from 15 to 27

inches that restricts the movement of water and the development of roots.

The main limitations of this association for farming are stones on the surface and wetness. The Paxton and Woodbridge soils are well suited to trees. Slope, the stones on the surface, slow permeability and wetness are the main limitations of this association for community development.

Hinckley-Freetown-Scarboro Association – This association consists of sand and gravel and organic soils. Slopes range from 0 to 25 percent. The Hinckley soils are excessively drained and very permeable and have a gravelly and sandy substratum. The soils are nearly level to steep and are droughty in most years. The Freetown soils are very poorly drained and consist of organic deposits more than 51 inches thick and are nearly level or depressional. The Scarboro soils are very poorly drained and have a sandy subsoil and substratum and are nearly level or depressional.

The minor soils include the Merrimac, Windsor, and Deerfield soils. The Merrimac soils are somewhat excessively drained and have a loose, gravelly substratum. The Windsor soils are excessively drained, and the Deerfield soils are moderately well drained.

Most areas of this association are in woodland. Several large sand and gravel pits are in the association. A few small areas are farmed, and a few are used for housing or other types of community development. The main limitations for farming and woodland in this association are the droughtiness of the Hinckley soils and the wetness of the Freetown and Scarboro soils. The wetness and the slope of this soil association limits community development on all but the nearly level and gently sloping Hinckley soils.

### **Important Farmland Soils**

Maps of important farmlands are part of a nationwide farmland inventory completed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These maps show the location and extent of the best land for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. This land is irreplaceable, and its location should be known by all who are interested in maintaining agricultural self-sufficiency.

The NRCS maps indicate areas that have been designated as prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance. Soil surveys and national or state criteria are the basis for making these designations (see map of agricultural soils)

Prime Farmland is the land that has the best combination of soil properties for growing crops. National NRCS criteria are used to assess these soil qualities and determine which areas qualify as prime farmland.

Prime farmland soils retain and provide ample moisture for crops, have favorable temperatures, growing season, acceptable salt content and acidity, and have few or no surface stones. They are permeable to water and air, are not excessively erodible, are not saturated with water for long periods of time, and do not flood frequently.

Unique farmland is land other than prime that is used for production of specific high-value crops. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture needed to produce high quality specialty crops.

Farmland of statewide importance is the land that is also important for growing crops, but it has one or more soil properties which do not qualify for prime farmland. The soils of such land may be moderately erodible, may not provide ample moisture for crops, or may be less permeable to water and air. They also may have surface stones but are not numerous enough to preclude their removal for cultivation. Areas not designated as important farmlands are much less suited to cultivation. Crops can be grown on some such lands, but with difficulty, expense, and likelihood of erosion.

### **Hydric Soils**

A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part. Hydric soils along with hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology are used to define wetland boundaries.

Additional mapped information provided in Section 10, shows the occurrence of these three types of farm soils, as well as hydric/wet soils, within the town.

### **Climate**

The normal average temperature ranges from 30.6 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 73.5 degrees Fahrenheit in July. The average annual precipitation of 47.3 inches is evenly distributed throughout the year.

### **Topography**

Freetown occupies an area of approximately 38.3 square miles or 24,512 acres. Its topography is mostly gently rolling, ranging in elevation from sea level to 90 feet. Its open land includes pasture and meadowland, freshwater wetland, low, wooded hills and areas of tide flats, salt marsh and sandy beaches.

The town has a total shoreline of approximately 29.4 linear miles according to the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program. The coastline consists of intermittent bays and coves formed by the meltwater from the last ice age.

### **Landscape Character**

Freetown is a pastoral community with a dash of maritime history, thanks to its location on the lower Taunton River estuary and its tributary, the Assonet River. The landscape consists of large open spaces, streams and ponds. Beautiful Long Pond provides boating, fishing, and swimming – and it's more of a lake than a pond, measuring roughly one-mile wide by four-miles long, with 11 miles of shoreline, and containing three islands within its boundaries. Freetown hosts a ball field- sized replica of Fenway Park where little leaguers develop their big-league swings.

Freetown lies within the Narragansett/Bristol Lowlands ecoregion and includes the Narragansett Basin. The ecoregion is more extensive than the Narragansett Basin proper, extending south across some granitic rocks to Buzzards Bay. The vegetation is varied, with some of the oak-hickory and oak-pine forests having coastal influences. Land cover is mostly mixed forest with numerous wetlands and small areas of cropland and pasture. Cranberry bogs are abundant, and the various types of wetlands provide important recharge to aquifers in the region. These types of areas are representative of the Freetown-Fall River State Forest and Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve, a combined 16,000 acre area that

hosts walking, bridle, bike and motorized bike trails, as well as outstanding nature observation and birding opportunities.

## **Water Resources**

### **Rivers, Streams, and Watersheds**

The flowing streams in Freetown consist of six named brooks – Terry Brook, Rattlesnake Brook, Quaker Brook, Fall Brook, Keene River, and Shingle Island Brook. These brooks empty into the Assonet and Taunton Rivers and Long Pond.

### **Taunton River Watershed**

The Taunton River Watershed is the second largest watershed in the state at 562 square miles and contains 94 square miles of wetlands and 221 lakes or ponds. Over 700,000 people call the watershed home. The Hockomock Swamp, at 12 square miles, is the largest wetland in Massachusetts. The Taunton River starts in the Town of Bridgewater and receives discharge waters from 18 river systems as it courses through ten communities before ending at the State of Rhode Island's Mount Hope Bay, which is part of Narragansett Bay.

The Taunton is the longest undammed coastal river in New England. The Taunton River Watershed is home to over 154 species of birds, and 45 species of fish. The tidal influence of the river is about 22 miles inland with a salt-water reach of about 13 miles inland, providing unique habitat for fresh and salt-water aquatic, terrestrial, and biological species. The river systems support the most productive river herring spawning grounds in the state. In Freetown, the Taunton River flows from the confluence of the Assonet River south to Fall River, into Mount Hope Bay.

Since the Taunton River flows through Freetown, any of the saltwater species that occur in the Mount Hope Bay could also be found in the Assonet River. Most of the Town of Freetown lies within the Taunton River Watershed, with a small portion of the eastern section of town in the Buzzards Bay Watershed.

The Taunton River was designated a federal Wild & Scenic River by Congress, as part of the National Park Service's (NPS) Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Program (PWSR), in March of 2009. This legislation included over 40 miles of the Taunton River from its headwaters in the Town of Bridgewater to the Braga Bridge, at the mouth of the Mount Hope Bay, in the City of Fall River.

The Taunton River Stewardship Council (TRSC) is the local partner group working with NPS to help protect, manage, restore, and enhance the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) of the Taunton River. The TRSC is made up of representatives from each of the ten (10) mainstem cities and towns, including Freetown, as well as members of state agencies, local tribal representatives, and regional non-profits. This collaborative effort is guided by the Taunton River Stewardship Plan, which was endorsed by all the parties above, prior to formal designation of the Taunton.

### **Assonet Bay Watershed**

The Assonet Bay watershed covers approximately 11,000 acres located in the western portion of Freetown. The Assonet Bay watershed is divided into three drainage areas: Terry Brook, Rattlesnake Brook, and the Assonet River.

### **Terry Brook Drainage Area**

The Terry Brook drainage area occupies 1,400 acres in the southern part of the Assonet River Watershed; the brook originates in a swampy area in the Freetown State Forest and flows west toward Route 24. Terry Brook joins Rattlesnake Brook approximately ½ mile south of the former Interchange 9 on Route 24.

### **Rattlesnake Brook Drainage Area**

Rattlesnake Brook flows for 2.7 miles from its headwaters in Fall River to Assonet Bay. The Rattlesnake Brook drainage area consists of 1,500 acres and is adjacent to the Terry Brook drainage area. Rattlesnake Brook originates in Fall River and flows north to join Terry Brook near Assonet Bay. Tributaries to Rattlesnake Brook include Terry Brook and Mill Brook.

### **Assonet River Drainage Area**

The Assonet River drainage area consists of 8,100 acres in the western part of the town. The Assonet River flows southeast from Lakeville, across Freetown and into the Taunton River. The Assonet River is approximately 9 miles long and is 0.2 miles wide at the mouth. The depth in the brackish channel ranges from 6 feet to approximately 30 feet at its deepest points. The Assonet River has a tidefall of about 4.4 feet.

### **Squam Brook – Keene River Watershed**

The Squam Brook-Keene River area is considered swamp or marshland, indicating the groundwater is at or near the surface much of the year. Surface drainage consists mainly of small streams, which arise in the numerous wetlands. There are two major streams in the watershed – Squam Brook and Keene River. Squam Brook is an important outlet for Long Pond and could be key in terms of water quality and flood mitigation.

### **Fall Brook-Long Pond Watershed**

The Fall Brook-Long Pond watershed covers 11,600 acres in the eastern part of Freetown. Fall Brook is the principal drainage system in the area. It originates in swampy areas near the center of Freetown and flows east into Long Pond. The Bolton Cedar Swamp is a large wetland area in the southern part of the watershed. This swamp is a major part of the water resources of the area and consideration should be taken to protect and preserve it as a wetland. As evidenced by numerous swamps and bogs, the entire Fall Brook-Long Pond watershed lying in Freetown is a considerable amount of water in storage. The wise use of this natural resource is of considerable importance to the future development of this region. In addition, any sources of pollution within this area could have profound effect on the life and usability of Long Pond.

Long Pond has approximately 4 miles of shoreline in Freetown. Along this shoreline there is one public Boating Access (State owned) and one public bathing beach for the townspeople. In addition, there are several smaller beaches restricted to residents of housing developments along the shore.

### **Impaired Waters**

The majority of the Town's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System, (MS4, EPA General Permit regulated) stormwater outfalls, twenty-eight (28), are located within the Taunton River Watershed. The remaining five (5) outfalls are located in the Buzzards Bay Watershed portion of East Freetown. Both the Taunton River and Buzzards Bay Watersheds have a watershed-wide EPA approved Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirement for bacteria and pathogens. This impairment requires Freetown to follow the requirements to mitigate pathogen discharges to the receiving waters. The Town should also prioritize sampling outfalls within the Taunton Watershed for bacteria and pathogens as part of the mitigation process. In addition to the Taunton and Buzzards Bay Watershed bacteria and pathogen requirements, all discharges in these watersheds must also be tested for Nitrogen and the Town must adhere to requirements listed in the General Permit.

Within the Taunton River Watershed portion of Freetown, there is one water body listed as a category 5 (impaired waterbody requiring a TMDL). This water body, an Unnamed Tributary (MA62-42), is located south off Slab Bridge Road (in Cedar Swamp portion of Freetown-Fall River State Forest), and flows to the confluence with the Cedar Swamp River, in Lakeville. This water body is impaired due to aquatic macroinvertebrate bioassessments and fishes bioassessments. There are no specific requirements that apply to these impairments.

The Assonet River is listed as a Category 4a (impaired waterbody, completed a TMDL) in Freetown, it is impaired due to fecal coliform and has a final TMDL. Outfalls discharging to this water body should be prioritized for sampling fecal coliform in sampling procedures. Freetown has a final draft Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) developed by Atlantic Engineering, completed in September of 2022.



**Shoreline of the Assonet River in Freetown (SRPEDD)**

## **Water Quality Threats**

The primary threat to water resources in Freetown is “nonpoint source pollution,” or polluted runoff. Nonpoint source pollution derives from many small, individual sources, including roads, farms, lawns and gardens, septic systems, parking lots, and other developed land uses. Nonpoint source pollution becomes a greater concern as the Palmer River and its tributaries face increased development pressures. Pollution due to excess nitrogen (fertilizer), phosphorous, road salt, and septage are all linked to increased development.

Excess nitrogen also has a noticeable effect when it flows into nearby streams and ponds, particularly those with no outlet. Nitrogen is an important plant nutrient and can lead to algae blooms when present in excessive concentrations.

Because of Federal and State regulations of major polluters/pollutants, “point source pollution” (i.e., pollution emanating from a pipe or other identifiable source) is less of a problem than it once was but is still a concern in terms of nutrient discharge from wastewater treatment plants on the Taunton River.

## **Wetlands**

Wetlands are one of Freetown’s most valuable resources and comprise a significant portion of its undeveloped land area. Important wetland functions and values include flood storage and storm damage abatement, fish and wildlife species habitat, water quality and water resource enhancement, scenic beauty, plant habitat, and recreational value. While all these elements have great importance for Freetown, the town has a critical need to protect its wetlands, since they recharge the groundwater aquifers upon which almost every residential and non-residential property depends for its water supply.

Freetown has several areas of wooded swampland including the Bolton Swamp and Assonet Cedar Swamp, which is the largest and most prominent. Freetown’s white cedar swamps once supplied the resource base for important local industries that utilized cedar. Several lesser wetlands areas also provide wildlife habitat, flood storage capabilities, and other nature-based services/values to the town. In addition, Freetown has approximately 83 acres of salt marsh located near the confluence of the Assonet and Taunton Rivers. This land along the river is affected by the tidal action in the Lower Taunton River estuary and the Mount Hope/Narragansett Bay.

## **Groundwater Resources**

An aquifer is a geologic formation capable of yielding significant quantities of potable water. Aquifers are generally found in sand and gravel deposits where pores in the soil allow water to collect. Groundwater enters the aquifer through sand and gravel soils, wetlands, and surface water bodies, and slowly percolates through the ground in a down-gradient direction.

Freetown has areas of medium and high yield aquifers within its borders (in addition to containing significant areas of land important to surface water recharge). The Water Resources Map in Section 10 shows the location of Freetown’s most productive aquifers.

Aquifers designated as “medium yield” and “high yield” on the map are based on delineations by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Medium yield aquifers are typically capable of sustaining a safe

pumping rate of 100 to 300 gallons per minute (gpm), while high yield aquifers can sustain a safe pumping rate of more than 300 gpm.

### **Water Supply**

Freetown has no central water supply. The residents of Freetown get their drinking water primarily from onsite wells. Aside from this, the Freetown Water Department oversees services provided by neighboring cities, New Bedford, and Fall River, to parts of Freetown. The Freetown Water Department's service area consists of two separate water systems, one in Assonet and one in East Freetown. Water supplied to Assonet comes from the City of Fall River to service 384 residential and 45 commercial customers. Water supplied to East Freetown comes from the City of New Bedford to service 209 residential and 29 commercial customers. The Freetown Water & Sewer Commission (FW&SC) manages approximately 17 miles of water supply lines and a booster pump station located on East Chipaway Road in East Freetown.

Freetown residents depend upon onsite septic systems for wastewater treatment. The FW&SC has two (2) industrial properties and one (1) private road (Birch Road) on the sewer system, for which they are responsible. Wastewater from these properties is sent to the Fall River Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Although the town currently has no plans to develop a municipal water supply, a public water supply may be needed in the future. In order to secure a potential well site for the future, the town would need to acquire an area of undeveloped land at least large enough to accommodate the 400' Zone I setback required around a municipal well pumping more than 100,000 gallons per day. As the town becomes increasingly developed, large parcels of land located above the greatest potential yield capabilities of the aquifer are becoming scarcer. These areas should be protected and preserved for the future while they are still available.

### **Existing Protection for Water Resources**

Several federal, state, and local environmental regulations protect freshwater resources against filling, inappropriate development, and other forms of alteration. The following are some of the most important environmental regulations that have jurisdiction within Freetown.

#### **Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act**

Wetlands have both human and ecological importance for pollution control, flood control, storm damage protection, wildlife habitat, fisheries, and groundwater supply. Wetlands in Massachusetts are regulated under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (310 CMR 10.00).

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act applies to activity within 100 feet of bordering wetlands (wetlands bordering ponds, streams, the ocean, and other water features) and within certain isolated wetlands. The Rehoboth Conservation Commission administers this law and considers applications for activities in wetlands and buffer zones. Generally, wetland alteration is allowed only in small areas when there are no feasible alternatives and is subject to the condition that an equivalent amount of wetland must be replicated elsewhere on the property. In wetland buffer zones, work is often allowed subject to an Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission. Although the Conservation Commission has some discretion in deciding how much development to allow in wetlands and buffer zones, the MA Department of Environmental Protection has the authority to override any Conservation Commission decision. The Wetlands Protection Act does not provide protection for many small, isolated wetlands, or vernal pools.

### **Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act**

According to studies and scientific literature, the area within 200 feet of a riverbank can play an important ecological role by serving as the recharge area for rivers, by providing a complimentary habitat for riparian species requiring upland resources, and by allowing riparian corridors to serve as effective migration corridors for species requiring larger habitat areas. The Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act, incorporated into the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act in 1996, regulates development within 200 feet of perennial rivers and streams (defined provisionally as those streams which appear as dark blue lines on USGS topographic maps). The Freetown Conservation Commission administers this Act. Typically, development is allowed within 100 feet of rivers only under extraordinary circumstances, but certain types of development are sometimes allowed between 100 feet and 200 feet of streams.

### **Freetown Wetlands Protection Bylaw**

The Freetown Wetland Protection Rules and Regulations (2008, revised 2021) require a 100 foot wetland buffer and a 200 foot river/stream/lake buffer. The purpose of this regulation is to protect the wetlands, water resources, and adjoining land areas in the Town of Freetown by controlling activities deemed by the Conservation Commission likely to have a significant or cumulative effect upon resource area values, including but not limited to the following: public or private water supply, groundwater, flood control, erosion and sedimentation control, storm damage prevention including coastal storm flowage, water quality, water pollution control and prevention, fisheries, land containing shellfish, wildlife habitat, rare species habitat including rare plant species, agriculture, aquaculture, and recreation values, deemed important to the community (collectively, the "resource area values protected by this bylaw"). The Conservation Commission has the authority to adopt these rules and regulations for the use of conservation land (G.L. Ch. 40 §8C).

### **Septic System Management**

All homes in Freetown rely on on-site/septic systems for sewage disposal. At present, there are no plans for building public sewers in the town (although the town did recently submit a grant application to the state for a feasibility study/design for sewerage the village area).

Malfunctioning cesspools and septic systems can contaminate groundwater aquifers and surface water resources with nitrates, fecal coliform, and other pollutants. This has been a particular concern around densely developed pond shore and shoreline areas in town for decades. For this reason, town boards and commissions and the Long Pond Association have been increasingly active in promoting homeowner awareness of septic system maintenance through various means.

### **Vegetation**

Vegetation not only provides aesthetically pleasing views and landscape diversity but is also a critical natural resource that forms the basis for habitats and ecosystems that support natural and human communities. In addition, vegetation helps to stabilize soils and prevent erosion, contributes to groundwater infiltration, serves as a visual and noise buffer between land uses, and improves local air quality.

## Shade Trees

The care and maintenance of shade and ornamental trees within the town right of ways is overseen by the Tree Warden. The Tree Warden's duties also include the oversight of removal of dead or hazard trees within the town right of ways and emergency removal of storm damaged trees.

## Forest

The Atlantic White Cedar Swamps in Massachusetts are second only to New Jersey in extent and number of Atlantic Cedar, and Southeastern Massachusetts has the largest and best examples in the state. Cedar swamps are habitats to the rare and endangered Hessel's hairstreak butterfly.

Massachusetts Audubon's Assonet Cedar Swamp Wildlife Sanctuary in Lakeville and Freetown contains one of the largest – and very high quality – Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamps in Massachusetts. This swamp and the lands around it are part of a very large, multi-lobed, 40,000 acre BioMap Core Habitat, extending southward from the Sanctuary to the Freetown-Fall River State Forest and to the Noquochoke Wildlife Management Area in Dartmouth. The watershed that contributes to the swamp is very large and extends well to the south. Approximately 1,000 acres is protected in Assonet, most of it owned by Mass Audubon, as well as two other large properties that are protected by conservation restrictions. Natural communities identified within the Assonet Cedar Swamp Wildlife Sanctuary include Coastal Atlantic white cedar, red maple, yellow birch, hemlock, and beech forest.

There are only four prominent stands of cedar, comprising of approximately 50 acres of the entire 809-acre Mass Audubon sanctuary. These areas are now becoming globally rare.

Similar to Pitch Pine trees, Atlantic White Cedar also requires fire for regeneration. Fires increase the vegetation within cedar swamps, creating unusual fen and shrub bog patches supporting other additional rare species. Hydrological stress due to municipal well withdrawal is a constant threat to this water loving species.

Freetown also contains areas of Transitional Forest. Just as the name implies, a transitional forest is a blend between forest types including oaks, birches, maples, and white pine. Pin-oak woods require sandy soil to keep the variety of trees to a minimum. This is characteristic of woodland areas on Cape Cod that also spread across Southeastern Massachusetts. Tall pitch pines and bear oaks often occur together and greatly outnumber other species.

Below are lists of trees and plants common to Freetown:

### Trees:

American beech	American holly	Pitch pine
Sassafras	Alder	Aspen
Norway maple	Ash	Silver maple
Shagbark hickory	Flowering dogwood	Sugar maple
Cherry	Cedar	Sycamore
White oak	Eastern Hemlock	Locust

Pin oak

Red oak

**Plants:**

White swamp azalea

Highbush blueberry

Viburnum Buttonbush

Spicebush

Witch hazel

Sweet pepperbush

Bayberry

Pussy willow

Skunk cabbage

Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Common ragweed

Water arum

Yellow flag Yarrow

Aster

Dusty miller Joe-pye weed

Fleabane

Black-eyed Susan

Goldenrod

Tansey

Dandelion

Knotweed

Smartweed

Cardinal flower

Queen Anne's lace

Broad-leave cattail

Narrow-leaf cattail

Duckweed

Eel grass

Poison ivy

Wintergreen

Indian-pipe

Phragmites

Beach grass

Saltmarsh

cordgrass

Wild rice

Grape

Sea lavender

Trout lily

Blue flag

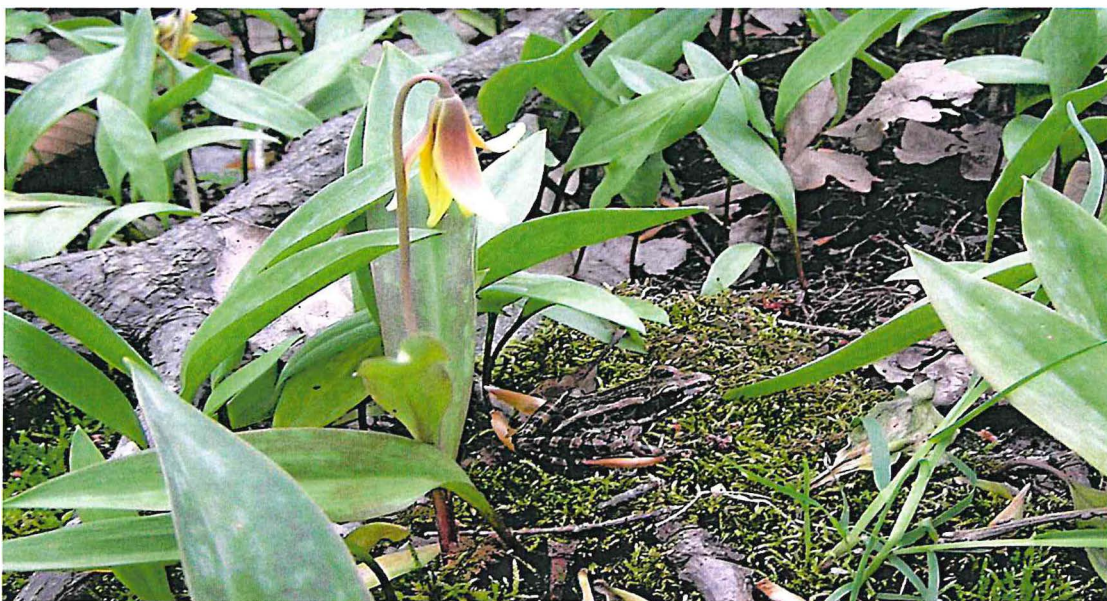
Bearberry

Trillium

Solomon's seal

Purple loosestrife

Milkweed



## Fisheries and Wildlife

The densely forested and wetland areas of Freetown provide good to excellent habitat for numerous wildlife and vegetative species. The large undeveloped areas of town, in particular, provide a diversity of swamp, shrub, upland and forested areas which, in turn, attract a variety of species of indigenous and migratory wildlife. The largest undeveloped areas include the land around the great swamps, coastal saltmarshes and the state and town forest areas.

### Inventory of Native Fish and Wildlife Species

**Mammals:** All members of the vertebrate class Mammalian are warm-blooded and able to maintain a near constant body temperature. Almost all mammals are born live rather than hatched from eggs. Mammals also produce milk that is high in nutrients and fat and promotes growth in offspring.

Some of the more common mammals found in Freetown include:

gray squirrel	red squirrel	coyote
woodchuck	mink	river otter
snowshoe hare	gray fox	Fisher cat
raccoon	Eastern cottontail	mole
opossum	Eastern gray squirrel	shrew
skunk	white-tailed deer	muskrat
white-footed mouse	Little brown bat	weasel
red fox	Eastern chipmunk	woodland vole

**Reptiles and Amphibians:** The inland wetlands provide habitat for various reptiles and amphibians common to Freetown. Appreciating these animals often begins with a fondness for little lizards or long-legged frogs. Fondly dubbed the herps or herptiles, the name comes from the Greek for "creeping," *herpetos*. These two groups include not only creepers such as snakes, but sea turtles which swim, and treefrogs that climb, and all of them burrow. They share neither a method of locomotion nor any other trait that is theirs alone. Like mammals, birds, and fish, they have backbones, but no fins or feathers. Reptiles and amphibians are cold-blooded, which means the temperature of their bodies varies with the outside temperature. The differences between reptiles and amphibians tend to reflect the reptile's greater independence from the water. The bodies of reptiles furnish general protection from predators and water loss, and amphibians are thin-skinned. Unlike the eggs of amphibians, the reptile's eggs are either leathery like a pair of moccasins, or brittle like a birds' egg and are less likely to dry out when laid on land.

Some of the more common reptiles and amphibians located in Freetown include:

American toad	Spotted turtle*	Northern Red-bellied cooter***
Spotted salamander	Northern black snake	Spring peeper

Bullfrog

Wood turtle

Northern leopard frog

Eastern garter snake

Diamondback Terrapin\*\*

Smooth Green Snake

Eastern Box turtle\*



The Rattlesnake Brook Dam Removal and River Restoration Project in 2016 brought the resurgence of the . . .



native River Herring fishery the following year. (photos courtesy of the MA Division of Ecological Restoration)

## Fisheries

The Taunton River and its major tributaries support a diverse **warmwater fishery**, including largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), yellow perch (*Pereaf/avescens* and white perch (*Marone americana*), bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*), chain pickerel (*Esox niger*), white sucker (*Catostomus commersonii*), brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*), sessellated darter (*Etheostoma olmstedii*), golden shiner (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*), and lake chubsucker (*Erimyzon sucetta*). Long Pond is a major site for largemouth bass fishing tournaments.

Long Pond also supports the bridle shiner, a minnow state listed as a Species of Special Concern. Important habitat for this species includes moderate amounts of submerged aquatic vegetation mixed with open areas of clear water for schooling and feeding, as they are visual feeders and weak swimmers.

Long Pond is heavily developed and the only pond in the APC with public access. Associated impacts to water quality from runoff and excessive use of personal watercraft could lead to increases in turbidity and aquatic vegetation, decreasing water clarity and feeding efficiency for bridle shiners. Long Pond is designated on MassDEP's Massachusetts List of Impaired Waterbodies as not supporting the Aquatic Life Use due to non-native aquatic macrophytes variable milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*) and fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection [MassDEP], 2021). Substantial concentrations of milfoil can displace native submergent vegetation used as cover and spawning habitat for the bridle shiner, and predation by largemouth bass can further stress populations. Bridle shiner populations have decreased dramatically from their historic range; healthy populations are critical for persistence of this species.

In October of 2014, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) provided communities with another important conservation planning tool, an online map of **Coldwater Fisheries Resources (CFR)**. Coldwater streams are state classified as Critical Areas, and they are certified by DEP under its "Outstanding Resource Water" Programs. These streams provide important habitat for a number of species, including trout. Trout are a very important indicator species in gauging the health of a coldwater stream as they are typically more sensitive to changes in temperature, water quality, and stream flow within their resident streams. The CFR database is derived from fish samples collected annually by DFW staff biologists and technicians. The hope is to update the database as new streams are sampled annually by staff.

The current CFR database shows no state certified coldwater fishery streams in Freetown (2022), however, the Cedar Swamp River is reported to support a coldwater fishery.

Below is a list of fishes common to Freetown:

American shad

smelt

pickerel

alewife	perch	bluegill
sunfish	Striped bass	bridle shiner*
Winter flounder	tautog	herring
Scup shad	Menhaden	bluefish
American eel		

The Assonet River and bay contain isolated concentrations of **marine and estuarine invertebrates**, such as oysters and soft-shell clams. Seed clams are abundant in the Assonet Bay. Two beds of oysters are concentrated at the tip of Assonet Neck, although no harvesting is allowed here due to pollution. Large quantities would be available if not for the cumulative impact of historical industrial pollution in the river sediment in this area. At this time the only means of utilizing shellfish in closed areas is to transplant to unpolluted areas were the shellfish purge bacteria (referred to as depuration) and then can be harvested for human consumption.

Below is a list of marine/estuarine invertebrates common to the Freetown coastal region.

Quahog	mantis shrimp	Periwinkles
Oyster	Blue crab	Green crab
Soft-shell clam	Horseshoe crab	Razor clam
Calm worm	Common periwinkle	Moon snail
Common slipper snail	Channel whelk	Northern lobster

### Birds

**An Important Bird Area (IBA)** is an area that provides important habitat to one or more species of breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. These areas are designated as part of an international effort to protect bird habitat around the world. The Massachusetts Audubon Society has designated an Important Bird Area (IBAs) within the Freetown-Fall River State Forest and Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve, as well as around Long Pond (as part of the Assawompset Ponds Complex).

The Freetown-Fall River State Forest/Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve IBA is a 15,000-acre area located in the towns of Freetown, Fall River, and Bristol. It includes the Freetown-Fall River State Forest, the Acushnet Cedar Swamp, and the Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve. This area supports important avian habitat diversity, especially in the Rattlesnake Brook area, and provides important migratory/stopover habitat as well as nesting habitat. Because of the Bioreserve designation, there is a focus on habitat management, research, and monitoring of flora and fauna. Some of the bird monitoring efforts include Christmas Bird Counts, spring migration bird counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, and Biodiversity Day events. Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys have been conducted since 1970.

The Freetown-Fall River State Forest/Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve IBA has been reported to contain one breeding and/or wintering/migrant state-listed species, and at least seven regional and one state high conservation priority species. Very abundant species include the Eastern towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*), and prairie warbler (*Dendroica discolor*). The migrant state-listed species reported to use the site is the Northern parula (*Parula americana*).

In addition, Long Pond is part of another Mass Audubon IBA in the Assawompset Ponds Complex.

The major habitat types found within this IBA include northern hardwoods forest, oak-conifer forest, pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*)/scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), early successional shrubland, power line, shrub-scrub wetland, and river/stream. (see the Mass Audubon Important Bird Area/IBA Maps in Section 10 of this document)

Below is a list of birds common to Freetown (migratory and observed):

Cedar waxwing	blue jay	house wren
ruffed grouse	cardinal	chirping sparrow
quail	crow	black duck
wood duck	northern oriole	barn swallow
field sparrow	red-tailed hawk	black capped chickadee
mourning dove	common grackle	Downey woodpecker
Cooper's hawk*	osprey	Bald eagle*
Wild turkey	Ring-necked pheasant	Eastern bluebird
Eastern screech owl	goldfinch	Eastern towhee

\* Statewide species of special concern

\*\* Threatened species

\*\*\* Endangered species

### **Rare and Endangered Species and Habitats**

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) in their 2012 BioMap2 Reports for Massachusetts' cities and towns, provides an inventory of rare and endangered species and their habitats, as well as information on, and maps of

**Core Habitat** identifies key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Protection of Core Habitats will contribute to the conservation of specific elements of biodiversity. BioMap2 Core Habitat in Freetown is estimated by the state to be approximately 6,374 acres.

Freetown's Core Habitat Inventory includes (see Appendix B for BioMap2 Summary):

- 4 Exemplary or Priority Natural Community Cores
- 6 Forest Cores
- 16 Wetland Cores
- 3 Aquatic Cores
- 13 Species of Conservation Concern Cores (4 reptiles, 3 amphibians, 3 plants)

**Critical Natural Landscape** identifies large natural Landscape Blocks that are minimally impacted by development. If protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience to natural and anthropogenic disturbances in a rapidly changing world. Areas delineated as Critical Natural Landscape also include buffering upland around wetland, coastal, and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity. BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape in Freetown is estimated by the state to be approximately 12,201 acres

Freetown's Critical Natural Landscape Inventory includes:

- 2 Landscape Blocks
- 12 Wetland Core Buffers
- 2 Aquatic Core Buffers
- 8 Coastal Adaptation Areas

**Certified Vernal Pools:** Among Freetown's important habitat features are vernal pools, an increasingly rare type of isolated wetland inhabited by many wildlife species, some of which are totally dependent on vernal pools for their survival. Vernal pools are small, seasonal water bodies occurring in isolated basins which are usually wet during the spring and early summer and dry up during the later summer months. Vernal pools typically lack fish populations, making them excellent breeding habitat for many amphibian species and larval and adult habitat for many insect species, as well as other wildlife. The wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*) and all species of mole salamanders (genus *Ambystoma*) that occur in Massachusetts breed exclusively in vernal pools. Areas in the immediate vicinity of the pool also provide these species with important non-breeding habitat functions, such as feeding, shelter and overwintering sites.

Certified vernal pools are resources that have been inventoried by local volunteers and certified under NHESP's process. Certified vernal pools that are located within Areas Subject to Flooding (as defined by the MA Wetlands Protection Act) are protected under the Wetlands Protection Act for their wildlife habitat value. However, certified vernal pools outside of Areas Subject to Flooding are not protected by state or local law. Uncertified vernal pools are also unprotected. Because vernal pools are temporary and seasonal, they can easily be developed unless they have been certified with the NHESP and have protection under the Wetlands Protection Act.

The protection of vernal pool habitat is essential for the continued survival of wildlife species that depend upon this unique type of wetland. Destruction or alteration of vernal pools is likely to have a highly adverse impact on the local (and world-wide) amphibian populations, because few if any of them will be able to find alternative breeding sites. The accelerated rate of development in the vicinity makes

it imperative that vernal pools be proactively certified and mapped so as to steer proposed development projects away from these critical habitats. Freetown has eight (8) Certified Vernal Pools.

## **Species of Conservation Concern, Priority and Exemplary Natural Communities, and Other Elements of Biodiversity in Freetown**

### **Insects Moths**

[Water-willow Stem Borer](#), (*Papaipema sulphurata*), T

### **Butterflies**

[Hessel's Hairstreak](#), (*Callophrys hesseli*), SC

### **Fishes**

[Bridle Shiner](#), (*Notropis bifrenatus*), SC

### **Reptiles**

[Diamond-backed Terrapin](#), (*Malaclemys terrapin*), T

[Northern Red-bellied Cooter](#), (*Pseudemys rubriventris* pop. 1), E

[Eastern Box Turtle](#), (*Terrapene carolina*), SC

Smooth Green Snake, (*Opheodrys vernalis*), Non-listed SWAP

### **Plants**

[Few-seeded Sedge](#), (*Carex oligosperma*), E

[Mattamuskeet Panic-grass](#), (*Dichanthelium dichotomum* ssp. *mattamuskeetense*), E

[Weak Rush](#), (*Juncus debilis*), E

[Climbing Fern](#), (*Lygodium palmatum*), SC

[Philadelphia Panic-grass](#), (*Panicum philadelphicum* ssp. *philadelphicum*), SC

[Long's Bulrush](#), (*Scirpus longii*), T

[Long-leaved Panic-grass](#), (*Panicum rigidulum* ssp. *pubescens*), T

### **Priority Natural Communities**

[Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamp](#), S2

[Acidic Graminoid Fen](#), S3

[Coastal Plain Pondshore](#), S2

[Oak - Holly Forest / Woodland](#), S1

## **Other BioMap2 Components**

[Forest Core Aquatic Core Wetland Core Landscape Block](#)

[Aquatic Core Buffer Wetland Core Buffer Coastal Adaptation Area](#)

E = Endangered

T = Threatened

SC = Special Concern

S1 = Critically Imperiled communities, typically 5 or fewer documented sites or very few remaining acres in the state.

S2 = Imperiled communities, typically 6-20 sites or few remaining acres in the state.

S3 = Vulnerable communities, typically have 21-100 sites or limited acreage across the state.

## **Wildlife Corridors**

Wildlife Corridors are commonly defined as narrow strips of land that differ, usually in terms of dominant vegetation, from the surrounding area. They serve as trails, routes, and pathways for wildlife species between two similar yet fragmented habitat areas and provide important sources of food and cover for many species.

Some obvious corridors in Freetown are the large swamp and forested areas such as the Assonet Cedar Swamp, the Freetown-Fall River State Forest, and the adjoining Southeastern Massachusetts Bioserve lands. The most notable riparian corridors in town are the Taunton River and the Assonet River but other riparian corridors include Terry Brook and Rattlesnake Brook. The recent ecological restoration of Rattlesnake Brook, led by the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), helped to improve flow, restore the health of the resident fishery, and reduce flooding and erosion concerns. Some of these riparian corridors may be barriers to certain terrestrial animals.

The Assawompset Pond Complex, including lands in neighboring Lakeville, Rochester, and Middleboro, is another important wildlife corridor. The Pond Complex's diverse landscape, waterbodies and waterways support Bald Eagles, Northern Red-bellied cooters, and an Alewife and Blue-black Herring population that utilizes the pond complex after their long journey up the Taunton River and its tributary, Nemasket River in Middleboro, for spawning.

Some of the major barriers to terrestrial wildlife in Freetown occur where roads, like Routes 18, 105, 79, 140 and 24 fragment otherwise contiguous forested and wetland areas, and may restrict aquatic passage through undersized culverts and other flow/drainage structures.

## **Coastal Habitats – the Lower Taunton River Estuary**

An **estuary** is a partially enclosed body of water formed where freshwater from rivers and streams flows into the ocean, mixing with the salty seawater. Estuaries and the lands surrounding them are places of transition from land to sea, and from fresh to salt water. Although influenced by the tides, estuaries are

protected from the full force of ocean waves, winds, and storms by the reefs, barrier islands, or fingers of land, mud, or sand that define an estuary's seaward boundary.

Estuaries come in all shapes and sizes and go by many different names, often known as bays, lagoons, harbors, inlets, or sounds. Though they may have many names, the defining feature of an estuary is the mixing of fresh and salt water, not the name. The tidal, sheltered waters of estuaries support unique communities of plants and animals, specially adapted for life in these unique areas. Estuarine environments are among the most productive on earth, creating more organic matter each year than a comparable area of forest, grassland, or agricultural land.

The productivity and variety of estuarine habitats foster a wonderful abundance and diversity of wildlife. Shore birds, fish, crabs and lobsters, marine mammals, clams and other shellfish, marine worms, and sea birds are just some of the animals that make their homes in and around estuaries. These animals are linked to one another through a complex food web.

Besides serving as important habitat for wildlife, water draining from the uplands carries sediments, nutrients, and other pollutants. As the water flows through fresh and salt marshes, much of the sediments and pollutants are filtered out. Wetland plants and soils also act as a natural buffer between the land and ocean, absorbing floodwaters, and dissipating storm surges.

A **salt marsh** is a nearly flat, coastal grassland community subjected to periodic flooding and ebbing of tides. Its vegetation is dominated by extensive and nearly pure stands of two types of grasses, *Spartina alterniflora*, (saltwater cordgrass) and *Spartina patens*, (saltmarsh hay). The unique character of the saltmarsh community lies in its development of intertidal location where it is influenced both by seawater and freshwater runoff. These soft green tidal grasslands are generally found in sheltered areas of the coast.

Salt marshes are extremely important for they provide a diverse habitat and nursery for two-thirds of shellfish and commercial or sport fish during their early life stages. These economically important juvenile species use the marsh for feeding, shelter, and protective covering. They also filter out nutrients and sediments from runoff. Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen are taken up by plants and converted into plant biomass. A variety of other pollutants can be taken up by the plants or held in the marsh soil. The most notable saltwater flats and marshlands in Freetown occur on Assonet Bay. These areas are fairly substantial (83 acres), and more importantly, are contiguous.



Marshland on the Assonet River (photo courtesy of Save The Bay)

## **Scenic and Unique Features and Heritage Landscapes**

The Freetown Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by a small group of residents, was held on July 11, 2005. During the meeting a list of Freetown's heritage landscapes was compiled. Once the comprehensive list was created, community members identified priority landscapes, which were visited by the consulting team and local residents during the fieldwork. Each is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved.

The following text describes the priority heritage landscapes that are the focus of the reconnaissance work in Freetown. In some instances, intensive survey work will be needed to fully document the physical characteristics and historical development of each area. The landscapes, which are listed in alphabetical order, represent a range of scales and types. In some cases, a single property is listed, in other cases a category of property, such as burial grounds, is discussed.

### **Assonet Village including Hathaway Park**

Assonet Village has recently been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Assonet Historic District focuses on the area historically known as Assonet Four Corners and includes properties on the major roads radiating from it: North Main Street, Mill Street, Elm Street, South Main Street and Water Street. This well-preserved village, one of two centers in Freetown, was the site of the shipbuilding, milling and gun manufacturing industries. It is also significant as the religious, commercial, and civic center of the community. The location at the furthest navigable point of the Assonet River gave the area access to coastal shipping and commercial opportunities that allowed the community to flourish. The district has a fine collection of buildings dating from the early 18th century through the early 20th century, including Georgian, Federal and Gothic Revival residences and two 19<sup>th</sup> century stone bridges.

The area east of the current village center along the north side of the Assonet River, which is included in the historic district, was the site of Freetown's shipping and shipbuilding industry. The narrow roadways and historic houses along Water Street evoke the past, while Hathaway Park serves as an anchor and public gathering place. Loss of trees along Water Street is one issue of concern to local residents. North Main Street, which is in the district, contains a mix of historic and contemporary houses, while Pleasant Street, which lies largely outside the district, has mostly modern houses. The area between Pleasant and North Main remains largely undeveloped but is vulnerable to change.

The area surrounding the historic district also contributes significantly to the character of the town center. North and South Main Streets from Route 24 to the center are important gateways to the community that retain a scenic character with stone walls, historic houses and a general rural landscape quality. This is in sharp contrast to the strip development that characterizes portions of South Main Street south of Route 24 towards Fall River.

### **East Freetown (Furnace Village)**

East Freetown was established in 1727 when Philip Rounsevell built his homestead there. The area, which developed along the Fall Brook and its mill pond, is now a National Register district which includes houses, church, library, former stores, cemeteries, stone arched bridges, industrial sites, and dams which collectively reflect the development of the area over time. The historic district is located along Gurney, Washburn, and County Roads with residences on the roadways and historic industrial sites at the falls of Fall Brook.

The houses are primarily of wood construction while the industrial buildings and bridges were made of granite quarried from a nearby pit. Many of the houses have granite foundations. Granite is also used in fieldstone walls and porch supports. The Christian Congregational Church on Washburn Road, the only large building in the district, is a focal point.

The East Freetown Historic District includes the approximate area of the village shown on the 1871 map. The district remains a cohesive unit that is evocative of the early years of the village. Its buildings, cemeteries and bridges are unified by the network of narrow rural roads that see relatively little traffic. Route 140 runs north-south through the district but as it passes overhead on tall pylons it seems removed from the district. However, there is evidence of impending change.

One contemporary industrial use is already located adjacent to the bridge at Gurney Road and the mixed uses further south along Gurney Road reflect the relaxed zoning regulations in Freetown.

### **Long Pond Area**

Long Pond, a part of the Assawompset Pond complex that is located primarily in Lakeville, was an important Native American area and is valued today for recreational use and as backup water supply. A distinctive residential neighborhood is the Lakeside area, a cottage community located on the east side of the lake on both sides of Middleboro Road just south of the Middleboro border. It is a compact late 19th century neighborhood with small, picturesque houses on compact irregular lots. A series of informal private alleys that lead to the water provides access to most of the houses. Immediately to the south is the state boat ramp which provides public boat access to the lake. Land on the east side of Middleboro Road which is not part of the cottage community is well-maintained municipally owned watershed land. Further south on Middleboro Road is Cathedral Camp, a summer camp owned by the Diocese of Fall River which includes valuable pond frontage and has a collection of late 19th century farm buildings. The town beach off County Road is municipally owned open space that provides access for Freetown residents to the pond, and also includes ball fields.

### **North Main Street Industrial Area**

The Assonet River was an important source of waterpower that drove a series of industries located north of Assonet Village beginning around 1710. Earliest were saw, grist and fulling mills. The forge,

an iron works built in 1704 to process Taunton iron, continued to produce iron tools through the 19th century. Tisdale Mills on Mill Street ground corn and sawed wood.

The upper Assonet River was first dammed for industrial use nearly 300 years ago, although the current dams are of more recent construction. While all the early mill buildings are gone, foundations, raceways, spillways, and related industrial structures can be found throughout the woods.

### **Profile Rock**

Profile Rock is a large outcrop reputed to have the appearance of a human profile. The area has Native America significance as well (the profile said to be that of the Pokanoket Massasoit Osamequin). This feature is also locally referred to as “The Old Man of Joshua’s Mountain”, named for Joshua Tisdale, the first settler near the mountain. Unfortunately, on June 19, 2019, a large portion of Profile Rock collapsed, removing this iconic physical feature from the landscape.

The park area surrounding the rock is owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and administered as part of Freetown-Fall River State Forest. It includes an entry drive, parking lot, picnic area and trail to Profile Rock and links with other trails that are part of the state forest. Lack of maintenance and potential for vandalism at this unsecured site are the primary concerns.

### **Peace Haven**

Peace Haven is the site of 11,000 years of settlement by Native Americans ending with the Pocassets in the Colonial era. The site, south of Winslow Point along the east side of the Taunton River, was chosen by the Pocassets because it was readily accessible by water, had a rich aquatic environment that provided a wide variety of food sources, and was well suited to agriculture. It is also the site of a glacial esker. An archaeological investigation by Roy Athearn in the 1950s identified many artifacts associated with Native American use. Today the privately owned site is largely wooded and offers rich habitat to a variety of wildlife. There are trails through the area but no vehicular access. It is still considered vulnerable to the impacts of adjacent industrial development.

### **Porter Shore**

Porter Shore is town-owned conservation land on the north shore of Assonet Bay. The wooded site includes ornamental species as well as forest and provides improved public access that is used primarily by fishermen. It is not widely known. Currently this section of shoreline is largely undeveloped but that could easily change. There is a burial ground nearby.

Specific areas and sites of interest are shown on the Scenic Resources and Unique Environments Map in Section 10 of this document.

## **State and National Registers of Historic Places and Historic Districts**

The history, culture, and character of an area is reflected in its buildings, structures, and sites. These historic features provide a community with a continuing sense of its past and a tangible, visual example of its heritage. However, lack of foresight in planning as an area grows and develops often leads to significant historical resources being destroyed, changed beyond recognition or to the encroachment of structures that are incompatible and detract from the historic value of an area.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides a means for communities to preserve their historic resources through the establishment of historic districts. As stated in the Massachusetts Historical Commissioners' "Guideline for Establishment of Historic Districts," the purpose of the Historic District Act is to promote that public welfare through the preservation and protection of: a) the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of Massachusetts and its cities and towns, b) to maintain and improve the settings of buildings and places, and c) to encourage new designs that are compatible with the existing buildings in a district.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. All National Register properties are automatically listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Freetown has two National Register districts, the Assonet Historic District, and the East Freetown Historic District, both established in 1999.

Also listed in the State Register are those properties protected by a preservation restriction, drawn up in accordance with MGL Chapter 183, Sections 31-33. A preservation restriction (PR) runs with the deed and is one of the strongest preservation strategies available. All properties which have preservation restrictions filed under the state statute are automatically listed in the State Register. Freetown has two properties with preservation restrictions, the Merrick Cemetery, and the Terry Burial Ground, both on South Main Street.

## **Archaeological Resources**

In addition to the inventory of residential, manufacturing, and historical locations contained in this report, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) also recommends that special attention be given to potential sites of archaeological significance that exist within the town such as Heritage Landscapes and Indigenous sites. Throughout much of Prehistory, perhaps from as early as the Early Archaic (9,000 to 8,000 B.P.), the lower Taunton River estuary was a core area or zone of relatively intensive Native American settlement/land use. Before the mid-seventeenth century, Native American groups such as the Pocasset may have maintained settlements along the lower Taunton River that were similar to those of the Wampanoag groups farther upriver in the Titicut section of Bridgewater and North Middleborough.

## **Environmental Challenges**

Despite its slow and steady growth over the past two decades, the town is still quite rural and lacks the high concentrations of development or polluting commercial and industrial activities that can result in severe environmental problems. However, Freetown does have sensitive land and water resources, and it is important for the town to be proactive about protecting these resources from pollution.

Freetown's most serious potential environmental challenges appear to come from:

**Nonpoint source pollution**, for decades, the town has been working with various parties to analyze and evaluate pollution impacts and suggest best management practices that help to retain the aquatic and agricultural landscape and economy, while addressing ecosystem needs. The recently completed Assawompset Pond Complex (APC) & Nemasket Watershed Management and Climate Action Plan (2022), conducted through the Assawompset Pond Management Committee (municipal representatives from Freetown, Lakeville, Middleboro, Rochester, Taunton and New Bedford) in conjunction with a consultant team led by the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), has begun to turn best management practices suggestions into actions to address flood, flow, pollution and stewardship issues.

**Erosion and Sedimentation** problems have been documented to occur around pond shores and pond shore community roads in the Long Pond area, as well as several streams

**Impacts of tidal events and storm surge** in the Taunton River estuary, including the Assonet River, remains a potential concern with sea level rise and increasing storm intensity

**Development impact** on the Town's groundwater supply and recreational surface waters, particularly around Long Pond; development and energy related land use is also impacting the town's forested, field, wildlife corridors, fish passage, and edge habitat areas.

**Flood prone areas** are noted on the FEMA Flood Map in Section 10 of this plan, and have also historically included the Ashley Heights, Heaven Heights, and Hemlock Point neighborhoods as well as Beach Bluff Road, Chipaway Road, Chace Road, Middleborough Road, Point of Pines Road, and the Route 140 ramp near Chace Road.

**The DEP's Waste Site** and Reportable Releases data for Freetown includes 109 listed contaminated/reported sites as of 9/22. A majority of these are linked to fuel related incidents.

**Landfill** and recycling/composting activities are managed at the town's Transfer Station. The DEP lists three former unlined landfill sites in the town that have been closed and capped (the last being completed in 2014).

**Invasive species/Non-native species/Exotic species** can rapidly and seriously degrade the quality of wildlands by altering natural processes and reducing biodiversity. This is a problem not only for plant life but for wildlife/wildlife habitat as well. Invasive species generally out compete native species for space, food, cover, shelter, and nesting places. The presence of an invasive species can lead to a decline in ecosystem diversity.

A variety of non-native species have become established in Freetown such as phragmites, Mute swans, purple loosestrife, Oriental bittersweet, Japanese knotweed, multiflora rose, milfoil, fanwort, autumn

olive, and burning bush.

**Anticipated Climate Change Impacts on Fisheries:** Although it may seem counterintuitive, warmwater fish also face threats from predicted climate change. Naturally occurring fish kills in late spring-early summer, due to low dissolved oxygen levels and occasional spawning stress or fish disease, may increase with warming temperatures. Warmer water cannot hold as much oxygen as cooler waters, and oxygen can be further reduced in ponds with dense aquatic vegetation when plants increase overnight oxygen consumption.

This stress can be further compounded in late spring-early summer when most warmwater fish congregate to spawn in shallow, near shore areas. Warmer waters also create a breeding ground for bacterial infections and parasites. During this crowded spawning period, fish may become more vulnerable to disease.

Milder winters, however, may reduce natural fish kills for some species as reduced ice cover and increased light helps maintain adequate dissolved oxygen levels. Although many warmwater fish are fine above 70°F, warmer temperatures, droughts, and limited water, could push some species towards thermal tolerance limits, forcing them to seek new habitats and expand their range if freshwater systems remain connected and fish are able to navigate obstructions. Warmer temperatures could also trigger earlier spawning and impact peak season for recreational bass fishing in Long Pond.

**More intense flood and drought cycles:** These changes could reduce habitats and ecological process that are critical for species. More impactful droughts affect forest health, increasing likelihoods of falling trees and fire hazards, altering habitats/ecological processes as well as threatening public health and property. This can lead to changes distributions and abundances of invasive species which can impact forest health, and vulnerability to falling trees and fires, threatening public health and property.

**Ground mounted solar development:** At the request of the Town, as part of a Comprehensive Bylaw Review conducted by Mass Audubon under the auspices of a SNEP grant, existing zoning provisions and draft proposed updates to the Site Plan Review Rules and Regulations that regulate large-scale ground-mounted solar developments were also assessed. Article 11.28 of the existing General and Zoning Bylaws allows large scale (having a minimum capacity of 250kW) ground-mounted solar photovoltaic installations by right but requires all developments to undergo site plan review. The Zoning bylaws are not clear on which districts solar developments are allowed in, so clarifying this in the Zoning Bylaws is suggested. It is also recommended that areas most appropriate for ground-mounted solar development, including already altered and disturbed areas, be identified and that developers be encouraged to site projects there, rather than sensitive natural areas.

Encouraging alternatives to ground-mounted solar installations should also be considered. Allowing rooftop and canopy solar installations in parking lots and other paved areas by right can prevent unnecessary loss of Freetown's open space network and valuable resource areas. The proposed Site Plan Review updates would require Impact Plans for all large-scale solar development projects. This is an important provision; however, there is no Environmental Impact Plan required (only Sound Emission,

Light Emission and Visual Impact Plans are required). Therefore, this does not address impacts typically associated with large-scale ground mounted arrays including forest clearing; soil disturbance, grading, and erosion control; stormwater management; and maintenance (e.g.- planting of native pollinator plants, avoiding the use of herbicides). Developers should also be asked to produce Environmental Impact Plans that outline where natural resource areas are located on the site and steps taken to reduce impacts to and fragmentation of those areas. Requiring preservation of existing natural buffers in the proposed design standards is important to limit development impacts, and a minimum buffer area will protect undesirable visual impacts to surrounding properties. Large buffers or setbacks may also increase impacts to and fragmentation of natural areas, however, by encouraging more work on back portions of properties, away from development.

Maximum buffers should be imposed along already developed property lines and rights-of-way to prevent fragmentation and preserve as much intact natural habitat as possible. This, along with other design standards like incorporating pollinator habitat and protecting wildlife corridors and intact forested landscapes, will help to limit the impacts of the development on wildlife habitat. (Consult the *Best Practices for Low Impact Solar Siting, Design, and Maintenance* guidelines and the *Model Site Plan Regulations* from Maine Audubon's Solar Siting Toolkit for more guidelines and best practices for thoughtfully sited solar developments).

**Environmental Equity:** Freetown residents, along with visitors from neighboring communities and across the Commonwealth, have access to a range of the passive and active recreational, as well as open space and cultural resources in the community. The distribution of these resources, including Town holdings, publicly accessible non-profit organizational holdings, and federal, state, and community association holdings, occurs across the length and breadth of the town.

Environmental equity considers the distribution of the above-mentioned resources in a community to all neighborhoods, including Environmental justice (EJ) populations. Although Freetown does not contain a state or federally designated EJ population, neighboring Fall River, Dartmouth, Middleboro, and Westport all have designated EJ communities. Freetown is committed to providing all residents with equal access to conservation, parks, and recreational opportunities. Environmental equity assures an unbiased distribution of environmental benefits, such as open space and recreation areas, to all neighborhoods and populations. In building community resilience, social and economic concerns go hand-in-hand with the environmental, infrastructural, and recreational issues discussed in this plan.

One of the many ways that the Open Space and Recreation Plan helps to promote local resilience (in addition to protecting green infrastructure, soil, water, habitat) is to assure that all residents do have access to the conservation and recreation assets of the Town. This was identified as an issue in the Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey in a number of open-ended comments that cited the need for sidewalks, shared use paths, and better connectivity between conservation and recreation destinations.



## **Environmental Opportunities for a More Accessible and Resilient Freetown**

### **Community Resilience**

In terms of building community resilience, open space has become even more valuable for its function, particularly where we can retain large intact areas and native vegetation. How we plan for and prioritize our open space acquisition and preservation going forward, particularly in the most vulnerable parts of our community (coastal areas, flood prone areas, vulnerable populations), should be central to all of our municipal planning.

**Conduct comprehensive study of water resources**, including groundwater studies and drought assessment and a field inventory of culverts and bridges to rank and prioritize projects for increased flooding resiliency and storm-hardening, followed by design and implementation of priority re-sizing or replacement projects. Green infrastructure, Low-Impact Design, and other nature-based solutions will be integrated with hard-infrastructure improvements to sound approaches in the face of natural hazards and climate-change scenarios.

**Mill Brook Bog Wetland Restoration Project** involves the active and passive restoration of approximately 164 acres of wetland on Howland Road in the Town of Freetown. The 230.8-acre project site includes the 115.5-acre former cranberry bog and grasslands, disturbed uplands, forests, swampland, small perennial stream (Mill Brook), small public parking lot located within the Mill Brook Bogs Wildlife Management Area (WMA) owned by MassWildlife.

The project is expected to provide significant and permanent improvements to the ecology, geomorphology, and hydrology of the retired cranberry bog, in addition to the adjacent degraded swamp. This will primarily occur through the active ecological restoration of a 115.5-acre retired cranberry farm. Passive wetland restoration is anticipated to occur on 56 acres of adjacent, degraded former Atlantic white cedar (AWC) swamp. The project is proposed by Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) as part of the Cranberry Bog Restoration Program and is designated by the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) as a *Priority Project*. Together, these activities will restore natural hydrologic conditions to support self-sustaining wetlands, eliminate barriers to fish and wildlife movement, address farm-related physical simplification to enhance habitat and expand biota, and provide opportunities passive public recreation.

**Long Pond Aquatic Invasive Removal Project:** The first phase of a newly permitted project to remove aquatic invasives from Long Pond (a chronic and habitat degrading problem) was completed in August of 2022. The project employed an Eco Harvester to harvest the Variable Leaved Milfoil and the Fanwort from four shallow shoreline areas, pulling the invasive plants from the roots. The goal of this project is to remove and/or reduce dense patches of the milfoil in order to enhance nearshore habitat - including water quality and substrate - for fish, freshwater mussels, and other aquatic organisms. Similarly, Eco Harvester removal of Milfoil was initiated last year in the upper Nemaquasset River to maintain a healthy population of the declining river herring, as well as to improve flow and upstream pond habitat for other aquatic and water dependent organisms. It is hypothesized that if the Milfoil and Fanwort are not managed, the established populations of both will continue to be detrimental to the health of the pond and aquatic organisms that it supports. Thick mats of Milfoil and Fanwort reduce sunlight and water movement as well as reduce habitat availability and water quality, depleting dissolved oxygen and increasing sedimentation as it decomposes. Pulling the plants

is likely the least invasive measure to take in order to help the overall health of this ecosystem, which is preferable to using herbicides, lake mats or dredging. This project has been approved to continue under Conservation Commission permitting through 2024.

**Conduct robust education and outreach to build awareness of town resources, promote stewardship** and make Town residents aware of the many recent planning efforts which are focused on making the Town more resilient to climate change impacts and promote partnership and stewardship in working to meet environmental challenges.

**Address the recommendations of the 2020 Mass Audubon Comprehensive Bylaw Review report** pertaining to stormwater management, Low Impact Development, and natural resource protection to increase resiliency, ensure that regulations accommodate and encourage nature-based solutions, and provide legal authority to enforce protective measures.

**Coordinate with Mass DOT** to develop a fix for the drainage issues in the vicinity of the Snake River culvert and the area around the Route 140-Chace Road ramp.

**Provide public education and outreach to private well owners**, focusing on conservation measures and means of limiting water use to prevent impacts to the water supply.

**Participation in the SRPEDD Trails Mapping Project:** In the Spring of 2020, SRPEDD, in conjunction with a statewide effort, began to collect information on trails in the region using existing GIS data. Initial efforts resulted in 414 miles of identified trails, which were consolidated into a database using mapping software. In July of 2020, SRPEDD launched a trails mapping program through our Unified Planning Work Program to verify the existing trail locations, collect condition data on trails and to expand the database. The overall goals of this program are to provide a unified resource for the public and municipalities, to bring trail information together from multiple groups and resources, participate in the development of a statewide database, and fill gaps in our multimodal network. Since the launch, the total number of trails identified has grown to 736 miles of trail in the region.

SRPEDD set out, not only to identify, but to also collect detailed information on all public trails within the SRPEDD region. The data collected will then be compiled into a database that could eventually be utilized by the public via an interactive map on the SRPEDD website. In order for SRPEDD to collect detailed information on the attributes and coordinates of the trails within the region, its staff selected a versatile and mobile tool that would ensure a seamless transition to and from field work, working from home, or in the office. The tool chosen, the ArcGIS Collector application, works on mobile devices and tablets. This allowed the team to instantaneously collect and upload the data they acquired in the field. By using this application, SRPEDD has been able to verify data provided by its many partners, collect new information, and record new GPS tracks of previously unmapped trails out in the field.

SRPEDD staff collected a wide array of data points with the aim of increasing appropriate user access to the trails in the region. The data collected includes, but is not limited to trail width, trail condition, surface type, allowed recreational activities, trail difficulty, et cetera. Once fully compiled, this information will be a valuable resource to promote recreation and tourism in the SRPEDD region. When the project draws to a close, SRPEDD's database will be the most detailed and complete data set of public trails in Southeastern Massachusetts

The Freetown OSRAC, in addition to wanting to develop local trails information to post online and publish to hand out, also sought information on a local example of a fully accessible ADA trail. Such a trail segment was recently developed in Middleboro and is described below.

The Pratt Farm in Middleboro recently converted an approximately 750-foot section of trail into a fully accessible ADA trail. Pratt Farm, a 160-acre property, is managed by the town's Conservation Commission and a dedicated group of volunteers. The project included adding a crushed stone dust surface and grading that provided accessible access from the parking lot. In addition, the project added benches and a dozen signs and sculptures of native plant life. Each sign has the common name, scientific name, and braille of the featured plant. Next to the braille on the sign is a sculpted clay model of the plant's leaves. Together these elements create a more interactive, fulfilling, and inclusive experience for all visitors to enjoy. This project was funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Conservation and Recreation Department, the town of Middleboro, and many generous local donors.

## **Potential Regional Conservation and Recreation Partners**

### **The Long Pond Association**

The Long Pond Association has recently become a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The Association has a website with information on recreation, which lists boating, swimming, water skiing, fishing, ice-fishing, skating, camping, and aesthetic view appreciation as pond recreational uses. The website also contains information on sound stewardship practices as well as current projects related to the pond. The Association has been the lead organization in the Long Pond Aquatic Invasive Vegetation Removal project and plans to remain active with follow-up workshops related to pond water quality.

### **The Taunton River Stewardship Council (TRSC)**

The Council (TRSC) implements the Taunton River Stewardship Plan for the federally designated Wild & Scenic Taunton River and provides a forum for all parties responsible for managing the Taunton River and its tributaries to discuss river interests and make recommendations. The TRSC also provides grants for local stewardship projects, including informational kiosks and access projects at several sites along the Taunton River and its major tributaries, and has helped to advance land acquisition and dam removal planning projects and public education in throughout the watershed.

### **The Taunton River Watershed Alliance (TRWA)**

The Taunton River Watershed Alliance has run a water quality monitoring program in the watershed since 1989, that now includes about twenty sites. In partnership with the Rhode Island Blueways and Greenways program, TRWA has a mapped and printed materials with descriptions of canoe/kayak put-ins throughout the watershed. The new TRWA Bruce Spooner Education Center has put on or sponsored environmental programs, both in the field and in places like the Lakeville Public Library and, has hosted events at the TRWA/TRSC River Center at Sweets Knoll State Park in Dighton.

## **The Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts (WLT)**

The Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the natural heritage of Southeastern Massachusetts. The Wildlands Trust holds its land in perpetuity to preserve the characteristics that make this area special. Not only does The Wildlands Trust protect land through acquisition, conservation easements and conservation restriction they also are actively educating the public about the importance of protecting landscapes, wildlife, habitat, and the rural character that makes Southeastern Massachusetts special. The Wildlands Trust owns the Puddingstone Preserve in Freetown.

## Section 5: Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Open space preservation is critically important. It affords the local population an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of more rural landscapes and associated activities as well as relief from the constraints of excessive urbanization. Open space also serves a vital role as a buffer between land uses, for flood control, community resilience, and as habitats for desirable plant and wildlife species.

Protected land includes:

- A. Any land that is specifically designated for conservation purposes under MGL Chapter 40, Section 8C (Conservation Commission Act), contains a conservation restriction under MGL Chapter 184, Sections 31-33, designated for conservation or recreation purposes purchased with LAND grant funds (or with funds from the former Self Help or Urban Self-Help Grant Programs, under MGL Chapter 132A, Sections 2B, and the implementing regulations found in 301CMR7.00).
- B. State-owned wildlife habitat land and water department land held for aquifer protection, and recreation land is protected under Article 97 of the Amendments to the Constitution. All other municipally owned land is defined as land not committed to conservation purposes, or parks not dedicated under MGL Chapter 45, Sections 3 and 14, and therefore are not protected under Article 97.
- C. The majority of land acquired using the aforementioned laws and funding sources consists of municipal and government land holdings and is referred to as “public open space land” in this document. There are private landowners, like land trusts, whose land is also permanently protected and open to the public. This land is referred to as ‘private open space land” in this document.

The distinction between active and passive recreation (defined below) has not always been clear to the public or local officials, but it is very important when dealing with land under the management of the Conservation Commission or under the management of the Recreation Commission. By law, only passive recreation is allowed on land owned or managed by the Conservation Commission.

**Passive Outdoor Recreation**, per the MA Division of Conservation Service’s (DCS) recently revised definition (per 301 CMR 5.00), is any outdoor activity that occurs in a natural setting with minimum disturbance of the natural and cultural resources, and that is consistent with quiet enjoyment of the land including, but not limited to, hiking, nature study, outdoor education, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, trail bicycling, hunting, fishing, picnicking, canoeing, ice-skating, community gardening in existing fields, swimming in a natural water body with minimal site development, or informal sports activities on an open natural field. For the purposes of eligibility and reimbursement under these regulations snowmobiling may be considered passive outdoor recreation if the municipality determines that it is compatible with other activities. Facilities necessary to support passive recreation with a minimum of disturbance to the natural and cultural resources, such as natural surface trails and wood roads, and appropriately scaled parking areas, bathrooms, and nature centers,

- Chapter 61B Recreation Lands
- Chapter 61A Agriculture Land
- Chapter 61 Forest Lands.

The owner, location, map and parcel, size of the parcel, recreational potential, public and handicapped access, current use of the site, degree of protection, condition, means of purchase (grant source, etc.), and zoning, for each parcel, is included in the Inventory of Lands of Conservation Interest in Appendix D of this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

### **Agricultural Land Protection Under MGL Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B**

The agricultural and horticultural land classification program under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61A is designed to encourage the preservation of the state's valuable farmland and promote active agricultural and horticultural land use. It offers significant local tax benefits to property owners willing to make a long-term commitment to farming. In exchange for these benefits, the city or town in which the land is located is given the right to recover some of the tax benefits afforded the owner when the land is removed from classification. Under Chapter 61, a city or town is also given an option to purchase the property should the land be sold or used for any purpose other than to continue raising farm products.

Eligible property must consist of at least 5 contiguous acres of land under the same ownership and be "actively devoted" to agricultural or horticultural land use under Chapter 61A. Land is used for agricultural or horticultural purposes if it is used primarily and directly to raise or grow the following for sale in the regular course of business:

- Animals, including, but not limited to dairy cattle, beef cattle, poultry, sheep, swine, horses, ponies, mules, goats, bees and fur-bearing animals, or products derived from the animals.
- Fruits, vegetables, berries, nuts and other foods for human consumption, feed for animals, tobacco, flowers, sod, trees, nursery or greenhouse products.
- Forest products under a forest management plan approved by the State Forester (see Chapter 61 discussion).

Land is also used for agricultural and horticultural purposes if it is used primarily and directly in a manner related to the production of the animals or crops and that use is necessary and incidental to the actual production or preparation of the animals or crops for market.

For the land to be considered "actively devoted" to a farm use, it must have been farmed for the two fiscal years prior to the year of classification and must have produced a certain amount of sales. The minimum gross sales requirement is \$500 for the first 5 acres of productive land. That amount is increased by \$5 for each additional acre of productive land being classified, unless the additional acreage is woodland or wetland. In that case, the amount is increased by only \$50 for each additional acre.

The minimum gross sales requirement for land being used to cultivate or raise a farm product that takes more than one season to produce its first harvest is satisfied if the land is being used in a manner

intended to produce those sales within the product development period set by the Farmland Valuation Advisory Commission for the particular crop or animal.

Buildings and other structures located on the parcel, as well as any land on which a residence is located or regularly used for residential purposes, do not qualify for classification and continue to be assessed a regular local property tax.

### **Forested Land Under M.G.L. Chapter 61**

The forest land classification program under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61 is designed to encourage the preservation and enhancement of the state's forests. It offers significant local tax benefits to property owners willing to make a long-term commitment to forestry. In exchange for these benefits, the city or town in which the land is located is given the right to recover some of the tax benefits afforded the owner when the land is removed from classification and an option to purchase the property should the land be sold or used for non-forestry uses.

Eligible parcels must consist of at least 10 contiguous acres of land under the same ownership and be managed under a 10-year management plan approved and certified by the State Forester in order to qualify for and retain classification as forest land under Chapter 61. Buildings and other structures located on the parcel, as well as the land on which they are located and any accessory land, do not qualify for classification and continue to be assessed a regular local property tax.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61 allows landowners to reduce the property tax burden on their woodlands if they are willing to keep the forested land undeveloped and in wood production. Land certified under Chapter 61 is taxed at 5 percent of fair market value or at \$10 per acre, whichever is greater. In addition, a products tax of 8 percent is charged on the stumpage value of any wood cut from the property.

To qualify for Chapter 61, landowners must have 10 or more contiguous acres of private woodland managed for wood production under an approved long-term forest management plan. The plan must be approved by the DCR service forester and then filed with the local board of assessors. To continue in the program, the plan must be renewed every 10 years. As part of the agreement, the town receives an option to purchase the property if the owner decides to sell to someone other than a relative.

Generally speaking, if the land is not kept in wood production for at least 10 years, the costs incurred will be greater than paying the normal tax bills as they come due. If landowners choose to remove their land from Chapter 61 prior to the 10-year anniversary, they must repay all the taxes which were avoided and a 14 percent interest penalty.

### **Recreation Land Under Chapter 61 B**

The recreational land classification program under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61B is designed to encourage the preservation of the Commonwealth's valuable open space and promote recreational land uses. It offers significant local tax benefits to property owners willing to make a long-term commitment to preserving land in an undeveloped condition or for use for outdoor activities. In

exchange for these benefits, the city or town in which the land is located is given the right to recover some of the tax benefits afforded the owner and an option to purchase the property should the land be sold or used for any purpose other than to maintain it as open space or for recreational use.

Property must consist of at least five contiguous acres of land under the same ownership in order to qualify for and retain classification as recreational land under Chapter 61B. The land must fall into one of the following two categories to qualify:

1. It must be maintained in a substantially natural, wild or open condition or must be maintained in a landscaped condition permitting the preservation of wildlife and natural resources. It does not have to be open to the public, but can be held as private, undeveloped, open space land.
2. It must be used for certain recreational purposes and must be open to the public or members of a non-profit organization. Recreational purposes include land used primarily for any of the following outdoor activities, so long as they do not materially interfere with the environmental benefits of the land: hiking, camping, nature study and observation, boating, golfing, non-commercial youth soccer, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, skiing, swimming, picnicking, private non-commercial flying, hang gliding, archery, and target shooting. Buildings and other structures located on the land, as well as the land on which a residence is located or regularly used for residential purposes, do not qualify for classification, and will continue to be assessed a regular local property tax.

Under Chapter 61B, the owner still pays an annual property tax to the city or town in which the classified land is located. However, the tax is based on the commercial tax rate for the fiscal year applied to the value of the land for recreational purposes, rather than its fair market value as would be the case if the land were not classified. The value of the land for recreational purposes is determined annually by the assessors and cannot exceed 25 percent of the fair market value of the land. The property tax is due in the same number of installments and at the same time as other local property tax payments in the city or town. Interest is charged on any overdue taxes at the same rate applicable to overdue local property taxes.

The city or town has an option to purchase any classified land whenever the owner plans to sell or convert it to a residential, commercial, or industrial use. The owner must notify by certified mail the mayor and city council or the selectmen, assessors, planning board and conservation commission of the city or town of any intention to sell or convert the land to those uses. If the owner plans to sell the land, the city or town has the right to match a bona fide offer to purchase it. If the owner plans to convert the land to another use, the city or town has the right to purchase it at fair market value, as is determined by an impartial appraisal. The city or town may also assign its option to a non-profit, conservation organization. The owner cannot sell or convert the land until at least 120 days after the mailing of the required notices or until the owner has been notified in writing that the option will not be exercised, whichever is earlier. This option is not available to the city or town and the notice requirement does not apply if the recreational use is simply discontinued, or if the owner plans to build a residence for his or her use, or the use of his or her parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother or

sister, the surviving spouse of any of those relatives, or an employee working full time in the recreational use of the land.

To ensure the continued protection of all Chapter 61 properties, the Town's Conservation Commission, and the Recreation Department, in cooperation with the Assessor, should conduct an annual review (including interviews with owners) of all Chapter 61 properties to assess which properties should be pursued for potential acquisition. By conducting these reviews annually, the town can develop a ranking and prioritization system for potential acquisition. This will provide a rationale and clear direction for the town in its pursuit of securing the funding necessary for land purchases.

### **Recreation and Conservation Assets**

The inventory of open space in Freetown includes public and private land holdings that are used for conservation, recreation, and forestry. These properties offer various levels of protection. These would include the wildlife habitats, parks, ball fields, public meeting places, water supply lands, and farmlands. Open space offers the opportunity to maintain the rural character, create linkages between land uses: it gives us areas of recreation and play, flood control, and helps to avoid excessive urbanization.

Forestland enrolled in the Massachusetts Forest Assessment Act, Chapter 61, farmland enrolled in the Chapter 61A, Massachusetts farmland Assessment Program, and recreation land enrolled in the Chapter 61 B, Recreational Land Program, are included in the open space inventory because they are temporarily secured. They are considered temporarily protected due to the fact that while the town has the option to purchase, without the financial ability to do so the land is vulnerable. Therefore, they will be inventoried as unprotected parcels and included in the comprehensive inventory of lands of conservation interest that appears in Appendix D.

### **Inventory of Conservation Commission Owned and Managed Properties**

#### ***Fall Brook***

Location: Off of East Howland Road  
Acreage: 144 acres

***Eleanor Winslow Property, Quaker Brook*** Location:  
Berkley Line, Bryant Street Acreage:  
20 acres

Lot borders Berkley Line and spans both sides of Quaker Brook, which drains into Forge Pond. Lot is landlocked and of mature forest, primarily pines except for low growing marsh brush along both sides of Quaker Brook. Unquestionably a wetland area.

***Porter Pasture/Porter Shore***

Location: Gramp Deane Road  
Acreage: 22 acres

Porter Pasture/Porter Shore was Milton “Gramp” Deane’s pet project. Going back to the 1600’s, the property had only left the Porter/Tisdale family hands once. The property had been sold during 1908, but repurchased by Deane, a retired Lt. Commander in the U.S. Navy shortly after World War I. It was then that Gramp began building a beach and picnic area that he maintained until his death in 1952. The picnic area had a standing stone fireplace and a 20’ long picnic table. Gramp was fond of soft-shelled crabs and could often be found cooking up a batch in between his labors. The site was used frequently by the community for outings and swimming. Firemen’s Clambakes were also popular events.

In 1970, the heirs of Milton I. Deane offered the land to the Town for conservation and recreational purposes. Two family members donated their portions. At Town Meeting April 20, 1970, Francis O. Walsh made a motion to raise and appropriate the sum of \$42,000 to purchase the parcel, the money to come from direct taxation. The motion was overwhelmingly approved. The deed was conveyed in the summer of 1970.

Summer nature outings for young people were conducted as well as trail making and clean-up days. During the 70’s, lifeguards were in attendance and gave swimming lessons. The road was circular traveling first through a pine grove, then a gravelly portion of road. It paralleled the shoreline and approached the sandy beach. From here, the road ran along the edge of a grassy picnic area, then out through the other side of the pine grove, joining the main road just below the entrance on Gramp Deane Road.

Currently, the area is used primarily for fishing, swimming and as a launch area for canoes, kayaks and small boats. The area is subject to indiscriminate dumping of various types of trash and waste, and despite past clean-up efforts, remains a persistent problem.



**Porter Pasture/Porter Shore (Save The Bay)**

***Gurney Saw Mill Woodland***

Location: Landlocked Off of Slab Bridge Road  
Acreage: 15 acres  
Use: Woodlot

This parcel actually consists of three 5-acre parcels called A, B, and C, adjacent to parcel 5 about 1 mile east of Slab Bridge Road and .6 of a mile north of Chace Road. All lots are abutting and are just south of the Algonquin Gas Line (around 100-200 feet) and west of Proprietor's Way (from 900 to 2000 feet). This property was deeded to the Town in 1972 when it was considered young forest growth.

***Bolton Cedar Swamp***

Location: East of Rt. 140 South of Chace Road  
Acreage: 12 acres

This property was given by Mrs. Mildred Ashley and her two brothers-Herbert M. and Charles E. Ashley. It is to be kept as a Wildlife Memorial Area in memory of Mrs. Ashley's great grandfather Cornelius Chace and Miss Emily Delano.

This property is wetlands with standing pools of water and general drainage to the east towards Bolton Cedar Swamp. Because this property drains towards the brook, which in turn drains into Fall Brook, Long Pond, and other watershed areas, it is recommended that this parcel remain undisturbed and inaccessible for the protection of local watersheds. Use of roadway salts should be monitored and/or restricted.

***Betsey Taber Wildlife Sanctuary***

Location: 19 Nestle's Lane  
Acreage: 28.6

This property was the former Betsey Taber Estate. It was donated to the Town and is permanently protected as a wildlife sanctuary that includes forest and mixed woodland habitat, as well as bird habitat.

## **Parks and Recreation Facilities (under Selectmen's Jurisdiction)**

Established by the Board of Selectmen on July 13, 2020, the mission of the Parks and Recreation Committee is to strive to provide clean and safe recreational areas, and to create diverse recreational opportunities to increase the social, cultural, and physical well-being of its residents and visitors.

The role of the committee shall include performing all functions assigned to Parks and Recreation Committee by the Board of Selectmen, promoting the use of and advocating the benefits of parks and recreational services, and advising the Board of Selectmen in the areas of public policy and long-range planning of recreation facilities for community use and public enjoyment.

The Parks and Recreation Committee has yet to be formalized, and Parks and Recreation matters, and facilities are still being managed by the Board of Selectmen. Town athletic fields are currently leased to the Freetown-Lakeville Athletic Association (FYAA), a local/regional non-profit with league affiliations that provide opportunities for baseball, softball for youth in Freetown and Lakeville. The FYAA utilizes the Central Park fields in Freetown and Ted Williams Camp in Lakeville for league games.

Below is a list of recreation facilities in Freetown.

### ***The Bandstand***

Location: Assonet Four Corners, South Main Street

Acreage: 0.49 acres

The Bandstand is located in Assonet Village on the site of what was once a stagecoach stop and former tavern site. Over the years, musical performances were, on occasion, given by local residents in front of the tavern on South Main Street. The tavern came into disrepair and was torn down in 1933. Money from WPA was available to turn this site into the present-day park and the bandstand was erected. During summer months, concerts were given by and for town residents every Monday evening. We are told that Horace Jones gave a moving rendition of "When I am too Old to Dream". The Apponequet High School band also performed at summer concerts at the bandstand during the mid-1960s. Master horticulturist, Alan Haskell of New Bedford, did the original tree planting and landscaping at the site. Scout troops have also had their hand in planting shrubs, flowering bulbs, and plants.

Currently, the Bandstand hosts the Tuesday Club of Assonet's Annual Strawberry Festival, held on Father's Day in June (amongst its many other cultural, social, and educational benefit activities). At this event, performances are provided, through local Cultural Council grant funding, continuing the musical heritage of the park. The Freetown Cultural Council also decorates the Bandstand and hosts an annual tree lighting event in early December. Otherwise, the park is a quiet spot to visit with a few benches provided for relaxing under shade trees. The east end of the park is on the Assonet River and is a pleasant place to stop and watch the water flow. It is especially scenic during the fall foliage.

**Welcome Hathaway Park**

Location: Water Street  
Acreage: 6.1 acres

Historically, this parcel was a homestead, a shipyard with wharfs and storehouses owned by Welcome Hathaway. Three grandsons, one of whom lived out of state, inherited the parcel. Upon his death, the two remaining heirs, Horace and Arthur of Fall River donated the property to the Town as a riverside park, with the deed stipulating it be named Welcome Hathaway Park. The land was accepted at the annual town meeting in 1949, and the park was dedicated on July 4<sup>th</sup> of that year.

From that point it was a wild area with old foundations and the remains of formerly cultivated gardens. Wild asparagus could be picked here in spring. A large puddingstone rock along the river's edge was a favorite picnic spot for villagers. In 1966, the then Freetown Recreation Committee began to work to level, grade and re-loam the property. Ten picnic tables were installed. The Tuesday Club of Assonet provided money for tree plantings. Scout Troops planted willow trees. Further improvement and installation of playground equipment was done during the 1970's.

Today, the park offers two sets of swings, a sandy space with rubber truck tires for climbing, a small baseball field, a single basketball hoop (intended to double as a small skating area, if flooded in winter) and a public access boat ramp. Most activity at the park occurs in the summer months, when motorboats, canoes and kayaks take to the water. It is also a popular fishing spot. The park has also been used to host the Town's Fourth of July Fireworks Display.

**KRR Com Energy Baseball Complex** Location: Narrows Road Acreage: 17 acres

Com Energy leased the acreage to the town. Equipment, loam, and other materials necessary to develop the site were donated by KRR. The property was subsequently deeded from Riverfront Business Park to the Town of Freetown in 2006.

The park contains ballfields, dugouts and fencing, and is primarily used as a practice site for local (Freetown-Lakeville) teams.

**Hilltop Park**

Location: Long Pond Road  
Acreage: 13 and 8 acres

**Town Beach/Pocasset Park**

Location: Long Pond Road  
Acreage: 5.9 acres

The Town Beach provides water access to Long Pond for town residents. The property also includes adjacent ball fields with some bleacher seating. The beach and park share a large, paved parking lot.

### **Central Park**

Location: 39 Memorial Drive

Acreage: 17 acres

The construction of the Central Park Complex grew out of the previous Open Space and Recreation Plan survey (1999) that indicated a need for an additional and centralized sports facility. Donations of \$450,000 in labor and materials came from individuals and local businesses. In addition, \$126,350 in grants from Major League Baseball and The Major League Baseball Players Association (Baseball Tomorrow Program) was received to build "Little Fenway", complete with a replica Green Monster, an extra deep center field, and sunken dugouts. The first game was played on May 22, 2001.

The complex has:

3 ball fields, 5 dugouts 3 benches along the ball field

2 basketball courts Concession stand

Restroom facilities Nature trail

5 handicapped parking spaces

The nature trail around the perimeter of the complex appears to be primarily a maintenance road for the fields, the most wooded part being parallel to Bullock Road. There are five benches along the path. The nature trail skirts the pavilion/picnic area and shuffleboard courts of the Senior Center.



The "Green Monster" at Little Fenway, Central Park (Freetown Lakeville Athletic Association)

## State and Non-Profit Conservation Organization Land Holdings

### ***Puddingstone Preserve***

Owner: The Wildlands Trust  
Location: North Main Street  
Acreage: 75.3 acres

Puddingstone Preserve was once part of the homestead of the Dean family. The old stone walls that line the trail and wander through the woods are reminders of the past when much of this land was cleared for farming and pasture. The trail follows an old country road and leads through a quiet forest of mature beech, white pine, holly and oak. Throughout the woods, outcroppings of puddingstone, a conglomerate rock can be seen.

The parcel also contains a small pond, abundant ground pine (club moss), spotted turtles, deer and a variety of birds. Particularly in spring, visitors can find vernal pools and the chorus of spring peepers and perhaps other vernal pool species.

Puddingstone Preserve also includes part of the Bryant Hill Fen. A fen is a type of wetland fed by alkaline, mineral rich groundwater and characterized by a distinctive floral. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program considers Puddingstone "one of the state's important natural areas". It protects one of the best examples of fen wetlands in southeastern Massachusetts as well as the globally rare Long's bull rush.

### ***Assonet River Cedar Swamp***

Owners: Massachusetts Audubon Society  
Location: Beechwood Road  
Acres: 34 acres

This parcel abuts already extensive Audubon holdings (809.02 acres) in the town of Lakeville. The land includes more than 1.5 miles of frontage on the Assonet River, habitat for the rare four-toed salamander and other rare species, and areas of White Cedar Swamp. The property is a mix of upland and wetland and contains priority habitat.

### ***East Freetown***

Location: Rte. 140 at the Lakeville town line  
Acreage: 5.8 acres

This smaller parcel also abuts Audubon holdings in the Town of Lakeville

***New England Forestry Foundation, Inc.***

Location: Talcott White Edminster Forest  
East Howland Road 2 adjoining parcels  
Acreage: 54 and 31 acres

Mrs. Jeanne Edminster gave this property in memory of her husband, Talcott White Edminster. The parcel contains a beautiful stand of white pine and an extensive wetland providing excellent wildlife habitat. This forest has been managed for over 60 years and had been in the same family for over 150 years. Historically, prior use of this site included extensive turnip fields and a poultry farm.

***Long Pond State Boat Ramp***

Location: Route 18/105, Freetown  
Ownership: Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Management: Town of Freetown, Board of Selectmen

The town of Freetown manages an Office of Fishing and Boating Access concrete boat ramp and associated parking area with space for 47 trailers, located off Route 18/105 in Freetown on the Southeast corner of the 1,781 acre Long Pond. The Town of Freetown collects a parking fee on Saturday, Sundays, and holidays.

MassWildlife has conducted fish surveys of Long Pond and has recorded numerous species including, Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Chain Pickerel, Yellow Perch, White Perch, Pumpkinseed, White Sucker, Alewife, Blueback Herring, Brown Bullhead, Golden Shiner, Tessellated Darter, and Lake Chubsucker. Long Pond has also hosted fishing derbies attracting fishermen from all around the region.

In recent years, a growing population of invasive Asian clams (*Corbicula* sp.) has been found in the pond and anglers should take care to empty live wells and remove aquatic plants from boats and trailers before leaving the pond. The pond has also been plagued with a chronic infestation of milfoil and fanwort, two invasive aquatic plants that occur in dense clusters in various portions of the pond, impacting habitat, swimming, and recreational boating.

In 2020, Freetown received a \$25,000 appropriation from the state legislature to make improvements to the boat ramp, including building a shack for attendants (completed) and potentially bringing in electricity and water. The Office of Fishing and Boating Access has also committed to installing a swing gate at the entrance and making improvements/repairs to the ramp itself.

The non-profit Long Pond Association received a \$50,000 grant, through SRPEDD, as part of an ARPA appropriation from the state legislature, in order to conduct a mechanical harvesting of milfoil and fanwort in Long Pond. The first phase of a projected five-year effort was permitted and completed in August of 2022, removing over 120 cubic yards of plants from heavily congested areas on the pond

***Freetown-Fall River State Forest (and Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve)***

Location: Headquarters at 110 Slab Bridge Rd., Freetown  
Acreage: 5,441 acres  
Ownership: Commonwealth of Massachusetts; managed by DCR  
(Bioreserve assemblage and ownership described below)

The 5,441 acre Freetown-Fall River State Forest headquarters is located on Slab Bridge Road in Freetown. A majority of the forest is located in Freetown and is located between Assonet and East Freetown. The headquarters building is ADA accessible, including restrooms. The site also contains picnic tables. There is a large, paved parking lot at the headquarters building that provides a point of access to the 50 miles of trails in the forest. Trails are accessible for hiking, biking, and nature observation, are rated for difficulty, and are blazed with markers indicating type of uses allowed. Certain trails are marked and dedicated as bridle paths or for dirt bike use.

In 1939, 227.5 acres of Freetown State Forest was set aside by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as an Indian Reservation. This was strengthened in 1976 by an Executive Order from former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis by granting tribal rights to the Wampanoag Nation for this section of the forest.

The Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve, located just north and east of downtown Fall River, originally consisted of over 13,600 acres, including the 5,441 acres of the Freetown-Fall River State Forest; 360 acres of the Acushnet Wildlife Management Area; over 4,500 acres of watershed and conservation lands owned by the City of Fall River and 3,800 acres acquired by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and The Trustees of Reservations, a nonprofit land conservation organization, formerly owned by the Acushnet Saw Mills.

The Bioreserve became a legal entity when its conservation restriction was recorded in 2009, rendering it protected into perpetuity. The Bioreserve today consists of approximately 16,000 acres with recent acquisitions by the state and the city. The purpose of the Bioreserve is to protect, restore and enhance the biological diversity and ecological integrity of a large-scale ecosystem representative of the region; to permanently protect public water supplies and cultural resources; to offer interpretive and educational programs; and to provide opportunities for appropriate public use and enjoyment of this natural environment.

## **Section 6: COMMUNITY VISION**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS**

The Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee sought input for the Open Space and Recreation Plan from the citizens of Freetown through a series of open, monthly working meetings, held between April of 2021 and September of 2022, as well as through the distribution of an Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey during the winter and spring of 2020. The survey was available on Survey Monkey via a link on the Town website and SRPEDD website, and in hard copy at the Planning Board Office in the Town Hall and through SRPEDD.

The information obtained in the responses to the survey was used as one of the means of gauging the public's needs and concerns. With this iteration of the survey, the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee also asked if surveys were being completed as an individual activity, or as a family activity. The survey received 104 responses. Respondents listed protection of water supply related land and critical habitat areas as the most important conservation priorities, while citing the need for improved water access and more bike, pedestrian and trail facilities and links to such regional facilities as top recreational priorities.

In addition to the survey, SRPEDD, on behalf of the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee, participated in a number of activities as a means to collect public opinion and develop supplemental data. These activities included: meetings and discussions with staff from the Wildlands Trust, Mass Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, Save The Bay, the Narragansett Bay Project, the Fall River Water Department, Taunton River Trails Committee, Taunton River Watershed Alliance, the MA Division of Ecological Restoration, and the MA Department of Fish & Game.

### **Recent Accomplishments Related to the Open Space and Recreation Plan**

This being the first Open Space and Recreation Plan for Freetown, with no prior plan to reference or update, the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee has put together a list of recent accomplishments related to the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

A list of some of these items includes:

- Participating in the Taunton Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council as a permanent member since 2000.
- Participating in the Assawompset Pond Complex Management Committee as a permanent member since 2002
- Participating in the South Coast Rail Priority Areas planning process, 2008, 2013
- Preparing a Housing Production Plan, 2017
- Participating in the development of the Assawompset Pond Complex and Nemasket River Watershed Management and Climate Action Plan, 2020-2022
- Updating and revising the Town's Wetland Rules and Regulations, 2008, 2021
- Developing a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan and a Regional Addendum, 2019
- Appointing an Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee, 2021
- Establishing the legal mechanism for a Parks and Recreation Committee, 2020
- Working with the MA Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) and numerous other federal, state, regional and local partners on the Mill Brook Bog Ecological Restoration Project, 2019 and ongoing

- Working with the DER and other agencies to remove the Bleachery Pond Dam and affect an ecological restoration of Rattlesnake Brook, 2017
- Working with the Long Pond Association and numerous state and local partners to initiate the phased removal of aquatic invasives from Long Pond with an Eco Harvester, 2022 and ongoing
- Working with the MA Department of Fish & Game's Office of Fishing and Boating Access and legislators to improve the State Boat Ramp at Long Pond, 2020 and ongoing
- Developing a Stormwater Management Plan, 2020

## **B. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS**

With the South Coast Rail Phase 1 project nearly completed, and the responsibilities of being an MBTA host community, Freetown is facing renewed development pressure in the coming years. Some of the potentially more developable areas, such as those located near highway access, are contrasted by the more rural areas, with large parcels of passive and active open land. Agricultural parcels, forestland, wetlands, streams, and ponds, located throughout these less developed areas, have been important in the overall preservation of the more rural characteristics of the town.

In 2022, the stewardship of existing assets, coupled with the challenges of developing new opportunities for the public, makes establishing sound conservation and recreation planning strategies a necessity. With a growing, and aging, population, fewer financial resources with which to operate, and more competition for those remaining financial resources (competitive grants, etc.), the Town and its citizens need to be organized, creative, and resourceful. The Town has recently been very successful in maximizing partnership opportunities for addressing the future open space, conservation, and recreation needs, and should continue to pursue this path going forward.

Below is a broad-brush list of Conservation and Recreation Goals based upon the results of the process described in Section 6A above.

1. Promote and Implement the Open Space Plan
2. Preserve the community character of the Town of Freetown
3. Protect and improve existing recreational facilities
4. Protect Water/Aquifer/Groundwater resources
5. Acquire parcels for open space
6. Support recommendations for zoning changes that enhance open space protection
7. Protect Fall Brook, Rattlesnake Brook, Assonet River, Taunton River, Long Pond, and other waterbodies
8. Protect Open Space through education
9. Create (non-motorized) multi-modal greenways, trails, corridors, shared use paths, and inter-municipal connections

## **Section 7: Analysis of Needs**

### **A. Conservation and Resource Protection Needs**

In recent years, the Conservation Commission has enhanced its local Wetlands Rules and Regulations (most recently in 2021), and added clerical help, to help meet its growing needs and obligations. These recent efforts can also complement the regulatory work of the Planning Board. Aside from meeting its responsibilities under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Commission has also been working with other municipal boards, commissions, committees, and non-profit organizations to protect the conservation interests of the Town.

In order to further protect the quality and quantity of Freetown's water resources, the Commission should assess and prioritize the acquisition/permanent protection of open space in significant watershed areas. This assessment should not only include land that meets conservation and recreation needs, but also provides river and stream buffers, preserves critical habitat linkages and functions, and protects recharge areas near existing and future potential water supply sites. Healthy environmental systems require a network of vital connections that help to preserve the services that these systems provide to our cities and towns (water quality, air quality, fish and wildlife habitat, etc.). By protecting and restoring naturally functioning ecosystems, we help to preserve the "green infrastructure" that is critical to the overall health and resiliency of our cities and towns. The Mill Brook Bog Restoration project, involving numerous federal, state, regional, and local partners is a perfect example of this philosophy and approach to holistic ecological restoration.

Another part of a more comprehensive municipal natural resources protection strategy would be to develop management plans for all of its conservation holdings. This should be part of an ongoing effort and involve other conservation partners such as Mass Audubon Society (MAS), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), and The Wildlands Trust (WLT). The process should begin by addressing municipal lands (and Conservation Restrictions) held in areas recognized as critical to the town's natural resources. If parcels already have management plans, they should be revisited to see if they are still appropriate, and if they are being addressed.

Areas that are critical for their conservation, recreation, and cultural values, and are heavily used and favored by the public, should also undergo regular need assessments, and when necessary, upgrades. It is also very important to regularly inspect locally held conservation restrictions to ensure that no encroachment or improper use is occurring.

Finally, the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee also recognized the need to optimize the use and efficiency of the Town website in order to engage and inform the residents of Freetown, neighboring communities, and visitors to the region. While the website does have a prominent GIS portal, where various community attributes can be explored, the Open Space layer falls under the general category "MassGIS Data," making it difficult to access intuitively, especially for a non-GIS data user. The Conservation Commission has some links to recreational opportunities like the Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve, but nothing about the Assawompset Ponds Complex, despite the Long Pond Town Beach and the Long Pond Boat Ramp being located within the Ponds Complex.

This is part of a broader strategy to connect people to, and with, the existing conservation, recreation, and public spaces in town to help promote awareness and stewardship.

## **B. Parks & Recreation and Community Needs**

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), Massachusetts Outdoor 2017, is a five-year plan developed by the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). The plan is required for state participation in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants programs. The SCORP also provides an overview of the recreational preferences of the citizens of each geographic region of the Commonwealth as determined through a public participation and outreach process. The profile of recreational use afforded by the SCORP also provides municipalities with a planning tool for addressing the future needs and uses of our outdoor recreational resources.

The SCORP's summary of information, collected at both public events and through other methods of survey (online and telephone), showed that people participate in outdoor activities primarily for physical fitness, but also to be close to nature. Despite having access to nearby facilities, lack of time (55%) was the number one reason that people gave for not using these facilities more often. While recreational programs were also important to responders, 88.2% that it was either somewhat or very important to have more programs for those aged 4 to 12 years, and 91.2% responded similarly regarding programs for teens.

Survey data also indicates that: water-based activities, such as boating – canoe, kayak, power boat; fishing; swimming – at beaches, lakes, rivers, pools, paddle boarding, tubing; and, trail-based recreation, such as hiking, biking (on and off-road), cross-country skiing, walking/jogging on trails, and mountain biking, provide the most popular recreational outlets for families in the regions. The SCORP also revealed that the types of projects that respondents would like to see funded in the future are trails (hiking, biking, paved walkways, trails for people with disabilities); playgrounds (for ages 2-5, for people with disabilities, for ages 6-12, and for ages 6 months – 2 years), and water (swimming pool, canoe/kayak access, and fishing areas).

Finally, it should also be noted that the SCORP also called out the need to recognize and address the needs of underserved populations (citizens with disabilities, teens, and senior citizens) and areas of a community (areas that are lacking facilities, environmental justice neighborhoods) when planning for and designing parks and conservation areas.

A good part of the SCORP summary reflects Freetown's recreation preferences and goals. Based upon both the Open Space and Recreation survey and feedback at community meetings, the top choices for the types of recreation facilities that are needed or should be expanded in Freetown included: nature/hiking/walking trails; bike paths; improved water/beach access; and more diverse passive and active recreation programs and facilities for people of all ages and abilities.

Some of the facilities/opportunities specifically mentioned as "recreational and community needs" (in terms of upgrades, repurposing, or new development) were compiled by the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee and included input from the Committee's public meetings and Open Space Survey comments, as well as Committee site visits to and assessments of Town owned facilities and properties.

The Committee priority ranking and recommendations for facilities, based on all of the above, are as follows:

1. Long pond Boat Ramp ·
  - a. Needs more supervision- increased hours for attendants
  - b. Inappropriate line painting makes access to area confusing
    - i. Needs to improve the surface
    - ii. No clear pathway
  - c. Police presence or patrol is needed
  - d. Dog poop bags, signs regarding leashed animals needs updating and refilling
  - e. Suggestion of a Kayak club.
  
1. Town beach/ Pocasset Park
  - a. Needs more supervision/ increased attendant hours
  - b. Beach area gate to be locked at night and when area is off season
  - c. Police presence or patrols
  - d. Dog poop bags, sign regarding leashed animals needs to be updated.
  - e. Picnic tables at beach. Benches in Pocasset Park needed
  - f. Improved fields and fencing for Pocasset could be
    - i. Dog park, Soccer & Lacrosse field, Frisbee golf, skate and Roller blade park, car club events or shows, farmers & flea markets
  
2. Central Park, including COA, Freetown Elementary School Playground, Memorial & Police and Fire station.
  - a. Minimal maintenance needed (Fence & Benches repaired, replaced, or repainted)
  - b. Basketball courts need painting, secure trash barrels near courts
  - c. Walking path signage, clipping of foliage (overhead), paths trimmed- trail signs & post the distance walked, areas for open space with wildflowers- 3 benches needs upgrades.
  - d. Extend walking path into memorial park & across street to Police Station
  - e. Dog poop bags, sign regarding leashed animals
  - f. At COA, outdoor music/sound and intercom system
  - g. Casa needs more raised beds gardens, shuffleboard court is a mess, improved 4 horseshoe pits build a bocce court.
  
3. KRR Ball Fields
  - a. Would need extensive upgrades for ball fields, fence and dugouts
  - b. Could be a great location for Open space activities.

Next two parks have some funding from the historical society.

4. Hathaway Park
  - a. Benches needs to be repaired, repainted
  - b. All swings need updates
  - c. Chainlike fence along river needs upgrades.

## 5. Bandstand

- a. Two trees in front need an arborist ASAP
- b. Needs additional renovation & restoration; grant funded improvements to date have included resurfacing the platform floor, rebuilding the stairs, repairing rails and walkways
- c. Needs picnic tables, trash cans
- d. ADA compliance

Community planners have traditionally looked to the National Park and Recreation Association Standards (NPRA) as a benchmark for the number of facilities/opportunities/acres a community should have per units of population. These standards are still very useful as guides but have become more difficult to achieve in leaner economic times as communities struggle to maintain their current recreational assets and stock. Partnerships (local and regional), reinvestment, and repurposing may hold the keys to the maximum and efficient use of current recreational stock as well as the ability to expand and offer more (and more diverse) quality, life-long experiences to citizens of all ages and abilities.

## Special User Group Needs

### *Seniors*

Freetown's population trending is similar to its neighbors, the state, and national data in that its population is aging and remaining more active than in years past. Data presented in Section 3 of this plan shows that from 2000 to 2020, Freetown experienced slight decreases in the population of the youngest age groups (0-19 years), but larger decreases in the population of those age groups linked to the labor force (25-54 years). Increases in population were experienced in all age groups above 54 years of age.

Many people in the 54 and above age group, both in survey responses and in community meetings, were looking for the Town to provide increased outdoor activities for seniors (walking, hiking, biking, etc.), as well as year-round indoor programs conducted at social or recreational facilities (Council on Aging, etc.).

### *Citizens with Disabilities*

Freetown must develop a self-evaluation and transition plan for its conservation and recreation facilities as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These plans are carried out through a municipally appointed ADA Coordinator. The ADA Coordinator is responsible for working to bring all municipal services, infrastructure, and buildings into compliance with the Act. The ADA Coordinator is not responsible for privately owned facilities.

The ADA Transition Plan contains an inventory of the public conservation and recreation facilities of the Town (exclusive of the School Department facilities; the School Department must conduct their own assessment and prepare a Transition Plan for their facilities). The Transition Plan takes an inventory of the improvements needed to bring a facility into ADA compliance.

The Town recognizes the need to develop an ADA Transition Plan and has been attempting to address these needs as funding allows. In October of 2022, the Town applied for a \$35,000 Americans with

Disabilities Act (ADA) Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability. Freetown will use the money to conduct a self-evaluation of certain town-owned properties and develop a Transition Plan for future improvements. The Town is currently awaiting word on a potential grant award.

All future recreation facilities should be designed with the needs of citizens with disabilities in mind, in terms of site access, physical use, and ability to view events and cultural/scenic landscapes.

### **C. MANAGEMENT NEEDS, POTENTIAL CHANGE OF USE**

Beyond the management needs of the physical conservation and recreation assets of the Town, the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee saw the need to manage the flow of information/education regarding the Open Space and Recreation Plan as a major priority. People feel the need to promote the plan, increase public awareness, involvement (volunteerism), and in turn, local government efficiency. The following ideas are a synthesis of those offered at Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee public meetings, and in follow-up engagement with other Town boards, commissions, and committees.

#### *Management/Oversight*

The Board of Selectmen should continue to support the work of, and make permanent, the Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC). The OSRAC can serve as the Town's initial point of contact for, and to oversee the implementation of, the Open Space and Recreation Plan. This will also improve both the internal communication process, and in turn, communication with external agencies, organizations, and potential partners. The OSRAC can also meet on a regular basis to make sure that the Open Space and Recreation Plan's Action items are being addressed (or delayed for whatever reasons) and keep the plan and the Town's accomplishments in the public eye.

The Board of Selectmen should formally appoint a Park and Recreation Committee. Freetown does not have a Parks and Recreation Department, although the town does have a publicly available document establishing a Parks and Recreation Committee on July 13, 2020. The current status of this proposed committee is not known at this time.

The Board of Selectmen should appoint a Bike/Pathways Committee to work with the OSRAC to help develop local bike and pedestrian routes, and to engage similar regional groups who would like to forge trail links with Freetown. Freetown's neighbors in Fall River and Dartmouth have been very active participants in the SRPEDD Bicycle and Pedestrian programs (these towns are developing individual routes as well as regional links to proposed and existing routes).

SRPEDD is in the process of updating its Regional Transportation Plan for 2020, and is also working continuously with community bicycle, pedestrian, and trail committees to maintain up-to-date Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans. SRPEDD has also been worked with several local communities in developing and implementing local Complete Streets Programs through Mass DOT (another potential source of bike and pedestrian priority project funding).

The appropriate designation and management of land is key to any municipal conservation, recreation, and open space efforts. Any vulnerable, significant conservation land that is not currently permanently protected should be placed under protection by the most appropriate means available (transfer to the Conservation Commission; Conservation Restriction, either held by the Town or assigned to a non-profit partner, etc.). The appropriate departments, commissions, or boards within the town should research the deeds of the property under their control, including the acquisition history of each. Identify the

parcels that have affirmative Town Meeting Votes stating that the subject property is to be dedicated to either conservation or recreation use and determine that the deed reflects the purpose of the acquisition. If research reveals that the accompanying deed does not reflect the intent of the acquisition, the situation may be remedied by recording a corrective deed (it is recommended that the authorizing Town Meeting Vote is recorded as an adjunct to the corrective deed).

### *Education/ Outreach*

The Town needs to develop and promote local public education materials describing available conservation, recreation, and open space assets and opportunities. In particular, it was recommended that the Town develop a passive and active recreation facilities website, with downloadable maps/brochures and fact sheets, that would complement the existing web page. An improved web page and physical materials would help to forge stronger ties between the Town and potential conservation and recreation partners, as well as to promote the public ownership and the need for stewardship of these outstanding resources.

Consistent wayfinding signage and informational kiosks at town owned conservation and recreation areas will make sites easier to find, encourage public use, and help the OSRAC promote the local need for stewardship of our community held assets.

### *Land Acquisition and Preservation*

The OSRAC also identified the need for a formal Land Acquisition/Protection Strategy for conservation and open space parcels. The goal here would be to promote a more unified and purposeful approach to land acquisition by the Town that would focus on: keeping significant natural corridors intact; retaining the integrity of significant blocks of watershed and agricultural land; looking at land function as well as features in a complementary context, and; promoting a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach as to how and why land is preserved or acquired.

This strategy should be used to target susceptible natural resource areas in Freetown along its rivers, streams, and waterbodies, and in areas of agricultural significance (in essence, a way to address issues in identified Core Habitat, high-quality streams, Heritage Landscape Inventory, and Critical Natural Landscape areas).

The Town should promote agricultural retention and look at assistance programs offered by the Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP), MA Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This can also help with retention of productive agricultural soils, particularly peat (which is critical in the retention of soil organic carbon) promote the practice of agriculture and encourage new farmers to invest in the community. The town can also sponsor workshops on intergenerational transfer of property to help older farm owners and their heirs.

## Section 8: Goals and Objectives

### *1. Promote and support the Implementation of the Open Space Plan working in conjunction with the appropriate boards and committees*

- a. Create a permanent Open Space Committee to review, update, and implement the Open Space Plan
- b. Preserve the finalized Open Space Plan both electronically and online for update and public education/awareness purposes

### *2. Acquire parcels for open space*

- a. Identify and assess open land in Freetown
- b. Protect critical vulnerable open space areas through various means, such as: outright land purchase, Conservation Restriction (CR), Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), Deed Restrictions, Bequeathals
- c. Assess the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), to qualify for funding
- d. Develop local funding sources dedicated to open space acquisition
- e. Connect with organizations offering free services to communities for grant projects

### *3. Preserve the community character of the Town of Freetown*

- a. Identify and assess open lands and significant natural areas in Freetown
- b. Preserve rural landscape, cultural, historic and archeologically significant areas
- c. Prevent agricultural losses and consider the potential use of Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) where/when appropriate
- d. Encourage conservation restrictions and restrictive covenants/deed restrictions for large parcels and development proposals in order to preserve contiguous open space
- e. Identify and protect scenic roadways through the scenic roadway designation bylaw
- f. Support natural resource protection

### *4. Protect and improve existing recreational facilities*

- a. Clarify jurisdictions over land use and continued care of Town owned properties
- b. Create local stewardship groups/committees to oversee protected parcels
- c. Mark and map (physical and GIS based) all town owned parcels and trails and install uniform wayfinding signage
- d. Create and distribute an educational brochure that identifies accessible general public parcels and conveys stewardship practices and map
- e. Develop recreational programs for citizens of all ages and abilities
- f. Create stewardship plans for permanently protected open space

- g. Develop new and update, and enhance existing open space and recreational areas
- h. Complete an updated ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan

*5. Protect Water/Aquifer/Groundwater resources*

- a. Identify and protect potential groundwater resources for municipal aquifers
- b. Identify and protect critical habitat along and including rivers, streams, certified coldwater fisheries

*6. Working collaboratively with the Planning and Zoning Boards to support recommendations for zoning changes that enhance open space protection*

- a. Support zoning changes that reflect Open Space Residential Zones Development
- b. Encourage planning and zoning educational opportunities
- c. Assess the adoption of Smart Growth Bylaws

*7. Protect Fall Brook, Rattlesnake Brook, Assonet River, Taunton River, Long Pond and other water bodies*

- a. Identify and mitigate potential pollution sources
- b. Connect with other organizations for water quality and quantity studies and monitoring
- c. Create volunteer network for shoreline cleanups

*8. Protect Open Space through education*

- a. Introduce environmental educational programs to the community
- b. Participate in the International Biodiversity Day Program in May of each year to help promote biodiversity and identify various species within the community
- c. Make better use of the Town website and local media to present articles focusing on conservation issues, properties, stewardship opportunities, and related public events

*9. Create (non-motorized) multi-modal greenways, trails, corridors, shared use paths, and inter-municipal connections*

- a. Link East Freetown with Assonet Village through on and off-road trails and pathways
- b. Develop inner and inter-municipal bike paths and shared use paths
- c. Connect to the State Forest/Bioreserve trail network
- d. Improve water access at existing points and explore future potential access points

## Section 9: Action Plan

The Action Plan items are not listed in any order of priority or in a chronological sequence. The Action Plan is meant to be flexible and responsive, as some of these Actions listed are in the process of being addressed, while others will be addressed as opportunities present themselves (including actions undertaken with neighboring towns, local and regional land trusts, and other external partners). The Action Plan also attempts to organize these action items in a format that is user friendly and provides a platform for grants/proposal writing.

Finally, the actions identified in this section are to be coordinated through the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board, with the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee continuing to serve in its current capacity.

**Action:** Retain a permanent, elected or appointed Open Space Committee

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Recreation, Planning, Board of Selectmen

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 1, Objective a.

**Action:** Create an Open Space Committee page on the Town website in order to better disseminate environmental education materials, present opportunities for public involvement, and communicate environmental issues

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Open Space Advisory Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning, Technical Support

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal1, Objective b.; Goal 8, Objective c.

**Action:** Educate the public about, and pass, the Community Preservation Act in Freetown

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Open Space and Recreation Committee, Community Preservation Coalition, Selectmen, others as necessary

Goals and Objectives addressed: Goal 5, Objective c.

**Action:** Develop a Comprehensive Town Trail/Canoe/Open Space Guide (physical and web based)

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Parks, Highway Dept., Open Space, SRPEDD, Save the Bay

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective c. and d.

Potential Funding Sources: MA Division of Conservation Services (DCS), Mass Trails, SRPEDD, Taunton River Stewardship Council (TRSC), other state, federal grants/programs

**Action:** Improve opportunities for the development of shared use paths (SUP), including ADA accommodations where feasible

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Parks, Highway Dept., Selectmen, Open Space, American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Officer, SRPEDD, others as needed

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective e.; Goal 9, Objectives a.-c.

Potential Funding Sources: DCS, Mass Trails, SRPEDD, others

**Action:** Improve access to waterways and waterbodies (boating, fishing, etc.)

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Open Space, Highway Dept., DCS, Save the Bay, TRSC, others

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 9, Objective d.

Potential Funding Sources: National Park Service (NPS), TRSC, DCS, other

**Action:** Conduct a comprehensive review and update of the Zoning Bylaw and appropriate rules and regulations to account for open space residential development, green infrastructure retention and improved community resilience

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Conservation, Open Space, Building Inspector, Board of Health, Historical Commission, Mass Audubon, SRPEDD, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 6, Objectives a.-c.

Potential Funding Sources: local, Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN), SRPEDD/DLTA, other

**Action:** Develop uniform wayfinding signage for town-owned assets

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Open Space, Conservation, Parks, Selectmen, others as necessary

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective c.

Potential Sources of Funding: local, DCS, TRSC, other

**Action:** Preserve contiguous resource areas in river, tributary, and wildlife corridors

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Planning, Open Space, Wildlands Trust, MA Dept. of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), DCS, United States Dept. of Agriculture (USDA), SRPEDD, Mass Audubon, TNC, Save the Bay

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 2, Objectives a., c., f.; Goal 4, Objective b.; Goal 7, Objectives a.-c.

Potential Sources of Funding: DCS, DCR, MDAR, Southern New England Program (SNEP), MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP), local, other grants programs

**Action:** Develop an Open Space and Trail Maintenance Plan/Program

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Parks Selectmen, Highway Dept., Open Space, others as necessary

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objectives a., f.

Potential Funding Sources: local

**Action:** Make necessary improvements to park and playground areas

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Conservation, Building Inspector, Parks, ADA Coordinator, others as needed

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objectives e., g., h.

Potential Funding Sources: local, DCS

**Action:** Update the ADA Section 504 Transition Plan for all town-owned conservation and recreation facilities

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Conservation, Park Department, Local ADA Coordinator, others as necessary

Goals and Objectives Addressed: Goal 3, Objective h.

Potential Funding Sources: local, MA Office of Disability Grant

**Action:** Work with neighboring communities to complete the development of links to regional trail systems

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Parks, Highway Dept., Open Space, TRSC, Taunton Pathways Committee, South Coast Bikeway Alliance, SRPEDD, Swansea, Dighton, Seekonk, others as needed

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 9, Objectives a.-c.

Potential Funding Sources: Mass Trails, DCS, MA Dept. of Transportation (Mass DOT), TRSC, SRPEDD, other

**Action:** Develop a method of prioritization for land acquisition, including our natural green infrastructure/lands that provide critical natural services (flood control, water supply protection/recharge, cooling, buffers, habitat linkage, etc.)

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Planning, Open Space, Selectmen, Parks, others as needed

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 5, Objective a.

**Action:** Continue to recognize and preserve Cultural, Historic, and Heritage Landscapes

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Historical Commission, Historical Society, Conservation, Planning, Building Inspector, Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), MA DCR, Old Colony History Museum, Tribal representatives, others as necessary

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 2, Objectives a., b., e.

Potential Funding Sources: DCR, Mass Cultural Council, local Cultural Council, MHC, TRSC, other

**Action:** Develop community conservation and environmental education programs and materials to promote conservation and environmental awareness as well as opportunities for stewardship

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Open Space Committee, Wildlands Trust, TRWA, TRSC, SRPEDD, Save the Bay, TNC, Assawompset Ponds Committee (APC), Mass Audubon, Bristol County Agricultural High School, others as needed

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective d.; Goal 8, Objectives a.-c.

Potential Funding Sources: TRSC, DCS, SRPEDD, MDAR, MVP, MDAR, others

**Action:** Establish a Freetown Agricultural Commission

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Planning, Board of Health, Conservation, SRPEDD, others

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 2, Objective b.

Potential Funding Sources: local

**Action:** Establish an Agricultural rollback provision, similar to Dighton's Home Rule petition, to create an Agricultural Acquisition Fund to be used for purchase or match for grants to acquire open space

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Finance Committee, state legislators, others as appropriate

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 5, Objective d.

**Action:** Evaluate local roads for inclusion in a Scenic Road inventory

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Planning, Highway Dept., others as necessary and appropriate

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 2, Objective e.

Potential Funding Sources: local, SRPEDD

**Action:** Preserve Scenic Views and Vistas (consult the Freetown Heritage Landscape Inventory, 2006)

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Open Space, Parks, Conservation, Planning, others as necessary and appropriate

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 2, Objectives a., e.

Potential Funding Sources: DCS, local, other grants programs

**Action:** Inventory all lands acquired by or held by the town for conservation purposes to ensure that they are under Conservation Commission control; file corrective deeds where necessary

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Conservation, Open Space, Parks, others as appropriate

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective a.; Goal 5, Objective a.

Potential Funding Sources: local

**Action:** Address Environmental Equity needs for parks, open space and trails, as feasible and practical

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Open Space, Parks, Selectmen, Highway Dept., ADA Coordinator, others as appropriate and necessary

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objectives e., g., h.  
Potential Funding Sources: local, DCS, Mass Trails, other grants programs

**Action:** Create sustainable management plans for all town-owned conservation lands  
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Conservation, Highway Dept., Open Space, Selectmen, Planning, ADA Coordinator, others as appropriate and necessary  
Goals/Objectives/ Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective f.  
Potential Funding Sources: local, DCS, Mass Trails grant, other grants programs

**Action:** Work with water intensive users/activities to promote sound water quality and conservation practices  
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Conservation, Planning, Board of Health, APC, various state agencies, MA Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA, SRPEDD  
Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 7, Objectives a.-c.  
Potential Funding Sources: local, DEP, USDA, TRSC, others

**Action:** Develop a sustainable forestry management plan for town owned lands  
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Forestry Dept., Selectmen, Highway Dept., Parks, Conservation, others as necessary  
Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective f.  
Potential Funding Sources: local, state, other grants programs

**Action:** Create a stewardship program and encourage involvement through schools, scouts, businesses, civic groups, and others  
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, ADA Coordinator, Parks, Conservation, TRWA, TRSC, APC, others as appropriate and necessary  
Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objectives b., f.; Goal 7, Objective c.; Goal 8, Objectives a.-c.  
Potential Funding Sources: local, federal, DCS, Massachusetts Office on Disability, Mass Trails, TRSC

**Action:** Develop a brochure and online informational materials on options for land donation, protection, and sustainable land use practices  
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Parks, Conservation, Open Space, ADA Coordinator, Highway Dept., others as appropriate and necessary  
Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 1, Objective b.; Goal 3, Objective d.; Goal 8, Objective c.  
Potential Funding Sources: local, state, federal, regional, non-profit, other grants programs

**Action:** Monitor recreational needs through periodic in-person and web-based surveys  
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Parks, Conservation, Open Space, ADA Coordinator, Highway Dept., others as appropriate and necessary  
Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 1, Objective a.; Goal 8, Objective c.  
Potential Funding Sources: DCS, CPC, local, state, federal, regional, non-profit, other grants programs

**Action:** Allocate adequate funding for regular maintenance, upgrades, and associated costs of town-owned conservation and recreation facilities  
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Parks, Conservation, Open Space, Finance, Highway Dept., ADA Coordinator, others as appropriate and necessary  
Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective f.; Goal 5, Objectives c., d.  
Potential Sources of Funding: local, DCS, CPC, Mass Trails, local, federal

**Action:** Work with conservation and recreation groups (land trusts, equestrians, hikers, seniors, youth groups, ADA Coordinator) to develop a Master Plan for trails and trail uses

Local Lead/Potential Partners: Highway Dept., Conservation, Selectmen, SRPEDD, others as appropriate and necessary

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 3, Objective e.; Goal 9, Objectives a.-c.

Potential Funding Sources: local, state, federal, non-profit

**Action:** Explore and compile all potential sources of funding to help implement the Action items presented in the Open Space and Recreation Plan, particularly the protection and preservation of open space in Freetown

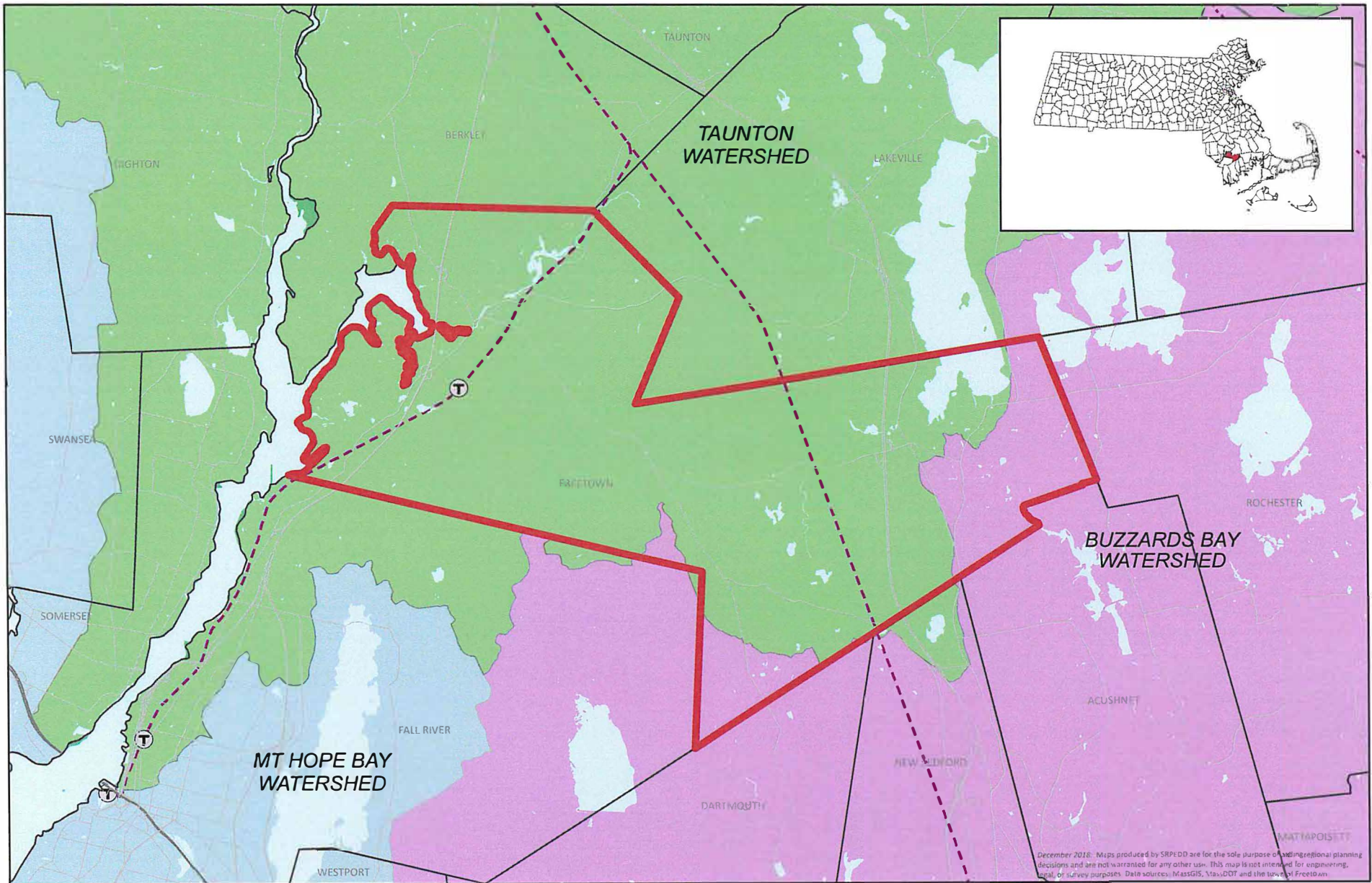
Local Lead/Potential Partners: Selectmen, Conservation, Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee, Parks, Community Preservation Coalition, others as necessary

Goals/Objectives/Needs Addressed: Goal 5, Objectives c., d.

Potential Funding Sources: DCS Grant Programs, Taunton River Stewardship Council, MVP Program, SNEP, MassDOT, CPA, numerous others

## **Section 10: Maps**

- **Regional Context and Watersheds**
- **Environmental Justice Areas**
- **Zoning**
- **Land Use**
- **Surficial Geology**
- **Prime Soils**
- **Hydric Soils**
- **Farmland Soils**
- **Water Resources**
- **FEMA National Flood Hazard Areas**
- **Wildlife Habitat**
- **Mass Audubon Important Bird Area – Freetown-Fall River State Forest and Bioreserve**
- **Mass Audubon Important Bird Area – Assawompset Ponds**
- **Scenic and Unique Features and Resources**
- **Open Space Maps (both Municipal map and State/County/Federal/Other map)**
- **Bioreserve Trail Map**
- **Green Infrastructure Network**
- **Action Map**



## Town of Freetown

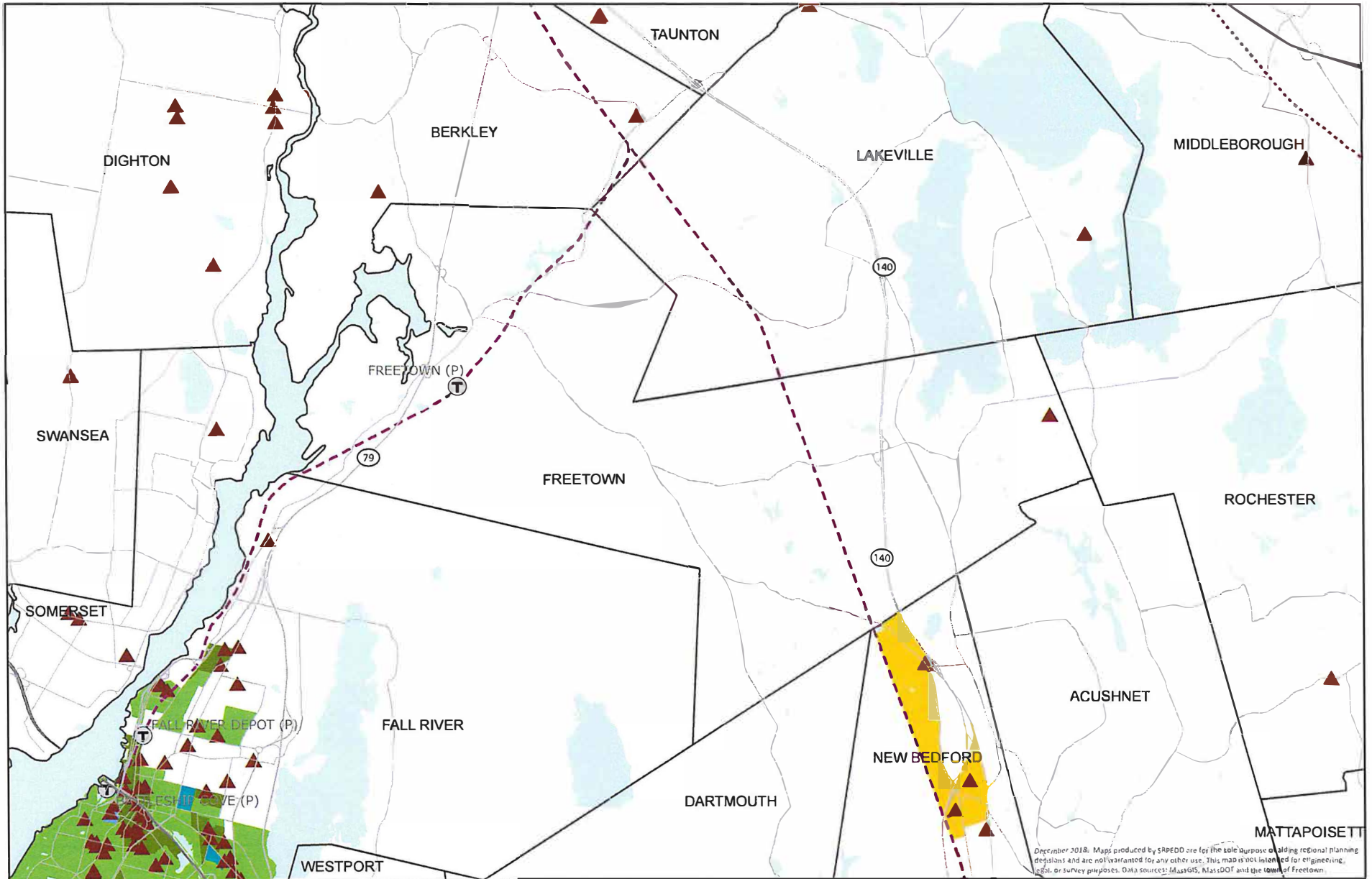
### Open Space and Recreation Plan - Regional Context Map

#### Legend

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  Buzzards Bay Watershed |  Municipal Boundaries     |  MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations   |
|  Mt. Hope Bay Watershed |  Interstates              |  MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines |
|  Taunton Watershed      |  Arterials and Collectors |   |
|  |  Local Roads              |   |

 1 mile





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# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Environmental Justice Map

### Legend

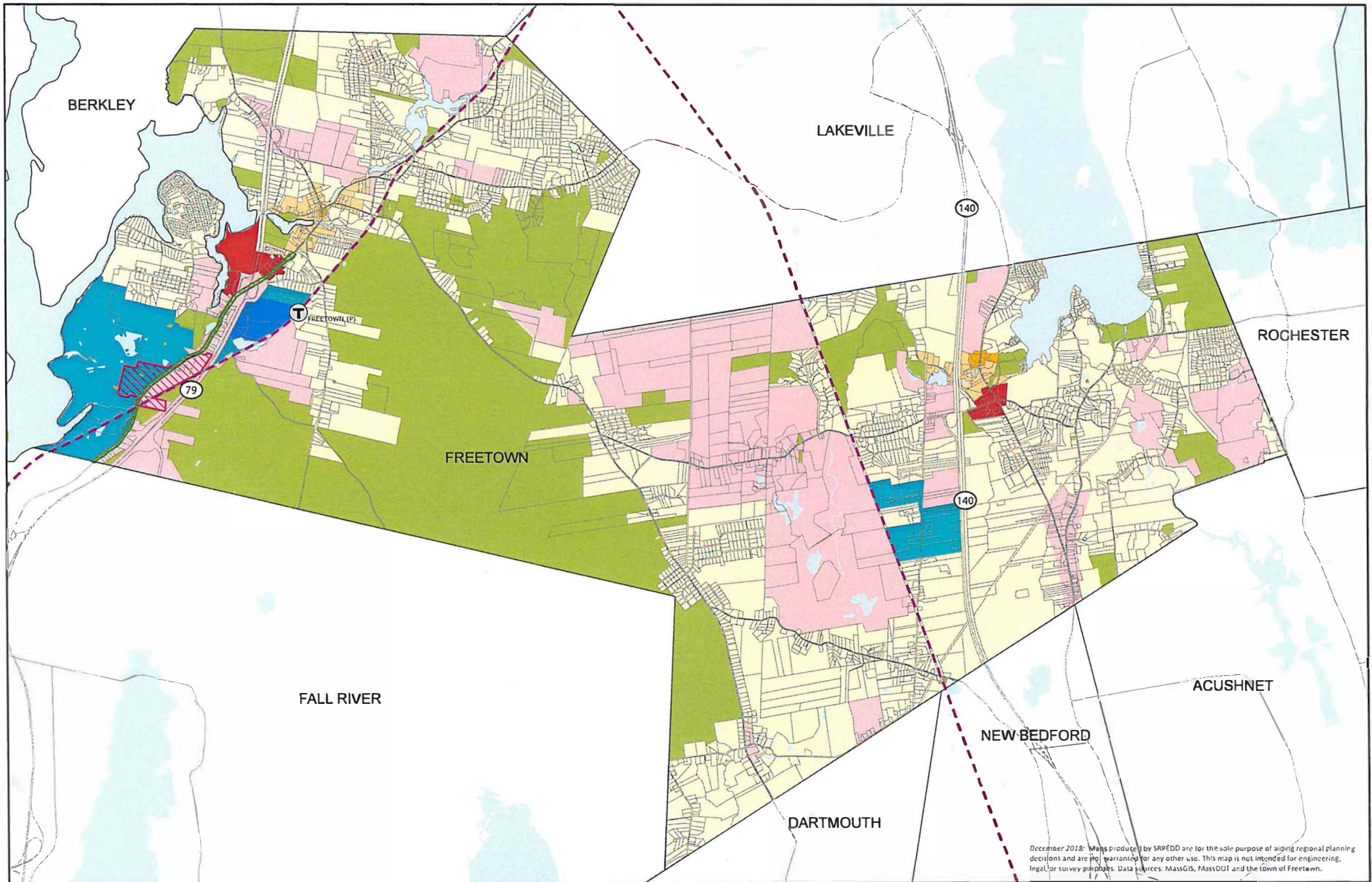
- |                     |  |                          |                                   |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Minority            | Minority and English Isolation         | Municipal Boundaries     | MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations   |
| Income              | Income and English Isolation           | Interstates              | MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines |
| English Isolation   | Minority, Income and English Isolation | Arterials and Collectors |                                   |
| Minority and Income | Subsidized Housing (SRPEDD)            | Local Roads              |                                   |

MassDEP Environmental Justice 2010 Populations - EJ Criteria, by Block Group

0.25 1  
Miles

1 mile



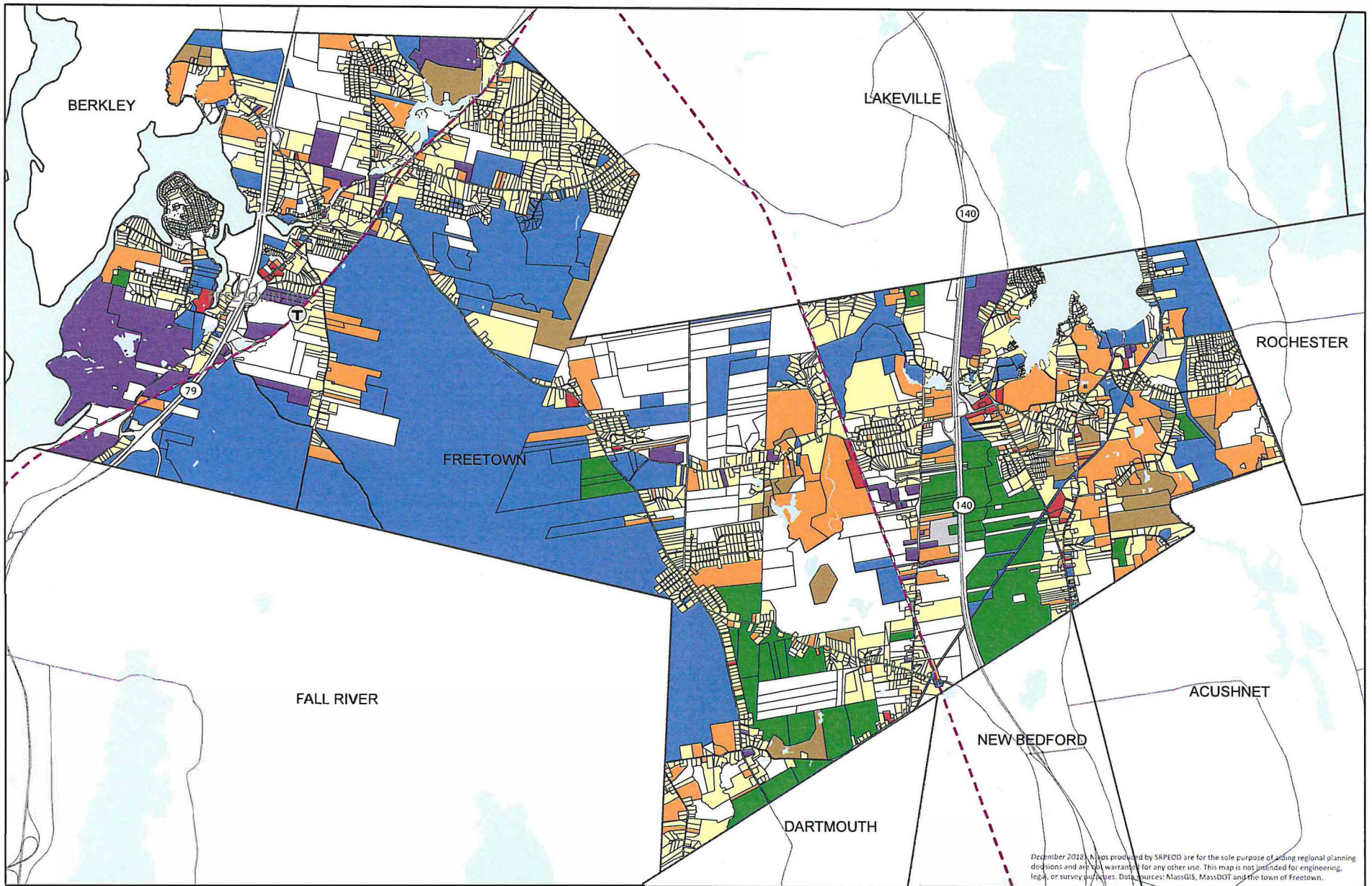


December 2018: Maps produced by SRPEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT and the town of Freetown.

# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Zoning Map

- |                     |              |                           |   |                          |                                   |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Residential         | Business     | General Use               | Planned Mixed Use District (PMUD)         | Municipal Boundaries     | MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations   |
| Village Residential | Industrial   | Open Space and Recreation | South Main Street Corridor Overlay (SMSC) | Interstates              | MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines |
| Village Business    | Industrial 2 |                           |   | Arterials and Collectors |                                   |
|                     |              |                           |   | Local Roads              |                                   |

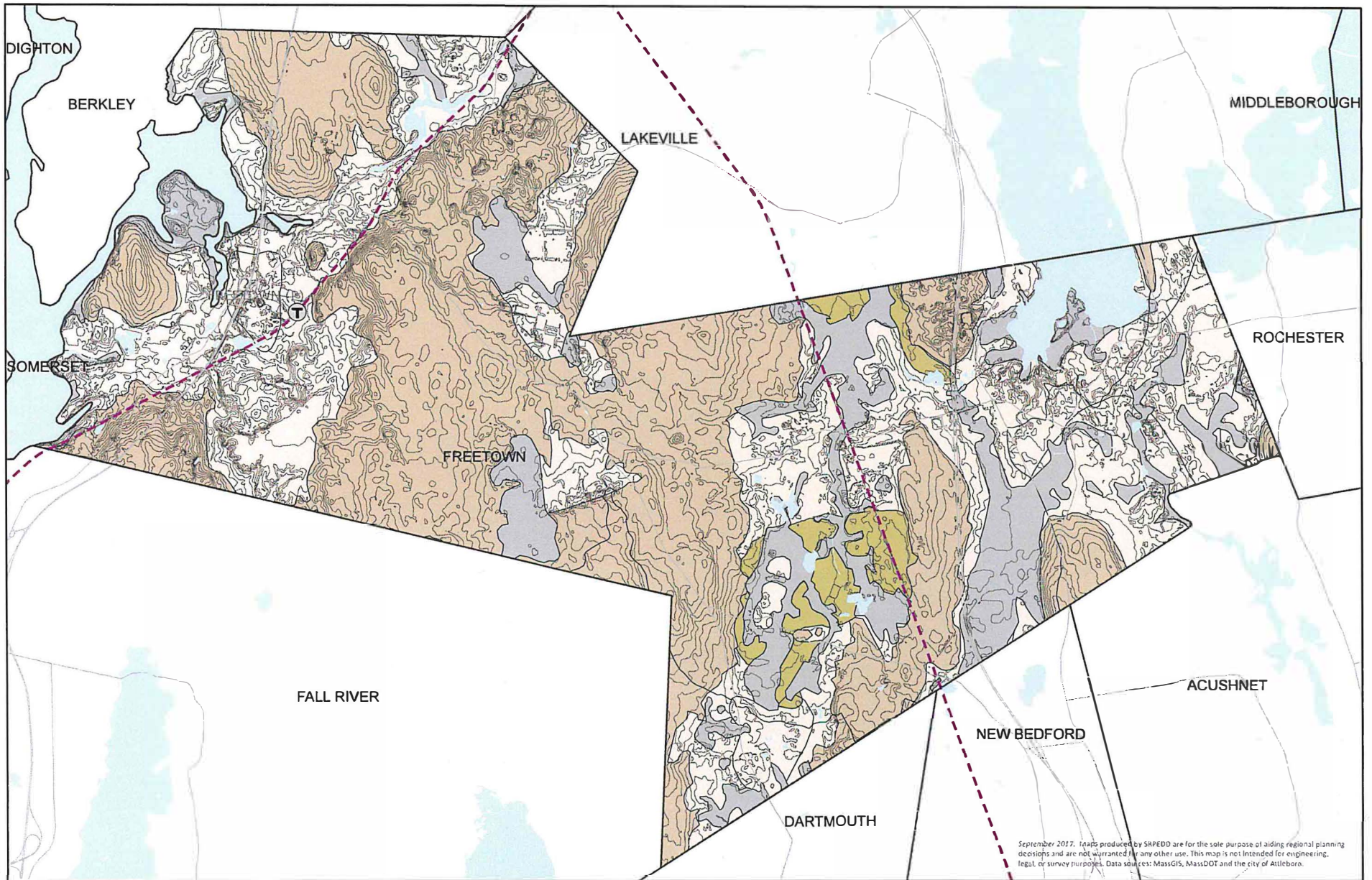


December 2023. Maps produced by SRPEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT and the town of Freetown.

# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Land Use Map

- Legend**
- Vacant or No Data
  - Mixed - Use
  - Residential
  - Open Space and Recreational
  - Agricultural
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Institutional
  - Water
  - Utility and Transportation
  - Municipal Boundaries
  - Interstates
  - Arterials and Collectors
  - Local Roads
  - T MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines



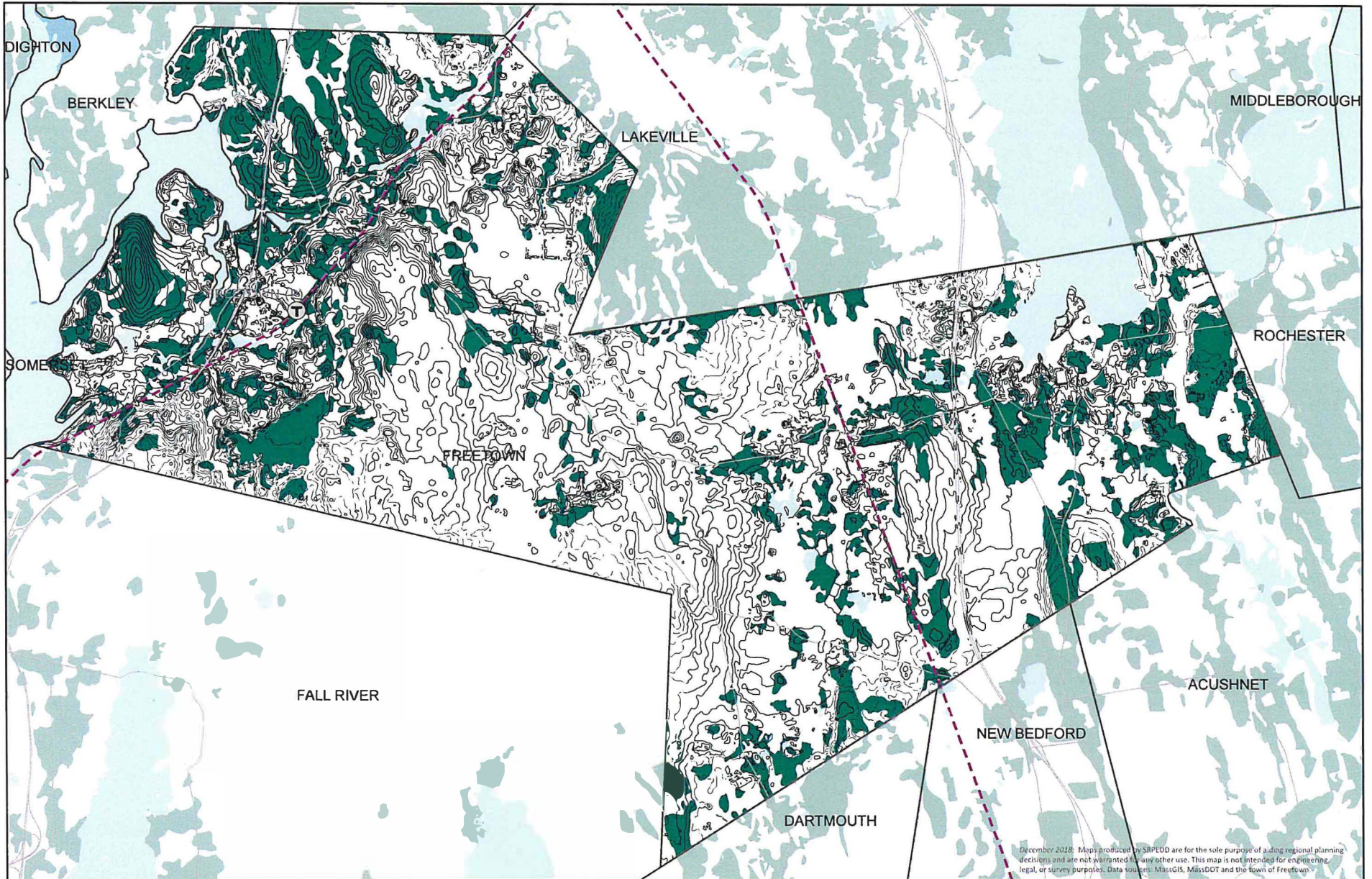
September 2017. Maps produced by SRPEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT and the city of Attleboro.

# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Surficial Geology Map

### Legend

- Sand and Gravel Deposits
- Till or Bedrock
- Floodplain Alluvium
- Large sand deposits where distinguished from sand and gravel deposits
- 3 Meter Contours
- Municipal Boundaries
- Interstates
- Arterials and Collectors
- Local Roads
- T MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
- MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines

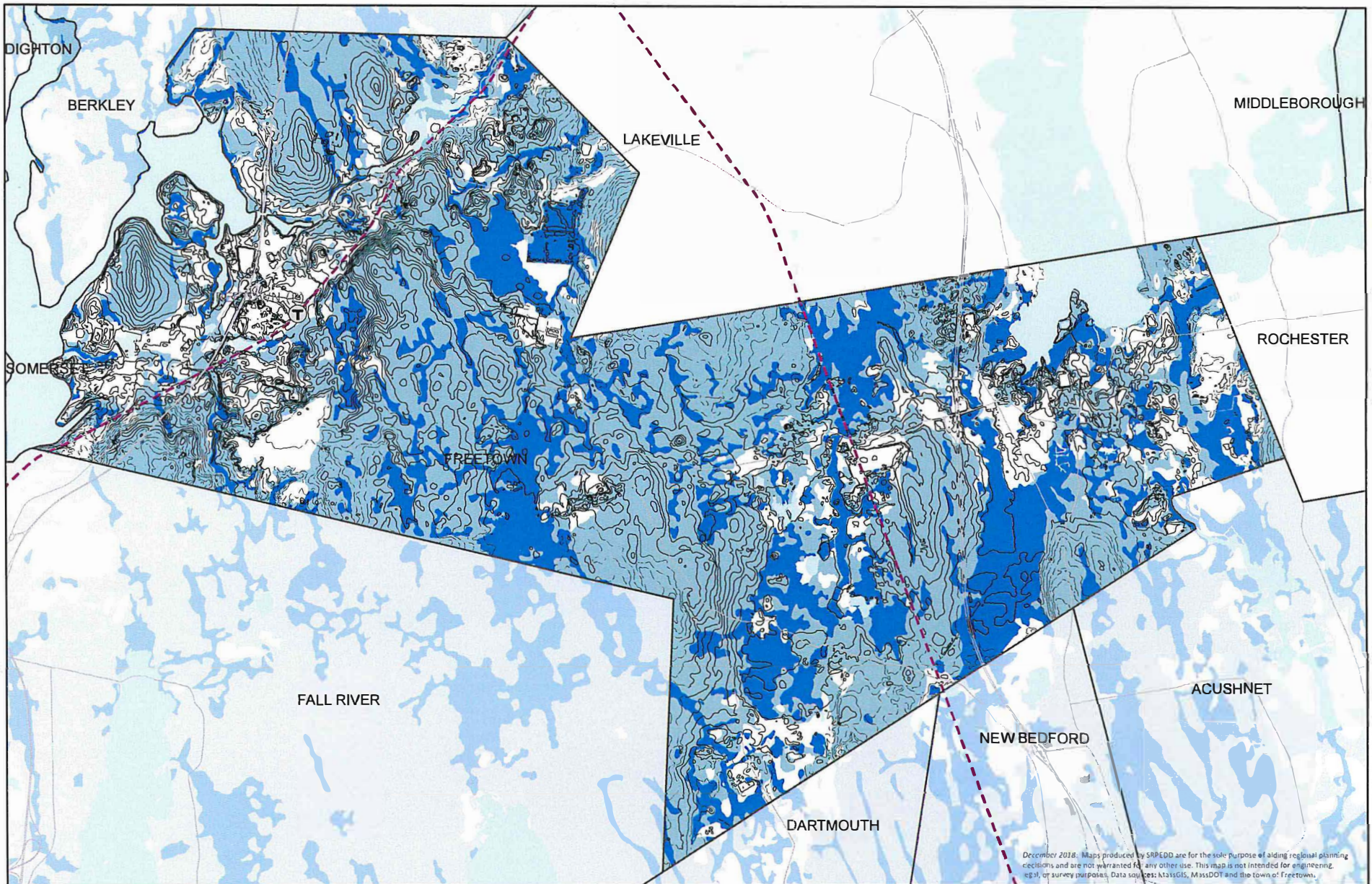


December 2018: Maps produced by SRP/ODD are for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT and the town of Freetown.

# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Prime Soils Map

- Legend**
- All prime and Statewide Significance
  - Interstates
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
  - 3 Meter Contours
  - Arterials and Collectors
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines
  - Municipal Boundaries
  - Local Roads

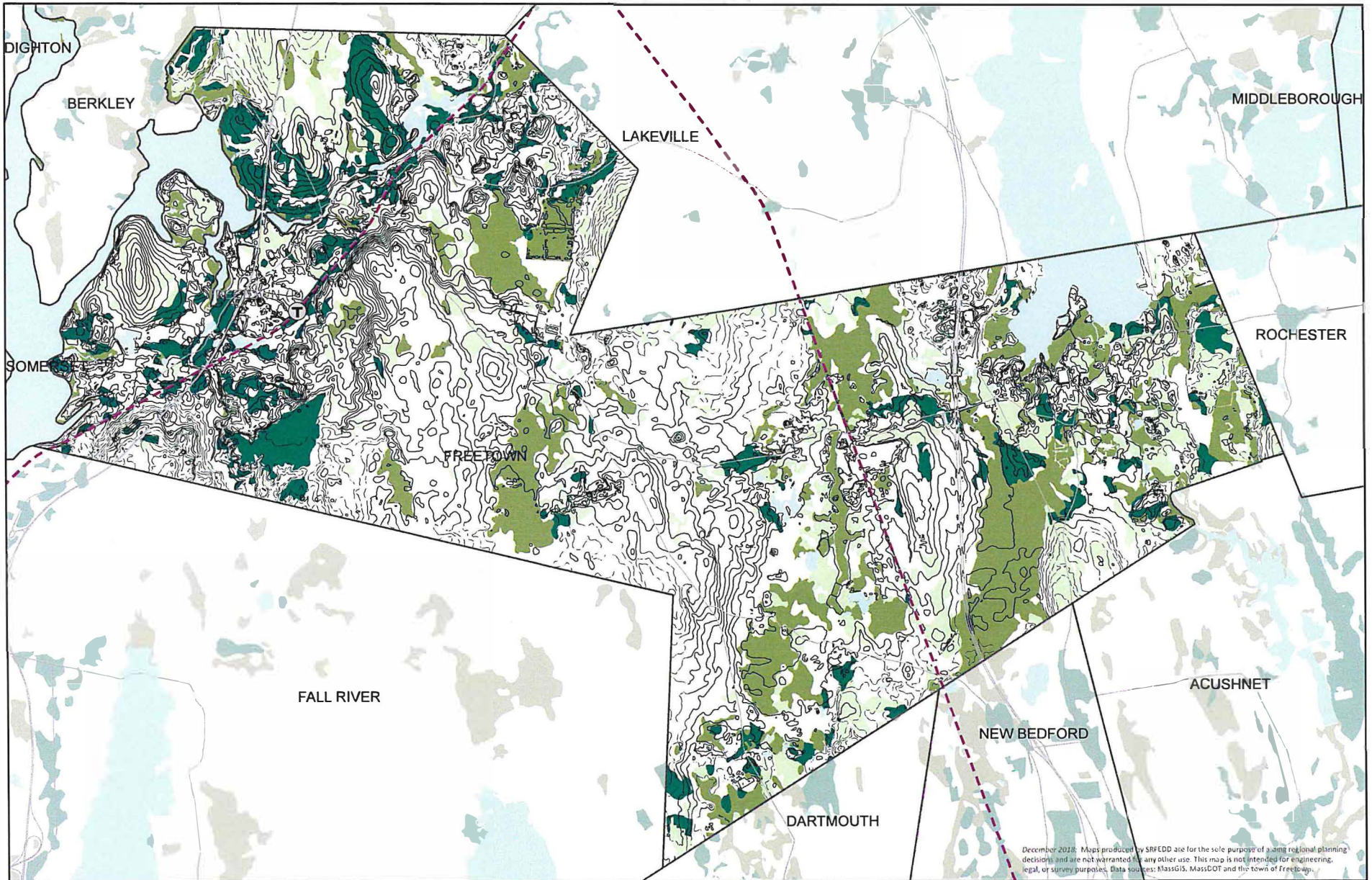


December 2018. Maps produced by SRPEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions, and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MASSGIS, MassDOT and the town of Freetown.

# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Hydic Soils Map

- Legend**
- All Hydic
  - Partially Hydic
  - 3 Meter Contours
  - Municipal Boundaries
  - Interstates
  - Arterials and Collectors
  - Local Roads
  - T MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines

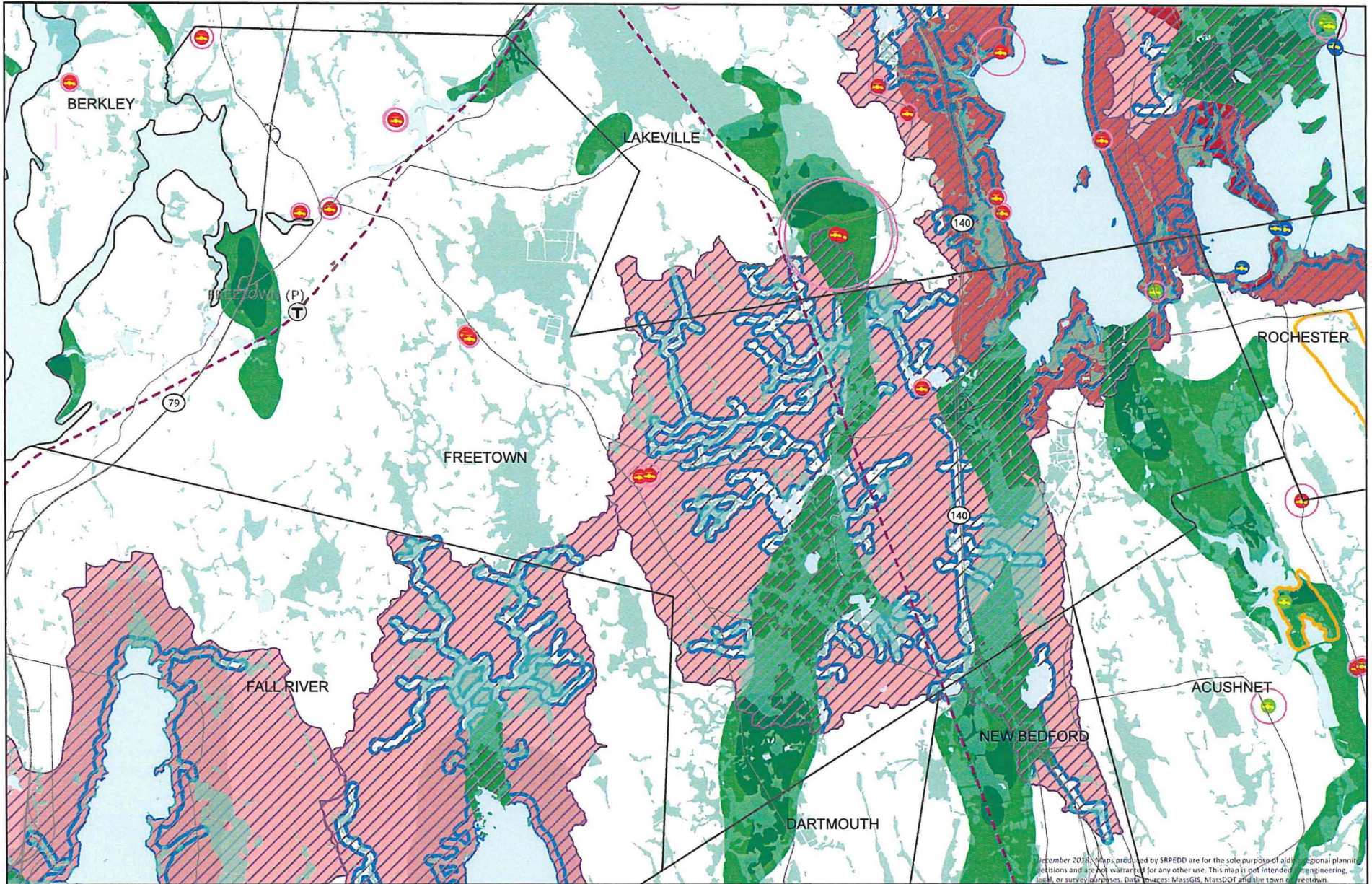


December 2018. Maps produced by SRFEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT and the town of Freetown.

# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Farmland Soils Map

- Legend**
- All areas of prime farmland
  - Farmland of unique importance
  - Farmland of statewide importance
  - 3 Meter Contours
  - Municipal Boundaries
  - Interstates
  - Arterials and Collectors
  - Local Roads
  - T MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines

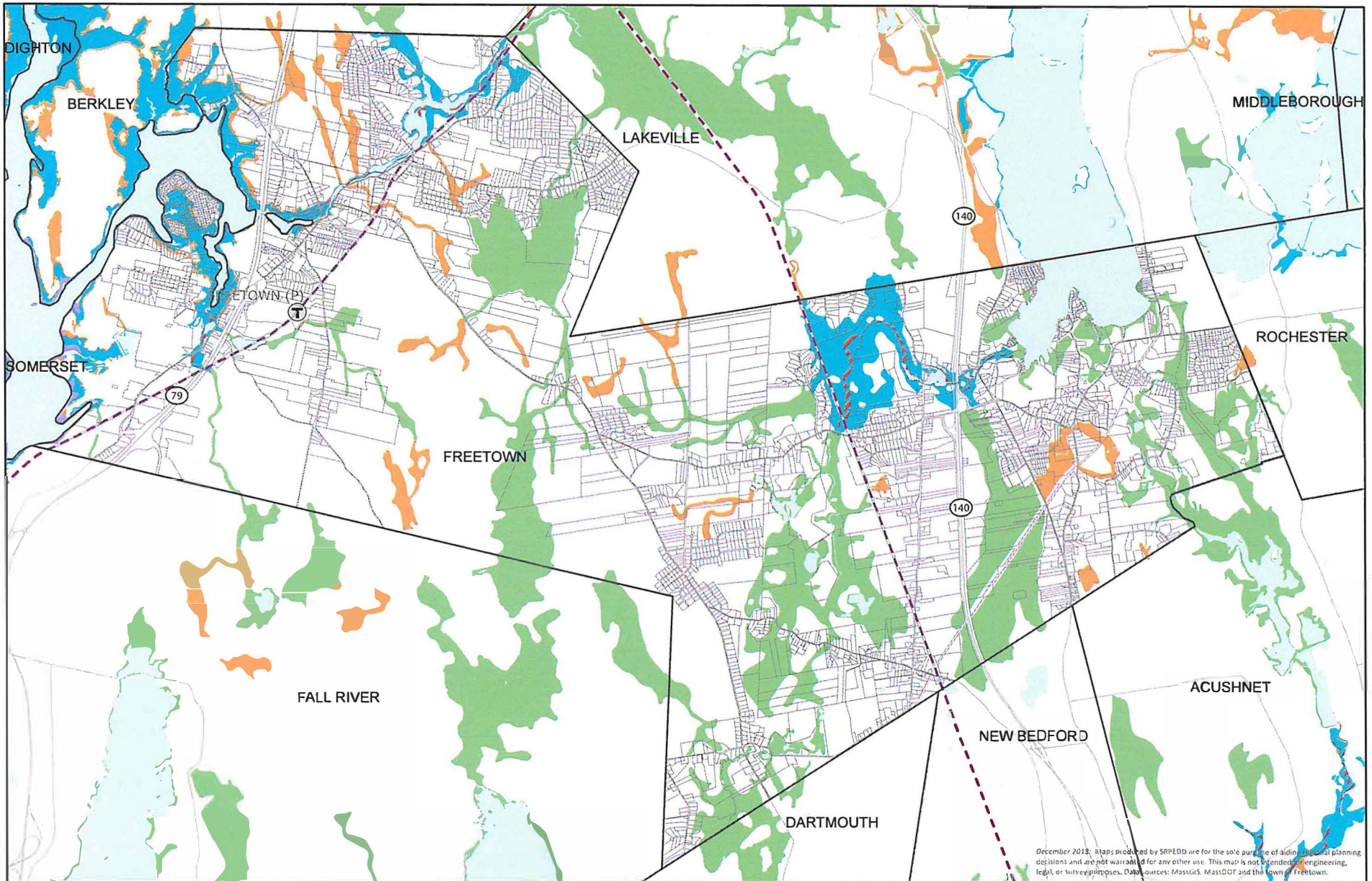


December 2018. Maps produced by SRPEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT and the town of Freetown.

# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Water Resources Map

- |                      |                                      |                                  |                          |                                   |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Aquifers</b>      | <b>Public Water Supply Watershed</b> | <b>Public Water Supplies</b>     | <b>Interstates</b>       | <b>Municipal Boundaries</b>       |
| High Yield           | Public Water Supply Watershed        | Community Groundwater Source     | Interstates              | Municipal Boundaries              |
| Medium Yield         | Public Water Supply Watershed        | Surface Water Intake             | Arterials and Collectors | MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations   |
| DEP Approved Zone II | Public Water Supply Watershed        | Non-Community Groundwater Source | Local Roads              | MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines |
| ZONE A               | IWPA's                               |                                  |                          |                                   |
| ZONE B               | Wetlands                             |                                  |                          |                                   |
| ZONE C               | Waterbodies                          |                                  |                          |                                   |



December 2018. Maps produced by SRPEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding municipal planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT and the town of Freetown.

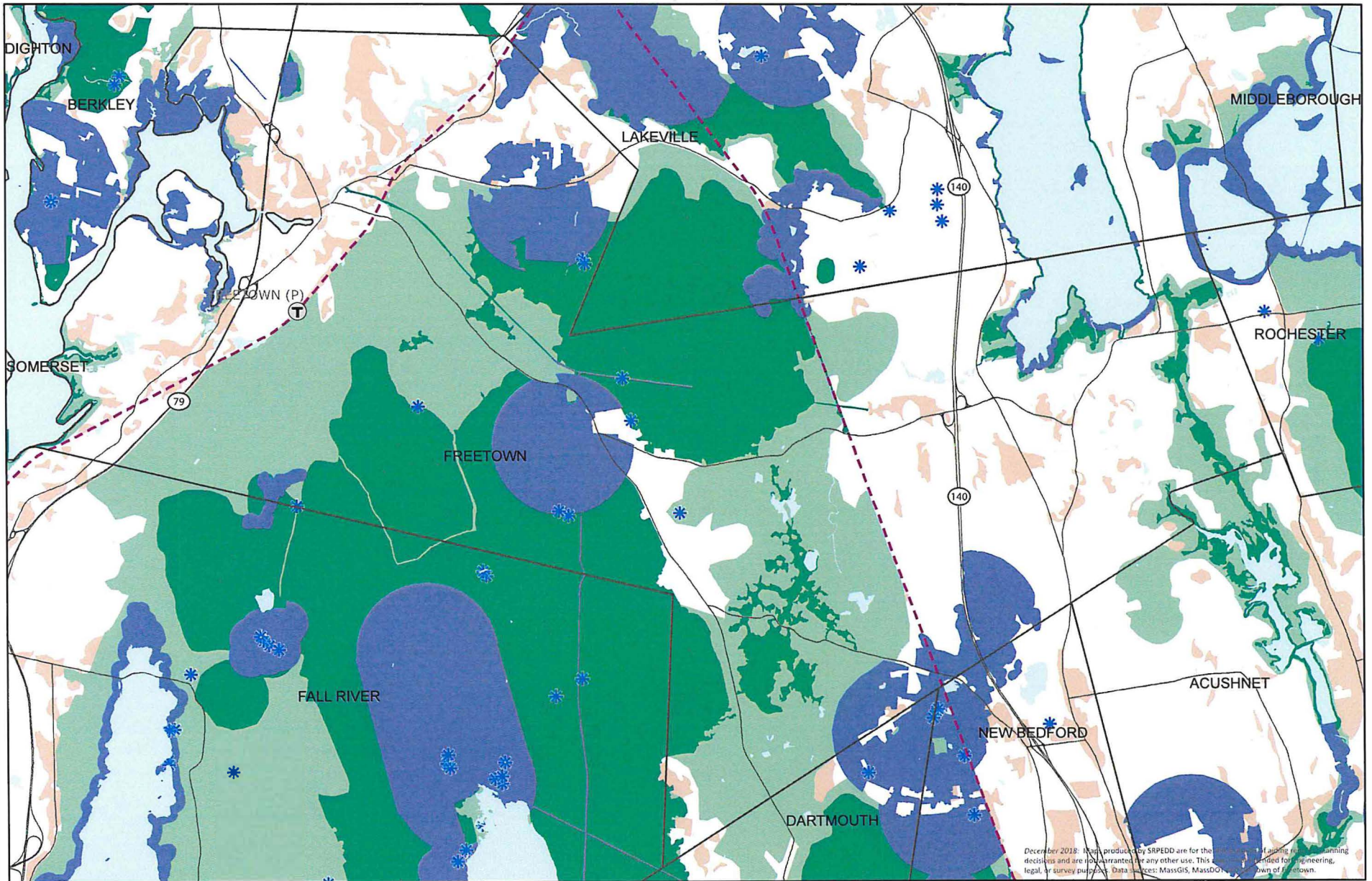
# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer Map

**Legend**

<b>Flood Zone Designations</b>	A: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, no BFE	AO: 1% Annual Chance of 1-3ft Sheet Flow Flooding, with Depth	Area Not Included	Interstates	MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
AE: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, with BFE	VE: High Risk Coastal Area	Area with no DFIRM - Paper FIRMs in Effect	Arterials and Collectors	MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines	
AE: Regulatory Floodway	D: Possible But Undetermined Hazard	Municipal Boundaries	Local Roads		
AH: 1% Annual Chance of 1-3ft Ponding, with BFE	X: 0.2% Annual Chance of Flooding				
	X: Reduced Flood Risk due to Levee				

1 mile 1

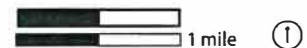


December 2018. Work produced by SRPEDD are for the purposes of mapping for planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This work is provided for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MassGIS, MassDOT, and Town of Freetown.

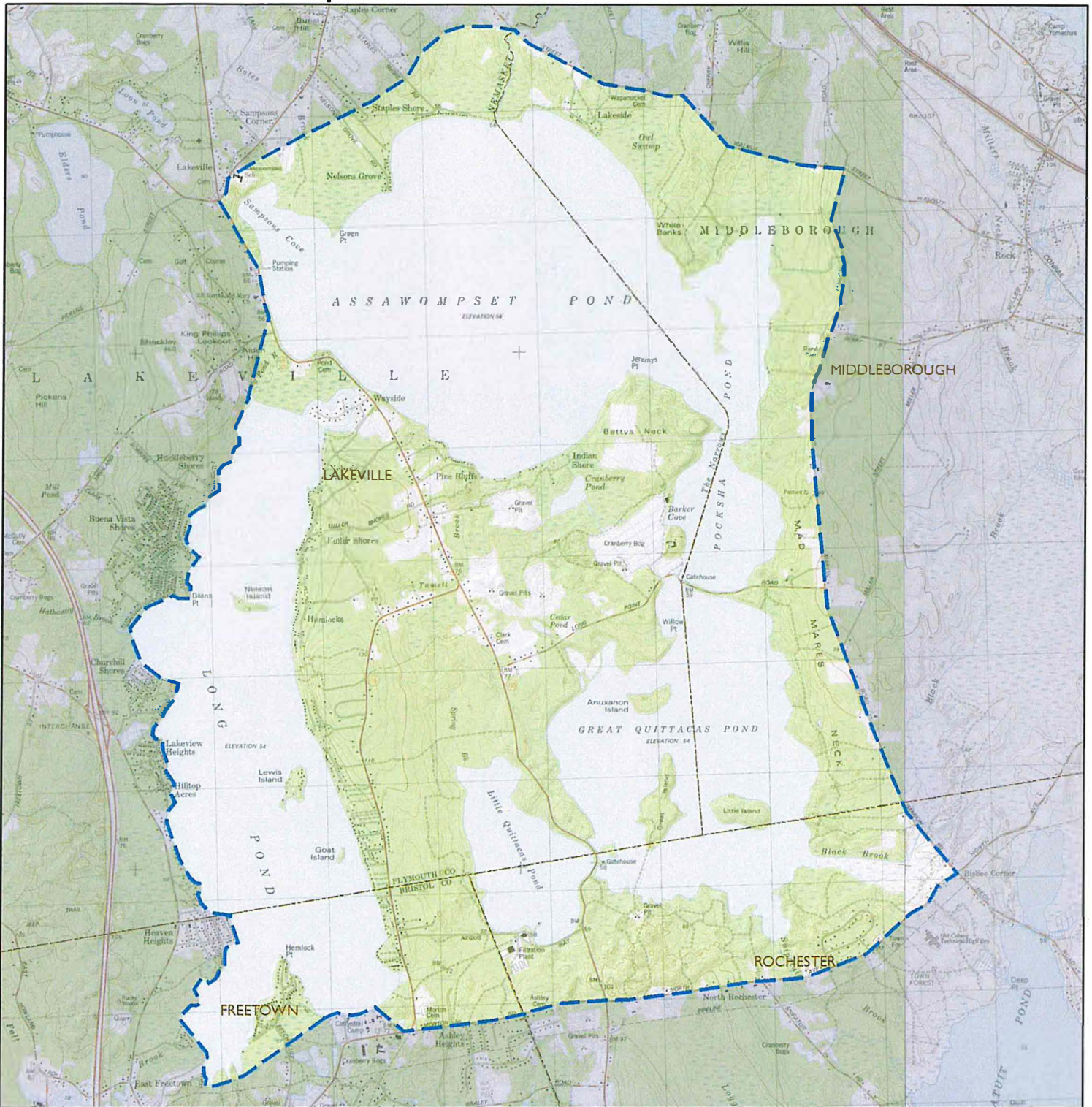
# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Habitat Map

- Legend**
- BioMap2 Core Habitat
  - NHESP Certified Vernal Pools
  - Interstates
  - Municipal Boundaries
  - BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape
  - Prime Farmland
  - Arterials and Collectors
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
  - Local Roads
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines



# Massachusetts Important Bird Areas



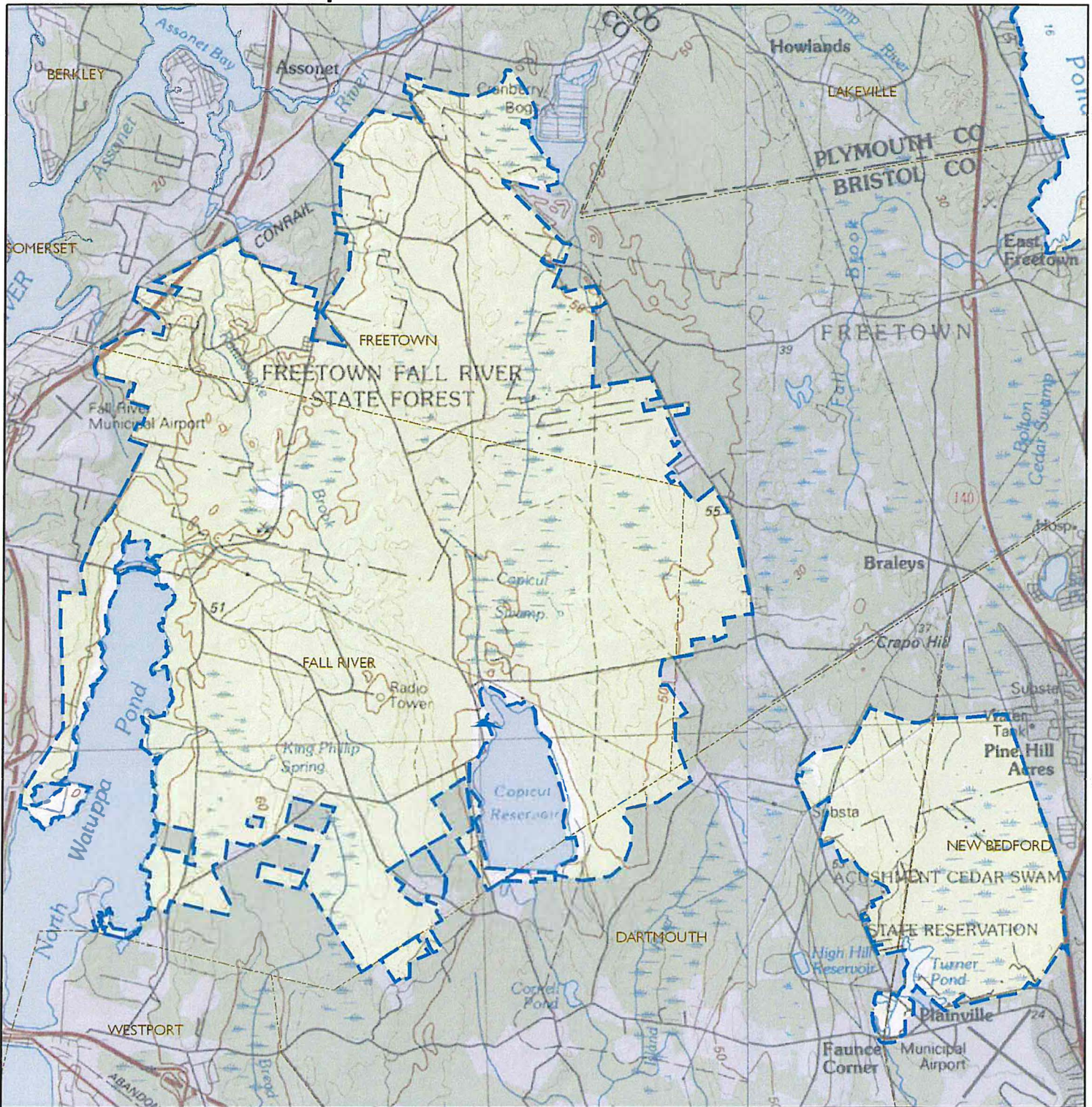
Assawompsett Ponds complex



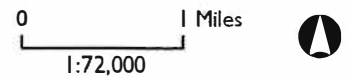
 IBA Boundaries


Notes: IBA boundaries from Mass Audubon's IBA Program.  
Base map (USGS quads and shaded relief, or 2001 color orthophotos)  
from MassGIS. Massachusetts State Plane, NAD83.  
Map produced by Mass Audubon GIS Services, February 2007.

# Massachusetts Important Bird Areas



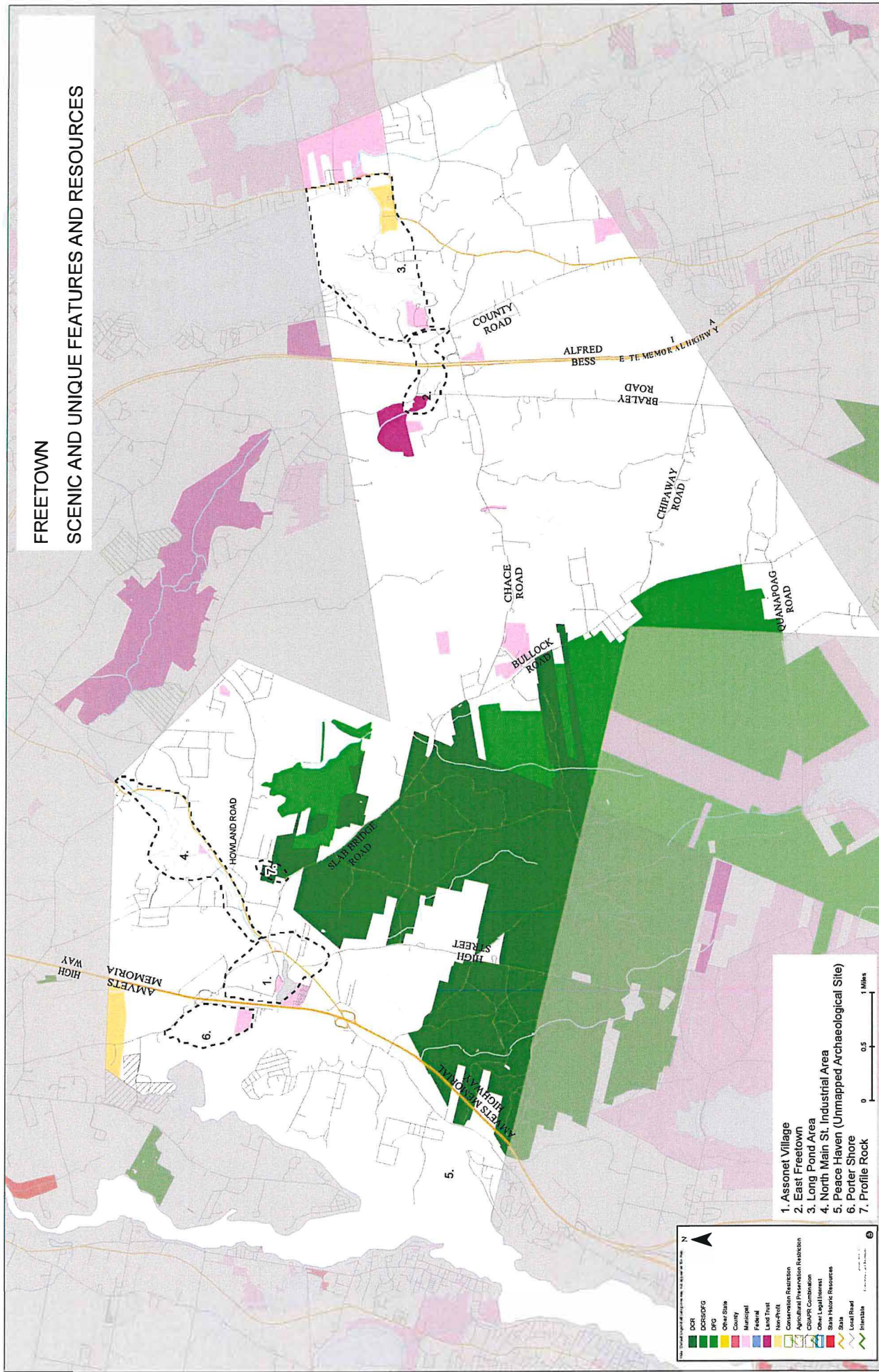
## Freetown - Fall River State Forest and Southeastern MA Bioreserve



 IBA Boundaries

Notes: IBA boundaries from Mass Audubon's IBA Program.  
Base map (USGS quads and shaded relief, or 2001 color orthophotos)  
from MassGIS or USGS. Massachusetts State Plane, NAD83.  
Map produced by Mass Audubon GIS Services, April 2007.

# FREETOWN SCENIC AND UNIQUE FEATURES AND RESOURCES



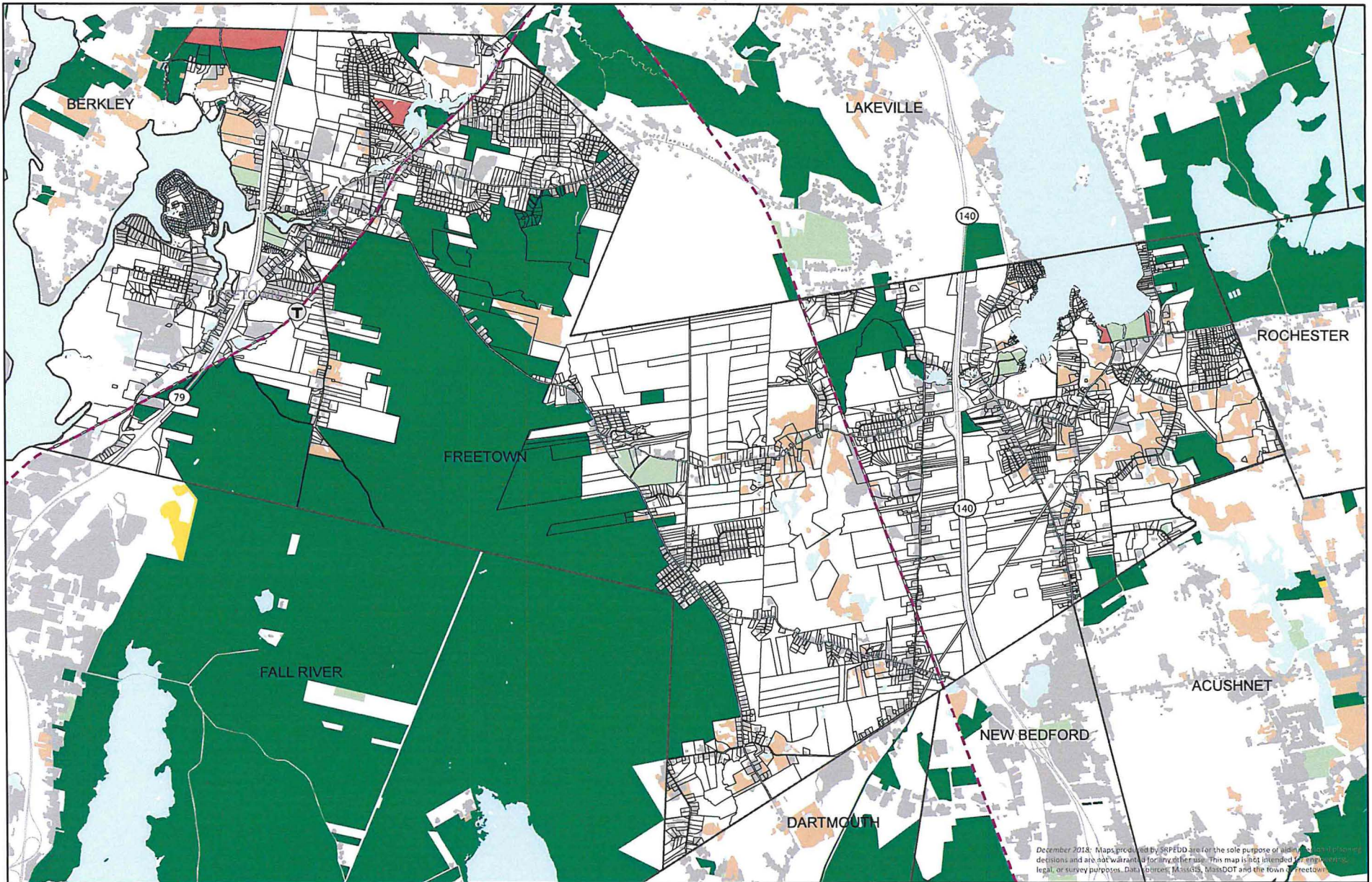
1. Assonet Village
2. East Freetown
3. Long Pond Area
4. North Main St. Industrial Area
5. Peace Haven (Unmapped Archaeological Site)
6. Porter Shore
7. Profile Rock

**Legend**

- DCR
- DCR/DFG
- DFG
- Other State
- County
- Municipal
- Federal
- Land Trust
- Non-Profit
- Conservation Restriction
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction
- DCR's Conservation
- DCR's Recreation
- State Historic Resources
- State
- Local Road
- Interstate

Scale: 0, 0.5, 1 Miles

North Arrow

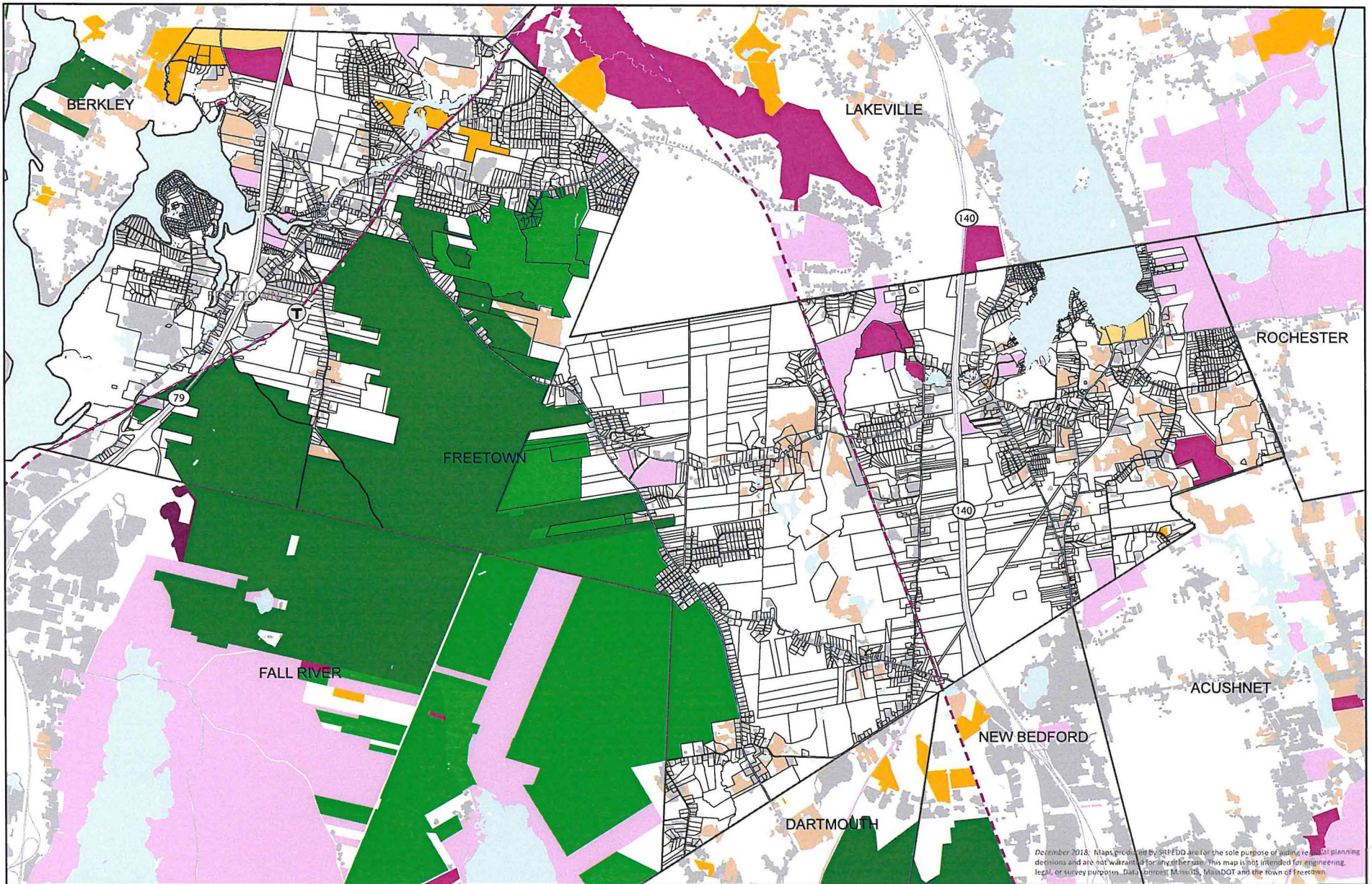


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# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Open Space Map

- Legend**
- In Perpetuity
  - Limited
  - Active Agriculture (Land Use 2005)  
Cropland, Hay, Pasture, Orchard, Pasture
  - Municipal Boundaries
  - Water
  - Developed (Land Use 2005)  
Commercial, High Density Residential, Industrial, Junkyard, Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Mixed-Use, Multi-Family Residential, Urban Public/Institutional, Very Low Density Residential, Waste Disposal
  - None
  - Interstates
  - Arterials and Collectors
  - Local Roads
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations
  - MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines
  - Unknown



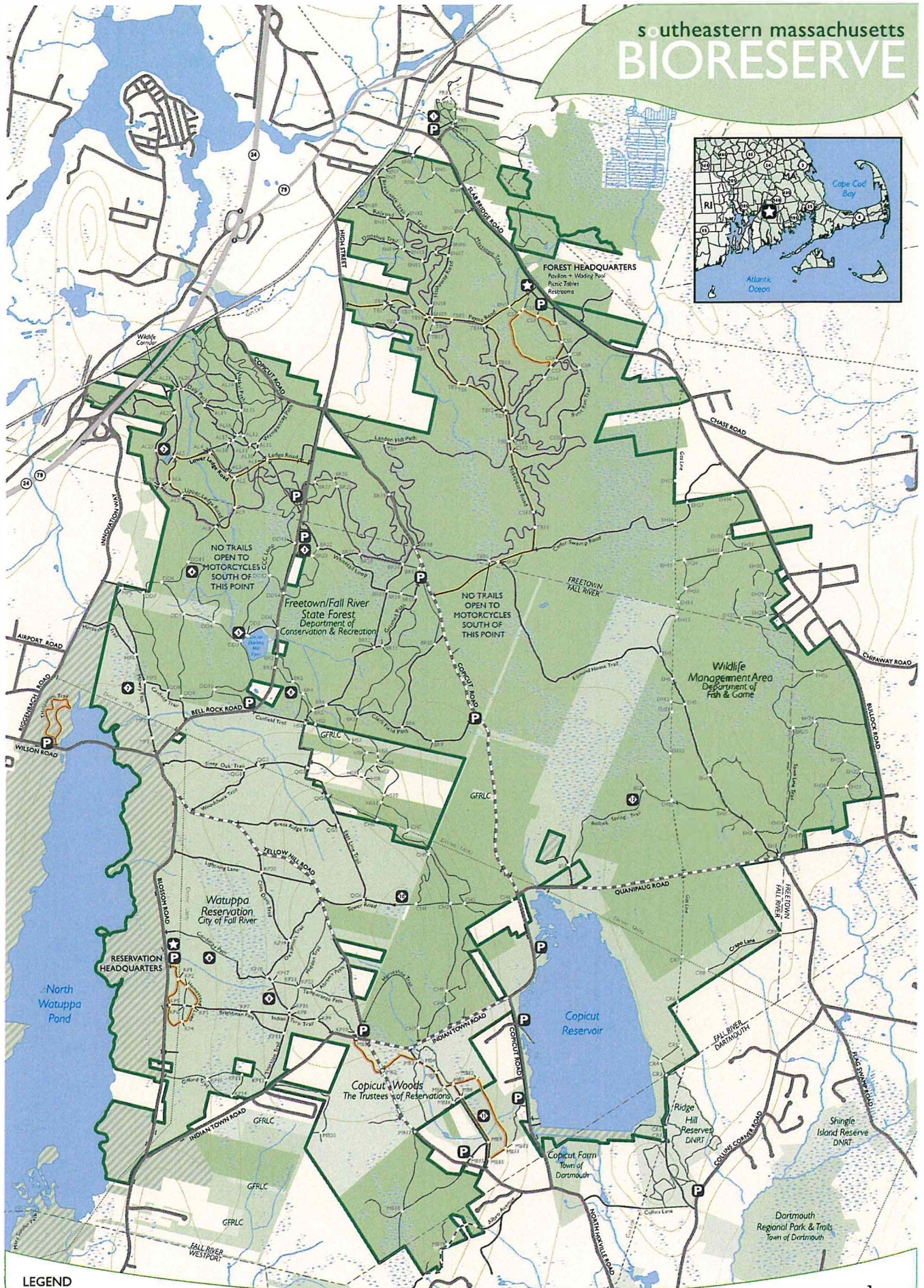
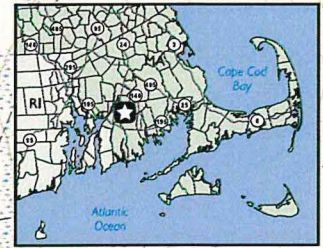
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# Town of Freetown

## Open Space and Recreation Plan - Open Space Map

- |                              |                                      |                           |  |                          |                                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Federal                      | Department of Agricultural Resources | Conservation Organization | Active Agriculture (Land Use 2005)<br><small>Cranberry Bog, Cropland, Nursery, Orchard, Pasture</small>  | Municipal Boundaries     | MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations   |
| DCR-State Parks & Recreation | Commonwealth of Massachusetts        | Non-Profit                | Developed (Land Use 2005)<br><small>Commercial, High Density Residential, Industrial, Single-Family, Low Density Residential, Marina, Medium Density Residential, Mining, Multi-Family Residential, Urban Public/Institutional, Very Low Density Residential, Waste Disposal</small> | Water                    | MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines |
| DCRS/DFG                     | County                               | Private                   | Interstates  | Arterials and Collectors |                                   |
| Department of Fish & Game    | Municipal                            | Other                     | Local Roads  |                          |                                   |
| DCR-Urban Parks & Recreation | Public Non-Profit                    | Unknown                   |  |                          |                                   |
| DCR-Water Supply Protection  | Land Trust                           |                           |  |                          |                                   |

# southeastern massachusetts BIORESERVE

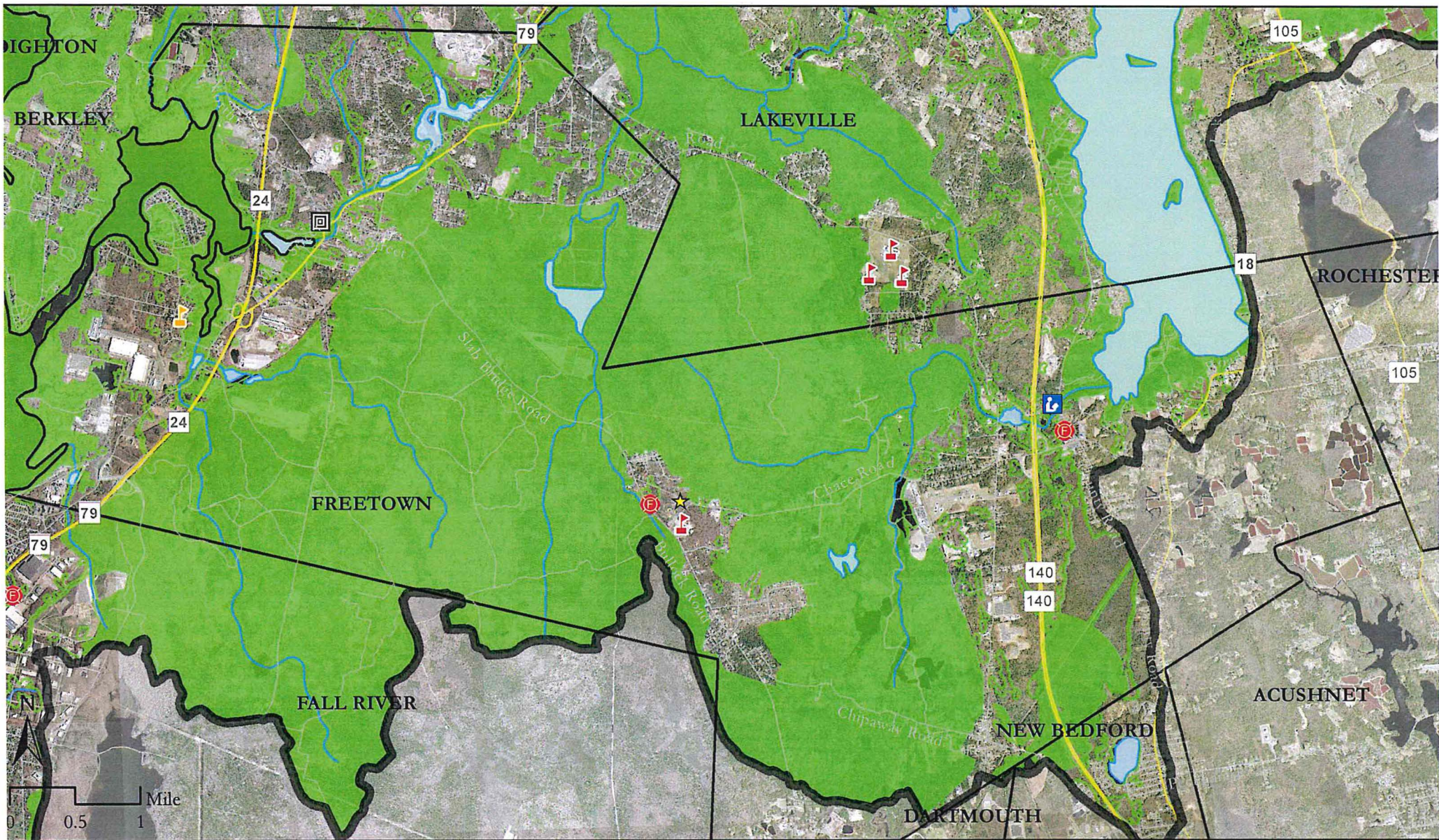


## LEGEND



























- |                            |              |                            |              |                              |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Southeastern MA Bioreserve | Wetlands     | Self-guided Trails         | Headquarters | Feature                      |
| State Land                 | Public Roads | Trails Open to Automobiles | Parking      | 1. Profile Rock              |
| Municipal Land             | Rough Roads  | Trails Open to Motorcycles | Gate         | 2. Assonet Ledge             |
| Nonprofit Land             | Woods Roads  | Streams                    | Intersection | 3. Bell Rock                 |
| Restricted Access          | Foot Trails  | Elevation Contour (10ft)   |              | 4. Hog's Rock                |
|                            |              |                            |              | 5. Doctor Durfee's Mill Pond |
|                            |              |                            |              | 6. Esker Trail               |
|                            |              |                            |              | 7. Mowry Path                |
|                            |              |                            |              | 8. Corduroy Path             |
|                            |              |                            |              | 9. King Philip's Spring      |
|                            |              |                            |              | 10. Copicut Hill Fire Tower  |
|                            |              |                            |              | 11. Miller Lane              |
|                            |              |                            |              | 12. Rolling Spring           |

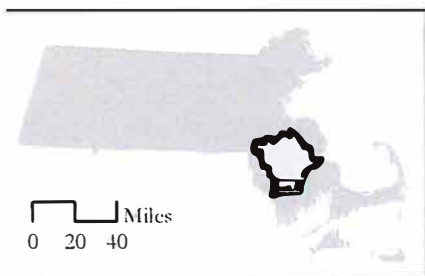
dc  
Massachusetts

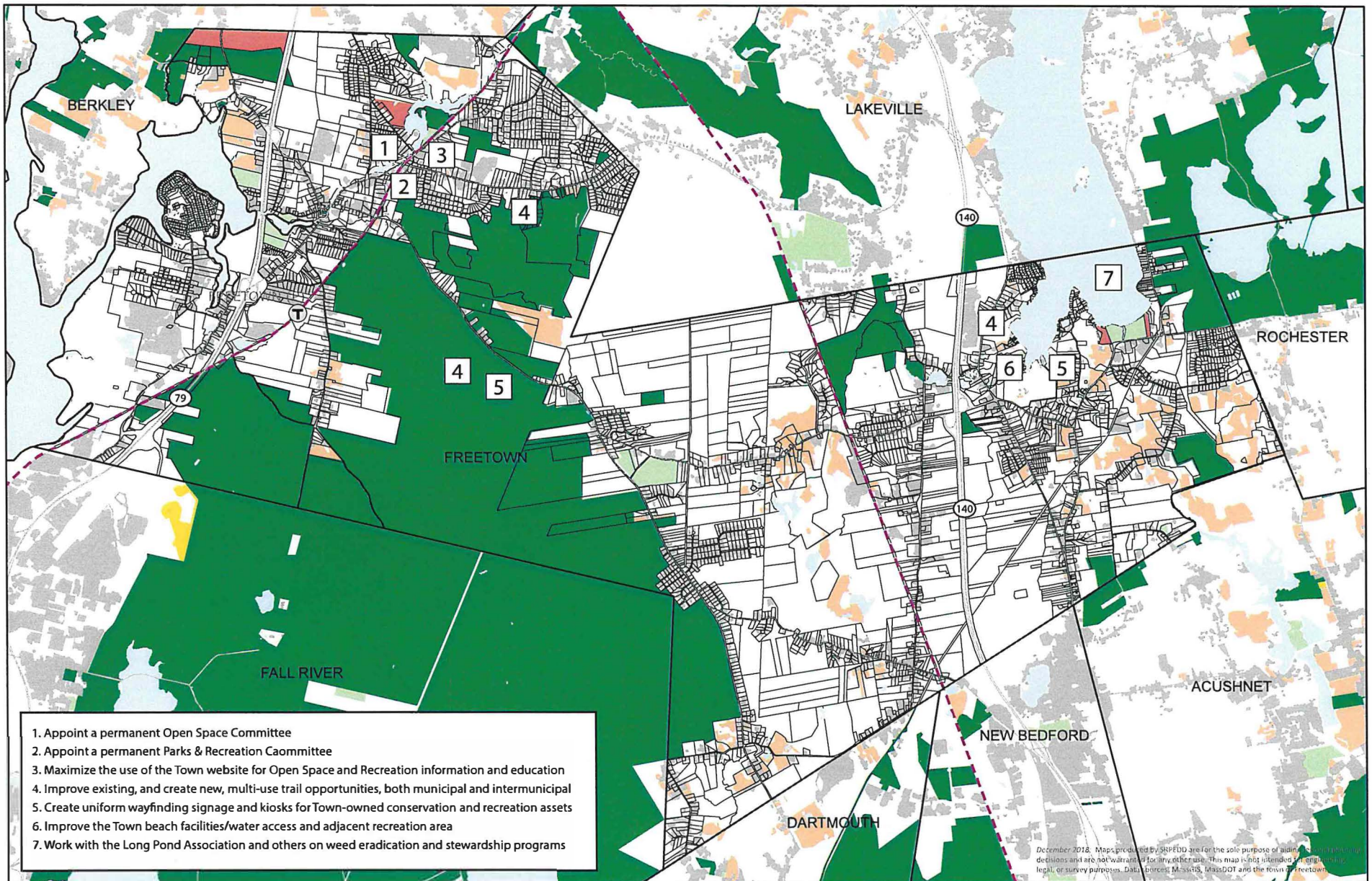
# Freetown Green Infrastructure Network



## Legend

- |  |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|---|--|
|  Green Infrastructure Network | <b>Roads</b>  |  Airports                   | <b>Schools (PK - High School)</b>   |  Local Police Station   |
|  Taunton Watershed            |  Interstate        |  Farmers Market             |  Public                |  State Police Station   |
|  Town Boundaries              |  U.S. Highway      |  Town Hall                  |  Private               |  County Sheriff Station |
|  Streams                      |  State Route       |  Public Library             |  Charter               |  Prison                 |
|  Lakes                        |  Non-numbered Road |  Private College/University |  Collaborative Program |  Hospital with ER       |
|  |   |  Public College/University  |  Special Education     |  Hospital without ER    |





1. Appoint a permanent Open Space Committee
2. Appoint a permanent Parks & Recreation Caommittee
3. Maximize the use of the Town website for Open Space and Recreation information and education
4. Improve existing, and create new, multi-use trail opportunities, both municipal and intermunicipal
5. Create uniform wayfinding signage and kiosks for Town-owned conservation and recreation assets
6. Improve the Town beach facilities/water access and adjacent recreation area
7. Work with the Long Pond Association and others on weed eradication and stewardship programs

December 2018. Maps produced by SHPEDD are for the sole purpose of aiding in planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. This map is not intended for engineering, legal, or survey purposes. Data sources: MASSGIS, MASSDOT and the town of Freetown.

## Town of Freetown

### Open Space and Recreation Plan - Open Space Map

#### Legend

- |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #008000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> In Perpetuity</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Limited</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Term Limited</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FF0000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> None</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #CCCCCC; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Unknown</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Active Agriculture (Land Use 2005)<br/>Cranberry Bog, Cropland, Nursery, Orchard, Pasture</li> <li><b>Developed (Land Use 2005)</b><br/>Commercial, High Density Residential, Industrial, Institutional, Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Mixed-Use, Multi-Family Residential, Urban Public/Institutional, Very Low Density Residential, Waste Disposal</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Municipal Boundaries</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Water</li> <li><span style="border-bottom: 2px solid black; width: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Interstates</li> <li><span style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Arterials and Collectors</li> <li><span style="border-bottom: 1px dashed black; width: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Local Roads</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 10px; height: 10px; display: inline-block; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle; margin-right: 5px;">T</span> MBTA Proposed Commuter Stations</li> <li><span style="border-bottom: 2px dashed red; width: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> MBTA Proposed Commuter Rail Lines</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|--|

## SECTION 11: REFERENCES

### Print, Personal Meetings, and Correspondence

1. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Conservation Services, The Open Space Planner's Workbook, March, 2008.
2. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2017, December, 2017.
3. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife and Certified Vernal Pools, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, June 1, 2003; 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, October 1, 2006; 13<sup>th</sup> Edition October 1, 2008.
4. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Species of Special Concern, 2010.
5. Mass Audubon Society, Losing Ground, 2020.
6. Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historic and Archaeological Resources of Southeastern Massachusetts, 1985.
7. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, BioMap2, Freetown, MA, 2012.
8. Town of Freetown, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan, 2019.
9. Mass GIS, Land Use data.
10. Assessor's data, Town of Freetown.
11. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resource Conservation Service, West Wareham Field Office, agricultural data and personal communication.
12. Payne, Maggie, Soil Scientist, USDA, NRCS, personal communication.
13. Gabriel, Marea, Landscape Conservation Program, The Nature Conservancy, MA, personal communication.
14. Chase, Brad, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, personal communication.
15. Hackman, Alex Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, personal communication.
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17. SRPEDD, South Coast Rail Corridor Plan, Five Year Update of Community Priority Areas: Rehoboth, 2013.
18. SRPEDD, Assawompset Ponds Complex and Nemasket River Watershed Management and Climate Action Plan, 2022.
19. U.S. Census Data 2010, 2020, Town of Freetown, SRPEDD Data Center.
20. American Community Survey Data 2013-2017, SRPEDD Data Center.
21. Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) Data, SRPEDD Data Center.
22. City of Fall River, Open Space Plan, 2019.
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25. Warns, Danica, Shaping the Future of Your Community Program, Massachusetts Audubon Society, personal communication.
26. Ferguson, Wenley, Save the Bay, personal communication.
27. Labossiere, Michael, Reservation Superintendent, City of Fall River Water Dept., personal communication.
28. D'Antoni, Victoria Town of Freetown Planning Technician, personal communication.
29. Fox, Jean, Project Manager, South Coast Rail Project, personal communication.
30. Yeatts, Nancy, Assawompset Ponds Complex, personal communication.
31. Jackie Jones, Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Coordinator, SRPEDD, personal communication.
32. Galotti, Ymane, New Bedford Department of Public Infrastructure, personal communication.
33. McPherson, Kate, River Keeper, Save the Bay, personal communication.
34. MacFaden, Scott, Land Protection Director, Wildlands Trust, personal communication.
35. Worley, John and Martha, Long Pond Association, personal communication

## Web-Based Sources of Material and Data

MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs [www.mass.gov/envir](http://www.mass.gov/envir)  
MA Department of Environmental Protection [www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep)  
Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program [www.nhesp.org](http://www.nhesp.org)  
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program [www.nbep.org](http://www.nbep.org)  
MA Division of Ecological Restoration [www.mass.gov/der](http://www.mass.gov/der)  
MA Department of Conservation and Recreation [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)  
MA Department of Fish and Game [www.mass.gov/dfg](http://www.mass.gov/dfg)  
MA Coastal Zone Management [www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/czm](http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/czm)  
Southeastern Regional Planning [www.srpedd.org](http://www.srpedd.org)  
Massachusetts Audubon Society [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org)  
The Nature Conservancy [www.tnc.org](http://www.tnc.org)  
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov)  
MA Department of Agricultural Resources [www.mass.gov/agr](http://www.mass.gov/agr)  
US EPA [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences [www.manomet.org](http://www.manomet.org)  
MA Division of Marine Fisheries [www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries)  
Town of Freetown [www.freetownma.gov](http://www.freetownma.gov)  
Long Pond Association [www.longpondassociation.org](http://www.longpondassociation.org)  
Wildlands Trust [www.wildlandstrust.org](http://www.wildlandstrust.org)  
Save the Bay [www.savebay.org](http://www.savebay.org)

**APPENDIX A**  
**ADA TRANSITION PLAN**

## **I. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

On July 26, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA provides comprehensive civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, public accommodations, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Freetown has a regulatory obligation to ensure that it does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities in the provision of municipal programs and services. The ADA defines individuals with disabilities as those who fall into one of the following three categories:

1. Individuals who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,
2. Individuals with a record of such an impairment; or
3. Individuals regarded as having such an impairment

The ADA does not necessitate that all the Town's facilities are fully accessible. The ADA does, however, require that all the Town's programs and services, "when viewed in their entirety," are accessible. The law provides public entities with some flexibility in how this standard can be met. Both structural and nonstructural methods of providing "program access" can be used.

In order to meet these goals, the ADA requires a public entity take the five (5) steps listed below:

1. Designate an employee responsible for carrying out compliance activities.
2. Provide notice to the public of its rights and protections under the ADA and how the entity complies with those obligations.
3. Establish a grievance procedure.
4. Conduct a Self-Evaluation, a comprehensive review of policies and procedures.
5. Develop an ADA Transition Plan.

TOWN OF FREETOWN  
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT NOTICE

The Town of Freetown does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities. The Town of Freetown does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its hiring or employment practices.

This notice is provided as required by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Questions, concerns, complaints, or requests for additional information regarding the ADA may be forwarded to the Town of Freetown's designated ADA Coordinator.

Jeffrey Chandler  
Building Commissioner  
Freetown Town Hall  
3 North Main Street  
Assonet, MA 02702  
508-644-2201

Individuals who need auxiliary aids for effective communication in programs and services of the Town of Freetown are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance Coordinator.

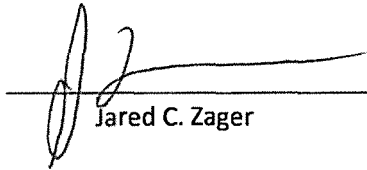
This notice is available in large print, on audio tape, and in Braille, from the ADA Compliance Coordinator.

Approved by the Freetown Board of Selectmen on July 25, 2022

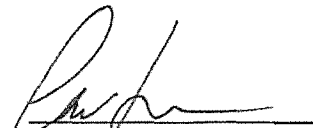
FREETOWN BOARD OF SELECTMEN



Trevor R. Matthews, Chairman



Jared C. Zager



Carlos A. Lopes

TOWN OF FREETOWN  
ADA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

- A. Persons shall be allowed to submit complaints regarding access or other alleged discrimination in writing by completing the ADA Complaint Form, which will be provided to you or to someone on your behalf by request. If the individual submitting the complaint is unable to do so in writing, the complaint may be submitted verbally to the ADA coordinator.
- B. The complaint should be submitted by the grievor and/or his/her designee, in writing as soon as possible, but no later than sixty (60) days after the alleged violation to the department head in authority, and to the ADA Coordinator stating where the violations are alleged to have occurred.
- C. Once completed, the ADA Complaint Form should be given to the ADA coordinator for resolution.

The ADA coordinator for the Town of Freetown is:

Jeffrey Chandler  
Building Commissioner  
3 North Main Street  
Assonet, MA 02702  
508-644-2201

- D. C. The ADA coordinator should meet with the complainant and try to provide a decision within fifteen (15) working days of the complaint being filed, not counting the date of the filing itself.
- E. Within 15 calendar days after the complainant meeting, the ADA Coordinator will respond in writing, and where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant. The response will explain the position of the Town of Freetown and offer options for substantive resolutions of the complaint.
- F. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant by the ADA coordinator, it will be forwarded to the Town Administrator. The Town Administrator will review the complaint, meet with the complainant, and try to provide a decision within fifteen (15) working days of the date of the ADA coordinator's decision, not counting the date of the decision. If the Town Administrator is the ADA coordinator, then the complaint should be forwarded directly to the Board of Selectmen.
- G. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant by the Town Administrator, it will be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen's decision is the final decision of the Town and it should be made within thirty (30) days of the Town Administrator's decision, not counting the day of the decision.

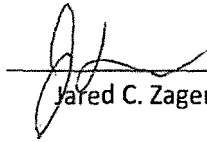
H. A record of the action taken on each request or complaint will be maintained as part of the records or minutes at each level of the grievance process.

Approved by the Freetown Board of Selectmen on 7/25/22.

FREETOWN BOARD OF SELECTMEN



Trevor R. Matthews, Chairman



Jared C. Zager



Carlos A. Lopes

## II. Section 504 ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

The ADA Assessment of Freetown's Parks was developed as part of a long-range Transition Plan for the Town's public conservation and recreation areas. The self-evaluation was conducted by the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC) and staff from Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) in 2021 and 2022, and changes are documented as they occurred (specific actions taken at each facility appear in **bold** print).

The Transition Plan was developed in accordance with the protocol presented in Appendix H of the state's Open Space and Recreation Planner's Handbook (Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services, rev. March 2008). Individual facility sheets (**samples following this section**) were developed for each of the eleven (11) properties discussed in the Transition Plan. Implementation of the individual facility transition plans that make-up the Transition Plan is the responsibility of the controlling department, board, or commission. In some instances, such as where the Town has Management Agreements in place with the state, the planning, scheduling, and implementation of these facility plans will be conducted on a partnership basis.

*(Note: as previously mentioned in Section 7 of this plan, in October of 2022, Freetown applied for a \$35,000 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability. If awarded, Freetown will use the money to conduct a self-evaluation of all town-owned properties and develop a Transition Plan for future improvements, at which time they will also revisit the properties included in this section.)*

ADA~ Type of Facility: \_\_\_ Recreation \_\_\_ Conservation

Acreage:  
 Location:  
 Ownership:

COPY

ADA Survey

**Name here:**

Compliance Guidelines for Section 504 Self-Evaluation

Category	Conforms			Comments/Notes
	Section	Yes	No N/A - None	
Ramps (boat ramp)				
Parking				
Surface				
Stairs				
Doors				
Restrooms				
Shower Rooms				
Drinking Fountain				
Telephones				
Signs				
Switches/Controls				
Ball Fields				
Seating				
Playground Equip.				
Basketball Court				
Picnic Tables				
Trash cans				
Trails				
Boat Docks				
Fishing Facilities				
Programming				
Services/Technical Assistance				
Wildlife area				

Recommendations:

ADA~ Type of Facility: X Recreation \_\_\_ Conservation

Acreage: **17 acres**

Location: **39 Memorial Drive**

Ownership: **Town (managed by FLAA)**

COPY

ADA Survey

**Name here: Central Park Fields**

Compliance Guidelines for Section 504 Self-Evaluation

Category	Conforms			Comments/Notes	
	Section	Yes	No		N/A – None
Ramps (boat ramp)				X	
Parking		X			5 designated Handicapped spaces
Surface		X			Surfaces in lot, approaches, and paths are good; either compacted gravel, paved
Stairs				X	
Doors			X		Doors to the restrooms at the Concession Stand should be widened; thresholds should be eliminated or ramped to provide unimpeded access; hardware/door handles should be replaced with ADA compliant hardware, and should be placed lower on the door
Restrooms			X		Interior hardware should be upgraded/updated, including sinks and stalls
Shower Rooms					
Drinking Fountain				X	
Telephones				X	
Signs					
Switches/Controls				X	
Ball Fields		X			
Seating		X			
Playground Equip.			X		Thick, elevated wooden frame around the playground equipment impedes access; an access should be cut or the frame should be eliminated; the current medium (woodchips/mulch) should be replaced with a more durable ADA compliant surface
Basketball Court		X			
Picnic Tables		X			
Trash cans					
Trails/Approaches		X			
Boat Docks				X	
Fishing Facilities				X	
Programming					
Services/Technical Assistance				X	
Wildlife area				X	

Recommendations: See "Comments/Notes"

ADA~ Type of Facility:  Recreation \_\_\_ Conservation

Acreage: **6 acres**

Location: **0 Long Pond Road**

Ownership: Town

COPY

ADA Survey

**Name here: Long Pond Beach/Pocasset Park**

Compliance Guidelines for Section 504 Self-Evaluation

Category	Conforms			Comments/Notes	
	Section	Yes	No		N/A - None
Ramps (boat ramp)				X	Informal launch area; natural surface from paved parking lot over a slight berm; direct beach access restricted by cement barriers
Parking		X			Very large paved lot; lacks designated parking spots for handicapped access
Surface		X			Main parking lot for beach is paved; surfaces leading into the fields (paths and open fenced area) are natural material and should be upgraded with ADA compliant materials where needed to impede field and seating access
Stairs				X	
Doors			X		Door to access the concession stand needs compliant hardware and widening
Restrooms					Porta-potties employed seasonally
Concession Stand			X		The approach to the concession stand platform needs a ramp or a cut for unimpeded access; the access door need new compliant hardware for access; the customer service bar should be lowered
Shower Rooms				X	
Drinking Fountain				X	
Telephones				X	
Signs					
Switches/Controls					
Ball Fields		X			Football and baseball field; no dugouts; benches for players and coaches should be replaced with compliant seating/structures
Seating		X			Portable bleachers in small sections located where needed
Playground Equip.				X	
Basketball Court				X	
Picnic Tables				X	
Trash cans	X				
Trails				X	
Boat Docks				X	
Fishing Facilities				X	
Programming					
Services/Technical Assistance				X	
Wildlife area				X	

Recommendations: see "Comment/Notes"

### III. Program Accessibility

#### Recreation Facilities

##### 1. Bandstand

**Assessment:** In 2020, State Rep. Fiola shepherded a \$20,000 grant to improve this area. Grant funded improvements to date have included resurfacing the platform floor, rebuilding the stairs, and repairing rails and walkways.

**Recommendation:** Overall, the facility still needs additional ADA compliant renovation and restoration in order to maximize its public use potential.



The Bandstand (Photo SRPEDD)

##### 2. Hathaway Park

**Assessment:** This area is in overall great shape and is favored by those looking for dog friendly parks and water views. Several years ago, the Town received a \$5,000 grant from the Taunton River Stewardship Council to make improvements to the shoreline (plantings and stabilization) at the park's boat ramp as well as install fencing to restrict boating access to the ramp and prevent shoreline erosion and habitat degradation.

**Recommendations:** The park would benefit from some tree trimming and additional signage and picnic tables. The town should also consider moving the playground (which is subject to periodic inundation during storm surge and tidal events) to another area on site. It was also suggested to move the old swing set across the park to be with the other playground equipment, or remove it and replace it with updated, ADA compliant equipment on improved surfaces. Finally, it is suggested that the Town develop an improved access road and compliant parking to accommodate greater use and promote user safety.



Hathaway Park Boat Ramp (Photo RI Blueways)



Hathaway Park (Photo RI Blueways)

### **3. KRR Ballfields**

**Assessment:** Accessibility for this field complex is an issue, and with its proximity to Crystal Springs it would be great if this facility were made more accessible and ADA compliant, including parking, approaches, surfaces (where appropriate/feasible), and signage. The fields themselves are now only used for practice due to quality issues.

**Recommendations:** Suggestions of adding better field maintenance to improve utility; ADA compliant parking, approaches, and surfaces where necessary; signage; and an accessible community garden and dog park (which were made by OSRAC members and OSRP Survey respondents).

### **4. Town Beach – Pocasset Park**

**Assessment:** Accessibility is an issue for this area. OSRAC and members of the public felt that picnic tables, a pavilion, and perhaps grills, would be nice additions. The trees on the left side of the road as you enter the site should be pruned. Sand is delivered to the beach yearly. Trash cans have been added along with a 4-yard dumpster which is secured/locked, and staff empty trash containers daily (M-F) into the dumpster. There are also porta potties on site from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

There were several public comments on the cement barriers between the parking lot and the beach not being “warm and welcoming.” Perhaps split-rail fencing could be used. The onsite storage shed needs some work, or perhaps, replacement.

**Recommendations:** There is no ADA accessible pathway from the shared, paved parking lot into adjacent Pocasset Park (paths around the interior and through fenced areas are natural material; fence openings should also be widened). The pavement is in fair condition. There are currently no designated handicapped parking spaces, and the lot is not striped. There is limited seating in the park for sporting and community events (a small section of portable bleachers on a grass field). There is also a need to update signage (perhaps as part of a broader consistent town-wide signage program for public properties). The concession stand needs updated hardware on the access door, which should also be widened, and a slight ramp or cut should be made in the apron around the concession area to provide

unimpeded access. The customer service bar at the concession stand should also be lowered.

## **5. Central Park**

**Assessment:** This area is well maintained. The non-profit Freetown-Lakeville Athletic Association (FLAA) leases the facility from the Town and maintains the basketball courts, primary fields, and takes care of the trash, mowing lawns etc. The nature trail around the perimeter of the complex appears to be primarily a maintenance road for the fields, the most wooded part being parallel to Bullock Road. There are five benches along the path. The nature trail skirts the pavilion/picnic area and shuffleboard courts of the Senior Center/COA. The adjacent Senior Center/COA uses the trails to walk. The VFW maintains the Memorial Park area.

The site also includes a parking lot with five (5) handicapped spaces, restroom facilities and a concession stand. The FLAA will install lights at the Babe Ruth field so that they will be able to host adult baseball league games, and would also like to install lights on the basketball courts

**Update:** In August of 2022, the Town received a state Shared Streets and Spaces Grant award of \$61,076 to create a well-lit crosswalk from the Freetown Elementary School to the Central Park ballfields with ADA compliant curb ramps as well as signage to increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety during games and town events.

**Recommendations:** Doors to the restrooms at the Concession Stand should be widened; thresholds should be eliminated or ramped to provide unimpeded access; hardware/door handles should be replaced with ADA compliant hardware and should be placed lower on the door. Interior hardware should be upgraded/updated, including sinks and stalls.

There is a thick, elevated wooden frame around the playground equipment that impedes access; an access should be cut or the frame should be eliminated; the existing playground medium (woodchips/mulch) should be replaced with a more durable ADA compliant surface.



Little Fenway Park (Photo FLAA)



Central Park Complex (Photo FLAA)

## **6. Long Pond Boat Ramp**

**Assessment:** The town of Freetown manages an Office of Fishing and Boating Access concrete boat ramp and associated parking area with space for 47 trailers, located off Route 18/105 in Freetown on the Southeast corner of the 1,781 acre Long Pond. The Town of Freetown collects a parking fee on Saturday, Sundays, and holidays.

**Update:** In 2020, Freetown received a \$25,000 appropriation from the state legislature to make improvements to the boat ramp, including building a shack for attendants (completed) and potentially bringing in electricity and water. The MA Office of Fishing and Boating Access has also committed to installing a swing gate at the entrance and making improvements/repairs to the ramp itself.



Long Pond Boat Ramp (Photo Freetown PD)

The non-profit Long Pond Association received a \$50,000 grant, through SRPEDD, as part of an ARPA appropriation from the state legislature, in order to conduct a mechanical harvesting of milfoil and fanwort in Long Pond. The first phase of a projected five-year effort was permitted and completed in August of 2022, removing over 120 cubic yards of plants from heavily congested areas on the pond. The project will result in improved water quality, swimming and boating safety, and enhanced habitat for the native fishery and wildlife populations.



The crew of the Eco Harvester preparing to launch in Long Pond (Photo SRPEDD)

## Conservation Commission Owned and Managed Properties

### 1. Porter Pasture/Porter Shore, Gramp Deane Road, 22 acres

**Assessment:** Currently, the area is used primarily for fishing, swimming and as a launch area for canoes, kayaks, and small boats. The area is subject to indiscriminate dumping of various types of trash and waste, and despite past clean-up efforts, remains a persistent problem. The marsh is unfortunately subject to vehicular traffic causing damage and loss of integrity in addition to that which is occurring as documented in site surveys.

**Recommendations:** To help prevent further degradation of the marsh, the town should remove and grade the dirt road (block it off with heavy wooden guard rail or boulders) and relocate access and parking away from the marsh. These measures would improve road surfaces and vehicular and pedestrian access, preserve an unobstructed route of upland retreat for the marsh and allow compromised areas to possibly be restored.



Porter Pasture (Google Earth and SRPEDD)

**2. Gurney Saw Mill Woodland**, off of Slab Bridge Road, 15 acres

**Assessment:** This landlocked site consists of three 5-acre parcels called A, B, and C, adjacent to parcel 5, about 1 mile east of Slab Bridge Road, and .6 mile north of Chace Road. All lots are abutting and are just south of the Algonquin Gas Line (around 100-200 feet) and west of Proprietor’s Way (from 900 to 2000 feet). This property was deeded to the Town in 1972 when it was considered young forest growth.

**Recommendation:** This property is landlocked and has limited recreational potential. It should remain in forestry (as part of Freetown’s natural green infrastructure assets) with a regularly monitored forestry management plan.

**3. Bolton Cedar Swamp** East of Rt. 140 South of Chace Road, 12 acres

**Assessment:** This property consists almost entirely of wetlands, with standing pools of water and general drainage to the east towards Bolton Cedar Swamp.

**Recommendation:** Because this property drains towards a brook, which in turn drains into Fall Brook, Long Pond, and other watershed areas, it is recommended that this parcel remain undisturbed and inaccessible for the protection of both habitat local watersheds. Use of roadway treatments should be monitored and/or restricted in the immediate area as well.

**4. Eleanor Winslow Property, Quaker Brook**, a 20 acre property that borders the Berkley Town Line and spans both sides of Quaker Brook, which drains into Forge Pond.

**Assessment:** The lot is landlocked and consists of mature forest, primarily pines, except for low growing marsh vegetation along both sides of Quaker Brook.

**Recommendation:** This is predominantly a wetland area that should remain undisturbed.

**5. Betsey Taber Wildlife Sanctuary**, 19 Nestle’s Lane, 28.6 acres

**Assessment:** This property was the former Betsey Taber Estate. It was donated to the Town and is permanently protected as a wildlife sanctuary that includes dense forest and mixed woodland habitat, as

well as bird habitat. The Sanctuary is located in a sparsely developed area and is well known to birders. There are no formal paths or trails.

**Recommendation:** In 2020, the Conservation Commission discussed pursuing a forest stewardship plan grant application to better manage the land and enhance songbird habitat. The stewardship plan could also create logging paths, access, and potential parking/staging areas.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **BIOMAP 2 Summary**



### Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game, through the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and The Nature Conservancy’s Massachusetts Program developed *BioMap2* to protect the state’s biodiversity in the context of climate change.

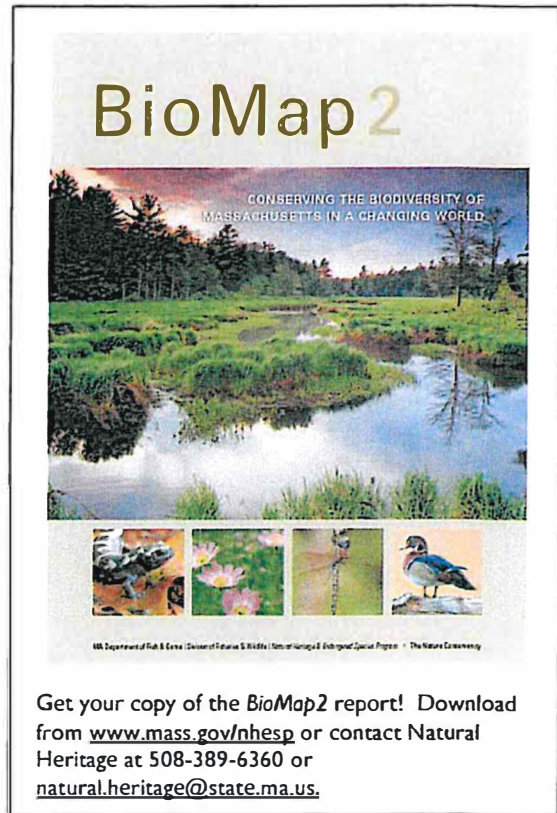
*BioMap2* combines NHESP’s 30 years of rigorously documented rare species and natural community data with spatial data identifying wildlife species and habitats that were the focus of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). *BioMap2* also integrates The Nature Conservancy’s assessment of large, well-connected, and intact ecosystems and landscapes across the Commonwealth, incorporating concepts of ecosystem resilience to address anticipated climate change impacts.

Protection and stewardship of *BioMap2* Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape is essential to safeguard the diversity of species and their habitats, intact ecosystems, and resilient natural landscapes across Massachusetts.

### What Does Status Mean?

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife determines a status category for each rare species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA), M.G.L. c.131A, and its implementing regulations 321 CMR 10.00. Rare species are categorized as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern according to the following:

- Endangered species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range or are in danger of extirpation from Massachusetts.



Get your copy of the *BioMap2* report! Download from [www.mass.gov/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp) or contact Natural Heritage at 508-389-6360 or [natural.heritage@state.ma.us](mailto:natural.heritage@state.ma.us).

- Threatened species are likely to become Endangered in Massachusetts in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
- Special Concern species have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked or occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become Threatened in Massachusetts.

In addition NHESP maintains an unofficial watch list of plants that are tracked due to potential conservation interest or concern, but are not regulated under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act or other laws or regulations. Likewise, described natural communities are not regulated by any law or regulations, but they can help to identify





ecologically important areas that are worthy of protection. The status of natural communities reflects the documented number and acreages of each community type in the state:

- Critically Imperiled communities typically have 5 or fewer documented good sites or have very few remaining acres in the state.
- Imperiled communities typically have 6-20 good sites or few remaining acres in the state.
- Vulnerable communities typically have 21-100 good sites or limited acreage across the state.
- Secure communities typically have over 100 sites or abundant acreage across the state; however, excellent examples are identified as Core Habitats to ensure continued protection.

In 2005 the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife completed a comprehensive State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) documenting the status of Massachusetts wildlife and providing recommendations to help guide wildlife conservation decision-making. SWAP includes all the wildlife species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA), as well as more than 80 species that need conservation attention but do not meet the requirements for inclusion under MESA. The SWAP document is organized around habitat types in need of conservation within the Commonwealth. While the original BioMap focused primarily on rare species protected under MESA, *BioMap2* also addresses other Species of Conservation Concern, their habitats, and the ecosystems that support them to create a spatial representation of most of the elements of SWAP.

### ***BioMap2*: One Plan, Two Components**

*BioMap2* identifies two complementary spatial layers, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape.

Core Habitat identifies key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Protection of Core Habitats will contribute to the conservation of specific elements of biodiversity.

Critical Natural Landscape identifies large natural Landscape Blocks that are minimally impacted by development. If protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience to natural and anthropogenic disturbances in a rapidly changing world. Areas delineated as Critical Natural Landscape also include buffering upland around wetland, coastal, and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity.

The long-term persistence of Massachusetts biological resources requires a determined commitment to land and water conservation. Protection and stewardship of both Critical Natural Landscapes and Core Habitats are needed to realize the biodiversity conservation vision of *BioMap2*.

### Components of Core Habitat

Core Habitat identifies specific areas necessary to promote the long-term persistence of rare species, other Species of Conservation Concern, exemplary natural communities, and intact ecosystems.

### Rare Species

There are 432 native plant and animal species listed as Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) based on their rarity, population trends, and threats to survival. For





Table 1. Species of Conservation Concern described in the State Wildlife Action Plan and/or included on the MESA List and for which habitat was mapped in *BioMap2*. Note that plants are not included in SWAP, and that marine species such as whales and sea turtles are not included in *BioMap2*.

Taxonomic Group	MESA-listed Species	Non-listed Species of Conservation Concern
Mammals	4	5
Birds	27	23
Reptiles	10	5
Amphibians	4	3
Fish	10	17
Invertebrates	102	9
Plants	256	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>62</b>

*BioMap2*, NHESP staff identified the highest quality habitat sites for each non-marine species based on size, condition, and landscape context.

#### Other Species of Conservation Concern

In addition to species on the MESA List described previously, the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) identifies 257 wildlife species and 22 natural habitats most in need of conservation within the Commonwealth. *BioMap2* includes species-specific habitat areas for 45 of these species and habitat for 17 additional species which was mapped with other coarse-filter and fine-filter approaches.

#### Priority Natural Communities

Natural communities are assemblages of plant and animal species that share a common environment and occur together repeatedly on the landscape. *BioMap2* gives conservation

priority to natural communities with limited distribution and to the best examples of more common types.

#### Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are small, seasonal wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat, especially for amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed. *BioMap2* identifies the top 5 percent most interconnected clusters of Potential Vernal Pools in the state.

#### Forest Cores

In *BioMap2*, Core Habitat includes the best examples of large, intact forests that are least impacted by roads and development, providing critical habitat for numerous woodland species. For example, the interior forest habitat defined by Forest Cores supports many bird species sensitive to the impacts of roads and development, such as the Black-throated Green Warbler, and helps maintain ecological processes found only in unfragmented forest patches.

#### Wetland Cores

*BioMap2* used an assessment of Ecological Integrity to identify the least disturbed wetlands in the state within undeveloped landscapes—those with intact buffers and little fragmentation or other stressors associated with development. These wetlands are most likely to support critical wetland functions (i.e., natural hydrologic conditions, diverse plant and animal habitats, etc.) and are most likely to maintain these functions into the future.

#### Aquatic Cores

To delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic





Species of Conservation Concern, beyond the species and exemplary habitats described above, *BioMap2* identifies intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur.

### Components of Critical Natural Landscape

Critical Natural Landscape identifies intact landscapes in Massachusetts that are better able to support ecological processes and disturbance regimes, and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames.

### Landscape Blocks

*BioMap2* identifies the most intact large areas of predominately natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds, as well as coastal habitats such as barrier beaches and salt marshes.

### Upland Buffers of Wetland and Aquatic Cores

A variety of analyses were used to identify protective upland buffers around wetlands and rivers.

### Upland Habitat to Support Coastal Adaptation

*BioMap2* identifies undeveloped lands adjacent to and up to one and a half meters above existing salt marshes as Critical Natural Landscapes with high potential to support inland migration of salt marsh and other coastal habitats over the coming century.

The conservation areas identified by *BioMap2* are based on breadth and depth of data, scientific expertise, and understanding of Massachusetts' biodiversity. The numerous sources of information and analyses used to

### Legal Protection of Biodiversity

*BioMap2* presents a powerful vision of what Massachusetts would look like with full protection of the land most important for supporting the Commonwealth's biodiversity. While *BioMap2* is a planning tool with *no regulatory function*, all state-listed species enjoy legal protection under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (M.G.L. c.131A) and its implementing regulations (321 CMR 10.00). Wetland habitat of state-listed wildlife is also protected under the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations (310 CMR 10.00). The *Natural Heritage Atlas* contains maps of Priority Habitats and Estimated Habitats, which are used, respectively, for regulation under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act and the Wetlands Protection Act. For more information on rare species regulations, and to view Priority and Estimated Habitat maps, please see the Regulatory Review page at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/regulatory-review/>.

***BioMap2* is a conservation planning tool that does not, in any way, supplant the Estimated and Priority Habitat Maps which have regulatory significance. Unless and until the *BioMap2* vision is fully realized, we must continue to protect our most imperiled species and their habitats.**

create Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape are complementary, and outline a comprehensive conservation vision for Massachusetts, from rare species to intact landscapes. In total, these robust analyses define a suite of priority lands and waters that, if permanently protected, will support Massachusetts' natural systems for generations to come.





BioMap2

Conserving the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World

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## Understanding Core Habitat Summaries

Following the Town Overview, there is a descriptive summary of each Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape that occurs in your city or town. These summaries highlight some of the outstanding characteristics of each Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape, and will help you learn more about your city or town's biodiversity. You can find out more information about many of these species and natural communities by looking at specific fact sheets at [www.mass.gov/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).

## Additional Information

For copies of the full *BioMap2* report, the Technical Report, and an [interactive mapping tool](#), visit the *BioMap2 website* via the Land Protection and Planning tab at [www.mass.gov/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp). If you have any questions about this report, or if you need help protecting land for biodiversity in your community, the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program staff looks forward to working with you.

Contact the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

By phone 508-389-6360  
By fax 508-389-7890  
By email [natural.heritage@state.ma.us](mailto:natural.heritage@state.ma.us)  
By Mail 100 Hartwell Street, Suite 230  
West Boylston, MA 01583

The GIS datalayers of *BioMap2* are available for download from MassGIS at [www.mass.gov/mgis](http://www.mass.gov/mgis).



Natural Heritage  
& Endangered  
Species Program

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581  
phone: 508-389-6360 fax: 508-389-7890

For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at [www.mass.gov/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).



### Town Overview

Freetown lies within the Bristol Lowland/Narragansett Lowland Ecoregion, an area of flat, gently rolling plains. Forests are mostly central hardwoods and some elm-ash-red maple and red and white pine. There are numerous wetlands, some cropland/pasture, and many cranberry bogs. Many rivers drain this area.



### Freetown at a Glance

- Total Area: 22,699 acres (35.5 square miles)
- Human Population in 2010: 8,870
- Open space protected in perpetuity: 5,182 acres, or 22.8% percent of total area\*
- BioMap2 Core Habitat: 6,374 acres
- BioMap2 Core Habitat Protected: 2,764 acres or 43.4%
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape: 12,201 acres
- BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape Protected: 4,732 acres or 38.8%.

### BioMap2 Components

#### Core Habitat

- 4 Exemplary or Priority Natural Community Cores
- 6 Forest Cores
- 16 Wetland Cores
- 3 Aquatic Cores
- 13 Species of Conservation Concern Cores\*\*
  - 4 reptiles, 1 fish, 2 insects, 7 plants

#### Critical Natural Landscape

- 2 Landscape Blocks
- 12 Wetland Core Buffers
- 2 Aquatic Core Buffers
- 8 Coastal Adaptation Areas

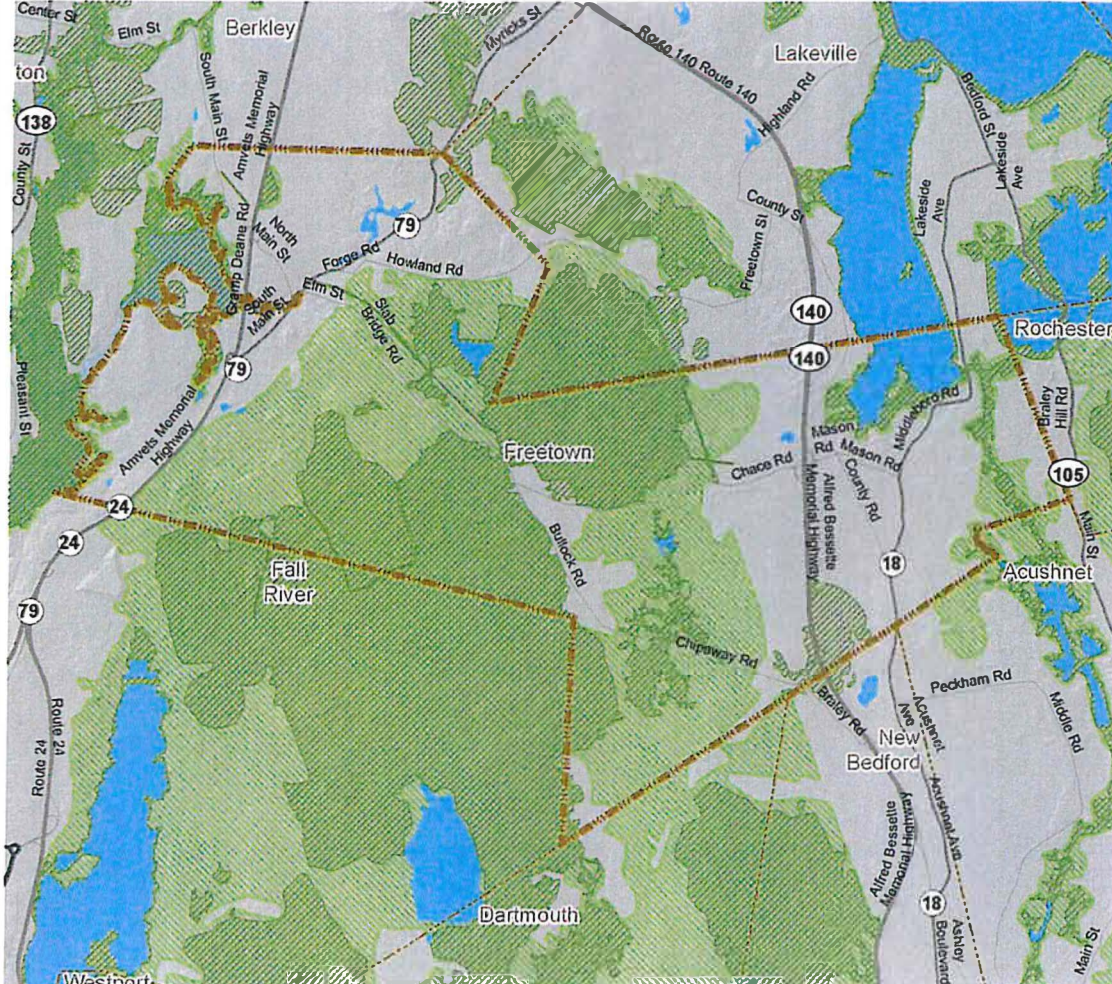
\* Calculated using MassGIS data layer "Protected and Recreational Open Space—March, 2012".



\*\* See next pages for complete list of species, natural communities and other biodiversity elements.






**BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape in Freetown**



-  BioMap2 Core Habitat
-  BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape

1 Mile  




Natural Heritage  
& Endangered  
Species Program

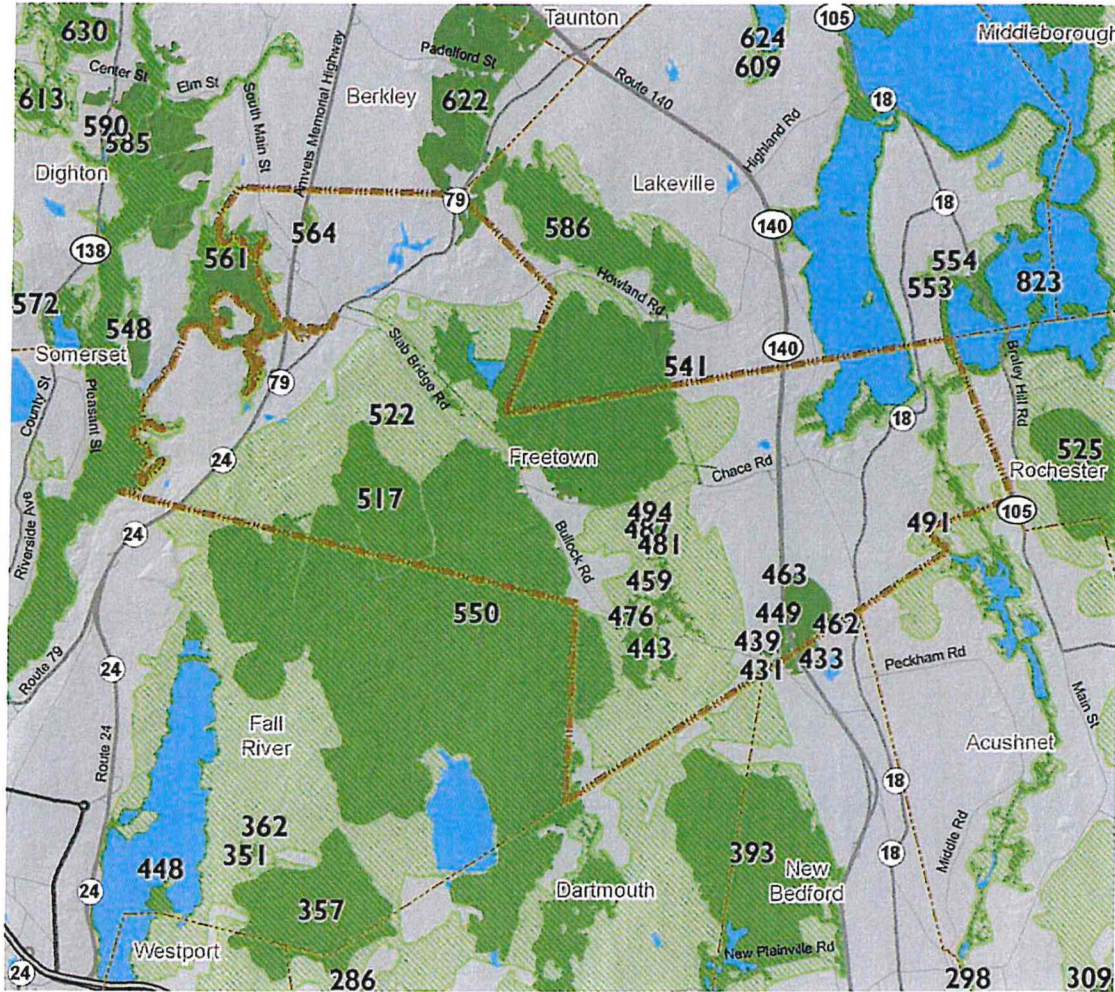
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581  
phone: 508-389-6360 fax: 508-389-7890



For more information on rare species and natural communities, please see our fact sheets online at [www.mass.gov/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp).




### BioMap2 Core Habitat in Freetown

Core IDs correspond with the following element lists and summaries.



-  BioMap2 Core Habitat
-  BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape

1 Mile  




Natural Heritage  
 & Endangered  
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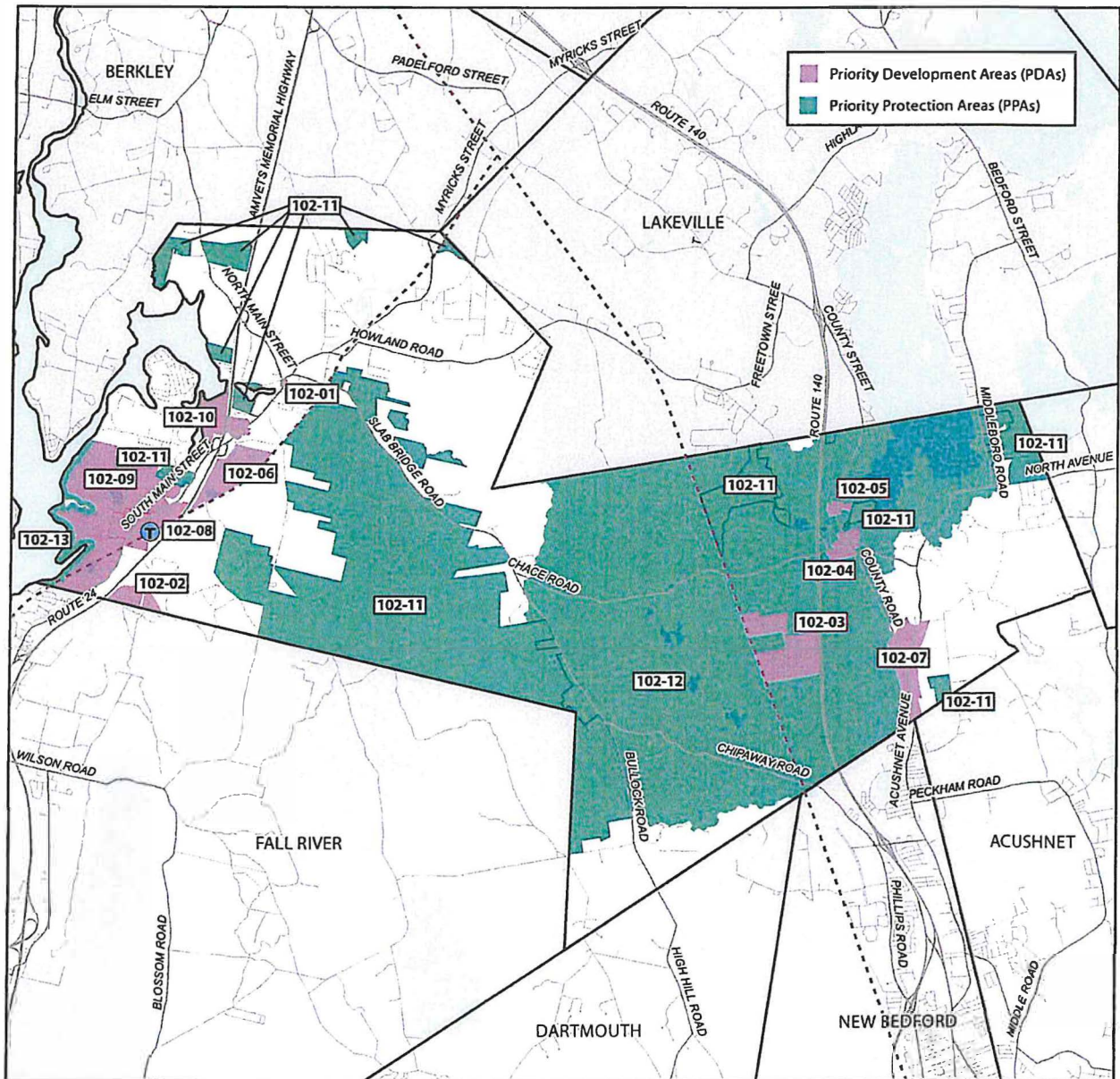
## **APPENDIX C**

### **2013 Priority Development and Priority Protection Areas (PDA-PPA): Dighton Community Priority Areas Summary**

# South Coast Rail Corridor Plan

## Five-Year Update of Community Priority Areas

### Freetown

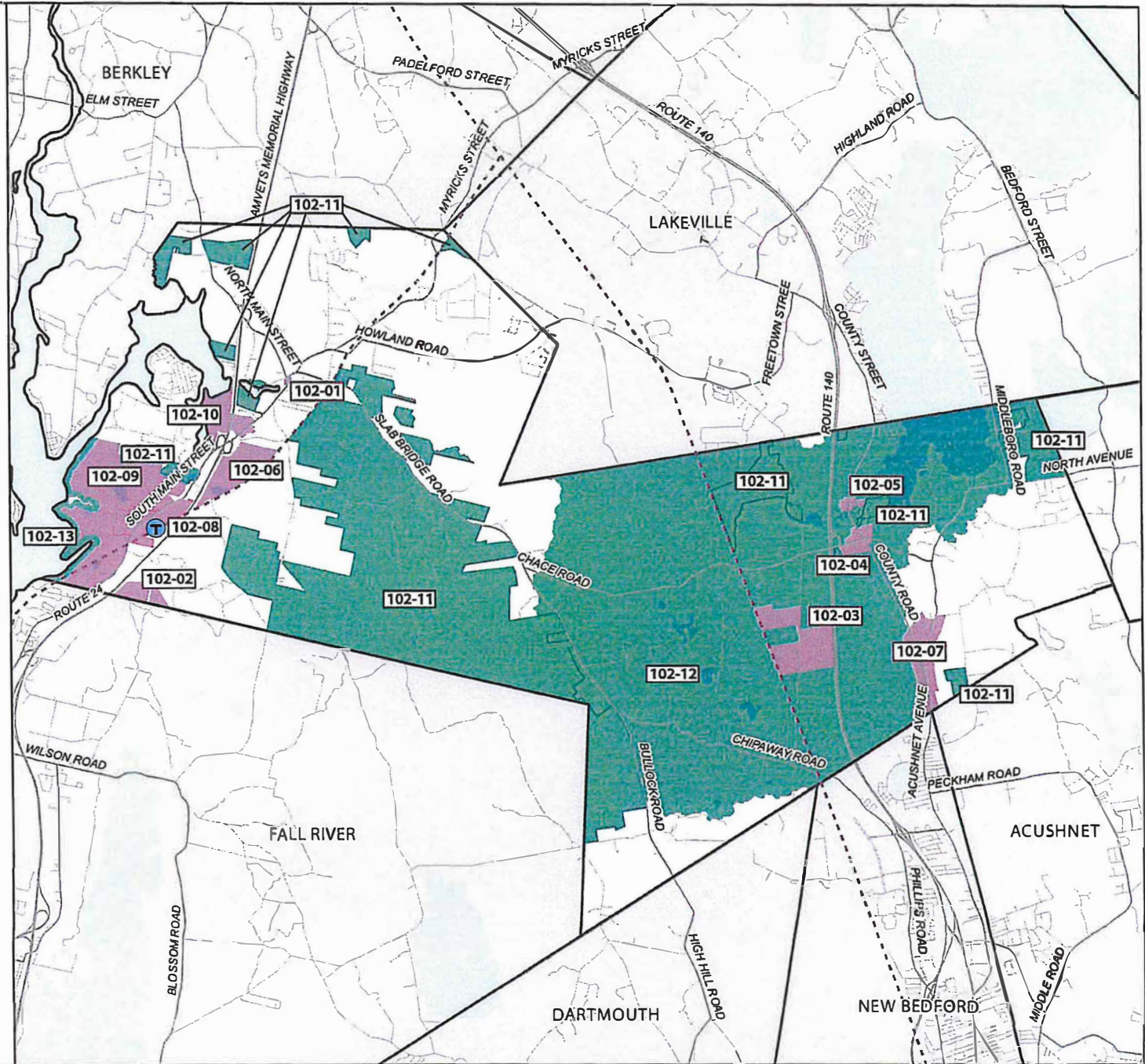


**2013 Freetown Community Priority Area List**

<b>ID Number</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Acres</b>
102-01	Assonet Village Small Business District	Development	3.21
102-02	Bio Park	Development	53.67
102-03	Braleley Road Industrial District	Development	206.95
102-04	East Freetown Business District	Development	45.46
102-05	East Freetown Small Business District	Development	16.62
102-06	Industrial 2 District	Development	137.42
102-07	Lower County Road	Development	152.14
102-08	Planned Mixed Use District	Development	116.78
102-09	Riverfront Business Park	Development	533.76
102-10	South Main Street Business District	Development	112.75
102-11	Open Space and Recreation Districts	Protection	4496.85
102-12	Outstanding Resource Water	Protection	7688.73
102-13	Peacehaven Riverfront Protection	Protection	118.48

# Town of Freetown Community Priority Areas, 2013

- Priority Development Areas (PDAs)
- Priority Protection Areas (PPAs)
- Arterials and Collectors
- Local Roads
- T MBTA Proposed Stations
- - - MBTA Proposed Rail Lines
- Water



This map is for the sole purpose of aiding regional planning decisions and is not warranted for any other use. June 2013



1 mile



**TOWN OF FREETOWN  
SOUTH COAST RAIL CORRIDOR PLAN  
PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT & PROTECTION AREAS FIVE-YEAR UPDATE**

**INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the updated Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and Priority Protection Areas (PPAs) in the town of Freetown. This community-driven land use planning exercise first took place in 2008, when three Regional Planning Agencies, SRPEDD, MAPC, and OCPC, worked alongside local residents, business owners, officials, and organizations to designate the areas that were most important for development or preservation in each community. All thirty-one (31) South Coast Rail (SCR) Corridor communities participated in this project in 2008 and again in 2013.

In 2013, the three Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) revisited these 31 communities to review and update the 2008 designations. Updates took into account new data that became available over the last five years as well as new municipal priorities. The “Five-Year Update” process was an opportunity to confirm choices made during the 2008 process, to revise previous designations, and to make new choices that acknowledged new conditions. During this review process, the SRPEDD website provided current information to the public, including a calendar of SCR Five-Year Update meetings and a resource library of relevant information sheets and maps.

*What are Priority Development Areas (PDAs)?*

Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are areas that are appropriate for increased development or redevelopment due to several factors including good transportation access, available infrastructure (primarily water and sewer), an absence of environmental constraints, and local support. PDAs can range in size from a single parcel to many acres. Potential development ranges from small-scale infill to large commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use projects. Town and village centers, Chapter 40R Districts, industrial parks, and proposed commuter rail station sites are typical examples of PDAs.

*What are Priority Protection Areas (PPAs)?*

Priority Protection Areas (PPAs) are areas that are important to protect due to the presence of significant natural or cultural resources, including endangered species habitats, areas critical to water supply, historic resources, scenic vistas, and farms. Like PDAs, the PPAs can vary greatly in size. Sites may be candidates for protection through acquisition or conservation restrictions.

### *What are Combined Priority Development and Priority Protection Areas (Combined Areas)?*

In Combined Priority Development and Priority Protection Areas, communities welcome development; however, the development is expected to be sensitive to its site and the surrounding area. This may include development that complements the older structures within a historic district or low impact development that protects nearby water resources or biodiversity.

### *What do PDAs and PPAs do for my city or town?*

A community's Priority Area designations can guide municipal decisions about zoning revisions, infrastructure investments, and conservation efforts. For example, some communities choose to incorporate these designations into their Master Plan. Also, municipalities are implementing these designations using technical assistance available through State funding programs such as the South Coast Rail Technical Assistance and District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA).

In addition, the Community Priority Areas serve as the foundation for developing Regional and State Priority Area designations. Lastly, through Executive Order 525 (see below), the Patrick Administration asked certain state agencies to consider priority areas when making funding commitments.

### *Regional and State Priority Areas*

The Community Priority Areas are essential to the process of determining the Regional and State Priority Area Maps. Local designations determined to be of regional significance through a regional screening process, including public input received at regional public workshops, make up the Regional Priority Areas map. In turn, the Community and Regional Priority Areas are the basis for the State Priority Area Map.

### *Executive Order 525 (E.O. 525)*

In fall 2010, Gov. Patrick issued Executive Order 525 (E.O. 525) providing for the implementation of the South Coast Rail Corridor Plan and Corridor Map (Corridor Plan) through state agency actions and investments. The Executive Order calls for state investments to be consistent with the Corridor Plan's recommendations to the maximum extent feasible. These state actions have the potential to leverage local and private investments in the priority areas. The Executive Order also directs state agencies to conduct a retrospective analysis to determine how consistent their actions and investments in the region have been with the Corridor Plan goals.

## PRIORITY AREA REVIEW PROCESS

SRPEDD staff worked with cities and towns to review their Priority Areas identified in 2008. Amendments to Priority Areas included delineating more precise boundaries using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data. RPAs used interactive GIS maps to present over forty layers of information including, but not limited to, ortho photography, parcel lines, zoning districts, state program areas (such as Growth District Initiative and Chapter 40R sites), and designated resource areas (such as high-yield aquifers, Zone II aquifers, BioMap 2 Core Habitats, and rivers and streams with their associated wetlands). Communities also worked to clarify the stated purpose for each Priority Area.

The process included a series of three meetings:

**#1: Introductory meeting:** A Regional Planning Agency staff member visited with Boards of Selectmen and Mayors to reintroduce the land use planning process that took place in 2008 and the reasons for conducting the Five-Year Update of Priority Area designations.

**#2: Preliminary Meeting:** SRPEDD staff facilitated a 2-3 hour working session with municipal staff and/or board and committee/commission members to review each priority area. Staff incorporated interactive GIS maps depicting various data layers (see Appendix) to inform discussions and decision-making. This preliminary process of updating the 2008 Priority Area designations had the following general guiding principles in mind:

- Incorporating changes in municipal priorities, needs, and desires
- Understanding updated state policies such as Executive Order 525
- Refining priority area boundaries to be exact and “rational” (coterminous with other map layers such as roadways, zoning boundaries, designated resource areas, etc.)
- Making clear and strategic statements about the stated purpose for and desired character of priority areas

For the few SRPEDD communities without town staff, SRPEDD did this preliminary review at a public meeting in the community; then, using the criteria outlined by meeting participants, SRPEDD made the remaining changes and returned revised maps and a narrative description of the revisions to the municipality for their review prior to the workshop with the general public. SRPEDD staff used the input from the preliminary meetings to generate a “before” and “after” map to present to the public for their feedback and input.

**#3: Public Meeting Review:** Each community held a public meeting, at which time RPAs and local meeting participants reviewed each community's priority areas and identified desired changes. Some communities incorporated this into a Board of Selectmen meeting, others

during a Planning Board meeting, and some communities held a public meeting held specifically for this purpose.

### TOWN OF FREETOWN RESULTS

On December 17, 2012, SRPEDD staff met with the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to re-introduce the Priority Area planning exercise. The BOS designated the Town Administrator, Richard Brown, as the contact person for this work. The preliminary municipal meeting was held on March 11, 2013 at the SRPEDD offices. Participants reviewed the purpose and the boundaries of each 2008 Priority Area. In discussions, they clarified the purpose of each and adjusted the respective boundaries to coincide with the stated purpose.

The town of Freetown held a public meeting to seek input from town residents on the revisions recommended by the municipal representatives on May 21, 2013 at the Freetown Town Hall. No revisions were requested for any of the priority areas. The consensus of the meeting attendees was that the 2013 Priority Area map depicts the boundaries of areas deemed to be priorities for development and for preservation. The result of this work is the 2013 Freetown Community Identified Priority Area Map, which can be found on page 2 of this document.

### PRIORITY AREA ADJUSTMENTS

As stated above, the 2013 Priority Areas (PAs) are based upon the PA designations identified in 2008. Many of these PAs still represent municipal growth priorities today. In most cases, revisions made to the PAs simply transition them from the “general designations” of the 2008 process to more “exact designations” (both in terms of their boundaries and their stated purposes) using current Geographic Information Systems data and updated local input. In some cases, communities added new PAs or removed previous designations because (1) municipal priorities changed over time, (2) the purposes for designations were achieved or new ones arose, or (3) designations were incorporated into other PAs identified for the same purpose. The text below lists the updated 2013 PAs, identifies their stated purposes, describes their boundaries, and details changes from the 2008 Priority Areas.

## PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

### **Assonet Village Small Business District [102-01]**

*Purpose:* Neighborhood scale businesses.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to the Village Business Zoning District in Assonet.

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives changed this priority designation from Combined PDA/PPA to PDA in order to correspond with the intent of the Village Business Zoning District. The purpose was simplified from “Mixed-use opportunities, including small-scale, low impact retail, service and development.” The area was greatly reduced.

### **Bio Park [102-02]**

*Purpose:* Economic Development and Research and Development.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to parcels within the EOHED GDI site.

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives chose to change this priority designation from Combined PDA/PPA to a PDA in order to correspond with the intent of the abutting Growth Districts Initiative (GDI) site located in Fall River. They renamed this PA, formerly Fall River Executive Office Park, in order to more clearly describe its purpose. Previous boundaries extended approximately twice as far east.

### **Braley Road Industrial District [102-03]**

*Purpose:* Industrial Development.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to the Industrial zoning district and contain an EOA.

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives revised the name from Braley Road Industrial Area and refined the boundaries to correspond to the zoning district.

### **East Freetown Business District [102-04]**

*Purpose:* Business development.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to the Business Zoning District.

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives renamed this PA to better describe its location and purpose. The 2008 PA was named Mixed-Use Area and its purpose was “mixed use.” The area was reduced from a larger oval area to boundaries were altered to correspond to the zoning district.

### **East Freetown Small Business District [102-05]**

*Purpose:* Neighborhood scale business.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to the Village Business Zoning District in East Freetown.

*Changes from 2008:* In 2008, this was a significantly larger Combined PDA/PPA called East Freetown Village. The community renamed this PA and revised its purpose from “potential mixed-use village redevelopment area” to more clearly describe its purpose and location.

### **Industrial-2 District [102-06]**

*Purpose:* Business and industrial economic development.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to parcels within the Industrial-2 (I-2) Zoning District and the abutting Industrial (I) Zoning Districts, including those designated as an EOA and a Chapter 43D PDS.

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives renamed this PA and changed this it from Combined PDA/PPA to PDA in order to correspond with the intent of the Industrial-2 Zoning District. This area covers the 2008 Ridge Hill Road Redevelopment Area and a portion of South Main Street Business Corridor PDAs.

### **Lower County Road [102-07]**

*Purpose:* Infill development with a mix of residential and business opportunities.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to the General Use Zoning District.

*Changes from 2008:* In 2008, this was the Lower County Road Redevelopment Area PDA, approximately the southern half of the current area, and the Freetown Screw Site Combined PDA/PPA. The community combined these areas into one PA and altered the boundaries to correspond to the zoning district.

### **Planned Mixed-Use District [102-08]**

*Purpose:* Compact development with pedestrian opportunities and a mix of uses.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to the Planned Mixed-Use (PMUD) Zoning District, portions of which are designated as an EOA and Chapter 43D PDS (both split with the Riverfront Business Park PDA).

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives renamed the 2008 Rte. 79 TOD PDA and revised its purpose to more clearly describe the location and purpose. The current area

covers part of the 2008 Riverfront Executive Park & Peace Haven Combined PDA/PPA (see below).

#### **Riverfront Business Park [102-09]**

*Purpose:* Economic Development.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to parcels within the Industrial Zoning District, including those designated as an Economic Opportunity Area and Chapter 43D Priority Development Site (both split with Planned Mixed-Use Development PDA), excluding a 300' buffer from the shoreline of the Taunton River (see Peace Haven Riverfront Protection PPA).

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives chose to separate this priority designation from the 2008 Riverfront Executive Park & Peacehaven Combined PDA/PPA, creating a new PDA and to designate a separate Peacehaven Riverfront Protection PPA to acknowledge the area's natural and cultural significance. The eastern section became part of the new Planned Mixed-Use District PDA.

#### **South Main Street Business District [102-10]**

*Purpose:* Business development.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to the Business Zoning District.

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives renamed this area from South Main Street Business Corridor and greatly decreased its area. Community representatives changed this priority designation from a Combined PDA/PPA to a PDA in order to correspond with the intent of the Business Zoning District and altered the boundaries to follow the zoning district.

### **PRIORITY PROTECTION AREAS**

#### **Open Space and Recreation Districts [102-11]**

*Purpose:* To protect open space, habitats, and recreation opportunities.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to all portions of the Open Space and Recreation zoning district not covered by other Priority Areas.

*Changes from 2008:* This is a new PA in 2013.

### **Outstanding Resource Water [102-12]**

*Purpose:* To preserve public drinking water resources, open space, and habitats.

*Boundaries:* Boundaries correspond to DEP Outstanding Resource Waters, excluding those areas already included in the Open Space and Recreation Districts PPA, East Freetown Small Business PDA, East Freetown Business District PDA, Braleley Road Industrial District PDA, and Lower Country Road PDA. This expansive designation includes BioMap 2 Core Habitats and Critical Natural Landscapes, NHESP Vernal Pools, Zone A Surface Water Protection Areas, and High- and Medium-Yield Aquifers.

*Changes from 2008:* Four 2008 PPAs - Fall Brook Water Resource, East Freetown Water Resource, Rocky Woods, and Route 140 Priority Habitat - were combined into one PPA. Community representatives renamed this PA in order to more clearly describe its purpose.

### **Peacehaven Riverfront Protection [102-13]**

*Purpose:* To acknowledge the area's natural and cultural significance.

*Boundaries:* A 300 foot buffer along the Assonet River.

*Changes from 2008:* Community representatives chose to designate a separate Peacehaven Riverfront Protection PPA out of the former Riverfront Executive Park & Peacehaven Combined PDA/PPA.

### **DELETED PRIORITY AREAS**

**Acidic Fen PPA, Cranberry Bogs and Jacob's Mountain PPA, and South Main Street Water Resource PPA:** The community chose to remove these three PPA designations and replace them with the extensive Open Space and Recreation Districts PPA – designations that have the support and authority of existing municipal zoning.

**APPENDIX D**

**INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION  
INTEREST**

Map	Lot	Owner	Location	Manager	Acres	Use	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Protected	Type of Grant	Condition of Site
	101	8 Conservation Commission	Bryant's Neck	Conservation Commission	27.46	Open Space	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Wetlands
	102	43 Conservation Commission	56 Gull Lane	Conservation Commission	0.23	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Wetlands
	102	115 Conservation Commission	4 Assonet Blvd	Conservation Commission	0.23	Open Space	Low	Yes	Residential	Yes	Tax Title	Good
	102	117 Conservation Commission	Payne's Cove Marsh	Conservation Commission	12.3	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Wetlands
	201	4 Conservation Commission	Beechwood Road	Conservation Commission	0.26	Open Space	Low	Yes	Residential	Yes	Transfer from Selectmen	Wetlands
	202	4.01 Conservation Commission	122 Richmond Road	Conservation Commission	8.06	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Transfer from Selectmen	Wetlands
	202	30 Conservation Commission	Pond Neck Woodlot	Conservation Commission	21	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Landlocked
	205	3 Conservation Commission	Westcott Island	Conservation Commission	3.5	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Landlocked
	207	7 Conservation Commission	15 Richmond Road	Conservation Commission	1.0977	Open Space	High	Yes	Residential	Yes	Donated	Old Parking Area Trail needs maintenance
	207	32.02 Conservation Commission	Forge Pond	Conservation Commission	0.26	Open Space	Low	Yes	Residential	Yes	Donated	Trail needs maintenance
	207	34 Conservation Commission	Richmond Road	Conservation Commission	0.61	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Tax Title	Good
	207	35 Conservation Commission Cemetery Commission	Forge Pond	Conservation Commission	5.9	Open Space	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Tax Title	Trail needs maintenance
	207	112 Richmond Cemetery	Richmond Road	Cemetery Commission	0.12	Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
	208	120 Conservation Commission Cemetery Commission	Green Area Kenswood Est	Conservation Commission	5.53	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Wetlands
	208	170 Haskins Cemetery	Joaquin Avenue	Cemetery Commission	0.076	Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
	209	65.01 Town of Freetown	Copley Drive	Conservation Commission	0.05	Open Space	Low	Yes	Residential	Yes	Abandoned	Good
	209	73 Town of Freetown	Copley Drive	Conservation Commission	0.36	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Unknown	Good
	210	76 Conservation Commission	Weetamoe Heights	Conservation Commission	9.267	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Tax Title	Good
	211	24 Town of Freetown	Assonet Four Corners	Veterans Agent	0.05	Memorial	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Purchased	Good
	211	86 Town of Freetown	5 South Main Street	Board of Selectmen	0.49	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
	211	148 Cemetery Commission	46 South Main Street	Cemetery Commission	24	Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Purchased	Good
	211	182 Town of Freetown	21 Water Street	Board of Selectmen	6.1	Recreation	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
	211	230 Conservation Commission	Porter Shore Land	Conservation Commission	22	Recreation	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated & Purchased	Good
	214	12 Cemetery Commission	Copicut Road	Cemetery Commission	0.72	Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
	214	18.01 Town of Freetown	9 Narrows Road	Board of Selectmen	29.74	Recreation	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
	218	1 Conservation Commission	Olive Sherman Lot	Conservation Commission	14.5	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Transfer from Selectmen	Landlocked
	218	5 Conservation Commission	Newhall Woodlot	Conservation Commission	23	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Transfer from Selectmen	Landlocked
	219	2.01 Conservation Commission	Rear E Howland Road	Conservation Commission	144	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Wetlands
	221	10 Conservation Commission	Middleboro Road	Conservation Commission	8.74	Open Space	Med	Yes	Residential	Yes	Tax Title	Good
	227	89 Town of Freetown	Long Pond Town Beach	Board of Selectmen	28	Recreation	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Purchased	Good
	227	151 Conservation Commission	Chace Road	Conservation Commission	12.2	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Wetlands
	228	3 Conservation Commission	Bosworth Lot	Conservation Commission	10.3	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Landlocked
	228	9.06 Conservation Commission	Christopher Drive	Conservation Commission	29.085	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Wetlands
	229	8 Conservation Commission	Proprietors Way	Conservation Commission	82	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Transfer from Selectmen	Good
	229	11 Conservation Commission	Julia Myrick Lot	Conservation Commission	24.9	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
	230	23 Conservation Commission	Slab Bridge Road	Conservation Commission	49	Open Space	Low	Yes	General	Yes	Tax Title	Wetlands
	230	39 Conservation Commission	High Plain Street	Conservation Commission	67	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Tax Title	Wetlands
	233	28 Conservation Commission	205 South Main Street	Conservation Commission	0.45	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good

241	45 Cemetery Commission	Pocasset Lane	Cemetery Commission	2.21 Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Purchased	Good
243	82 Town of Freetown	Middleboro Road	Unclear	0.82 VFW Parking	Low	Yes	Open Space	No	Purchased	Parking Area
245	19 Conservation Commission	Nestle's Lane	Conservation Commission	28.6 Open Space	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
245	66 Conservation Commission	Summit Pk	Conservation Commission	0.037 Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
245	81 Conservation Commission	Summit Pk	Conservation Commission	0.15 Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	Yes	Donated	Good
Transfer from										
246	4 Conservation Commission	Bolton Cedar Swamp	Conservation Commission	0.98 Open Space	Low	No	Residential	Yes	Selectmen	Wetlands
253	29.01 Cemetery Commission	East Chipaway Road	Cemetery Commission	0.6 Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Unknown	Good
253	31 Cemetery Commission	East Chipaway Road	Cemetery Commission	0.5 Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes	Unkown	Good

Map	Lot	Owner	Location	Manager	Acres	Use	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Protected
	202	5 Mass Audubon Society	Beechwood Road	Mass Audubon Society	14.34	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	204	17 Wildlands Trust Inc	North Main Street	Wildlands Trust Inc	71	Open Space	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	205	4 Wildlands Trust Inc	Westcott Island	Wildlands Trust Inc	0.96	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	206	22 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Public Works	Route 24	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Public Works	4.3	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	Yes
	206	81 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Locust Street	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	8.9	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	209	103.01 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Rear Howland Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	337	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	209	103 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Howland Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	199.264	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	209	103.17 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Howland Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	26.48	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	209	103.18 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Howland Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	1.609	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	209	109 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	96 Howland Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	1.612	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	209	112 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	86 Howland Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	2.032	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	210	142 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	17 Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	89	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	210	143 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Alice Woodlot	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	14	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	210	144 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	19	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	216	13 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	42	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	216	14 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Env Mgmt	85 Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Env Mgmt	24	Recreation	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	216	17.03 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Cons & Rec	Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Cons & Rec	80	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	216	20 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	108 Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	2880	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	217	1.01 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Freetown/Lakeville Line	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	77.36	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	218	4 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Proprietors Way	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	70.1	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	220	7 Mass Audubon Society	Route 140	Mass Audubon Society	5.83	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	Yes
	221	11 Commonwealth of Mass	209 Middleboro Road	Commonwealth of Mass	1.1	Boat Ramp	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	229	1 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Proprietors Way	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	287	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	229	4 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Proprietors Way	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	91	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	229	12 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Hog Brook	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	23.44	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	229	16 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Sampson Woodlot	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	10.8	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	230	2 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	45	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	230	13 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Old Slab Bridge Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	11	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	232	7 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Cons & Rec	Hathaway	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Cons & Rec	29	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	232	16 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Copicut Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	649	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	232	18 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Copicut Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	43	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	233	21 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Route 24	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	14.5	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	233	26 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	South Main Street	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	13	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
	235	7 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	South Main Street	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	4.7	Right-of-Way	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes

236	Commonwealth of Mass 2 Mass DOT District 5 Commonwealth of Mass	Route 24	Commonwealth of Mass Mass DOT District 5 Commonwealth of Mass	5.2	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	No
236	3 Mass DOT District 5 Commonwealth of Mass	Innovation Way	Commonwealth of Mass Mass DOT District 5 Commonwealth of Mass	17	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	No
236	4 Mass DOT Commonwealth of Mass	Innovation Way	Commonwealth of Mass Mass DOT Commonwealth of Mass	2.7	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	No
236	5 Mass DOT Commonwealth of Mass	Route 24	Commonwealth of Mass Mass DOT Commonwealth of Mass	4.5	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	No
236	7 Mass DOT District 5 Commonwealth of Mass	South Main Street	Commonwealth of Mass Mass DOT District 5 Commonwealth of Mass	2.26	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	No
237	3 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Bell Rock Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	167	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
239	41 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Cedar Swamp Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	169.58	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
239	43 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Makepeace Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	28	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
239	48 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Makepeace Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	13.7	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
239	49 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Makepeace Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	13.6	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
240	2 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Proprietors Way	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	6.07	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes
240	5 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest Commonwealth of Mass	192 Chace Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest Commonwealth of Mass	1.9	Open Space	Med	Yes	Open Space	Yes
242	105 Mass DOT	19 Braley Road	Mass DOT	5.1	Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	Yes
244	11 Fairhaven Acushnet Land Preservation Trust	Russell Lot	Fairhaven Acushnet Land Preservation Trust	84.75	Open Space	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
248	1 Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	Bullock Road	Commonwealth of Mass Freetown State Forest	13.3	Trail Use	High	Yes	Open Space	Yes
249	1 Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	Cedar Swamp Road	Commonwealth of Mass Dept of Fish & Game	37.93	Open Space	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes

Map	Lot	Owner	Location	Manager	Acres	Use	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Zoning	Protected
101	58	Assonet Bay Shores Assoc Inc	37 Cliff Drive	Assonet Bay Shores Assoc Inc	0.69	Recreation	High	No	Open Space	No
107	9	New Bedford Water District	Dr Braley Road	New Bedford Water District	16	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
204	1	Friends Cemetery Swansea Monthly Mtg of Friends c/o N E Yearly Mtg of Friends	Friend Street	Friends Cemetery Swansea Monthly Mtg of Friends c/o N E Yearly Mtg of Friends	0.51	Private	Low	Yes	Open Space	No
204	7	Robert Chamberlain	19 Friend Street	Robert Chamberlain	33	Agricultural Preservation Restriction	Low	No	Open Space	Yes
204	8	Robert Chamberlain	Friend Street	Robert Chamberlain	16	Agricultural Preservation Restriction	Low	No	Open Space	Yes
204	11	Robert Chamberlain	Friend Street	Robert Chamberlain	5.814	Agricultural Preservation Restriction	Low	No	Open Space	Yes
204	12	Robert Chamberlain	Friend Street	Robert Chamberlain	5.824	Agricultural Preservation Restriction	Low	No	Open Space	Yes
204	14	Boy's Club of Fall River	127 North Main Street	Boy's Club of Fall River	26	Camp	High	Yes	Open Space	No
204	16	Boy's Club of Fall River	Dean Farm West of Rte 24	Boy's Club of Fall River	61	Camp	High	Yes	Open Space	No
204	23	Boy's Club of Fall River	Dean Farm East of Rte 24	Boy's Club of Fall River	26	Not actively used	Low	No	Open Space	No
206	39	Carpenter Dr William Heirs Pratt-Carpenter Cemetery Cemetery Commission Winslow Cemetery	Locust Street	Carpenter Dr William Heirs Pratt-Carpenter Cemetery Cemetery Commission Winslow Cemetery	0.08	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
206	118	Winslow Helen W Heirs Cemetery Commission Henke Wakenda S TR	Locust Street	Winslow Helen W Heirs Cemetery Commission Henke Wakenda S TR	0.31	Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	No
207	111	Richmond Heritage Trust Henke Wakenda S TR	Richmond Road	Richmond Heritage Trust Henke Wakenda S TR	42.66	Conservation Restriction	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
207	38	Richmond Heritage Trust	Richmond Road	Richmond Heritage Trust	20	Conservation Restriction	Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
210	139	Freetown Historical Society	5 Slab Bridge Road	Freetown Historical Society	7.5		Yes	Open Space	Yes	
210	139	Freetown Historical Society Durfee-Hatheway Cemetery Durfee Priscilla H Heirs	5-R Slab Bridge Road	Freetown Historical Society Durfee-Hatheway Cemetery Durfee Priscilla H Heirs	1.89		Yes	Open Space	Yes	
211	51	Cemetery Commission	Mill Street	Cemetery Commission	0.11	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
211	63	Freetown Historical Society	1 Slab Bridge Road	Freetown Historical Society	1.27		Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
211	64	Freetown Historical Society	Slab Bridge Road	Freetown Historical Society	0.5		Low	Yes	Open Space	Yes
211	65	Algonquin Gas Transmission Co Plummer Burial Ground	Slab Bridge Road	Algonquin Gas Transmission Co Plummer Burial Ground	0.7	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
211	136	Cemetery Commission Schmidt David C Trustee	South Main Street	Cemetery Commission Schmidt David C Trustee	0.76	Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	No
211	146	The Purchase Homeowners Assoc	Freemen's Circle	The Purchase Homeowners Assoc	0.238	Recreation	High	No	Open Space	No
214	8	Fall River Water Department	97 South Main Street	Fall River Water Department	1.3	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
214	14	Fall River Water Department	Copicut Road	Fall River Water Department	7.8	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
214	18	Fall River Water Department Merrick Cemetery	South Main/Narrows Road	Fall River Water Department Merrick Cemetery	10.5	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
214	18.02	Cemetery Commission Evans Family Cemetery	Orchard Street	Cemetery Commission Evans Family Cemetery	0.625	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
214	73	Gail W Hotz	Narrows Road	Gail W Hotz	1.03	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
221	6	New Bedford Water District	Middleboro/Morton Road	New Bedford Water District	0.26	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
221	7	New Bedford Water District	Middleboro Road	New Bedford Water District	2.2	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
221	24	New Bedford Water District	Middleboro Road	New Bedford Water District	0.77	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
221	43	New Bedford Water District	Springhill Avenue	New Bedford Water District	11.6	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
221	52	Fall River Water Department	Quiticus Avenue	Fall River Water Department	0.07	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
221	62	New Bedford Water District Morton Cemetery	1 Negus Way	New Bedford Water District Morton Cemetery	190	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
221	67	Cemetery Commission	Middleboro Road	Cemetery Commission	0.38	Cemetery	Low	Yes	Open Space	No
221	74	New Bedford Water District	Conduit Road	New Bedford Water District	3.3	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
225	7	New Bedford Water District Pittsley Cemetery Assoc	Dr Braley Road	New Bedford Water District Pittsley Cemetery Assoc	12	Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
226	45	Robt Reynolds Rounsevell Cemetery	Middleboro Road	Robt Reynolds Rounsevell Cemetery	0.36	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
227	85	C Kuechler & L H Chace Jr Trs Hathaway Family Cemetery Terry Lucy S Est	County Road	C Kuechler & L H Chace Jr Trs Hathaway Family Cemetery Terry Lucy S Est	2.2	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
232	5	Cemetery Commission	High Street	Cemetery Commission	0.26	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
233	30	Copart Terry Capt Job Burial Ground Terry Job & Rebecca Heirs	170 South Main Street	Copart Terry Capt Job Burial Ground Terry Job & Rebecca Heirs	132	Conservation Restriction	Low	Yes	Industrial	No
233	30.01	Cemetery Commission	South Main Street	Cemetery Commission	0.39	Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No

233	Terry Burial Ground 30.02 Cemetery Commission Robinson Burying Ground Robinson David Heirs	South Main Street	Terry Burial Ground Cemetery Commission Robinson Burying Ground Robinson David Heirs	0.35 Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
234	3 Cemetery Commission Venancio Manuel P Heirs	Robinson's Lane	Cemetery Commission Venancio Manuel P Heirs	0.59 Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
235	12 Law Office of Luke Travis Chace Cemetery	Island Bed	Law Office of Luke Travis Chace Cemetery	0.98 Open Space	Low	No	Open Space	No
241	6 Cris Parker	Chace Road	Cris Parker	2 Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
242	47 New Bedford Water District	Conduit Road	New Bedford Water District	28 Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
243	10 New Bedford Water District White Cemetery Association	Middleboro Road	New Bedford Water District White Cemetery Association	24 Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
243	29 Kendrick Richard Sr	Dr Braley Road	Kendrick Richard Sr	2 Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
243	76 New Bedford Water District White Cemetery Association	Middleboro Road	New Bedford Water District White Cemetery Association	8.2 Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
245	4 Kendrick Richard Sr	Keene Road	Kendrick Richard Sr	4.8 Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
253	17 New Bedford Water District	East Chipaway Road	New Bedford Water District	1 Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
253	25 New Bedford Water District Reynolds Cemetery Association	East Chipaway Road	New Bedford Water District Reynolds Cemetery Association	4.3 Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
253	29 Richard Pittsley	East Chipaway Road	Richard Pittsley	0.27 Cemetery	Low	No	Open Space	No
253	32 New Bedford Water District	East Chipaway Road	New Bedford Water District	0.76 Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
253	34 New Bedford Water District	11.5 East Chipaway Road	New Bedford Water District	3 Private	Low	No	Open Space	No
256	38 Fall River Water Department	Crapo Lane	Fall River Water Department	0.75 Private	Low	No	Residential	No

**APPENDIX E**  
**Comment Letters**



# TOWN OF FREETOWN PLANNING BOARD

TOWN HALL • P. O. BOX 438 • ASSONET, MASSACHUSETTS 02702

Chairman  
Robert Jose

Vice Chairman  
Debra Robbins

Members  
Christopher Mello  
James Frates  
David Crose

January 18, 2023

**Jeffrey Amaral, Chair**  
**Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee**  
**3 North Main Street**  
**Assonet, MA 02702**

RE: Open Space and Recreation Plan 2023

Dear Mr. Amaral,

I am writing on behalf of the Town of Freetown Planning Board with regard to the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee's updated draft of the *Freetown Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029* ("the Plan", issuing the Board's letter of support.

At the Planning Board's meeting on January 17, 2023, a majority of the Board voted in support of the Plan for the Town of Freetown as submitted by the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee. The Board would also like to offer its appreciation to the members of the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee for their two years of hard work and commitment needed to complete the Town of Freetown Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The Plan is very thorough and it should serve the Town well as it continues its efforts to preserve open space and provide for the recreational needs of its residents.

Sincerely,

Victoria D'Antoni  
Planning and Land Use  
Administrator



**SRPEDD**

Southeastern Regional Planning  
& Economic Development District

January 12, 2023

Melissa Cryan  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
Division of Conservation Services  
100 Cambridge Street  
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Town of Freetown, Open Space and Recreation Plan

Dear Ms. Cryan:

Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District's (SRPEDD) Environmental Program staff has recently completed a review of the Town of Freetown's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

The plan is consistent with SRPEDD's regional goals and objectives and is in general compliance with DCS's Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements. The Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC) has done a commendable job in developing what will be Freetown's **first ever** OSRP. The Committee has been incredibly thorough, open, and directly involved in assessing the natural, recreational, and structural assets of the town. The Seven Year Action Plan has been publicly vetted and accurately represents community needs and issues of concern that came up in public visioning sessions, in the public survey, and in discussions with SRPEDD and town boards, commissions, and committees.

The town's planning and conservation staff, as well as the Board of Selectmen, see the opportunity to integrate the OSRP into a forthcoming Master Plan (2023-24) in order to promote long-range planning for growth and conservation; land use management for water resource protection, floodplain preservation, stormwater management, and, protection of the town's cultural, historical, and natural resources that are not only important to the town, but to the region and the Commonwealth as a whole.

SRPEDD strongly supports the certification of the first Freetown Open Space and Recreation Plan. The OSRP's development has already catalyzed a number of planning initiatives in the town and in cooperation with regional partners, and has prompted discussion of even more ambitious projects in the future.

If you have any questions regarding our comments, please do not hesitate to contact Bill Napolitano, our Rivers, Trails, and Watersheds Program Manager.

Respectfully,

*Bill Napolitano*

Bill Napolitano

Rivers, Trails, and Watersheds Program Manager

[bnap@srpedd.org](mailto:bnap@srpedd.org)

508 824-1367 ext. 315



TOWN OF FREETOWN  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
TOWN HALL • P. O. BOX 438 • ASSONET, MASSACHUSETTS 02702

Chairman  
Keven V. Desmarais

Members  
Christopher R. Mather  
Keith M. Mello  
Charles B. Sullivan, Jr.  
Margaret French

January 25, 2023

**Jeffrey Amaral, Chair**  
**Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee**  
**3 North Main Street**  
**Assonet, MA 02702**

RE: Open Space and Recreation Plan 2023

Dear Mr. Amaral,

I am writing on behalf of the Town of Freetown Conservation Committee with regard to the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee's updated draft of the Freetown Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029 ("the Plan", issuing the Commission's letter of support.

At the Conservation Commission's meeting on January 23, 2023, the Commission unanimously voted in support of the Plan for the Town of Freetown as submitted by the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee. The Commission would also like to commend to the members of the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee for the thoroughness of the document and level of collaboration that was necessary to complete this report.

The Plan provides the Town with strong goals in regards to Open Space and Recreation. We look forward to the implementation of the Plan.

Sincerely,

Victoria D'Antoni  
Planning and Land Use  
Administrator





# TOWN OF FREETOWN

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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TREVOR R. MATTHEWS, CHAIR

JARED C. ZAGER

CARLOS LOPES

DEBORAH L. PETTEY, INTERIM TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

LU-ANN SOUZA, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, LOLA FURTADO, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

3/1/2023

Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee,

The Board of Selectmen is writing in support of the Open Space Plan the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee submitted for their review.

The Board acknowledges the many hours the committee has poured into this enormous endeavor and would like to express their gratitude on behalf of the Town of Freetown.

With this plan in place the Town of Freetown will be poised to implement some amazing improvements throughout the Town of Freetown.

Once again, thank you for your efforts on this project. We look forward to seeing where the future takes us and we are proud to have each and every committee member on this exciting journey to a brilliant future with Freetown's open spaces.

Sincerely,  
Freetown Board of Selectmen

Trevor R. Matthews, Chairman

Jared C. Zager

Carlos A. Lopes

Cc: Jeff Amaral, Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee