

**PAXTON, MASSACHUSETTS
2008 COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN**

CHAPTER 6

**NATURAL FEATURES,
OPEN SPACE & RECREATION**



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NATURAL FEATURES, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION

COMMUNITY SETTING

A. Regional Context

Comprised of 9,904 acres, Paxton is bordered on the west by Oakham and Spencer, on the north by Rutland, on the east by Holden and on the south by Worcester and Leicester. Paxton's hilly terrain features rounded drumlins and winding stream valleys.

The Town center is located along Route 122, which runs through Paxton in a northwest to southeast direction. Route 31 (east and west) bisects Route 122 at Paxton Center, and Route 56-south links up to Route 122 in the southeast corner of Town, while Route 56-north branches off Route 122 in the center of Paxton. Paxton is the home of Anna Maria College, which is located off of Grove Street in the northeast corner of Town. Paxton has an abundance of permanently protected natural areas, including Moore State Park (located west of town center) and the Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area (southwest corner of town), and watershed lands that are closed to the public.

Paxton has long been one of Greater Worcester's most rural communities, with a rich agricultural history. Although the number of active farms in Paxton has dwindled over the last fifty years, the Town still retains its rural character and charm. Paxton qualifies as a "bedroom" community as the vast majority of its workforce (88%) works outside of Town (source: 1990 US Census). Just over half of the workers that constitute Paxton's workforce have jobs in the City of Worcester.

Paxton is blessed with a wealth of water resources, including four ponds, three reservoirs, and numerous brooks and intermittent streams. Paxton shares Kettle Brook Reservoir #3 with Leicester, Turkey Hill Pond with Rutland, and Pine Hill Reservoir with Rutland and Holden. The western half of the Town falls within the Chicopee River Watershed, while the eastern half is divided between two major watersheds: the Nashua River Watershed (northeastern quarter), and the Blackstone River Watershed (southeastern quarter).

Worcester utilizes several of Paxton's major reservoirs for the City's public water supply. A total of roughly five million gallons per day is drawn from Kettle Brook Reservoirs #3 & #4, and Pine Hill Reservoir. Kettle Brook Reservoirs #3 & #4 have storage capacities of 152 million gallons and 514 million gallons, respectively, while Pine Hill Reservoir has a total storage capacity of 2,971 million gallons. The water is pumped to the City's surface water treatment plant before entering the distribution system. Worcester in turn sells water to Paxton's entire municipal water service area. Paxton has a twenty-year agreement with Worcester to pump up to an average of 450,000 gallons per day from the City's water system.

B. History of the Community

The Town of Paxton was settled around 1748 and incorporated on February 12, 1765. The citizens of Leicester and Rutland had petitioned the Legislature in Boston several times to create a separate municipality. Although they had several reasons for this petition, the most important was that of hardship in traveling great distances to attend public worship. When the bill for incorporating the Town passed the House of Representatives, no name was inserted. The blank was filled in with the name Paxton in honor of Charles Paxton, the marshal of the Admiralty Court. It is said that Paxton promised the Town a bell if it was named after him. This promise was never fulfilled. After his participation in drafting the hated tea tax, an unsuccessful attempt was made by the inhabitants of Paxton to change the name of the Town.



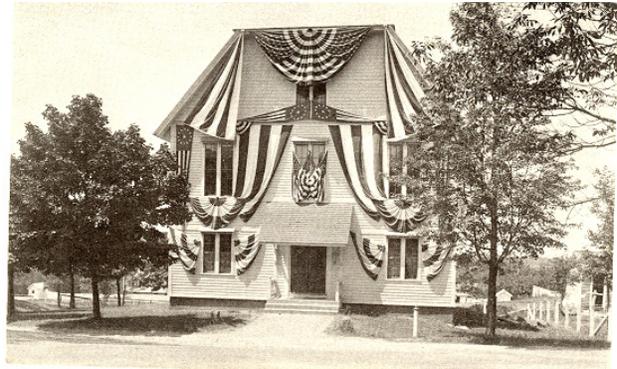
The present day Congregational Church was an integral part of the new Town. It was organized and completed in 1767. The church served as a place for all town meetings and a house of worship. The Church was originally situated on the town common. In 1835, after the disassociation of church and state, the church was moved a short distance away to a privately donated site where it still stands today. A basement story was added for use as a town hall and other social functions. At that time, a bell was brought by oxen from Boston to hang in the new belfry. To this day, members of the congregation ring the bell (made in Paul Revere's foundry) on Christmas Eve.

Paxton's first town meeting to elect district officers was held at the house of John Snow, who kept a tavern or hotel. In those early days, the inhabitants had no town hall so meetings were held in a public house or tavern. The same town meeting form of government is still in existence in Paxton. A town hall was erected in 1888 in which citizens could conduct town meetings and other town business. In 1899 a brick Records Building was erected for the safekeeping of town records. Both the Town Hall and Record Building are located on Pleasant Street and are still in use.

The early timber industry and the clearing of lands for agriculture left Paxton a predominantly open landscape in its beginning years. The abandonment of pastures and croplands has more recently led to an extensive coverage of second growth woodlands. Paxton's woodlands contribute to that intangible quality known as "rural character".

Although there exists no industry today, Paxton once supported a thriving boot and shoe industry. In 1820 John Partridge established this industry, which equaled in value (if not exceeded) the products of the farms in town. The firm Lakin and Bigelow and later R.F. Bigelow and Son followed in the same line. Several hotels, namely the Kenilworth and the Summit, served “summer people” from as far away as New York. The Paxton Inn served as an inn and stable for stagecoaches and horsemen passing through town. In 1915 it also served as a barracks for Company G of the State Police before becoming a restaurant prior to being destroyed by fire in 2001.

A major historical attraction in Paxton is the Moore State Park, which contains the remains of the Newton Sawmill Village. A sawmill, gristmill, trip hammer, and other mills serviced the area as early as the 1740’s. Use of the sawmill (still standing) dates back as early as 1767. Archeological excavations have exposed several ancient foundations and preservation is ongoing to restore the grounds around the mill to their original state.



According to the Historical Commission, the entire Town could be viewed as a vast historic landscape. A surprising number of clues to Paxton’s agrarian past have survived the building booms to date. There is no complete listing of archaeological sites, but it should be noted that Ledyard Bill, the author of The History of Paxton in 1899 states on p. 73, “There are all over town, many half filled cellars where former dwellings stood, and they equal in point of numbers the buildings now standing outside of the village proper.” In addition to the cellar holes of abandoned farmhouses, other historic features worthy of preservation include stonewalls, vestigial orchard trees, stone boat dumps, wells, and shade trees, especially street trees which were intentionally planted a century ago.

The needs and attitudes of the populace have since changed over the years so that the Town now assumes a suburban character, with Worcester providing many of the services and goods that the early townspeople once provided for themselves.

C. Population Characteristics

Between 1940 and 1970 Paxton’s population increased fivefold. Paxton’s growth rate has leveled off somewhat during the past thirty years, with just over 600 new residents moving to Town during this period. Paxton’s population is expected to grow at a slightly faster rate over the next decade.

Table OSR 1 - Paxton Population Growth

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*
Population	791	1,066	2,399	3,731	3,762	4,047	4,386	5,026
Increase (%)		34.8	125	55.5	0.8	7.5	8.4	14.6

Sources: US Census Bureau. * = Forecast for 2010 provided by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) at UMass Amherst.

Paxton's population growth has resulted in an increase in population density. Comprised of 9,903.8 acres of land (or 14.7 square miles), Paxton's average of persons per square mile grew from 53.8 in 1940 to 297.7 by the year 2000. Paxton falls somewhere in the middle when comparing its population density figure to those of its adjacent neighbors. Oakham (79.2) and Rutland (180.2) have lower population densities; while Holden (446.4), Leicester (448.3), Spencer (355.9) and Worcester (4,596.5) have higher population densities.

Table OSR 2 - Paxton Age Characteristics

Age Group	Number	% of Total Population
Under 5 Years of Age	219	5.0%
5 – 19	1,074	24.5%
20-44	1,402	32.0%
45-64	1,051	24.0%
65 Years of Age and Over	640	14.5%
Total:	4,386	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Table 2 indicates that roughly one quarter of Paxton's population consists of school-aged children. All of Paxton's population categories have shown a slight increase since the 1990 US Census, except the 20 - 44 age category, which has declined slightly. The MISER population forecasts for the year 2010 indicate that Paxton can expect a moderate increase for all population groups, except children under five years of age and senior citizens (65 years of age and older) which are projected to decrease slightly. Census data indicate that the median age for Paxton residents has increased from 26.5 in 1970 to 38.1 in 2000.

Table OSR 3 - Households by Type

Type of Household	Number	% of Total Households
Married Couple Family	1,029	72.0%
Male Householder	39	2.6%
Female Householder	86	6.2%
Non-Family Household	274	19.2%
Totals:	1,428	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Table 3 indicates that nearly three quarters of Paxton households consist of married couple families. Families with children often expect to find a diverse selection of recreational opportunities (both passive and active) in their communities, whether provided by the municipality itself or by private entities.

Table OSR 4 – Median Household Income Comparison

Paxton Median Household Income	\$72,039
State Rank	61 (out of 351 municipalities)
State Median Household Income	\$50,502
Percent of State Average	142.6%
Worcester County Median Household Income	\$47,874
Percent of Worcester County Average	150.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Paxton’s median household income is higher than that in most other communities in Worcester County and the State as a whole. Out of 351 municipalities in Massachusetts, only 60 communities have a higher median household income. Of the 58 communities in Worcester County, only eight have a higher median household income. This is an indicator of an affluent community that should be able to afford the cost of providing a diverse selection of recreational opportunities and open space amenities for its citizens.

Table OSR 5 – Per Capita Income Comparison

Paxton Per Capita Income	\$29,573
State Rank	95 (out of 351 municipalities)
State Per Capita Income	\$25,952
Percent of State Average	113.9%
Worcester County Per Capita Income	\$22,983
Percent of Worcester County Average	128.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Paxton’s per capita income is again quite high when compared to other communities in Worcester County and the State as a whole. Out of 351 municipalities, there are only 94 communities that have a higher per capita income. Of the 58 communities in Worcester County, only nine have a higher per capita income. This is another indicator of the relative prosperity of Paxton’s residents. A breakdown of Paxton’s income categories is provided in the table below.

Table OSR 6 – Paxton Household Income Distribution

Less than \$10,000	32 households
\$10,000 - \$24,999	109 households
\$25,000 - \$34,999	140 households
\$35,000 - \$49,999	143 households
\$50,000 - \$74,999	302 households
\$75,000 - \$99,999	288 households
\$100,000 - \$149,999	236 households
\$150,000 and over	175 households

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

The 2000 US Census data further indicate that the vast majority of housing units are owner-occupied, another indicator of prosperity for Paxton residents. Of the 1,428 occupied housing units existing in Paxton as of 2000, 94.8% were owner-occupied housing units while the remainder (5.2%) consisted of rental units.

Additional Demographics

Jobs: According to the most recent statistics of the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training (DETM), there were 76 business establishments in Paxton as of 2001, employing a total of 710 people. Paxton’s service industry had the highest number of these jobs (317) followed by the government employment category.

Labor Force: DETMA statistics further indicate that Paxton had a labor force of 2,380 workers as of 2001, with an unemployment rate of 2.4% (a full point below the State average of 3.7% for 2001). Paxton’s unemployment rate has hovered in the 2 to 3 percent range for the past twelve years, with 1991 and 1992 being the only exceptions. It is interesting to note that Paxton’s unemployment rate has remained steady throughout 2002, while the State’s unemployment rate has surged above 5% on several occasions.

D. Growth and Development Patterns

D-1. Patterns and Trends: The University of Massachusetts-Amherst has been tracking statewide land use data for the better part of the last century. The University uses aerial photographs and interprets them (now using GIS) based on land use categories. Table 7 below outlines Paxton’s land use totals for the last three UMass-Amherst statewide land use mapping efforts.

Table OSR 7 – Paxton Land Use Changes Over the Years

1971	1985	1999
1,045 developed acres	1,310 developed acres	1,643 acres
(914 residential)	(1,184 residential)	(1,495 residential)
(14 commercial)	(17 commercial)	(20 commercial)
(3 industrial)	(3 industrial)	(0 industrial)
(113 institutional)	(106 institutional)	(128 institutional)

Source: UMass-Amherst land use data for 1971, 1985 and 1999.

Table 7 indicates that Paxton’s residential sector has grown faster than any other land use category (64% during the past 30 years), and this is typically the case for most rural communities. Paxton has a minimal amount of commercial and industrial development and this will continue to be the case as long as the current zoning bylaw remains unchanged. Paxton has a moderate amount of institutional land consisting of Paxton Center School, two churches, and Anna Maria College. A graphic depiction of Paxton’s current zoning and existing land use pattern can be found on the Zoning Map and Land Use Analysis Map.

Paxton’s Buildout Analysis: In 1999, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) began a statewide effort to prepare a buildout analysis for each community in the State. A buildout analysis attempts to determine the number of developable lots and the town’s total population at full buildout, that is, if the town were completely developed under the standards of current zoning. Existing developed lands, protected lands and land with environmental constraints are taken out of the equation, and the remaining developable land is divided by the standards of the local zoning bylaw. The regional planning commissions were contracted to perform buildout studies for each community in their respective regions. In Paxton’s case, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) completed a buildout analysis for the Town in early 2000. A summary of Paxton’s buildout analysis is presented below. The first section details the amount of new development that Paxton could accommodate if its remaining vacant developable land were fully built out, while the second section adds the buildout potential to Paxton’s current land use figures to estimate what Paxton would look like upon achieving full buildout.

Table OSR 8 – Paxton Buildout Analysis

Remaining Acres of Vacant, Developable Land	4,181
Additional New Residential Housing Lots	2,842
Additional New Population	8,526
Additional New School-Age Children	1,995
Total House Lots at Full Buildout	4,303
Total Population at Full Buildout	12,912
Total School-Age Children	3,032

Source: CMRPC Buildout Analysis for Paxton, Spring 2000.

Paxton’s buildout analysis indicates that the Town is roughly one third of the way towards full buildout under the current standards of the zoning bylaw. Enough vacant developable land exists to triple the Town’s population and number of housing units. It should be noted that a buildout analysis does not attempt to determine *when* a community will reach full buildout; rather, it is simply an attempt to determine what a community would look like if its remaining vacant land were developed according to the town’s current zoning standards. The town could alter its buildout results by making changes to dimensional requirements for new lots (lot size, frontage) or by permanently protecting more land in town. Thus a buildout analysis is fluid and represents but a snapshot in time. Since 1995, Paxton has averaged 16.6 new residential building permits per year, with a high of 22 in 1997 and a low of 9 in 1996. At this rate of development, Paxton will not achieve full buildout for roughly 170 years.

Paxton will most likely retain its present land use pattern of scattered and dispersed development surrounding corridors of suburban residential clusters, a strip roadside development concentrated between the town center and the Worcester-Paxton boundary along Route 122. These patterns are expected to remain the same because an estimated 98% of Paxton’s land area cannot support the on-site sewerage systems required for commercial, industrial and residential growth.

D-2. Infrastructure

a. Transportation Network: Paxton has poor access to the interstate highway system, with Routes 90, 190 and 290 being at least 15-20 minutes away. There are several important State routes through Paxton: Routes 56 and 122 start in the southeast corner of town and extend through the heart of town in a northerly direction, and Route 31 extends through Paxton in an east-to-west direction. This lack of access may represent an important factor in Paxton’s failure to develop significant industry. Unlike the neighboring towns of Leicester and Spencer, Paxton remained primarily agricultural.

b. Paxton Water Supply System:

Overview: The Town of Paxton has a mixture of town water and private wells. The Paxton Water Department supplies town water to approximately 1,200 of the 1,400 homes and businesses in Paxton. The remaining homes have private wells.

Water Distribution System: The Paxton Water Department currently purchases all of its water from the City of Worcester. The Town maintains a pumping station on Pleasant Street at the Worcester City line to pump water from Worcester, and two water storage tanks, one on Maple Street and one on Asnebumskit Road. Paxton’s water distribution system begins with its pumping station at the Worcester City line on Pleasant Street. Water mains extend up Pleasant Street from the Worcester line to the center of Town, and branch off this main line to most parts of Town:

- Pleasant St. from the Worcester line to Davis Hill Rd.
- Grove St. from Pleasant St. to Sunset Ln.
- Holden Rd. (Rte. 31) from Grove St. to the Holden line.
- Streeter Rd. and Maple St. from Grove St. to Richards Ave.
- Richards Ave. (Rte. 56) to Brooks Rd.
- West St. (Rte 31) to South St.
- South St. and Suomi St. from West St. to Marshall St.
- Marshall St. to the Spencer line.

Major neighborhoods not served by Town water include:

- Brigham Rd.
- Nanigian Rd.
- Laurel St.
- Pond St./Grove St. beyond Sunset Ln.

Water Treatment: All of the water purchased from Worcester is treated at the City’s water filtration plant in Holden. The Worcester water filtration plant combines disinfection and filtration to provide excellent water quality. Water is initially treated with Ozone for primary disinfection. The water then undergoes filtration through eight coal/sand filters, followed by final disinfection with Chlorine. The filtration plant is capable of treating 50 million gallons of water per day.

Water Supply: The City of Worcester obtains water from eleven surface water reservoirs located in Paxton and surrounding communities. These reservoirs combined hold over 7 billion gallons of water. The Worcester reservoirs include:

- Asnebumskit Pond – Paxton
- Pine Hill Reservoir – Paxton/Rutland/Holden
- Kettle Brook Reservoir #4 – Paxton
- Kettle Brook Reservoir #3 – Paxton/Leicester
- Kettle Brook Reservoir #2 – Leicester
- Kettle Brook Reservoir #1 – Leicester
- Lynde Brook Reservoir – Leicester
- Kendell Reservoir – Holden
- Holden Reservoir #1 – Holden
- Holden Reservoir #2 – Holden
- Quinapoxet Reservoir – Holden/Princeton

In addition to these reservoirs, the City of Worcester can draw water from the Quabbin Reservoir Aqueduct at shafts 3 and 4. Due to cost considerations, the Quabbin Reservoir Aqueduct is considered an emergency water supply only. However, the City has drawn water from the Quabbin Aqueduct during droughts. Of the Worcester Reservoirs, four are located in the Town of Paxton, and portions of the watersheds of all but one (Quinapoxet) are in Paxton.

Asnebumskit Pond is owned and maintained exclusively by the Town of Paxton. Asnebumskit Pond was the Town's only water supply before it connected to the Worcester system in 1998. By the terms of the water contract, the City of Worcester can draw up to 270,000 gallons per day from Asnebumskit Pond. In addition to the Worcester reservoirs, the Leicester Water District maintains 4 wells off Grove Street in Paxton. These wells supply water to a portion of the Town of Leicester. The Town of Paxton has an agreement with the Leicester Water District allowing it to obtain water from these wells in an emergency.

Water Supply Protection Efforts:

1. Open Space Protection

The City of Worcester owns a significant amount of land (approximately 1,590 acres) in Paxton to protect the watersheds of the Kettle Brook and Pine Hill Reservoirs, and additional land (approximately 224 acres) in the watershed is protected through conservation restriction. The Town of Paxton owns a relatively narrow strip of land surrounding Asnebumskit Pond for watershed protection, and the Leicester Water District owns the property immediately surrounding its wells (48 acres total).

2. The Watershed Protection Act

The Watershed Protection Act, passed by the Massachusetts State Legislature, protects areas surrounding the Pine Hill Reservoir, Asnebumskit Pond, and their tributaries. These regulated areas and tributaries eventually drain to the Wachusett Reservoir which serves as a public drinking water supply for over two million people in the Greater Boston Area.

3. Town Zoning Protection

In the fall of 2001, the Town of Paxton enacted a Watershed Protection District as part of its Zoning Bylaws. The Watershed Protection District restricts land use in areas of town bordering reservoirs, tributaries of reservoirs, and the Leicester Water District wells. The Watershed Protection District regulations are similar to those of the Massachusetts Watershed Protection Act (the Cohen bill).

Water Supply Constraints: The contract between the Town of Paxton and the City of Worcester specifies that the Town can purchase up to 450,000 gallons of water per day. Of this amount, the Town receives a 20% rate discount on the first 370,000 gallons/day. The Town is currently consuming about 350,000 gallons of water a day. This means that the Town is using 95% of the water it can purchase at the discount rate, and can only add about 300 homes before reaching the overall limit.

If the town reaches the limit, it will be forced to either renegotiate the Worcester contract, or build municipal wells. Both of these options would represent a significant cost to the residents of Paxton.

Table OSR 9 – Paxton Water System Statistics

Total Available Water	450,000 gallons/day
Available at 20% Discount	370,000 gallons/day
1999 Water Usage	350,000 gallons/day
1999 Water Customers	1,158
Usage/Day/Customers	302.2 gallons/day/customer
Remaining Discount	20,000 gallons/day
New Customers Under Discount	66*
Total Remaining Water	100,000 gallons/day
Total New Customers	331*

Environmental Inventory and Analysis

A. Geology, Soils & Topography

The bedrock of Paxton belongs to the Merrimack Belt, which extends at least 250 miles from Connecticut into Maine. The sediments that formed these rocks were deposited several hundred million years ago, in the Silurian and Devonian Periods. The sediments gave rise to sedimentary rocks, which were subsequently subjected to heat and pressure, producing the metamorphic rocks that comprise the Merrimack Belt today. These rocks are classified as schist, quartzite and phyllite, reflecting the different particle sizes of the original sediments as well as the conditions of metamorphosis. In the Paxton area, geologists have recognized two members of the Merrimack Belt, the Silurian Paxton Formation and the Lower Devonian Littleton Formation.

The metamorphosed sedimentary rocks of the Merrimack Belt are interrupted in two places by other rocks. Parts of Brigham Hill west of Eames Pond are underlain by metamorphosed intrusive rocks known as granitic gneiss, probably of Devonian age. Also present in Paxton is a diabase dike. Diabase is dark, fine-textured igneous rock. It forms dikes when it is intruded into fractures in overlying rock. This dike trends northeast/southwest, running from the vicinity of Turkey Hill Pond southwest to West Street just north of Thomson Pond. It continues outside of Paxton, both to the northeast and to the southwest. This dike was probably emplaced during the Lower Jurassic.

The glaciation of the past few millions of years shaped much of the mineral surface of Paxton. The most prominent glacial features are several drumlins. These streamlined hills shaped by the glaciers include Turkey Hill, Davis Hill, Brigham Hill, Black Hill and several others. Melting glaciers also deposited a mantle of till over the bedrock, providing the parent material from which soils have developed. While glacial till is widespread in Paxton, glacial outwash is rare.

* Approximately 30 water customers have been added since 1999.

Outwash is a deposit of glacial streams and typically consists of sand and gravel. The rarity of glacial outwash has left the town without useful gravel deposits and means that soils with high percolation rates are uncommon.

The most recent information on the soils of Paxton is provided by an interim soil report published for the northwest section of Worcester County by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS has completed its soil investigations and mapping for the northwestern section of Worcester County, and the final report is due to be printed within two years. The most common upland soil types in Paxton are those of the Paxton, Charlton, Woodbridge, Ridgebury and Canton Series. These are mostly fine sandy loams developed on glacial till. Many are stony or extremely stony, and typical slopes are 3-15%. Several of these soils have a firm layer at a depth of 26-30 inches that impedes drainage and makes the siting of septic systems difficult. Canton, Paxton and Woodbridge soils on slopes below 8% are considered prime farmland. A graphic depiction of Paxton's soil properties can be seen on the Soils and Unique Geologic Features Map.

The most common wetland soils in Paxton are Bucksport and Wonsqueak Mucks. These occupy extensive areas along Turkey Hill Brook and bordering an unnamed tributary to Carruth Brook near the Rutland town line, as well as smaller areas at additional, scattered locations. They are highly organic soils with the water table near the surface for much of the year, and they support swampy woods, shrub swamps or marshes.



Paxton is part of the central upland region of Massachusetts. Just east of Paxton is an indistinct escarpment running from Fitchburg to Douglas. Land to the east of this escarpment is mostly 590 feet or less in elevation and slopes gently to the southeast. Within Paxton, elevations range from 885 feet to 1390 feet, with most of the land between 985 and 1,150 feet. The highest point is Asnebumskit Hill, a rocky prominence in the eastern part of Town. The lowest point occurs where Turkey Hill Brook enters Leicester downstream from Eames Pond.

B. Landscape Character

Paxton presents a landscape that is moderately varied in topography and vegetation, and that includes numerous ponds and reservoirs. The high point of Asnebumskit Hill stands clearly above the surrounding land when viewed from a distance (e.g. from Wachusett Mountain), though it cannot be seen from many parts of town owing to smaller intervening hills. The land today is predominantly forested, though scattered fields remain from prior farming activities. A few of the fields are still under cultivation, especially on the Cournoyer Farm between Route 56 and Grove Street. Most, however, are in hayfields or have been abandoned but have not yet been invaded by forest. Some of the best vistas in Paxton are associated with these old pastures and fields, including those of the aforementioned Cournoyer Farm, and others along Davis Hill Road. Significant features of Paxton's landscape can be seen on the Unique Landscape Features Map.



Several of Paxton's waterbodies are water supply reservoirs, and they and the surrounding lands are closed to the public. The only large pond with public access is Eames Pond in Moore State Park. Because Paxton straddles three watersheds, it has no rivers or large streams, but does have numerous temporary and small permanent streams. The most scenic of these is Turkey Hill Brook, which flows through a small gorge at Moore State Park, a site that draws many visitors.

C. Water Resources

Paxton lies in the watersheds of three rivers: the Blackstone, Nashua and Chicopee. Water supply reservoirs exist downstream in both the Blackstone and Nashua watersheds. These two watersheds lie in the eastern part of town, and occupy about 40% of the Town's total land area.

In the Blackstone drainage are two reservoirs, Kettle Brook Reservoir No. 3 and No. 4, owned by the City of Worcester. These are used for water supply, and the waters, shores and adjacent land are off limits to the public. Also in the Blackstone drainage is Southwick Pond, a portion of which lies in Paxton. Water flowing out of this pond joins Lynde Brook, which supplies Lynde Brook Reservoir in Leicester, also owned by the City of Worcester. Ownership of the Paxton part of Southwick Pond is private, though a portion of the shoreline is owned by the Greater Worcester Land Trust and is open to the public.

Three bodies of water in the northeast part of town are tributary to the Nashua River that eventually drains into the Wachusett Reservoir that, in turn, serves as a drinking water supply for over two million people in the Greater Boston area. Paxton's portion of the Nashua River Watershed includes two reservoirs: Asnebumskit Pond and Pine Hill Reservoir; the former is owned by Paxton and the latter by Worcester. A few houses exist on the west side of

Asnebumskit Pond, but there is no public access to either body of water. The remaining pond in this area is Streeter Pond, which lies upstream from Pine Hill Reservoir and is privately owned.

Two ponds on the west side of town lie along Turkey Hill Brook, which flows via the Quaboag River to the Chicopee River. One of these ponds (Turkey Hill Pond) lies partly in Rutland and there is no public access in either town. The other, Eames Pond, lies wholly in Paxton and the southern two thirds of the pond is included in Moore State Park. This pond supports an extensive



growth of aquatic macrophytes by midsummer and is lightly used by canoeists.

Because only a portion of the town is supplied by town water, many private wells are used for water supply. In addition, the town of Leicester has several wells and pumping stations on the east side of town adjacent to Grove Street. The land immediately surrounding the Leicester-owned wells is considered an aquifer recharge area, the extent of which was defined by the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) in a study conducted in 2001. The four Leicester-owned wells have

the capacity to deliver up to 320,000 gallons per day; however, the actual amount of water used per day is 200,000 gallons and this is the amount specified in the Town's permit from the State. The size of Leicester's pipes leading from the wells to the water distribution system are such that only two of the wells can operate at a time and only 200,000 gallons per day can be brought into Leicester from their Paxton wells.

Paxton occupies the height of land between several drainages, and flood hazard areas are limited in extent (Federal Emergency Management Agency 1981). Areas in the 100-year flood plain (Zone A) include land in the immediate vicinity of Asnebumskit Pond, Pine Hill Reservoir, the Kettle Brook Reservoirs and Eames Pond. Also in zone A are four additional areas: 1) swampy land adjacent to a small stream that rises north of Marshall Street and flows south parallel to Hill Street into Leicester, 2) swampy land northeast of Route 122 that represents a vegetated wetland tributary to Eames Pond, 3) land along Carruth Brook running from north of Nanigian Road south to the Spencer line, and 4) a swampy area along Turkey Hill Brook south of Route 31. The vast majority of this land is in natural vegetation.

Zone B flood zones are more extensive. They include land adjacent to Turkey Hill Pond, Southwick Pond and Streeter Pond. Also included are areas along Bumbo Brook, at the headwaters of Carruth and Kettle Brooks, along several unnamed brooks, and various wetlands not associated with any permanent stream or pond. Land in flood Zone B is also subject to flooding during 100-year storms, but water here is estimated to reach a maximum depth not greater than one foot and/or the contributing drainage is less than one square mile in extent.

Paxton has numerous small temporary and permanent streams, with Turkey Hill Brook (which flows through a small gorge at Moore State Park) being the most scenic. A portion of Turkey

Hill Brook is designated as a Natural Heritage Estimated Habitat of Rare Wildlife. The brook originates on the slopes of Turkey Hill in northern Paxton, and flows southwest through Moore State Park. Ultimately it empties into a tributary of the Connecticut River. A graphic depiction of Paxton's water resources is presented on the Water Resources Map.

D. Vegetation

Forest is the natural vegetation cover of most of Paxton, and the majority of the town is currently forested. Because the forest is so extensive, it is difficult to identify discrete blocks of forestland. However, the most extensive forested areas uninterrupted by roads are 1) west of Brigham Road, extending into Rutland, 2) south of the center of town, bounded by Suomi Street on the west, Marshall Street on the south and the Kettle Brook Reservoirs to the east, 3) extending east from Asnebumskit Hill and Little Asnebumskit Hill into Holden, and 4) at the northern end of town, in the vicinity of Pine Hill Reservoir.

According to the forest classification of Westveld et al. (1956), Paxton is at the southern end of the Transition Hardwoods – White Pine - Hemlock zone, near the border with the more southern Central Hardwoods – Hemlock – White Pine zone. The dominant vegetation in the latter includes a variety of oaks (black, red, white, chestnut and scarlet), chestnut, red maple, shagbark and bitternut hickories and black birch. The former zone contains smaller amounts of most of these species mixed with the northern hardwoods (sugar maple, beech and yellow birch) and white ash. White pine and hemlock are of variable abundance in both zones, and their presence is strongly influenced by historical factors like fire and land use history.



Slope position has much to do with the forest types developing on Paxton sites. Low areas are usually dominated by red maple along with yellow birch, American elm and sometimes hemlock. Moist but well drained sites with relatively rich soils support sugar maple, white ash and red oak. Drier sites, including ridges and hilltops, typically contain a mixture of oaks in which black, white and red oaks are prominent along with some hickory and red maple. An excellent example of an oak savanna, with widely spaced trees and an open understory dominated by sedges occurs on the south slope of Asnebumskit

Hill. White pine can be abundant in woods originating on abandoned pastures, but is only occasional in other areas. Hemlock is most frequent in damp areas and in stream valleys.

The northern slopes of Black Hill, west of Brigham Road in the western part of town, support a stand of red pine that is apparently of natural origin. This plant community is relatively uncommon in central Massachusetts. Red pine is also abundant in plantations adjacent to the Kettle Brook Reservoirs. A few Atlantic white cedars can be found along the shores of Turkey Hill Pond, and there is a more extensive cedar swamp in Rutland on the north side of this pond.

Several non-forest vegetation types are represented in Paxton. These include marshes and shrub swamps associated with several ponds and streams. Prominent examples occur along Carruth Brook, along an unnamed brook adjacent to Hill Street, and adjacent to Turkey Hill Brook. Floating and emergent aquatic plant communities are prominent in parts of several ponds, especially Eames Pond, Southwick Pond and Turkey Hill Pond. Hay fields are dominated by alfalfa, clovers and various grasses (most of which are non-native). Abandoned fields undergoing succession typically support some combination of gray birch, aspen, white pine and red maple.

Several records of rare plants have been recorded in Paxton. One is dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium pusillum*), a species of special concern. This is an inconspicuous species growing as a parasite on black spruce trees. Cornel-leaved aster (*Aster infirmus*), an endangered species, was last reported from the west slope of Asnebumskit Hill in 1899. American hedge nettle (*Stachys palustris pilosa*), a species no longer known in the state, was collected from Paxton in 1943. Several watch list (informally tracked) species have also been recorded in Town, though most were last seen over 50 years ago. Species without information on location include fringed gentian (*Gentianopsis crinita* 1937), whorled milkwort (*Polygala verticillata* 1942), one-flowered pyrola (*Moneses uniflora* 1942), Hayden's sedge (*Carex haydenii* 1942), and the green adder's mouth orchid (*Malaxis unifolia* 1944). Narrow-leaved bur reed (*Sparganium angustifolium*) was recorded from Asnebumskit Pond in 1943 and rough aster (*Aster radula*) from the Leicester-Paxton Road in 1942. The sedge *Carex bicknellii*, also a watch list species, was recently recorded from woods along Brooks Road. Red pine is a watch list species and, as noted above, it appears to occur in a natural stand west of Brigham Road adjacent to the abandoned Carruth Road.

E. Fisheries and Wildlife

Paxton supports most of the wildlife that one can expect to find in forest, marsh, pond and residential habitat in central Massachusetts. The extensive areas of forested land without public access in the vicinity of the several reservoirs provide appropriate habitat for species with large home ranges and those that are sensitive to human disturbance.

Moose and bears probably do not breed in Paxton but have been sighted in town on numerous occasions. Raccoons, foxes, skunks, opossums, beavers, muskrats and coyotes are all common, the latter sometimes preying on sheep and other domestic animals. Deer are common and problematic in some parts of Town, feeding on ornamental plantings and vegetables. Fishers also appear to be fairly common. Cottontails are present, though not especially common.

Among game species, deer are common and a few are taken in Paxton each year, though more are probably killed on the roads. Turkeys are moderately common and receive some hunting. Woodcocks are locally common, though do not appear to be highly sought by hunters, and the same is true for ruffed grouse. Waterfowl hunting is severely limited by the availability of suitable habitat with public access.

Several state-listed (rare and legally protected) animals are present in Paxton. These include two reptiles (spotted turtle and wood turtle), two salamanders (spring salamander and four-toed

salamander), one fish (bridle shiner) and two mussels (triangle floater and squawfoot) (Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, 2000). All of these species except the wood turtle are associated with aquatic or wetland habitats. The wood turtle is often found in terrestrial habitats, though it too may be found in small streams and wetlands. Two vernal pools have been registered in the Town and documentation is being gathered on three more. Other vernal pools are known to local naturalists.

F. Scenic and Unique Environments

The best-known and most widely used scenic landscape in Paxton is Moore State Park. This park combines interesting historical features, extensive plantings of numerous varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas, and a pleasing natural landscape. Eames Pond, most of which occurs in the park, is the only large body of water in Paxton with public access. While unsuited for motorboats, it can be used by canoeists and provides an attractive vista from several viewing locations.

Asnebumskit Hill, the highest elevation in the town, provides a good point from which to view the landscape to the southeast. The top of the hill has, however, been extensively altered and is home to several communications towers. Good views of the surrounding landscape can also be had from open ground on other hills, most of which is associated with current or former farms. These locations include Fox Hill along Davis Hill Road northeast of Route 122, an unnamed hill in Moore State Park along Davis Hill Road near West Street, another unnamed hill near the intersection of Nanigian Road and Rockland Street, and high pastures on the Cournoyer Farm east of Richards Avenue.

Roads: Carruth Road, a former agrarian area, has 18th and 19th century stonewalls, and long-abandoned cellar holes along its sides. A physical connection can still be made between the core Moore State Park mill village, clustered around Turkey Hill Brook, and the old Carruth Road, which is marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide. A natural stand of red pine (a “watch list” species) can be found west of Brigham Road, adjacent to the abandoned Carruth Road.

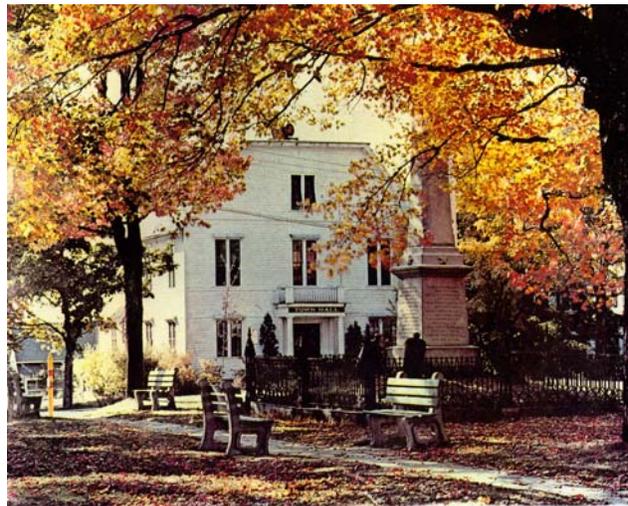
Farms: The Cournoyer Farm and the Cheney Farm on Grove Street, and the Morrow Farm on Rockland Road, all provide picturesque open fields, adding an element of rural character to Paxton. The Cournoyer Farm is the only active farm in Paxton. It grows vegetables, and sells fresh fruit and vegetable on the grounds. The rest of the agricultural land is mostly used for haying, with some portions reserved for family vegetables.

Historic Resources: Historic sites in town, including places of historical significance though not on the National Register, should include, according to the Paxton Historical Commission, Paxton’s Center Village. With its fine Greek revival homes, and older colonials, the Commission says, the village has enough historical significance as a community to be eligible for the establishment of a historic district. In addition, there are many excellently preserved historic homes throughout the town. Again, according to the Historical Commission, the entire town could be viewed as a vast historic landscape. A surprising number of clues to Paxton’s agrarian past have survived the building booms to date. There is no complete listing of archaeological

sites, but Ledyard Bill, the author of The History of Paxton in 1899 states on p. 73, “There are all over town, many half filled cellars where former dwellings stood, and they equal in point of numbers the buildings now standing outside of the village proper.” In addition to the cellar holes of abandoned farmhouses, other historic features worthy of preservation include stonewalls, vestigial orchard trees, stone boat dumps, wells, and shade trees, especially street trees which were intentionally planted a century ago.

What follows is taken almost entirely from Paxton, Massachusetts, A Self Guided Tour of Historical Points of Interest:

- The First Congregational Church - Located at 1 Church Street, it was originally on the common in 1766, and moved to its present location in 1835 when a steeple and a bell from the Paul Revere foundry were added. The bell and the steeple clock (1892) are properties of the town. Beginning in April 1, 1865, the basement served as Paxton’s Town Hall, a function shared by the Town Library beginning in 1876. There have been two 20th century additions. It is considered by the Historical Commission to be not only one of the most beautiful buildings in town and one of the most historic.
- Center Cemetery – Located at the rear of the First Congregational Church, it was established in 1765. It contains many excellent examples of 18th and 19th century gravestone art, including the gravestone of the first minister, Rev. Silas Bigelow. The graves of early settlers and veterans of the French and Indian War through to WWII can be found there.
- The Town Hall – Prior to the construction of the Town Hall in 1888, town meetings were held and town business was conducted at the Congregational Church. A gift of \$1500 from the Simon Allen Estate and a land donation by Ledyard Bill launched the construction project. The main hall on the second floor is named ‘Allen Hall’ in Simon Allen’s honor. Ledyard Bill was the most prominent Paxtonite in the 19th century. He was an author, Selectman, State Representative, and one of the leading forces behind the construction of the Town Hall and White School Building. Additional funds of \$1000 were voted and approved by the townspeople. The basement contains the original lock up or “Tramp Room” and the men’s privy (the 4-holer), recently restored by the Paxton Historical Commission. In addition, the Hall quartered the town library until 1925, and housed the school for a year until the White Building was built.
- The Paxton Inn Site – The Paxton Inn, 687 Pleasant Street, was erected in 1759 by Jobiah Clark. It had been known as a hostelry, stagecoach stop and a dining place. Troop “C”, Massachusetts State Police Mounted Patrol Headquarters was located there for a short period of time during the 1920s. The building and its surroundings had withstood many changes through the years until it burned on February 27, 2001.



- The White School Building – From the time of its construction in 1898, the White School Building has served the educational needs of Paxton’s student population by itself until the first modern era addition in 1957. Today the White School Building houses the Senior Center and the Paxton Historical Commission Office.
- St. Columba Roman Catholic Church – In August of 1936, Paxton was designated as part of Christ the King Parish in Worcester. A new parish known as St. Columba was established in 1951 and the church was built adjacent to the Town Common.
- Asnebumskit House, The Summit House and the Kenilworth Hotel Sites - The property at 672 Pleasant Street is the site of three 19th century hotels, the last being the Kenilworth Hotel, which burned in 1927.
- Bigelow Boot Shop Site – The 2 ½ story shop, located between 604 and 612 Pleasant Street, was the primary employer of 19th century Paxton. The building was destroyed by fire in 1870 and was never rebuilt. The boot and shoe industry of the 19th century was the only industry Paxton had other than water powered saw and gristmills.
- The Penniman House - This house at 508 Pleasant Street was built for the Penniman family in 1739. In the 1760’s, Ralph Earle purchased the farm. He held the rank of Captain in Paxton’s Minutemen Company. The Earle family had several notable artists spanning two generations. A Ralph Earle, Jr. painting is on display at the Worcester Art Museum.
- Howe/Davis Farm Site - Jonah Howe built on homestead land on Davis Hill Road about 1730. It was sold in 1790 to Deacon David Davis. In 1835, Davis, along with his oxen team, brought the bell from the Paul Revere foundry in Boston for the new church steeple. The property remained in the Davis family until sold to Edward Eames in 1907. The buildings were destroyed by fire about 1911. The cellar holes can still be seen and are located within Moore State Park boundaries.
- Howe Homestead - The original log cabin was built on 140 Davis Hill Road in 1743. The property remained in the Howe family for four generations. In 1892 the widow of Dr. Andrew Jackson Howe gave it to the town. This property served as the town poor farm. It is now privately owned.
- Moore State Park –A beautiful 711 acre historical, cultural, and archeological landscape dedicated to peace and tranquility, this reserve has sustained 180 years of continuous water powered milling activities. Most recently two wealthy Worcester families (the Mortons and the Spauldings) transformed it in the 20th century to a private estate, whereupon the property was extensively landscaped with thousands of rhododendrons and azaleas. The DEM notes that it “.is one of the most historically significant properties under DEM’s care. The DEM Cultural Resource Inventory – a baseline study of known and potential cultural, historic and archaeological sites conducted in 1984 as part of a statewide cultural resources survey of the Massachusetts Forests and Parks system – identified eighteen historic and potential prehistoric (pre-European) sites.”
- Carruth Road – Prior to construction of Barre Road (now Rt. 122), Carruth Road served as the main travel road from the mill village at Moore State to Rutland and beyond. Daniel Campbell’s farm was located on this road. He was murdered on his farm in 1744. History states he was one of the first murder victims in Worcester County.
- Boynton Park - Charles Boynton deeded this land to the city of Worcester in 1898 for use as a public park. The property consists of approximately 114 acres (85 in Paxton, 29 in Worcester), located at the Paxton-Worcester line on Mower Street. The City of Worcester

maintains the Park, which contains such features as woodlands, trails, ball fields and some hiking. Picnicking is allowed but not with open fires, or cookouts. The existing hiking trails could be connected to a town-wide trail system. The Park is marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.

- Abraham Smith Farm – Abraham Smith erected the home about 1748, on what is now 259 West Street. He was Paxton’s first Representative to the General Court in Boston.
- Bellows Farm – This farm on Marshall Street was established prior to the Revolutionary War. The Bellows family operated a tannery business on this farm. The property may also include the site of a Revolutionary War period fort. The Ahearn family operated a dairy farm here from 1866 until 1986. It is currently Kettlebrook Golf Course.
- Jocktown Baptist Church Site – On Marshall Street and the Spencer town line, a Baptist Church existed from 1820 through 1887, taking its name for this region of North Spencer and Paxton.
- Goddard House – This house on 112 Richards Avenue was originally built in 1739. It is depicted on the Paxton town seal along with the Congregational Church. Its original site is where the Richards Memorial Library now stands. Ellis Richards, the benefactor of the public library in Paxton, purchased the Goddard House in 1902 and moved it to its present location. The shade trees and stone walls gracing Richards Avenue are the legacy of the Ellis Richards Estate.
- Memorial Park of Worcester County – Located at 217 Richards Avenue, this beautifully landscaped private cemetery was established in the 1960’s. It is noted for its park-like grounds.
- Moore Homestead – The residence at 218 Richards Avenue is the early 18th century birthplace of Major Willard Moore, the only Paxton casualty of the Revolutionary War. Major Moore was mortally wounded during the second British assault at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775.
- Mooreland Cemetery – This town-owned cemetery on Richards Avenue was established in 1913. The importance of the Moore family to the history of Paxton is memorialized on a plaque affixed to a boulder near to entrance gate of the cemetery.
- Asnebumskit Hill – In addition to attracting Henry David Thoreau in the mid 19th century, Asnebumskit Hill is noted, in the 20th century, for being the site of the first experimental FM stereo broadcast in the United States. Asnebumskit Hill is one of the highest elevations in Central Massachusetts.
- Treasure Valley Scout Reservation/Boy Scouts of America – This area located off Rockland Road is over 1,600 acres in size (shared by Paxton and Rutland), and has been in continuous operation since 1926. The portion of the property in Paxton covers some 88 acres in the far western extension of Town. The Reservation has buildings that are used during the summer resident camp, and it has many backwoods campsites. The Reservation has a waterfront on Browning Pond, and owns 90% of the mostly undeveloped shoreline. Over 1,400 acres of the land remains undeveloped woodland. The Mid-State Trail passes through the Reservation on its west side. Both Scouting and non-Scouting groups can utilize most of the Reservation property over the entire school year for reasonable usage fees. The Reservation is accessible for hikes and nature walks after check-in with the camp Ranger. Access for outings and picnics are offered for a nominal fee. The wooded and open fields also provide a buffer at the town line and contribute to the open character of that end of town. The Midstate Trail passes Sampson’s Pebble, a

giant glacial erratic at Treasure Valley. The Reservation is marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.

- The Paxton Town Common – The Common, 0.7-acres in size, is a lawn area with monuments and shade trees. It is 1,135 feet above sea level. Although the Common needs refurbishing, it presents an uncluttered image to the center of Paxton.
- Varnum Property – The property is a Marshall Street and South Street area containing wetlands and stream. The property is a good spot for bird watching. No trails have been developed. The property is marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.
- W. Elmer Ekblaw Sanctuary (Also known as the ‘Forbush Bird Sanctuary) – The Forbush Bird Club owns this 11-acre property located adjacent to the eastern boundary of Moore State Park.

Status of the nominations for properties to the National Register of Historic Places: there is only one nomination being processed at this time. Moore State Park’s nomination to the National Register in a new category as a Historic Landscape has recently been submitted, and the Park is awaiting a response from the National Park Service.



Cultural Resources: Anna Maria College – Located on Grove Street is a four-year coed liberal arts college established in 1952. It comprises extensive grounds that include numerous athletic fields. There is a small theater on campus that offers plays and musical events and a library for town use. The College is marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.

G. Environmental Challenges

The major environmental issue in Paxton is and will undoubtedly continue to be the impact of development. Current zoning, homebuyer preferences and the need for sufficient land for septic systems mean that typical house lot sizes are one to several acres. Given the average household size of 2.79 persons, this means that the addition of each new person results in the alteration of an additional acre or more of the existing landscape.

Paxton is largely free of other environmental problems. There are no known hazardous waste sites, reflecting the agricultural and residential heritage of the town. One known former landfill exists in town, located between Eames Pond and Davis Hill Road. Erosion and sedimentation have not been problematic. Flooding issues are minimal. Partly this reflects the town’s location at the height of land, i.e. the upstream ends of three watersheds, and partly it reflects the extremely limited development that has occurred in the few flood zones. Minor threats to roads and septic systems are posed by flooding associated with beaver dams. Ground and surface water pollution has been minimal, although naturally elevated levels of arsenic have recently been

reported from several private wells. Roads do approach several of the drinking water reservoirs, but impact from street drainage appears to have been very limited. There are few remaining agricultural operations in town, and those that are present do not appear to have detrimental effects on water supplies, though livestock are maintained close to tributary streams in a few areas.

Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest

A. Permanently Protected Parcels

Article 97 of the State Constitution provides permanent protection for certain lands acquired for natural resources purposes, meaning “conservation, development and utilization of the agricultural, mineral, forest, water, air and other natural resources.” Lands of this nature are often owned by the municipal conservation commission, recreation commission, water department, or by a state or federal conservation agency (i.e., the EOEPA or the Division of Fish & Wildlife). Private, public and non-profit conservation and recreation lands are also protected under Article 97. Removing the permanent protection status of such lands is extremely difficult, as is evidenced by the following required steps:

- The municipal conservation commission or recreation commission must vote that the land in question is surplus to its needs;
- The removal of permanent protection status must be approved at a Town Meeting/City Council vote and pass by a 2/3 vote;
- The municipality must file an Environmental Notification Form with the EOEPA’s Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA);
- The removal of permanent protection status must be approved by the State Legislature and pass by a 2/3 vote; and
- In the case of land either acquired or developed with grant assistance from the EOEPA’s Division of Conservation Services), the converted land must be replaced with land of equal monetary value and recreational or conservation utility.

In other words, it is intentionally difficult to remove a property’s permanent protection status so that it may be developed. Private lands can also be protected in perpetuity through deed restrictions or conservation easements. Municipal lands under active use (schools, town halls, highway department facilities, police/fire facilities, etc.) are **not** considered permanently protected, nor are private lands that are within the State’s special taxation programs (Chapter 61).

Paxton’s Conservation Commission owns and manages seven properties totaling approximately 74 acres. The Town’s Recreation Department manages three properties totaling 67 acres. The lands belonging to both entities are considered permanently protected. Descriptions of their landholdings are provided below and a tabular inventory is provided in Appendix A of this document.

1. Town-Owned Public Facilities: Recreation

1-a. Town Center Recreation/Education Facilities: A 1,000-foot access road begins at the end of the Center School parking lot and provides access to the Wentworth Swimming Pool (currently closed), former playground, and Illig's Pond, the tennis court, center playing fields, basketball court and the Smith Property, one of the Paxton Conservation Commission's land holdings. Additional parking for roughly forty vehicles is available at the one designated lot for this complex. Many people choose to park on Pleasant Street and walk down the steep embankment to Tivnan Field. There is a parcel of Town-owned land available between the street and the embankment that might be suitable for additional parking.

i.) On-Site Amenities: A tennis court enclosed with an eight-foot chain link fence is located to the east of the parking lot. A snack shack sits between the parking lot and the adjacent "multi-use" fields. It is approximately 12'x16' in size, made of cinderblock construction and contains no plumbing or heating.

ii.) A "multi-use" ball-field is located west of the snack shack. This field is approximately 400'x180' in size and includes both a Triple A Little League baseball field and a softball field. In the fall it is used for two soccer fields each at 200'x120'. The Triple A field includes a backstop and a six-foot fence which runs along both the first and third base lines. There is no water irrigation available to this field. The softball field includes a backstop, benches for two teams, and limited spectator seating. This field is sufficiently lit for evening games.



iii.) The Tivnan Little League Field is located northwest of the multi-use field. It is fully lighted, consists of 50,000 square feet, and is completely fenced. The field is served by an irrigation system that is connected by a two-inch mainline water metered pit off of Pleasant Street. At the far northern end of the field is a wooden 8'x16' snack shed. There is no heating or plumbing in this building. On the third base side several old wooden benches provide seating for spectators. Two small sets of bleachers are also present near home plate.

iv.) There is a basketball court west of the Tivnan Field. This court was resurfaced within the past two years and at that time new backboards and rims with new nets were installed. A water fountain (handicapped compliant) is present between the basketball court and Tivnan Field. The basketball court is not fenced although this is sorely needed to protect the surface from skateboard and bike use.

v.) Site of Former Playground: A wooden playground was erected by townspeople adjacent to the Wentworth Pool approximately fifteen years ago. Unfortunately, this structure was recently found to be in violation of 82 state building and health codes, nineteen of which were considered life threatening. The playground consequently was removed. A Recreation Commission-sponsored \$64,000 warrant article for a new playground was put before the voters June 3, 2002, but was not approved. A citizen ad hoc committee has been formed to study, plan and promote the building of a new playground. Private donations are presently being solicited, along with other fundraising activities.

vi.) Paxton Swimming Pool (Wentworth Pool): A few hundred feet beyond the site of the former playground, sits the Paxton Swimming Pool (a.k.a. the Wentworth Pool). The pool occupies a couple of acres, plus a gravel parking area for roughly 75 cars. The pool is approximately 40 years old and is sorely outdated in terms of overall practicality. The pool itself is over one acre in size and can hold up to 2,500 people. It requires one million gallons of water to fill and it leaks in excess of 50,000 gallons per day during the summer, due to leaks and evaporation. During the ten-week season in 2001, it used a total of 4.1 million gallons of water. In 2001, 62 households out of a total of 1,400 purchased season passes, with additional use by recreation programs and day users. Since 1985, the Town has spent \$261,727 on repairs to the pool, and even a \$400,000 rehabilitation would not address all of the health and environmental concerns. In the spring of 2002, the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and the Recreation Commission recommended no further financing of the pool. The June 2002 Town Meeting saw residents vote not to provide funding for the pool. Arrangements were made with the Paxton Sports Center to offer summer pool programs at that facility in 2002.

vii.) Illig's Pond: To the southeast of the pool's parking lot is Illig's Pond, surrounded by a natural wooded landscape with a trail that runs along the pond's southwest side. Illig's Pond is available to Paxton Center School as a nature study site. At the end of the access road cars can park in the Pool's gravel parking lot. The lot is fairly level but uneven in spots; there are no handicapped parking spots identified. There is direct access (no stairs, minimal grade sloping) to the fields and tennis court from this lot.

1-b. Grove Street Playing Fields: In 1997-1998, Paxton Youth Sports went to the Board of Selectmen requesting the use of the Grove Street land that had been donated to the Town a few years earlier. After a few meetings, the Select Board gave its approval to develop the land for playing fields. Spearheaded by Paxton citizen John Glowik, a plan was drawn up and an ambitious fund raising campaign was underway. In the end, \$450,000 was raised from private donations and the fields were completed in 1999, all with no tax dollars!

Prior to the opening of the Grove Street fields, Paxton had no Babe Ruth field (which was taken with the construction of the school expansion) and had outgrown the capacity of the Town's "Center" soccer fields. At that time, there were three Babe Ruth teams with a total of 40-45 kids and soccer was growing with over 300 kids playing. Most games were

away games and there was no practice time due to the limited fields. The Grove Street facility provided a logical answer to these concerns. It also provided a new and valuable asset to the Town's residents. The Grove Street complex is truly a first class recreational facility that is the envy of not only the playing district, but also to colleges, such as Boston College, who have chosen to play tournaments there (for a fee) due to the outstanding professional and pristine nature of the fields.

In 1999, Paxton Youth Sports turned the facility over to the Town but continues to support, financially and with voluntary labor, improvements to the facility. PYS has provided the support to help build the field house, provide soccer goals for the fields and to help build an extra parking lot. Paxton Baseball has purchased fencing, a backstop, benches, batting cages, a scoreboard, bases and an infield tractor. These organizations have provided in excess of \$100,000 to the recreation fields of Paxton and will continue to show their support through the Recreation Commission, which oversees the use and maintenance of all the Town's fields. In these times of very limited tax based monies, the effort of the private sector is all the more necessary and appreciated.

Signs for Grove Street direct people to the parking lot. Traffic flows counter clockwise. The entry is at the southern corner of the property, and cars can park on either of the two levels. The exit to Grove Street is at the north end of the lot. Several additional parking spots are present behind the field house, allowing about 100 cars in all. An additional level of parking is currently under construction.

From the parking lot, it is a short walk to the field house. Parking lot and walkways are hard-packed gravel. The field house includes restrooms (handicapped accessible), a snack shed, equipment storage and small workshop. North of the field house are two large soccer fields (approximately 250 x 400 feet each). The field design allows rotation of fields. Below and northeast of the soccer fields is a Babe Ruth field. A gravel road skirts the soccer fields and leads to the Babe Ruth field. The gravel road also allows emergency vehicles access to all the playing fields in case of emergency.

1-c. Paxton Recreation Programs: The Town of Paxton currently provides a wide and varied selection of programs to its residents. They include:

Spring Programs

- Elementary Day Programs
- Swimming lessons
- Teen Outing Programs
- Summer Fest
- Basketball (boys & girls)
- Tennis lessons
- Lacrosse
- Softball
- Baseball
- Soccer camp
- Mountain Club soccer

Fall/Winter Programs

- Step Aerobics
- Men's Basketball
- Adult Volleyball
- Yoga
- Flag football
- Soccer

- Instructional Basketball (K-4th grade)
- Basketball League (5-8th grade, boys & girls)
- Karate
- Adult soccer

Recently Added Programs

- Adventure Boating
- Summer Pre-School Program
- Adult competitive Volleyball
- Teen Adventure Program
- Tennis Lessons
- Counselor in Training (C.I.T.) Program
- Parents night out (proposed)
- Girls Summer Outdoor Program (proposed for 7 & 8th grade)

Recreation programs continue to grow both in terms of participants and scope each year. Lacrosse and flag-football have recently started in Town. Seventh and eight-grade girls basketball will start this summer to be coordinated with the boy’s basketball league. Despite very limited town funding, the Recreation Commission continues to pursue creative ways to finance existing and future recreation programs.

2. Town-Owned Public Lands: Conservation

Property #1: Smith Land

Tax Map & Lot #: Map 19, Lot 204

Property Size: 41 Acres

Property Description: The 41-acre Smith property adjacent to the Town’s playground/pool area, where people can park to access this site. This property became protected in 1969 and the Paxton Conservation Commission has been responsible for its management since that time. The property contains several trails, some of which connect to the trail along Illig’s Pond. These trails provide an excellent scenic view of adjacent wetlands and Illig’s Pond. This land is available for passive recreation, though it is not easily handicapped-accessible. The Smith Land has been marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.

Property #2: Clarkson Land

Tax Map & Lot #: Map 26, Lots 99 & 102-Y

Property Size: 30 Acres

Property Description: This site is composed of two properties consisting of a total of 30 acres. The Town purchased this property in 1970, and has been responsible for its management ever since. The site is heavily wooded and contains no public amenities. The site contains a trail that starts at the radio towers at the top of Asnebumskit Hill and slopes down behind the Alderwood Road residential area. The property is accessible from both Alderwood Road and Knollwood Road; however, there is no on-site parking available. Its acquisition by the town provided a greenbelt that enhances adjoining property. The lower land is marshy and makes excellent cover for birds and wildlife. The area east of this leads to steep slopes up Asnebumskit Hill. In between

and remote from road access are areas of good land with interesting features such as a natural amphitheater. The entire area, including the upper slopes, lends itself to the development of hiking trails for nature walks, and allied activities. This 99-acre property is adjacent to Asnebumskit Hill (privately-owned property), and contains trails for cross-country skiing and hiking, including part of the trails of the Appalachian Mountain Club. Access to the Appalachian Mountain Club is at the end of Howard Street. The AMC has extensive hiking trails, and events for all ages. There is also a half-acre parcel, owned by the Paxton Land Trust, on top of Asnebumskit. The Clarkson Land is marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.

Property #3: Crowningshield Land
Tax Map & Lot #: Map 19, Lots 212 & 284
Property Size: 7 Acres

Property Description: This site consists of two properties that abut the Crowningshield subdivision, and Crowningshield Drive provides a secondary point of access. The 7-acre site remains in its natural wooded state and there are no public amenities or on-site parking.

3. Other Permanently Protected Lands Owned by Paxton

The Paxton Water Department owns twelve properties (totaling 79 acres) that are considered permanently protected. In addition, the town-owned Mooreland (11 acres) and Center (2.6 acres) Cemeteries are considered permanently protected.

4. Permanently Protected Lands Owned by Other Municipalities

The City of Worcester's Water Department owns 16 properties in Paxton. These properties, totaling approximately 1,590 acres, are permanently protected for the purpose of safeguarding water supply sources. The Town of Leicester's Water Department owns four properties (totaling 48 acres) also for the purpose of watershed protection. Lastly, the Town of Spencer owns a small property (just over an acre in size) along its boundary with Paxton.

5. State-Owned Permanently Protected Lands

The State Department of Environmental Management owns 14 properties (most are associated with Moore State Park). These properties total approximately 700 acres and are considered permanently protected. The Division of Fisheries & Wildlife also manages the Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area in the southwest corner of Town. The wildlife area is roughly 180 acres in size and is comprised of eight parcels. A more complete description of these two State-owned landholdings is provided below.



Moore State Park – This approximately 700-acre State Park has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in a new category as a Historic Landscape. Besides the remnants of a mill village, which sustained 180 years of continuous milling operations from 1747 to 1927, the Park is known for the thousands of rhododendrons and azaleas planted in the estate era (1935 - 1965). Elements contributing to the Park’s eligibility include: structures, stonework, bridges, and three dams, including millponds, and three waterfalls. The park also includes historic roads, landscaped plantings, forested stands, archaeological sites, agricultural fields and abandoned orchards. The Park was formerly known as the ‘Spaulding Estate’- and included a one-room schoolhouse, built in 1812, and the manor house, with its lawns and gardens, acres of forest and fields, and the 50-acre Eames Pond that is an impoundment of Turkey Hill Brook. Just below Eames Pond, Turkey Hill Brook drops a dramatic 90-feet within ¼ mile. Several bridges, including a historic sawmill structure on a dry laid stone foundation, still exist within the brook bed. The property was converted to estate use in the 1930s and extensive landscaped plantings of flowering and ornamental shrubs, including many varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas, were added.



The Park has several types of natural outdoor habitats supporting the types of wildlife found in Central Massachusetts. But, in addition, it maintains a bat house that supports a large colony of Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus*). The agricultural fields are leased to a farmer, and are managed to provide habit for significant populations of nesting grassland birds, particularly the Bobolink. Both the presence of the bat colony and the overall diversity of wildlife habitats combined to qualify the park for listing in the 1996 Massachusetts Watchable Wildlife Guidebook. The Park also supports human

activities. Permitted usages include interpretive tours, summer and winter fishing, hunting, trail hiking, nature study, canoeing, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and ice-skating. Most every area of the Park provides a scenic view of some kind. Specific vistas, in addition to those already mentioned include: views of Eames Pond from Mill Street; views of Turkey Hill Brook and the sawmill from Black Hill Road; the Azalea Path connecting the sawmill with Black Hill Road; and the view of surrounding hills and villages afforded from the crest of the large agricultural field located near the intersection of Mill Street and Davis Road. Its ancient sawmill on a dam above a series of waterfalls is one of the more-photographed sites in Central Massachusetts. The prolific spring blooming of azalea and rhododendron bushes, as well as blueberry bushes, and the spectacular splashes of red and orange of the swamp maples around Eames Pond in the fall, are special attractions. Moore State Park draws many visitors.

Moore State Park also provides the exceptional peace of quiet. The theme of the Park is historic and botanic, the park being originally purchased in 1965 for the purposes of conservation and education. All trails are closed to motorized vehicles. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Thus,

it is a very restful place to visit. It is marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.

Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area - This site consists of approximately 180-acres, and is managed as a Wildlife Management Area by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Fishing and hunting are permitted. The property also includes a parcel known locally as the “Trum Land”. The lands that make up the Wildlife Management Area are financed primarily to insure Massachusetts sportsmen a place to hunt, but are open to the public at large. This area is also marked as a point of interest on the Wachusett Greenways Guide.

6. Permanently Protected Lands Owned by Non-Profits

There are five permanently protected properties in Paxton that are owned by non-profit organizations, totaling approximately 95 acres. These properties include: Worcester County Memorial Park (57-acre cemetery located on Richards Avenue), a small property (0.45-acres) off of Asnebumskit Road owned by the Paxton Land Trust, a 3.5-acre property off of Stoneleigh Road owned by the Appalachian Mountain Club, and two properties (totaling 34-acres) in the southeast corner of Town owned by the Greater Worcester Land Trust.



7. Privately-Owned Permanently Protected Lands

There are five permanently protected properties in Paxton that are owned by private entities, totaling approximately 186 acres. The first is the Forbush Bird Club Property (11-acre bird sanctuary located on Davis Hill Road). The second site consists of the four properties (175-acres in total) that make up the Cournoyer Farm property just west of Pine Hill Reservoir.

B. Parcels Under Limited Protection

1. Town-Owned Parcels Under Limited Protection

The Town of Paxton owns 16 properties (totaling approximately 100 acres) that are not considered permanently protected. These properties include three parcels associated with the Town Hall, the Police Station, Fire Station, Town Library, and the Paxton Light Department. There are also several Town-owned properties where the management entity is “unknown”.

2. Non-Profit Lands Under Limited Protection

There are twelve properties in Paxton owned by non-profit organizations that are not considered permanently protected. These properties include three properties associated with Anna Maria College, three properties owned by the Boy Scouts (Treasure Valley), three properties owned by the First Congregational Church of Paxton, two properties owned by the Roman Catholic Church of Worcester, and a property owned by the Worcester Natural History Association. These twelve properties total approximately 440 acres.

3. Privately-Owned Lands Under Limited Protection

There is one privately owned property in Paxton that has limited protection under its deed. This is the Lefrancois property on West Street (15.5 acres).

4. Privately-Owned Chapter Lands Under Limited Protection

There are 31 privately owned properties in Paxton enrolled in the State’s Chapter 61 Programs. There 16 properties enrolled in the Chapter 61 Program (forestry), totaling approximately 612 acres. There are 15 properties in the 61-A Program (agriculture), totaling approximately 511 acres. Lands in the Chapter 61 Program can be withdrawn from the Program at any time (after the landowner pays a tax penalty) and developed.

Many private landowners participate in the State’s voluntary Chapter 61 Programs that benefit forestry, agriculture and/or open space uses. Owners of ten acres or more who manage their land for forestry uses can enroll in Chapter 61, which allows a 95% reduction in property taxes. Owners of five or more acres can enroll in Chapter 61-A if they use their land for agriculture. The Chapter 61-A Program allows a 75% reduction in property taxes. Landowners are free to pull their land from the Chapter 61 Programs and sell it for development (after paying a tax penalty). Communities have the right of first refusal on all Chapter 61 lands if owners decide to sell or convert their land to residential, commercial or industrial uses (unless it is a residential use for a family member). However, it is often difficult for small communities to mobilize their financial resources to acquire Chapter 61 properties when the right of first refusal opportunity arises.



Table OSR 10 – Land Ownership and Protection Summary

	Acres of Land	% of Total
Total Land Area of Paxton	9,904	100.0%
Town-Owned Permanently Protected	220	2.22%
Town-Owned Limited Protected	98	0.99%
Land Owned by Other Communities (Permanently Protected)	1,639	16.54%
State-Owned Permanently Protected	180	1.82%
Non-Profit Permanently Protected	95	0.96%
Non-Profit Limited Protected	440	4.44%
Private Land Permanently Protected	186	1.88%
Private Land Limited Protected	73	0.74%
Chapter Land (Privately-Owned Limited Protection)	1,123	11.33%
Remaining Privately-Owned Land (Unprotected)	5,850	59.08%

Source: Tax parcel data from Paxton Assessors Office and CMRPC GIS analysis (2/2003).

A graphic depiction of Paxton's open spaces (both permanently protected lands and those lands under limited protection) can be found on the Open Space Inventory Map

Community Goals

A. Description of Process

The planning process for this effort continues the Town's long-standing commitment to the conservation and recreation needs of Paxton residents. In 1970, the Conservation Commission prepared the Town's first ever Conservation Plan. In 2001, the Paxton Selectboard appointed an Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee to develop a new Open Space and Recreation Plan that is in full compliance with the requirements of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Division of Conservation Services (DCS). Having a DCS-approved Open Space and Conservation Plan will enable Paxton's eligibility for accessing a variety of State grant programs including: the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Self-Help open space acquisition program.

The Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee met on a monthly basis beginning in January 2001. In the summer of 2002, the Town received a planning grant from the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) to help cover the cost of preparing the Plan. Shortly thereafter, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was hired to assist the Committee. The first order of business was developing an open space and recreation survey that consisted of eight questions. The survey was sent to every household in Paxton in June 2001 and 195 responses were received (a response rate of 14%). During 2002 there were two events that prompted the Committee to conduct another survey: the closing of the Wentworth Pool and the adjacent playground. In January 2003, the Committee once again sent out the eight-question survey to every Paxton household. The second survey effort was combined with the Town Clerk's annual census request. This helped to boost the survey's response rate considerably. The response rate was 31.7% with 444 surveys returned. As the public preferences expressed in both survey efforts were very much the same, the Committee utilized both survey results during their deliberations for this updated Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The Committee also sponsored two public forums to solicit the opinions and feedback of Paxton residents. The first such forum was held on October 3, 2002 at the Paxton Center School. The purpose of the forum was to review the Town's existing open space holdings and recreation facilities, as well as to obtain the public's input on the five draft goals that were guiding the Committee's planning efforts. A second public forum was held on April 29, 2003 at the Paxton Center School where the Committee reviewed the findings of the draft Plan and discussed its proposed five-year action plan.

B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

The community input derived from the Committee's numerous monthly meetings, two survey efforts and two public forums, resulted in five broad goals for ensuring the Town's open space and recreation needs in the future:

- Protect and preserve aesthetic, natural, and historic resources.
- Protect and preserve water resources and supplies.
- Provide inclusive active recreational opportunities, resources and facilities.
- Provide and promote inclusive passive recreational opportunities.
- Identify and develop funding sources and other resources to further the goals, objectives and strategies of the Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Analysis of Needs

A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The Town of Paxton has a significant amount of land under permanent protection for the purpose of safeguarding public drinking water supplies. The City of Worcester Water Department owns and manages 1,590 acres within Paxton, and the Town of Leicester Water Department owns and manages 48 acres for watershed protection. In organizing the land protection priorities for this Plan, the Paxton Open Space & Recreation Committee developed a three-tier protection priority scheme:

- High Priority (1)
- Medium Priority (2)
- Low Priority (3)

These priorities are identified on the Action Plan Map. High Priority land protection needs are labeled as 'One', Medium Priority needs as 'Two', and Low Priority needs as 'Three'. Within each protection priority, lands were identified for protection based on a variety of needs: active recreation, passive recreation, wildlife protection, water resource protection, watershed protection, providing linkage between open spaces (contiguity), providing trail access, and other resource protection needs.

This section will generally describe those land protection priorities that are intended to address resource protection needs, whereas Section B outlines land protection priorities intended to address passive and active recreation needs, and any other community needs that do not involve resource protection.

- High Priority:
 - The Muir Farm property in the southeast corner of Town was identified because of its prominent landscape and aesthetic value.
 - Property in the vicinity of Asnebumskit Hill was identified because of its great views and access to trails maintained by the Appalachian Mountain Club.

- A few properties near Anna Maria College were identified as suitable for both watershed protection and for active recreation fields.
 - A few of the Cournoyer Farm Chapter properties were identified because of their aesthetic appeal.
 - Land in the vicinity of Turkey Hill Pond and Turkey Hill Brook were identified because of scenic vistas and potential beach access.
- Medium Priority:
 - No properties were identified under this category for the purpose of resource protection needs.
 - Low Priority:
 - Two properties between Brooks Road and Turkey Hill Brook were identified for the purpose of protecting wildlife habitats.
 - Properties on either side of the northern end of Eames Pond were identified for the purpose of protecting the Pond.

B. Summary of Community Needs

Results from the two open space survey efforts indicate strong citizen support for protecting Paxton's open spaces, historic resources and scenic vistas. In terms of needed active recreation facilities, the survey effort shows strong support for a swimming pool (identified in both survey efforts) and a playground (identified as a prominent need in the second survey effort). As townspeople know, the Town's public playground and pool were both closed during the past two years. In terms of passive recreation activities, both survey efforts demonstrated the citizen's desire for more hiking trails. Citizen comments made at both Open Space public forums indicated a need for more usable open space, that is, open space properties that people can actually walk on and utilize for passive recreation (as opposed to the protected watershed lands where public access is not allowed). Of major importance is the need to obtain contiguous properties as a means of preventing fragmentation of ecosystems as well as enhancing the value of properties as a source of Town recreation. To meet this end, obtaining parcels adjacent to existing protected lands will enhance the value of both properties to the community.

In terms of the Action Plan Map, the following areas were identified for purposes other than resource protection:

- High Priority:
 - Several properties abutting Moore State Park were identified for the purpose of park expansion.
 - Numerous properties around Town were identified because they are adjacent to existing protected lands.
 - Boynton Park in the southeast corner of Town was identified for the purpose of active recreation.
 - A property near Asnebumskit Hill was identified because of its potential link to trail networks in Holden and possible ski area.

- Medium Priority:
 - Numerous properties around Town were identified because they are adjacent to existing protected lands.
- Low Priority:
 - Several properties abutting Moore State Park were identified for the purpose of park expansion.
 - Numerous properties around Town were identified because they are adjacent to existing protected lands.
 - Two properties located to the east of the Moose Hill Wildlife Management Area were identified for possible active recreation.

C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

The Town of Paxton has limited financial resources and the current State budget crisis is likely to result in fewer State resources for the purposes of open space protection and recreation. Identification of funding and staffing resources will be key elements of the Town’s strategy for open space acquisition and upgrading recreation facilities. Towards that end, a partial listing of funding mechanisms and programs can be found in Appendix B of this document. In regard to potential changes of use, several of the properties identified for protection on the Action Plan Map are in the State’s Chapter program and their permanent protection would technically constitute a change of use.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Protect and preserve aesthetic, natural, and historic resources.

Objectives:

- 1A. Enhance the aesthetic appeal and historical character of Paxton by preserving historic landscapes and contained structures and visually appealing properties along the public thoroughfares.
- 1B. Identify parcels of land for acquisition that contain historic value or potential conservation/recreation use.
- 1C. Identify parcels of land for potential acquisition that protect rare and endangered plant or animal species, or unusual natural communities.
- 1D. Preserve contiguous tracts of open space by providing connections between protected parcels, thereby reducing fragmentation of plant and animal populations, maintaining animal migration routes and facilitating public use of protected land.
- 1E. Establish an historical district encompassing the town center to preserve the aesthetic appearance of Paxton and encourage an historical appreciation.

Goal 2. Protect and preserve water resources and supplies.

Objectives:

- 2A. Protect the three watershed areas in town through targeted acquisition of environmentally sensitive parcels for open space and water supply protection.
- 2B. Encourage citizens to appreciate the importance of protection of both upland and wetland open space to the quality of water resources.

Goal 3. Provide inclusive (i.e., handicapped and elderly accessible) active recreational opportunities, resources and facilities.

Objectives:

- 3A. Plan for the development of new active recreation opportunities as identified in the public participation process and the identification of funding sources.
- 3B. Create new fields, parks and recreational facilities, while upgrading and maintaining existing recreation facilities.
- 3C. Identify and correct obstacles to the full enjoyment of existing recreational facilities by all members of the Town.

Goal 4. Provide and promote inclusive passive recreational opportunities.

Objectives:

- 4A. Cooperate with neighboring towns to create/connect/extend regional trail systems where possible.
- 4B. Identify and publicize existing open spaces and trail systems.
- 4C. Investigate the possibility of developing new nature trails contiguous to school or park property for educational purposes.
- 4D. Identify those historic scenic vistas, conservation property, and open spaces that may appeal to special needs, senior, or handicapped populations and ensure their physical accessibility for the greatest enjoyment and enrichment.
- 4E. Acquire, maintain and create access to greenways including nature trails, hiking areas, and cross-country ski trails on contiguous tracts of conserved land.

Goal 5. Identify and develop funding sources and other resources to further the goals, objectives and strategies of the Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Objectives:

- 5A. Research and identify potential sources of funding from state and federal governments, local and regional charitable and education foundations for the acquisition and protection of open space and the construction and rehabilitation of recreational facilities.

- 5B. Encourage dialogue between various community, government and civic groups in Paxton to share ideas, partner on initiatives, and avoid duplication of efforts designed to attain the goals and objectives as described above.
- 5C. Develop strategic partnerships with boards, commissions, charitable foundations, and civic and conservation groups to enable the town to seek funding for unique initiatives designed to implement the goals, objectives and strategies of this Plan.
- 5D. Pursue the feasibility of conducting various fundraising initiatives designed to generate funds to implement those strategies required for the attainment of the objectives outlined in this plan.

Five-Year Action Plan

*** Important Note: Successful implementation and completion of any or all of these strategies is contingent upon sufficient availability of funding and staffing levels in the appropriate department, board or commission assumed to be responsible for each individual strategy. Likewise, projected timeframes may need to change depending upon the availability of funding and staffing.**

Goal	Strategy	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1	Establish a tree planting program to beautify public property and to replace trees that are removed for public projects. (garden club, Department of Public Works, Historic Commission)					
	Improve the landscaping and aesthetics of the town common including the planting of trees, shrubs, and flowers, and the installation of benches, walkways, and lighting. (Local businesses, garden club, Department of Public Works, Historic Commission)					
	Encourage the creation of a committee to pursue the development of a Historical District Overlay Zone in the village center thereby maintaining the character and identity of the Town. (Selectboard, Historic Commission, Planning Board)					
	Request legislative delegation to file special state legislation, or request the Selectboard to file an application for federal nomination, to designate Route 122 from the Paxton/Worcester line through to Barre or Oakham as a Scenic Byway, thereby enabling the town to apply for federal and/or state funds for aesthetic improvements along the Route. (Selectboard)					
	Preserve stone walls and significant archaeological sites, particularly along major roadways. (Historic Commission)					
	Preserve scenic views that contribute to the rural character of Paxton as viewed from roadways and public areas. (Historic Commission, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board)					
	Ensure that improvements on historically significant structures and landscapes are done according to ADA approved standards and preservation standards and guidelines administered by appropriate state and federal agencies.					
	Identify parcels containing significant geological features, flora, fauna, and natural communities. (Conservation Commission)					
	Identify and register vernal pools. (Conservation Commission)					

	Acquire key parcels that will provide contiguous linkage among trails and conservation areas. (Selectboard, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Paxton Land Trust, DEM)					
2	Support the Anna Maria College Sewer Connection Project to provide the college with a sewer connection to the MDC Rutland/Holden sewer line, thereby protecting the reservoir from sewage overflow. (Conservation Commission, Board of Health)					
	Protect land in the watersheds of existing public water supplies by acquisition of selective land parcels or encouraging the utilization of Conservation Restrictions or legacy fulfillment. (Conservation Commission, Board of Health)					
3	Replace school playground. (Recreation Commission)					
	Construct or obtain access to a swimming pool facility for town residents. (Recreation Commission)					
	Develop a skateboard park. (Recreation Commission)					
	Develop a walking/jogging track. (Recreation Commission)					
	Develop areas for in-line skating. (Recreation Commission)					
	Develop areas for ice skating. (Recreation Commission)					
	Establish marked bike lanes on designated roads. (MassHighway Dept., DPW)					
	Maintain, expand, and upgrade existing fields, parks, and recreational facilities. (Recreation Commission)					
	Encourage consideration of Asnebumskit Hill as a park area for hiking, picnicking, scenic observation, and novice downhill skiing/snowboarding recreation and education. (Selectboard, Recreation Commission)					
4	Identify and publicize existing open spaces and trail systems including their conditions and accessibility. (Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission)					
	Acquire, create access, expand and maintain trails and conservation areas in town to create larger, contiguous areas for hiking, biking, jogging, cross-county skiing, snow-shoeing, nature watching, and preservation of conservation areas and lands for passive recreation. (Selectboard, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Paxton Land Trust)					

	Link existing town trail systems and conservation areas to regional pathways and trail systems to create contiguous areas to traverse. (Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Open Space and Recreation Committee, Land Trust, Boy and Girl Scouts)					
5	Research the feasibility of filing special legislation to enable the town to assess a 1% tax on all real estate transactions, with the revenues to be placed in a designated fund for the purpose of open space preservation and acquisition. (Conservation Commission, Selectboard)					
	Place an item on the Town Warrant to vote for the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to provide a 1% to 3% additional tax on real estate property, with the first \$100,000 in valuation to be exempt, to make the town eligible to receive grant funds or to leverage additional state funds for historic preservation, open space preservation, and affordable housing. (Conservation Commission, Selectboard, Historic Commission)					
	Encourage Paxton Center School to seek funding to develop nature trails contiguous to school property.(Recreation Commission)					
	Support the activities of land trusts and other organizations involved in land protection.					
	Encourage the use of opportunities under M.G.L. Chapter 61. [Under M.G.L. Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B the Town of Paxton holds the first right of purchase for private parcels taxed at reduced rates due to tax classification as forest land, agricultural/horticultural lands, or recreational lands.] This first purchase right of town government is an effective preservation tool which should be seriously considered by town officials each and every time a parcel becomes available under this program. (Selectboard, Conservation Commission)					
	Investigate other funding and technical assistance sources including the Self-Help and Urban Self-Help Programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the MDC Watershed Protection Program, the MDC Parks Program, the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, the Department of Environmental Management, the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, the Division of Conservation Services of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), and the Community Preservation Act. (Selectboard, Recreation Commission, Conservation					

Commission, Paxton Land Trust)					
Investigate other mechanisms for the preservation and creation of open space and recreation areas such as the use of easements; public and private partnerships; land and conservation restrictions; developer exactions; cluster requirements; tax title and town transfers; use of scout groups and others for help improving trails, cutting brush, removing trash; collaboration with our legislative delegation; and use of organizational resources. (Selectboard, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Paxton Land Trust)					

