

OPEN SPACE /OUTDOOR RECREATION SURVEY ANALYSIS

Throughout the months of June and July, the Open Space Planning Committee conducted an Open Space survey to determine public interest in open space for conservation and outdoor recreation. A questionnaire was mailed to every household in Marion and was also available for pick up at various locations in town. The survey was promoted on the local cable television channel and in two local papers, "The Sentinel" and "The Presto Press."

Three hundred and thirty six households responded, representing 15% of the total households in Marion including a total of 867 family members. While this is not a true sampling of the interests in Marion, it is a sampling of those interested enough to respond. As with the League of Women Voters' survey conducted in 1985, the results are somewhat slanted by the nature of the respondents. For example, 31% of the respondents were over 50 years old, while less than 25% represented families with children under 18. The inland neighborhoods of north Marion and the Route 6 area had a very weak showing of 19%. It is not surprising that 62% of the respondents felt that there was no need to expand the public beach areas, since 40% of the respondents said that their family had access to private beaches. A dot map on page 58(b) identifies the respondents by neighborhood.

According to the survey results, Marion residents have ample opportunity for outdoor recreation. Nature and walking trails and bikeways were the designated needs along with a teen/ community recreation center. A recreation center at first glance doesn't seem to fit in with outdoor recreation needs; however, it was identified by the Recreation Committee as a top priority need and scored the highest in the public survey. A recreation center set in a ball field complex would be beneficial to coordinate outdoor activities including team and league sports.

Marion youth participate in a regional soccer league. Presently there are no practice or game fields in Marion for the league to use, so all of their games and practices must be held in other towns. The Recreation Committee felt that this was a strong need even though only 21% of the respondents identified soccer fields as a need.

Most of the respondents that use public beaches go to Silvershell Beach and Planting Island Causeway Beach. Planting Island Causeway Beach has very limited parking and is by design a low impact use area that includes fragile beach grass plantings. The other five beaches were generally unknown (according to the survey). They are also too small for family beach going, have inadequate parking, and are generally silty or otherwise in poor condition. Silvershell Beach is the only family bathing area of any size, and this beach is also shared with the residents of Rochester, a fast growing inland town to the north and west of Marion. Respondents to this survey, as with previous surveys, considered this beach to be totally adequate.

This finding is not consistent with neighboring communities or with national standards. According to the American Society of Planning Officials and the National Recreation Association, the minimum beach requirement for a community is 3 linear feet per 3% of the user population. Since Marion's user population includes Rochester as well as summer residents, 1080 linear feet are required to meet minimum standards. Silvershell Beach consists of about 750 linear feet of beach.

The respondents of the survey were very concerned with conservation issues. Overwhelmingly they saw pollution of ground water, loss of habitats, and well field protection as serious problems. They tended to favor preservation through zoning as an approach to protecting these areas, which scored second only to a program of land giving. Fifty percent favored acquiring conservation easements and 50% favored a Land Bank Fund, with an additional 26% responding that it depends on the situation.

Percent of response figured on 336 returned questionnaires

MARION OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION SURVEY

distributed by the

Town of Marion Open Space/Land Bank Study Committee*

This is a public survey to determine the need for open space planning and to find out the community need for outdoor recreation and conservation in Marion. Please submit one form per household.

Which activities do you and your family members enjoy? and where?)

| ACTIVITY | IN MARION | IN OTHER TOWN |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| tennis | 42% | 8% |
| golf | 27% | 15% |
| softball | 6% | 1% |
| baseball | 15% | 3% |
| basketball | 14% | 3% |
| soccer | 13% | 7% |
| fishing | 48% | 15% |
| boating | 70% | 13% |
| canoeing | 11% | 11% |
| swimming | 74% | 16% |
| jogging | 38% | 7% |
| birding | 29% | 5% |
| walking | 76% | 17% |
| bicycling | 67% | 14% |
| camping | 6% | 15% |
| skating | 28% | 10% |
| x-country skiing | 26% | 18% |
| dancing (list type) | 26% | 18% |
| Other: | 12% | 7% |

Do you feel Marion has the need to expand or develop:

| | NO NEED | MODERATE NEED | PRIORITY NEED |
|--|---------|---------------|---------------|
| a. basketball courts | 40% | 19% | 40% |
| b. tennis courts | 37% | 18% | 40% |
| c. soccer fields | 38% | 13% | 8% |
| d. baseball fields | 37% | 12% | 3% |
| e. softball fields | 34% | 27% | 15% |
| f. access to beaches | 29% | 24% | 15% |
| g. boat ramps | 29% | 24% | 15% |
| h. playgrounds | 44% | 12% | 9% |
| i. parks | 34% | 21% | 9% |
| j. picnic areas | 32% | 23% | 10% |
| k. nature/hiking trails | 18% | 36% | 23% |
| l. bike trails | 21% | 30% | 29% |
| m. teen/community recreation center | 18% | 15% | 28% |
| n. other suggestions: (jogging trails, skate board area, municipal pool) | | | |

pool 10%
 Skate board area 10%
 Community sailing 1%

3. Have you or your family used the following beaches? If no, indicate reasons as listed in the four right-hand columns.

| BEACH | YES | NO | LACK OF PARKING | CONDITION OF BEACH | NOT AWARE OF BEACH | OTHER |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
| a. Silver Shell | 184 | 63 | 13 | 18 | 3 | 19 |
| b. River Road | 1 | 271 | 3 | 19 | 139 | 37 |
| c. Old Landing | 52 | 179 | 3 | 50 | 78 | 29 |
| d. Island Wharf | 50 | 200 | 8 | 44 | 72 | 30 |
| e. Point Road | 22 | 227 | 11 | 8 | 154 | 25 |
| f. Oakdale | 7 | 230 | 11 | 18 | 126 | 25 |
| g. Planting Is. Causeway | 171 | 118 | 19 | 29 | 35 | 25 |

4. Does your family have access to a private beach?

YES 133 40% NO 203 60%

5. Do you feel Marion needs to expand beach access?

YES 121 36% NO 207 62% 2% N.A.

Comments:

improve what we have; Expand Silvershell; provide shuttle

6. Are you concerned about any of the following?

| | NO PROBLEM | SLIGHT PROBLEM | SERIOUS PROBLEM |
|---|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| a. Pollution of groundwater | 48% (184) | 5% | (92) 27% |
| b. Protection from landfill contaminants? | 19% | 10% | 25% |
| c. Loss of natural habitats? | 41% | 9% | 22% |
| d. Loss of fishing areas? | 15% | 24% | 61% |
| e. Protection of well field? | 6% | 20% | 70% |

6. Which of the following approaches do you support to protect natural areas and/or to acquire recreational land?

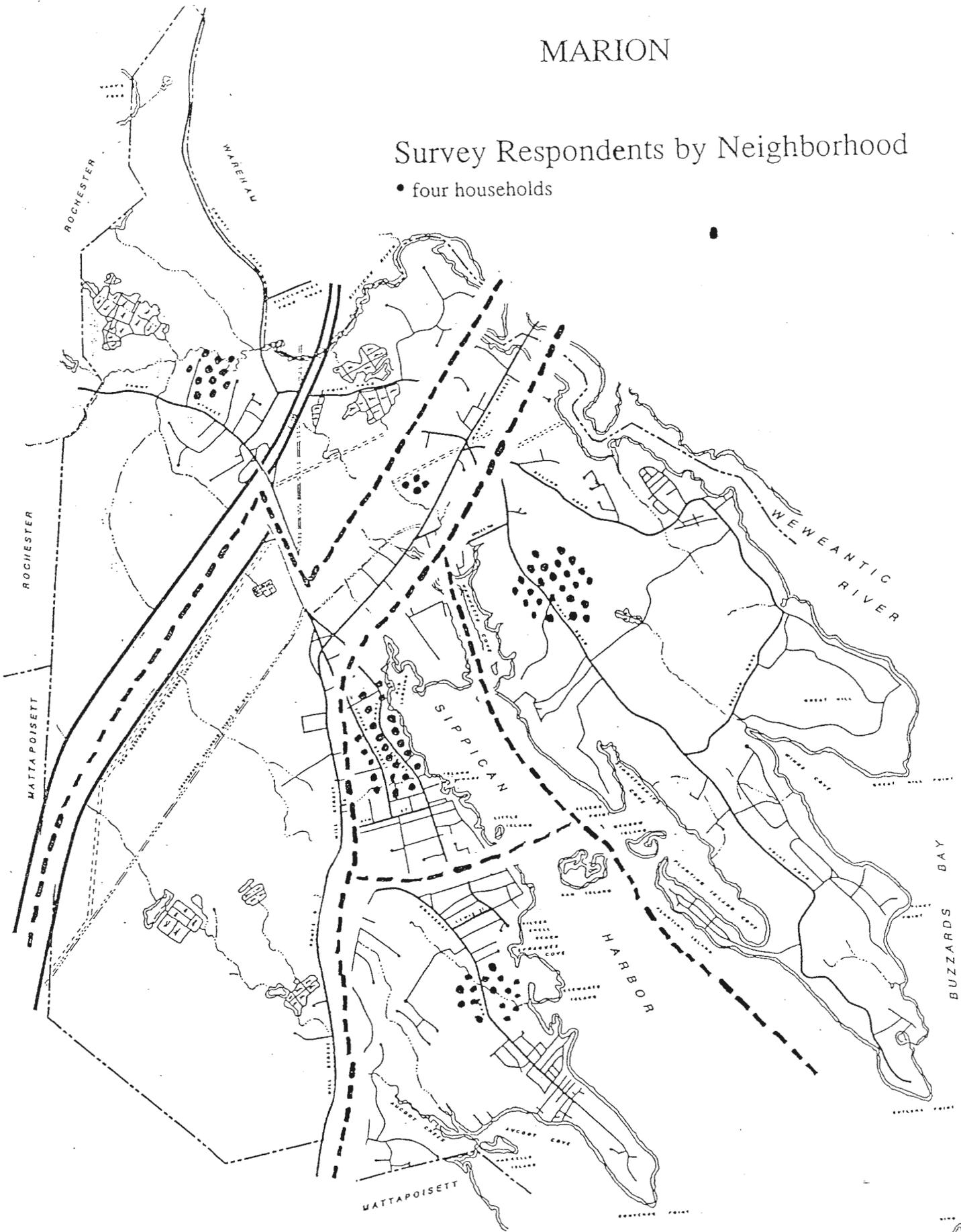
You may indicate more than one.

| | YES | NO | DEPENDS ON SITUATION |
|---|-----|-----|----------------------|
| a. Purchase land with town funds only? | 56% | 15% | 33% |
| b. Funds from property tax? | 25% | 19% | 30% |
| c. Funds from transfer fee? (Land Bank Fund) | 50% | 10% | 26% |
| d. Purchase land with partial reimbursement from state and Federal funds? | 47% | 13% | 11% |
| e. Protection through zoning? | 68% | 4% | 12% |
| f. Acquire conservation easements? | 58% | 10% | 15% |
| g. Encourage programs of land giving? | 71% | 2% | 7% |

MARION

Survey Respondents by Neighborhood

• four households



METHOD OF DETERMINING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals were derived by examining community need and anticipated future need, against existing open space. These needs came from a study of past plans and reports; review of the Open Space Survey results and the results of the League of Women Voters Survey (1986); interest expressed at the open space public forum in June; and suggestions from various boards, commissions, and citizen groups with open space interests. Burk Ketcham, Marion planning consultant, also contributed recommendations, and care was taken to have this Open Space Plan complement the Land Use Plan for the Town.

During June and July, an open space survey was mailed to every household in Marion, followed up by an open space public forum held on June 27 at the Sippican School. The survey and meeting were promoted on the local cable television station and advertised in both "The Presto Press" and "The Sentinel." While this was not a true sampling of all of the people in Marion, it was a sampling of those interested enough to respond.

Suggestions and comments were canvassed from boards, commissions, and interest groups. Those contributing included: The Marion Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, Zoning Board of Appeals, Council on Aging, Marine Resources Commission, Coastal Zone Management, Sippican Lands Trust, Tabor Academy, Tri-Town River and Herring Committee, and the Historical Society.

A list of goals and steps to reach those goals was drafted by the Open Space Planning Committee in September. A five year plan of action was created and funding options were explored.