

Maine is Vacationland. What does this mean? Well, for starters, it means that people who live in Winslow have access to recreational opportunities typically associated with vacations.

Unorganized Recreation

The water and other natural resources spread throughout town were documented earlier in this Plan. Those resources are not only natural and habitat resources, but also recreational resources for residents and visitors alike. Unorganized recreation, taking advantage of these local resources, is typically “organized” by private entities.

The Fort Halifax Snowdrifters is a local snowmobiling club. Their current map of snowmobile trails in Winslow can be found at the end of this chapter. The Snowdrifters maintain approximately 35 miles of local trails. Winslow not only contains numerous local trails, but a major Interconnected Trail System route passes through town (ITS 85). This major trail runs from Augusta to Fort Kent, providing residents easy access to trails throughout the entire state without having to leave the snowmobile. The ITS trail also brings in riders from all across the state, passing through Winslow on their tours, and oftentimes stopping in their travels. Maintenance of this ITS trail not only provides a major recreational opportunity to residents, but is also a boon to the winter economy.

Kennebec Messalonskee Trails (KMTrails) is a regional hiking and biking organization. Their map of trails is also published at the end of this chapter. In addition to hiking and bicycling, some trails can be used for cross-country skiing in the winter. KMTrails provides more of a facilitator role than construction and maintenance. They help form the partnerships necessary for construction and maintenance, working with public and private entities. As the name implies, KMTrails are focused along the Kennebec and Messalonskee Rivers, although there are some efforts to incorporate and connect with trails along the Sebasticook River. The trail network is thus limited to the northwest corner of Winslow. However, the goal of these trails is to provide non-motorized “unorganized” recreation to urban residents, so the fact that the trails focus on the “urbanized” central Maine region of Oakland, Waterville, Winslow, Benton, and Fairfield is exactly the point.

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine, a state organization, promotes regional bicycling opportunities. A major bicycle path, known as the Waterville-China Lakes tour, passes through the town of Winslow (map of tour can be found at the end of this chapter). By starting in the urban area of Waterville and Winslow, a major benefit of this path is providing unorganized recreation to urban residents, without first requiring that those residents travel in vehicles.

Maine contains stunning national parks, such as Acadia, as well as renowned state parks, such as Baxter. The unorganized recreational opportunities in these parks is obvious. However, the irony is that one must drive long distances to access these wild places. Driving in vehicles causes pollution that harms the very wild places being visited. Additionally, not all residents, especially urban residents, have access to vehicles or have the ability to travel in vehicles to major parks. Urban links to unorganized trails not requiring vehicles help urban residents understand their relationship to nature and appreciate those natural resources providing the recreation. These links also enhance urban living by providing access to unorganized recreation increasingly considered only accessible in rural areas. People can enjoy the benefits of urban living, while also enjoying many benefits of rural living.

A grand dream of the movement to provide urban links to unorganized recreation is known as the East Coast Greenway. The plan of the Greenway is to connect Key West, Florida to Calais, Maine through a continuous pedestrian and bicycle path (see map at end of chapter). Thus, urban residents all along the eastern seaboard could gain access to traffic-free trails and recreational opportunities well outside city limits. Section 3B of the Maine stretch of the East Coast Greenway runs through Winslow (see map at end of chapter). Winslow residents, even urban residents, are connected to a wide and expanding network of unorganized recreational opportunities.

Organized Recreation

Schools in the United States have long provided organized sports opportunities, and municipal governments have long provided public parks and playgrounds. Local public parks, unlike state and national parks, are typically neighborhood-sized and contain either playground equipment or ball fields.



Neighborhood playground in northwest Winslow

There are over 100 acres of public greenspace in Winslow. Of this amount, approximately 60 acres (including school athletic fields) are used for organized recreation. In addition to outdoor sports, Sukee Arena provides indoor hockey and soccer facilities for many local and regional organizations. The arena is located in the industrial park off the Augusta Road in southwest Winslow.

The town employs three part-time workers (no full-time employees) in the Parks & Recreation Department, whose responsibilities include maintenance of the outdoor fields and organization of programs. A volunteer Board of Parks & Recreation oversees program development and activities. Active recreational opportunities abound in northwest Winslow, ranging from large high school facilities to neighborhood playgrounds.



Soccer field on Halifax Street

Like development in general, organized recreational opportunities are centered in western Winslow. All three school levels, elementary, middle, and high, are located in northwestern Winslow, including their associated recreational fields. Organized recreation opportunities for children, including outdoor neighborhood playgrounds, are well-located in Winslow.

There are not many indoor recreation opportunities. There is no large, centrally-located community center. Something like this would be ideal given the aging population – someplace for seniors to continue their active recreation even during the long winter months. The Alford Center in Waterville is a highly successful collaboration between private and public entities. Perhaps something similar could occur in Winslow. A community center would also allow the town to provide recreational activities beyond traditional outdoor sports. Currently, specialized programs such as music or dance lessons are not provided by the parks & recreation department.

Analysis and Key Issues

Recreation is impossible without access. Maine has a long tradition of public recreational access to private lands. These collaborative compacts allow for opportunities such as snowmobiling and walking/biking trails. Motorized and non-motorized trail maps can be found at the end of this chapter.

Public access from Fort Halifax Park entails a grassy riverbank slowly grading down to the Kennebec River. This access point allows for easy canoeing and kayaking; however, does not provide for larger boat access. With the removal of the Fort Halifax Dam, this public access point can now provide canoe and kayak recreation along the Sebasticook River.



Access to the Kennebec River from Fort Halifax Park

The access point to the Kennebec River pictured above, though public, is not publicly maintained. It is not a state-maintained boat launch; and there is no state boat launch from Winslow into either the Kennebec or Sebasticook River. Additionally, there is no public access point, state-maintained or otherwise, to Pattee's Pond.

Pattee's Pond, as documented earlier in this Plan, is a wonderful resource. It is thoroughly enjoyed by those living on, and visiting the Pond. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife stocks Pattee's Pond with brook trout. Numerous other fish species exist in the Pond, such as chain pickerel, smallmouth bass, and white and yellow perch. Pattee's Pond is currently open to ice fishing from the time ice forms in the fall to March 31, with no special regulations.

Camp Caribou is a boys summer camp on the north side of Pattee's Pond, established in 1922. It covers approximately 200 acres, including the entire large peninsula jutting south into the Pond. In addition to the hundreds of boys who descend upon Winslow every summer, Camp Caribou hosts the Maine Becoming an Outdoors Woman program. This program, which occurs throughout North America, began approximately 20 years ago with the philosophy that many women prefer learning hunting, fishing, and outdoor skills in a non-competitive atmosphere with other like-minded women. The three-day introductory skills workshop is held at Camp Caribou every fall.

Camp Caribou is a wonderful private recreation asset in Winslow. Nonetheless, local officials must seriously collaborate with state and private organizations to develop both a public boat launch and a public beach on Pattee's Pond.

Town residents should also seriously consider investing in non-sports recreation activities. Most public parks and playgrounds are in good shape; in fact, most of the money for the parks & recreation department goes towards maintaining those parks and playgrounds. However, as stated earlier, there is a dearth of indoor recreation, such as space for elderly activities and music and dance. This type of recreation could be provided with a large community center, or a series of small specialized community centers. Alternatively, the town could contract with the Alford Community Center in Waterville, allowing Winslow residents access to those services.

Policies

- The town should maintain and upgrade (as necessary) existing recreational facilities to meet current and future needs.
- The town should preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.
- The town should seek to achieve at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming; and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.

Strategies

- ✓ The town should create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs.

The Parks and Recreation Board should update current and future recreational needs, based upon resident input and this Comprehensive Plan. The Board should then present a prioritized list of needs to the Town Council, for discussion of strategies for addressing the needs. The Parks and Recreation Board should present this list to the Town Council by 2010.

- ✓ The town should include any capital needs identified for recreation facilities in the Capital Improvements Plan.

The Director of Parks and Recreation should continue providing annual recommendations to the Town Manager on capital investment plans for the recreation department.

The Board of Parks and Recreation should investigate public-private partnerships in developing a community center. The Board should talk to representatives from the Alford Community Center in Waterville to assist in developing a plan for expanded recreational opportunities including non-sports recreation.

- ✓ The town should work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. These trails should connect with regional trail systems where possible.

The town should continue to support local organizations, such as the Fort Halifax Snowdrifters and Kennebec Messalonskee Trails. These and other local organizations should be encouraged to make annual presentations to the Planning Board to keep the Board abreast of potential future conflicts between development and recreation.

- ✓ The town should work with a local land trust or other preservation organization to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.

See the strategy for creation of a Resources Protection Fund in the Fiscal Capacity chapter.

- ✓ The town should provide education regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property.

The Planning Board should invite local organizations, such as Kennebec Messalonskee Trails, to present the benefits of public access during a meeting. The presentation can be summarized into a brochure that the CEO can distribute to landowners. The Planning Board should receive the brochure by 2011.