



*Lancaster Town Forest*

*Photo by MRPC*

## **Section 5. Inventory of Lands of Open Space and Recreation Interest**

This section inventories existing conservation and recreation lands in Lancaster, details the protections accomplished since publication of the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and identifies focus areas for continuing protection efforts. For the purposes of this Open Space and Recreation Plan, open space is defined as, “an area of land that is valued for natural processes and wildlife, for agricultural and silvicultural (forestry) production, for active and passive recreation, and for providing other public benefits”.

Generally speaking, “protection” means development and changes in land use that are permanently prohibited by law; conservation and recreation lands are considered to be permanently protected, legally, only if they are subject to the jurisdiction of Article 97 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts State Constitution. Conservation and recreation land can be protected through fee ownership by governmental agencies or non-profit organizations, while private property, whether owned by individuals or organizations, can be protected through conservation restrictions held by governmental agencies or non-profits. Examples of Article 97 land include properties owned by State conservation agencies (Massachusetts Departments of Conservation and Recreation, Fish and Game), municipally-owned properties under the control and management of Conservation or Recreation Commissions, and privately-owned properties with Conservation Restrictions held by governmental agencies and/or non-profit organizations pursuant to the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 184, Sections 31-33.

It is critical to permanently protect properties vulnerable to development so as to:

- Protect the Town’s water supply and health of its ponds, streams, wetlands, and waterways.
- Protect and enrich recreational resources.

- Protect and enrich plant and wildlife habitat.
- Protect contiguous blocks of forestland.
- Protect and preserve agricultural lands and the viability of farming.
- Improve the connectivity of people and places in order to foster a sense of community.
- Integrate growth and development so that Lancaster’s rural feel, scenic vistas, historic character and natural landscape are preserved.

### **5.A. Inventory of Existing Conservation and Recreation Lands**

Tables 5.1– 5.4 list all parcels in Lancaster under some form of protection; this inventory includes public, non-profit and private properties. Table 5.5 lists State-owned non-Article 97 lands, Table 5.6 all municipally owned parcels with their protection status (or lack of), and Table 5.7 land, and its protection status, owned by non-profit organizations. Please also see Map 7: “Open Space Inventory” in the Appendix.

### **5.B. Focus Areas for Expanded Protection and Protection Accomplished since the 2009 OSRP**

In her May 6, 2009 letter written to the Lancaster Open Space Committee, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP, part of MassWildlife) Ecologist Patricia Swain identified and prioritized conservation focus areas in Lancaster according to the diversity and rarity of the species and natural communities living within them. The letter (a copy of which is included in the Appendix) continues to be an important guiding document for land protection planning in Lancaster. Lancaster Town Forest Committee Chairman Tim Castner’s 2012 *Lancaster Greenbelt Vision Plan* has also identified and prioritized focus areas for land conservation efforts (see also Section 4 of this Plan, **Environmental Analysis & Inventory.**)

#### **Nashua River Floodplain**

The Nashua River is Lancaster’s premier natural resource asset and a popular recreational resource as well. Much of the land along the Nashua consists of open agricultural fields, contiguous forest and unique wetlands, including vernal pools and oxbows sustaining rare species such as Blandings turtles, freshwater mussels, and several species of dragonflies and damselflies. While much land along the Nashua River is publicly-owned or owned by conservation organizations, and some of the privately-owned land has been developed in the last decade, a significant amount remains undeveloped and unprotected.

#### **The First Nashua River Greenway in Lancaster**

The effort to protect land along the Nashua River in Lancaster has a long and productive history, beginning with the *Nashua River Greenway Plan* prepared by Lee “Bill” Farnsworth in 1970, envisioned in the Town’s first Master Plan, and further developed by the Lancaster Greenway Committee. This early planning work ultimately led to creation of the Nashua’s first permanently protected riparian corridor in Lancaster, known as the Lancaster Nashua River Greenway, comprised of five (5) permanent Conservation Restrictions conveyed, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 184, to the Lancaster Conservation Commission in late 1978 by the owners of undeveloped riverfront properties located on the east side of the North Nashua River west of Main Street in the vicinity of the Perkins School (see **Table 5.2: MGL Chapter 184 Conservation Restrictions**). The 2000 Open Space and Recreation Plan included an updated *Nashua River Greenway Plan* that continued to build and expand upon the initial vision, as did the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Plan and 2012 *Lancaster Greenbelt Vision Plan*.

### Additional Nashua River Greenways

The Lancaster State Forest, Cook Conservation Area, and Chapman Greenway together form a greenway along the north side the North Nashua River extending west from Route 70 to the Leominster State Forest in Leominster. While nearly all of this several hundred acre area is permanently protected public land, two parcels – one municipally owned, the other privately – remain unprotected on the north side of the River.

### Pellechia Conservation Area

Located nearly a mile south of the entrance to the Cook Conservation Area on Route 70 is the small Town-owned Pellechia Conservation Area, the site of a boat launch that has been fully permitted for handicapped access, but which, so far, lacks funding for construction.

### Ballard Hill North Conservation Area

Ballard Hill North Conservation Area is a 32-acre parcel owned by the Lancaster Land Trust running north-south between Route 117 and the North Nashua River's south side directly across the River from the Cook Conservation Area. This parcel was acquired by the Land Trust using funding from the federal Forest Legacy Program, which required the conveyance of a Chapter 184 Conservation Restriction to the Lancaster Conservation Commission.

Comparatively much less land has been protected on the south side of the North Nashua River than on the north side; serious effort should be directed to further conservation in the area of Ballard Hill and vicinity, where the majority of the undeveloped land is still in private ownership. Nearly the entire area from the existing greenway on the north side of the North Nashua east to Route 70, west to I-190, and south to Route 117, is located within the Central Nashua River Valley Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), and Wekepeke Brook, a designated Coldwater Fishery, runs through the western section of the area, where it joins with the North Nashua River.

### Bolton Flats State Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

The Nashua River and its floodplain in the Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area are one of Lancaster's most biologically diverse areas. Expansion of the WMA, especially in the Pine Hill area, which supports a very rare Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak community, is a high conservation priority for MassWildlife, and the agency has been actively pursuing land acquisitions there. The Pine Hill lands connect to the Fort Devens South Post and to the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge.

### Confarm Forest to Dexter Drumlin

The actively managed Confarm Forest, owned by the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF), is at the northern end, and Dexter Drumlin, owned by the Trustees of Reservations, is at the southern end of an area of fields and forests bounded by Langen Road on the west, Route 117 on the north, the North Nashua River on the east, and George Hill Road/Main Street on the south. Much of the land in this area consists of floodplain and NHESP-mapped habitat, and the numerous agricultural fields define the Town's scenic character. This general area is directly opposite Lancaster's first Nashua River greenway on the North Nashua's east side; see The First Nashua River Greenway in Lancaster above.

While significant portions of this area have been developed in the years since the publication of the 2009 OSRP, development has mostly been restricted to the front of properties in close proximity to public roads, and there are still relatively large undisturbed areas directly adjacent to the North Nashua at the back of several properties; obtaining Chapter 184 Conservation Restrictions from the owners of these parcels would greatly benefit the permanent protection of this potentially large greenway.

#### Nashua River Greenway Protection Accomplished since the 2009 OSRP

- At the Special Town Meeting held on October 6, 2014, voters approved the transfer to the Conservation Commission's control and management of Town-owned parcels 24-82 and 24-90.A, together totaling 37.60± acres in the Ballard Hill area once known as "Walnut Swamp" just north of Route 117.
- In August, 2015, the Conservation Commission accepted a gift of parcel 25-28, 1.00± acres on the North Nashua River, opposite the Pellechia Canoe/kayak launch, from the estate of Eleanor Jarvis.
- At the Annual Town Meeting held on May 1, 2017 voters approved the transfer of Town-owned parcels 14-18 and 18-65 on the north side of the Nashua River in the Cook Conservation Area, together totaling 24± acres, to the Conservation Commission's control and management.

#### Lancaster Town Forest (aka Blood Forest)

Open Space and Recreation survey respondents and public forum attendees underscored the importance of conserving Lancaster's forestland, in particular adding protected acreage to the Lancaster Town Forest. The Town Forest forms the core of a much larger block of contiguous forestland of over 1,000 acres that extends from Langen Road into Sterling. Most of this area does not have permanent protection. Should the discontinued Old County Road become a public road again, development could penetrate and fragment the forestland. As referenced in Section 4 of this Plan, some of the soils in the Town Forest and vicinity are estimated by the Harvard University Forest to be 1830s primary forest soils. There are five (5) NHESP-certified vernal pools in the Town Forest (see Table 4.1).

#### Town Forest Protection Accomplished since the 2009 OSRP:

- In February 2013, the Town closed on the purchase of parcels 33-82 and 33-82-A, together totaling 20.6± acres, approved by voters at the Special Town Meeting held on October 1, 2012. At the Annual Town Meeting held on May 1, 2017 voters approved the transfer of parcels 33-82 and 33-82.A to the Conservation Commission's control, to be managed by the Town Forest Committee under the Commission's direction.
- In March 2014, the Conservation Commission accepted a gift of parcel 24-42.N, 10.18± acres, from Lancaster Development Trust, the developer of the Devonshire Estates subdivision.
- At the Annual Town Meeting held on May 5, 2014, voters approved the transfer of Town-owned parcels 28-13, 29-15, and 29-16, together totaling 41.4± acres, to the Conservation Commission's control, to be managed by the Town Forest Committee under the Commission's direction.

- In June 2015, pursuant to the vote on Article 11 of the Annual Town Meeting held on May 5, 2014, the Town closed on the purchase of a perpetual Conservation Restriction on parcels 28-12, 29-17, 29-18, collectively known as “Ballard Hill South”, together totaling 17.85± acres and owned by the Lancaster Land Trust, who acquired the properties with the financial assistance of a Conservation Partnership Grant award from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- At the Special Town Meeting held on October 2, 2017 voters approved the purchase, for conservation purposes, of parcel 29-22 consisting of 26.8± acres directly adjacent to the Town Forest’s southern boundary, contingent on the Town’s receiving a Land Acquisition for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant from the Commonwealth, which was awarded in early December. The Town closed on the purchase of the property on April 24, 2018.

#### **Additional Conservation Focus Areas and Protection Accomplished since the 2009 OSRP**

- Privately held land that would extend the Fitchburg State College land located in North Lancaster on Lunenburg Road north of Route 2, near Lancaster Woods and the Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center, south of the P.J. Keating sand and gravel site. This block of land contains many wetlands, Harvard Forest has mapped likely 1830’s primary forest soils here, and MassDEP has mapped a conifer swamp as well. There is a large vernal pool to the west of the Johnny Appleseed Visitor Center.
- Land near Jungle Road and the Wekepeke Brook. Should land become available for conservation, there may be a regional opportunity to connect trails with Leominster’s extensive open space in this area. The area is a Zone II wellhead protection area for a public water supply, and a portion has been mapped by NHESP as Priority and Estimated Habitat for Rare Species. There is an owner-unknown parcel here that should be conserved, and which is near the Leominster well site (Map 23, Parcel 8).
- The far southwest corner of town, which shares a border with Sterling and Clinton, has been mapped by the NHESP as Priority and Estimated Habitat for Rare Species. The Clinton-owned Brandli parcel is here.
- The Town owns two land-locked parcels east of White Pond Road; Map 8, Parcel 43 and Map 9, Parcel 3. There is a private parcel sandwiched between these two parcels. The biodiversity of this area is likely high, and Harvard Forest has mapped likely 1830s primary forest soils here. A nice mixture of wetlands and sandy uplands, along with a cluster of vernal pools, create good turtle and amphibian habitat. Connecting a public access trail from the White Pond Road neighborhood south to the Nashua River Greenway and east to Route 70 could be a way to “improve the connectivity of people and places in order to foster a sense of community”, one of the goals of this Open Space and Recreation Plan. This block of land is within an Integrated Planning Overlay District (IPOP), which requires an open space set-aside when developed.
- Lands around the Great Ponds in North Lancaster, so as to protect water supply, public access and wildlife habitat (see Section 4, **Environmental Analysis and Inventory**, for details about the impaired water quality of Fort Pond and White’s Pond).
- At the Annual Town Meeting held on May 4, 2015, voters approved the transfer of Town-owned parcel 2-3, 7.00± acres, to the Conservation Commission’s control and management.

- At the Annual Town Meeting held on May 2, 2016 voters approved the transfer of Town-owned parcels 32-17, 32-18, and 32-19 on Hilltop Road, together totaling 25± acres, to the Conservation Commission's control. The Town Meeting vote included the designation of nearly twenty acres of the land (parcels 32-18 and 32-19) as the "Eugene Christoph Memorial Wild Forest" in memory of Mr. Christoph's many years of dedicated volunteer service to the Town of Lancaster (see Forest Blocks in Section 4 for additional information on the Eugene Christoph Memorial Wild Forest).

### **Chapter 61/61A/61B Lands**

Owners of undeveloped, actively managed land receive a significant reduction in their real estate taxes upon enrollment of the land in the M.G.L. Chapter 61 program. Chapter 61 provides landowners with three management options, each of which has specific statutory requirements pertaining to land use and/or products generated from the land:

- Chapter 61 – Forestry
- Chapter 61A – Agriculture
- Chapter 61B – Recreation

The Town has the legal right of first refusal on any property enrolled in Chapter 61/61A/61B when the property is sold, or its use changes from forestry/agriculture/recreation, i.e. the Town has the opportunity to acquire the property – in the former case by matching the price offered to the landowner by a third party, in the latter case by paying fair market value as determined by an independent appraisal. Lancaster currently has approximately 1,251 acres in Chapter 61A, 61B and 61, a reduction of approximately 74 acres since the 2009 OSRP. Many of our Chapter lands abut other open space, some of which is permanently protected.

### **Chapter 61 – Forestry**

Chapter 61 lands identified by Open Space and Recreation survey respondents as "Of interest for Protection" include three parcels abutting the Town Forest; one of these parcels is east of Old County Road and the two remaining contiguous parcels are on the west side of Brockelman Road. Together, these parcels extend this large, forested block of land west into Sterling. (See **Lancaster Town Forest** above, and **Forest Blocks** in Section 4, for additional information on the Lancaster Town Forest).

### **Chapter 61A – Agriculture**

Respondents to the [2017](#) Lancaster Open Space and Recreation Survey ranked "the protection and preservation of our agricultural lands for food resources and open space" as very important. Current 61A (agriculture) lands identified by Open Space and Recreation survey respondents as "Of interest for Protection" include:

- Nashua floodplain fields in the area of the Bolton Flats, Neck Road (Night Pasture) and between Langen Road and Main Street/Route 70. This includes the Quill fields, Brazao land, Flats Mentor Farm, Watts land and Kanis land. Survey respondents overwhelmingly commented about not building on floodplains.

- Other 61A land identified by Lancaster Open Space and Recreation Survey respondents included George Hill Orchards, Manny's Dairy Farm, Bashaw Farm, Harper's Farm, Deershorn Farm, Kilbourn field, Jakubowitz field, Davis Farm, and Gove Farm near the Leominster border.
- Some of the smaller 61A parcels are in "yet to be built" approved subdivisions or in built up areas that consist of 2-5 acre lots that do not connect to other open space parcels. These parcels could be strategic locations for future neighborhood parks, as survey respondents have identified neighborhood parks as generally lacking in Lancaster.

### **Lands of Recreational Interest**

#### **Municipally-Owned**

Municipally-owned recreational lands and facilities are limited in Town and need to be increased and existing ones improved. Open Space and Recreation Survey respondents as well as public forum attendees identified the following:

- A 22-acre Town-owned parcel in North Lancaster off Old Turnpike Road and in between Spectacle Pond Avenue and Fire Road 7 (Map 10, Parcel 13A).
- The Town Hall/Community Center parcel at 695 Main Street. In 2016, the Town of Lancaster was awarded a Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for the design and construction of the Nathaniel Thayer Memorial Park outdoor recreational campus on this parcel.

#### **Privately-Owned**

- Kilbourn Field on Sterling Road across from Poulin Drive (survey respondents had equal interest for recreation and for wildlife).
- Lands that provide access to the Nashua River.
- Land around South Meadow Pond/Brandli parcel.
- Kalon Farm field on Route 117.
- As properties in North Lancaster get developed as part of the Integrated Planning Overlay District (IPOD), areas for public recreational access and/or facilities should be earmarked.
- Golf Courses

There are two golf courses in Lancaster, both of which are privately owned, providing recreational opportunities and a measure of wildlife habitat:

- Sterling National Country Club is an Audubon National Certified Cooperative Sanctuary. This course abuts the Eagle Ridge Subdivision. Sterling National is one of only ten courses in the state to earn this honor. The 260 acres of nature preserve and wetlands connects to Town-owned open space behind Hilltop Road, forming a large, contiguous block. The Sterling National Country Club land is under Chapter 61B (recreation).

- The International Golf Resort straddles Bolton and Lancaster and is in the southeast corner of Town. The Town of Lancaster owns a small abutting parcel on the corner of Mill Street Extension and Bolton Station Road, and the Lancaster Land trust owns a small, landlocked parcel here.
- Soccer Fields
  - The Massachusetts Youth Association Soccer (MYSA) fields in North Lancaster. Town residents have limited use of the fields through leagues and clubs. The MYSA property abuts other forested habitat that is privately-owned and which will likely get developed. Land set aside in the form of connecting recreational trails may be a way to link the White Pond neighborhood (and other residents and MYSA visitors) south to the Nashua River Greenway.
  - The four (4) FCStars fields on McGovern Boulevard off Lunenburg Road (Route 70.) Town residents do not have use of these fields. The FCStars fields abut the large block of unfragmented forest extending south to the Nashua River and west to I-190, consisting of the State-owned Lancaster State Forest and the Town-owned Cook Conservation Area.
- Camps
 

YMCA Camp Lowe is in North Lancaster on Fort Pond Inn Road. North and east of Camp Lowe is a large block of unfragmented forest which includes Bow Brook, a designated Coldwater Fishery, and two bogs. Some of this land is within the IPOD. MassDEP has identified Fort Pond as impaired and plans a watershed analysis which will then inform the Total Maximum Daily Load restriction plan for the pond. Conserving land in the Fort Pond watershed and encouraging low impact development will be important.

### **Lands of Historical Significance**

- In February 2015, the Conservation Commission accepted a gift of the Rowlandson Rock parcel, Map 37-Parcel 30, .25± acres, from The Estate of William A. Kilbourn. In January 2017, the Conservation Commission accepted gifts of Parcels 37-32D, 37-32H, and 37-32I, together totaling 8.95± acres, from NLJW, LLC. Parcel 37-32D abuts the Rowlandson Rock parcel, providing public access to the latter.
- The Massachusetts Department of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) property on Old Common Road (Map 39-Parcel 4) has numerous buildings and structures in the National Historic Register, and these buildings and grounds should be protected.

### **Lancaster's Well Site**

Lancaster's well site is in the southeast corner of the Town between Bolton Station Road and Mill Street Extension. Open Space and Recreation Survey respondents identified protection of the Town's drinking water supply of primary importance; protecting additional land in this area would help protect Lancaster's future water supply.

### **Institutional Lands**



All of the institutions below own extensive lands in Lancaster significantly contributing to the beauty and rural feel of the Town:

- Maharishi Ayurveda Health Center  
The Center owns approximately 217 (Map 32-Parcel 1) acres abutting the Lancaster Town Forest and the 100-acre New England Forestry Foundation parcel off of Bull Hill Road. Originally the estate of Baird Thayer, this property remains mostly undeveloped, approximately two-thirds of it located in BioMap2 Core Habitat. Mr. Thayer's old mansion is used by the Center for retreats.
- Atlantic Union College  
The College owns 28 acres abutting the Town Forest. Several historic mansions of the Thayer family grace AUC's grounds, in particular the Nathaniel Thayer mansion on Route 70, now the home of the College's Thayer Conservatory of Music. This parcel also abuts Chapter 61A land and Dexter Drumlin, owned by The Trustees of Reservations.
- Dr. Franklin Perkins School  
The School is located on Main Street in the mansion and on the grounds of the former Iver Johnson Estate. The School also owns a therapeutic equestrian riding facility across the street on Map 34-Parcel 9, a 6.20-acre portion of which is permanently protected under a Chapter 184 Conservation Restriction granted to the Lancaster Conservation Commission in 1978 (see **Table 5.2: MGL Chapter 184 Conservation Restrictions.**)

### **5.C. Government and Non-Profit Parcels**

#### **Federal**

The federal government owns approximately 5,000 acres in North Lancaster comprising the Fort Devens South Post. This land is not open to the public and is used for National Guard training. MassWildlife monitors natural communities and turtle populations on the site. When de-commissioned, the South Post will become part of the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. One hundred acres will be given to the Town at that time.

#### **State**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns the following land in Lancaster:

- Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which is open to the public and allows hunting and fishing. This site supports a model airplane landing field off Route 110, site of an abandoned pig barn.
- Lancaster State Forest, which is approximately 100 acres. The acreage and boundaries of the state forest are currently being verified by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Hunting and fishing are allowed. The DCR's Department of Forestry plans to harvest this forest and has done so in the past.
- Department of Capital Asset Management owns institutional land on Old Common Road.
- MassDOT owns parcels of land near Route 2.

- Fitchburg State College owns land in Lancaster north of Route 2 and west of Lunenburg Road which its students and faculty use for biology and conservation study.
- MA Fish & Game, Division of Boating Access, owns a boat launch on Fort Pond Road for public access.
- The Division of Youth Services owns a little over 500 acres in North Lancaster near the Shirley line, which is the location of a correctional center complex.

### **Municipal**

The following Town parcels are of interest for recreation and open space purposes because they connect to currently-protected open space, are potential sites for recreational facilities, protect water supply, or serve as wildlife corridors:

- Map 26, Parcel 2 – this 35-acre parcel is at Pine Hill, between two MassWildlife parcels within the Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area and contains some of the best remaining Pitch Pine/Scrub Oak habitat in the State. MassWildlife has expressed interest in conserving this parcel and suggests that this could be done while maintaining the current use of the site as a shooting range and for town sand and gravel mining.
- Map 8, Parcel 43 and Map 9, Parcel 3 – these two parcels are near White Pond and are approximately 15 acres. There is a privately held parcel sandwiched between which should be considered for acquisition. The larger plan for this area could include a pedestrian/equestrian trail extending from the White Pond neighborhood south to the Nashua River Greenway.
- Map 10, Parcel 13A – this 21-acre parcel on Old Union Turnpike is in the general vicinity of the town beach and would likely be a good future site for recreational purposes.
- Map 23, Parcel 22 – this 17-acre parcel west of Brockelman Road connects to the Town Forest and to Chapter 61 (forestry) land. It abuts owner-unknown parcels through which the Wekepeke Brook, a coldwater fishery, flows.
- Map 23, Parcels 12 and 15 – the combined acreage of these two parcels is 10 acres. They connect to the above parcel and to owner unknown parcels through which the Wekepeke Brook flows.
- Map 28, Parcel 14 – this privately owned 25-acre parcel is attractive for open space acquisition because it extends the Town Forest. This parcel could be a nice place for a picnic and park, and is drier than the abutting Town-owned parcel.
- Map 18, Parcel 53 – this 2.4-acre parcel provides street access off of North Main Street/Route 117. It provides access to a private parcel of interest that abuts the North Nashua River.
- Map 45, Parcel 36 – this 2-acre, landlocked parcel appears to have a right of way access via Magnolia Avenue. This parcel could be the location of a neighborhood playground and park area situated in the southern part of the Town. Magnolia Avenue is in South Lancaster near the Clinton town border and Route 62.

- Map 38, Parcels 83A, 85A – these two 13.5-acre parcels off of Kilbourn Road abut the Nashua River and its floodplain.
- Map 38, Parcel 2 – this 7-acre parcel off of Main Street/Route 70 is near Bigelow Gardens and abuts the railroad tracks, near the Eastwood Cemetery.
- Map 38, Parcel 131 – this parcel has access from Center Bridge Road and is in the vicinity of the “Meeting of the Waters,” where the South and North Nashua conjoin. Two small Conservation Commission-owned parcels abut.
- Map 30, Parcel 154 – this 37-acre parcel is where the elementary and middle schools are located. The back portion of this large parcel is in NHESP-mapped habitat as well as in an ACEC and should be considered for conservation restriction. There is an oxbow wetland here and a maintained nature trail.

The following unprotected, Town-owned parcels abut Conservation Commission land and/or are a key link in the Nashua River Greenway and should be considered for either transfer to the Conservation Commission or for a conservation restriction:

- Map 13, Parcel 6
- Map 14, Parcel 10
- Map 14, Parcel 14
- Map 23, Parcel 5
- Map 25, Parcel 32
- Map 42, Parcels 15 and 11 (these are small, likely landlocked parcels of just under an acre but they abut the Nashua River and a conservation restriction on an adjoining private parcel)

The following owner unknown-parcels are either in NHESP Priority and Estimated Habitat for Rare and Endangered Species habitat or abut protected conservation land. For these reasons, they should be strongly considered for acquisition:

- Map 23, Parcel 8 – this parcel is in a Zone II water supply protection area off of Jungle Road and is in/abuts NHESP habitat. The Wekepeke Brook, a coldwater fishery, flows near here.
- Map 23, Parcels 14 and 18 – the Wekepeke Brook flows through these parcels, and these parcels connect to protected Commonwealth of Massachusetts DPW land.
- Map 14, Parcel 16 – this parcel abuts the Lancaster State Forest and is in an ACEC.
- Map 28, Parcel 6 – small parcel adjacent near the Town Forest, adjacent to protected land owned by the Lancaster Land Trust. Currently in Land Court, the Town will take title to the parcel if awarded by the Court.

#### **5.D. Park and Open Space Equity**

The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs has identified an Environmental Justice (EJ) population in Lancaster – Census Block Group 7131-2 (see Map 2 in appendix) in South Lancaster. The following proposed actions describe means to effectively create, restore and maintain open spaces located in neighborhoods where EJ populations reside:

- The Nathaniel Thayer Memorial Park project comprises the design, renovation and construction of a multi-generational recreation campus in the heart of Lancaster. This campus will be located on a portion of the 23-acre municipally-owned parcel which currently houses our Town Hall, Thayer Memorial Library, Prescott Building (new annex for Town Hall), Community and Senior Center, and the First Church of Christ. We are planning to construct this recreation campus in phases. Campus components include baseball fields, soccer fields, lawn game area, playground, basketball court, tennis courts, dog park, walking path and amphitheater.
- Dexter Drumlin, owned by the Trustees of Reservations, is a favorite spot for dog walking and sledding in the winter.
- MassDOT's Complete Streets program will be repairing sidewalks and installing curb ramps, crosswalks and bike lanes all along Main Street, which includes the EJ population.

It is the goal of this Plan to improve recreational opportunities and access for citizens in all areas of the Town.