

## SECTION 1

## PLAN SUMMARY



*Sunrise over North Beach*

*Source: Chatham Chamber of Commerce Website*

# PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

## Introduction

Chatham initially addressed planning for open space and recreation issues with a comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan, prepared in 1985. While conditions have changed considerably over the last twenty plus years, the Town has been very active in the intervening period leading up to this new *2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan* in its efforts to preserve open space, protect community character and provide recreational opportunities. Chatham's adoption of both the Cape Cod Land Bank and Community Preservation Acts is a testament to the community's ongoing commitment to the preservation of open space and recreation lands with tangible results through numerous open space acquisitions and recreational facility upgrades. Additionally, other community planning initiatives such as the local Comprehensive Plan, South Coastal Harbor Management Plan, Pleasant Bay Resource Management Plan (regional), Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, Conservation Land Management Program, and Community Preservation Committee's Long Range Plan contain open space and recreation related recommendations which are integral pieces of the Town's broad based approach to preserving Chatham's physical environment and historical, maritime character.

This Plan builds on the foundation established in the 1985 Open Space and Recreation Plan and subsequent adoption of the Land Bank and Community Preservation Acts, the recommendations of the complementary planning documents noted above reinforcing the Town's broad goals, while outlining updated specific open space and recreation goals and actions to be addressed during the next five years and beyond based upon current conditions. An important overriding purpose of the *2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan* and the entire open space planning process is to foster public awareness of open space issues and to encourage the participation of Town boards, committees, officials and concerned citizens in the Plan's development and implementation, particularly through Chatham's Land Bank Open Space Committee and the Community Preservation Committee.

The purpose of the *2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan* is to provide a framework and guide for responsible conservation and recreation planning in the Town of Chatham. Major objectives put forward in the Plan are the conservation of Chatham's natural resources and the provision of ample public recreational opportunities. This Plan includes the following key components:

- Analysis of Chatham's natural and cultural resources;
- Inventory of conservation and recreation lands currently owned by federal, state, town and private nonprofit groups;
- Analysis of community open space and recreation needs; and,
- Outline of the community's goals, objectives and proposed actions to fulfill those needs.

A major component of the planning process involved development and distribution of the *Chatham Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey*. In general, responses indicated the following:

- A need for all types of recreational facilities;
- Increased maintenance and expansion of facilities;
- Lighthouse Beach and the Atwood House Museum are the two favorite open space and recreation facilities with other local beaches and two park areas close behind;
- Water supply protection was ranked the most important reason for protecting open space with historic and wildlife protection following;
- Purchases by the town or state were seen as most preferable option for land acquisition;
- The majority of people feel that natural resources are being well protected however 25-30% of responses indicated that the town was not doing a good job at protecting the resources listed;

- There is a strong majority that considers it important or very important for the town to acquire and preserve conservation areas. Only 4.3% considered it not at all important;
- Between 45 and 58% of responses indicated satisfaction with the availability and quality of recreational areas for all age groups. About a quarter of responses indicated dissatisfaction; and,
- Respondents prefer protecting land primarily through town supported acquisitions and are less interested in donating or selling their own land, although 36.5% did indicate a willingness to sell at fair market value.

Based on the inventory and analysis in the *2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan* the following broad goals have been established:

- It is very important for the Town of Chatham to continue to preserve open space in order to protect the environment, provide recreational opportunities and slow or control development;
- It is essential to protect important sensitive areas from development;
- It is essential to protect ground and surface water resources in order to provide a pollution-free environment for both the human and natural environments;
- It is important to protect wildlife habitat and species including forest, wetlands and fisheries;
- It is very important to protect the appearance and character of Chatham in order to maintain and improve the economy and overall quality of life that attracted and keeps people here;
- It is important to maintain existing open space and recreation facilities at a level that sustains their inherent qualities and values as ecological and cultural systems;
- It is important to provide present and future residents of Chatham with the opportunity to enjoy the recreational, open space and natural resources in and around the Town; and,
- Beaches and other open space and recreation areas are considered to be the most important assets of the town and should be protected and managed as vital natural and cultural resources.

Section 9 includes a detailed table entitled *2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan Action Items*, which lists the goals, objectives and actions that have been defined during the development of this Open Space and Recreation Plan and will guide the town's Open Space and Recreation Planning for the next five years.