

VII. RECREATION

Residents of Sandgate are fortunate to have ready access to a wealth of recreational opportunities. Although there is no public recreation park in Sandgate, the town's location among the mountains and forests of the Taconic Range provides numerous opportunities for year-round outdoor recreational activities. Maintenance of the quality of these recreational resources is an important goal of this Town Plan.

7.1 Natural Resources

The forests that blanket Sandgate's hillsides and hollows are an integral part of the area's natural ecosystem and support large and diverse populations of indigenous flora and fauna. These resources provide numerous opportunities for nature appreciation and study, and also make Sandgate one of the most popular hunting destinations in the area. The remoteness of Sandgate's forests is certainly one factor that makes the area attractive to residents, camp owners, hunters, and others who visit the town. Municipal land use policies and actions should include efforts to preserve the remote rural character of upland forest areas.

Miles of trails traverse the thousands of acres of unbroken land in Sandgate. Many of these trails were originally laid out and use as town roads, farm roads, or logging roads and trails. After years of disuse, most of these traveled ways became overgrown and impassable. A number of them, however, continued to be used. With the exception of three Class 4 town roads (the upper portion of Southeast Corner Road being the most extensive) and one town trail (the "Provencher" road near Beartown, all of these trails are privately owned. Consequently, public access is possible only by virtue of acquiescence on the part of landowners. (some groups have obtained formal access agreements to use certain trails.) Recreational use of trails should not disturb wildlife, cause erosion, or result in any other type of environmental damage.

Sandgate's streams are also important recreational resources. The Green River, Terry Brook, Chunks Brook, Pruddy Brook, and numerous other streams contain popular fishing and swimming holes, and provide an outstanding environment for hiking, picnicking, and other activities. With the exception of bridge crossings and stream segments that lie immediately adjacent to public roads, access to these streams involves crossing private property. As in the case of trails and forests, the town should encourage efforts to maintain public access to important streams.

7.2 Recreational Resources Outside Sandgate

Just as many people who live elsewhere recreate in Sandgate, residents of Sandgate have access to nearby recreational resources in other towns. The Green River empties into the Batten Kill in Arlington. The Batten Kill is one of the premier recreational resources in the region, and Sandgate residents are among the many people who use the river for fishing, swimming, canoeing, and tubing. Similarly, many of Sandgate's trails extend into neighboring towns, and the forests and wildlife populations of the Taconic Range are enjoyed by residents without regard to municipal boundaries.

There is also a very complete and well-run recreation park in Arlington; many Sandgate residents participate in activities at the park. In addition, since children from Sandgate attend schools in other towns, the scholastic recreational facilities and programs in those communities are important to Sandgate residents.

Because of this interdependence with other towns, it is important for Sandgate to communicate and cooperate with its neighbors. The town should remain active in regional planning through participation in the Bennington County Regional Commission. The Sandgate planning commission should solicit input from neighboring towns on local issues that might affect recreational uses or users in those towns. The planning commission should also attempt to stay informed of related issues in neighboring towns and should take advantage of opportunities to offer input in the planning processes in those towns.

7.3 Future Public Recreational Facilities

At the present time there is no organized public recreational facility in Sandgate. It is not likely, moreover, that such a facility will be needed or built in the next few years. It is probable, however, that at some future time there will be a need for additional community facilities, including a small recreation park, near the center of town. The town should, therefore, consider acquisition of an amount of land adequate for such facilities in the Green River valley near the existing Town Hall.

7.4 Policies and Recommendations

1. Rugged and poorly accessible mountain and forest areas should remain free from development, reserved for forestry and recreational uses consistent with their wilderness character.
2. The town should participate in regional or inter-town planning activities which involve important recreational resources.
3. The town should consider the question of whether additional land will be needed, at some future time, for community facilities that may include a small park. If such a need is likely to exist, the town should develop a plan for acquiring suitable land.