

Chapter 9

Recreation



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Littleton is within one of New England's most important recreation areas. More than three million people live within 100 miles of the area. Local residents and tourists from the northeastern United States and Quebec fish, boat, swim, picnic, hunt, snowmobile, and ski in or around the Littleton area. Grafton County provides 38% of the recreational land in New Hampshire, and more people are now participating in a wider range of recreational activities than ever before.



This rich natural and cultural landscape provides a wonderful setting, and the four-season climate allows for a diversity of recreational activities. Promoting and encouraging the enjoyment of Littleton's landscape enhances the quality of life of local residents and supports tourism in the region. This promotion provides an opportunity for personal health and wellness benefits, economic opportunities, and portrays Littleton as a prime location in the White Mountains of New Hampshire for recreation and access to the great outdoors. With increased use of these resources Littleton must also be mindful of the resource management issues that can arise from increased use of the recreational areas in the community. According to the 2003 Master Plan Survey Littleton residents value the outdoor recreation opportunities available to them (39%), and would like to see more facilities in Littleton.

2.0 COMMUNITY RECREATION VALUES AND GOALS

The results from the Littleton Master Plan Survey show strong appreciation and support for recreation. The responses show that 58% of the respondents felt that proximity to the White Mountains made Littleton a desirable place to live/visit, and 57% would like to see more preservation of open space in Littleton over the next ten years. When asked about pursuing the development of additional recreational facilities in Littleton 40% of the survey respondents wanted cross country trails, 62% wanted more bicycle and pedestrian trails, and 69% would like walking paths.

Overall there was great support for additional paths for a multitude of uses, depending on the season, and for additional preserved open space. This is good news for recreation,

transportation, natural resources, and general land use issues. Pursuing the protection of a network of open spaces in Littleton, and creating a network of trails and paths could provide additional recreational opportunities and connections, help protect key natural resource corridors, provide additional transportation options, promote health and wellness, and provide “spaces between places” in Littleton.

3.0 EXISTING RESOURCES

3.1 Town Recreation Facilities

The Littleton Parks and Recreation Department maintains the following facilities which are open to the public:

- **Remich Park** provides recreational fields for the high school and a public recreation area. This fifteen acre park includes recreational fields, tennis courts, locker rooms, two baseball fields, a soccer field, a playground, a recreation room, a public swimming pool, as well as a cross country skiing area, ice-skating rink, and sledding hill in the winter. Littleton High School also uses these facilities for its sports programs.
- **Apthorp Commons** is a five acre public recreational facility in Littleton. This park has a softball field, soccer field, a playground, basketball court, two tennis courts, and an area for fishing on the Ammonoosuc River.
- The **Norton Pike Fields** encompass approximately three acres including a softball field and youth soccer field.
- The **Brickyard Road** recreation area has a full size soccer field.

3.2 Trails in Littleton

The Littleton Conservation Commission (LCC) published a map in the spring of 2000 describing town hiking trails in Littleton. Table 9-A identifies these trails and their locations are outlined in Figure 9-B. The trails include the walking trail at the Dells, Kilburn Crags, and the Pine Hill Trails which are maintained by the Littleton Parks and Recreation Department.

Table 9-A Hiking Trails in Littleton

Name	Description
Littleton Hospital Walking and Interpretive Trail	Used by patients, employees, and the general public for fitness and relaxation. Educates trail walkers about their natural surroundings.
Kilburn Crag	Located off of Route 135. Short 7/10-mile hike offers rich geologic history and views to the Presidential Range.
The Dells	Short walking trail around the edge of Dell's Pond
Pine Hill Trails	Public trail system within easy walking distance to the downtown. The main trail is a one-mile loop.

3.21 The Dells

In 1917, Daniel Remich gave an area known as The Dells to the Town of Littleton to be kept as a “park forever.” The Dells is open year round for snowmobiling, x-country skiing, picnicking, walking, and fishing is allowed. This area is owned by the Town, managed by the Conservation Commission, and is open to the public. There are many birds that use this area for habitat, and along the walking trails there are many varieties of wildflowers as well. The main walking trail within the park connects Dells Road to NH Route 18. Parking areas are available at each end of the trail.

3.22 Pine Hill Trails

The Pine Hill Trails begin at the Remich Park trailhead and create a one mile round trip woods walk. The trail system passes a number of glacial erratics, and there are a wide variety of northern birds and plant species. The trail system connects to other trails in the area leading to the old Town Ski Jump site, the Town Reservoir, and Palmer Brook.

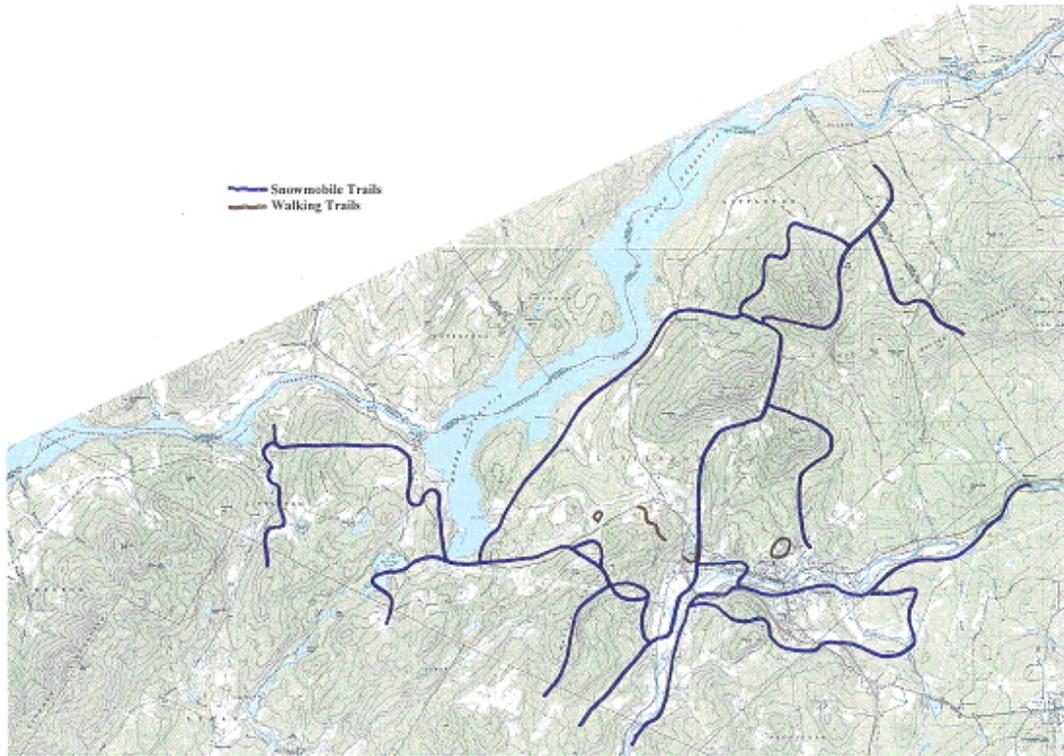
3.23 Kilburn Crag

Located between NH Route 18/135 and U.S. Route 302 the Kilburn Crag offer a glimpse at Littleton’s rich geologic history. Another legacy to the Town by Daniel Remich, the trailhead and parking area are located on NH Route 18/135. The 7/10 of a mile hiking trail leads through a meadow and then through the woods to a spectacular view of Littleton, the Ammonoosuc River Valley, and the Presidential Range.

3.24 Snowmobile Trails

Another popular recreational activity in Littleton is snowmobiling. The State maintains a series of trails but there are also local trails. These trails are primarily on abandoned roads, logging roads, etc. The Snowmobile Club publishes a map of trails located in Littleton, which has been transferred onto Figure 9-B.

Figure 9-B Trails



Source: Littleton Natural Resource Inventory - 2002

3.3 Class VI Roads

Class VI roads are those that the Town owns but does not maintain for vehicular travel. Although not used for automobiles, Class VI roads have other contributions as routes for hiking and biking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, and hunting. There are two Class VI roads in Littleton, as shown in Table 9-C.

Table 9-C Class VI Roads

Name	From	Mileage
Mt. Misery Road	North Littleton Road	1.490
Foster Hill Road	Maintained Section	0.590

Source: Littleton Town Office, 2002

3.4 Public Boat Launches

There are currently 780 water bodies considered ‘Great Ponds’ in the State of New Hampshire and four of them are in Littleton. Table 9-D summarizes these water bodies and the status of public access on each water body.

Table 9-D Great Ponds and Public Access

Name	Size (acres)	Public Boat Access
Moore Reservoir	3500	Yes
Comerford Reservoir	1093	Yes
Partridge Lake	105	Yes
Reynolds Pond	19	None

Source: NRI, Lobdell Associates, 2002

There are four boat launches on Moore Reservoir in Littleton and one at Comerford below Moore dam. Additionally, there are canoe take outs and portages around both dams.

According to RSA 271:20-A, bodies of water greater than ten acres in size are public waters. RSA 233-A states that the State of New Hampshire must provide one public access site for water bodies 10-100 acres in size, two access sites for lakes 100-500 acres in size, etc. A “public access site” is defined as those launch sites that are owned and or controlled by the State of New Hampshire. New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHF&G) manages the lake access program. There are, however, several other access sites around the lakes that are open to the public.

3.5 Moore and Comerford Reservoir and the Fifteen-Mile Falls Project

The largest single recreational area in Littleton is the Fifteen-Mile Falls hydroelectric project owned by the U.S. Generating Company. The project area includes about a 26-mile stretch of the Connecticut River, of which 16 miles is in Littleton. The resources include the Moore Reservoir (3531 acres), the Comerford Reservoir (1093 acres) and the McIndoe Reservoir (570 acres). Also, approximately 6,000 acres of forestland around the reservoirs (primarily Moore) will soon be protected by conservation easements for recreational and forest management. There are several recreational activities currently available including boating, sailing, canoeing, fishing, swimming, hiking, snowmobiling, and bird watching.

Recreational facilities include twelve recreation access areas, including a visitor center at Moore dam, boat launches, picnic areas, hiking trails, swimming areas and parking. Figure 9-E shows the Fifteen-Mile Falls recreation resources and they are listed in Table 9-F. Of the twelve facilities six are located in the Town of Littleton and five on Moore Reservoir.

As part of the recent Fifteen Mile Falls re-licensing, a recreation study was conducted to determine user characteristics at the twelve recreation sites. Highlights of the study include:

- Annually 138,000 visitors utilize the sites.
- Of those, 67% visited sites in Littleton, with the Dodge Hill and Moore Visitor Center receiving the most visitors.
- Picnicking was the most popular activity followed by sightseeing, boat fishing, swimming and motor boating. Other activities included mountain biking, tubing, walking and relaxing.
- The visitor's area was used primarily by locals. Approximately 55% of the visitors were from New Hampshire, 37% from Vermont, and 3% from Massachusetts.
- During the non-peak period (November-April), ice fishing was the most popular activity, but many people reported bank fishing, snowmobiling, and hunting during this time period.
- Visitors spend an average of \$33.02 per visit or \$1.4 million annually. Combined with estimated secondary economic impacts, recreational users of the project areas accounted for \$1.8 million in 1997.

The reservoirs are also used for Fishing tournaments and events. One major tournament was held in 2003 along with several smaller events.

A survey of fifteen Mile Falls users was completed to assess public opinion and the following was found:

- 77% felt the use of the areas had not significantly increased in the past few years
- 87% felt the existing recreation facilities are adequate to meet the needs.
- On a scale of 1 to 5 for crowdedness (with 5 being very crowded), visitors rated the area as a 1.54, or not very crowded.

Future improvement to the recreation areas are planned, but no major changes. For the Littleton sites, improvements include improving boat ramps, creation of additional parking, creation of additional swimming areas, additional picnic tables, etc. A total of about \$130,000 of improvements have been planned, and work on these improvements should begin in 2005.

Figure 9-E 15 Mile Falls Recreation Area

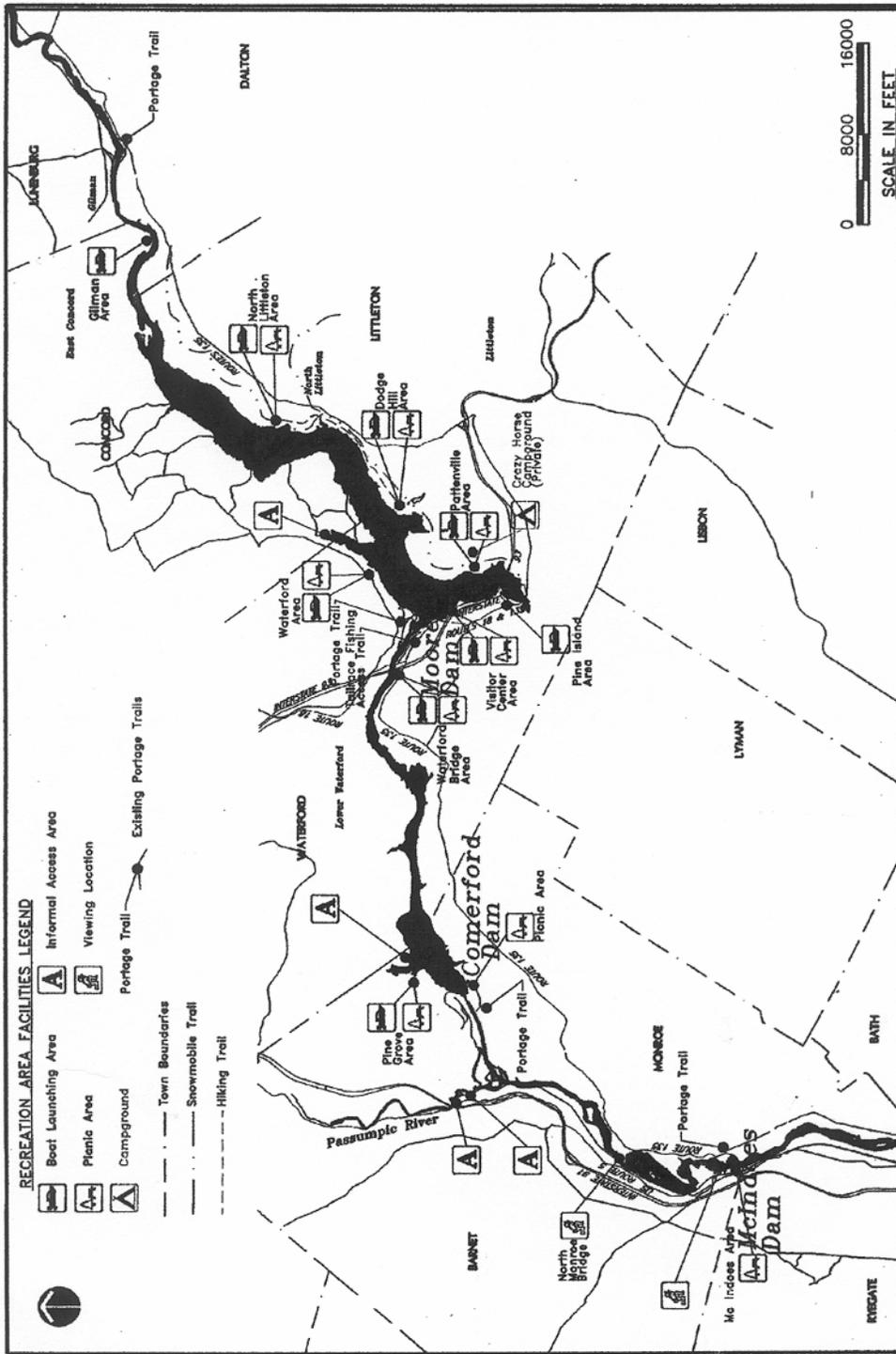


Table 9-F 15 Mile Falls Recreation Areas

Facility	Boat Launch	Fishing	Swimming	Nature Trail	Picnic Area	ADA Facilities	Picnic Tables	Port-a-Johns	Parking Spaces	Grills/ Fireplaces	Portage Trail
Moore Reservoir											
Gilman Boat Launch			✓						10		
North Littleton Boat Launch	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3	1	10	1	
Dodge Hill Boat Launch	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	2	30	2-Jun	
Pattenville Boat Launch	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	4	2	15	3	
Pine Island Boat Launch	✓	✓	✓						15		
Moore Dam Visitor Center	✓			✓	✓	✓	1		50		✓
Waterford Boat Launch	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	5	2	25	1-May	
Comerford Reservoir											
Waterford Bridge Boat Launch	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	5	1	10	1	
Pine Grove Boat Launch	✓	✓	✓		✓		6	2	50	4	
Comerford Dam Picnic Area	✓	✓	✓		✓		5	1	30	2	✓

3.7 Local Facility Level of Use

According to the Littleton Parks and Recreation Department, the recreational facilities in Littleton are experiencing a steady increase in use. In some cases groups are being turned away when trying to reserve facilities that are already booked up. The Parks and Recreation Department reports that there are currently twelve programs, beyond the school sports programs, that are using the existing facilities throughout the year. These include the following identified programs in Table 9-G.

Table 9-G Recreation Programs in Littleton

Activity	Grades/ Age Range	Time of Year	Enrollment
Biddy Basketball	Grades K-6	Winter	60
Park Program	Grades K-6	Summer	120
Swim Lessons	Grades K-8	Summer	120
Youth Soccer	Grades K-6	Fall	138
T-ball	Grades K-2	Spring	50
Pony League	Grades 2-3	Spring	60
Carl Ripken Baseball	Grades 4-6	Spring	75
Girls Softball	Grades 4-6	Spring	36
Babe Ruth Baseball	Grades 8-12	Summer	40
Girl's Softball	Ages 13-18	Summer	15
Littleton Youth Hockey	Ages 12-18	Year-round	
Men's Summer Soccer	Ages 18 and over	Summer	25
Men's Senior Softball League		Summer	

3.8 Regional Recreation Resources

Within an hour drive of Littleton, there are numerous State of New Hampshire and State of Vermont parks, forests, fish and wildlife management areas, local parks, as well as the 773,241 acre White Mountain National Forest. These regional resources provide numerous and varied public recreation opportunities. Within a one hour drive, there are nine New Hampshire State Parks and eight Vermont State Parks offering camping facilities, hiking trails, snow skiing, and public access to lakes for fishing, boating, swimming and many other recreation opportunities. There are also eight wildlife management areas and numerous fish and wildlife areas where hunting and fishing are allowed. Towns and organizations also own and operate public parks and forest reserves in the region offering both active and passive pursuits, free and for-a-fee, with some handicapped accessible facilities.

4.0 RECREATION TRENDS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

In 2003 the State of NH completed a State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The SCORP explains that more people are participating in recreational

activities, partially due to the increase in population, and that people are also participating in a much wider range of activities today than was even the case ten years ago.

With this in mind it is easy to imagine that the most popular sites will experience greater and greater congestion in the future. This could result in a greater number of conflicts between recreationists vying for use of the same areas at the same times. Access to all recreation sites will become an important management issue. Meanwhile, the number of organized recreation and conservation groups is expected to continue to grow and will have an increasingly larger voice in the management of public land.

According to the State, New Hampshire State Parks have seen an increase in attendance. Current estimates indicate State Parks saw around 6.69 million visitors in 2001. According to the Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study, conducted by the New Hampshire Office of State Planning in 1997, the US Forest Service reports a 23-percent increase in trail use in the WMNF between 1974 and 1995. The State also reports that wheeled off-highway vehicle registrations, both in-state and out-of-state, are increasing. Total registrations have more than doubled in the last seven years. Out-of-state registrations have more than tripled. Out-of-state snowmobile registrations are steadily increasing. Out-of-state registrations have more than doubled in the last seven years, while in-state registrations have remained steady. New Hampshire's waters have also experienced an increase in use with boating registrations doubling between 1980 and 1990, and increasing over 19 percent between 1990 and 2000.

With this increased interest in recreation, and its corresponding pressure on recreational areas, it is important to remember that the majority of recreational land acreage is found in the northern part of New Hampshire.

According to the findings in the SCORP, many of the most popular activities in New Hampshire are similar to those identified in nationwide studies. Wildlife observation, driving for pleasure, sightseeing, and jogging/running/walking are extremely popular activities. Additionally, these activities show a high frequency of participation. Day hiking seems to be more popular in New Hampshire than the national average. The most popular activities in the WMNF include viewing wildlife and natural features, sightseeing, hiking and walking, general relaxation, driving for pleasure on forest roads, cross-country skiing, and developed camping.

5.0 LAND USE IMPLICATIONS AND POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Land Use Implications

Littleton's existing recreation resources provide area residents and visitors with exceptional opportunities to enjoy outdoors and exercise. Here are a few items to consider related to the recreation resources in Littleton.

- 1) Having an interconnected system of trails within a greenway of protected land provides recreation, health and wellness, natural resource, transportation, and economic benefits that help shape the character of Littleton.
- 2) The Conservation Commission has voiced concerns related to the trails in Littleton that include:
 - Trail Erosion;
 - Vandalism and Trash;
 - Lack of Maintenance, particularly of trails around Moore Reservoir;
 - Loss of trails on town land due to changes in land use.
- 3) Overall there is a need to incorporate outdoor recreation more fully as an issue within larger discussions of land use and transportation in Littleton because of the many benefits this amenity provides.

Potential Actions

There are an array of possible actions the Town may want to consider pursuing as it evaluates and improves the existing recreation resources in Littleton. This section will be used to identify the specific actions for Littleton to take upon completion of the master plan.

- 1) Consider creating a non-motorized trail network/greenway plan for the entire town that identifies future trail connections and properties to be protected. This could include a path to the Brickyard Road field, and a multi-use trail from the downtown out to the hospital site.
- 2) Some of the new trails the Conservation Commission would like to see established include additional trails around Moore Reservoir and completion of the riverwalk/railbed trail.
- 3) The community should address the long-term stewardship issues of the protected parcels and recreational facilities in Littleton. This may include roles for the various user groups and clubs (i.e. horseback riders, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, Littleton Off-Road Riders, etc.) in monitoring properties and trail maintenance.
- 4) Educate landowners about the benefits of leaving lands open to the public and the liability protections provided by existing laws.
- 5) Promote the use of education and information-based strategies to manage or avoid conflicts between user groups.
- 6) Ensure that recreational opportunities are available to those with disabilities.