

# Recreation



*Mt. Eustis Ski Area. Source: Powder Magazine*

## Introduction

Littleton's rich natural and cultural landscape and its four-season climate allows for a diversity of recreational activities. The mountains, hiking trails, forests, rivers, town facilities, and programs are all robust outdoor recreation resources that promote physical activity, tourism, and a high quality of life. Additionally, access to recreation facilities attracts families, employers, and an active workforce. Throughout successive Master Plans, Littleton's residents have consistently voiced support for access to outdoor recreation activities and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This chapter highlights the existing recreation resources in Littleton and identifies recreation opportunities and potential actions.

*69% of New Hampshire residents participate in outdoor recreation each year.*

## Existing Resources

### Town Recreation Facilities

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

**Remich Park** is a fifteen-acre park that includes:

- recreational fields
- tennis courts
- locker rooms
- two baseball fields
- a soccer field
- a playground
- a public swimming pool
- a cross country skiing area
- ice-skating rink, and
- sledding hill in the winter.



Picture Above: Remich Park

Littleton High School also uses these facilities for its sports programs.

**Apthorp Commons** is a five-acre public recreational facility that has:

- a softball field,
- soccer field,
- a playground,
- basketball court,
- two tennis courts, and
- an area for fishing on the Ammonoosuc River.



Pictured Above: Soccer game at Norton Pike Fields

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.

### Trails in Littleton

Littleton has a robust network of hiking trails throughout town that are well documented and easy to find by using trail maps created by the Conservation Commission. The table below identifies these trails and their locations are outlined in Figure 9-B. The trails include the walking trail at the Dells, Kilburn Crag, and the Pine Hill Trails which are maintained by the Littleton Parks and Recreation Department, as well as the LRH walking trails.

Name	Description
<b>Littleton Regional Healthcare Walking and Interpretive Trail</b>	Used by patients, employees, and the general public for fitness and relaxation. Educates trail walkers about their natural surroundings.
<b>Kilburn Crag</b>	Located off of Route 135. Short 7/10-mile hike which offers rich geologic history and views to the Presidential Range.
<b>The Dells</b>	Short walking trail around the edge of Dell's Pond

<b>Pine Hill Trails</b>	Public trail system within easy walking distance to the downtown. The main trail is a one-mile loop.
<b>Riverwalk</b>	A ½ mile trail along the Ammonoosuc River in downtown Littleton

**THE DELLS**

The Dells is open year-round for snowmobiling, x-country skiing, picnicking, walking, and fishing. This area is owned by the Town, managed by the Conservation Commission, and is open to the public. This area is highly valuable for bird habitat and biodiversity. The main walking trail within the park connects Dells Road to NH Route 18. Parking areas are available at each end of the trail.

*In 1917, Daniel Remich gave an area known as The Dells to the Town of Littleton to be kept as a “park forever.”*

**KILBURN CRAGS**

Located between NH Route 18/135 and U.S. Route 302 the Kilburn Craigs 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.



*Pictured Above: View from Kilburn Craas*

**PINE HILL TRAILS**

Located within easy walking distance of the village and adjacent to Remich Park, Pine Hill Road offers a public trail system through a stand of tall white pine trees, a cleared hillside, and onto the ridge of Pine Hill, showing hikers remnants of its geological history. The trail can be completed as a one-mile loop and its highest point is the Pine Hill Summit boulder.



*Pictured Above: snowmobiling club in Littleton*

**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.

**MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS**

Parker Mountain has a 22-mile network of mountain biking, hiking, skiing, and running trails just north of downtown Littleton. Users can access the trail system from the Pine Hill trails on School Street where there is a trailhead and parking area. Trails range from easy to advanced.

SKIING TRAILS

Mt. Eustis Ski Hill opened in Littleton in 1939 and shut down in the 1970s. A group of dedicated community members worked to reopen the ski hill and it officially began operating in 2016. Mt. Eustis Ski Kill is a non-profit organizing.

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: Mt. Misery Road (1.5 miles) from North Littleton Road and Foster Hill Road (.6 miles).

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. The table below summarizes these water bodies and the status of public access on each water body.

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

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.



*Pictured Above: Partridge Lake, Littleton NH*

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) is protected by conservation easements for recreational and forest management. There are several recreational activities

**Littleton Parks and Recreation Department**

The Littleton Parks and Recreation Department coordinate and manage a variety of recreation programs including basketball, soccer, swimming, t-ball, softball, school vacation camps, after school programs, and hockey.

Parks and Rec also organizes community annual events such as Green Up Day, the Easter Egg Hunt, Hikes in the Whites, and the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration.

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.

### The Ammonoosuc River

The river is a significant natural resource and potential recreation asset in Littleton, especially because of it crosses through the downtown area. Currently, access is limited and the river's underutilized for recreation purposes. More and more communities are learning that establishing pedestrian access and circulation by their water resources can have significant benefits, such as providing a unique community feature downtown and promoting relationships between people and the river ecosystem.

### 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 and tourism 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.



*The Flume, Franconia Notch State Park. Source: Yankee Magazine*

## Recreation Trends in NH

The 2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan highlights important national outdoor recreational trends reported by the Outdoor Foundation from their 2017 Outdoor Recreation Report. The report showed the growth in nature-based outdoor activities and a decline in youth outdoor participation. These findings support Littleton's recreation planning efforts by analyzing the benefits and effects of outdoor recreation on the economy, health, and happiness. Here are some of the key findings:

- **Return to Nature:** Nearly 50 percent of Americans age six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2016, a slight increase from 2015, equating to a total of 144.4 million Americans.
- **First Time Participants:** Activities with the highest percentage of first-time participants in 2015 included stand up paddling, traditional/road triathlons, kayak fishing, and non-traditional/off road triathlon.

- **The Economy:** 42% of outdoor participants said the economy impacted how often they participated in outdoor activities.
- **Fitness and Health:** Outdoor participants rated their fitness level at 6.4 on a 10-point scale. In terms of health, outdoor participants rate their health level at 7.6 on a 10-point scale.
- **Youth:** Among youth, bicycling is the most popular outdoor activity.
- **Preservation of Land:** The majority of Americans agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking trails is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.

## Planning for Recreation

Identifying challenges, opportunities, and potential projects for expanding or improving Littleton’s recreation resources will provide significant economic, social, and environmental benefits for the community. The Town should identify recreation as a priority for achieving quality of life and economic development goals. As identified during the public outreach component of the master planning process, the Town should serve multiple functions in assisting leaders, organizations, and others in the outdoor recreation industry to help further Littleton’s goals as being a hub for recreation activity.

### What are the biggest opportunities for Littleton to pursue related to recreation in the coming years?

A focus group was coordinated to collect feedback from those involved in the recreation industry in Littleton. Some key points related to potential opportunities related to recreation are below:

- Create a dog park in town.
- Explore the feasibility of developing additional indoor recreation programming and facilities, including more basketball courts, pickleball courts, and indoor track).
- Littleton should apply to become a Bicycle Friendly Community, awarded by the American League of Bicyclists.
- Utilize the town bicycle and pedestrian plan to phase future projects that improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Improve parking, littering, and access at local trail areas (such as Kilburn Crags and the Dells).
- Host more recreation related events in town, such as a fishing derby or mountain biking events.
- Expand outdoor community gathering spaces, such as a public pavilion.
- Create a recreation directory that lists recreation programs, facilities, events, and trails in town.

Land Use Implications of Recreation	Potential Actions
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.	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.

	Evaluate the town’s trail system and prioritize improvements related to parking, signage, and other amenities.
<p>Establish partnerships and programs with the Conservation Commission to regularly maintain the town’s trails to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trail Erosion;</li> <li>• Vandalism and Trash;</li> <li>• Lack of Maintenance, particularly of trails around Moore Reservoir;</li> <li>• Loss of trails on town land due to changes in land use.</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to encourage stewardship of town trails by improving trail and parking signage related to littering and vandalism.</p> <p>Work with local groups to conduct trail maintenance activities.</p> <p>Continue improving the public’s awareness of trails on Town-owned land with improved trail and parking signage, maps, and mobile-friendly interactive features.</p>
Littleton’s recreational facilities and programs should offer opportunities for all age groups and users in the community.	Assess the recreational needs of different user groups in the community, especially seniors, and how they are being met. If there are unmet needs, prepare a strategic plan to guide the addition and/or improvement of recreational facilities, programs, and related administration.
Planning for maintenance and expansion of recreational facilities offer townspeople fitness and health opportunities, contributes to tourism and economic development, and improves quality of life.	Work with new partners on opportunities that arise in the future to improve and/or expand program offerings and access to recreational facilities and areas.
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.	<p>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.</p> <p>Educate landowners about the benefits of leaving lands open to the public and the liability protections provided by existing laws.</p> <p>Promote the use of education and information-based strategies to manage or avoid conflicts between user groups.</p> <p>Ensure that recreational opportunities are available to those with disabilities.</p> <p>Evaluate Littleton’s land use regulations and ensure zoning ordinance promotes the expansion of walking and bicycling infrastructure and denser development patterns, where appropriate.</p>
Promoting Littleton’s recreation assets will increase tourism, market the region, and encourage use of those assets.	<p>Create a centralized location (physical and digital) for visitors and community members to find trails/recreation information, guides, trail maps, and information on recreation facilities.</p> <p>Publicize recreation groups, events, and activities on the Littleton Parks and Recreation website as affiliated organizations. Promote recreation related events on town website.</p> <p>Develop communication materials and content about the importance and economic value of recreation to</p>

	the wider community to gain broader support for recreation projects.
Funding recreation improvements through a combination of grant and town funds will reduce the burden of taxpayers.	The town should consider hosting more outdoor recreation related events in town to contribute to the local economy, promote tourism, and strengthen sense of place.  Be proactive about funding recreation related projects by finding grants to offset payment of improvements.

### Case Study: Telluride, Colorado

Similar to Littleton, Telluride, CO's unique location in Colorado's San Juan Mountains makes this area a premier destination for hiking, mountain biking, and skiing. Town recreation facilities include a kid's fishing pond, 4 ball fields, an ice rink, a pavilion, concert stage, imagination station, a mountain bike pump track, a campground, and disc golf course. They also have a world class ski resort, hiking trails, and rock-climbing areas, and host large events, such as the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, which draw hundreds of people to the community. In their Master Plan, they acknowledge the connection between their outdoor based economy and the need to protect and restore the natural environment to ensure the health of local ecosystems and sustained human existence. Littleton has very similar assets to Telluride and should continue to leverage them to create a strong local economy and a robust outdoor recreation industry.

