

Arts and Recreation **DRAFT**

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to inventory the many outdoor recreation activities and arts and cultural resources available to the community. These assets are key to quality of life, sense of place, and economic development, and understanding their place in the community may allow the town to support and prioritize these organizations and activities into the future.

Key Findings

- Beyond just locally conserved lands and trails, South Berwick enjoys the benefits of several other conservation organizations which manage preserves and other outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.
- South Berwick has an active community of volunteers and non-profit organizations which provide ample opportunities for arts and cultural activities, programs and events.

Community Engagement Results

PLACEHOLDER

Outdoor Recreation

In addition to municipal parks and recreation programming, South Berwick has a wealth of recreation opportunities in town and in neighboring communities. Outdoor recreation is a hidden asset of many communities in Maine, being a source of economic development, health and wellness, and local quality of life.

A recent study of York and Southern Oxford counties estimated that the outdoor recreation industry contributes nearly \$105.3 million to the to the regional economy.

Key Agencies

Great Works Regional Land Trust

The Great Works Regional Land Trust is a member-supported organization which provides conservation options and community programs for the Southern Maine communities of Eliot, South Berwick, Berwick, North Berwick, Wells and Ogunquit. Since 1986, the organization have preserved over 7,000 acres of natural, historic, agricultural, scenic and recreational resources.

The GWRLT has 6 preserves in South Berwick that cover approximately 700 acres of conserved land. All preserves are open to the public and have trail networks which frequently connect to other conserved properties and towns.

GWRLT Preserves in South Berwick		
Preserve	Acres	Assets
Savage Wildlife Preserve	26	.6 mile flat, easy trail network, Salmon Falls River views
Derocher's Memorial Forest	135	Extensive trail network (moderate terrain of about 4 miles) which abuts Town Forest property and trails, Great Works River views.

Rocky Hills Preserve	200	3+ miles of trail (difficult terrain) shared with abutting Maine IF&W and Town of Eliot properties. Large unfragmented forest alongside York Pond.
Orris Falls Conservation Area	213	3.76 miles of hilly trail network (moderate to difficult terrain) which provide access to diverse landforms such as the Balancing Rock and the Big Bump. Trails also connect to Mt. Agamenticus trail networks.
Kenyon Hill Preserve	108	1 mile loop trail (moderate terrain) through wetlands, forest, ledges, and multiple historic foundations.
Kimball Farm North Preserve	37	3+ miles of trail connecting to more extensive trail network in abutting properties. Frontage along Tatnic Brook, connecting to the Ogunquit River.
<i>Source: Great Works Regional Land Trust, GWRLT Preserves</i>		

Notable Sites & Assets

Vaughn Woods State Park

Vaughn Woods State Park is a 165-acre tract located on the banks of the Salmon Falls River. The park includes an almost 4-mile trail network open to walking, hiking, cross country skiing, and horseback riding Memorial Day to Labor Day for a small fee. Walking or snowshoeing is permitted in the off season as well, with limited parking available outside the gate. The area includes both ecological and historically significant sites along the river, and around the Hamilton House grounds. The land is owned and managed by the Maine Dept of Agriculture and Forestry (DACF) Parks & Lands. Private facilities include 4 historic structures, a Rod and Gun Club, a church-owned gymnasium, and Berwick Academy.

Mt. Agamenticus

The Mount Agamenticus region covers approximately 30,000 acres of conserved land which spans South Berwick, York, and Wells making it one of the largest pieces of conserved and unfragmented forest land in direct proximity to the Atlantic ocean on the entire East Coast. The conserved area is made up of many different preserves and owners, including the Maine DACF Wilderness Management Areas, York Water District, York Land Trust, Great Works Regional Land Trust, and the Towns of York and South Berwick. Management of the resource is supported primarily by the Town of York Parks and Recreation Department with support from others as well. Joint management is guided by the Mt Agamenticus Steering Committee.

There is an extensive trail network throughout the coastal forest (in excess of 20 miles), including the Mt. Agamenticus summit itself. Trails are designed for hikers, bikers, and seasonal activities such as snowshoeing. These trails interconnect both towns and recreational resources. Some trails are open to horseback riding and ATVs. The network also offers some ADA routes which are intended to be accessible for all ages and abilities. There is also regular educational programming, including a Tree ID Loop, StoryWalk, and the Summit Learning Lodge.

Eastern Trail

The Eastern Trail consists of 22 miles of off-road trail connecting to another 40 miles of on-road routes which make up a regional active transportation corridor which runs from South Portland to Kittery. The

Eastern Trail Alliance is continually campaigning for additions to the off-road portions of the trail, which follows the Eastern Railroad corridor, with the goal of eventually completing an entirely off-road 60+ mile greenway. The portion of the trail in South Berwick is currently on-road, but plans for “Blazing the Trail South” have been in progress for a few years.

Overall, the trail provides a recreation and transportation opportunity, which even in its partially complete state brings over 19 million dollars in tourism revenues for the region. Access to regional trail networks is a benefit to local quality of life, wellbeing, and economic development.

Boat Launches & Put-Ins

Salmon Falls River

The Salmon Falls River offers almost 4 miles of paddling between dams along the South Berwick Town border. Carry in boat launches are available at the Counting House Park and off Route 101 Dover/Eliot Road. The [“Salmon Falls River Canoe Trip” guide](#) is available online and appended to this chapter. The river is tidal, and has a varying shoreline of forests, coastal wetlands, and diverse species. The area is also historical, and old granite foundations and historic homes can also be found here. The Counting House Park neighbors the Counting House Museum, where visitors can learn more about the history of the town and river.

Great Works River

There is one boat launch located on the Great Works River adjacent to the dam over Brattle St. This river can be paddled all the way to a takeout in North Berwick, through mostly calm flat waters. The North Berwick end can become shallow in the summer months, and occasionally downed trees and debris is an issue.

Private Recreation Opportunities?

Arts & Culture

South Berwick’s cultural assets consist of past and present people, places and events. The Town has many noted artisans, including writers, artists, performers, promoters and supporters of the arts. The quiet rural setting, proximate to the ocean, lakes and streams, mountains, as well as nearby cities lends itself to creativity.

Local Organizations

Old Berwick Historical Society

The Old Berwick Historical Society (OBHS) is a local non-profit which, “promotes public awareness of and appreciation for local and regional history through a variety of activities that explore, preserve, interpret and celebrate the past.” The OBHS also owns and operates the Counting House Museum and its many exhibits and artifacts, open seasonally.

The Museum hosts many various cultural education programs, lectures, and events. Group tours for classes, family groups, etc. are also available. The OBHS is also responsible for a few exhibits and historic walks around the town, including installations at the South Berwick Library and South Berwick Town Hall.

Sobo Central

Sobo Central is a local non-profit organization with the mission of supporting programs that help make South Berwick a vibrant and caring community. The organizations programming ranges from charitable community fundraising and giving, to community wide events that bring local residents and visitors together to enjoy public activities in public space. Community programs range from fund raising for the restoration of the historic Great Works Bridge, to providing help to families in need with school year necessities. Sobo Central is responsible for several popular local events such as Home for the Holidays, Hot Summer Nights, and Lanternfest. They also run the community Food Pantry, located on Ross Street and open periodically throughout the month.

Sobo Central also supports management of the town-owned ski area Powderhouse Hill, located on **Agamenticus Road**. The hill has 3 trails and 175-feet of vertical elevation. There is a small lodge at the base with a snack bar and wood stove.

Sobo Arts

Sobo Arts is a local group whose mission is to serve the creative population in South Berwick with shows, sales and programming that inspires a more vibrant arts community. Along with promoting their list of member artisans, SoBo Arts holds the annual Holiday Arts Show at the Home for the Holidays event, for local artisans to promote and sell their goods. Other programming includes community workshops and mentorships for local students.

South Berwick Public Library

The South Berwick Public Library offers many programs and activities for patrons of all ages. For children and teens, there is regular offerings such as story times, clubs, game groups, and arts and crafts activities. For all ages, librarians offer book bundles of hand selected books for families without time to browse. Adult reading challenges and book clubs offer opportunities to engage with others. Various internet & technology offerings are available, including computers, wi-fi, software, scanners, faxing and printing.

South Berwick Community Garden

The South Berwick Community Garden is located on Willow Drive and offers raised garden beds to local community members for \$15.00 a bed per year.

Civic Groups

South Berwick has an active Rotary Club which organizes several charitable activities and events throughout the year. The Rollinsford-South Berwick Lions Club is also active, and sponsors similar charitable community activities. There are also local Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Cub Scout troops open to kids of varying ages.

Local Events

Strawberry Festival

The Strawberry Festival is perhaps the most well-known South Berwick community event. Held every June for the past 40+ years, the strawberry festival celebrates the beginning of summer harvest season

with food vendors, local artisans, rides and games, and music & performances. The event brings thousands of visitors to South Berwick every year.

Home for the Holidays

Home for the Holidays is an annual event which includes holiday celebrations and activities, as well as the SoBo Arts Holiday Arts Show showcasing local artisans and vendors.

Hot Summer Nights

Hot Summer Nights is a seasonal event series hosted by a volunteer group aimed at promoting local musical talent in the region and providing free live music events for local residents. Concerts are held on the Central School lawn and are open to the public.

Issues or Implications

By any standard South Berwick is home to a vibrant arts community and wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. These assets have helped establish the community as a vibrant place to live.

Questions to consider may include:

What should be the town's role in supporting these assets? Or is the town's existing role in combination with the non profit/volunteer groups sufficient?

Should the town actively market these resources? If so how?

Summary

This chapter begins to inventory the many other organizations and opportunities in South Berwick which provide health, wellness, and economic benefits through outdoor recreation and arts and cultural activities. The town has a wealth of engaged volunteers and non-profit organizations outside of the municipal facilities which encompass a wide variety of arts and recreation opportunities.

Add any challenges or needs?