

## Chapter 7: Outdoor Recreation

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Outdoor recreation is an important component of the quality of life in Readfield. The town's lakes provide residents with abundant opportunities for swimming, boating, water skiing and fishing. The extensive fields and forests provide areas for hunting, hiking and nature observation. During the winter, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and ice fishing are popular activities.

Since Readfield has only a small amount of publicly-owned land, most dispersed outdoor activities such as hunting and snowmobiling occur on privately owned land relying on the good will of landowners. In southern and central Maine there has been an increasing trend toward posting of land limiting public access for traditional outdoor recreational pursuits. Development in rural areas and expanded posting of land could potentially limit future outdoor recreational opportunities in Readfield unless steps are taken to preserve open space.

Developed recreational facilities in Readfield are limited to the Town Beach on Maranacook Lake and playing fields associated with schools and civic organizations. The town runs a recreation program jointly with Manchester.

### **Water-Based Recreation**

Since Readfield was first settled under the name of Pondtown, lakes have shaped the character of the town. Portions of four major lakes are located within the town (Maranacook Lake, Echo Lake, Torsey Pond and Lovejoy Pond). They all support significant recreational use.

#### ***Beach Areas:***

Readfield owns and operates a public beach at the north end of Maranacook Lake. The beach had been operated as a private association until 1989 when residents voted to have the town acquire and operate it. Up until 2003, the Readfield Beach Board oversaw the operation of the 8.7-acre site, which includes the beach, picnic tables and pavilions, changing rooms and toilets, a small playground and a volleyball court. It is now operated by the Readfield Recreation Association. Beach attendants are hired in the summer to maintain the grounds and oversee beach operations. Lifeguards are not hired.

In order to use the beach, Readfield residents must purchase an annual membership. Currently, the cost of a family membership is \$40 with special accommodation for elderly and low-income residents. In the past out-of-town families were allowed to purchase memberships to the beach. No new out-of-town memberships are currently offered though past members are allowed to maintain their membership for the current rate of \$50 annually. About 1/4 of the total memberships are out-of-town. In 2003 it cost about \$8,000 to operate the beach with the largest expense paying for staffing. Membership fees cover the operational costs.

According to the current president of the Beach Association, there was concern in 1989 that the Beach was nearing its capacity. Water quality was becoming an issue and the beach, swimming

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area and parking lot were becoming very crowded. Membership has leveled off since that time, but if membership levels increase substantially, the Board has discussed the possibility of eliminating out-of-town memberships, which would allow for an increase in Readfield memberships. Acquisition of more land and expansion of the facility is one of the top recreation investment priorities of the town.

Camp K-V, the YMCA Camp located on the western shore of Maranacook Lake, in the past has considered making its beach area available to the public on a fee basis, but has yet to establish a program. There are no other designated public swimming areas on any of the lakes in Readfield. A limited number of privately owned beach sites exist on lakeshores within the town. These areas are highly sought after for shorefront development and their value continues to escalate. Opportunities to acquire an additional beach area(s) for public use at an affordable price are likely to diminish rapidly in the coming years.

### ***Boat Access and Use:***

Public boat access sites currently exist on Maranacook Lake, Torsey Pond, and Echo Lake (Route 41 in Mount Vernon approximately 2 miles from the Readfield Town Line). Non-residents utilize these sites extensively. The Maranacook Lake site on Route 41 is maintained by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and has a launching ramp, float and parking for vehicles with trailers. It also offers open green space for picnicking and scenic views. The Torsey Pond area, also run by the state, is located on Old Kent's Hill Road and consists of a carry-in area (no ramp or floats). Parking is extremely limited.

Currently there is no official public access available to Lovejoy Pond in Readfield. Continued public use of access points located on private land is questionable. Current facilities on Maranacook Lake, Torsey Pond and Echo Lake appear to assure the public adequate boat access to lakes located within the town for the foreseeable future. In fact, many Readfield residents believe that boat congestion and safety on Maranacook Lake is a problem particularly the use of high-powered motorboats. Any improvement or expansion of boat access sites could increase water safety hazards and user conflicts. Personal watercraft are already prohibited on Torsey Pond.

Lack of a publicly owned access site on Lovejoy Pond has not been a major concern to Readfield residents. Boaters other than shorefront property owners do not favor the Pond due to its size.

## **Land-Based Outdoor Recreation**

### ***Snowmobile Trail Network:***

For the past 30 years there has been a formal system of snowmobile trails in Readfield. Currently there are about 33 miles of groomed trails maintained by the local club, the Blizzard Busters. The trails connect up with those in adjacent towns and are part of the statewide system of snowmobile trails. The trails are also used by cross-country skiers and in the summer, bikes and ATV's. The trails run across private lands. Each year the club obtains permission from landowners to use the trails and holds a recognition banquet for cooperating landowners.

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### *Other Trails:*

A number of cross-country ski and walking trail systems exist on both private and public lands in town. A system of trails was developed on the Maranacook Community School property for use by the ski team, cross-country team and the public. A fitness trail includes a one-mile and a 3.5-mile loop in addition to fitness stations along the route. A nature trail is located in the woods behind the Readfield Elementary School.

Readfield residents also take advantage of the Kents Hill School ski trail system. The School permits, but does not promote, use of its trails.

In 1991 two loop trails, totaling 2.3 miles, were built on the Readfield Town Forest. There is the potential to expand the system in the future. Many landowners in town maintain their own trail or woods road systems and often permit others to utilize them. In some areas adjacent landowners have developed joint trail systems.

While there are many small trail systems scattered throughout Readfield, there is no town-wide system of trails available to the public for year-round use. Landowner permission obtained for the snowmobile trail network extends only to snowmobile use and does not ensure public access to land for other purposes such as hiking. Additionally, the snowmobile trail network utilizes frozen lakes and wetlands so its suitability for other purposes is limited. The community survey indicated that there is substantial public support for additional trails for walking and skiing.

### *Hunting and Fishing:*

There are no figures available on the percentage of land in town which is open to hunting. There is a statewide trend toward more posting of private land particularly in locations where large parcels have been subdivided. While this trend appears to hold true in Readfield, there is no data available to confirm or measure the change. In 1990 the town passed a new ordinance creating areas of town off-limits to rifle hunting.

Readfield has many opportunities for fishing. Several lakes support cold water fisheries and are managed and stocked by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Lovejoy Pond is managed for bass, perch, and pickerel. Public access is essential to utilization of the fishery as a recreational resource.

There were a total of 588 hunting and fishing licenses issued in Readfield in 2004.

### *Conservation Lands:*

There are many public and institutional tracts of land in Readfield used for multiple purposes including conservation and which may be open for public recreation. Most of these are depicted and described on the map developed by the Conservation Commission, titled "Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Areas of Readfield, Maine." The table below identifies these properties and their uses:

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**Table 7-1  
Recreation and Conservation Lands in Readfield**

<b>Property</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Uses</b>
Factory Square Dam Site	Town	parking, historic site
Readfield Fairgrounds	Town	town events, recreation
Fogg Farm Woods	Town	conservation, trails
Torsey Pond Nature Preserve	Town	nature trails, scenic views
Town Forest/Farm	Town	trails, historic site
Readfield Recreation Lot	Town	playground, athletic field
Lot near state boat landing on Rte. 41	Town	conservation
Readfield Elementary School	Town	education. athletic fields/trail
Readfield Beach	Town	recreation
Former Parks Lot, Main St.	Town	Conservation
Small Corner lot, Giles Rd./Main St.	Town	Conservation
Maranacook Middle/HighSchool	CSD #10	education, athletic fields/trails
Wyman Memorial Forest	Kennebec Land Trust	conservation, nature study
Gannett Woods (Shed Pond) Area	Kennebec Land Trust	
MacDonald Conservation Area	Kennebec Land Trust	
Tyler Conservation Area	Kennebec Land Trust (easement)	
St. Andre Fields	Kennebec Land Trust (easement)	
Echo Lake Watershed Preserve #1	Kennebec Land Trust	
Echo Lake Watershed Preserve #2	Kennebec Land Trust	
Avery-Smith Shoreland	Kennebec Land Trust	Echo Lake water access only
Carleton Pond Watershed	Augusta Water District	no public access
NEFF Area off Dan Luce Road	N.E. Forestry Foundation	Forest management

Source: Readfield Conservation Commission

The town owns about 274 acres of the approximately 1758 acres of protected land (excluding submerged lands) listed above. This protected land equals approximately 8.8% of the town's land base. Partially protected lands include Camp K-V and Camp Kirkwold, which total an additional 170 acres. Much of the Kents Hill School property remains undeveloped. In 1990, the town established an open space acquisition fund. The fund was set up as a non-lapsing fund to build over time and be available for the acquisition of lands with important natural and recreational resources.

One of the reasons for the establishment of the acquisition fund was the potential sale of the Augusta Water District lands around Carleton Pond. In 1989 the Water District considered selling the lands of which 568 acres lie within Readfield when it decided to build a water treatment plant that would eliminate Carleton Pond as a primary drinking water source. It proposed selling the lands to the state's Land for Maine's Future Program. However, the Water District has decided to maintain Carleton Pond as a drinking water source and is no longer planning to sell the surrounding watershed lands.

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The attractive lands around Carleton Pond are currently not open to the public for recreational use except with permission. This policy was established to protect the drinking water quality of the Pond. With the completion of the treatment plant such strict protection may not be required. This raises the possibility for opening up the lands to limited recreational use. It would also be important to determine whether wildlife would be impacted by recreational activities as the area is designated as a State game preserve.

### Developed Recreation Facilities

Table 7-2 lists the developed athletic facilities currently existing in Readfield. Most of these facilities are associated with the schools in town.

**Table 7-2  
Developed Recreational Facilities**

<b>PUBLIC</b>	Baseball	Softball	Football	Soccer	Multi	Track	Tennis	Basketball	Playground
Maranacook Community School	1	1		2		1,312	3	1	
Readfield Elementary School	1				1			1	1
Readfield Beach									1
<b>PRIVATE</b>									
Kents Hill	1	2	2	4	1		6		
Readfield Lions Club	1								

#### ***Readfield Elementary School:***

In 2004 an improved baseball field was constructed at the Elementary School. The school also has a multipurpose field and gymnasium. A community playground was constructed at the Elementary School through a volunteer effort in 1988 and expanded in 2001.

According to the school's principal, the current athletic facilities are adequate for school purposes. She does not see a need for expanded facilities in the future unless the school's population exceeds 400 pupils.

#### ***Kents Hill School:***

In addition to its considerable undeveloped land ownership and outdoor facilities, Kent's Hill School makes the Alford Arena (ice rink) available for organized groups.

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### *Use of School Recreation Facilities for Non-school Activities:*

Readfield's soccer, baseball, softball and basketball leagues utilize the schools' recreational facilities. According to Town Recreation Committee representatives, soccer and baseball fields are currently being used close to capacity. Youth baseball leagues currently use fields in several locations making logistics difficult. Proposed expansion of baseball leagues may require the addition of one or more fields.

### *Other Facilities:*

Over the past decade there have been sporadic efforts to create a community skating area on Maranacook Lake by simply plowing and flooding a section of the lake. No ongoing program has yet to be established. In 2003 the Recreation Association erected a new recreation building on the Maranacook Community School campus to meet, store equipment and hold events.

## **Community Recreation Programs**

The town currently sponsors a variety of recreation programs. The Readfield Recreation Association coordinates these programs. The program relies almost exclusively on volunteers, but in 2003-2004 the Association hired its first director. Stipends are provided for certain program instructors. Funding for the program is provided through the town (\$3,000 from taxes in FY 04), small fees and several fundraising events. Activities include:

- Summer classes in arts and crafts, dance, biology, and puppetry
- Summer swim lessons
- Halloween Party
- Sledding and Ice Fishing Outings
- Pee-Wee Basketball
- Soccer League
- Family Ski Program at Lost Valley
- Baseball/Softball League
- Spring art lessons

In 2005 for the first time, Readfield and Manchester cooperatively sponsored a week of summer camp for children in K-6<sup>th</sup> grades. A joint recreation committee administers the program.

Demand for recreation programs by parents continues to increase. In particular, there is interest in more after-school programs particularly from families with two working parents. The emergence of paid staff positions will help to meet the demand.

Maranacook Adult and Community Education provides a variety of recreational programs for children. Offerings have included: soccer, basketball, baseball, softball, cross-county skiing, dancing, gymnastics and arts and crafts. Adult program offerings have included courses in ballroom dancing and a variety of arts and crafts and musical activities.

## Goals and Policies

**Goals:**            **Provide for a wide range of recreation opportunities.**

**Protect significant view corridors and parcels of recreational and open space land.**

### **Policies:**

- 7.1     Continue to improve access to, and enjoyment of, public water resources.
- Consider long-range public beach needs and explore the acquisition of additional shorefront area(s) for public use.
  - Work with the state to establish reasonable controls on motorized traffic on Maranacook Lake, Torsey Pond, Echo Lake and Lovejoy Pond.
  - Cooperate with the state and other communities to protect lakes and lands from invasive species.
- 7.2     Plan for, and develop a townwide system of interconnected trails for multiple forms of recreational use taking into account landowner relations, environmental protection and public safety.
- Encourage cooperative arrangements with private landowners and developers to maintain controlled access to open land for summer and winter hiking, cross-country skiing, walking, snowmobiling and water recreation. Formalize these arrangements with easements or licenses whenever possible.
  - Continue to support expansion and maintenance of the snowmobile trail network through designation of registration fee revenue, donations from individuals and businesses and state and federal grant funding.
  - Develop a walking tour of Factory Square.
- 7.3     Continue to develop and update the Open Space Plan to preserve significant corridors and public access to recreational resources.
- Determine appropriate levels and locations for open space and recreation land within Readfield.
  - Maintain existing trails and incorporate the trail network concept into open space planning.
  - Identify and promote greenbelts through the town for wildlife habitat, visual amenity, open space and recreation that could be established in cooperation with public and private landowners.

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- Continue to increase the Open Space Fund (established for future acquisition of natural lands) through fund-raising, grants and impact fees as identified in the Open Space Plan.
- 7.4 Maintain and increase, where possible and appropriate, opportunities to use local private recreation resources including, but not limited to, conservation lands, Camp K-V and the Kents Hill School.
- Maintain communications with owners of private recreation resources and work cooperatively to address issues of public use.
  - Explore opportunities to provide recreational access on the Augusta Watershed District lands surrounding Carleton Pond.
- 7.5 Promote and support a wide range of public recreation activities.
- Continue to support the work of the town's Recreation Board.
  - Continue to support and expand town recreation programs. Continue to encourage participation and improve coordination of volunteers.
  - Continue to support the annual Heritage Days event.
- 7.6 Continue an active program to manage and retain public recreation lands and opportunities.
- Secure permanent, legal public access to the Town Forest from within the town.
  - Retain public easements for recreational purposes on any town roads discontinued in the future.
  - Research discontinued and abandoned roads to determine present public rights.
  - Evaluate the benefits and costs of proposed offers of property to the town.
  - Encourage the responsible use and stewardship by residents of all town recreational and conservation resources.