

# Recreation

## Introduction

Recreation is very important to quality of life, and in terms of community development, increasing recreational opportunities is often identified as a way to develop a stronger sense of community through participation in shared activities.

According to a report entitled "*NH Outdoors, 2003-2007*" *NH's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, Rockingham County has not only one of the largest populations, it also has the largest number of field sport areas, parks/picnic areas and golf courses than other NH Counties. Unfortunately, Plaistow does not conform to this trend, as evidenced by the lack of Town-owned field sport areas. Because of this, recreation is a significant issue in Plaistow and due to the dwindling amount of open space, it is important that additional land be acquired for recreational purposes. The blending of open space needs, conservation requirements and recreational needs will be a constant challenge as we move on into the years.

Specific goals and objectives that were identified by the Plaistow Recreation Commission include:

**Goal: Provide suitable recreation opportunities—land, programs, and facilities—to service the town’s existing and projected populations.**

Objective 1: Meet the town’s current and projected recreational needs by ensuring that there is an appropriate amount of land and facilities.

Objective 2: Provide suitable recreation facilities that are within easy access of the town’s major neighborhoods.

**Goal: Encourage the long-term use, maintenance, and improvement of existing recreational facilities.**

Objective 1: Ensure that there are available recreation resources for all age groups.

Objective 2: Provide for the maintenance and enhancement of existing recreation facilities.

## Existing Recreation Facilities

Plaistow employs a full time Recreation Director who manages the town’s recreation program. The recreation department operates the spring baseball and softball programs, summer recreation program, field trips, community trips, workshops, summer concert series and other community-holiday events. At present, approximately 300 youth participate in spring programs, 200 youth in the summer recreation program and 1000 children and adults in the other programs. The department has experienced an annual increased demand on the town’s recreation programs.

Due to a lack of field space, the department no longer operates its own football and soccer programs. These are now combined at the school district level with the town of Plaistow providing financial support but not providing facilities. The recreation department manages one recreation facility, which consists of a 2.16-acre field off of Ingalls Terrace. Because of a lack of town-owned facilities, the department uses the fields at the Pollard Elementary School, Timberlane Middle School and High School fields, but only when not in school use. The department has baseball and softball equipment for up to 22 youth teams but unfortunately not enough fields on which to use them. (See Table R-1 and the Recreation Map).

**Table R-1: Recreational Facilities in the Town of Plaistow**

Facility	Size (approximate)	Includes
Pollard Elementary School (school district owned)		undersized baseball/soccer practice field
Timberlane Regional Middle School (school district owned)		softball field soccer/multi purpose field 1 full-size indoor basketball court
Timberlane Regional High School (school district owned)		3 softball fields 2 baseball fields 1 full-size indoor basketball court mini-gym for wrestling, cheerleading, & track 1 dedicated soccer field 1 field for both soccer and football with lights with stadium seating PAC center (theater with seating for 900) 1 field hockey field 3 tennis courts track - around the soccer/football field
Recreation field located off Ingalls Terrace (town owned)	2.16 acres	minor league baseball field outdoor basketball court 2 tennis courts picnic area with shaded enclosure playground equipment

Source: Town of Plaistow, NH

## Plaistow’s Recreation Needs

### *Comparison with State Standards*

According to the current state standards, **the town must add recreational facilities of all kinds**-such as, but not limited to: ball fields, tennis courts, skate board parks, community center, hard court games, playgrounds, picnic areas, gymnasiums, beaches, boating areas and campgrounds for the current year and in 2020. Some of these standards are not feasible due to Plaistow’s geography. Plaistow does not have any ponds over 2.5 acres in size, which makes it impossible for boating and to provide beach areas.

**Table R-2** is a comparison of Plaistow town-owned facilities to state standards for the year 2000 using the population figure of 7,747 persons.

**Table R-2: Current Comparison of Plaistow Town-owned Facilities to NH State Standards (year 2000)**

Facility Type	State Standard per 1000 population	Number of town-owned Facilities In Plaistow	Number of town-owned Facilities per 1000 of Plaistow's Population	Meets State Standards?
Ballfields	0.6 to 1.0	1	0.13	No
Tennis Courts	0.5 to 1.5	2	0.26	No
Hard Court Games	1.0 to 4.0	1	0.13	No
Playgrounds	0.2 to 2.0	1	0.13	No
Picnic Areas (acres)	0.2 to 5.0	.1	0.013	No
Boating Areas (acres)	23 to 95	0	0	No*
Gymnasiums	0.2 to 1.0	0	0	No
Beaches	0.1 to 1.5	0	0	No
Campgrounds	0.5 to 3.5	0	0	No

*Source: Town of Plaistow, NH*

*\*the Town of Plaistow has no major waterbodies over 2.5 acres in size*

**Table R-3** is a comparison of Plaistow facilities to state standards for the year 2020 using the projected population figure of 11,720 persons.

**Table R-3: Projected Comparison of Plaistow Town-owned Facilities to NH State Standards (year 2020)**

Facility Type	State Standard per 1000 population	Number of town-owned Facilities in Plaistow	Number of town-owned Facilities per 1000 of Plaistow's Population	Meets State Standards?
Ballfields	0.6 to 1.0	1	0.085	No
Tennis Courts	0.5 to 1.5	2	0.17	No
Hard Court Games	1.0 to 4.0	1	0.085	No
Playgrounds	0.2 to 2.0	1	0.085	No
Picnic Areas (acres)	0.2 to 5.0	.1	0.0085	No
Boating Areas (acres)	23 to 95	0	0	No*
Gymnasiums	0.2 to 1.0	0	0	No
Beaches	0.1 to 1.5	0	0	No
Campgrounds	0.5 to 3.5	0	0	No

*Source: Town of Plaistow, NH*

*\*the Town of Plaistow has no major waterbodies over 2.5 acres in size*

The state standards reflect broad objectives of the stated preferences of large groups of people. Consequently, they cannot take into account the particular circumstances of Plaistow or any other community. Plaistow's needs for recreational facilities will be different from state-wide norms due to the demographic characteristics of the town and the variety of recreational opportunities available in nearby communities. While the model is useful in determining how Plaistow compares to the state standards, the most accurate indication of the demand for the facilities is the need expressed by Plaistow residents and observed by town officials.

The School and Recreation Departments share the use of many athletic facilities. (This is necessary since the school district owns many facilities, but the town of Plaistow only owns one.) **However, school activities have priority** over other teams when games are played on school property, which further increases the need for athletic fields for organized sports that exist outside of the school system. While the school district will allow the use of their athletic facilities, if not used by school groups, this is not conducive to town-sponsored recreational activities.

Ideally, fields should be located in either one concentrated area or distributed throughout the town. Small neighborhood parks and facilities provide community gathering places and are usually accessible by pedestrians. However, while distribution is desirable in terms of equity among neighborhoods, it will be difficult to accomplish due to the lack of available land in established neighborhoods. One benefit of locating the fields in one concentrated area is the ability to host tournaments. Games can occur simultaneously in one area for a variety of age groups (i.e. parents would not have to drive between locations when more than one child is involved in a sport), and this allows the more efficient use of maintenance staff and time.

## **Facility Needs Identified by Town Officials and Residents**

The Town of Plaistow's Recreation Commission is actively exploring options for obtaining recreational land. It has established a recreational impact fee account, Friends of Recreation Group, and a fund raising committee called PARC (Plaistow Area Recreation Complex). The Recreation Commission is constantly looking for additional recreation land, but few large sites are available.

In March of 2002, Warrant Article P-15 was proposed for the development of a new recreation facility on an 18-acre site, which was formerly used, as an excavation area. (**See Recreation Map**). The site would have provided space for the town's recreation programs including baseball, softball, soccer, playgrounds, courts, etc. The estimated total cost for the proposed Plaistow Area Recreation Complex was \$275,000. This estimate included \$50,000 previously appropriated by the town for engineering and related work. Some early engineering work was done for the site and at this time, the town is holding the remaining appropriated money. The warrant article failed to pass at the annual town meeting.

In March 2004, a Warrant Article passed resulting in funding (\$250,000) for the development of 5 playing fields along with the related costs of developing those fields at an 19 acre parcel, which will be reclaimed from an existing excavation area. The estimated costs for this facility is now at \$350,000. Much time has been spent in seeking alternatives to meet the costs, including volunteers. Fund raising by a few interested people have netted a small amount (PARC). Grant writing has also been done, but Plaistow did not obtain any funds by grants for this project. In addition, the Town of Plaistow, under RSA 674:21, V and an adopted zoning ordinance, is authorized to assess a recreational impact fee for new residential development to compensate the town for its share of the recreation's capital costs constructed or to be constructed in anticipation of growth. All funds collected are transferred for deposit in a recreation impact fee account and are used solely for the purposes described in the zoning ordinance.

The Plaistow Recreation Commission will continue to seek land and to build facilities in the future to meet the goals and objectives of this chapter of the Master Plan. The blending of open space needs, conservation requirements, and recreational needs will be a constant challenge as Plaistow moves on into the years.