

Provide Recreational Opportunities

“...conservation planning will protect land and water resources while ensuring recreational opportunities”

Introduction

The Town of Bremen offers outdoor recreation enjoyable to young and old alike. Preservation of rural character and proximity to water are important to outdoor activities such as walking, hiking, biking, kayaking, swimming and hunting. Open space, forested islands, Johnston Hill, healthy ponds, Maine Audubon, a vibrant working waterfront and the beauty of the Medomak River and Muscongus Bay define recreational opportunities available in Bremen. The National Study on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE)¹ indicates that 97% of the population participates in outdoor recreation. Whether to enhance overall health and well being or simply to enjoy the outdoors, recreation is an important aspect of life in Bremen.

Access to private land

Bremen has a unique understanding between private landowners and public recreationists: centuries of tradition and culture have created an open-land expectation of private property. Public access is assumed to be allowed unless the land is posted.

However, attitudes regarding traditional access over private lands are fast changing. According to a report prepared by the Maine State Planning Office (MSPO), “The Maine tradition of public access to private land is without parallel in the nation. At the same time, the amount of private land posted to restrict public access in Maine is on the rise. The “open-land” tradition, unique to Maine and respected for generations, is increasingly being overruled by “No Trespassing” signs.² Private landowners indicated past abuse such as trash dumping, ATV damage and landowner liability as the biggest issues that determine the access status of their lands. Although Maine has a strong law to protect landowners, known as the “landowner liability law” or “recreational statute” (Title 14 MRSA Section 159-A),³ few landowners understand the level of protection it provides. With 94% of Maine land privately owned, educating landowners may be instrumental in keeping natural areas open to recreationists.

Trails and Recreation

Generations of Bremen residents have enjoyed access to trails and footpaths that have served recreational interests through the years. While many of these trails were created by logging operations, some have existed as narrow wildlife paths or known as old Abenaki Indian trails. Most of these trails are multiple use. Activities such as hiking and wildlife watching occur

primarily in the summer months, whereas hunting, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing may be more prevalent in the winter. These interconnecting trails are common and traverse large undeveloped blocks of land. Trail users can explore Bremen without ever having to travel public roads.

There can be no greater resource to Bremen residents who enjoy wildlife watching than having Maine Audubon in your back yard. The Todd Audubon Sanctuary provides three interpretive trails totaling two miles of walking trails that are open to the public. Hog Island with its rugged 330 acres provides an additional 3 miles of nature trails for hiking and nature viewing.

The 2004 Bremen Comprehensive Plan identified the aforementioned Audubon trails and noted a trail accessing the Johnston Hill Fire Tower via Route 32 as sufficient in meeting the needs of residents.⁴ While this assessment may have been true in 2004, it now appears outdated. In 2007 the fire tower and surrounding land were sold again. This property and local landmark is notable because over the past sixty years Bremen and nearby residents have developed a fondness for hiking to the fire tower and enjoying its breathtaking views.

With the exception of Maine Audubon trails, *none* of the beloved trails enjoyed by so many people over the years has guaranteed public access. The informal network of trails that are enjoyed today exist on private land with landowners holding the option to discontinue their use at any time. At the same time development threatens to fragment the trails' existence.

Wildlife Based Recreation

Wildlife-based recreation is a large part of the quality of life in Bremen and is dependent on unfragmented forests and water quality. Hunting and fishing have formed the backbone of our proud recreational heritage for generations. The 2007 Town of Bremen annual report indicates there were a total of 160 hunting and fishing licenses issued to Bremen residents.⁵ While deer and waterfowl are most popular, the recent emergence of turkey and coyote has expanded traditional hunting opportunities. With restoration efforts underway, alewives may soon thrive in Webber Pond.

Traditional recreation relies on access over private lands to waterbodies supporting healthy populations of fish and game. In support of this access, Maine state law 17MRS§3860 states that "No person on foot shall be denied access to or egress over unimproved land..."⁶ Without the introduction of this law, hunting and fishing on Bremen's ponds would have serious limitations.

In addition to traditional hunting and fishing, Bremen is home to Maine Audubon, one of the leading ecological organizations in the state. Since 1936 thousands of visitors from around the country have visited the Todd Audubon Sanctuary. These visitors bring with them a strong appreciation for conservation and are given the opportunity to learn about the ecosystems of the Coast of Maine.

Saltwater access and recreation

Access to Bremen's coastal waters is a requirement for a healthy working waterfront. Such access should also be available to the general public. One of the greatest quandaries facing Mainers has been understanding how to strike a balance between the access for the fishing industry and recreationists.



Bremen is fortunate to have multiple coastal access points. The Town Landing in Medomak is owned by the town of Bremen and used primarily by island residents and occasionally by fishermen and local recreationists. Ample parking, a pier and two floats assure access, regardless of tide or time of day. There is no boat launch facility but small boats such as kayaks may be wheeled or carried to the floats. With the popularity of kayaking, the fastest growing water-based recreation in the state, commercial recreational outfits and non-resident kayakers are discovering the Bremen Town Landing.

The Creek Road Landing in Medomak is used primarily by residents who launch small watercraft there or go smelting in the spring. Depending on the tide, one may occasionally see children swimming in warm weather. Lack of parking helps prevent overuse.

A right of way to Greenland Cove provides access for recreationists and clammers. Lack of signage and parking area for only a few vehicles keep recreational use limited.

Storer Road landing provides public access to Broad Cove. A tidal boat launch facility is available to clammers, but the rising popularity of kayaking finds the landing a popular destination among recreationists. Parking is problematic and seems to limit the extent of recreational opportunities.

Access to and from Bremen Long Island is available near the northern and southern ends of the island. These access points connect to the town road that runs nearly the length of the island. They are difficult for recreationists to locate because they are not signed or maintained by the town. The Berger Preserve, owned by the Medomak Valley Land Trust, will have some small-boat access from both Hockomock Channel and The Flying Passage. Aside from private piers, there exists no convenient way to land on the island. If one can get to the island, the town road is trail-like and provides opportunity to explore the beauty of the island with its simpler way of life.

Additional access is available to recreationists through Broad Cove Marina for a daily parking fee.

Freshwater access and recreation

Access to great ponds is important to water-related recreation such as swimming, ice skating, fishing and non-motorized boating. However, public access to Bremen’s fresh waterbodies is limited. With the exception of a footpath off Fogler Road accessing Biscay Pond, there is no other public recreational access to Bremen’s great ponds. (See Table below) While many use the causeway on Turner Road to access McCurdy and Pemaquid Ponds, it is less than ideal and does not provide safe parking for recreationists.

Without public access to fresh water, recreational opportunities for Bremen residents will remain limited. Although access should be ensured to every resident, without a conservation plan, water access will continue to be enjoyed only by waterfront property owners.

Table 2 - Town Owned Water Access Points

Access Location	Access	Type	Parking	Primary User
Town Landing	Yes	Deep water/Tidal	Yes	Commercial Fisherman/Recreationist
Storer Landing	Yes	Tidal access	Yes-Limited	Clamming Industry/Kayakers
Creek Road Landing	Yes	Tidal	No	Seasonal traditional use/residents
Greenland Cove	Yes	Right of way (ROW)	Yes-Limited	Day hikers
Bremen Long Island – North	Yes	Tidal – ROW	No	Day visitor access to and from island
Bremen Long Island – South	Yes	Tidal – ROW	No	Day visitor access to and from island
Biscay Pond	Yes	Footpath	No	Resident recreationist
McCurdy Pond	None			
Pemaquid Pond	None			
Webber Pond	None			

Waterway Recreational Opportunities

As mentioned as a tool in conservation of wildlife habitat, easements can be useful in conserving open space for recreation. Since easements are designed by the property owners, they can be written in such a way as to allow public access to high value-recreational areas.

Unfortunately a small percentage of easements in Bremen are written in this manner. Of the nine known conservation easements in Bremen ([see Conservation Easements in Appendix](#)) only Hungry Island and its 140 acres of undeveloped land specifically allows public access for such traditional recreation as hiking, swimming, picnicking and daytime landing of watercraft. The island provides four campsites, the only campsites in Bremen available for public use.

Downriver from Hungry Island, the Bremen Conservation Commission is working with the Medomak Valley Land Trust to manage open space for Bremen's future. The recently established 165-acre Karl F. Berger Preserve on Bremen Long Island will serve as a model for future collaborative land conservation projects in Bremen. With access from the east and west shores of Bremen Long Island, the property contains open space that allows for hiking and wildlife watching. Though there are currently no easements held on the property, conservation efforts will ensure that the preserve protects deer wintering grounds, allows continued traditional hunting and fishing, and conserves land for a multitude of recreational activities.

Through the generosity of the late Elizabeth (Betty) Noyce, Bremen is fortunate to own Clam Island. Situated between the eastern shore of Bremen Long Island and the Medomak shore, it is accessible by boat. Although it was given to the town to be enjoyed by the people of Bremen, the town does not manage the property for any specific uses. Aside from occasional visits from daytime recreationists it is rarely used by Bremen residents.

The State of Maine owns all of the smaller islands south of Clam Island, which include Crotch, Strawberry, Narrows and Jim's Island. Unsuitable for development, these islands are well suited to such daytime activities as picnicking, kayaking and wildlife watching. Important to the view corridors along the Medomak River, these islands add to the beauty and recreational opportunities available.

Not surprisingly, Hog Island is a naturalist's dream. Comprising 330 acres, the island is dominated by one of the state's largest and most mature coastal spruce stands. By boat the public can access the island's three-mile Hog Island Trail, which gives bird-watching enthusiasts the opportunity of spotting some of the 150 known bird species that have been identified on the Island. In meeting with the director of the Todd Audubon Sanctuary, interest was expressed in working with the Bremen Conservation Commission in forging a stronger relationship with the Town of Bremen in areas such as recreation and nature conservation.

Town-Owned Properties

The Town of Bremen has a very modest inventory of undeveloped town-owned land. Aside from Clam Island (Map 5 Lot 20) and the former ballfield beside the Town Center, the 40-acre parcel of land north of the Town House is the only other property available for recreational opportunities. Undeveloped and gently sloping, the property consists of a field, forestland and access to Crabapple Creek. In the early 1990's the town selectmen appointed an ad hoc

committee to explore possible uses of the property. One recommendation made by the committee called for a town park area with recreation trails. To date the property remains undeveloped.

Conclusion

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan states that Bremen *is rich in recreational resources.*⁷ Given the rising popularity of Lincoln County as a place to live, demand for outdoor recreation in Bremen will increase. As it does, conservation planning will be critical in the protection of land and water resources while enhancing recreational opportunities for the people of Bremen.

Objectives

- Inventory recreational activities in Bremen
- Encourage traditional recreation

1. National Survey on Recreation and the Environment
2. Public Access to Maine's Private Lands: A Cultural and Economic Asset. Maine State Planning Office, February 26, 2008.
3. State of Maine Liability Law (Title 14 MRSA Section 159-A), [Http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes.search.asp](http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes.search.asp)
4. Town of Bremen Comprehensive Plan, 2004, p. 104
5. Town of Bremen, 2007 Annual Report 2007 op. cit., p. 53
6. Maine State Law (Title 17 MRSA Section 3860)
7. Comprehensive Plan, op.cit. p. 106