



DRAFT 1/06/2015



FAIRGROUNDS ACTION PLAN



Acknowledgments (Draft)

This Action Plan was developed by the New Gloucester Parks and Recreation Committee, which met frequently throughout 2015 both to create this document and to generate a Land and Water Conservation Grant application to the state to fund proposed improvements. The Committee was comprised of the following members.

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The principal author was Will Johnston, Town Planner, who worked with the committee in the examination of issues, formulation of strategies and revision of drafts, and in applying for the state grant.

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- Phoebe Hardesty and Cliff Andrews from Environmental Resource Committee,
- Beverly Cardigan from the New Gloucester Historical Society
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- The Gray-New Gloucester Economic Development Corporation
- The New Gloucester Water District
- Royal River Conservation Trust
- New Gloucester Historical Society
- New Gloucester Environmental Resource Committee
- Patriot Soccer
- Patriot Lacrosse
- Patriot Flag Football
- State Representative Eleanor Espling
- Richard McCann
- The New Gloucester Board of Selectmen

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INTRODUCTION

The New Gloucester Fairgrounds represents a tremendous recreational resource to the Town. This 31-acre parcel is ideally situated along the Royal River reservoir and within walking distance of the town's Upper Village. Past improvements – mostly focused on the park's infield areas to facilitate organized recreational activities – have resulted in increased use and interest in the park beyond its annual hosting of the Town's Community Fair. But the facility is still an underutilized resource that is in need of a clear vision and a practical strategy for achieving that vision. The property has potential to serve as highly successful, multi-use park that will enhance recreational opportunities, improve public health, provide improved access to the Royal River and support community values.



Although the Town has other recreational areas – most notably a facility on Rowe Station Road that includes ballfields and a tennis and basketball court – the Fairgrounds provides immediate opportunities for improvement and increased viability. In a 2014 survey conducted by the Town's Park and Recreation Committee, respondents showed strong support for Fairgrounds master planning and for making improvements. This finding echoed similar sentiments stated in public forums that significant improvements should be preceded by a targeted planning effort. Accordingly, beginning in January 2015, the Committee began meeting twice monthly to develop an "Action Plan" for the Fairground to guide future investments.

The focus of the plan is on short-term and mid-term strategies. It was felt the best model for the Fairgrounds is to start with highly achievable and fundable smaller steps and build on success and increased public support – rather than putting too much on the plate at once. The plan provides general guidance for longer range improvements, ensuring that more immediate steps do not reduce future opportunities. The emphasis, however, is on implementation of short and mid-terms steps during the 3-year horizon, with a number of steps taken immediately and a clear strategy how to pay for others. With growing public use and support, this plan will be updated to include longer-range steps.

The Committee recognizes that even implementation-oriented plans should be consistent with an overall approach to recreation. This action plan, therefore, sets forth several goals and overarching principles aimed at guiding all of its recreational improvement efforts. As time permits, the Committee also plans to continue with efforts to create an overall recreation plan for the town.

In addition, although the Committee feels that a key to success at the Fairgrounds is to focus efforts and resources there, it should not be at the expense of the maintenance of existing recreational assets, particularly Rowe Station facility. Accordingly, this plan includes a *Maintenance and Management Plan* to ensure that the investments already made there are protected and that Fairground improvements are also properly maintained. (See Appendix B).

II. OPPORTUNITES AND CHALLENGES

Assets and Opportunities

The Fairground is rich in opportunities for enhancing its use and making it a prime community asset.

1. “A River Runs Through it” – Royal River Access

The Fairgrounds location on the Royal River increases its value as a recreational resource. The property has over 1,500 feet of frontage on a section of the river known as the “reservoir, created by a dam just east of the site. This impoundment creates a navigable and attractive area for paddling and fishing. A portion of the site already includes a semi-open waterfront area that can be enhanced for boating access and riverside gathering.



2. Track

The half-mile track that surrounds the Fairground’s infield is an existing asset that both has practical applications and gives the facility a unique identifying feature. Most tracks in Maine that encircle recreational fields are a quarter mile in length. Because Fairgrounds was formally used for horseracing, the track is twice that distance – 800 meters or 4 furlongs. This distance provides walkers and other users a with longer and more varied lap circuit, and also creates a larger infield for active recreation and other events.



3. Playing Fields

The 12-acre infield area within the track circuit is already used for a variety of sports-related activity, and has been the site of the annual Community Fair. Roughly a third of the infield located at the westerly portion of the site, was upgraded in 2008, and is the current focus for most organized recreational activities. Opportunities exist to further to upgrade that area, as well as improving other areas of the infield.



4. Proximity to Upper Village

The Fairground is less than one mile from the Town’s Upper Village, one of the town’s traditional centers. With the Town in the process of implementing a Master Plan for that area which calls for promoting a mixed use village orientation, having a prime recreational area nearby is a significant asset. Opportunities also exist for improving trail linkages between the Upper Village and the Fairgrounds.



5. Royal River Conservation Trust (RRCT)

The Trust has strong interest in the Fairgrounds due to its extended frontage on the river and RRCT’s efforts to establish a “River Trail” that extends from the river’s headwaters to the ocean. In partnering with the Trust, the Town can obtain assistance in waterfront improvements as well as making linkages to other recreational assets.



6. Potential for Improved Health Benefits and Multi-Generational Involvement

As the health benefits of exercise for users of all ages become more widely recognized and with issues such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease become growing concerns among the Maine general population, it is more important than ever to provide opportunities for both passive and active recreation to a variety of age and user groups. The current use of the Fairground tends to be “one-dimensional” – for, example, an

organized youth sports event with parents watching or dropping their athletes off at the venue. The vision for an enhanced Fairgrounds facility is for multi-dimensional use, with younger siblings of organized-sports participants exercising on playground apparatus, parents and grandparents walking the track and hiking trails, and all users taking advantage of the waterfront and pavilion areas for gathering and additional recreational pursuits such as boating, fishing and volleyball.

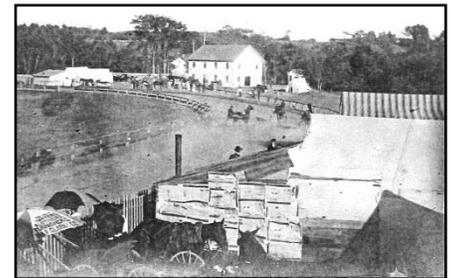


Generic File Photos (not Fairgrounds)

7. Opportunity to Link to New Gloucester’s Past

The Fairgrounds and the activities that have occurred there over the years are an integral part of the New Gloucester’s history. (See Background Section: History). The property hosted the New Gloucester-Danville Agricultural Fair from 1885 to 1935, an event that during its heyday drew as many as 3,000 visitors. A racing grandstand and judges’ stand, exhibit hall and other structures were prominent and well-loved features. Even after the Fair officially ended, the property was used for motorcycling racing, sporting events and horse training, and the Fairground remains part of the collective memory of New Gloucester residents.

An opportunity exists to provide a link to this rich history, and preserve this connection for future generations. New structures and other improvements can be designed to visually relate to the buildings of the past – particularly agricultural and horse racing-related structures. Interpretative signage can provide both written and graphic information on the property’s past. Ultimately the Fairground can be a place where users can both enjoy a variety of activities in the present while celebrating the past.



Challenges and Constraints

1. Increasing Use and Public Support

The Fairgrounds now experiences moderate seasonal use for organized sports and other more passive pursuits such as walking the track. But it is generally an underutilized resource, and for some times of the day, the facility is largely vacant. To some extent the Fairgrounds suffers from a “chicken-egg” scenario, in which lack of use becomes an argument for not investing in the facility. One of the underlying objectives of this plan is to reverse this trend, promoting incremental improvements that will increase use, which, in turn, will likely strengthen community support of the facility and additional investment.



2. Overcoming Inertia

Several Fairground planning efforts have been undertaken since the Town purchased the property in 2002, with some creative and far-reaching ideas forwarded. Although selected improvements followed these planning efforts – most notably the upgrade of a portion of the infield and a number of volunteer-focused projects – some of the more ambitious elements of these plans were never implemented, largely due to lack of funding. As time went by, these proposals may have been viewed more as “wish lists” than commitments to action. The result has been a lack of consensus on how to proceed and a degree of inertia to put off investments. This plan proposes to overcome this inertia by breaking up Fairground improvements into manageable “chucks,” building community support for the facility and proposing some clear funding strategies.

3. Funding of Improvements and Maintenance

Lack of funds has been an obvious impediment to Fairground investment. With the community challenged to meet basic needs such as schools, roads and public safety, it is understandable that funding recreation improvements is viewed as a lower priority. Significant capital reserve funds have been accumulated in Parks and Recreation budget, but without a targeted plan for improvements, voters have been hesitate to release this funds for specific improvements. This plan offers a clear funding strategy for short and mid-term investments with a focus on pursuit of other sources of revenue beyond the property tax and bonding.

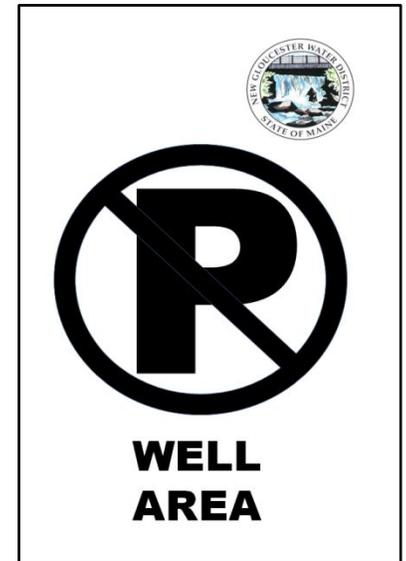


4. Vandalism and security

Over the years, the Fairgrounds have experienced isolated incidents of vandalism and property damage. Due to the facility’s relatively isolated location on the fringe of a residential area and the secluded nature of some parts of the site, concerns persist regarding security. This plan suggests that increased use is the best anecdote to this problem, although there are also measures that can be taken in planning and implementation that improve security for the facility.

5. Balancing use and improvement with wellhead protection and protection of river resource

While the Town considers the Fairgrounds to be an ideal site for additional recreational use and development, it needs to ensure that the natural resources adjacent and under the site will not be compromised. With the municipal water system well located on the property, site development and recreational activities need to be carefully considered to avoid adverse impacts on the underlying aquifer and immediate wellhead area. The site's proximity of the Royal River and adjacent floodplain also presents challenges in terms of site development. A portion of the site is located within the 100-year floodplain and is within the Town's Resource Protection District. This proposed action plan delineates a well-head protection zone, and recommendations regarding both groundwater and surface water protection.



III. VISION STATEMENT, GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

Vision Statement: *To create a vibrant, multi-use facility that can be enjoyed by both active and passive recreational users for a range of age groups while serving its role as a venue for community events.*

Overarching Principles

The following overarching principles should govern this Action Plan and on-going planning efforts at the Fairgrounds.

1. Promote increased use of the facility.

- Use generates a constituency
- Use discourages vandalism and negative behaviors
- Use promotes more use
- Use promotes the overall health and well-being of New Gloucester residents
- Increased use may eventually provide opportunities for increased revenues to help off-set cost: e.g. field rentals.

2. Focus on achievable short- and mid-term improvements, within the context of an overall plan, that have a clear funding strategy. More immediate improvements should be sited in such a way to preserve options for long-term improvements.

3. Promote multiple uses with a balance of both active and passive recreational use, and improvements that support a range of user groups.

4. View the Fairgrounds and potential improvements and activities in the context of how they might improve the overall health and wellbeing of the community, for users of all ages.

5. Consider Fairgrounds planning and implementation in relation to town’s overall recreation and trail use scheme.

6. Program into Town budgeting, ongoing maintenance of both Fairground facilities and other Town recreational facilities.

7. Work with the New Gloucester Water District to ensure that improvements and activities are consistent with protecting the water quality of the public drinking water supply.

Design Principles

Successful park facilities often share key elements, consistent with the principles of good landscape and recreational design. The following specific designs principles should be promoted:

- *Establish several “focal points” where people can gather and interact.*
- *Create a gateway area that introduces the facility and welcomes visitors.*
- *Promote accessibility and linkages throughout the facility. In siting focal point and improvements, carefully consider site flow and coordination between different venues and activities.*
- *Through signage and the design of other improvements, promote a clear identity or theme for the Fairgrounds. The property’s former use for agricultural fairs and racing events provides an excellent opportunity for linking this identity to town history.*

Planning Strategies and Objectives for Specific Areas

Waterfront Area

The Fairground's waterfront has potential serve as a significant "draw" for the facility, providing a major activity area and focal point with opportunities for boating, fishing, waterside picnicking and wildlife viewing. The Royal River Conservation Trust is promoting the idea of a "river trail" in the corridor from Sabbathday Lake to Casco Bay, and the Fairgrounds can serve as attractive link in this system. The overall strategy for this area is to build interest and use by providing selective amenities and improving ease of access, while protecting the water resource. As the area sees more use, additional amenities may be appropriate.



Overall Goal: Promote greater use of the waterfront area by improving its function both as waterside access site and as a focal point for gathering, while ensuring that this is accomplished in an environmentally sound manner.

- Provide improved river-side boating opportunities, including better access for small carry-in watercraft.
- Partner with Royal River Conservation Trust in its efforts to promote use of the river.
- Provide opportunities for picnicking and other leisure activities by the waterside.
- Ensure that activities and improvements follow best management practices and receive necessary permitting and approvals.

Upland Areas (other than infield/playing fields)

Except for the use of the existing track for walkers and the periodic use of the property for community events, the Fairground's upland areas outside the infield are generally underutilized, mainly providing parking and access to the playing fields. Historically, a number of structures were located in these areas including agricultural barns and a racing grandstand. An opportunity exists to provide a major focal point for the Fairgrounds with the siting of a central pavilion/group gathering area in the "berm" where the grandstands were once located. The pavilion would provide shelter, a viewing spot for sports events and a venue for family cookouts and gatherings. Other improvements such as a playground and the development of a trail network in the wooded area help the Fairgrounds transition into a true multi-use facility for both active and passive users. Finally, addition of an entry kiosk would provide a defined gateway for the facility and provide users with valuable information.



Overall Goal: Better utilize the upland areas of the Fairgrounds as both a focal point/gathering area and for a variety of active and passive recreational uses.

- Provide a major focal/point/gathering area in the vicinity of the old grandstand area with the construction of a pavilion and adjacent cookout area.
- Provide a gateway structure in the vicinity of the main entrance.
- Provide a playground area for exercise.
- Establish and expand a trail system for exercise and nature viewing.
- Maintain and upgrade the track for walkers, possibly adding mile markers and fitness stations.

Infield Areas

The Fairground's infield area is currently used by a number of groups for organized recreational activities: mostly soccer, lacrosse and flag football. A roughly 3-acre area located in the westerly side of the infield (Area A) was improved in 2009-2010, and is the focus of much of this activity. For various reasons, the quality of playing surface in this section is variable, especially during dry conditions. The quality of the remaining 9 acres of the infield (Areas B and C) is even more marginal. Without some sort of irrigation or watering system, the ability to upgrade any of these field areas is limited.



The overall strategy for the infield is two-fold. One, is to undertake some short-term actions to improve the quality of the turf in Field Area A and to protect the investment the Town already made in this area. Two, is to begin planning for and develop a financing strategy to upgrade Field Area B into a high-quality playing surface, including installation of an irrigation system. This will serve to move the primary playing field area away from the public water system well-head area and to provide a more centralized location near the proposed pavilion. In the longer term, it may also prove desirable to make improvement to Field Area C to provide additional sport-field opportunities.

Overall Goal: Pursue a phased approach to infield surface improvements, with the goal of creating and maintaining at least one high-quality, centrally located, multi-field area, while protecting water quality within the water district wellhead protection area.

- Within the area labeled as “A” on the concept plan and additional areas shown to warrant particular protection as part of a well-head protection strategy, pursue a conservative approach to field upgrades and fertilization in light of the proximity to the water district well.
- Allocate money in each year's CIP to build reserve funds and pursue other funding sources toward a major upgrade in the area labelled as “B” on the concept plan.
- Protect investments in fields with a clear maintenance schedule and a system for irrigation.



Balancing of Needs/Impacts

As planning and implementation for the Fairgrounds unfolds, it is helpful to be aware of some of the trade-offs that exist between different needs and potential impacts. Thoughtful balancing of these trade-offs is key in an overall effective strategy.

1. Balancing active recreation and passive recreation
2. Balancing of improvements to facilitate year-round use and use for periodic community events.
3. Balancing development/use of the Fairground with the paramount of protection for the town's public water supply.
4. Balancing increased use of Fairgrounds with protecting the natural environment, especially Royal River water quality.
5. Balancing field improvements for organized recreation with potential other use of facility.
6. Balancing open access versus protection from misuse/vandalism

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Immediate Actions (Spring 2016)

The following actions are low/no cost items that are proposed for the spring of 2016. (Several have already been implemented or are in process). These actions will not only result in increased use, but will build support and interest in other actions and demonstrate the Town's commitment to investing in the facility.

Waterfront Area

1. Kayak/Canoe Station

Purpose: Provide park users the opportunity to sign out canoes and kayaks for use on the Royal River reservoir.

Needed Improvements: Installation of a lockable rack to hold up to 2 kayaks and 2 canoes.

Needed Equipment: Donated watercraft will be available on-site. Paddles, PDFs and keys to unlock watercraft will be available for sign-out at the Public Library

Responsible Party: Parks and Recreation (P&R) Committee, Town Staff

Time Frame: Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Two canoes and kayaks already donated. Most other costs covered by Outdoor Heritage Fund grant funds in conjunction with Royal River Conservation Trust (RRCT) with in-kind labor provided by Town.



2. Boat Launch Improvements

Purpose: Improve the ease of launching watercraft and minimize erosion and other impacts from use.

Needed Improvements: Addition of an in-ground structural component to facilitate small boat launching. Area will be stabilized as necessary per DEP requirements.

Needed Permitting: Can be accomplished by DEP Permit by Rule for Carry-In Boat Launch.

Responsible Party: P&R Committee, Environmental Resource Committee, Town Staff

Time-Frame: Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Outdoor Heritage Fund grant funds in conjunction with Royal River Conservation Trust, with in-kind labor provided by Town. Would require DEP permit-by-rule.

3. Waterfront Kiosk/Signage

Purpose: To provide information to users about the Royal River Water Trail and the canoe/kayak sign-out procedures

Needed Improvements: A kiosk with water trail map, waterfront rules and watercraft sign out instructions.

Time-frame: Spring 2016

Responsible Party: P&R Committee, Town Staff

Funding Strategy: Outdoor Heritage Fund grant funds in conjunction with Royal River Conservation Trust, with in-kind labor provided by Town.

4. **Picnic Table/Bench**

Purpose: To facilitate use of the area as a picnic spot and general focal point for boaters and park users.

Needed Improvements: 1 all-weather picnic table and bench.

Responsible Party: Town Staff

Time-frame: Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Funds provided by Royal River Conservation Trust – supported by Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, with in-kind labor provided by Town.

5. **Parking/Circulation and Sign Improvements**

Purpose: To clearly identify the water area/boat access site and provide users with an efficient approach to boat off-loading and parking.

Needed Improvements: Signs identifying boat launch site, unloading area and parking, delineation of parking area for waterfront users and stabilized trail leading to launch area.

Responsible Party: Town Staff

Time-frame: Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Funds provided by Royal River Conservation Trust – supported by Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, with in-kind labor provided by Town.

Fairgrounds Upland Areas

1. **Maintenance Shed**

Purpose: To house sports and field maintenance equipment

Needed Improvements: Installation of 8x10' shed

Responsible Party: Town Staff

Time-frame: Late Summer 2015 (done)

Funding Strategy: Existing Parks and Recreation budget



New Maintenance Shed

2. **Parking Signs**

Purpose: To better delineate parking lot areas on site (and discourage parking on Bald Hill Road).

Needed Improvements: Installation of at least 6 new permanent signs indicating parking areas and wellhead protection identification.

Responsible Party: Town Staff

Time-frame: Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Existing Buildings and Grounds budget

3. **Landscaping/Pollinators Garden**

Purpose: To provide landscaping around new Water District fence, enhance pollination and serve as educational demonstration project

Needed Improvements: Selected plantings.

Responsible Party: Environmental Resource Committee

Time-frame: Fall: 2015/Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Allocation from FY 2016 Environmental Resource Committee Budget/Donations

4. **Field Repair/Enhancement**

Purpose: To make immediate field repairs/enhancements for the 2016 season

Needed Improvements: Filling holes/improving playing surface – labor by Parks and Recreation Director and Buildings and Grounds personnel.

Responsible Party: Town Staff

Time-frame: Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Existing Parks and Recreation and Buildings and Grounds budget

5. **Beach Volleyball Court**

Purpose: Enhance Existing Active Recreation Opportunity

Needed Improvements: Additional Sand

Cost/Funding: Parks and Recreation Budget

Responsible Party: Town Staff

Time-frame: Spring 2016

Funding Strategy: Existing Parks and Recreation budget/Volunteers

6. **Initial Trail Improvements**

Purpose: To provide several new walking trails off of main existing trail/woods road

Needed Improvements: At this stage, involves mapping out trails and cutting of vegetation along paths.

Possibly some trail stabilization needed. Any trail building within 250 feet of Royal River would need to meet Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, and trails closer than 75 feet, the requirements of the Natural Resource Protection Act.

Responsible Party(s): Environmental Resource Committee

Time-frame: Spring/Summer 2016

Funding Strategy: Volunteer labor/material donation

Short-Term Improvements: 2016-2018

1. **Playground and Fitness Apparatus**

Purpose: To provide a play/exercise area for children and several fitness apparatus for adults.

Needed Improvements: Expandable playground set and fitness apparatus

Time-frame: Summer/Fall 2016

Funding Strategy: Land & Water Conservation (L&WC) Grant / Local funds/in-kind donation of material and labor

2. **Pavilion and Family Gathering Area**

Purpose: To provide a major focal point that provides shelter, a gathering area and a viewing area proximate to sports fields and the playground area.

Needed Improvements: Site preparation and installation of pavilion structure. Possible addition of adjacent cookout area.

Time-frame: Fall 2016/Spring 2017

Funding Strategy: L&WC Grant/Local funds/in-kind donation of material and labor. Addition of cookout area would require additional cash/in-kind support, or would be deferred as Mid-term Action Item.



Visualization of Pavilion Located in "Berm" Area formerly occupied by grandstand.

3. **Entry Kiosk**

Purpose: Provide a structure(s) inside the main gate area which will serve as a gateway for the facility, provide information and a location for administration/ticketing for organized event of organized events.

Needed Improvements: Install a gazebo with informational kiosk

Time-frame: Fall 2016/Spring 2017

Cost/Funding: Funds provided by Royal River Conservation Trust – supported by Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, with cash and in-kind labor provided by Town.



4. **Parking Improvements**

Purpose: Create defined parking areas near activity centers

Needed Improvements: Mark defined areas with signs and add gravel and landscape timbers, and other stabilization where necessary.

Time-frame: 2016-2017

Funding Strategy: L&WC Grant/Local funds/in-kind donation of material and labor



Entry Kiosk Examples

5. **Field “A” Improvements**

Purpose: Enhance Field area A (the western 1/3 of the infield area) to add value to the improvements that have already been made and achieve a more consistent a “B” playing surface.

Needed Improvements: Adding loam and organic material, minor regrading, aeration and reseeding consistent with water quality protection guidelines. Also add new metered tap off public water line to allow for irrigation.

Time-frame: 2016-2017

Funding Strategy: L&WC Grant/Local funds/in-kind donation of material and labor

6. **Hardscape: Picnic Tables and Benches**

Purpose: Provide fixtures for sitting and gathering.

Needed Improvements: At least 6 picnic tables for gazebo area, and 2 tables and benches for other areas

Time-frame: 2016-2017

Funding Strategy: Local Funds/Donations

7. **Additional Landscaping**

Purpose: Continue to add landscaping to improve the aesthetics of the area

Needed Improvements: Continue planting in vicinity of water district fence. Consider planting in gateway and pavilion areas, and possibly along main perimeter fence.

Time-frame: 2016-2018

Funding Strategy: In-kind donation of material and labor, L&WC Grant/Local funds within grant-funded area.

Mid-Term Improvements: 2018-2020

1. Substantial Field Improvements

Purpose: Make significant improvements to the Field area B (the middle 1/3 of the infield area) for use for organized sports activities

Needed Improvements: Regrading and turf removal, addition of loam and other material, reseeding, fertilization, drainage improvement, addition of sunken irrigation system (either pop-up or drip)

Time-frame: **2018-2020**

Funding Strategy: Annual CIP allocations, in-kind donation of material and labor/fundraising efforts/grants, possible assistance from sports user groups.

2. Trail Enhancements

Purpose: Further expand trail system and improve trail system and add interpretative signage.

Needed Improvements: Possible addition of boardwalk area to cross ravine area, expansion of trail network, addition of surface material, addition of interpretative natural signs and possible fitness stations. With RTP grant funding, the Town may want to also consider creating better linkages to the Upper Village and to the Lily Pond area (renamed Chandler Mill Pond).

Time-frame: **2018-2020**

Funding Strategy: Recreational Trail Program (RTP)grant and local in-kind matching (20%)



Examples of trail improvements (above) and interpretive signs (below)

3. Waterfront docking system

Purpose: Improve waterfront accessibility and reduce shoreland impacts.

Needed Improvements: Installation of a seasonal docking system.

Time-frame: **2018-2020**

Cost/Funding: Possibly grant funding through state boating program.

Funding Strategy: **2018-2020**

4. Cookout Area

Purpose: To create opportunities for group cookouts in pavilion area.

Needed Improvements: Install several heavy duty park grills

Time-frame: **2018-2020**

Funding Strategy: Local donations, annual operating budgets.

Possible Longer-Term Improvements

There are a number of longer-term improvements that would enhance the use of the Fairgrounds. Some of these improvements might prove more feasible once overall use of the facility increases and demand grows for particular activities or services. At the current time, no funding strategy is proposed for these items, but with increased use and support for the facility in the future, they may deserve consideration and financial support.

1. **Natural Amphitheater:** A portion of the site that slopes down toward the river has potential to serve as a natural amphitheater which could be used for open air events and performances, providing the Royal River as a backdrop. Some grading and creating of seating platforms would be needed, as well as the possible creation of a stage area.
2. **Additional Field Improvements:** Once the “Field B” area as shown on the concept plan has been improved, the remaining infield area might be upgraded to provide additional playing field area.
3. **Snack Shack:** Many recreational venues have enclosed structures that are used to serve food and refreshments to participants and spectators during athletic and other events. Sale of items also provides a potential fund-raising opportunity for particular groups or projects.
4. **Second Pavilion:** With increased use, there may be demand for a second pavilion area in the vicinity of the first to serve families and groups. The siting of the first pavilion should be rendered in such a way to allow this expansion to occur.
5. **Additions to Playground/Fitness Apparatus:** The playground system proposed for the short-term time frame is relatively modest in size and the number of apparatus. With growing demand, there may be a need to add apparatus, including fitness equipment for older users.
6. **Restroom Facilities:** While use of a port-a-potties is probably the most feasible option for the short-and mid-term time frames, there may come a time in the future when restrooms with running water are needed.



Amphitheater Example

B. Process Recommendations

As the Town moves forward in implementing the above actions, there are several factors that deserve careful considerations if the tradeoffs described earlier are to be successfully balanced and the overall improvement effort is to be put on solid, sustainable footing. The following recommendations pertain to these factors and are primarily focused on the process the Town should follow as it moves forward.

1. Site Aesthetics

The Fairgrounds has outstanding visual qualities due to its open fields, forested backdrop and extended river frontage. Improvements should not only fit well into the property’s existing landscape, but, where possible, enhance overall visual attributes. Toward that end, it is recommended that:

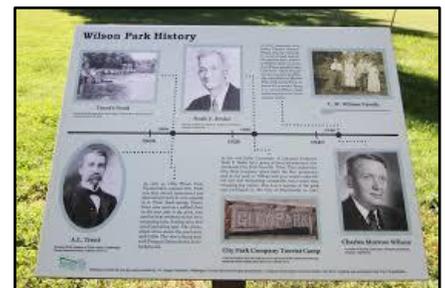
- New buildings and structures be sited and designed to enhance visual qualities, or, when this is not possible, adequately landscaped/buffered. The effect of proposed changes on the overall “curb appeal” of the property from Bald Hill Road should be given particular attention.
- The Parks and Recreation Committee hold discussions regarding opportunities for creating a unified theme for the facility that would be reflected in design of improvements and signage. A theme that connects the facility to its past use as an agricultural fairgrounds and race-track should be given serious consideration (see next recommendation)



2. Historical Context

The Fairground’s rich history is an asset unto itself that should be strongly considered as improvements are made to the facility. Interpretative signs, both at the entry kiosk and throughout the facility, can provide written and visual information regarding the Fairgrounds prominent role in the town’s past. New buildings and structures can include design elements that relate to former structures such as the exhibit barn, the grandstand and judges stand. Toward these ends, it is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Committee work with the New Gloucester Historical Society and other groups and individuals to:

- Identify opportunities for incorporating improvements and design elements that connect the Fairgrounds to its past.
- Periodically organize and host events that celebrate the Fairground’s past and generate interest in and use of the facility.
- Enlist the help of resident craftsmen and design professionals in planning and implementing improvements.



Interpretive sign example



Pavilion Example with Agricultural Theme

3. Public Water Supply Protection

The protection of the wellhead for the town’s public water supply – which is located on the Fairground’s property – is a paramount consideration. Although the site was selected partially due to the presence of a deep aquifer with excellent separation from surface water influences, conservative management of overlying land uses and activities is still necessary, particularly in the area of the property closest to the wellhead. The Water District holds an easement within 300 feet of the well, which restricts development and uses that could adversely affect water quality.

But even beyond that area, careful consideration should be given of activities as to their potential groundwater impacts. To this end, it is recommended that the Town:

- Continue working with the Trustees of the New Gloucester District in ensuring adequate protection of the public water supply.
- In the short-term, work with the District on ensuring that the approach for “Field Area A” enhancement and maintenance that is conservatively protective of the immediate wellhead area.
- In the longer run, work with District and their consultant as they develop a detailed well-head protection plan for the vicinity.



4. Accessibility

It is a goal of this action plan to make the Fairgrounds as accessible as possible for users of all ages and levels of mobility. All equipment and improvements funded with federal grants is required to be in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). For other improvements, the goal is to plan for and implement strategies for promoting accessibility as resources and site conditions allow. To satisfactorily address this consideration, the Town should take the following actions:

- The Town should review the requirements of the ADA and research how other recreational facilities have addressed accessibility considerations.
- Improvement to upland areas (other than trails) shall be laid out and designed to maximize accessibility and reduce barriers.
- The trail system, as it evolves, shall be designed and constructed so that at least a portion of it is accessible to mobility-challenged users.



Handicap Accessible Recreational E... by wesleyjones Zazzle

5. Community Events

The Fairgrounds can serve not only as a place for active and passive recreational pursuits, but as a venue for periodic events that can help bring the community together and enrich the town's cultural life. Between 2003 and 2014, the New Gloucester Community Fair was successfully held at the property, which included entertainment, crafts and an auto show among other activities. Efforts to promote the use of property for selected events and festivals should continue; they not only serve to build community, but give the facility added exposure and publicity. To address this consideration, it is recommended that the town:



Between 2003 and 2014, the New Gloucester Community Fair was successfully held at the property, which included entertainment, crafts and an auto show among other activities. Efforts to promote the use of property for selected events and festivals should continue; they not only serve to build community, but give the facility added exposure and publicity. To address this consideration, it is recommended that the town:

- Promote community events at the Fairgrounds, particularly ones that are financially self-sustaining.
- Explore the potential for the facility to be rented out to groups outside the community for selected events such as concerts, shows and exhibitions, if these activities are determined to be consistent with community values and low-impact.
- For all periodic events, ensure that measures are taken to minimize property damage, avoid liability and remediate any adverse impacts, and that the adjacent public water wellhead is adequately protected.

6. Trail Linkages

Although creating trail linkages between the Fairgrounds and other areas of Town is not the focus of this Action Plan, the Town should consider opportunities for making such connections. The viability and use of the Fairgrounds could be enhanced by improving pedestrian/bicycle links access from the Upper Village and neighboring residential areas – either along existing roadways or interior trails. The Royal River also provides a corridor from which other connections might be considered, including a possible connection to Lily Pond, now referred to as Chandler Mill Pond, a 117-acre property that has recently been purchased by the State. Finally, the Town should assess interest in a renewed effort to identify trail linkages on a town-wide and regional level.

Accordingly, the Town should take the following actions:

- Further investigate options for providing improved pedestrian and bicycle linkages between the Fairgrounds and the Upper Villages/neighboring residential areas.
- Continue to work with the Royal River Conservation Trust on its “river trail” initiative, and identify possible trail/river linkages to Chandler Mills Pond and beyond.
- Gauge community interest in developing a plan which further identifies town-wide and regional trail connections. This effort would build on past efforts to delineate possible trail routes.
- In reviewing development proposals and land use changes, assess the impact on possible trail linkages and pursue opportunities for securing permanent connections.



V. Costs and Funding Strategy

Laying out a viable cost and funding strategy is crucial if this Action Plan is to be successfully implemented. Despite general support for and interest in Fairground improvements, it can be difficult for recreational needs to compete for local tax dollars with other funding priorities such as education and infrastructure maintenance and repair.

Accordingly, this plan lays out an integrated approach that adheres to the following principles:

- Use a diversified funding approach that taps into available grant funding and other resources, and uses these monies to leverage other funds and resources.
- Seek immediate funding from the Land & Water Conservation Grant Program to jumpstart the implementation of this plan.
- Vigorously seeks local in-kind donations and materials.
- With this Action Plan in place, seek voter approval to release capital reserve funds already designated for recreational improvements.
- Continue to set aside money in the Parks and Recreation budget both for improvements and ongoing maintenance.
- In the longer run, seek additional revenue streams, e.g. user fees for organized recreation use.



Possible Funding Sources

Royal River Conservation Trust/Outdoor Heritage Fund

The Royal River Conservation has committed \$5,000 for Fairground Improvements in the waterfront area from funds it received from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Program in fall of 2015. The plan calls for using these most of these funds in the spring/summer of 2016.

Land and Water Conservation Grant

Securing funding from the Land and Water Conservation (L&WC) Grant Program is a major objective for successful implementation of this plan. This funding would not only help to cover several facility infrastructure items that would make the facility more viable, but would also incentivize local support – both in terms of local funding and in-kind efforts and donations. A grant application will be submitted in November 2015, with the hope that funding will be secured by spring of 2016.

Existing Town Capital Improvement Fund

The Town has already set aside reserve funds for recreation improvements. As of 2015, it had the following monies in reserve:

Fairgrounds Playground:	\$25,245
Fairgrounds (general):	\$29,566
<u>Parks and Recreation (General)</u>	<u>\$34,537</u>
Total	\$89,348

Release of these monies to fund projects requires a Town Meeting vote, and to date, voters have chosen not to do so, with a prevailing argument, at least for funding a playground, that the Town should first develop an overall Master Plan for the facility before making significant investments. With this Action Plan in place and the possibility of additional funding from the L&WC Program, there is a compelling rationale for release of a portion of these funds – at least enough to cover playground improvements and otherwise fund the local share necessary to secure state grant funding (the L&WC program requires a 50% local match).

For the L&WC application submitted in November 2015, the local matching strategy is to provide an upfront commitment of \$50K in cash from the Playgrounds and Fairgrounds reserves (subject to Town Meeting approval), and a guaranteed in-kind match (mostly staff time) of the \$5K balance. If the grant is awarded, the approach is to leverage an additional \$15K in donations of labor, equipment and materials, reducing the cash match needed. If successful, this effort would leave a balance of roughly \$19K in the Fairgrounds reserve account, an amount which could built be upon to fund mid-term improvements, or serve as match for additional grant solicitations.

Future Capital Investment Planning

The primary mid-term improvement in this plan is significant improvements to Field B area in the center of the infield. A first step in moving forward on this action is to obtain an accurate estimate for what it would cost to create a high-quality playing field in this area, including an irrigation system. Once this is accomplished, a targeted funded strategy will be developed, including a realistic assessment of the extent to which project costs can be defrayed by donations, user fees and additional grant support. The Town should then develop a capital investment schedule that can serve as the basis for annual CIP requests.

Operating Budgets

The Parks and Recreation Department has an operating budget, with several line items that support recreational programming and maintenance. With greater use of the Fairground and more infrastructure to maintain, a strong argument can be made that modest increases are necessary to protect the investments made both at the Fairgrounds and the Rowe Station facility. Monies are also available in the Buildings and Grounds budgets that can fund some improvement and maintenance needs.

In-Kind Donation of Time and Labor

For previous projects – most recently the development of the Veteran’s Memorial Park – local New Gloucester businesses, organizations and individuals generously donated materials, labor and expertise. This project aims to tap into this same local spirit of giving and cooperation, which will reduce the need to spend local tax dollars on improvements and help meet matching requirements for grants.

Many communities have successfully used naming opportunities and “adopt a feature” programs to help fund park infrastructure including picnic tables, benches and other amenities. Donated features can recognize givers, remember friends and family members or commemorate historical events. It is recommended that a list of potential donated items be developed and posted, possibly using an

on-line application similar to the successful “Kick-Start” program that facilitates one-stop contributions.

In addition to private resources, Town staff and municipal departments can also provide valuable time and expertise regarding Action Plan implementation. The Public Works, Planning and Parks and Recreation, in particular, will be involved in certain improvements, and these resources also should be accounted for as matching activity as the Town pursues grant opportunities.

Future Funding Steams and Support

Recreational Trail Program

The Recreational Trail Program (RTP) funds trail development, improvement and maintenance. In the shorter term, this plan recommends trail improvement using mostly volunteer labor and materials. In the longer-term, the Town should consider pursuing RTP funding, both for additional trail improvement (e.g. making a portion ADA compliant) and to possible improve trail linkages to the Fairgrounds.

Facility User Fees

As the Fairground’s facilities are improved and use increases opportunities may arise for charging user fees for specific activities or regular use by certain organizations, to help defray the costs of maintaining the facility. Facilities in neighboring communities do this now (site examples: i.e. Twin Brook in Cumberland). An example might be charging a Youth Sports Organization fees for regular use of the fields for practices and games. Another example would be charging for use of the Fairgrounds for a particular event, such as a concert or exhibition. As improvements are made to the facility to better accommodate events, there will be an increasing demand for it use, and it makes sense that at least some of the cost involved with hosting these events, including increased maintenance needs, should be recouped.

Ongoing Solicitation of Donations

Although an objective of this plan is to ensure that the Fairground remains open, free and accessible for all – other than making provisions for recouping expenses for heavy use by organized groups – the Town should explore other approaches that promote voluntary donations by individuals and groups. One approach would be to install an “Iron Ranger” at the Fairground entrance, which would allow those using the facility to make donations as they see fit. Another approach would be to set up Fairgrounds Improvement Fund, possibly sponsored by an existing charitable organization, to which groups and individuals could make contributions on an annual or periodic basis



Fairground Concept Plan



VI. BACKGROUND

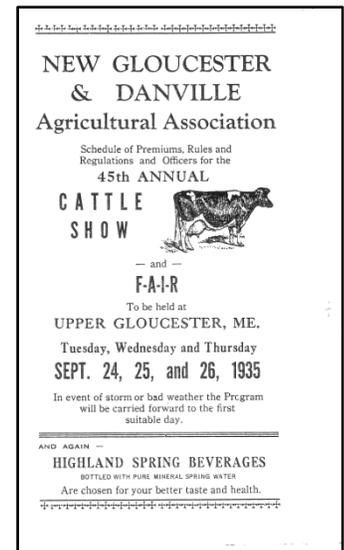
A. History

Activities at the New Gloucester Fairgrounds date back to the late 1800s. An integral part of the annual agricultural fair was horseracing on the half-mile dirt track, later leading to renaming the Fairgrounds to Trotters Park. In 1904, the grandstand was purchased from the Town of Gray after its fair had been discontinued, and a judges' stand was built. Those structures along with a section of sheds to house the race horses produced an impressive stage for the facility's harness races.



The original fair was disbanded after 1935, but events intermittently continued to be organized there during the succeeding decades. In 1945, the Fairground was purchased by Howard Small of Bath and underwent a name change to Royal River Park. It was billed as "Maine's newest sports and amusement center." Motorcycle races, ball games, and band concerts were but a few of the myriad of special attractions offered at the multi-day fair in 1946. Events held at the park that summer included horse races and a Western rodeo show.

Small sold the park to the Androscoggin Agricultural Society, which hosted a horse show in 1947. Beech Ridge Speedway owner Jim McConnell and the Maine State Stock Car Racing Association promoted racing events at the fairgrounds from 1949 to 1951.



When the popularity of harness racing declined, horse racing at Trotters Park was phased out over time. The track was then used as a training ground for trotters and pacers into the early 1990s. In 2003-04 the Town of New Gloucester purchased the property. Since that time, the Fairground has been used for active and passive recreational purposes. It has also served as a venue for the annual Community Fair in October. The last major structure in the Fairgrounds, "the Barn," located near the main entrance, burned in 2013.

Planning/Improvement History

Since the Fairground property was purchased by the town, there were several efforts to create an overall plan for its development as a recreational area. Although many of the recommendations of these plans were not implemented, a number of improvements and enhancements have occurred during the 2002-2015 time-frame.

A conceptual site plan developed in 2000 (as the Town considered buying the property) included plans for little league and multi-purpose fields in the infield area, tennis and basketball courts, a municipal complex, a picnic area and a central parking lot area.



From 2003-2006, the New Gloucester Fairground Committee met regularly to develop a long-range plan for the facility. The group conducted a citizen survey and developed a list of recommended improvements, including a concept diagram that included a description and location of new facilities. In addition to proposing playing fields in the infield area, the plan included a community center, an open bandshell/amphitheater area for performance and events and a trail system.

While these plans provided a vision for how the Fairgrounds might be developed and some excellent ideas for improvements, a consensus was not reached on how such investments would be funded. A number of smaller steps were undertaken with largely volunteer help: trail clearing, development of a volleyball court and skating rink. The Town also constructed a new perimeter fence for the park and installed a new gateway sign

In 2008, the Town invested in improving the approximately 3 acres on the western portion of the infield to make it more viable for multi-purpose use. The project included grading, the addition of organic matter, reseeding and drainage improvements. Although the upgrade considerably improved the area's playability, due to lack of a water supply and other issues, the quality of the turf is mixed, especially near the end of the growing season.

In 2013, the Town drilled a new well on the western end of the property to provide water to the newly formed New Gloucester Water District. A pumphouse structure was constructed with accessory infrastructure.

In 2014, the Town took steps to discourage parking on Bald Hill Road during organized sports and events. Permanent "No Parking" signs were installed on the south side of the road as well as signs guiding cars into the main access gate area. Signs were also placed to direct cars into a series of cordoned off parking areas, and to alert users to the presence of the Water District wellhead area.



In early 2015, the Parks and Recreation Committee began renewed planning efforts for the Fairgrounds, with the goal of creating a new master plan for the property. The Town also had discussions with the Royal River Conservation Trust on how the waterfront area might be improved. The organization committed \$5,000 it received from an Maine Outdoor Heritage grant for various waterfront improvements, and helped the Town secure a corporate donation of canoes and kayaks to be available for use at the site.

B. Existing Conditions

Basic Description

The 31-acre Fairgrounds property is located adjacent to the Royal River Reservoir on Bald Hill Road, roughly 3/4 mile from the Upper Village, one of the town's historic centers. The site is comprised of a roughly 15-acre cleared area, which includes a 1/2 mile oval track and grassed infield area. The remainder of the site is mostly forested.

Topography

The cleared area of the property is generally flat, particularly the track and infield areas, and the area occupied by a perimeter roadway. A discernable hummock exists just outside a southerly section of the track where a grandstand once stood. Slopes are more variable in the forested area of the site, with slopes running down toward the river in the southern and eastern portion of the site.

Soils/Vegetation

Medium intensity soils maps classify the soils as being part of the Adams/Croghan/Naumburg soils group. The predominant soil in this group, Adams, is a somewhat excessively drained soil, typically underlain by sand, with no appreciable water table and a typical depth to bedrock of 60 inches. Test borings taken as part site evaluation for the new public water supply and anecdotal evidence confirms that, in general, the soil is underlain by a very sandy layer, which tends to contribute to dry soil conditions between rain events. There is one area of more poorly drained soils site located near the west gate area of the property, where runoff sometime ponds, and some hydric soils are evident along the Royal River.

The cleared areas described above are mostly vegetated with grass. The improved part of the infield has the best quality of grass, although there is an infusion of crab grass and other unwanted weeds. The less improved area of the infield has a lower quality grass. The other cleared areas outside the infield are a combination of grass and gravel along the accessways.

The forested area is a mixed hardwood/softwood.

Surface Water Resources

The Royal River Reservoir comprises the property's southwesterly boundary. The impoundment is created by a dam control structure at Bald Hill Road. The park has over 1,500 feet of frontage along the river.

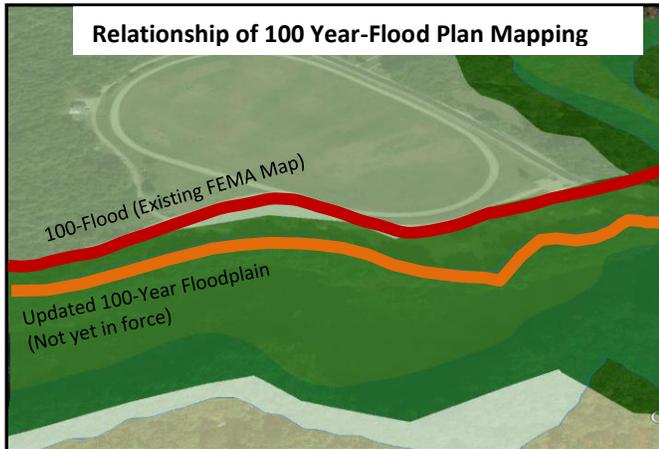
The reservoir provides paddling and fishing opportunities. The actually impoundment area provides the deepest water and unobstructed access, but, depending on water levels, paddlers can also travel upstream past the Maine Turnpike bridge and beyond.

The reservoir is not stocked for fish and cannot support a cold water fishery, but the river is stocked upstream and both brown and brook trout have been caught there.



Floodplains

A significant portion of the site closest to the Royal River is within the mapped 100-year floodplain. The extent of this floodplain is somewhat in question. Map 1 shows in red the floodplain as delineated on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps that are now used in the administration of the state floodplain program. Anecdotal evidence suggests that even during periods of extreme flooding, water levels have never approached these elevations, and revised maps, which are in the process of being approved at the state/federal level, show a less extensive floodplain area (indicated in orange).



The main implication for the location of floodplain is that the floodway area should generally be kept free of structures to allow the free flow of water and to prevent property damage. Minor structures such as benches and small recreation-related structures are generally permitted within floodplain area. Under the rules promulgated by the Floodplain program, the location of the floodplain may be appealed based on certification of elevations by a professional engineer. In the

case of the Fairgrounds, this may be a good idea, especially if the Town wants to consider siting permanent structures within the currently defined floodway area. The adoption of updated floodplains maps as described above, may, however, make this unnecessary.

Well-Head Protection

The well and pumphouse for the newly formed New Gloucester Water District are located near the westerly boundary of the site. This District currently provides water to over 50 households and businesses as well as to the Memorial School, with future expansions possible.

Protecting the quality of the underlying groundwater in the area is paramount. The Town gave the Water District an easement that encompasses the area of the Fairgrounds within 300 feet of the wellhead. Two gates limit road access other than authorized vehicles: one just off Bald Hill Road is over 500 feet from the wellhead; the other on the park access road is 440 feet away. The entire Fairgrounds is encompassed by the Town's Groundwater Protection Overlay, which also restricts a number of uses and activities that might pose a threat to the wellhead area and to the underlying groundwater in general.

Although the location of the water supply at the Fairgrounds was selected partially due to the presence of a deep aquifer with excellent separation from surface water influences, conservative management of overlying land uses and activities is still necessary, particularly in the area of the property closest to the wellhead.

For this Action Plan, the delineated 300-foot foot easement area is viewed as the portion of the Fairgrounds property that warrants the highest level of protection from potential adverse impacts. Under the easement, the Town reserves the "use and enjoyment of the easement area for any purpose

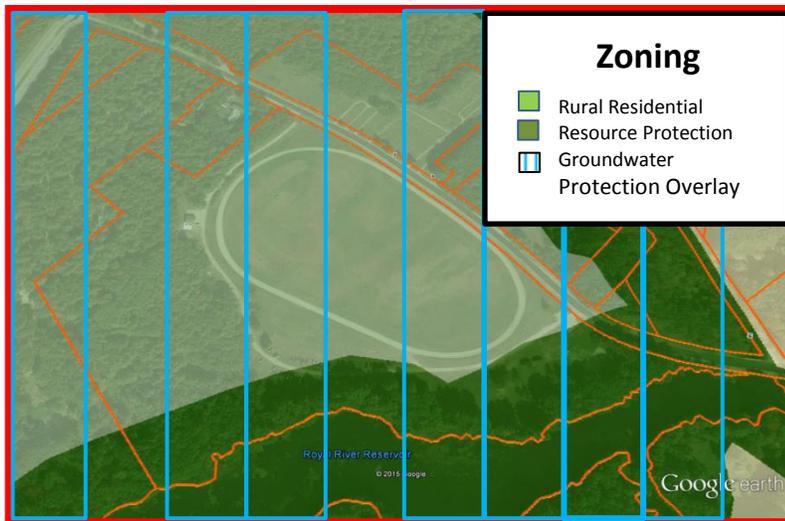
that does not unreasonably interfere with the use of the area by the [Water District] for its own purposes, provided that the [Town's] use are consistent with the terms of any Wellhead Protection Plan for the easement area..." The easement also requires the Town to have written permission from the District for erection of any permanent structures or for any earth moving activities within the easement area, which the District may not "unreasonably withhold."

Beyond the easement area, the Town is still committed to ensuring that improvements and uses at the Fairgrounds do not pose a threat to the water supply. The District is in the process of developing a comprehensive well-head protection area strategy for the area which will include identification of potential threats and recommendations regarding protection strategies. The Town and the District should continue to work together as this plan unfolds.

Zoning

The area of the Fairground closest to river are within the Resource Protection District. This zone generally follows a line that extends 250 feet from the river's normal high water mark. Within this zone most structural uses are prohibited and removal of vegetation is restricted. The zone permits private and public recreational areas involving minimal structural development, as well as permanent

piers, wharves and docks with Planning Board site review.



The basis for designating this area as RP along the frontage of the Fairgrounds property appears to have been the location of the 100-year floodplain indicated on FEMAMaps. These maps are in the process of being revised, and may result in a considerably less extensive floodplain area. When these maps are adopted, it may make sense for the Town to revisit the extent of RP zoning in the area,

especially in the area once occupied by the barn near Bald Hill Road.

The upland portion of the property extending beyond the RP District is zoned Rural Residential. This district allows a range of uses, including "public and semi-public recreational facilities" with planning board site plan review, and accessory uses.

The entire area is also overlain by the Groundwater Protection Overlay District. This district prohibits a number of uses because of their potential threats to water quality and provides performance standards that govern permitted uses.

Existing Facilities/Structures

Structures

Besides the location of the water district pumphouse, no major structures now exist on the site. The last remaining vestige of the property's use for agricultural fair, a large barn located near the front gate was destroyed in 2013. The site's main structural elements are a 1,500-foot long fence located along the Bald Hill Road frontage and two gates that control access from that road into the site.

Track

The facilities ½ mile stone dust track is a significant asset, both because of its colorful history and its continuing functional uses for park users. Some improvements have been made to the track over the years including reducing its width at one point (it now is between 20 and 25 feet wide) and periodic addition of stone dust and dragging to prevent the intrusion of grass. Several temporary distance markers were installed in the summer of 2015; more permanent signage and even fitness stations are future possibilities.



Roads and Parking

A gravel drive extends from the main gate around the perimeter of the site. A small parking area, enough to hold roughly 12 cars is located at the east entry areas. Although no gravel parking areas are available, parking is available on grass areas adjoining the access road. In 2014, parking areas were labeled and delineated to promote parking within the site as opposed to Bald Hill Road. Permanent “no parking signs” were installed on south side of Bald Hill Roads and several signs directing people to park on the site.

Utilities and Stormwater Drainage

Utility poles extend along the property's Bald Hill Road frontage, and services extend into the site at two locations: an above-ground run along utility poles into the site along the main access road and a short-overhead run to a pole in the middle of the infield area (used for community events). A potable water supply is located at the main gate with a frost-free pump.

There are three drainage structures on the site that collect stormwater from the infield area. Two drain to the Royal River side of the property; the other toward Bald Hill Road.

Neighboring Land Uses

The site is generally in an area that could be classified as low density residential. Directly across the site to the north is located a cemetery and with undeveloped land owned by the town. To the west there is an abutting residence as well as a mobile home park with 40 units scattered over the 21-acre site. The west and east boundaries are bordered by the Royal River, with residential uses beyond. As one travels east from the Fairground on Bald Hill Road, the density of residential uses increases as one approaches the town's Upper Village area, which is approximately ¾ mile away. The New Gloucester Memorial School is located approximately 1 mile from the facility.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS/PUBLIC OUTREACH

Two surveys have been conducted by the Town regarding the Fairgrounds. The first survey was conducted in 2003 soon after the Town purchased the property. The second survey was conducted in the Fall of 2014.

2003 Survey Results

Do you feel the Town of New Gloucester should invest tax money in the development of the Town-owned property on Bald Hill Road?

Yes: 84% (342)

No: 16% (63)

Please indicate the amount of annual tax raised investment you think is adequate.

\$50,000 or more	31%	(97)
\$25,000	25%	(78)
\$20,000	22% ⁷	(71)
\$10,000	21%	(66)
Less than \$10,000	1%	(4)

Percent supporting \$20,000 or more per year: 78%

2014 Survey Results

This survey was a “spot” survey held on Election Day. A majority of the respondents felt the Town should focus its recreational investments on the Fairgrounds (as opposed to Rowe Station or other areas).

The 81 respondents rated the following improvements most highly (scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating most support).

Playground:	4.1
Parking:	4.1
Master Planning:	4.1

Other improvements that scored 3.5 or higher included improved water access, field enhancements, and a recreation center and/or pavilion.

Public Outreach

Information displays on the evolving action plan were exhibited at the Annual Town Meeting in May 2015 and at a well-attended Special Town Meeting in November 2015. A televised public workshop was also held in November 2015 at which the Parks and Recreational Committee gave a slide presentation on the plan, received public comment and answered questions. The draft document is available on the Planner webpage at _____. Public outreach on the plan will continue in 2016.

APPENDIX A: MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Establishing a program for regular maintenance is key to the long-term viability of the Fairgrounds facility and to the town's existing recreational facility on Rowe Station Road as well. Such maintenance should be viewed as a protection of the investment in these properties and as cost-saving approach that extends the life of the facilities.

Not only does regular maintenance make economic sense for the town, but it is an obligation for properties that have received funds from the Land and Water Conservation Grant program. This requirement applies to Rowe Station, which received such funds, and will apply to the Fairgrounds as well if the submitted grant application is successful.

Maintenance components include:

- Regular mowing and weed-whacking
- Maintaining/enhancing turf quality (i.e. aerating and fertilizing)
- Maintenance and repair of all structures
- Maintenance and repair of tennis and basketball playing surfaces
- Selected ballfield maintenance (e.g. dragging base-paths)
- Trail maintenance
- Trash removal

This maintenance plan focuses on existing maintenance of recreational facilities as well as maintenance of Fairground improvements contemplated for the short-term. As steps are taken to secure funding and implement mid-term improvements, particular a major upgrade of the Field Area "B," this maintenance plan will be updated.

Overall Principles

- Protect investments the Town has made in its recreational facilities by regular maintenance.
- As new investments are made, consider anticipated ongoing maintenance costs
- To the greatest extent possible, take advantage of volunteer help and donations in reducing maintenance cost and enhancing recreational facilities.
- Institutionalize annual "clean up" days at both the Fairgrounds and Rowe Station.
- Continue to encourage sports groups using recreational facilities to help in facility upkeep.
- If there is adequate interest, consider forming a "Friends of Park" group that might solicit funds and seek business sponsorships to promote facility maintenance and enhancements.
- As playing fields are upgraded, consider opportunities for user fees for outside sports groups to help offset maintenance cost and fund improvements.
- Require groups using the Fairgrounds for periodic events to be responsible for offsetting any impacts/damage as a result of the use.



Field Aeration: Generic File Photo

Budgeting Considerations

One challenge for meeting existing and future maintenance needs is how to adequately fund replacement and repair of items which fall below the \$7,500 threshold for consideration under the town's CIP process. Some of these items can be funded out of the operating budget, but ideally there would be a way to set aside modest amounts of funds annually that could fund replacement or refurbishment at prescribed intervals. The Town should consider creative options to address this issue.

Fairgrounds

The immediate and short-term improvements recommended in this plan are not expected to significantly increase maintenance needs at the Fairgrounds. Some of the mid- and longer term improvements proposed would have higher maintenance requirements. As funding is sought for such enhancements, maintenance costs should be factored in.

Parks and Recreation Department Budgeting

The current annual maintenance budget for the Fairgrounds is roughly \$4,000, which includes an estimated \$2,500 for field maintenance – mostly materials and outside labor/equipment use. With the short-term improvements described in the Action Plan, the Parks and Recreation Department estimates the following additional maintenance costs:

- Annual Field Maintenance: \$1,000 (more frequent aeration, fertilization, etc.)
- Estimated annual maintenance to other park features (pavilion, signs, waterfront improvements, parking area gravel replacement) \$500
- Adjusted Fairground Maintenance Budget: \$5,500 per year. (\$1,500 increase)

To account for the replacement of woodchips in the playground area once every 3-5 years, an additional \$2,700 (100 yards at \$27 per yard) should be programmed into the P&R operating budget at necessary intervals.

For more costly maintenance needs that involve major repair or replacement of structures, money should be set aside as part of the CIP process.

Labor (Staff)

Mowing and weed-whacking at the Fairground is accomplished by a Buildings and Grounds staff member. It is estimated that at least 1.5 days are spent performing these activities at the Fairgrounds each week during the growing season. With short-term Fairground improvements necessitating additional weed control and possible watering duties, the number of days spent per week can be expected to increase to 2 days.

Other maintenance duties at the Fairgrounds are carried out by the Parks and Recreation Director. Given the part-time nature of that position, a challenge for that staff member has been finding the time outside of Recreational programming to devote to facility maintenance. For immediate and short-term improvements, additional use of volunteers may be necessary to allow the Rec Director to both oversee park upkeep and attend to a variety of other job duties. In the longer run, as Fairgrounds management grows, the Town will need to consider appropriate increases in staff time.

Rowe Station

The facility at Rowe Station is generally in good condition. The facility was developed with the help of a Land and Water Conservation Grant in 1988, and upkeep of the facility was a condition of the funding. The Maine Bureau of Parks and Recreation conducts periodic inspections of the site.

In the summer/fall of 2015, Town staff, with the help of volunteers, took the following actions:

- Conducted an overall inspection of the facility to assess the facility's condition and develop a list of repair/improvement items.
- Repaired the gate accessing the field area.
- Installed a required sign acknowledging federal grant funding (temporary signs installed – permanent sign had been fabricated and ready for installation).
- Dragged baseball diamonds and picked up trash.



The site inspection revealed the following additional maintenance needs:

- Tennis court repair: The tennis courts have extensive cracks and need to be completely refurbished. The court needs to be power washed, have cracks filled, and then resurfaced with two coats of a standard color Novacrylic Combination Surface. Then 2" tennis playing lines for both courts need to be repainted.
- Dugout repair: Several cement blocks are damaged and need replacement (arrangements have been made for repair, to be funded with the FY 2016 Operating Budget).
- Additional fence repair: Several sections of the fence need to be better secured.
- Basketball backboard replacement. Two new backboards needed.

Parks and Recreation Department Budgeting

The current annual maintenance budget for Rowe Station is roughly \$2,500. This amount seems sufficient to cover smaller annual maintenance issues at the facility and corrective measures for most of the items identified in the site inspection except tennis court repair. Volunteers have contributed to the maintenance of this facility – particular the baseball diamonds – and this type of ongoing commitment will be necessary to help control maintenance costs and keep the facility well groomed. The adequacy of funding levels for maintenance should be regularly assessed.

For more costly maintenance needs that involve major repair or replacement of structures, money should be set aside as part of the CIP process. Currently, there is approximately \$34,000 in the Parks and Recreation capital reserves (General) which, if released by the voters, can be used to fund major repairs and improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department has requested release of \$12,000 of these funds as part of the FY2017 budget to refurbish the tennis court playing surface.

Labor

Mowing and weed-whacking at Rowe Station is accomplished by a Buildings and Grounds staff member. It is estimated that at least 1 day is spent performing these activities each week during the growing season, and this will continue.