

# Atkinson, New Hampshire

## Recreation

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Atkinson’s Recreation Department and Elder Services Department offer over 10 programs for all ages at four different sites throughout town. These recreation sites are a combination of built structures, natural areas like Big Island Pond, and designated open spaces such as athletic fields.
- Atkinson has access to several nearby outdoor public and private recreational areas including the Timberlane Regional High School track and field, and the golf course at the Atkinson Resort & Country Club.
- There are approximately 21 miles of trails in Atkinson offering a diversity of recreational opportunities that include, but are not limited to, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing/snowshoeing, and dog walking on nine unique trail systems.
- Atkinson's established trails are on protected land owned by the town.
- Data suggests a high usage of Atkinson’s roads and trails for recreation throughout the year including NH 111, Providence Hill Road, and NH 121.
- NHDOT has identified about 7.6 miles of recommended paved bicycle routes in Atkinson which include Meditation Lane, Maple Avenue, Academy Avenue, East Road, and NH 111.
- There is a demand for the Recreation Department to provide more programming for youth and teens.

### DATA SOURCES:

- 2011 Natural Resource Inventory
- 2022 Land Conservation Plan
- Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC)
- Atkinson Conservation Commission
- Atkinson Recreation Commission
- 2021 Atkinson Annual Report
- Strava Global Heat Map
- NH GRANIT
- Atkinson Town Website
- Atkinson Recreation Department

## INTRODUCTION

Atkinson's recreation facilities and activities contribute to resident's quality of life by providing many community and recreation resources for all ages, while promoting public health. Throughout previous Atkinson Master Plans, it is clear that the community values its recreational facilities, programs, and lands which includes open space areas. These properties and programs are overseen by the Town's Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, and Recreation Department.

### Recreational Facilities and Programs

Atkinson has a Recreation Department and a Recreation Committee that together maintain and offer recreational facilities and programs for all demographics in the community. Recreation opportunities in town take advantage of the unique rural and historical character of the natural resources and built facilities in Atkinson including Big Island Pond and the extensive trail system on Atkinson conservation lands. The full list of sites and facilities offered in Atkinson are found in Table 1. The list of programs provided by the Recreation Department, and other local organizations are found in Table 2. The Town could consider investing in a deeper study to analyze whether the existing recreation facilities and programs are meeting the community needs. Additionally, this study could help determine whether existing funding for recreation facility maintenance and programming is adequate.

Table 1: Recreational Locations in Atkinson				
Site Name	Recreational Facilities	Acreage	Location	Conservation Status
Atkinson Recreation Department List of Facilities:				
Woodlock Park	4 baseball fields, 2 soccer fields, 2 tennis courts, picnic area, trails, 1/2 basketball court, 1 Pavilion, restrooms, access to power and water	-	80 Woodlock Park Lane	Developed Open Space
Collins Park	Lacrosse fields, multi-purpose field	10.03	17 East Road	Conserved, w/ Recreation Deed Restriction
Kimball Library Courtyard	Courtyard/Amphitheater	-	5 Academy Ave	Developed Open Space
Canoe/Kayak Launch	Small dock w/ limited parking	0.27	Stickney Road	Conserved
Schools:				

Atkinson Academy	Basketball Court, gymnasium	-	17 Academy Ave	Developed Open Space
Timberlane Regional School	Indoor track, football field, outdoor track, soccer field, two baseball fields, practice field, four tennis courts, gymnasium	-	44 Greenough Road Plaistow, NH	Developed Open Space
<b>Privately-Owned:</b>				
Atkinson Resort & Country Golf Club	18-hole course, driving range, a 9-hole par-3 course	220.75	85 Country Club Drive	Developed Open Space

**Table 2: List of Programs in Atkinson**

**Atkinson Recreation Department List of Programs:**

Co-ed Volleyball (Adult)	Tai Chi – Temple Exercises
Fusion Fitness (Adult)	Whist Party – Card Game
Gentle Yoga (Adult)	Line Dancing (Adult)
Jacki’s Aerobic Dance Class (Adult)	Seasonal Senior Luncheons
Craft projects (holidays)	Day Trip Programs for Seniors
Kid’s Summer Program: Sun n’ Fun	Ice Cream Socials/Concerts
Learn to play Pickleball	Egg Hunt, Fishing Derby (Kids)
Adult one Day Trip Programs (Seniors and Adults)	Veterans Breakfast and Ceremony (Veterans and General)
Tree Lighting (General)	

**Programs Run by Local Organizations**

Timberlane Youth Lacrosse	Timberlane Youth Soccer League (TYSL)
Timberwolves Soccer Club (TSC)	Timberlane Youth Basketball Softball Program
Garden Club	Boys/Girls Scouts
Youth Programs at Kimball Library	Atkinson Youth Basketball and Softball
Atkinson Garden Club	Atkinson Lions Club
Atkinson Women’s Civic Club	Atkinson Veterans Club

## TRAIL NETWORK

The Town of Atkinson has an extensive trail network throughout the community, which accommodates a variety of recreational uses including hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, hunting, and dog friendly sites. Each property and trail system determine which permitted uses are allowed. The permitted uses for each trail system in Atkinson can be found in Table 3.

Atkinson’s total trail network encompasses 20.5 miles of publicly accessible trails. The parcels that support these trail systems are identified on the Trails on Conservation Land Map – Map H from the 2022 Land Conservation Plan also found at the end of this profile. There are also a

significant number of trails that are privately owned in cluster development neighborhoods that are not a part of the Town of Atkinson Trail System, but still exist in town for residents of those neighborhoods such as the Bryant Woods Trails.

Atkinson's Conservation Commission has worked to expand the trail network over time, and in recent years, trail maps were created and supplied at each of the trailheads. In 2021, the Conservation Commission established a new trail entrance on Juniper Lane to the western portion of Sawyer Forest, completed the addition of a Fitness Trail along the Woodlock trails in the Chadwick Town Forest, and took initial steps toward completing ADA Compliant Trails in Slade Town Forest in collaboration with the Atkinson Recreation Department. As shown in Table 3, Atkinson has several trails located on town-owned/managed land. In fact, all the properties listed in Table 3 are on protected land.

<b>Table 3: Recreational Trails in Atkinson</b>				
<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Total Trail Miles</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Total Acreage of Land</b>	<b>Permitted Use</b>
Caroline Orr Land Trail System	2 miles	4 Main Street behind Community Center and Robie Lane	60 acres	Hiking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting
Sawyer Land Trail System	3.9 miles	Sawyer Ave and Jupiter Lane	Approx. 140 acres	Hiking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting
North Sawmill Swamp Trail System	3.7 miles	Knightland Ave	102.35	Hiking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting
Crown Hill-Noyes Trail System	3.4 miles	East Road and Crown Hill Road	48.83	Hiking, biking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting. This trail system connects to both Plaistow and Hampstead trail systems
South Sawmill Swamp Trail System	1.5 miles	Woodlawn Ave	102.35	Hiking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting

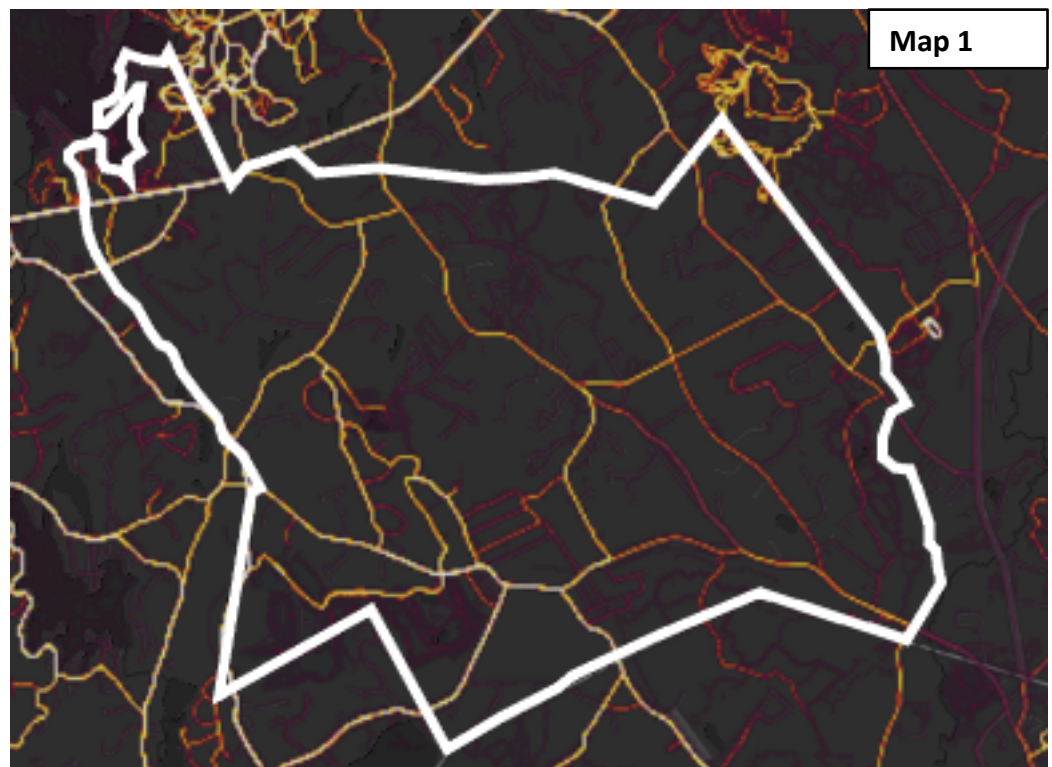
Marshall Land Trail System	2.2 miles	Boulder Cove Road	Approx. 35 acres	Hiking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting. This trail system connects to Hampstead trail system.
Stickney Trail System	2.3 miles	Lakeside Drive	34.44	Hiking, biking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting
Woodlock Trail System	1.5 miles	Adjacent to Woodlock park and Merrill Dr.	Approx. 4.5 acres	Hiking, dogs allowed, seasonal hunting, Fitness Trail

### Recreation Commission

The Town of Atkinson has a Recreation Commission that consists of five members and the Recreation Department Director. The Atkinson Recreation Commission is a volunteer commission appointed by the Board of Selectmen and meets once a month. The Recreation Commission is responsible for maintaining the parks in Atkinson as well as the Fitness Trail at Woodlock Park. The Recreation Commission notifies the Care of Grounds personnel of the town when mowing or other maintenance is needed at town parks, the Dow Common, etc. The Commission works with the Recreation Director to plan and implement a wide range of civic, cultural, and recreational opportunities for all residents of Atkinson. Other responsibilities include overseeing the Recreation and Community Center facilities and ensuring the safety, development, and quality of the town's athletic fields, parks, and recreation facilities.

### RECREATIONAL USES

A helpful resource to observe and understand the popularity of recreation activities and usage areas is through Strava Heat Maps. These maps indicate areas in Atkinson where users are frequently participating in a variety of recreation activities. This includes both existing recreation assets and other places that may not be owned or managed by the



town. Strava describes itself as a “*social network for athletes*” where the program tracks and analyzes the activities of its users by connecting to the individual’s device such as a phone, watch, GPS, etc. Strava then uses this information to create a usage map (also known as a heat map) to depict where their users recreate. It should be noted however, that not all Atkinson recreation participants utilize Strava, and this data is not intended to represent all recreational users in Atkinson. It does help indicate trends for further investigation. To learn more about Strava Heat Maps, visit <https://medium.com/strava-engineering/the-global-heatmap-now-6x-hotter-23fc01d301de>.

The town wide heat map (Map 1) represents all forms of recreation in Atkinson that Strava collects – bicycling, running, walking, aquatic, and winter activities. This map indicates that many of the Strava users are recreating on Atkinson’s roads and existing trails. In addition to these, recreationists are utilizing Atkinson’s roads. Strava users are also utilizing Atkinson’s conservation areas, and cluster development set aside areas.

### Bicycle Recreation Usage

It should be noted that many of Strava’s users seem to already be using roads for recreation that were identified in NHDOT’s recommended bike routes. As seen on Map 2, Atkinson’s most popular roads for bicycling are Main Street (NH 121), Providence Hill



Road, North Broadway, and NH 111 which appears to be utilized by many users from Haverhill, MA and Salem, NH. Images like the one shown in Map 2 provide the town with a visual of the demand on recreation and transportation infrastructure and may help to assist the town in identifying what areas are the highest priority to implement bicycle lanes on existing roads or where developing separate routes may be necessary.



### Run/Walk Recreation Usage

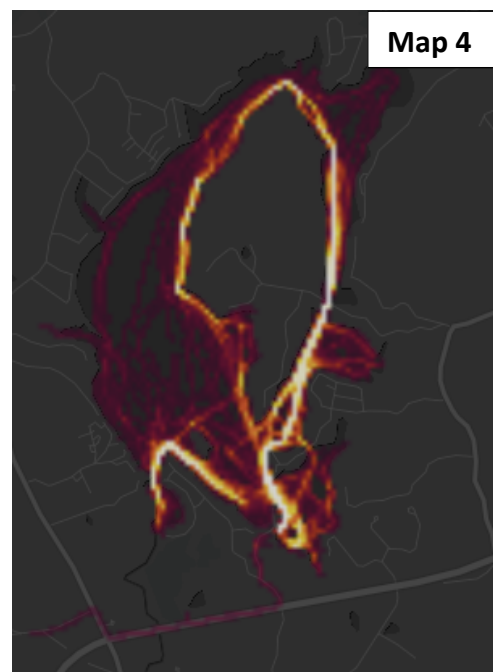
Map 3 shows high run/walk usage in Atkinson Heights, on Providence Hill Road, NH 111, and connecting to Haverhill Road in Salem and along Westside Drive connecting to the center of town. This



may be an indication that if more sidewalk infrastructure was available, additional residents would utilize Atkinson roads for running/walking. In addition to Atkinson's roads, Woodlock Park and the Stickney Trail System show many recreation users.

### Aquatic Recreation Usage

As shown on Map 4, there is significant aquatic recreation activity from Strava users on Big Island Pond. Map 4 shows the entirety of Big Island Pond though it should be noted that only the southern portion of this pond is in Atkinson and is accessed by Atkinson residents at the canoe/kayak launch on Stickney Road. Further explanation of the town canoe/kayak launch is described below. This indicates that the public canoe/kayak launch on Big Island Pond is highly utilized and contributes to a diverse range of recreational activity offered in Atkinson.



## Winter Recreation Usage

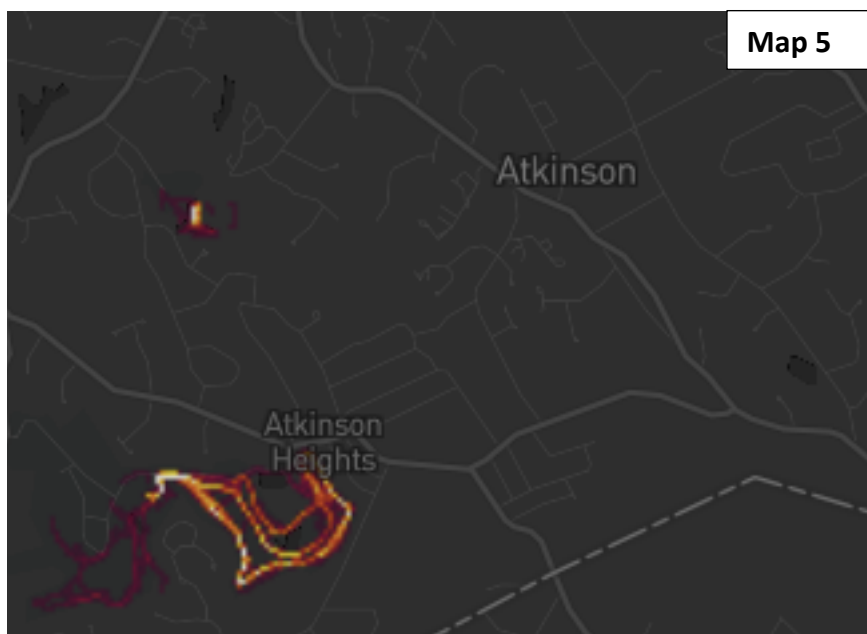
Map 5 shows that there is significant winter recreation activity in Atkinson Heights as well as Woodlock Park. This indicates that Atkinson's recreational resources are utilized year-round by some users.

### TOWN CANOE/KAYAK LAUNCH

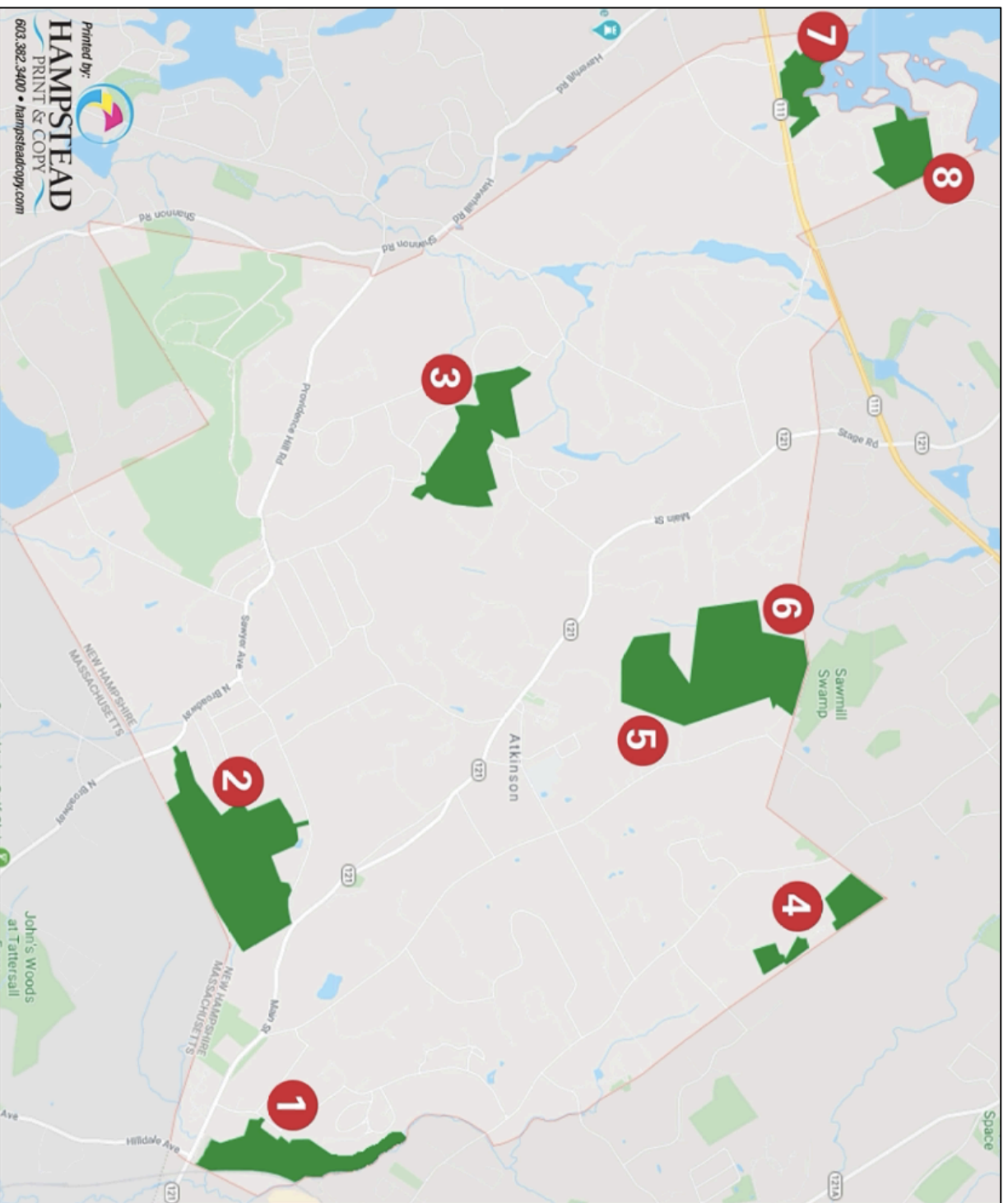
The Town of Atkinson maintains a public canoe/kayak launch for Atkinson residents located on Stickney Road that provides recreation access to Big Island Pond. This launch is for personal recreation only and commercial use is prohibited. There are two small parking lots provided at this launch on either side of the launch steps with a combined capacity of approximately eight vehicles. More information about the Town's canoe/kayak launch can be found on the Town of Atkinson website under the Conservation Commission tab.

### RECOMMENDED BIKE ROUTES

The NH Department of Transportation maintains an interactive bicycle route map found here: <https://nh.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=49c702c328d84a29af3b4a27eb271b37>. Included on this map are DOT recommended bicycle routes. In Atkinson, there are 7.6 miles of recommended paved bicycle routes. Many of these state-recommended bike routes coincide with the Strava street bicycle heatmap and include connectivity through Atkinson's center to neighboring communities. Some of these road connections include Meditation Lane, Maple Avenue, Academy Avenue, East Road, and NH 111.







## Appendix B, Map H

### Trails on Conservation Land

- 1 - Caroline Orr Trails
- 2 - Sawyer Trails
- 3 - Woodlock Trails
- 4 - Chambers-Fila Trails
- 5 - Sawmill South Trails
- 6 - Sawmill North Trails
- 7 - Stickney Trails
- 8 - Ruth Marshall Trails

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