

Casco Open Space Plan

Draft List of Actions

Guiding principle:

During all potential land acquisitions and management decisions, the Town of Casco will work to balance public access and rural character with the protection of wildlife habitat.

1. Conserve and Protect Casco's Unique Landscapes and Water Resources

- a. Prioritize land conservation efforts that safeguard historical, wild, working, and water-rich landscapes, with a strong emphasis on protecting water quality in lakes, ponds, rivers, and wetlands. (Existing Conditions Report)
- b. Prevent development sprawl by coordinating an interconnected open space network that radiates from our villages and expands access to trails and waterbodies. (Existing Conditions Report)
- c. Keep large, in-tact forested blocks available and uninterrupted for wildlife passage and ecological health. Areas for consideration include Jugtown Forest, Hacker's Hill Preserve, Rattlesnake Mountain, Pine Hill Wilderness, Hancock lumber lands, and the undeveloped areas between Routes 11, 121 and 302. (Outreach report)
- d. Conserve wetlands and marsh systems that support biodiversity, water filtration, flood storage, and sustain habitat. Areas for consideration include wetlands near The Heath, areas across from Webbs Mills, and wetlands behind the Hancock Mill on Route 11. (Outreach report)
- e. Establish regular check-ins with water-quality monitoring organizations for updates on water quality within Casco's waterbodies including: (Existing Conditions Report)
 - i. Thompson Lake Environmental Association (TLEA) (Thompson Pond)
 - ii. Oxford County Soil & Water Conservation District (Thompson Pond, Pleasant Lake)
 - iii. Pleasant Land and Parker Pond Association (Pleasant Lake and Parker Pond)
 - iv. Thomas Pond Improvement Association (Thomas Pond)
 - v. Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District (Thomas Pond, Parker Pond, Coffee Pond, Dumpling Pond)

- vi. Crescent Lake Watershed Association (Crescent Lake)
- f. Inquire if stewardship and water-quality monitoring organizations would consider adding additional waterbodies in Casco to their monitoring program. (Existing Conditions Report)
- g. Protect moderately developed shorelines, private shoreline buffers, and conserved forestland along waterbodies to preserve the clarity, habitat quality, and scenic character of Casco's "blue spaces". (Existing Conditions Report)
- h. Formally conserve the group of town-owned properties classified as "Conserve & Enhance" properties by the Casco Open Space Commission. These properties include: (Open Space Inventory)
 - i. State Park Road Property
 - 1. Map-lot 001A-0002 & 0003-0036
 - 2. Inventory map #15
 - ii. Libby Road
 - 1. Map-lot 0004-0019-A
 - 2. Inventory map #19
 - iii. Lilly Brook Property
 - 1. Map-lot 0042-0022-B
 - 2. Inventory map #27
 - iv. 70-Acre Wood
 - 1. Map-lot 0002-0003
 - 2. Inventory map #29
- i. Expand and connect, through direct land acquisition or easement, the existing network of conserved lands in areas such as Owl Pond, Rattlesnake Mountain, Pine Hill, and lands between major roadways. (Outreach report)
 - i. Collaborate with Loon Echo Land Trust to work with private landowners to make these expansions/connections and protect lakefront areas. (Outreach report). The Casco Open Space Commission is aware of many individuals that are open to conversations regarding easements and/or public access, and the relationships should be fostered delicately. (Existing Conditions Report)
- j. Deepen the relationship with any camps or former camp landowners that have expressed an interest in working with the Town to expand the existing open space and recreation network. (Existing Conditions Report)

- k. Using the climate resilience map, identify and secure proactive land acquisitions to combat climate change (i.e., lands adjacent to waterbodies or high elevation areas). (Meeting notes)
 - i. Acquire and manage land to address erosion concerns in problem areas using the climate resilience map and any other relevant maps as a guide. (Outreach report)
- l. Identify and secure land acquisitions or enhancements designed for youth-friendly gathering spaces such as parks or waterfront hangouts and areas where teens and others feel safe, are well-maintained, and are easy to reach from schools and other public places. (Outreach report)
- m. Convene an annual or bi-annual summit of surrounding communities including but not limited to Raymond, Naples, Otisfield, and Poland to collaborate on conservation and recreation efforts in the region. (Existing Conditions Report)
- n. Identify and secure, through acquisition or easement, conservation corridors essential for wildlife continuity and long-term ecosystem resilience including connecting major open spaces including links between Rolfe Hill and Rattlesnake Mountain, between Pleasant Lake and Thompson Lake, and from Sebago Lake State Park toward village areas. (Outreach report)
- o. Inventory and map all properties in current use to understand the pattern of working lands in Casco, and the potential for future land conservation. This would need to be revised regularly as current use land continually changes. (Meeting notes)

2. Enhance Connectivity and Expand Access for People and Wildlife

- a. Develop a refined trail network with safe on- and off-road connections linking villages, waterways, conserved lands, and other destinations. (Existing Conditions Report)
- b. Expand open space infrastructure—including parking, wayfinding, trails, and both trail and water access points—to support recreation and improved access. (Existing Conditions Report)
- c. Advocate for formal public access on private conservation easements (i.e., LELT). (Existing Conditions Report)
- d. Identify process and protocols for the development of multi-use trails and connections that can serve walkers, bikers, skiers, and motorized uses while

promoting safe, shared access. Ensure the Safe Streets Committee is involved in any multi-use trail discussions. (Outreach report)

- e. Work to increase conserved and publicly accessible lands in northern and eastern parts of town to balance the distribution of the existing network. (Existing Conditions Report)
- f. Work to formalize any informal entry points – boat launches, beaches, swimming spots – to Casco’s blue spaces (lakes, ponds, rivers). (Existing Conditions Report)
- g. Work to formalize the recreational and scenic benefits of the island within Parker Pond, which is vulnerable to restricted access, to ensure community use in the future. (Existing Conditions Report)
- h. Work to formalize public access throughout the recreational trail network. Many trails in Casco are informal and/or unmarked, which means it is vulnerable to access restrictions. Creating landowner agreements or using regional initiatives such as the 2020 Traction on the Trails and the Maine Trails Bond provide frameworks for Casco to formalize trail access and play a stronger role in regional recreation planning. (Existing Conditions Report)
- i. Expand non-motorized (hiking and mountain biking) and universally accessible trail options as much of the existing network is intended primarily for snowmobile and ATV use. (Existing Conditions Report)
- j. Improve signage throughout Casco’s trail network and consider a cohesive branding program. (Existing Conditions Report)
- k. Work with trail user groups to develop a cohesive and collaborative trail maintenance program that is agreed upon and adhered to. (Meeting notes)
- l. Align land acquisition and/or trail development/maintenance with the Safe Streets Committee to ensure collaboration and shared goals. (Meeting notes)
 - i. Identify areas where residents and visitors may feel unsafe due to traffic, lack of lighting, or poor visibility such as Route 11 and Route 302. (Outreach report)
 - ii. Add sidewalks, bike-friendly routes, and after-school shuttles between villages and to specific destinations to increase safety and accessibility. (Outreach report)
 - iii. Align these efforts with the vehicle crash data provided by Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. (Meeting notes)

- m. Improve parking at access points, including Owl Pond, and implement clearer trailhead markings, additional trail maps and signage about land ownership, permitted uses, and wildlife habitat. (Outreach report)
- n. Expand the trail network between Pike's Corner and Casco Village, Parker Pond, Berry Property, Jugtown Forest, Pine Hill, Webbs Mills, Rolfe Hill, Rattlesnake Mountain, and other destinations, including loops around Parker Pond. (Outreach report)
 - i. Ensure maintenance of any expanded trails is understood and planned before construction. (Outreach report)
- o. Refine and build on the specific list of identified wildlife crossing locations outlined in the Outreach Report and work to reduce/limit fragmentation effects. (Outreach report)
 - i. Mayberry Hill Road and Heath Road, between the Mayberry Hill Preserve and the protected parcel on Heath Road. (Outreach report)
 - ii. Leach Hill Road and Route 11, where a crossing would link Jugtown Forest with adjacent Hancock Lumber parcels. (Outreach report)
 - iii. Leach Hill Road and West Fountain Hill Road, indicating movement between forest and open space on each side. (Outreach report)
 - iv. Route 121 at Parker Pond, with a note suggesting seasonal turtle-nesting warning signs. (Outreach report)
 - v. Mayberry Hill Road near Pleasant Lake, where respondents noted frequent wildlife crossing activity. (Outreach report)
- p. Refine and build on the specific list of identified trail corridors and recreation enhancements outlined in the Outreach Report. (Outreach report)
 - i. Migis Lodge Area: There is public interest in exploring the potential for public trail access from Manning Field to the lakefront at Migis Lodge if the existing or future owners are open to this idea. (Outreach report)
 - ii. 70-Acre Wood: Loon Echo Land Trust circled this property, noting they were unaware it was town-owned conserved land and are interested in helping the Town develop signage, formal access, mapped trails, and potentially funding support. (Outreach report)
 - iii. Pine Hill Wilderness: Notes highlighted the need to maintain older trails, restore forgotten routes, and add additional trails. (Outreach report)
 - iv. Rattlesnake Mountain Wilderness: Identified as an area needing trail development and long-term protection. (Outreach report)

- v. Route 302 to Rolfe Hill Forest: A desired trail was drawn connecting Route 302 to Rolfe Hill Forest, then extending toward the Rattlesnake Mountain Wilderness and ultimately to Webbs Mills Village. (Outreach report)
- vi. Old Johnson Hill Road: Marked as an important location for potential landowner conversations to support trail development. (Outreach report)
- vii. Between Sebago Haven Road and Ring Landing: Circled as an area with “great bones” for walking trails, trailheads, and better-defined access. (Outreach report)
- viii. Large Town-Wide Loop Concept: Participants illustrated interest in a long-distance loop trail connecting major waterbodies and destinations—such as Crescent Lake, Coffee Pond, Thomas Pond, Sebago Lake, Pleasant Lake, Parker Pond, Thompson Lake, and back to Crescent Lake. (Outreach report)
- ix. Crooked River (near the Naples town line): Marked for improved public access to the river for recreation, viewing, and low-impact use. (Outreach report)
- x. Berry Property: Highlighted as a priority location for improved recreation amenities, including parking, signage, and trail access consistent with previous feedback. (Outreach report)
- xi. Hancock Lumber Parcel (northern Casco near Heath Road/Heath Island): Interest in expanded public access, recreational trail opportunities, and potential collaboration with the landowner. (Outreach report)
- xii. ATV Trail Connection (Pike’s Corner to Hancock parcel via Stone Road): Marked to improve connectivity, maintenance, and clarified routing along this identified ATV corridor. (Outreach report)
- xiii. Pleasant Lake Beach: Interest indicated a need to enhance infrastructure such as parking, signage, or shoreline access to support recreational use. (Outreach report)
- q. Refine and build on the specific list of identified transportation barriers and needed improvements identified in the Outreach Report. (Outreach report)
 - i. Bike Lanes and Multi-Use Paths: Desired connections between Webbs Mills, Pike’s Corner, and Casco Village using Poland Spring Road, Route 121, and Mayberry Hill Road into Otisfield. (Outreach report)
 - ii. Sidewalk Gaps: Marked needs for sidewalks along: (Outreach report)
 - 1. Route 121 in Casco Village near Pleasant Lake
 - 2. Pike’s Corner
 - 3. Webbs Mills Village

4. From Mayberry Hill Road at the Otisfield town line through Casco Village to Pike's Corner
- iii. Road Safety Concerns: Coffee Pond Road and Poland Spring Road near the northern point of Coffee Pond were identified as dangerous for cyclists. (Outreach report)
- iv. Route 121 Maintenance: Notes highlighted roadway maintenance needs between the Raymond town line and Pike's Corner, including improving shoulders and repairing pavement. (Outreach report)
- v. Park-and-Ride Need: A location near the Raymond town line on Route 121 was circled, suggesting a small park-and-ride for people traveling north toward Otisfield, Hanson, and Oxford. (Outreach report)
- vi. Trail Access Issues: (Outreach report)
 1. Parking and signage improvements are needed at Owl Pond.
 2. ATV trails near northwest Pike's Corner were marked as needing maintenance.
 3. Trails between Pike's Corner and Cooks Mills were noted for maintenance needs and improved mapping.

3. Lead as a Resilient, Strategic, and Well-Resourced Community

- a. Consider proactive land acquisitions to combat climate change by referencing the climate resilience map as a starting point (i.e., lands adjacent to waterbodies or high elevation areas). (Meeting notes)
- b. Strengthen Casco's implementation capacity by partnering with regional organizations, major landowners, and the community to advance land use and open space priorities. (Existing Conditions Report)
- c. Refine and build on the specific list of identified climate resilience concerns outlined in the Outreach Report. (Outreach report)
 - i. Consider lakefronts, ponds, streams, and wetlands as top priorities for their stormwater management benefits and ability to aid in erosion control. (Outreach report)
 - ii. Emphasize the importance of the Crooked River watershed for its climate resilience benefits and highlight vulnerable areas where erosion, flood events, nearby development, and road crossings may be impacted. Specific climate resilience concerns should be explored around the elementary school and South Casco. (Outreach report)
 - iii. Address areas at risk of erosion from steep slopes including but not limited to Mayberry Hill Road, Leach Hill Road, Quaker Ridge,

- powerline/Leach Hill areas, Sonny Maines Road, and roadside slopes near Pine Hill. Stabilization and vegetative cover could help reduce erosion in these areas. (Outreach report)
- iv. High-risk watershed connections and village areas: Areas around Route 121-302 corridor, Webb's Mills village (runoff issues from Pine Hill), Casco Village, and areas where stormwater flows toward Pleasant Lake or Parker Pond. (Outreach report)
 - v. Town beach and waterfront access points: Pleasant Lake/Casco Town Beach and public waterfront areas were identified for shoreline protection, stormwater controls, and erosion management. (Outreach report)
 - vi. Rolfe Hill Forest (southeast and northwest portions): Areas where slopes, runoff patterns, and erosion concerns were frequently noted. (Outreach report)
 - vii. Quaker Ridge Road near Hancock Family Farm: Identified for stormwater issues and hill-slope runoff during heavy rain events. (Outreach report)
 - viii. Meadow Road (Route 121) near Parker Pond: Marked as an area with roadway washouts, drainage challenges, and shoreline impacts. (Outreach report)
 - ix. Intersection of Webb's Mills Road (Route 85) and Route 11: Highlighted for frequent flooding and poor drainage during major storms. (Outreach report)
 - x. Upper Shore Drive near Thompson Pond: Identified for shoreline flooding, erosion, and stormwater runoff concerns. (Outreach report)
- d. Review Casco's Ordinances to identify ways to increase environmental protections including but not limited to shoreline buffer distances for development along waterbodies. The resulting revisions should be aligned with state and regional recommendations. (Existing Conditions Report)
 - e. Participate in regional conservation efforts such as through the protection of key habitat blocks in the Crooked River watershed ensures local conservation goals contribute to broader watershed and biodiversity outcomes. Regional efforts include the 2011 Lake Region Greenprint, the 2025-2035 State Wildlife Action Plan, and the work of Sebago Clean Waters that offer technical tools, funding pathways, and science-based strategies municipalities can use to help guide local decisions. (Existing Conditions Report)
 - f. Align local recreation planning with statewide priorities that link outdoor access, conservation, and economic development. The State of Maine's 10-Year Outdoor

Recreation Economy Roadmap provides a framework for achieving this. (Existing Conditions Report)

- i. By aligning Casco's recreational and open space planning with the State's Roadmap, the Town could pursue state-supported funding opportunities, grants, and partnerships associated with Maine's outdoor recreation economy initiatives. (Existing Conditions Report)
- g. Seek creative funding sources including the Maine Trails Bond that funds trail development, trail maintenance, and land acquisition for trail development. (Meeting notes)
- h. Consider adding a young adult representative to the Casco Open Space Commission. (Outreach report)

4. Strengthen Community Identity and Economic Vitality Through Education and Stewardship

- a. Create materials and programs that (1) highlight Casco's open space and recreational networks and (2) help communicate with and educate residents and visitors about land use, development, conservation, water quality protection, and recreation initiatives and opportunities. (Meeting notes)
 - i. Increase outdoor learning opportunities and facilities including playgrounds that remain open throughout the year. (Outreach report)
- b. Attract families and outdoor enthusiasts by enhancing Casco's reputation as a connected, water-rich, and recreation-oriented community that stands apart from others in the region. (Existing Conditions Report)
- c. Work to strengthen the relationship between Casco's open space and recreational network and the villages within town. (Meeting notes)
- d. Recognize the importance of the Crooked River as a large and defining community resource along with Sebago Lake and the other waterbodies. (Existing Conditions Report)
- e. Determine the status of the ongoing feasibility study for the town-owned Berry Property, located on the southwestern shore of Parker Pond behind the Public Safety complex, that was referenced in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. (Existing Conditions Report)
 - i. Develop long-term plan for the Berry Property that meets the needs of the community while also strengthening linkages between Casco Village and the Town's open space network. (Existing Conditions Report)

- f. Establish a committee to determine the ultimate use and management of many town-owned properties. As part of this process, the committee could convene a series of localized, neighborhood-scale forums to get feedback on the future direction of each particular property. The list of properties in need of future direction includes, but may not be limited to: (Open Space Inventory)
 - i. Manning Field
 - 1. Map-lot 16-5-COMM
 - 2. Inventory map #11
 - ii. State Park Road Property
 - 1. Map-lot 001A-0002 & 0003-0036
 - 2. Inventory map #15
 - 3. The Casco Open Space Commission determined this property should be classified as a “Conserve & Enhance” property to never be sold. However, the future direction of the property still needs to be determined.
 - iii. Berry Property
 - 1. Map-lot 0038-0032, 0038-0032-0001, 0038-0019
 - 2. Inventory map #17
 - iv. Libby Road
 - 1. Map-lot 0004-0019-A
 - 2. Inventory map #19
 - 3. The Casco Open Space Commission determined this property should be classified as a “Conserve & Enhance” property to never be sold. However, the future direction of the property still needs to be determined.
 - v. Lake Shore Drive
 - 1. Map-lot 0020-0070-A
 - 2. Inventory map #23
 - vi. Varney Road
 - 1. Map-lot 0027-0005
 - 2. Inventory map #24
 - vii. 15 Varney Road
 - 1. Map-lot 0027-0006
 - 2. Inventory map #25
 - viii. 3 Dadmun Drive
 - 1. Map-lot 0031-0010-A
 - 2. Inventory map #26
 - ix. Lilly Brook Property

1. Map-lot 0042-0022-B
 2. Inventory map #27
 3. The Casco Open Space Commission determined this property should be classified as a “Conserve & Enhance” property to never be sold. However, the future direction of the property still needs to be determined.
- x. Point Sebago Road
1. Map-lot 0001-0008-0001
 2. Inventory map #28
- xi. 70-Acre Wood
1. Map-lot 0002-0003
 2. Inventory map #29
 3. The Casco Open Space Commission determined this property should be classified as a “Conserve & Enhance” property to never be sold. However, the future direction of the property still needs to be determined.
- g. Create a centralized and easy-to-share source of information about local recreation and open space options such as a website, map, or educational resource that summarizes trails, open spaces, and parking locations. If distributed to the business community, it would allow the tourism industry to confidently direct guests to appropriate public areas. (Outreach report)
- i. Partner and connect with regional outdoor-based organizations to promote Casco’s – and the regions – outdoor recreational economy. Use the existing relationships with Loon Echo Land Trust and others to explore this option. (Outreach report)
- h. Strengthen Casco’s economic vitality by encouraging access and visitation to waterbodies, waterways, and conserved and open space lands. (Existing Conditions Report)
- i. Consider land acquisitions or enhancements to develop dog parks and dog-friendly trails where dogs are safe to run and dog owners can congregate and build community. (Outreach report)