

## ***B. Landscape, Scenic Resources & Unique Environments***

### **1. Landscape and Scenic Resources**

Mashpee's location and geology have combined to define its landscape. We have no mountains, or even significant hills, to serve either as vistas or scenic viewpoints. What we have is water, in the form of ocean, bays, streams, and wetlands. Views of these are necessarily low-level and, usually, up close. Our undeveloped upland areas are almost totally forested, with no expansive views of meadows or fields.

As a result, Mashpee's landscape is of an intimate scale. The little details of vegetation, tree forms, plant colors and ground cover come to dominate one's perception of the place. Our small "rivers" are hidden from the view of passing cars and must be viewed, and appreciated, on foot or by canoe. Similarly, except at parking lots at town beaches or town landings, our ponds cannot be viewed from a passing car. Even viewing the ocean, except at the South Cape Beach Town parking lot, involves getting out of a car and walking across the dunes, or into a boat on Nantucket Sound.

Despite what we feel is quite beautiful Mashpee Scenery, there are apparently no areas in Mashpee which are included in the state's Scenic Landscape Inventory. A former Secretary of Environmental Affairs did, however, designate South Cape Beach State Park as a "Special Place". That said, we do have some fine scenic vistas, even though none have been recognized by the state's inventory. Just about any spot on Dead Neck in South Cape Beach State Park offers spectacular views of Vineyard Sound, Waquoit Bay or Sedge Lot Pond. Farther east in the Park, the dunes offer views of Nantucket Sound and the swans and ospreys resident on Great Flat Pond.

Succoneset Point, a 40+ foot high bluff at the midpoint of our coast, offers spectacular views across the sea to Martha's Vineyard. Unfortunately, it has been developed for private house lots, as has most of our coast, and is not accessible to the public. The only other opportunity for public views of the sea is at a small fisherman's landing owned by the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife at the end of Wading Place Road. It offers an excellent view of privately-owned Popponeset Spit and the coast of Cotuit stretching off to the east.

Other public views of our coastal ponds and bays are rare, as their shores are privately owned and have been split into house lots. The Seconsett Island Road causeway offers an excellent vista of Waquoit Bay to the south and the marshes of Hamblin Pond to the north. The Pond can also be viewed from the Monomoscoy Island Road causeway, which offers great views of the extensive marsh system of upper Great River, as well as the islands and wooded shore of the "Bufflehead Bay" property purchased by the Town and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as part of the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge. Trails on the "Bufflehead Bay" property itself provide great viewing opportunities of the upper Great River marshes, Jehu Pond and Abigail's Brook. The only other potential public views of Jehu Pond are from a small tax-taking parcel on Great Oak Road which could be developed as a prime view point along the proposed South Cape Beach to Sandy Neck "Cross-Cape Trail."

There are no Town roads or public properties in the densely-developed areas of New Seabury or Popponesset. As a result, views of Fells Pond, Fish Hook Pond and most of Popponesset Bay are no longer available to the public. However, there is one particularly charming vista of Dean's Pond and its white foot bridge that is available from Shore Drive.

Popponesset Bay can be viewed from the "Pirates Cove" Town Landing at the end of Mashpee Neck Road or from a tiny, undeveloped conservation area at the end of Punkhorn Point Road opposite Gooseberry Island. Otherwise, one has to visit Cotuit's Meadow Neck Conservation Area to see the Bay, as the Mashpee side is now fully developed. The Shoestring Bay arm of the Popponesset estuary can be viewed from Quinaquisset Ave. In addition, an easement has been acquired over a portion of the Willowbend Country Club property which can be developed as an excellent Shoestring Bay scenic viewpoint accessed from a potential parking area on two tax taking lots on Ash Street.

As noted above, our rivers are essentially invisible from a car. The one exception is the attractive Mashpee River herring run located at Mill Pond adjacent to the Indian Museum. On foot, however, an extensive network of trails offers countless beautiful vistas of the Mashpee River south of Route 28. Along the Quashnet River, limited views are available from dirt roads and trails on state-owned land south of Route 151 and from the cranberry bog maintenance roads at Johns Pond Park. The potential exists for further trail and vista development along the Quashnet on Town lands adjacent to the high school, as well as on the opposite side of the river as part of the proposed expansion of the Mashpee Commons project.

The Childs River Conservation Area extends for the full length of that small stream and offers occasional intimate views of the river. The Santuit River Conservation Area provides potential scenic views of the marshes along that river, which is also glimpsed at its mouth at Quinaquisset Ave.

No public land abuts Ashumet Pond in Mashpee, or most of our smaller ponds. At Johns Pond, however, fine water views are available at the Town Beach in Johns Pond Park. A nice view of 17-acre Moody Pond in the Park is available at its south end from Grafton Pocknett Road, a dirt road. Fine potential views of Johns Pond would also become available from the Alper Conservation Area on its western shore if trails were developed.

Excellent views of Mashpee/Wakeby Pond are available from the parking lots at Attaquin Park Town Beach, the state's adjacent Fisherman's Landing and The Trustees of Reservations' Lowell Holly Reservation. The Reservation also has an extensive trail system offering some excellent lake vistas.

Santuit Pond offers fine views from a peninsula which has been developed as an unpaved Town landing. The currently undeveloped Sachems Field Conservation Area, at the pond's north end, has the potential to provide good views from walking trails. Excellent views are now available at the South half of the pond from trails on the Bickerstaffe and Santuit Pond Conservation Areas and the Santuit Pond Preserve.

Aside from Mashpee's natural landscapes, there are a few man-made vistas which help define the character of Mashpee. One is the old center of town, with Town Hall, the Town Archives, Baptist Church and Country Store (formerly Ockry Trading Post) surrounding a Town Park and veterans memorial. Just to the west on Route 130 is another attractive area which includes Mill Pond, the herring run, the Indian Museum and the old parsonage. Large street trees and the road's position as the town's historic Main Street also make Route 130 east of South Sandwich Road a defining piece of our landscape.

In other parts of the town, both Route 151 and Great Neck Road South have, so far, been able to retain a solid buffer of the classic pitch pines that say "Cape Cod" to homesick residents returning from off-Cape. Red Brook and Meetinghouse Roads, too, have retained much of their wooded character. We have not been as kind to most of our other major roadways, leaving them a jumble of bits and pieces of incompatible building and landscaping schemes.

The new commercial heart of Mashpee at the Mashpee (Pine Tree) rotary, though not consistently attractive because of large parking areas, has probably come to dominate outsiders' idea of what Mashpee is and looks like. While the Mashpee Commons, South Cape Village and Deer Crossing shopping centers are very well done, there exists much room for improvement in how we present that face of our town to the world. Proposed expansion of Mashpee Commons has the potential to reshape central Mashpee's image for the better. However, in order to maximize its potential visual benefits, the Town will have to extend its design principles to adjacent commercial and residential areas.

Most of Mashpee's most scenic areas and recreational amenities, particularly along our ocean, bay and pond shores, have been lost to private development. We have noted those few places that are left for all the public to enjoy. We have also noted some of the areas whose preservation is critical to maintaining or improving public access to our beautiful places.

Mashpee lost much of its rural character and most of its undeveloped open space during the development boom of the last three decades. Despite that, there are still critical opportunities to save beautiful places. Because of that, it is more critical then ever that we do so.

## **2. Unique Environments.**

The Waquoit Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern is shown on Map 7-4, along with other important coastal resources.

The Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1995, encompasses many unique habitats.

The South Mashpee Pine Barrens, part of the Refuge, offer a unique combination of increasingly rare pine barrens habitat interspersed with numerous Atlantic White Cedar swamps and wet heaths that have now largely been protected by open space purchases by the Town, The Nature Conservancy and the Mass. Division of Fisheries & Wildlife.

Also mostly protected and within the Refuge is the lower Quashnet River valley, which features a nationally-famous stream restoration project by Trout Unlimited, along with another area of pine barrens and shrub swamps. The swamps support a number of species of threatened insects. The

protected land in this area, now comprising about 2000 acres, has become unique by virtue of the size of contiguous undisturbed forest, which supports bird species such as the Black and White Warbler, that require deep forest habitat.

Another unique environment, not well protected, is the coastal plain pondshore, home to rare plants able to withstand intermittent periods of drought and inundation as groundwater levels (which control the levels of our ponds) fluctuate from year to year and season to season.

Other critical habitat areas for rare animals and plants listed by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program are illustrated on Map 7-3.

# Scenic Resources

## Map 4-14

