

MILTON MUNICIPAL FOREST & BOVE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Submitted by
MILTON CONSERVATION and RECREATION COMMISSIONS
August 1, 2011

This Management Plan supersedes the Milton Municipal Forest Management Plan (MMFMP) approved on October 6, 2008. The Milton Municipal Forest was established in 1991, and is subject to protections as written within the Town Charter. The Bove Property was acquired by the Town in 2006 and is not part of the Municipal Forest as described in the Town Charter. The following documents were used in developing this management plan: The Milton Municipal Forest Inventory, Assessment, and Recommendations prepared by LIA Consultants, and Bove Property: Natural Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning Final Report prepared by Lamoureux & Dickinson.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision for the Milton Municipal Forest and the Bove Property is to preserve the ecological integrity for plants, wildlife and other cultural and natural features, including Milton Pond and a Red Maple-Sphagnum Acidic Basin Swamp, while enhancing the Town's recreational opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Natural Resource Protection and Management

a. Natural Plant Communities and Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species (includes bullets 1, 2, 3 and 4 from Section A of the MMFMP):

- i. Encourage hiring a qualified botanist to conduct a survey of rare plant species during the growing season.
 1. Monitor for invasive plants for conservation of the Prickly Hornwort species on the Bove Property.
- ii. Avoid clearing timber near the West Side Trail (Milton Municipal Forest) to prevent the spread of non-native, invasive Japanese knotweed.
- iii. Become informed about and involved in the Vermont Watershed Basin Planning Process:
 1. Work with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) to determine a Water Quality Classification for Milton Pond.
 2. Develop watershed-based strategies to maintain the level of water quality required by the classification.
- iv. Consider working with the VTDEC to perform yearly Spring Phosphorus and Biocriteria Monitoring on Milton Pond. Volunteer efforts could be coordinated to perform this monitoring in partnership with VTDEC staff.

b. Wetland Protection:

- i. Conduct a survey of vernal pools.
- ii. Plan any development of recreational infrastructure to avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands and surrounding uplands.
 1. Impacts to Class 2 wetlands and their 50-foot buffer zones are under the jurisdiction of the State. Impacts to any of the wetlands (whether Class 2 or 3) are also under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

2. Impacts within 100 feet of wetlands in the Town of Westford fall under the Town's Water Resources Overlay District for which there are significant restrictions regarding trail width, bridges, and permanent structures.
3. If any of the wetland areas are suspected of having vernal pools, the Army Corps of Engineers may require spring monitoring. If use by vernal pool dependent species is established, there could be a requirement to preserve an upland forested buffer around those wetlands.

c. Wildlife Habitat Protection (includes bullets 3 and 5 from Section C of the MMFMP):

- i. Establish a wildlife monitoring system.
- ii. Encourage keeping pets on leashes to protect wildlife and to protect pets from the abundant porcupine population.
- iii. Conduct periodic amphibian surveys.
- iv. Maintain a wooded corridor within the panhandle to allow wildlife coverage to cross Westford Road.

d. Archaeological Protection:

- i. Should any ground disturbing activities be planned around defined archeologically sensitive areas, phase I survey work should be considered in these areas. Sensitivity for historic Euroamerican remains is highest in the western portion of the property in the vicinity of the G.W. Crown/ Coburn and Perry cellar hole (ASA 10).

e. Forestry (Includes bullets 1, 2, and 4 from Section C of the MMFMP):

- i. Plan any timber harvest in consultation with the Chittenden County Forester to minimize soil compaction and erosion. Use only a certified logger who will carefully follow Vermont's Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) for timber harvesting. Viability of timber harvesting was explored in 2009 and determined to not be an option at the time due to lack of trees of substantive size. Explore again in 15-20 years. Logging of the Westford portion of the Bove Property will be prohibited.
- ii. Preserve cavity trees, mast trees and snags.
- iii. Conduct apple tree release and pruning.

2. Recreation Activities and Trails (Includes Sections B & D from MMFMP)

a. Ongoing Tasks:

- i. Allow carry-in boat usage for treated, non-motorized watercraft on Milton Pond.
- ii. Encourage users to stay on trails to protect sensitive species.
- iii. Organize periodic volunteer efforts to remove litter from the forest.
- iv. Develop ordinances regarding accepted recreational uses, if necessary beyond this Management Plan.
- v. Maintain a well-designed, and marked, trail system to encourage users to stay on trails and avoid disturbing cultural features and natural communities of ecological significance.
- vi. Keep trails away from dens, vernal pools, riparian areas, and other fragile habitat features.
- vii. Uses currently allowed for: Hiking, Bird Watching, Snowshoeing, Cross Country skiing, Hunting, Fishing.

b. Phase I (estimated timeline is 2011 - 2013):

- i. Develop a map which accurately depicts the phases outlined in this Management Plan versus the Final Recommend Master Plan Concept – Phasing Plan found in the Bove Property: Natural Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning Final Report prepared by Lamoureux & Dickinson.
 - ii. Construct eight (8) space parking lot with associated signage to provide a public access to the Municipal Forest.
 - iii. Develop main trail with only passive recreational uses to connect parking lot to existing Municipal Forest trails.
 1. Construct two wooden bridges over streams on the Bove property and along the Old Town Road on the Municipal Forest, and trail signage.
 - iv. Repair and relocate trails within the Milton Municipal Forest with reference to the Trail Repair Map (Map 9) found in The Milton Municipal Forest Inventory, Assessment, and Recommendations prepared by LIA Consultants.
 - v. Re-blaze boundary lines and replace missing iron posts at boundary corners.
 - vi. Uses allowed for with this Phase: Hiking, Bird Watching, Snowshoeing, Cross Country skiing, Hunting, Fishing.
- c. Phase II (estimated timeline is 2014 - 2017):**
- i. This phase includes the trail loop off of the main trail, the primitive camping sites, and trail signage on the Bove Property. A portion of this trail will extend into Westford and will require DRB approval.
 - ii. Establish the interpretive walking/hiking trails, three boardwalks and observation platforms, trail signage and interpretive signage. A majority of these improvements will take place in Westford and will require DRB approval. The looped trail that connects the boardwalk/bird watching blind trails will be pulled back to address the Town of Westford's concerns as stated in their June 14, 2011 letter.
 - iii. Establish the interpretive walking/hiking trail on the Municipal Forest property that connects with the trails on the Bove Property.
 - iv. No additional recreational uses allowed for with this phase.
- d. Phase III (estimated timeline is 2018 - 2021):**
- i. Make improvements to the Bove Property main trail to allow for horseback riding and mountain biking and designate trails for these uses in the Municipal Forest. The necessary upgrades to accommodate for these uses should be done on both properties at the same time so as to avoid a confusing situation.
 - ii. Provide for motorized vehicle use along designated trails if and when VASA and/or VAST (or similar organization) establishes a trail system. The timing of this may be earlier or later depending on trail establishment by those organizations.
 - iii. Uses allowed for with this Phase: Hiking, Bird Watching, Snowshoeing, Cross Country skiing, Hunting, Fishing, Horseback Riding, Mountain Biking, Snowmobiling and ATVs.
- e. Phase IV (estimated timeline is 2022 - 2024):**
- i. This phase includes the parking lot expansion.
 - ii. No additional recreational uses allowed for with this phase although the parking lot expansion could accommodate school busses and possibly trailers.

3. Education (Includes Section E from the MMFMP):

- a. Develop an educational brochure for circulation in the community and distribution at the trailhead.
- b. Post signage at the trailhead with brochures, maps, rules and regulations, etc.
- c. Create educational programs (e.g., orienteering, wildlife surveying)
- d. Foster connections with local environmental education centers, local schools, Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, etc.
- e. Provide information to users about the transmission of invasive species such as zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil in bait buckets and on boats.
- f. Require users to pack out their trash.
- g. Require users to bury human waste more than 200 feet from any water source in a 6-8 inch deep hole.
- h. Encourage 'Leave No Trace' principles.

4. Public Safety and Signage (Includes Section F from the MMFMP and DRB conditions for the Bove Property parking lot):

- a. In accordance with Title 10 Chapter 113 § 4707 of the Vermont State Statutes, a person who intends to set a trap for any animal on the property shall, prior to setting the trap, notify the Selectboard of his intention to set the trap and of the prospective location of the trap. The Selectboard may, at any time, refuse to grant permission to set a trap or revoke the permission if previously granted.
- b. Encourage all visitors to wear safety orange during hunting season.
- c. Discourage swimming as elevated levels of *E. coli* and giardia are suspected.
- d. Monitor the integrity of the Milton Pond dam to prevent dam failure; consultation with an engineer is recommended.
- e. Encourage users to keep dogs on leashes at all times and pack out dog waste.
- f. The parking lot's visibility from Westford Road must be maintained through selective clearing/pruning as necessary.
- g. The Town shall implement measures to prohibit after-hours and non-authorized uses of the parking area, up to and including a lockable gate. If problems are encountered on a regular basis, the Town shall install a lockable gate.
- h. Signage must be installed indicating the hours of operation and delineating the boundaries of the adjacent properties in the vicinity of the parking area and along the trail along the eastern property boundary. The signage must include the telephone numbers of who to call if a problem is encountered (e.g. the Police Department and/or the Recreation Department).

Appendix A

Federal, State and Local Permits and Clearances

The following federal, state and local permits and clearances will most likely be needed for implementing components of the Preferred Conceptual Master Plan for the Bove Property and possibly for the Milton Municipal Forest as well. However, the Town should contact the respective permitting agencies during the next phase of design.

_ A State Stormwater Discharge Permit may be needed for future expansion of the parking area if the total disturbance is greater than one acre.

_ A State Erosion Prevention & Sediment Control Construction General Permit is not likely needed.

_ Municipalities usually don't need an Act 250 permit for projects disturbing less than 10 acres.

_ A State Stream Alteration Permit is not likely needed.

_ A Section 404 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers General Permit (wetlands) will possibly be needed if wetlands impacts exceed 3,000 square feet. If this permit is required, a Section 401 Water Quality, Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species and State Historic Preservation Office clearances will also be needed.

_ A State Conditional Use Determination (wetlands) would be needed for impacts to the Class II wetlands or their buffer areas.

_ State Agricultural Soils Clearance may be needed based on disturbance of prime agricultural soils on the site.

_ New Accessibility Rules from the Department of Justice to take effect March 15, 2011.

_ The Town will also need to work with the Town of Westford regarding the observation platforms. Currently, the Westford Zoning Regulations does not permit decks. There are numerous examples of similar observation platforms that have been built in similar natural areas.