



CHARLES M. EWING WOODS

LAND USE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

DEVELOPED BY

Swampscott Open Space &
Recreation Plan Committee

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APPROVED BY

Swampscott Conservation Commission

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INTRODUCTION

The Ewing Woods is a 7.3-acre natural area of forested land that has been dedicated as public conservation land and is managed by the Conservation Commission.



Site Location & Description

Ewing Woods is located along the southern boundary of the Stanley School and its athletic field. Limited access to the woods is from the school property, the parking lot of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn (at the end of Forest Avenue), or the end of Forest Avenue extension. On the north perimeter of the Ewing Woods property (along the school property), there is a dirt path that runs between the Church parking lot and Forest Avenue extension (referred to in this document as the “Main Path”). There are also several smaller paths in the Woods, including a trail that loops up from the Main Path to the ridge in the center of the property and then back down to the Main Path (referred to in this document as the “Loop Trail”).

PURPOSE

This document sets forth how best to manage the Ewing Woods and what actions will be taken to maintain the property. A Conservation Land Maintenance checklist is also included. This plan is intended to be a working document; experience may reveal that adaptations and changes are necessary.

Ewing Woods is of varied terrain. In addition to the ridge that runs roughly from east to west midway through the property, there is a low area north of this ridge that pools with water in the Spring. This low area may include uncertified vernal pools. There are mature oak and white pine in the Woods. There is poison ivy throughout the Woods and invasive plants (e.g. burning bush) have been observed along the western perimeter of the property.

Currently, Ewing Woods is used for passive outdoor recreational such as bird watching, nature study, dog walking and strolling on the dirt paths.

Acquisition

Swampscott's 1983 Open Space & Recreation Master Plan states that "[o]pen space in the Stanley School area proposed for preservation ... was purchased by the Swampscott Foundation¹ in 1972 to forestall subdivision, and offered to the town at cost. The town purchased about one-half the area ... with 50% state funding obtained by the Conservation Commission. Town meeting voted to name this area in memory of Charles M. Ewing, one of the original trustees of the Swampscott Foundation."

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Management Objectives & Oversight

As Ewing Woods is one of the few natural undeveloped areas in town, the management objective is to maintain the woods essentially in its present natural state, healthy, clean, undamaged and as free as practicable from invasive vegetative species and to provide public access for passive outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Greater use of the woods could be generated for nature study and, to that end, trail markings could be added identifying the main paths through the Woods. As discussed below, new signage identifying the Woods is needed as the one existing sign is badly damaged.

Steps should be taken to avoid encroachment by neighbors that abut the property, including installation of signs identifying the property's borders. The access points may be threatened by possible encroachment by potential school demolition/remodeling new construction in the future. Plans should be made now to circumvent compromises to this land.

The Conservation Commission shall be responsible for its care and supervision and shall exercise management oversight, with assistance from the Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee and the Department of Public Works, and volunteer citizen groups that may be formed to provide maintenance and cleanup activities.

Permitted Uses

Passive outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, on-leash dog walking, wildlife observation is permitted, along with educational and nature study.

¹ The Swampscott Foundation consisted of concerned townspeople who pooled their resources with the aim of purchasing properties which were potentially valuable as conservation or recreation land but which were imminently threatened with development.

Prohibited Uses

Per the Town of Swampscott General Bylaws Section 19², possession and consumption of alcohol in public parks is prohibited. Other prohibited uses and actions include: fires, camping, motorized and motor-assisted vehicles and other powered equipment or motorized wheelchairs, littering, placement of refuse or waste of any kind (including yard waste), damaging or removal of vegetation or of public-posted signs. Visitors must carry out all articles carried in, including trash.

Precautions & Warnings

Ticks, with the accompanying risk of contracting Lyme Disease, are present in all vegetated areas in the region, including Ewing Woods. Mosquitoes are also infectious disease carrying insects and are common in this region and on the property. Simple preventive measure can be taken to protect against potential harm from these insects and users of Ewing Woods should acquaint themselves with those methods through internet research or via contacting Swampscott Board of Health. Poison Ivy is also present on the property, as well as other brambles and vegetation that can cause injury and unpleasantness. Users should be familiar with what plants look like in various stages and take precaution to avoid contact.

Public Parking

Parking is available in the Stanley School parking lot.

Signage

Signs identifying Ewing Woods as well as small conservation boundary signs along the property's perimeter are needed as discussed in more detail below.

Enforcement & Public Safety

The Conservation Commission with assistance from the Open Space & Recreation Committee will coordinate with, and rely on, the Swampscott Police Department to provide surveillance of the property and enforce the regulations applying to the property. If visitors or neighbors to the property observe a violation of the regulations, which may or may not pose a hazard, they are encouraged to contact the Swampscott Police Department to report a potential violation. In the instance of conditions that do not require immediate response, or that require maintenance attention, the public should contact the Conservation Commission or the Open Space & Recreation Committee. Contact information for either committee can be obtained on the Town website: <http://www.town.swampscott.ma.us/>

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Maintenance Tasks

Initial Necessary Tasks: A new sign identifying Ewing Woods is needed to replace the existing sign that is badly damaged. The Swampscott Conservation Commission and Swampscott Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee will work with the Municipal Design Committee on creation of this sign which should be placed on the Main Path opposite from the access point through the Stanley parking

² Town of Swampscott, "General By-Laws," as amended May 4, 2015

area. Also discussed with the Municipal Design Committee will be the addition of smaller signs identifying the property to be placed at either end of the Main Path.

As with other conservation land in the Town, small signs (approximately 4" in diameter) need to be placed along perimeter of property identifying it as conservation land.

The Town should also consider a sign or signs that provide information on the characteristics (flora and fauna, etc.) of the Ewing Woods as well as other conservation property.

Signs should also be installed stating the permitted and prohibited uses (such as the prohibition against access to the property after dark and the possession or consumption alcohol).

In addition to signage, the Swampscott Conservation Commission and Swampscott Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee should coordinate action, either by volunteer groups or private contractor, to remove the invasive species present on the property.

Ongoing Routine Maintenance: No improvements other than minimal litter and vegetation clearing and trail maintenance are anticipated. There will be no removal of vegetation aside from that necessary to clear existing paths or eradicate invasive species (as properly identified as such). There will also be no new paths cut through the woods without first consulting with a botanist, naturalist or other knowledgeable person, so as to prevent damage to existing native plant species.

The fire hydrant located at the rear of the Stanley School parking lot must be clear of vegetation and properly maintained for both firefighting and training activities.

While the town maintains a "carry-in, carry-out" policy, periodic maintenance (especially along the Main Path) is necessary to remove litter and the dumping of lawn and garden wastes that occurs.

Seasonally, all the trails should be checked for fallen trees and erosion. Vegetation should be pruned from the sides of the trails and dead trees or branches that have fallen on the trails removed.

The property should be examined periodically for the reintroduction of invasive species and, if found, action taken to have it removed.

Ongoing routine maintenance will be coordinated through the Swampscott Conservation Commission and Swampscott Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee soliciting assistance from the Department of Public Works and/or volunteer individuals and groups. To assist in implementation of routine maintenance, attached is a Conservation Land Maintenance Checklist.

Efforts will also be made to coordinate with the Stanley School administration in an effort to prevent trash and litter from entering Ewing Woods from the school property, in particular from the trash dumpsters located behind the school.

Maintenance Funding

The Town has responsibility for maintenance of the property, and the Conservation Commission will exercise oversight in coordination with the Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee. As noted, they will solicit voluntary contributions and/or services of individuals, groups, and/or landscapers or other businesses in support of routine maintenance activities. For long term ongoing maintenance, it may be

possible to promote creation of a “Friends of Ewing Woods” organization and/or have local group(s) “adopt” Ewing Woods similar to the “Adopt-an-Island” programs instituted by many towns to beautify roadways and islands.

If maintenance that goes beyond routine upkeep (e.g., restoration of paths, remediation of erosion, replacement or repair of signs, and removal of invasive species) will be the responsibility of the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission will seek out the assistance of the Department of Public Works, and/or outside contractors in order to undertake these improvements, using available monies and/or grant funds as needed, or any other funds generated in other ways. Solicitation of in-kind services and/or materials from outside entities will also be considered as options of supporting extraordinary maintenance projects as well.

Conformance with Existing Regulations

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 266 Section 120, 120d and 122, and Chapter 40 Section 8C contained rules on prohibited uses on public parkland and property and applicable fines for violating these regulations.

Plan Participants

The Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee initiated the development of this management plan and solicited the following stakeholders for feedback and input on the plan:

- » Conservation Commission
- » Board of Selectman
- » Fire Department
- » Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee
- » Police Department
- » Department of Public Works
- » Residents of Ewing Woods neighborhood and other interested Town residents
- » Municipal Design Committee
- » Disability Commission

In preparing this plan, the following documents were reviewed: 1970 “Swampscott Environment: Now or Never”; 1983 “Open Space & Recreation Master Plan;” and the “Open Space & Recreation Plan 2013-2020.”



CONSERVATION LAND MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

LOCATION: _____

INSPECTED BY: _____ DATE: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

Place the following beside each item in each category provided below.

“Y” indicates maintenance needs to be done

“X” indicates item is acceptable

“N/A” indicates not applicable to this location

PARKING LOTS

	Does litter need to be picked up?
	Do the trash receptacles and/or recycling bins need to be emptied?
	Do the trash receptacles and/or recycling bins need maintenance?
	Are the signs readable and free from graffiti or damage?
Further explanation of above issues:	

TRAILS

	Does litter need to be picked up on the trails?
	Do the trails need trimming of branches or groundcover?
	Are trail markers easy to see and follow?
Further explanation of above issues:	