

MAY 2002



Take & Hike

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FISH

SNOWSHOE
OBSERVE



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HIKE
BIRD WATCH
SKATE
RUN

MEDITATE
ENJOY
LEARN

**Westwood Open Space Lands Offer
Peace, Solace and Communion with Nature**

www.townhall.westwood.ma.us

Take & Hike

A summary of
Open Space for your use
and enjoyment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction2
Regulations3
Open Space Sites Map.....4
Goals & Objectives8
Hiking Tips8

OPEN SPACE SITES

Lowell Woods5
Currier5
Neponset River Wetlands6
Clapboardtree Meadow
Conservation Area6
Lyman's Pond/
Rice Reservation6
Buckmaster Pond/
Lake Shore Conservation Area ..6
Germany Brook/
Arcadia Road6
Martha Jones Conservation6
Pheasant Hill Conservation7
Hale Reservation7
Rock Meadow Brook
Conservation Area7

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This Land is Your Land

“There are many reasons why each of us moved to Westwood. Not the least of these is acknowledged by many of us to be the Town’s natural character, the amenity of its woods and streams, and the opportunity for a surprisingly rural environment very near our homes.

In order to provide open space and natural recreation areas for Westwood and to preserve the semi-ruralism still evident in Westwood during this period of rapid urbanization... We consider this open space to be of equal importance as any other kind of development. It should be designed and planned as part of our community.

Excerpted from ***This Land is Your Land***, a brochure published for Westwood residents by the Conservation Commission in 1968.

The authors, in 1968, concerned that the rapid development being experienced would change the character of Westwood, “and unless it is planned growth, it would be a self-destructive force ruining the very reasons why so many residents find this town attractive,” published a brochure in an open letter format to Westwood residents expressing their concern. The timelessness of this message is uncannily current. The character of our town still hovers in the balance between big developments building over the large, open parcels of land and the “surprisingly rural” feel of this town so close to the big city.

“The Invitation”

“*This Land is Your Land*” invited fellow residents to explore and visit the natural wonders of our town. That very same “invitation” is extended to you, our neighbors. We invite you to protect, conserve, enjoy, savor and love our natural unspoiled resources. Whether a first time visitor to these natural treasures or reacquainting yourself with an old friend, we hope that this guide will be useful.



Two baby Great Horned Owls wait for their mother to arrive back home.

Ever heard of waffle stompers?

An ankle boot with a ridged sole used especially for hiking

Open Space in Westwood



Westwood has 35 documented Conservation Commission sites, totaling over 495 acres of wetlands, fields, forests, ponds and streams. In addition to our Conservation Commission sites, the Town owns 17 acres of Water District Land, 206 acres of general Town owned land and 96 acres of land for the use of our schools. Of the total 814 Town owned acres, parcel sizes range from less than a half an acre to our largest single parcel, Mulvehill Conservation Area of 88.5 acres. Open space land includes conservation sites, schools, recreation fields, municipal property, sewer, water district and cemetery holdings.

Since the late 70s, very little land had been placed under the management of the Conservation Commission. By careful planning, the Town through the Selectmen, Conservation Commission and through the hard work and dedication of many town residents, who have volunteered their time and expertise, as well as the dedicated employees of the town, many special parcels have been donated, purchased and permanently protected from development.

In 1998, the 71-acre Lowell parcels were added to the Conservation Commission land inventory. In 2000, with the purchase of the Sandy Valley Trust parcels, 70 acres were placed under the control and custody of the Conservation Commission. Through a donation to the Town, an additional 22 acres in Clapboardtree Meadow were placed under conservation protection in 2001.

Strategic planning of land acquisition by the Town has added many parcels to existing open space creating sites that comprise not only significant acreage but also important ecological zones. The Lowell Woods area includes the Mulvehill Conservation Area of 88.5 acres, the Grimm Conservation Area 38.4 acres, the 51 acre Sandy Valley parcels, the Town owned Shuttleworth parcel of 37.5 acres and the Town owned 3.4 acre Wheeler Pond. Wildlife, delicate species and the headwaters of Purgatory Brook, an important ground water source for our wells, call these 290 acres home.

Ecological zones not only protect wildlife, delicate species and water resources, they also provide recreational hiking, biking, birding, ice skating, cross country skiing, snow shoeing and limitless nature education. Bubbling Brook still supports a cold water fishery and river otter, portions of Mill Brook host belted kingfishers, great blue herons, red winged blackbirds, eastern phoebes, northern orioles and northern flickers. Additionally, such wildlife as squirrels, raccoons, chipmunks, opossums, skunks, turtles, coyotes and deer, as well as wild turkeys, turkey vultures and a variety of raptors and ducks frequent our town.

Whether fueled by an increased concern for nature, a desire to maintain the rural character of the town and reduce the strain on municipal services or just because the town can't bear the thought of further traffic congestion, it appears that there is a renewed interest in open space. It is a documented fact that open space helps to reduce the overall tax burden to the community because virtually no municipal services are needed for those areas.

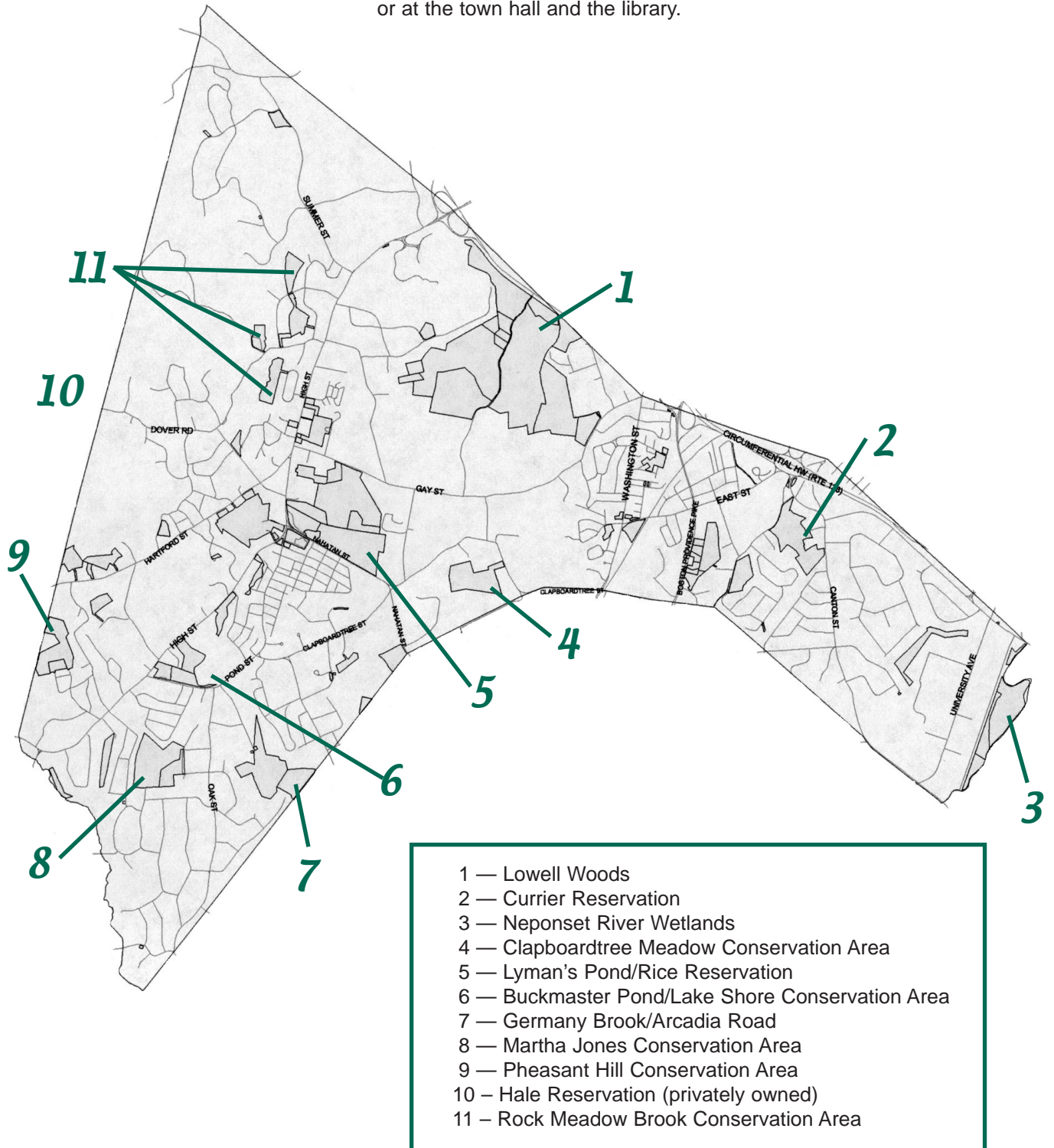
Whatever your motivation – Take a Hike!

The following pages contain a map and brief description of many of our Open Space Sites. We hope you will use them wisely. In order to protect the unique ecology of each area, the following regulations have been adopted:

1. No tools, cars, trucks, or other powered vehicles are permitted.
2. No hunting or discharge of firearms permitted.
3. Fishing is permitted in season, with license and in accord with applicable law.
4. No fires are allowed without permit from the Chief of the Fire Department.
5. No standing trees, bushes, plants, or flowers are to be cut or defaced, nor paint applied.
6. Debris is to be placed in containers (if provided), otherwise removed from the premises. Please leave the area you visit cleaner than how you found it.
7. Report all violations of these rules to the Westwood Conservation Commission and/or to the Westwood Police Station.
8. The Conservation Commission and the Town of Westwood assume no liability for injuries, damage to personal property, or loss to persons using this property.

WESTWOOD'S NATURAL OPEN SPACE SITES

The numbers on this map refer to the numbers next to the Open Space Sites in the following pages. Other maps and trail information are available on the town website — www.townhall.westwood.ma.us — or at the town hall and the library.



Map provided by Donna McClellan,
Town of Westwood GIS Analyst

**What is a large group of
herons called?**

A *siege*.

WESTWOOD'S NATURAL OPEN SPACE SITES



Natural Open Space Sites in Westwood

Listed are many of the sites in town, along with their location, acreage and optimal usage. Please avail yourself of these wonderful resources for your physical and spiritual well being. Also, check out the town website at www.townhall.westwood.ma.us to view important documents like the Comprehensive Plan and the Open Space Plan, as well as to learn about important town happenings. For information about how you can help maintain our natural resources, please call the Selectmen's Office at 781-326-4172.

1 Lowell Woods:

Stretching from one end of Gay Street, behind the Hanlon School to High Street behind Farm Lane to the end of the Sandy Valley Road extension, this area contains some of the newest conservation land in Westwood. The contiguous Conservation Commission sites of Lowell, Mulvehill, Grimm, Sandy Valley combined with Town owned Shuttleworth and Wheeler Pond parcels offer over 290 acres of Town owned scenic beauty, historic and natural wonderment.

The Lowell Woods has miles of marked trails and various terrain and woodlands. There is a picnic area, a small pond and several wetland areas to enjoy. A picturesque bridge crossing Purgatory Brook is a favorite stopping point for many hikers. Some of the fun names of the trail system indulge the active imagination for many visitors. Antler Alley, Dead Swamp Road, Purgatory Pass and Rocky Ridge, to name a few, provide habitat for deer, coyote, hawks, owls, small woodland creatures and dozens of birds. The wide variety of wildlife, woodlands, wetlands and rock outcroppings and the feeling of great expanse make an outing to this area worthwhile. Passive recreational activities abound with hiking, birding, biking, snow shoeing and cross country skiing.

One of the parcels, Mulvehill, acquired in 1969, was once one of the earlier dairy farms in the area long owned by the Mulvehill family, a well-known name in the early history of Westwood. Containing the headwaters of the Purgatory Brook, which is a ground water supply system for Westwood and an important tributary of the Neponset River, make this parcel an important environmental resource.

Access to this area is from two Trailheads, behind the Hanlon School on Gay Street and at the end of the Sandy Valley Road extension. A trail map of the area is available online at www.townhall.westwood.ma.us.



Spring brings back new growth to the woods.

2 Currier Reservation:

This 30-acre parcel offers a convenient path to a small pond and a large stand of white pine trees. It is located between Canton Street and Downey Street, Booth Drive and Phillips Brook Road. It boasts an amazing stand of mature white pine, lush undergrowth, a meadow in transition and a pond that is utilized by the Downey School as an outdoor classroom. The access is a right-of-way from Downey Street near Booth Drive.

WESTWOOD'S NATURAL OPEN SPACE SITES

3 Neponset River Wetlands:

Acquired in the late 1990's, over 36 acres of freshwater wetlands bordering the Neponset River comprise this important ecological parcel. Magnificent stands of birch trees highlight the many wetland tree, plant and wildlife species that can be found in this area. Designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in 1992, this parcel is part of The Fowl Meadow area and Ponkapoag Bog freshwater wetland. Access to this area is not available at this time.

4 Clapboardtree Meadow Conservation Area:

23 acres, of unspoiled natural beauty, was saved from development when Ellen and Duncan McFarland donated this parcel in 2001. From a large meadow area, a meandering trail guides the casual hiker through woodlands and wetlands viewing unusual native Rhododendrons and wildlife. Access from Clapboardtree Street, public parking is not available.

5 Lyman's Pond/Rice Reservation:

Over 118 acres of Town owned land contain one of the most bio-diverse parcels in Westwood including the famous Great Blue Heron Rookery. This area is also home to the High School, Middle School, Senior Center and the historic Fisher School House. The reservation was a gift to the Town by Henry Davis, Sheila Fiona and Margaret Lyman. Several walking trails have been laid out around the pond, including some to view the heron rookery without disturbing the birds. Frequent nature education programs are held on the reservation and high school students' use the area as an outdoor classroom, monitoring heron activity and studying ecosystems. In addition to the heron rookery, wood duck nesting boxes dot the pond. Located between Gay Street and the High School, reservation access is from behind the high school and pedestrian access behind Starbuck's.

6 Buckmaster Pond/ Lake Shore Conservation Area:

Over 53 acres, including the approximate 28 acre Buckmaster Pond, the 9 acre Pitts/Ruynsaardt Conservation Area and the Sheehan School comprise this very special Town resource. Lake Shore Conservation area is located between Pond and High Street and Lake Shore Drive. Providing access to Buckmaster Pond this parcel has been planted to attract wildlife. Buckmaster Pond is often used for hiking, bird watching, picnics and fishing. The town sponsors an annual fishing derby in the spring. Access to this area is from Pond Street, the Sheehan School and High Street.

7 Germany Brook/Arcadia Road:

With the recent addition of 28 acres in 2000, this now 40-acre conservation site, primarily consisting of wetlands, serves an important function as a drainage area for the surrounding neighborhoods. Hiking trails are not delineated on the lands so boots would be recommended when visiting this site. Access is located at the end of Arcadia Road off of Pond Street.

8 Martha Jones Conservation Area:

This 37 acre site is located in the southwestern section of Westwood. It was purchased by the Recreation Commission (precursor of the Conservation Commission) in the 50's with the school built on the site, leaving 28 acres that now house a baseball field, woods and wetlands including a pond. Several walking trails through wooded areas of deciduous and evergreen trees, with easy access to the pond, offer a wonderful environmental education site. Access is by way of the school, Tamarack Road or through the woods from Sunrise Road.

A Great Blue Heron looks for some lunch amid the tall grasses.



WESTWOOD'S NATURAL OPEN SPACE SITES

9 Pheasant Hill Conservation Area:

This parcel was acquired by the town in 1956. By vote of town meeting in 1967, 20 acres of the area was transferred to the control of the Conservation Commission. A three-acre parcel, June Street playground, is under control of the Recreation Department. The area is mostly uplands, covered with hardwoods, primarily oaks with a few white pines. From a rock outcropping at the entrance from Pheasant Hill Street, there is an extensive view of the countryside to the east. This area is located along the western portion of the town and is accessible from the ends of Pheasant Hill and Highview Streets.

10 Hale Reservation:

Hale Reservation is a 1,200 acre oasis straddling Westwood and Dover and offering year-round outdoor enjoyment to the public free of charge. Many a dog walker, hiker, camper, mountain biker and fisherman have enjoyed the trails, fields, streams and ponds that this wonderful, privately-owned reservation has to offer. The reservation is rich in wildlife and boasts a variety of both wetland and upland plant species. There are also two documented Native American archaeological sites on the reservation.

In the summer months, the country's largest day camp, serving over 2,000 campers daily, is run at Hale. Membership Beach is available on a fee basis for families and individuals to enjoy swimming, boating, arts and crafts, nature programs and other events from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Scouts and other organizations utilize the vast acreage throughout the year. To inquire about any of the wonderful programs at Hale Reservation, call their office at 781-326-1770.

11 Rock Meadow Brook Conservation Area:

Over 75 acres of Conservation, Water District and Town managed land are included in the Rock Meadow, Baker and Deviney Conservation Areas. Perhaps the greatest advantage in preserving the entire Rock Meadow Brook area is that it forms an important greenbelt of wetlands with the Baker Conservation Area and contains water supply wells. The Baker Conservation Area is the headwaters of Rock Meadow Brook. Rock Meadow Brook, a tributary of the Charles River, flows toward Stevens and Lee Ponds located in the northwest corner of Westwood. The Conservation areas surround wetlands popular for bird watching.

Baker and Deviney Conservation Area's are located between High and Hartford Streets next to the new cemetery land. From the mature white pine stand in the cemetery, a trail leads through a forest of pines, hemlocks, oaks and red maples. Interspersed with interesting rock outcroppings, the trail offers an overlooking view of a pond. Wetland vegetation including a large field of skunk cabbage can be found by the casual explorer. Hiking, biking, ice-skating, birding and nature exploration are offered within this unique area. Access to this area is from the new cemetery or from Hartford Street.



Rock Meadow Brook Conservation Area: Three parcels of land along the brook from High Rock Street, Conant Road and Dover Road. The entire area is a marsh and flood plain that abounds with waterfowl. Red maple, alder, oaks and pitch pines may be found on this parcel. Although hiking is limited in the area, it is used for ice-skating and bird watching. Access to this area is along Conant and Dover Roads.

Take & Hike

Hiking Tips

Exploration is always more fun when you feel safe and comfortable. It's always good advice to go with a friend or let someone know where you're going and when you will return. Always dress for the season and keep a careful eye on the weather. Wear good sturdy shoes or hiking boots, long, light-colored pants and long sleeve shirt. Water, for those extended periods of trail walking, is highly recommended. Insect repellent, sun screen, and, of course a hat, will increase your comfort. Learn to identify and avoid poison ivy and other irritants.

Please stay on marked or cleared trails, avoid long grass and that urge to go cross country through the brush.

Lyme Disease, which is rapidly becoming a health care crisis, is preventible. Ticks infected with the bacteria which causes this disease are here in Westwood, so here are some further tips to help prevent coming in contact with an infected tick:

- wear light colored clothing to spot ticks more easily
- wear long sleeve shirts and tuck pant legs into socks or boot tops
- apply insect repellent containing DEET (n,n-diethyl-m toluamide) to clothes and exposed skin (according to instructions on repellent container)
- do a tick check after any hike and remove any ticks using fine-tipped tweezers. Ticks are not likely to infect anyone if they are removed before 36 hours of being attached.

For more information about Lyme Disease and prevention, please visit the Center for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme.

This brochure brought to you by:

The Conservation and Forest Management Committee

Mission Statement: The mission of this Committee is to provide balanced oversight and review of the development and implementation of a plan for the maintenance of Westwood's Open Space and Conservation Areas.

Anne Cadigan Westwood Preservation Society
Greg Agnew, Trails Committee
Anthony Antonellis, Selectman
Michael Jaillet, Exec. Secretary
William Scoble, Fire Chief

Jane Murphy, Recreation Dept. Director
Diane Thornton, Recreation Commission
Joe Champagne, Town Engineer
David White-Lief, OPEN
Joseph Previtera, Conservation Commission



Goals and Objectives

Westwood, by means of the Comprehensive Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan, has made it clear that open space is a priority. The stated goals include:

- ❖ Acquire new conservation and recreation areas, through donation, purchase or other appropriate means.
- ❖ Protect and enhance Westwood's natural environment
- ❖ Encourage increased use and appreciation of existing conservation areas
- ❖ Establish and manage a town-wide network of publicly and privately held open spaces for the protection of critical land and water resources, habitats
- ❖ Enhance the quality of life and maintain the desired character of the community, through the preservation of key natural, cultural and scenic resources
- ❖ Protect critical land and water resources
- ❖ Better manage the location, rate and design of new residential developments to protect natural and scenic resources and community character
- ❖ Provide quality recreational opportunities for all segments of Westwood's growing population.
- ❖ Create a system of bikeways, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, connecting the two town centers, recreation areas and other public facilities.

