



## CHELMSFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

**May 4, 2021**

### **Update on Warren-Pohl Conservation Reservation**

The Warren-Pohl land was purchased by the Town of Chelmsford in October 2020, using funds from the Chelmsford Community Preservation Fund. The Warren and Pohl families wanted to preserve the open space for the people of Chelmsford, and offered it to the town prior to putting it on the open market. We are grateful to the families for this opportunity to preserve this beautiful open space.

The Warren family actively farmed this property since 1699, with many crops, orchards, livestock, and other activities on the site. After selling off some of the property in the early 1970's, the only agricultural activity has been haying the fields. This has created a largely hidden pastoral setting less than a half mile from the Chelmsford Public Library in the center of town.

The Select Board and the Town Manager have asked the Conservation Commission to put together a plan to develop the site as a Conservation site. Following is an update to our status and plans for the site.

### **Access and parking**

The site has six possible access points – i.e., land that is accessible by a public road. The main criteria for establishing public access and parking were as follows:

- Safety for traffic entering and leaving site
- Adequate parking for at least 10 vehicles
- Low impact to abutters
- Visibility of lot from street to minimize/deter off-hours visitors and issues
- Meet ADA requirements

We were initially hoping to utilize the frontage on Acton Road for site access and parking, but this area is far too wet for any type of development. After analysis and review of all possibilities, our plan is to develop the 95 Boston Road “farm road” entrance and establish a parking area near the “barnyard” behind 93 Boston Road.

There is a warrant article (#27) before the Spring Town Meeting to request funds (\$30,500) from the Community Preservation Fund to establish parking, signage, and to widen the driveway off of Boston Road.



Depending on demand for additional parking, we are also considering an expansion of the parking lot at the adjacent George B. B. Wright Reservation on Parker Road, to establish walk-in access to the site via Parker Road. The Wright Reservation has had a trust fund in place since 1968. We plan to use some of these funds if we decide to move forward with this Wright Reservation parking expansion plan. We will also look at walk-in (no parking) access in the Bartlett St. and Acton Rd. vicinity, perhaps near the pumping station.

### **Conservation Restriction**

The Conservation Commission is working with the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust (CLCT) to create a Conservation Restriction as per Massachusetts General Law (Ch. 184 Sec. 31-33). The purpose of the Conservation Restriction is to permanently protect the intended conservation of this property.

### **Usage**

The site will be similar to our other conservation reservations, for the purposes of passive recreation, including walking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and bicycling (off-road); no motorized vehicles.

We plan to maintain the ability for agriculture on the site, but will limit this to haying the open field at this time. We are working with a local farmer to make this viable.

### **Trails**

The site has a legacy of well-established farm roads and trails that we plan to utilize with minor changes and alterations. We will likely introduce a linking trail to loop together different parts of the site. We may also create a new trail in the woods connecting Parker Road access to the trail in the field by Hall Road. We will also incorporate more accessibility into the trail system where possible. We have reached out to the Chelmsford Commission on Disabilities for ideas and collaboration.

We are also working to include interpretative displays and signage, including farm/site history and nature/wildlife information.

### **Maintenance**

On an ongoing basis, the Conservation Commission would prefer to have the Chelmsford Open Space Stewardship take on maintenance of this site in the same manner they currently maintain other Conservation Reservations.

### **Timing and Access**

The driveway improvements and parking will not begin until sometime after a presumed approval of the funding request at the Spring town meeting in June 2021.

Public access is not permitted until the proper driveway, parking and signage are in place.