

Save North Pond – Why Should Southwick Taxpayers Care?

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is this project all about?

This project is trying to permanently conserve and open to the public 147 acres of land along South Longyard Rd. with 2500 feet of frontage on North Pond. This is the last pristine land on North Pond. Though people use the land informally, it is privately owned and will be sold for development if we don't work together to conserve it.

2. What is the request to Town Meeting?

Town Meeting is being asked to spend \$1 million of Community Preservation funds to go towards this project. The town funds are being leveraged 4-1 by state and private funds.

3. What is the total purchase price of the land?

The land was appraised by an independent professional appraiser for \$5 million. The waterfront and road frontage make it very desirable from a development perspective. The bulk of funding for this project is to come from the state, private foundations, and donations from concerned citizens and local businesses.

4. Why should we support it?

The land is valuable in its undeveloped condition for 3 key reasons—clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreation. The land is located over an aquifer that provides drinking water to Southwick and nearby cities and towns. If the land is developed, both our drinking water and the water of Congamond Lake will be threatened by increased runoff. In addition, conservation of this land will result in the reservation of a new public drinking supply well site for the Town of Southwick, as well as a water line easement that will serve to connect Southwick's public drinking water system around North Pond.

The land also supports a host of birds and animals that depend on it for food and shelter. As a neighbor to Southwick Wildlife Management Area, the land provides a home to threatened species like the grasshopper sparrow, vesper sparrow, and the upland sandpiper. Lastly, if the land is conserved, it will all be open to the public for hiking, fishing, hunting, and picnicking.

Even if you do not live on the lake or even own a boat, if you are a Southwick resident you will directly benefit from the conservation of this land.

5. Wouldn't it be better to develop the land and get more tax dollars?

While developing the land may result in more tax dollars to the town, it would also mean that the land would be forever closed-off from the public. In addition, should the land's development result in the contamination of Southwick's drinking water supply or Congamond Lake, Southwick could face remediation expenses that far exceed any real estate taxes realized.

Finally, the land's loss to development would preclude a new public drinking water well site for the town and water pipeline easement, thus potentially costing the town significantly more money to expand public drinking water supplies in the future and to make the water supply connection.

6. What will happen to the land if the project is successful?

Eighty-five acres on the eastern half of the property will be sold to the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game (MA DFG) to expand the Southwick Wildlife Management Area. This land will be managed for grassland birds and will be open to the public.

The remaining land will be sold to the town for passive public recreation (e.g. hiking, bird watching) and conserved with a conservation restriction that will be held by MA DFG. Existing roads and trails will be enhanced into a high-quality trail network, and it is hoped that a composting toilet facility for use by boaters and recreational users will be built on the property. The property will be managed by the Town of Southwick's Conservation Commission and their Land Management Advisory Committee in partnership with MA DFG. The town will be responsible for enforcing rules and regulations regarding public use of the land.

7. Who is Franklin Land Trust and why are they involved?

Franklin Land Trust (FLT), a non-profit land trust, is coordinating the fundraising and transactions for this project. FLT has conserved 30,000 acres of land throughout western Massachusetts in its 30 years of existence. They are serving as an intermediary and will transfer the land to the State and the town when the project is complete.

We can be reached at 413-625-9151, www.franklinlandtrust.org/northpond