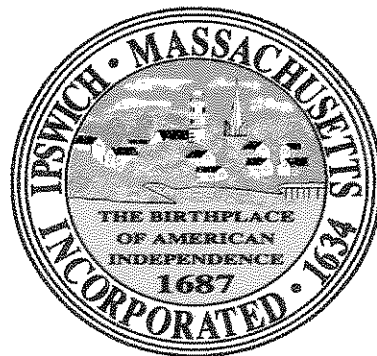


**TOWN OF IPSWICH  
TURKEY HILL CONSERVATION AREA  
LAND USE and MANAGEMENT PLAN  
Located on adjacent parcels at  
31 & 33 PINESWAMP ROAD;  
Assessors' Map 41A Lot 40 and Map 40 Lot 81**

*Adopted November 8, 2011*

**Adopted by the Ipswich Conservation Commission  
In consultation with  
Ipswich Police Department  
Ipswich Department of Public Works  
Ipswich Department of Parks and Cemeteries  
Ipswich Department of Planning and Development  
Ipswich Department of Public Utilities  
Ipswich Board of Selectmen**



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## **Preface**

The Turkey Hill Conservation Area is a 23 acre property located at 31 Pineswamp Road, owned by the Town of Ipswich under the care, custody and control of the Conservation Commission. The property was acquired in November 2006 as conservation land and funded through the Town's Open Space Bond Authorization, which was established in 2000 to protect land for open space and conservation purposes. The property was ranked a high priority for protection for its many natural resource values including undeveloped hilltop views, mature forest, wildlife habitat and watershed resources, as well as for the potential for public recreational and educational opportunities.

A combination of sources were used to compile the information for this Land Use and Management Plan, including a Natural Resource Inventory Report prepared in 2009 for the property, conversations with the former landowner, input from land conservation specialists, and feedback from Town residents and staff, as well as the experience of the Conservation Commission in overseeing the protection and management of other Town owned properties. Taking all of this information into account the following document lays out the details of the values for which the property is being protected (Section I. Introduction), how best to manage the property to achieve that protection (Section II Property Management), and what action will be taken to maintain those values and the property (Section III Property Maintenance).

This Plan is intended to be a working document. Once it is approved by the Conservation Commission the "on the ground" experience of the land use and management may reveal that adaptations and changes to this plan are necessary and advisable. Therefore this Plan should be used as a working document and changes to it should be considered in the future as warranted by use and experience. Turkey Hill Conservation Area is a beautiful piece of wooded hilltop, protected by the Townspeople of Ipswich that has the potential to connect to a larger greenway of protected open space for the public's enjoyment and benefit of flora, fauna, soils, and waterways in perpetuity. Balancing the multiple objectives of protecting this property for future generations is a welcome challenge we strive to achieve.

## I. Introduction

### A. Acquisition and Ownership

The Turkey Hill Conservation Area (“THCA”) was acquired for the purchase price of \$580,000, using funds from the Town’s Open Space Bond Authorization (Article 18, Spring 2000 Annual Town Meeting). The Town closed on the property in November 2006 after negotiations with the landowner, which began in 2001 and eventually resulted in the landowner selling to the Town the two “back lots”, which make up the 22.58 acres of the Turkey Hill Conservation Area and subdividing his remaining property into two separate lots: one house lot where the landowner currently resides and a vacant, buildable house lot, where ownership was retained by the landowner. The ownership of the two back lots was transferred to the Town of Ipswich acting by and through its Conservation Commission (the Commission), after recommendation by the Open Space Committee to acquire the land and unanimous vote of the Board of Selectmen to authorize the expenditure from the Open Space Bond at its October 30, 2006 meeting. The cost of the acquisition was below the minimum expenditure of \$1.5 million required for Town Meeting authorization at the time; therefore it did not require Town Meeting approval.

### B. Site Location and Description

Turkey Hill Conservation Area is a 22.58-acre parcel(s) located on two contiguous parcels at 31 and 33 Pineswamp Road in Ipswich, MA, which do not have frontage on Pineswamp Road. The property is located on the north side of Pineswamp Road approximately ¼ mile from the intersection with Linebrook Road. It is in an area of Town zoned RRA (Rural Residence A), comprised of privately owned residential properties (both developed and undeveloped), including properties in active agriculture classified under Massachusetts Chapter 61A. The property is located just over a mile east of Willowdale State Forest and Bradley Palmer State Park, which together comprise over 3100 acres of protected open space. The property is accessed from Pineswamp Road via a 1000’ long, 30’ wide public access easement over private land retained by the landowner. The easement leads to a perimeter path on the property which is fairly well-established but overgrown in some locations and currently being cleared for use.

The property’s natural resource and conservation attributes include the following:

1. At 246.5 feet elevation it is one of the highest undeveloped hilltops in Ipswich with distant views of the ocean when leaves have fallen from the trees.
2. It is located within a portion of the Town of Ipswich Surface Water Supply Protection District Zone C and adjacent to Water Supply Protection District Zone A.
3. It is located within the boundaries of both the Parker River and Ipswich River watersheds.
4. It is primarily a second growth forested upland, which was previously managed under Chapter 61 as forestry land.
5. It has the potential to connect as a greenway to other undeveloped privately owned forested lands to the west, which eventually connect to Willowdale State Forest and Bradley Palmer State Park.
6. It is adjacent to private property that contains a hilltop pond and wetland ecosystem, creating a unique juxtaposition of habitat types.
7. It is located within the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (“DCR” and formerly known as DEM) Scenic Landscape Inventory.

#### 1) Vegetation

The property is a forested hill composed of mature mixed hardwoods with scattered inclusions of eastern white pine. The hillsides and slopes are predominately red maple with occasional stems of red and black oak. Moving upslope to the top of the ridge, the species composition transitions to mainly mixed upland oaks (red/black/white). In addition to the mix of native tree, shrub, vine, flower, and fern species in the understory and forest floor, there is also a significant presence of invasive exotic plants, some of which are dominating specific areas, particularly oriental bittersweet in the northwest corner and glossy buckthorn throughout.

## 2) Soils

The USDA National Cooperative Soil Survey classifies the soil on the THCA property as Montauk very stony fine sandy loam. From observations on the property soils there tend to be more gravelly and droughty than what is typically found in the clay-dominated glacial drumlins in this general area. There are exposed areas of sand and gravel throughout the property, including an old gravel pit near the southeast corner boundary.

## 3) Wetlands

There is one small isolated wet area, which has not been formally identified as a wetland, that is situated along the southern boundary closest to the southwest corner, created by a combination of groundwater seep and a barrier from the stone wall and the existing path in that area to surface water flow. The property also is adjacent to private property, which contains a large pond and wetland habitat known as Hilltop Lake situated along the northeast property boundary. It is not common for a wetland to be located adjacent to a hilltop, adding another important conservation value to the property.

## 4) Wildlife

The property provides an interior woodland habitat for birds and mammals, particularly deer, as evidenced by significant deer browsing on the property as well as visual sightings. There is also evidence of several species of breeding birds. Particularly significant is the sighting of Eastern Towhees, which have declined in other local forests in recent years, and which is a new confirmation for this region. Hilltop Lake, located on private property and adjacent to the THCA, and the surrounding forest, offer substantial breeding and feeding opportunities for wildlife dependent on both upland and wetland habitats, and add to the overall diversity and function of habitat types in the area. For more detail of the natural plant and wildlife communities on the property see the attached Natural Resource Inventory and Narrative, Fall 2009.

## C. Historic, Recent and Intended Property Uses

Stone wall boundaries on the south, west and north perimeters suggest that this property was likely pastureland, typical for many of the hills in this region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The land was then abandoned for agriculture and allowed to revert to forestland. The forest was selectively logged on an ongoing basis until fairly recently, and was classified as Chapter 61A forestry land until 2007. There are no existing structures on the property other than the stone walls along the perimeter as previously mentioned. There is an existing path which follows the approximate perimeter of the property, as well as remnants of an interior path near the summit of Turkey Hill, which were established by the former landowner as part of the forestry operation. These paths continue to be used by the significant deer population that inhabits the area.

The paths will be formally and clearly established, making minor adjustments on the ground as necessary, and the property will be open to the public for passive recreation purposes. It is anticipated that the forest will remain intact and continue to evolve into a forest with old growth characteristics, which in the future may require the preparation of a forest management plan prepared by a professional forester to guide best management practices in order to achieve that goal. The property will remain under the care, custody and control of the Conservation Commission as land protected under Article 97 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

## II. **Property Management**

### A. Guiding Principles

The guiding principle and purpose of the Land Use Management Plan for the Turkey Hill Conservation Area is to preserve the property and its characteristics for the unobstructed hilltop views, wildlife habitat, water supply protection, and the future enjoyment and education of the public. Its beauty and quiet rural character, the peace that can be found there, and its value as habitat and watershed lands are the assets intended to be protected.

The property is to be owned and maintained in perpetuity by the Town as open space and conservation land through the Conservation Commission. All uses and activities consistent with these objectives and commitments will be permitted unless prevented by terms of acquisition; all those not consistent will be prohibited as specified in more detail below. There will be no discrimination among users based on race, color, national origin, religion, physical ability, age, sexual orientation, or gender. Public use of the area is not limited to Ipswich residents.

#### B. Management Objectives and Oversight

This Land Management Plan is intended to guide the use of the property in order to preserve its existing characteristics described above. The management activities and usage restraints that will be undertaken and enforced are those necessary to (a) maintain the hilltop views, (b) maintain the woods essentially in its present form and in acceptable condition, (i.e., healthy, clean, undamaged, and as free as practicable from invasive vegetative species) (c) protect the nearby water supply and watershed resources, and (d) provide public access for passive outdoor recreational and educational opportunities as stated herein. Public access will be provided through the creation of an unpaved parking area in a parking easement area located just off of Pineswamp Road within the landowners private property and consisting of spaces for four (4) vehicles, with pedestrian access to the property along a meandering path to be established and located within a 1000' long, 30' wide public access easement connecting to an existing path on the THCA property.

The Turkey Hill Conservation Area was purchased by the Town as conservation land and placed under the care, custody, control and supervision of its Conservation Commission or a duly qualified successor agency, which shall be responsible for its care and supervision and shall exercise management oversight, with assistance from the Open Space Stewardship Coordinator. The Commission will also be assisted in its duties from time to time by the Town Departments of Public Works, Division of Parks & Cemeteries, Utilities, and Public Safety, as needed. A Stewardship Committee for the property may be established, as advisory to the Commission, consisting of representatives of those Departments, interested citizens, and/or members of the Open Space Committee or other relevant and interested Town Committees. If established, this group will meet at the call of the Commission Chair or designated Town employee as needed; to consider the condition and use of the property, organize any special maintenance or cleanup effort, and recommend changes to the Management Plan as warranted.

#### C. Permitted Uses

The Conservation Commission has concluded through its experience with other Town public access conservation properties, and through consideration and consultation with other Town Departments, and input by the public at a public meeting held on September 13, 2011, and through comments provided by email and phone correspondence via the Open Space Stewardship Coordinator that the following uses are allowed:

- The property will be open from dawn to sunset for these and only these permitted passive recreational activities; walking, jogging, wildlife observation, vista enjoyment, photography, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hunting that complies with state and local laws.
- Dogs are allowed but **must** be leashed and dog owners **must** bag and remove all dog waste from the premises.
- Hunting is allowed if it comports with state and local laws. In Ipswich that means it will be allowed **only** with written permission from the Town Manager or his designee (currently the Ipswich Police Department), and **only** within areas and at times legally allowed for hunting as regulated by local and state laws. Said consent from the Town Manager or his designee shall be carried at all times by any person so hunting, and upon request shall be shown to any law enforcement officer or any Conservation Commission staff, or the Open Space Program staff.

#### D. Prohibited Uses

Through the same process described above for permitted uses on the property the following uses will not be allowed at the Turkey Hill Conservation Area;

- Access to and use of the property between the hours of sunset and sunrise is prohibited.
- Horses are prohibited (until which time as a connecting trail makes it possible to link with other equestrian trails located on adjacent and/or nearby properties, and then the Commission (or Committee if established) may reconsider this prohibition).
- Use of bicycles are prohibited due to the steepness of the terrain, type of soil conditions prone to erosion, nature of the narrow, single track path not currently connecting to a larger trail network, and the express exclusion of bikes within the trail access easement.
- Fires and camping are prohibited.
- Possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages on the property is prohibited.
- Motorized and motor assisted-vehicles and other powered equipment, including but not limited to motorcycles, motorbikes, All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off Road Vehicles (ORVs), snowmobiles, scooters and any other motorized recreational vehicles are prohibited.
- Littering, the placement of refuse or waste of any kind on the property is prohibited. Visitors must carry out all articles carried in, including trash.
- Damaging or removal of vegetation or of signs, walls, fences or structures or objects of any kind, are all prohibited.
- The parking of trailers of any kind in the parking area is prohibited, as is blocking or parking on or within any portion of the landowner's driveway, over which the parking area is accessed.

Violators of these regulations are subject to punishment as provided by law. Ipswich General Bylaws Chapters 12, 13, 15, and 17, and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 266 Sections 120, 120d and 122, and Chapter 40 Section 8C contain further details on prohibited uses on public parkland and property and the applicable fines for violating these regulations.

#### E. Precautions and Warnings

Ticks, with the accompanying risk of contracting Lyme Disease, are present in all vegetated areas in this region, and the Turkey Hill Conservation Area is no exception. Mosquitoes are also infectious, disease-carrying insects and are common in this region and on the property. Simple preventive measures can be taken to protect against potential harm from these insects and users should acquaint themselves with those methods through internet research or via contact to the Ipswich Board of Health. Ground hornets have also been observed on the property and as their name states, they are ground nesting insects that sting. Keep a watchful eye on the path as you walk along it and avoid disturbing or stepping on, in or near the nest of a ground hornet. 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 should take every precaution to avoid contact. Any wetlands present on the property are protected against entry and may be posted as such. Staying on marked paths may reduce the risk of coming in contact with nuisance plants as well as stinging and disease carrying insects, and should be adhered to at all times. Staying on paths will also eliminate the chance of trespassing on neighboring properties as well as adversely affecting plants, wildlife, habitat, and terrain on this property. Signage will be displayed at the entrance alerting visitors to potential hazards on the property, with warnings that use of the property is solely at the risk of the user.

#### F. Public Parking

Visitor parking at the THCA will be provided for four automobiles in an unpaved parking area, which is part of a trail and parking access easement deeded to the Town. It is to be located adjacent to Pineswamp Road, in the space designated as "Proposed Gravel Parking Spaces", as depicted on the plan entitled "Plan of Land in Ipswich, Ma Prepared for John T. & Karen M. Riley" prepared by Donohoe and Parkhurst, Inc., and dated June 26, 2006. If necessary, a barrier will be erected to delineate the on-site parking and preclude vehicle access to the remainder of the property. The parking of trailers of any kind in the parking area is prohibited.

Signage will be posted in the parking area specifying that whenever all 4 (four) parking spaces are full, visitors are asked to return to the property at another time when parking space is available or to return on foot or on bicycle. No overflow parking by the public visiting the THCA property will be allowed along the access driveway (which is privately owned) and signage will be posted to this effect. Parking in or along the private driveway may result in ticketing and/or towing of vehicles violating this prohibition. Parking will be discouraged in the right of way on Pineswamp Road and if overflow parking from the parking area along Pineswamp Road becomes an issue that warrants posting of "No Parking" signs, the Board of Selectmen will be asked to consider that issue, which is under their purview.

#### G. Signage

##### 1) Information Kiosk

An information kiosk sign, similar to those located on other Town conservation properties with public access, will be placed within the parking area easement at the trailhead, providing property users with information relative to allowed and prohibited uses of the property, permitted hours of access, and other pertinent information.

##### 2) Other Signs

Other signs may be placed as needed along the trail easement and property boundaries indicating limits of access and property boundaries, as well as along the existing pathway and in areas of wetlands or other ecologically sensitive or noteworthy locations.

#### H. Enforcement and Public Safety

The Conservation Commission with assistance from the Open Space Stewardship Coordinator will coordinate with and rely upon the Ipswich Police Department to provide surveillance of the property and enforce the posted regulations as appropriate. 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 Ipswich Police Department to report a potential violation. In the instance of conditions that do not require immediate response, or that require maintenance attention contact the Open Space Stewardship Coordinator or Conservation Agent.

### III. **Property Maintenance**

#### A. Maintenance Tasks

The path along the access easement to the existing trail(s) on the property will be clearly established, marked, and maintained as needed. Portions of the existing path along the southern property boundary that are wet from downhill runoff and ground seep will be addressed by a combination of creating walkways and/or relocation as needed to avoid repetitively wet stretches. No improvements other than minimal brush and vegetation clearing and simple trail markings are anticipated on the easement (as allowed) and the existing path. Trail work will be coordinated through the Conservation Commission and the Open Space Program soliciting volunteer assistance from trail groups such as Essex County Trails Association or a local community or volunteer group. If usage increases to the extent that wear and erosion of the paths becomes a problem, management options to be considered will include changes to walkway surfaces, relocation as appropriate, and identification and limitation of uses found to be creating the most wear.

No forestry management practices are currently planned; however there may be a time in the future when the Conservation Commission may wish to engage professional foresters in approved forestry management practices for the purpose of improving forest health and water quality in the watershed. Areas identified with extensive invasive plant infestation will be treated and controlled as deemed appropriate, taking into consideration scale of impact, available funding, and labor resources. The designated parking area easement will be graded and resurfaced as necessary. Vehicle exclusion barriers and signs will be installed, maintained, and/or restored as necessary.



## B. Maintenance Funding

### 1) Ordinary Maintenance

The Town has responsibility for maintenance of the property, and the Commission will exercise oversight in coordination with the Open Space Stewardship Coordinator and the Seasonal Laborer through the Division of Parks & Cemeteries. The Town will also solicit voluntary contributions and services of individuals, groups, and/or landscapers or other businesses in the support of maintenance activities (in a manner similar to support of roadway islands and edges). The Open Space Program, in partnership with the Commission, will seek out the assistance of the Department of Public Works, and Division of Parks & Cemeteries to create and maintain the paths and the parking spaces, including plowing snow from the parking area during the winter months as resources allow.

### 2) Extraordinary Maintenance

Maintenance that goes beyond routine upkeep (i.e., restoration of paths, remediation of erosion, replacement or repair of signs and barriers, resurfacing of parking areas) will be the responsibility of the Conservation Commission. The Commission will seek out the assistance of the Department of Public Works, Division of Parks & Cemeteries, the Utilities Department, and/or outside contractors in order to undertake these improvements, using Open Space, Recreation, and Water Supply Protection Fund monies or other 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 for supporting extraordinary maintenance projects as well.

## IV. **Conformance with Existing Regulations**

The Town of Ipswich adopted and amended regulations on August 1, 2002 governing the use of town-owned land, the documents being known as "Town of Ipswich Regulations on the Use of Unimproved Town Lands" and "Town of Ipswich Use of Town Land Regulations" (attached). Except as specifically stated otherwise herein, the Turkey Hill Conservation Area shall be subject to these regulations. Ipswich General Bylaws Chapters 12, 13, 15, and 17, and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 266 Sections 120, 120d and 122, and Chapter 40 Section 8C contain further details on prohibited uses on public parkland and property and the applicable fines for violating these regulations.

## V. **Plan Participants**

The Open Space Stewardship Coordinator together with the Open Space Program Manager initiated the development of this management plan and solicited the following stakeholders for feedback and input on the plan:

Town of Ipswich Boards, Committees and Departments:

*Conservation Commission and its Agent*

*Board of Selectmen*

*Open Space Committee*

*Police Department*

*Department of Public Works*

*Department of Parks and Cemeteries*

*Department of Utilities*

*Bay Circuit Trail Committee*

Local Non-Profit Land Conservation Organizations and Trail Groups:

*Trustees of Reservations*

*Essex County Trails Association*

And residents of the Pineswamp Road neighborhood and other interested Town residents

**VI. Signatories**

Conservation Commission

David A. Stanley, Chair 11/8/2011 (Date)

Board of Selectmen

Raymond K. Maskey, Chair 11/7/11 (Date)

Police Department

Paul A. [Signature], Chief 11/08/11 (Date)

Department of Public Utilities

Toni Henney, Director 10-31-11 (Date)

Department of Public Works

[Signature], Director 10/31/11 (Date)

Department of Parks & Cemeteries

Jeffrey H. [Signature], Director 10/31/2011 (Date)

Department of Planning and Development

[Signature], Director 10/31/2011 (Date)

**VII. Attachments**

- Survey plan of land
- Trail and Parking Easement
- Ortho Photo Parcel Map
- Protected Open Space & Natural Resource Map
- USGS Topographic Map
- Town of Ipswich Regulations on the Use of Unimproved Lands (8/1/02)
- Town of Ipswich Use of Town Land Regulations (11/01/79, amended 8/1/02)
- Turkey Hill Conservation Area Natural Resource Inventory and Narrative, Fall 2009, prepared by Mike Simmons, Open Space Program Intern
- Public Meeting Notes 9-13-2011

*This document will be considered adopted and become effective as of the last date signed above*