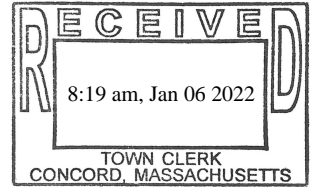


WHITE POND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

AGENDA JANUARY 26, 2022 7:00PM



Meeting to be held on Zoom only

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86766241722?pwd=dWVkZm45Sk80dmpoN3BIRm1udzgxUT09>

If you cannot access the meeting using the link above, please open your Zoom app then type in:

Meeting ID: 867 6624 1722

Passcode: 783305

Dial by your location

- +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
- +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

WPAC Agenda January 26, 2022, 7PM

1. Approve December 1, 2021 and January 5, 2022 WPAC meeting minutes.
2. Review Action Items from December 1, 2021 meeting
 - a. How should town departments link and be linked to Friends of White Pond website
 - b. Has everyone sent WPAC Annual Report 2021 comments to Beth
3. Review of beach discussion from January 5, 2022
4. Visitor Management proposal presentation and discussion
5. Volunteer sub-group reports
 - Water testing
 - Sewer group
 - Social Media group
 - Other
6. Other Business. Discussion / Q & A

Reminder for future meetings.

Topic: WPAC

Time: Feb 23, 2022 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every month on the Last Wed

Mar 30, 2022 07:00 PM

Apr 27, 2022 07:00 PM

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Monthly: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZ0sc-gupikjHNemYeJZI3MAKaHTkRl0dpHN/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGhrz8pHNyXuR-ERpx5BY-gb-7xiHpEgo1YkSbgKRp6MS7XHeNqBrINHNFU>

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Visitor Management Plan for White Pond

White Pond Advisory Committee

Draft version 3

January 6, 2022

Summary

- This proposal addresses the need for a visitor management protocol for White Pond outside of the public beach area.
- Recommendations for visitor management focus on:
 - Parking and pond access
 - Rule enforcement and signage
 - Communications
 - Reservation land status
- The action items in this proposal can all be implemented by the Town of Concord and neighborhood groups.
- This proposal is necessary due to:
 - Deterioration of White Pond water quality due to toxic algae blooms, which have led to pond closures from 2015 to the present.
 - Litter and feces left behind that enters the pond.
 - Neighborhood disruption from vehicles and litter.

Discussion

White Pond, a Great Pond under Massachusetts law and a beloved resource in the Town of Concord, has seen a rapid decline in water quality from 2015-due to an abundance of toxic algae blooms (cyanobacteria). These blooms have led to the closure of the pond for some or all warm months due to unsafe swimming and recreational conditions. Visitors accessing the pond directly contribute to increased blooms and negatively impact the quality of life and in some cases the well-being of those living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

This document delivers a working proposal for visitor management at White Pond outside of the Town of Concord beach area. Visitors are defined as both local and non-local individuals and groups who utilize public and private lands surrounding the pond. The Town of Concord public beach has its own well-defined rules for season and day pass holders.

Background of Visitor Management Challenges

The challenges of visitor management at White Pond have been regularly observed since the 1970s, according to area residents. A study commissioned by the consultancy ESS

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described difficult conditions in 2014.¹ The White Pond Vision 2015 reported these and other challenges.² The updated White Pond Vision 2021, based on conversations with over 100 area residents, town officials and pond experts, found no change in the baseline problems or solutions.³

One of the root causes of challenges to visitor management is that multiple entities have legal responsibility for the pond's shores and its waters. Unlike Walden Pond, ownership is shared by the Town of Concord at roughly 30% of shoreline including the beach and Sachem's Cove, the State owns an access point and the water itself, and private homeowners and homeowner associations own the remainder. No one entity has the power to mandate parking, trash rules, fines or swimming rules that would ordinarily create the conditions for a successful visitor management outcome. This proposal seeks collaborative solutions to these on-going issues.

Pressure on White Pond's water quality has increased in recent years from visitors. A warm summer day will bring hundreds of visitors to Sachem's Cove, a publicly held reservation area, including in-town and out-of-town guests who may disregard town signage on pond use. Some visitors park on neighborhood streets and may reach the pond by sliding down already eroding hillsides. Some visitors reach the pond from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. It is normal to find discarded beer cans, cigarette butts, plastic wrappers, plastic bags, animal feces and fishing line. Residents abutting the pond have witnessed the impact on wildlife, such as dead fish in the shallows and an owl ensnared in fishing line. Swimming in prohibited areas is common. Since there are no restrooms available, human waste goes directly in the pond.

Visitor management concerns are not limited to Concord neighborhoods and are expected to increase. Sudbury residents at Frost Farm, near the southwest corner of the pond, have reported speeding and nighttime disturbances, and litter is evident on nearby trails. The White Pond Advisory Committee expects human pressure on the pond to substantially increase from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the opening of new housing at Cold Brook Crossing in Sudbury.

Proposals

The White Pond Advisory Committee proposes changes in four areas to improve visitor management to the pond: parking, rule enforcement, communications and changing the status of the reservation land to conservation land.

¹ "White Pond Watershed Management Plan", ESS Group, October 1, 2014, copy available at http://www.wwwalker.net/whitepond/reports/ESS_White_Pond_Report_Oct_2014.pdf

² "A Shared Future: A Comprehensive Vision For White Pond, Its Watershed, and Its Neighborhoods," White Pond Advisory Committee, March 29, 2015, available at <https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4018/A-Vision-for-White-Pond-PDF>

³ "White Pond as a Resource for All: A Vision for Water Quality, Usage and Sustainability," White Pond Advisory Committee, September 29, 2021, available at <https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/32979/White-Pond-Vision-2021-Final>

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Parking

Visitor management begins with parking. Currently, visitors park on side streets to reach the pond. A warm day will see cars parking on Dover, Alden, Anson, Mitchell, White and multiple other streets. Altercations between residents and visitors have been reported.

- a) Improved “No Parking” signs should state that cars will be fined and towed. No Parking signs on every street impacted by White Pond visitors can prevent unwelcome interactions and litter for surrounding communities. Signs should be posted on streets that are currently Permit Parking only and those outside the permit parking zones.
- b) Regular police ticketing and towing as needed should occur on all warm days year round. We recommend that police actively ticket every day on weekends and at the start of the summer, then decrease to three times a week. Word will get around that parking fines are being issued leading to fewer visitors, as evidenced by the successful 1970’s Permit Parking program. This schedule can be revisited after year one in a meeting with police and neighbor residents.
- c) The beach area may also be a target for unwelcome behavior when no lifeguards are present. This can be mitigated by closing/locking the beach gate (on the left to the parking lot) in the evenings after lifeguards leave and when the beach season is over. Most nearby recreation areas at least have a sign indicating that the area is closed from dusk to dawn; the White Pond beach could do the same.
- d) There is no expectation that White Pond beach lifeguards should monitor the parking area to enforce regulations. This is not an appropriate role for teenage lifeguards.

Rule enforcement

The Town of Concord has already committed to installing permanent signage to replace the current metal and laminated signs around the pond. Many of these signs have been vandalized or torn down. Permanent signs will need to provide clear directions on rules, bike use, swimming prohibitions and Pack In/Pack Out or Leave No Trace on non-public beach areas.



- a) Both laminated and permanent signs that are currently present are often disregarded and destroyed (see picture). Old, outdated and unclear signs need to be replaced immediately with permanent signage posted by the Town as a short term measure. We recommend wooden signs over metal or laminate as more attractive, easier to replace individual boards and less prone to

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vandalism. Other areas also require permanent updated signage, particularly near the new stairs on either side of Sachem's Cove leading to the pond, access points from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and on the trail from Cold Brook Crossing. The Concord Trails Committee should be engaged for recommendations.

- b) More Ranger patrols, especially on weekends and at night, can deter visitors from abusive behavior simply by an official presence. This will require a line item in the town budget. Neighborhood residents would like an opportunity to periodically exchange views with Rangers in a meeting organized by the town, White Pond Advisory Committee or Friends of White Pond.
- c) Similar to State of Massachusetts policies, the Town of Concord should implement fines for swimming outside of designated Town areas with exceptions only for private landowners. Prominent and permanent signage along with a Ranger presence can help deliver the message before fines are given. Signage may include "open dusk to dawn only" language to discourage night time use on public properties.
- d) Town of Concord police should be notified promptly when excess visitors to White Pond suggest that rule enforcement will be necessary, or when smaller numbers of visitors are not following the rules. Rangers are not expected to fine visitors, but should have a direct line to police officers who can.
- e) Owners of the Cummings Building in Sudbury should be asked to install No Parking signs for White Pond access, and Town of Sudbury police should be alerted to this change. Cummings may also be asked to issue parking stickers to approved users.
- f) The Town of Concord should articulate clear expectations with the Town of Sudbury about the reality of accessing White Pond, particularly with regard to Cold Brook Crossing.

Communications

A White Pond neighborhood group has created their own website to provide information to on the pond for any interested party.

- a) This website with live links should be advertised on Town and social media sites.
- b) Coordination between the Town of Concord and Sudbury Police Departments can support safety at the pond especially once the Cold Brook Crossing development is complete.
- c) The Town's website and websites for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail should include language that discourages visitors from taking a swimming or recreational break at the pond.

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- d) Use of the public beach rather than other areas should be encouraged on social media and town signage. This would include information that there are no bathroom facilities or trash bins on the White Pond Reservation land and directions as to where to find these services.

Change Reservation Land to Conservation Land

In order to protect the fragile ecosystem at White Pond, it may be prudent to designate the Concord Reservation around the pond as conservation land. We request further information from the Town about this per Mass General Laws Section 31-33 of Chapter 184.

Next Steps

- 1) Meeting with police officials. Three of the four areas of concern (parking, rules enforcement and communication). The town should organize or endorse a series of meetings with the residents/ neighbors effected and the chief of police. If the chief of police or his designated staff were involved in suggesting or brainstorming solutions it may improve understanding and police commitment to enforcing parking rules. A Natural Resources Division representative should be included.
- 2) Documentation of signage requirements. WPAC asks the town to specify if there are certain requirements to signage language, size, materials or other limitations. If none, WPAC will request that the current laminated signs be remade as permanent with backups for expected damage.

Appendix A: Public authorities with responsibilities related to White Pond

Town of Concord

Natural Resources

Recreation Commission

Board of Health

Planning Division

Planning Board

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

Community preservation committee

Pollinator Health Advisory Committee

Engineering Division

Water and Sewer Division

Visitor and Tourism Services

Police

Fire

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Finance

Town Manager

Public Works Commission

Town of Sudbury

Cold Brook Crossing Management

Police

Recreation

State of Massachusetts

Massachusetts department of recreation and conservation (DRC) : manages trails

Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs: stocks fish

Massachusetts Department Environmental Protection : Watershed planning

Walden Pond