



## **Town of Holliston Massachusetts**

# **Conservation Lands in Holliston 2009**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Holliston Conservation Commission (HCC) has been entrusted with the care of the many Conservation Lands that have been donated by interested town citizens or have been purchased with monies from the Conservation Fund, State Self-Help, and Community Preservation Act.

The parcels are located throughout Holliston and range in size from less than one acre to over 400 acres. This land is available at any time to all town residents for their enjoyment. By law, the land can only be used for "passive recreation", which includes hiking, skiing and picnicking. There are a few rules that govern its use: please pick up after your visit, keep the area clean and do not disturb wildlife, animals or vegetation. Open fires or overnight stays are not allowed without prior permission. If you would like to camp overnight, please contact the Conservation Commission. Fishing is allowed on all parcels, where appropriate, and is subject to state regulations. Hunting is prohibited on all conservation land. **The use of motorized vehicles (i.e. ATV's, trail bikes, motorcycles, snowmobiles, etc.) is strictly prohibited on all conservation land.**

The historical information in this brochure was adapted to a great extent from the "Holliston, Massachusetts 250 Anniversary Commemorative Booklet" that was written by Dorothy Rees and published by the Holliston 250th Anniversary Committee in 1974. In 2009, it was updated jointly by the Holliston Conservation Associates and the Conservation Agent. Publication of this map was made possible with the generous donation of Joseph Cohen, former chairperson of the Holliston Conservation Commission.

This map is dedicated to the memory of Marianne Cohen who was an ardent conservationist.

### **CONSERVATION LAND MAP**

This brochure shows most of the protected land in Holliston. It includes public and private land owned or under the control of organizations including the Conservation Commission, Park Department, the Town Forest Committee, Army Corps of Engineers, Upper Charles Conservation Inc., and the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

This map is designed to indicate land that is open to the public. The numbers following the description correspond to the accessible areas on the map. The boundary lines on the map, as shown, are only approximate. Please observe "No Trespassing" signs if they are posted in any area.

This list is not all-inclusive and is not designed to limit activities to certain areas but rather to introduce people to the many possible uses of available land. The Conservation Associates has many detailed trail maps on their website at <http://www.townofholliston.us/ConAssoc/maps.htm>.

### **HOLLISTON CONSERVATION GROUPS**

The Holliston Conservation Commission (HCC) was formed to protect ecologically important land and enforce the Wetlands Protection Act. Both the State Wetlands Protection Act and the Town by-laws prohibit alteration of the protected interests in the wetlands. Members of the HCC are appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

The protection of wetlands is necessary for many reasons. Wetlands act like a sponge in times of heavy precipitation; filling wetlands destroys the "sponge" effect and will result in flooding of other downstream areas. Wetlands act as a buffer zone to separate the water supply from contamination, keeping our Town drinking water safe. The open space provides habitat for wildlife, thereby protecting and supporting the food chain.

A second purpose of the HCC is to preserve Holliston's scenic beauty and rural character by acquiring, through purchase, easement or gift, significant tracts of undeveloped land.

The Conservation Associates of the HCC were founded to be a distinct body under the jurisdiction of the HCC to conduct activities in such areas as land management, education, recreation on conservation land, and implementation of the Open Space & Recreation Plan. They conduct a land stewardship program to monitor activities on conservation land; supervise the local Adopt-A-Highway Program; conduct periodic guided walks on open space land; and sponsor a series of lectures on topics of interest in the general areas of conservation and ecology. The Associates meet monthly and welcome interested town residents to participate in their activities. They can be contacted through the Town Clerk's Office or through their website.

The Open Space Committee, appointed by the Board of Selectmen, was founded to facilitate the acquisition of additional permanently protected open space in Holliston. The Committee prioritizes land acquisitions based on the HCC's Open Space and Recreation Plan, which is updated every five years.

The Town Forest Committee is another distinct group, appointed by the Selectmen. They have the responsibility of managing the Town Forests that are shown on the map.

Some of our most interesting land areas include:

#### **Adams Street Conservation Area (1)**

This area is part of a three-town project to preserve the land between Adams Street in Holliston, Route 495 in Milford, and Route 85 in Milford and Hopkinton. Encompassing almost 2500 acres, it is considered to be the largest remaining piece of open space between Metrowest and Boston. Holliston had made significant progress in protecting this land over the years through purchases for Town Forest and Conservation Land. The Open Space Committee was able to obtain grants and funding to add the Fairbanks Property, (210 acres) in 2002, off Dunster Road, and the 87 acre N-Star property in 2008, making this the largest contiguous piece of protected land in Holliston. This property has it all: boulder strewn uplands, vernal pools, wetlands, mammals, birds, quiet streams, and plenty of trails to explore. Parking is at the end of Dunster Road and in a lot off Adams Street just before Marshall Street.

#### **Town Forests (2 & 6)**

These two parcels are controlled by the Town Forest Committee. One parcel is located on the west edge of town, off of Adams Street. The other is located off of Highland Street. The Highland Street Town Forest was donated by William Henrich, a long time Forest Committee member and caretaker of the parcel.

#### **David Reed Fairbanks Conservation Land (3)**

In 2002, Fairbanks was the first parcel to be purchased with monies from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) as well as donations from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Trustees of Reservations. This property serves as an important link to neighboring conservation areas and with its wetlands and woods provides habitat to many state listed species.

#### **Weston Pond (4)**

This 73-acre site is to the west of town off of Washington Street near Courtland Street. There is also a parking area on the southern side of the parcel with access to the pond and soccer field. There is an island containing benches on the pond accessible by a bridge. The benches, bridge

and trail system were built as part of an Eagle Scout project. Deer, otter, geese and great blue heron are commonly seen. The pond also provides a significant waterfowl nesting area. The Boy Scouts have placed wood duck nesting boxes on-site. On the east side of the pond is a recreation area containing soccer fields and walking paths. The recreation area was developed jointly by various Town Boards using local and federal funding.

### **Rocky Woods (5)**

Although there is access through a right of way from Adams Street, it is best to enter from the College Rock area in Hopkinton (off of Rte. 85). The 162-acre site is composed of the Rocky Woods and the former Bowker Property and it abuts the corner where the towns of Holliston, Hopkinton, and Milford come together. A major trail circles the land's periphery. It is very wild and mostly dry, whereas most of our other Conservation Land contains wetlands. Some of the outstanding features are large, picturesque granite boulders.

### **Brentwood Conservation Land (6)**

This is approximately 400 acres in size and was assembled over many years from a number of separate parcels. The majority of the parcels are federally owned. A few parcels are owned by the town.

The entrance is off of Gorwin Drive near Karen Circle in the Brentwood Development. It includes the Cedar Swamp and the Gardner Morse areas. The main entrance passes through an abandoned gravel pit and then follows a long wooded path to two small shallow ponds. The ponds were excavated by the National Guard for winter skating. They contain numerous small fish and frog species. The path travels between the ponds and turns right to the beginning of the trail system. The trail is called the Frank A. Rees Memorial Trail in honor of a founding member of the HCC who was instrumental in acquiring much of the Brentwood land. A flowing stream that carries much water often covers part of the path in the spring and early summer. Just past this point numerous side trails branch off. Some of the features include a fine example of a rare Atlantic white cedar swamp, a birch woods, and a pine forest. The site contains a unique mature beech forest. If you are quiet you may encounter animals off the trails. Fisher, beaver, mink, coyotes, fox, deer, owls, hawks, and many other species have been sighted. The trails are well marked and are easy to follow.

### **Waseeka Wildlife Refuge (9)**

This land is owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society and is located partially in Holliston, Ashland, and Hopkinton. It contains a large pond and many interesting features. It was donated by Elizabeth Powers who is commemorated by a plaque found on a rock near the southern corner of the pond. To access Waseeka, follow Mill Street north of the town line into Hopkinton, where Mill Street changes to Clinton Street.

### **Joseph Cohen Conservation Land**

This land was named for a past Chairman and longtime member of the HCC and the Associates. It is in the Queens area, on the west side of Westfield Drive, near Travis Road. It encompasses a small stream as it meanders through swampland, connecting back with Westfield Drive and the edge of Houghton's Pond. It has been preserved as an example of urban wetlands in the midst of a built-up area.

### **Houghton's Pond (18)**

This 33-acre pond extends between Washington Street and Westfield Drive in the Queens area. Access may be gained from beyond the dam located to the rear of the parking lot at 441 Washington Street or from the concrete head wall on Westfield Drive. Homeowners' property lines are very close to the edge of the property. Town residents can often be seen fishing from the culvert. It has been reported that three pound bass have been taken here. The pond contains many turtles and frogs. Waterfowl use it as a nesting site. Although it is quite shallow, some people do canoe on it.

#### **Mellon Street Conservation Land (10)**

The Mellon Street Property was purchased from the Finn family in 2007 through a combination of CPA and Mass Audubon funding. The land abuts the Daniels property and was a strategic purchase in creating a wildlife corridor from Washington Street by the Historical Society and the Poitras Conservation Land all the way to Hopkinton across both public and privately owned and protected land.

#### **The Connector (11)**

The Connector parcel forms a continuous corridor between Poitras, Daniels, and the Mellon Street properties. Hikers are asked to please stay on the marked trail provided when passing beside the abutting residential development.

#### **Daniels' Property (12)**

This 20-acre parcel was donated by the Daniels' family. It was formerly a home site with a variety of gardens and fruit trees. Evidence still remains of the house and garage that were torn down a number of years ago. A former cranberry bog exists beneath the large vernal pool located on the property.

#### **Poitras Memorial Land (13)**

The Poitras family donated this 44-acre parcel to the town in 1986 in memory of their parents. Access to it is off of Washington Street by the Historical Society and is marked. This is a long, relatively narrow, parcel that leads to the top of a hill with good views in winter.

#### **Jasper's Rock (14)**

This is our smallest parcel and is only 0.1 acres. It is primarily of historical significance. The area is at the top of Fairlane Way, off of Washington Street, just east of the center of town. It encompasses a medium sized granite boulder that is reputed to have been used by Jasper Adams. In 1660, Henry Adams of Medfield sent his sons to Holliston to pasture his sheep. Jasper built a fire on the rock to let his father know that all was well.

#### **Factory Pond (15)**

This 11-acre pond is off of Woodland Street near the Miller and Placentino Schools. It is very picturesque and is often used by fishermen. The Cutler brothers owned a variety of industries that were located in this area. In the mid-1880's they operated a cooper and wheelwright shop, a grist mill, a tannery and a thread mill near the dam.

#### **Frank and Dorothy Rees Outdoor Classroom (16)**

This one-acre site is on Woodland Street, behind the elementary/middle school complex. It is named in honor of Frank Rees and his wife Dorothy. There is a long circular self-guiding trail

around the site. The land is used by the schools for nature instruction, although it is open to everyone. Trail guides are available from the Conservation Associates or downloadable from their website.

### **Strawberry Hill (21)**

Strawberry Hill encompasses approximately 30 acres on the southeast end of Holliston. The walking trails of Strawberry Hill were developed by the neighbors of the Shaw Farm Road area and finished as an Eagle Scout Project by Ricky Wester and Troop 14. It is possible to see deer, fox, rabbit, turkey, and owls along the trails.

### **Wenakeening Woods (22)**

This 100-acre property was gifted to the Upper Charles Conservation, Inc. by the Avery-Dennison Corp. Parking is available in a small lot located on the east side of Summer Street, just north of the Wilde Company building. Pedestrian access is available from Highland Street, between the two entrances to the "Preserve" residential subdivision. An extensive network of foot trails and cart paths traverse the land and join with abutting properties. The majority of the site is attractive woodlands with large rock outcroppings on the high ground.

### **Upper Charles Trail (24)**

The Upper Charles Trail is a proposed multi-purpose accessible trail of 6.7 miles in the Town of Holliston. A two mile section is currently available for use. The trail is currently maintained as an unimproved rail bed with the rails removed. The trail is intended to become a 20-mile loop through surrounding towns and connecting various conservation lands and the Bay Circuit Trail.

### **Hopping Brook (25)**

The Hopping Brook area, together with the nearby Cedar Swamp, Beaver Brook, and the Charles River in Milford, is considered to be a rich biodiverse environment and is a natural home to many species of turtles and salamanders. The Hopping Brook area is adjacent to the Upper Charles Trail.

### **Other Conservation Lands**

Some other parcels include the Haak Land on Birch Road, the Young Land on Birch Road and Cottage Drive, and the Landau Land, all of which are located near Lake Winthrop. Other parcels are: Rachel Capone Land off of Donna Road, and Esther Fischer Land off of Lowland Street. The Hamilton/Crocker Land off of Central Street and Oak Ridge are both near Willowgate Rise. Denham Land is off of Jar Brook Road, Ethel Vaughan Land is off of Wilson Street. Stratton Woods is off of Central Street, Goodall-Murch Land is off of Beatrice Road. There is also the North Mill Street Development Land and the Winter Street Land. The Arch Land borders the Winthrop Canal.

### **Recreation Lands**

Pine Crest Golf Course/Miller Hill (7), Goodwill Park (17), Pleasure Point (19), Stoddard and Patoma Parks (20), and Mission Springs (23) are town-owned parks. Pine Crest Golf Course is open to the public and features an 18-hole course and club house. Adjacent to and south of the golf course, Miller Hill has walking trails. Goodwill Park is located in the center of town and has a playground and playing fields. Pleasure Point has a sandy beach for swimming and a playground. Stoddard Park features a sandy beach, bathhouse, playing fields, and a

playground. Patoma Park has tennis courts and playing fields. Mission Springs buffers the conservation areas of Chicken Brook and Wenekeening Woods from the Mission Springs Senior Citizen Housing.

(Note: The text contained herein is the same as on the 17x22 map; it has been formatted to fit letter sized (8-1/2 inch by 11 inch) paper.)