



## Town of Lexington - FY 2018-FY 2022 Capital Improvement Projects

**Project Name:** Cotton Farm Conservation Area Improvements **Date:** 02-Sep-16  
**Project ID Number:** 1017 **Revision Date:** 19-Oct-16  
**Submitted By:** Jordan McCarron **Department:** Land Use, Health and Dev **Priority:** 2  
**First Year Submission?**  **Phone #:** 781-698-4505 **E-mail:** jmccarron@lexingtonma.gov

### Description of Project:

Cotton Farm Conservation Area is a four-acre parcel purchased by the Town of Lexington from the Cataldo Family in 2011 with assistance from the CPA program. The property was acquired for its passive recreation value, its pastoral views along Marrett Rd, and the link it provides between two larger conservation areas: Upper Vine Brook to the north and west and Dunback Meadow to the south. The property features open meadow, a picnic area, a large apple orchard along Marrett Rd, a wooded glade, and a wildlife-rich swamp and pond—features which result in a pleasing, park-like atmosphere.

In 2014, the Conservation Commission partnered with Mass Audubon's Ecological Extension Service to prepare a long-term land management and design plan for the property; this was also done using CPA funds. The plan includes both short and long-term goals aimed at enhancing the property's recreational, cultural, and conservation values while protecting the value of the Town's investment in the property.

Since then, the Conservation Commission and the Lexington Conservation Stewards have made great progress on this land management plan, including the following:

- Improved the access from Marrett Road by adding a crosswalk and mitigating drainage issues
- Installed nesting-boxes for several bird species to enhance habitat value and improve wildlife viewing for visitors (Girl Scout project)
- Renovated signage along Marrett Road to be more visible and inviting for visitors to the property
- Modified mowing regime to better serve both passive recreation and wildlife habitat needs
- Currently finalizing a Conservation Restriction for the property, including establishing an annual monitoring program with assistance from the Citizens for Lexington Conservation

Additionally, the Conservation Stewards have worked tirelessly since the property's purchase to maintain the orchard and picnic area as a scenic, peaceful, and inviting resource for Lexington residents; in September 2015, the Stewards hosted a free apple picking day, which attracted more than 100 families.

The Conservation Commission is now seeking design and construction funds to address the following long-term goals established by Mass Audubon:

- Removal and naturalization of a major portion of the existing driveway and parking area
- Relocation and construction of new expanded parking area
- Installation of an ADA accessible trail and pond viewing platform along the edge of the pond and wetlands on the property.

### Justification/Benefit:

• Removal and naturalization of a major portion of the existing driveway and parking area: This coincides with the extinguishment of the Cataldo Family's easement over the driveway. It will significantly increase the amount of land on the property that is in a natural and open condition as well as improve visitor safety via the reduction of vehicle access across the property. This will have the effect of enhancing the habitat value of the property and improving the visitor experience; restoration of the driveway area will effectively expand the existing meadow on the property and enhance the off road experience for visitors. Additionally, it will allow for future expansion of the orchard. A split rail and/or natural fence will be installed along the easterly boundary with private property owners to ensure their privacy while augmenting the pastoral and natural feel of the property.

• Relocation and construction of a new expanded parking area: Relocating and enlarging the parking area is important for the restoration of the property and for improved public access. Currently, the parking area is difficult to see, and to many passersby the area looks like private property, not conservation land open to the public. Additionally, cars backing up from the existing parking spaces have to negotiate a curve which drops off steeply into the glade: this presents a potential danger to visitors and the property. The parking area would move closer to Marrett Road so that it is more visible and welcoming to visitors in addition to being safer and easier to maneuver.

• Installation of an ADA accessible trail and pond viewing platform: The easternmost portion of the extensive wetland complex at Cotton Farm contains a pool of open water lying adjacent to the picnic area and is perhaps the most attractive visual feature of the property. The addition of an accessible trail from the parking area leading to a platform overlooking the pond will allow visitors to safely experience the pond and its wildlife. The platform will be sized and constructed to allow access to the water for net-dipping, water-quality testing and other education-based experiences. With the potential for future trail connections to the Community Center on Marrett Rd, a pond viewing platform would be a unique and important educational resource in Lexington.

### Impact if not completed:

• Removal and naturalization of a major portion of the existing driveway and parking area: The existing driveway and out-of-view parking make the property appear private, not public, which deters visitors. Now that the Cataldo Family is no longer allowed to use the driveway due to the extinguishment of the driveway easement, the Town should be enforcing the extinguishment of private property access and take steps to improve access and parking by the public. In addition, maintaining a driveway that cuts through the property does not support the pastoral and open space values for which the property was acquired.



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Relocation and construction of a new expanded parking area: The existing parking area is undersized and difficult to maneuver; in addition, it is not visible from Marrett Rd. Relocating and expanding the parking would attract more visitors and minimize parking along the shoulder of Marrett Road or Bacon Street.

Installation of an ADA accessible trail and pond viewing platform: The impact of not installing an accessible trail and platform for the purpose of educational programming and nature viewing is one of missed opportunity. Due to the accessibility of Cotton Farm from Marrett Road and its proximity to the Community Center, a pond platform would offer a proximity to wildlife and a wetland system for environmental education purposes not present elsewhere in Lexington.

**Timeframe:**

This project is proposed for Fiscal Year 2018 and 2019

**Replace. Freq:**

0 Years

**Stakeholders:**

- Conservation Office Staff
- Conservation Stewards
- Conservation Commission
- Lexington citizens who use any of Lexington's conservation land
- Educators

**Operating Budget Impact:**

Annual maintenance activities will be covered by operating budget and initiated by Conservation staff and Steward volunteers. Long-term maintenance costs will occur on a 10 year cycle at \$10,000.

**Cost Analysis:**

**Funding Source:**  Levy  CPA  Revolving  State Aid  Water  Sewer  Recreation  Private  Other

**Capital Funding Request**

Recurring Cost

\$10,000.00

Maintenance Cycle

10 Years

CPA Purpose	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Open Space
<input type="radio"/>	Recreation
<input type="radio"/>	Historic
<input type="radio"/>	Housing

1017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Totals
Site Acquisition	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Design/Engineer	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$37,000
Construction	\$224,220	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$224,220
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contingency	\$39,183	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$39,183
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$300,403</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$300,403</b>
CPA Amt. Req.	\$300,403	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

**Basis of Cost Projection:**

Assistance from Engineering Division and estimates from a professional wetland scientist and landscape design consultant using figures from projects of similar scope.

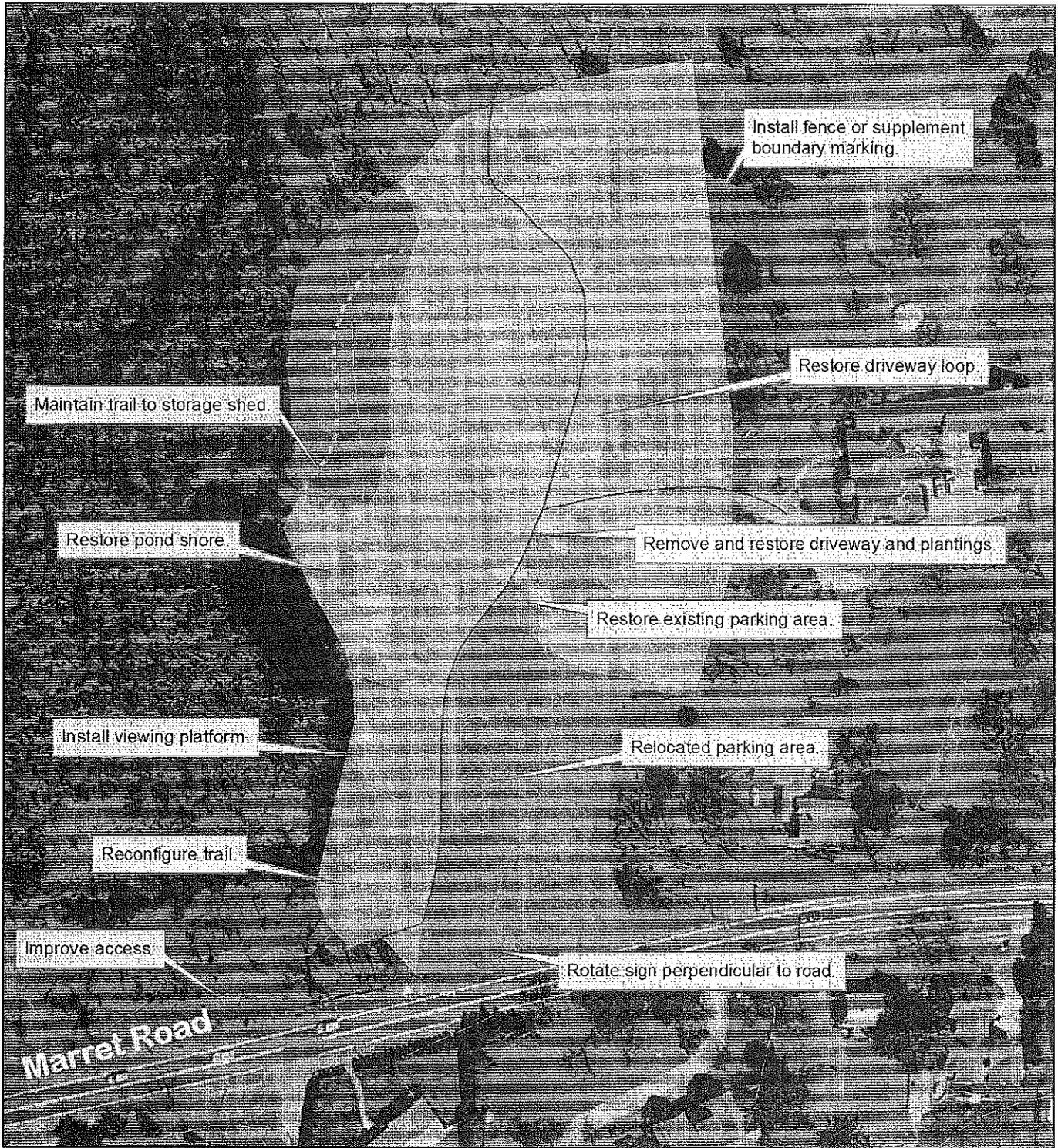


Figure 2. Cotton Farm Design Plan

