



Brewster Conservation Trust

PROTECTING BREWSTER'S WOODLANDS, PONDS, MARSHES AND MEADOWS
FOR TODAY AND FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Long Pond Property

Water Quality is Priority One

BCT's role in the planning processes for the former Sea Camps properties is to preserve and protect important and vulnerable conservation values. Specifically, we must decide what the criteria will be for fulfilling our pledge of \$1.75 million toward the Town's cost of acquiring the Pond Property.

The Pond Property has very special features. It is remotely located, directly adjacent to protected open space, heavily forested and almost completely free of any existing development. It provides habitat for wildlife and the potential to connect to the walking trails of Long Pond Woodlands.

Most importantly, the property – the ENTIRE property – is particularly important to the protection of water quality, both pond water and Town drinking water. While a large portion of the property has only a slight slope (less than 2% grade), that slope increases to more than 12% grade as the terrain drops steeply -- more than 75 feet overall from the Route 137 frontage to the shore of Long Pond. The downward slope, amplified by the porosity of Cape Cod's sandy, gravelly soil, means wastewater or runoff anywhere on the property will flow into Long Pond, unless it is

drawn instead into nearby Town drinking water well fields.

The half of the property closest to Route 137 is in our Town's well field recharge area, a parcel identified by the Commonwealth¹, the Cape Cod Commission², and Town Meeting³ as particularly sensitive to risks of water-borne contaminants. This is because, under certain conditions – drought or heavy summertime usage – the Town's drinking water well pumps will draw water from the area. In addition, this portion of the Pond Property has been identified as one of the few remaining places on the Cape where it may be possible to site a new drinking water well.

The EPA has already classified Long Pond's water quality as "impaired," a result of the high density of existing development in the Pond's watershed. Additional development has taken place within the Town well field recharge areas, including adjacent to the Pond Property along Route 137. Obviously, each additional increment of runoff or wastewater added to those existing burdens will increase the risk of contaminating Pond and drinking water quality. In recent years, the Town and its citizens have consistently acted on this logic – often in partnership with BCT -- to preserve available open spaces from

¹ "Zone II"

² "District of Critical Planning Concern"

³ "Natural Resource Protection District"

development that might compromise water quality. As the Town’s website says, “Protecting our water quality and resources consistently ranks as one of the top priorities of our residents.”

The preliminary stages of the planning process have already yielded many suggestions for future uses of the Pond Property that would be compatible with conservation and pose no or only minimal risks to Pond or drinking water quality. Hikers could enjoy connections of trail networks to adjacent conservation land. Under Brewster Rec’s management, the public could access the Pond shore for swimming and boating. Mass Audubon has proposed educational programs and a nature camp. For these and other potential uses, access and parking (and associated runoff) are legitimate concerns, but reliably resolvable using existing technologies.

However, more intensive development would almost certainly generate increased runoff and/or wastewater – potentially including septage – thereby significantly elevating the risk to Pond and drinking water quality. Because septic systems currently in general use do not treat pollutants such as nitrogen, phosphorus and contaminants of emerging concern such as PFAS, the threat to water quality is impossible to overstate.

As the planning process for the Pond Property proceeds, these kinds of risks must be confronted and addressed directly, fully and candidly. BCT recognizes that people may differ on just how severely a particular proposed use will impact water quality, and whether that impact will be “significantly” adverse or whether it can be effectively managed or mitigated. But it is the position of BCT that:

- 1) Protecting water quality and resources, particularly drinking water, has been clearly and repeatedly established as one of our Town’s highest priorities.
- 2) The particular features of the Pond Property mean that discharge of runoff or wastewater ANYWHERE on the Property will impact water quality.
- 3) Any proposed use of the Property should be evaluated openly and fully on that basis. And,
- 4) To be true to its mission and carry out the will of its donors, BCT must oppose any use determined by its Board of Trustees to pose a significant risk to Pond or drinking water quality.

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