

Warner's Pond Task Force:

Final Report

Concord, Massachusetts

June 2025

Background

The Concord Natural Resources Commission (NRC) convened the Warner's Pond Task Force in February 2024 and the Task Force completed its work in June 2025. Pursuant to its Committee Charge, the purpose of the Task Force was to become familiar with all alternatives that have been considered to date, explore new ideas as appropriate, and recommend a course of action to the NRC to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system.¹

The charge further detailed the following Task Force duties and responsibilities:

1. To become familiar with Warner's Pond, its three public access points, the dam, and the general environs;
2. To review prior reports, plans, and other documentation evaluating and implementing alternatives over the last few decades;
3. To explore and evaluate ecological health of the pond system under each feasible alternative;
4. To explore and evaluate future recreational opportunities under each feasible alternative with the Town's consultant;
5. To obtain preliminary cost estimates for each feasible alternative;
6. To explore and evaluate potential funding sources for each feasible alternative;
7. To review the issues and concerns related to dam removal raised by the community;
8. To solicit input from the community through a variety of methods, including at least one public hearing early in the process;
9. To consider whether there are measures which might be taken to improve ecological health and recreational opportunities that would require additional planning and/or more time to implement;
10. To submit a final report to the Natural Resources Commission recommending a course of action to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system by December 2, 2024;²
11. To perform such other duties as the Natural Resources Commission may request.

The charge specified that the Task Force was to include eleven members appointed by the Natural Resources Commission, in consultation with the Town Manager. A complete list of Task

¹ The Task Force's complete charge is available in Appendix A.

² The Task Force later discussed this deadline and opted to extend it.

Force members is included in Appendix B below. The Task Force was also supported by a team of two professional facilitators from the Consensus Building Institute.

The Task Force was tasked with preparing a draft report, presenting the draft report at a public hearing to solicit feedback from the community, and then prepare its final report outlining a course of action. This document constitutes the Task Force’s Final Report to the Natural Resources Commission, in final fulfillment of the above duties and responsibilities.

Task Force Process

The Task Force met 21 times from February 2024 to June 2025. It also conducted two Community Meetings specifically designed to update the public on its progress and solicit community input, one in June 2024 and another in April 2025.

In addition to these two community meetings, all Task Force meetings had at least one and in most cases two designated sessions on the agenda when members of the public were invited to offer comments on the Task Force’s work. The Task Force also launched an online portal where members of the public could share written comments on its work, resulting in the receipt of close to 200 discrete written comments.

The Task Force’s process for deliberation included the following elements.

Clarification of norms, roles, and process

At the outset of its work, the Task Force agreed on a set of norms and worked to clarify roles. In its February 2024 meeting, the Task Force approved a set of group protocols to clarify expectations around the group’s purpose, authority, and composition; time commitment for members; decision-making; meeting planning, facilitation, and documentation; and ground rules. Among these protocols was a decision that the Task Force would seek overwhelming agreement on its final recommendation, defined as at least 75% of voting members.³ In early 2024, the Task Force appointed a pair of elected co-chairs to lead its work. The Task Force also discussed and clarified an overall process and stages for its work

Articulation of decision-making criteria

To support decision-making, the Task Force reviewed the *Envision Concord* comprehensive long-range plan and articulated how the community criteria in that document might apply to the Warner’s Pond system. The Task Force identified and agreed on five key questions that must be answered in the affirmative with respect to any course of action that the group might recommend:

1. Will this alternative support and preserve the historical character and cultural heritage of the area?
2. Will this alternative enhance Concord’s desirability as a place to live?
3. Will this alternative maintain/increase connectivity to Town centers and access to services by vulnerable residents?

³ The Group Protocols are included below in Appendix C.

4. Will this alternative enhance the ecology/biodiversity of the water body and adjacent land?
5. Will this alternative support fiscal sustainability?

The Task Force further agreed to consider a set of specific sub-criteria for each of these five questions, included in Appendix D below.

Review of documentation and expert consultations

Alongside its review of *Envision Concord* long-range plan and work to articulate how that plan's criteria apply to Warner's Pond, the Task Force conducted a systematic review of prior reports, plans, and other documentation evaluating and implementing alternatives over the last few decades. Some of these materials were developed and/or released over the course of the Task Force's work.

Documents reviewed and discussed included:

- 2012 Warner's Pond Watershed Management Plan
- 2018 Warner's Pond Dredging Feasibility Study
- 2022 Warner's Pond Restoration Project (dredging) cost estimates, contract documents and specifications, Addendum #1, 100% Design Plan Set, and bid form from Charter Contracting Company, LLC
- 2023 Alternatives Analysis Report
- 2023 Warner's Pond Dam Phase 1 Inspection Report
- 2024 30% Design Dam Removal Plans and Basis of Design Report
- Technical Memos on Sediment Sampling (2024), North Field Capacity (2024), Drawdown (2024), and Fish Passage (2025)

To supplement its review of documents, the Task Force consulted with various experts both during full Task Force meetings and, during the latter stages of its work, as individual Task Force members and/or during publicly-noticed Work Group sessions. The Task Force consulted with the following experts during official Task Force meetings:

- Joseph Gould, MA Division of Ecological Restoration
- Steven Mattocks, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- Allen Orsi, Pare Corporation
- Alex Patterson and Amy Hunt, EA Engineering
- Ben Wetherill, OARS

These meetings included in-depth discussion of the impacts of different alternatives on the Warner's Pond system, with opportunities for Task Force questions and expert responses.

Individual Task Force members and/or Work Groups engaged in additional outreach and communication with a range of experts including but not limited to:

- Management of Bare Hill Pond in Harvard, MA
- Representatives from Charter Engineering, Inc.
- Brad Chase, MA Division of Marine Fisheries
- Additional representatives from EA Engineering

- Bruce Thompson, NMI-Starmet *de maximis, inc.* Project Manager
- Representatives from the Nipmuc Elders Council
- Representatives from SumCo Eco-Contracting
- Town of Concord staff

Proposal development via Work Groups

After developing a foundational understanding of the pond system and feasible alternatives to improve its ecological health and recreational capacity, the Task Force divided into three separate Work Groups each tasked with developing a specific proposal for an alternative course of action: 1) enhanced recurring pond management,⁴ 2) dredging, and 3) dam removal. (The dredging sub-group ultimately presented three related alternatives, reflecting three different dredge volumes.) The three proposals (or five, accounting for the three dredge options) were intended to represent the Task Force’s best efforts at articulating what enhanced recurring pond management, dredging, and dam removal could look like if optimized to meet the *Envision Concord* criteria and stakeholder goals and concerns. Each Work Group worked independently on its proposal, then shared it with the full Task Force for feedback and refinement.

The proposals were then written up and shared with the public in the Task Force’s March 2025 “Alternatives Under Consideration” report. This interim/draft report included detailed an overview of issues that the Task Force considered in developing its proposals (specifically the historical context, costs, wildlife habitat, and recreation), and information on each proposal’s rationale, details, costs, risks and uncertainties, relevant ideas considered but not proposed, and potential additional areas for investigation moving forward. This interim/draft report represents an important companion piece to this final report, and should be reviewed in conjunction with this report for a fuller picture of the Task Force’s thinking and considerations in developing its recommendations.

Community meetings

As noted above, the Task Force hosted dedicated Community Meetings in June 2024 and April 2025. During the June 2024 meeting, the Task Force shared its progress and then invited members of the public to break into small groups and suggest issues the Task Force might be missing and/or additional information it should consider. During the April 2025 meeting, the Task Force shared each of its three proposals, answered questions, and invited written and verbal feedback on what community members like about each proposal, what concerns they have, and what they would like further clarified. After each community meeting, the Task Force met to discuss the feedback received and implications for its work.

Final deliberations

After presenting its proposed alternatives and reviewing the public input received, the Task Force engaged in final deliberations on its recommendations. Each member reviewed the agreed

⁴ Initially, this course of action was named “short-term actions/pathways.” During Task Force meetings, it was sometimes also referred to as the “no action alternative,” reflecting the fact that it does not include either of the major long-term management actions under consideration: dredging or dam removal.

criteria for decision-making, evaluated the three core proposals against this criteria, and considered additional ideas for amending or improving the proposals that could help build alignment within the Task Force.

Members' individual perspectives on these issues were captured via a written survey and then shared with the public.⁵ After completing the survey, members then met to discuss the thinking behind their responses, and potential avenues for building alignment on a single set of recommendations that could be accepted via (at least) an overwhelming agreement or 75% of voting members. This final report reflects the outcome of that effort.

Final approval of recommendations

The Task Force initially approved an initial framework for these recommendations on May 22 by a vote of 8 members who either supported or could “live with” the recommendation, to 1 member opposed it, with 2 members abstaining. The Task Force then approved this final report on June 12 by a vote of XXXX.⁶ The full, detailed voting results are included in Appendix E.

Recommendations

The Task Force's recommendations to the NRC include three elements:

1. Preparation and implementation of an Adaptive Management Plan
2. Convening of a standing multi-stakeholder Warner's Pond Watershed Management Committee to oversee the development and implementation of the Adaptive Management Plan, among other duties related to the pond and watershed
3. Cooperation and support for a series of specific actions to enhance the recreational and historical value of the Warner's Pond system

Adaptive Management Plan

The Task Force recommends that the NRC establish and implement an Adaptive Management Plan for Warner's Pond, with the plan's preparation and implementation overseen by a multistakeholder subcommittee under the NRC. The Adaptive Management Plan should include the following elements:

- Clear and specific goals, metrics, and performance targets related to generally accepted measures of water quality (e.g. dissolved oxygen, water temperature, nutrients), biodiversity (fish, birds, invertebrates), percent cover and annual duration of aquatic invasive species, and recreation (e.g. use of the pond for fishing, boating)
- An adaptive methodology, whereby management approaches are systematically identified for implementation, measured and evaluated against agreed metrics, and then modified, eliminated, or replaced based on their performance against metrics, resulting in ongoing progress reports and updates to the plan at least every year

⁵ All the survey results and relevant data — including how different Task Force members evaluated and ranked all the alternatives under consideration and their reasoning — are available online at the Warner's Pond Task Force website, <https://concordma.gov/3520/Warners-Pond-Task-Force>.

⁶ The final vote included only 10 Task Force members because one member resigned from the Task Force, pursuant to Town regulations, after joining the Select Board and before the Task Force's final meeting.

- Independent study design, monitoring and assessment, whereby the metrics are established and monitored in a robust study design created by a qualified independent entity (i.e., a consultant), not the same entity carrying out the recurring management actions nor the new Warner's Pond Watershed Management Committee (described below). Metrics should be collected at sufficient frequency and scale to permit concrete assessment of management actions.
- Accountability to a clearly defined, limited budget, proposed to and approved by the NRC. For guidance, the NRC should review the Task Force's estimated costs from its interim "Alternatives Under Consideration" report, and consult with the Community Preservation Committee on their previously approved funding for the pond.⁷
- A five-year implementation timeline to test and evaluate management approaches (i.e., ending in 2030), along with annual progress updates and plan refinement
- A comprehensive reevaluation and decision-making process to determine if adaptive management is achieving its stated goals, or whether a different, more capital-intensive long-term approach is needed, to take place: 1) at the end of the five-year period, and 2) any time a significant investment in dam-related infrastructure is contemplated (e.g. a fish ladder, major dam repairs, a pumping system for drawdown)
- If Adaptive Management continues after five years, similar periodic reevaluation and decision-making processes should take place every two years thereafter to ensure ongoing accountability to performance targets.

Warner's Pond Watershed Management Committee

The Task Force recommends that the NRC convene a multistakeholder body tasked with overseeing preparation and implementation of the Adaptive Management Plan — the Warner's Pond Watershed Management Committee — among other duties. The Management Committee should be a standing subcommittee of the NRC and include the following elements:

- A mandate to report and make recommendations to the NRC on an annual basis.
- A clearly defined mission to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system, guided by the community criteria identified in *Envision Concord*.
- An overall charge to monitor the pond and experiment with methods to: 1) reduce invasive vegetation; 2) enhance the environment for wildlife; 3) enhance the recreational potential for the community; 4) create opportunities for wider community involvement; and 5) advance climate resilience; and 6) increase awareness and cooperation with the communities connected through the Nashoba and Fort Pond Brooks.
- Representation from all town departments involved with implementing elements of the plan (including the NRC, the Concord Recreation Commission, Concord Public Works), as well as other groups with a specific interest in the future of the pond system (such as Friends of Warner's Pond, OARS, and the West Concord Advisory Committee), plus some number of other members with relevant expertise. Each town department would bring relevant expertise connected to the Management Committee's mandate. Specifically, NRC would bring expertise on the ecological elements of the work, the

⁷ See Appendix H for the Base Scenario A Recurring Management Proposal scenario budget, as well as budget items for water access upgrades and trails from the Dam Removal Proposal, which reflect Task Force estimates for those costs.

Recreation Commission would bring expertise on the recreational elements, and CPW would bring expertise on elements related to dam maintenance and safety.

- A fixed and appropriate appointment term for members (e.g. five years).
- As noted above, external support from a pond management consultant and/or third-party evaluator to ensure rigorous and impartial development and tracking of goals and metrics in the Adaptive Management Plan.
- Committee meetings of sufficient frequency (e.g., every month) to ensure effective and rigorous oversight of the Adaptive Management Plan and other Management Committee tasks.
- An annual (or more frequent, if necessary) larger meeting with community stakeholders, interest groups (e.g. OARS, Friends of Warner's Pond, other interested members of the public), and other town entities to share plan progress and updates on the health and uses of the pond, listen to community concerns, answer questions, consider new ideas, and solicit feedback on future plans.
- Ongoing efforts to support and leverage community involvement with the pond, for example by recruiting volunteers to survey wildlife, monitor the water quality, and hand pull water chestnuts; and consultation with expert volunteers on other facets such as financing, engineering, and recreation.

Specific actions to enhance the recreational and historical value of the Warner's Pond system

The Task Force further recommends that the NRC engage other town entities (e.g., the Recreation Commission, Historical Commission) to develop recommendations and support implementation of a series of specific actions to enhance the recreational and historical value of the Warner's Pond system. These include the following:

- Improvements to the boat launch, public access, and parking along Commonwealth Avenue to provide stream access for paddle craft, wildlife viewing, and fishing
- Similar improvements at Pond Street and/or the current dam location
- Water access and improved viewing from Gerow Park
- Development of a trail network to enhance access to and enjoyment of the pond system, e.g. around the agricultural field and bridge crossing Nashoba Brook near the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
- Investigations of and mitigation efforts regarding stormwater runoff from Route 2
- Installation of historical panels and/or artwork at Kenny Dunn Square pocket park to provide information on the history of Nashoba Brook and Warner's Pond and their relationship to Indigenous residents, early industry, and the development of West Concord.

These improvements should be designed in a manner that ensures their utility regardless of the long-term future of the pond system (i.e., they should assume that both dam removal and dredging remain options in the future and be designed accordingly).

Additional detail on the key considerations behind these recommendations is provided below.

Key Considerations

Warner's Pond is cherished by many West Concord residents. The pond is undergoing eutrophication due to significant buildup of sediments and nutrients. These conditions have led to poor water quality (e.g., excess nutrients, low dissolved oxygen, elevated temperature) and extensive invasive vegetation, degrading the pond's ecological and recreational value. If absolutely nothing is done, over an indeterminate time the pond will continue to experience eutrophication and likely become a vast wetland with a channel passing through it. However, there is currently no imminent or catastrophic threat to the pond, the dam, or the Nashoba Brook watershed. The Task Force therefore believes there is little immediate harm in planning short-term, low-cost actions to make improvements to the pond, and continuing to carefully assess potential actions related to the long-term disposition of the pond, provided that these measures are undertaken in a rigorous, time-bound manner as specified above.

In addition, there are future developments/events that could have a significant impact on the pond and Nashoba Brook moving forward, but that have not yet been clarified. These include:

- 1) The further development of Gerow Park, and potential increased demand for use of the pond system
- 2) Overall development in West Concord and in particular the future uses of the MCI Concord property, and potential impacts on density, use, and demand for recreational amenities
- 3) The planned removal of the Talbot Mills dam on the Concord River, which is expected to enable migration of anadromous fish into the Assabet River and make Warner's Pond dam a barrier to their further movement into the Nashoba Brook and Fort Pond Brook watersheds,
- 4) Changes to Route 2 and the resulting landscape of nearby transportation infrastructure

There may be other key future developments/events to consider as well. The Task Force has concluded that it would be most helpful for the town to gain more clarity on these issues before deciding whether or which more capital-intensive/substantial intervention to pursue.

This recommendation does not preclude a future decision to dredge the pond, remove the dam and restore Nashoba brook, or another capital-intensive/substantial intervention. It simply suggests that before turning to such substantial and/or costly projects, recurring methods should be employed and evaluated. These methods may include herbicides, hand harvesting, suction harvesting, limited drawdowns, and other methods determined by the Management Committee.

Adaptive management decision-making timeline and triggers

The Task Force recommends that the management plan should be in effect for a minimum of five years to allow sufficient time to determine if adaptive management approaches are viable. To promote rigor and accountability to performance targets, a comprehensive reevaluation and decision-making process should take place at the five-year mark to determine whether a different, more capital-intensive long-term management approach is needed. This comprehensive five-year decision-making milestone is an important element of this recommendation, necessary for ensuring that adaptive management does not unintentionally enable the long-term degradation of the pond system. To the Task Force, such a long-term outcome is not acceptable. If the experiment in adaptive management is not achieving its stated objectives by the end of

year five, it should be deemed a failure and the town should look back at this Task Force's work (among other data sources) to help determine a more effective way to address the underlying issues.

The Task Force recommends that a similar comprehensive reevaluation and decision-making process take place any time a significant investment in dam-related infrastructure is contemplated, such as a fish ladder, major dam repairs, or a pumping system for drawdown, to ensure the investment aligns with the town's long-term plan for the pond system.⁸ These investments are not part of the Task Force's current recommendations, and they should only be pursued if it is decided for the foreseeable future Warner's Pond dam will remain based on an evaluation of all relevant alternatives.

The Task Force suggests that future decisions about the long-term future of the pond system should account for the range of lessons the Task Force has learned about the pond system and the various alternatives under consideration, as captured in the Task Force's interim report and its appendices, and other Task Force work products (e.g. meeting minutes, slide decks, etc.). In particular, the town should consider:

- The various experts the Task Force consulted with (noted above) and their perspectives on the ecological, recreational, and financial costs and benefits of different alternative approaches
- The data reviewed and collected through technical reports
- The Task Force's development and analysis of specific alternative approaches designed to meet the *Envision Concord* criteria while also addressing key stakeholder goals and concerns as effectively as possible, including the detailed cost estimates for each alternative
- The range of public comments the Task Force received, both for and against each of its proposed alternatives

To facilitate future decision-making, all the information collected and reported on in the Warner's Pond Task Force website should be preserved.

Stakeholder involvement in the Watershed Management Committee

Alongside the development of an Adaptive Management Plan (and key decision-making triggers), another important feature of this proposal is the development of the Warner's Pond Watershed Management Committee. In recommending the convening of a Management Committee, the Task Force intends to ensure that key town institutions and other stakeholders with responsibilities for and interests in the pond system are included in oversight of the management plan and are effectively coordinating their efforts.

Historical and recreational improvements

The Task Force's recommendations for improved parking, boat launches, public access, and/or viewing at Commonwealth Ave., Gerow, Pond St. and/or the dam location could significantly improve access to recreational opportunities and wildlife viewing for a wide range of users. New

⁸ This recommendation does not apply to standard dam maintenance costs.

trails would connect more users to more areas of the pond system for active use. The historical panels/artwork at the pocket park would raise awareness and celebrate the long and rich history of the area and its people. These reflect important recreational and historical upgrades available at a reasonable cost, and do not preclude the town from pursuing any number of long-term solutions for the pond system in the future.

Costs

This recommendation will result in some increased town expenses compared with the status quo. Estimated costs from the Task Force's interim report are reported in Appendix F below. The cost figures represent the Task Force's current best estimates of additional annual and one-time costs, fees, and staff time, based on discussions with National Resource Division and state agency staff. Because much of the financial cost information was compiled based on estimates from town staff, not through a formal/vetted budgeting process, these data should be understood as rough estimates only.

Additional Task Force Member Perspectives and Expectations

In offering these recommendations, the Task Force acknowledges that different Task Force members have different perspectives and expectations regarding the likelihood of success. Some members are cautiously optimistic that a rigorous adaptive methodology combined with multistakeholder implementation and oversight could result in meaningful improvements to the pond system. Others are more skeptical, but recognize that the town and the Task Force are highly divided on the issues of dam removal and dredging, and acknowledge that there are benefits to improving data collection and monitoring changes to the ecology of the pond system, along with changes to the surrounding human infrastructure and recreational needs, to enable more informed decision-making in the future. A number of members are influenced by their expectation that the Warner's Pond dam is very likely to be removed at some point in the future (whether due to maintenance/safety issues, legal requirements, or town decision-making), although they recognize that the timeline is highly uncertain.

To some members, the recommendation represents an inability to reach agreement on a more substantial intervention that would address root causes of the pond's condition. These members feel the recommendation represents a decision to "kick the can down the road" and is unlikely to succeed. Two of these members suggested an alternative for consensus involving dam removal, stream restoration, and limited dredging to maintain a smaller Warner's Pond near Gerow Park, but this concept did not attract additional support.

Several of these members believe it is important for this report to highlight elements of the Task Force's information gathering and deliberation that point to the benefits of dam removal. These members point to the written survey that Task Force members completed during the deliberation phase of their work and note that recurring management was the top ranked option for seven Task Force members, dam removal was the top recommendation for four Task Force members, and dredging was not the top ranked option for any Task Force members.⁹ In addition, these members note that 1) Task Force members weighted ecological sustainability in their survey

⁹ The interim report used the term recurring management in place of the term adaptive management.

responses on average as the most important or relevant criterion for evaluating options for the pond system, and 2) the Task Force’s interim report characterized dam removal and stream restoration as the most ecologically beneficial solution at Warners Pond. Specifically, the interim report noted: “A restored stream and wetland system, as would be produced by removing the dam, can claim to offer the most diversity of wildlife.”

These members also note that the Task Force heard from several environmental professionals and conservation organizations that dam removal and stream restoration would be best for the environment, specifically:

- Joe Gould, Ecological Restoration Specialist (DER), who noted that DER prioritizes dam removal — along with culverts, cranberry bogs, and saltmarshes — because it's one of the very best things we can do for biodiversity
- Steven Mattocks (DFG), Aquatic Connectivity and Fisheries Outreach Biologist
- Ben Wetherill of OARS (presentation) and OARS staff (public comment). OARS is a watershed organization representing over 300 Concord members
- Concord Land Conservation Trust trustees, direct abutter to Warner's Pond and representing 500 households (via a public comment form)
- Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council (via a public comment form and [video](#))
- Bryan Windmiller, Director of Field Conservation, Zoo New England
- David Swain, professor of field ornithology at Southern NH University

The broader Task Force acknowledges these perspectives while offering the following additional observations:

- The full survey results — including members’ written explanations — provide important context about each member’s perspective. For example, several members who supported dredging over the long-term decided it was preferable to start with recurring management as a way to build alignment on a pathway forward. If future decision-makers decide to use these survey results to guide their thinking about the future of the pond, they should review the results in their entirety.
- Likewise, the criteria weighting exercise in the survey was approached differently by different individual members, with an understanding that the Task Force would not be engaging in a formal collective “weighting” exercise.
- The interim “Alternatives Under Consideration” report contains a range of data and observations about each of the different alternatives regarding their relationship to the history and character of the area, ecological impacts, recreational impacts, costs, and uncertainties, among other factors. Specific language across all sections of the report was carefully vetted and agreed to by Task Force members after substantial deliberation, and the interim report should be considered in its entirety during future decision-making.
- The Task Force was charged with considering the full range of criteria in the *Envision Concord* long-term plan, including 1) historical and character, 2) livability and values, 3) mobility and accessibility, 4) ecological sustainability, and 5) fiscal sustainability. All five of these criteria were fundamental to the Task Force’s decision-making.

Acknowledgments

This Final Report reflects the culmination of an extensive and time-consuming deliberative process. Over the course of fifteen months, the Task Force has reviewed many hundreds of pages of documents, many of them containing detailed technical data, as well as hundreds of public comments. We have addressed a set of issues that have a deep emotional resonance for many town residents, where people have strongly held convictions and very different perspectives on their preferred course of action. Throughout it all, we have been supported by a highly dedicated and professional cohort of town staff from the Natural Resources Division, Concord Public Works, and the Planning Division. These staff have worked diligently to provide impartial technical information and guidance, identify and reach out to experts on our behalf, and ensure adequate support for Task Force decision making from professional facilitators. The overall level of resourcing and support for this Task Force has been extraordinary. We are deeply grateful to town staff for their dedication and professionalism, without which we could not have completed this work.

Appendices

Appendix A: Committee Charge

Town of Concord Warner's Pond Task Force Charge

Background

Warner's Pond is an approximately 59-acre impoundment (including its three islands), with approximately 20 acres of connected wetlands. The pond's main tributaries, Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook, merge and enter Warner's Pond from the northwest, and continue flowing over the dam, eventually merging with the Assabet River to the east.

Warner's Pond has been a community resource for generations but is now in a state of eutrophication. This has resulted in a number of undesirable conditions including decreased water depths, widespread growths of aquatic invasive plants, and impaired recreational opportunities.

Warner's Pond has three public access points: Gerow Park on the northern boundary, acquired in 2018 for recreational purposes, a boat launch on Commonwealth Avenue; and a primitive boat landing at the end of Pond Street. There is also a pocket park near the dam on Commonwealth Avenue. The pond's recreational uses include boating, fishing, bird watching, ice fishing, and skating.

Warner's Pond and some of its appurtenant features are owned by the Town of Concord, under different boards and committees.

- ∇ Warner's Pond itself is under the care and custody of the Natural Resources Commission (along with the boat launch off Commonwealth Avenue and the primitive access at the end of Pond Street)
- ∇ The dam is under the care and custody of Concord Public Works
- ∇ Gerow Park is under the care and custody of the Select Board, and maintained for recreational purposes.

Scout Island, the largest island in the pond, is owned by the Concord Scout House, and used by local Scouting groups for camping and annual cross-over ceremonies.

Warner's Pond lies at the base of a 47-square mile watershed, 98% of which occurs outside of Concord. Nutrients, including nitrogen and phosphorus, and sediments enter the pond from this very large watershed, including from developed areas with inadequate stormwater management.

The Natural Resources Commission, spurred by community concerns, has explored alternatives to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of Warner's Pond since the 1990s. Efforts to remove aquatic invasives and address sediment build-up have been ongoing since that time. The Town has received state and local grant funding to study the problem and implement solutions, all of which have had limited effectiveness, and the eutrophication of the pond has steadily continued.

Efforts have ranged from managing aquatic invasive plants (hand harvesting, hydroraking, herbicide treatment) to addressing the nutrient and sediment build-up (dredging). The 2012 Warner's Pond Watershed Management Plan identified limited dredging (6 acres of the 59-acre pond, or 35,000 cubic yards) as an effective, long-term solution to improve the ecological health

and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system. The 2012 Plan estimated that limited hydraulic dredging would cost on the order of \$1 million, and the required studies, sampling, design, and permitting were undertaken. As part of the Dredging Feasibility Study completed in 2018, the estimated cost was upped to \$2 million. After federal, state, and local permits were obtained in 2022, the revised cost dredging estimate was \$3 million. The project was bid in 2022, and came in at over \$9 million, more than three times the allocated funding secured for the project.

In response to the cost-prohibitive dredging bid, the Division explored an additional three options: (i) a modified dredging approach that moved sediment within the pond rather than trucking it offsite, (ii) dam removal, and (iii) no action. Based on the consultant's evaluation of ecological restoration, public safety/liability, recreational opportunities, flood risk, and cost, dam removal was identified in May 2023 as the best alternative to achieve multiple goals for the Town.

Purpose

The dam removal recommendation is a change in strategy to what the Commission has worked towards for several years and has been identified by some in the community as a cause for concern. The Natural Resources Commission seeks to engage in a structured decision-making process, working with a facilitator, that includes robust community input. The purpose of the task force is to become familiar with all alternatives that have been considered to date and explore new ideas as appropriate. The Task Force will recommend a course of action for the Pond that reflects community criteria identified in *Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030*: (i) History + Character, (ii) Livability + Values, (iii) Mobility + Accessibility, (iv) Environmental Sustainability, and (v) Fiscal Sustainability.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To become familiar with Warner's Pond, its three public access points, the dam, and the general environs;
2. To review prior reports, plans, and other documentation evaluating and implementing alternatives over the last few decades;
3. To explore and evaluate ecological health of the pond system under each feasible alternative;
4. To explore and evaluate future recreational opportunities under each feasible alternative with the Town's consultant;
5. To obtain preliminary cost estimates for each feasible alternative;
6. To explore and evaluate potential funding sources for each feasible alternative;
7. To review the issues and concerns related to dam removal raised by the community;
8. To solicit input from the community through a variety of methods, including at least one public hearing early in the process;
9. To consider whether there are measures which might be taken to improve ecological health and recreational opportunities that would require additional planning and/or more time to implement;

10. To submit a final report to the Natural Resources Commission recommending a course of action to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system by December 2, 2024;
11. To perform such other duties as the Natural Resources Commission may request.

Deliverables

Prepare a draft report that recommends a prioritized list of actions for Warner's Pond while being sensitive to the historical and cultural values of the system to the Town. Present the draft report at a public hearing to solicit feedback from the community. Following the public hearing, a final report outlining a course of action will be submitted to the Natural Resources Commission by December 2, 2024.

Membership

The Task Force shall be comprised of eleven members appointed by the Natural Resources Commission, in consultation with the Town Manager, with representation as follows:

1. Friends of Warner's Pond representative
2. Upstream abutter
3. Downstream abutter
4. Select Board member
5. Natural Resources Commission member
6. Recreation Commission member
7. Public Works Commission member
8. At-large members (2)
9. Concord Scout House representative
10. OARS representative
 - o Ex officio (non-voting) members
 - Hassanamisco Band of Nipmuc representative
 - Public Works Director or his designee
 - Natural Resources Director or her designee
 - Senior Planner (representing historical interests)
 - Department of Corrections representative

Each member will serve until the task force completes its work and submits a written report to the NRC. Candidates should submit a Volunteer Card (available [here](#)) along with a letter of interest.

When staffing the task force, preference will be given to Concord residents with the specific interests noted above and experience, knowledge, and/or professional training in ecological restoration; recreation; civil engineering; cultural and historical expertise; climate resiliency; local, state, and federal wetland permitting laws and regulations; and a strong connection with the community. The task force will determine the frequency of meetings and will be led by a chair elected by the members.

Other Considerations

The task force chair will consult with the Natural Resources Commission to discuss the need for financial support for task force activities. The task force will conduct its business in full conformance with the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, Conflict of Interest Law and other state and local rules encouraging openness and transparency in governance.

Appendix B: Task Force Members

Name	Representation
Vickie Alani	Upstream abutter
Paul Boehm	Recreation Commission
Malcolm Bryant	At-large
Jeff Collins	OARS
Christine Denaro	Downstream abutter (Co-Chair)
Keith Hannon	Friends of Warner's Pond
Mark Howell	Select Board
Bill Kemeza	Natural Resources Commission (Co-Chair)
Elizabeth Morrison-Howe	At-large
David Owen	Concord Scout House
Sven Weber	Public Works Commission
Ann Clifford (<i>ex officio</i>)	Senior Planner (Historic)
Bruce Curliss (<i>ex officio</i>)	Hassanamisco Band of Nipmuc
Delia Kaye (<i>ex officio</i>)	Natural Resources Director
Jeffrey Quick (<i>ex officio</i>)	Department of Corrections
Samiksha Poudel (<i>ex officio</i>)	Concord Public Works - Engineering

Appendix C: Group Protocols

Warner's Pond Task Force Task Force Group Protocols

February 8, 2024

Purpose

The Town of Concord needs to decide what should happen to Warner's Pond to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system. Many residents and stakeholders care deeply about what happens to Warner's Pond. A decision about what is next has historic, cultural, environmental, recreational, and fiscal implications.

The Warner's Pond Task Force, appointed by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), will review, discuss, and evaluate the options of what to do with the pond system and will present its recommendations to the Natural Resources Commission. The group will learn together about and jointly consider the many implications associated with the choices for what should happen to the pond system. Members will deliberate and seek to reach agreement to the extent possible.

Authority

Members' authority is to develop a shared recommendation for the Natural Resources Commission on a course of action or actions to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system. The Natural Resources Commission will take recommendations under serious advisement, and act accordingly. Major actions will be brought forward by the NRC to Town Meeting for approval. Task Force members do not have the authority to directly decide what happens to the pond system.

Composition

This Task Force is appointed by the Natural Resources Commission, in consultation with the Town Manager. Its members include community members representing various perspectives, both those who serve on particular boards or committees as well as those who represent other community views. Staff from key Town departments, as well as representatives speaking on behalf of other fundamental interests, serve as ex officio, non-voting members.

Time Commitment

Task Force members will be expected to actively participate over the duration of the project (anticipated to occur from February to December 2024). This will include attending approximately 10 virtual and in-person Task Force meetings, each approximately 2-3 hours for virtual meetings and slightly longer for in-person meetings. Members will be expected to track project related communication between meetings, review materials and draft documents, come prepared to meetings, and follow the expectations described below.

Decision-making

Given the importance of the pond to the Town, Task Force members commit to listening carefully, learning from one another, and seeking to understand each other's perspectives.

The Task Force will seek overwhelming agreement on its final recommendation, defined as at least 75% of voting members. Each Task Force member will have one vote. Agreement may be on a set of options or choices with their advantages and disadvantages clearly articulated.

During final decision-making, members may vote that they 1) endorse and support the final recommendation, 2) that they can live with the recommendation, or 3) that they cannot live with the final

recommendation. Members may also choose to "abstain." Those who abstain will not be counted in the final tally. The Task Force's final report will capture the weight of the group's perspective on the final recommendation as needed, including capturing the key reasons why any who do not support the recommendation are not able/willing to sign on.

Should overwhelming agreement not be obtained on a recommendation, the Task Force will report out areas of agreement and disagreement. The Task Force will note if agreement was not reached due to incomplete information, and what information would be needed to reach a decision. The Task Force will issue only one report.

Meeting planning

With input from the Task Force, the facilitators will work with Town staff to design meeting agendas, work on logistics, prepare draft materials and provide appropriate technical presentations.

Expectations / Ground rules

To foster an open and collaborative discussion, we ask the following of each other:

- Take space/make space
 - Be as present as you can be
 - Contribute: your perspectives are valued
 - Share time, ask questions of each other
- Foster a safe environment for discussions
 - Be honest and respectful
 - Build on each other's comments and integrate across ideas
 - Presume good intent and attend to the impacts of your actions
- Be an effective participant
 - Attend regularly for continuity
 - Come to meetings prepared
 - Actively participate and contribute, both at and between meetings
 - Keep collective purpose at the center, focus on solutions to bridge differences
 - Stay on track with the agenda
- Communicate thoughtfully
 - Communicate with others — both within and outside meetings — respectfully
 - "No surprises" policy — bring ideas for research to the Task Force for group discussion; be transparent about perspectives on options raised
 - Will not characterize the opinions of other Task Force members or the Task Force as a whole to others

Meeting facilitation

Impartial facilitation support will be provided by staff from the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), who will plan and run meetings, coordinate with members between sessions, and help the group work through topics in a logical way.

Note-taking and documentation

The CBI staff will document the group's progress and be responsible for helping to write up its final recommendation.

Appendix D: Community Criteria for the Warner's Pond System

1. History and Character: Will this alternative support and preserve the historical character and cultural heritage of the area by
 - a. Maintaining, reviving, or further protecting historical assets and uses of the waterbody and surrounding land (including Scout Island)?
 - b. Enhancing the natural resource values of the waterbody and surrounding land (including Scout Island)?
 - c. Improving or enhancing the natural environment by providing diverse plant communities, wildlife and aquatic habitats, or landscape features to the town's existing open space?
 - d. Enhancing the visual appeal of the existing area/landscape?

2. Livability and Values: Will this alternative enhance Concord's desirability as a place to live by
 - a. Increasing the quality and quantity of recreational assets and programs for all socio-economic groups in the community?
 - b. Increasing opportunities for public enjoyment and use of the waterbody and surrounding land, including physical and social (i.e., gathering) opportunities for the community?
 - c. Contributing to improvements to public health?
 - d. Enhancing the resilience of community infrastructure (roads, stormwater structures, wastewater/water supply facilities, fire prevention, emergency access)?

3. Mobility and Accessibility: Will this alternative maintain/increase connectivity to Town centers and access to services by vulnerable residents, by
 - a. Increasing transportation access by walking, biking, mobility devices, or waterways, etc.?
 - b. Improving access to the water body and surrounding land to people of all mobilities and ages?

4. Ecological Sustainability: Will this alternative enhance the ecology/biodiversity of the water body and adjacent land by
 - a. Enhancing and improving wildlife habitat for diverse species, including rare or threatened species?
 - b. Enhancing and improving fisheries habitat for diverse species?
 - c. Enhancing and improving habitat to support diverse native plant communities?
 - d. Improving water quality within the waterbody?
 - e. Improving connectivity between different habitats to support migrating species?
 - f. Providing a sustainable ecological condition over time (i.e., will improvements last)?
 - g. Improving the resilience of the natural resource area to flooding events?
 - h. Contributing to improved water quality in the downstream riverine system (i.e. the Assabet River)?
 - i. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or increasing carbon sequestering?
 - j. Reducing use of synthetic chemicals?

5. Fiscal sustainability: Will this alternative support fiscal sustainability by:
 - a. Using an identified and sustainable funding source?
 - b. Minimizing the need for additional resources (staffing, space, equipment, and other direct or indirect costs)?
 - c. Providing for cost recovery or cost savings?
 - d. Being feasible from technological, permitting, and engineering perspectives?

Appendix E: Final Task Force Votes on Recommendations

May 22, 2025 vote: [ADD language]

Name	Vote
Vickie Alani	Support
Paul Boehm	Support
Malcolm Bryant	Oppose
Jeff Collins	Abstain
Christine Denaro	Support
Keith Hannon	Support
Mark Howell	Support
Bill Kemeza	Support
Elizabeth Morrison-Howe	Can live with
David Owen	Support
Sven Weber	Abstain

June 12 vote: Add language

Name	Vote
Vickie Alani	
Paul Boehm	N/A (resigned from the Task Force)
Malcolm Bryant	
Jeff Collins	
Christine Denaro	
Keith Hannon	
Mark Howell	
Bill Kemeza	
Elizabeth Morrison-Howe	
David Owen	
Sven Weber	

Appendix F: Estimated Costs

Preparing a New Recurring Pond Management Plan Base Scenario A

Base Plan A: New Management Plan Only	One-Time / Capital Costs	Annual Recurring / Operating Costs	5-year Total: One-Time + Annual
Pond Management Consultant / O&M Plan	\$50,000	\$20,000	\$150,000
Permits & additional analysis	\$20,000		\$20,000
Invasive plant removal methods and monitoring		\$50,000	\$250,000
Recruitment and support of the Pond Stewards		\$2,000	\$10,000
Improvements for boat launch areas	\$50,000		\$50,000
Ongoing dam maintenance		\$11,000	\$55,000
Twice a year hold a meeting with community stakeholders		\$2,000	\$10,000
Base Plan A Totals	\$120,000	\$85,000	\$545,000
<i>Sources: Consultations with Town of Harvard staff; 2022 Charter dredging bid</i>			

Recreational and Historical Improvements (originally from the Task Force's dam removal proposal)

Potential Additional Costs Scenario C:	One-Time / Capital
Boat Launch Improvements (Comm. Ave. & Gerow Park)	\$50,000
Viewing/Fishing Platform	\$75,000
Historical/Interprative Signage	\$6,000
Potential Scenario C Totals	\$131,000
<i>Sources: Task Force review of publicly-available SumCo project costs; 2022 Charter dredging bid</i>	

Potential Additional Costs Scenario D:	One-Time / Capital
Riverfront Surface Trail - cornfields (4,500')	\$109,000
Wright Road connector bridge	\$50,000
Potential Scenario D Totals	\$159,000
<i>Sources: Task Force review of publicly-available SumCo project costs</i>	