

**Town of Tolland, Connecticut  
Conservation Commission  
John H. Weigold Conservation Area  
Management Plan  
256 Weigold Road, Tolland, CT**



*A Passive Recreation Open Space Conservation Area*

**Adopted by Commission: 2/12/2009; Revised 3/13/2014; Revised 4/23/2020**

**Adopted by Council: 2/24/2009**

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# **Town of Tolland**

## **Conservation Commission Property Management Plan**

### **John H. Weigold Conservation Area, 256 Weigold Road**

**Background** – The Tolland Conservation Commission is responsible for overseeing properties purchased by the Town of Tolland for conservation purposes and to prepare a management plan for each property. The management plans are based upon the environmental characteristics of the property and outline the opportunities for public use. Each plan includes a property description, an analysis of the unique characteristics and acceptable uses of the property, and a management program. The management program outlines the property management and improvement needs; the individuals and organizations to manage the property; and resource capabilities and protection needs related to the site. Each management plan is developed under the Commission's management planning process.

#### **I. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION, ACCESS, USES, RESTRICTIONS, VISITOR RESPONSIBILITIES, PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS**

**Property Description** – The John H. Weigold Conservation Area is a 32.98 acre parcel of land on the westerly side of Weigold Road and located in the southerly part of Tolland. It was purchased by the Town of Tolland on June 24, 2002 with assistance from an Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program grant from the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.



The remains of an old mill pond have become a swamp with a brook running through it. One of the two entrances to the property is just north of the old dam located by the side of Weigold Road.

The property rises to the west and is heavily forested with oak, beech, and birch trees. Along the southern border, it has a permanent brook and a ledge rising 70 feet above the brook forming one wall of a gorge. On the western property line, a vernal pool exists.

Although the property has been logged, a unique environment supports fish, birds, and other wildlife in this varied terrain. Coldwater fish, wildlife, and a variety of birds flourish along the brook, vernal pool, and the swampy remains of the mill pond, and up onto the rocky ledges and upper tree canopy.

The property drains to the Skungamaug River. There are two adjacent properties with interconnecting trail systems. To the west is the 82 acre Tobiassen Memorial Forest owned by Joshua's Trust with a 1.4 mile trail. To the north is the 28 acre Auperin Conservation Area owned by the Town of Tolland with a 0.3 mile trail. The Auperin trail is accessed via the Weigold Conservation Area. To the south, the Town of Tolland owns a 3.58 parcel of open space land obtained with the Summerwood Ridge subdivision that provides trail access. Directly across Weigold Road from the Weigold Conservation Area is an historic mill site, 55.5 acres in size, known as Donkeyville Mill. It is privately owned by the Weigold Living Trust and currently leased to the Coventry Fish and Game Club, which owns the abutting 78.97 acre property.

The Weigold property contains a vernal pool, a stream of *Surface and Stream Water Quality Class A* (Town of Tolland Open Space & Conservation Plan, map 5), and a wetland and upland area containing a coniferous stand, forest soils, a coarse grained stratified drift aquifer on the eastern most section and slopes over 20%. The parcel contains a significant natural habitat and is within an *Important Wildlife Area and Corridor* as designated by the Town of Tolland Open Space & Conservation Plan (map 12).



**Access** – There are two ways to access the property. One way is a dirt road off Weigold Road that leads to a small parking lot and the trail system. This parking lot provides the shortest distance to the Auperin Conservation Area. There is also trail access from Summerwood Ridge.

**Uses** – In accordance with the DEEP grant conditions, use of the property must be passive recreation which includes hiking, maintaining habitats for animals, and studying existing habitats and wildlife. Accepted uses include:

- Hiking
- Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing
- Dog walking under owner's control; town ordinance requires dogs to be on a leash
- Habitat and wildlife studies
- Nature study

**Use Restrictions** – With the transfer of this property to the Town there are inherent restrictions which derive from use of conservation bond funds. This funding source requires that the property must be used as a passive open space conservation area in perpetuity.

**Visitor Responsibilities** – Visitors are reminded to use the property in a manner consistent with land use guidelines and protecting open space resources. The following guidelines are the standards for use and are identified on signage on the property:

- Town ordinances require dogs to be on a leash. Leashes must be held by a person responsible for the dog's behavior.
- Leave no trace.
- No littering. Carry out what you carry in.
- No motorized vehicles or other means of motorized transport.
- No horseback riding or mountain biking.
- No disturbing vegetation or wildlife.
- Visitors need to stay on marked trails and roads.
- No hunting or firearms allowed.
- No setting of fires.
- Respect the rights of other visitors.
- Area is closed from sunset to sunrise. Night use is by permit only.
- Notify Commission of organized group activities.

**Problems and Concerns** – The Weigold Conservation Area, being a remote property, shares common problems with other remote privately and Town-owned areas. The property steward monitors for any illegal hunting.

## **II. OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Management Objectives** – The principal objectives are to conserve the property and protect wildlife habitat while providing access and passive recreational opportunities for the general public. While the Conservation Commission, acting as an agent of the Tolland Town Council, is ultimately responsible for property management, implementation of a management program is a shared responsibility with the Tolland Conservation Corps, property steward, and a variety of Town agencies and resources in accordance with the *Open Space Management Guideline and Process*.

Specific objectives for this parcel include:

- Follow best property management processes.
- Maintain the approved trail system.
- Monitor the dam, vernal pool, and stream.
- Maintain the parking lot.
- Conduct a natural resource inventory.
- Pursue educational, documentation, and protection opportunities for habitat, wildlife, and unique features.
- Manage the woodlands using forest best management practices (BMP) in conjunction with a professional forester. Although it is not the intention of the Conservation Commission to manage this property for timber production with periodic commercial harvests, it may be necessary, from time to time, to carry out certain silviculture practices to maintain the health of the forest or to maintain the property in a particular

stage of succession to encourage a particular habitat. The Commission will consult with professional forest managers to ensure that the appropriate practices are implemented.

- Maintain the approved trail system.
- Maintain the bridges and bench.
- Protect the stone walls.
- Maintain property boundaries.
- Monitor for illegal hunting.

**Management Plan and Program** – Tasks required to assure that management objectives are achieved shall be overseen by the Conservation Commission and implemented by the Head Steward and the Property Steward. These tasks include:

- Maintain the approved trail system.
- Maintain the bridges and bench.
- Maintain trail markings and signs.
- Maintain map containers and keep them supplied with property brochures.
- Monitor the dam, vernal pool, and stream.
- Protect the stone walls.
- Perform litter patrol as needed.
- Maintain parking lot and access fence (materials to be provided by the Town).
- Clear brush and debris from catch-basin on Summerwood Ridge and promote stand of aspen to create habitat for grouse.
- Continue control of invasive species.
- Maintain property boundary markings. Conduct a yearly walk of the boundaries.
- Maintain the entering/leaving Tolland land signs, property name sign, and rules post at both connections with Joshua Trust land.
- Manage the woodlands following the guidance of a professional forester.

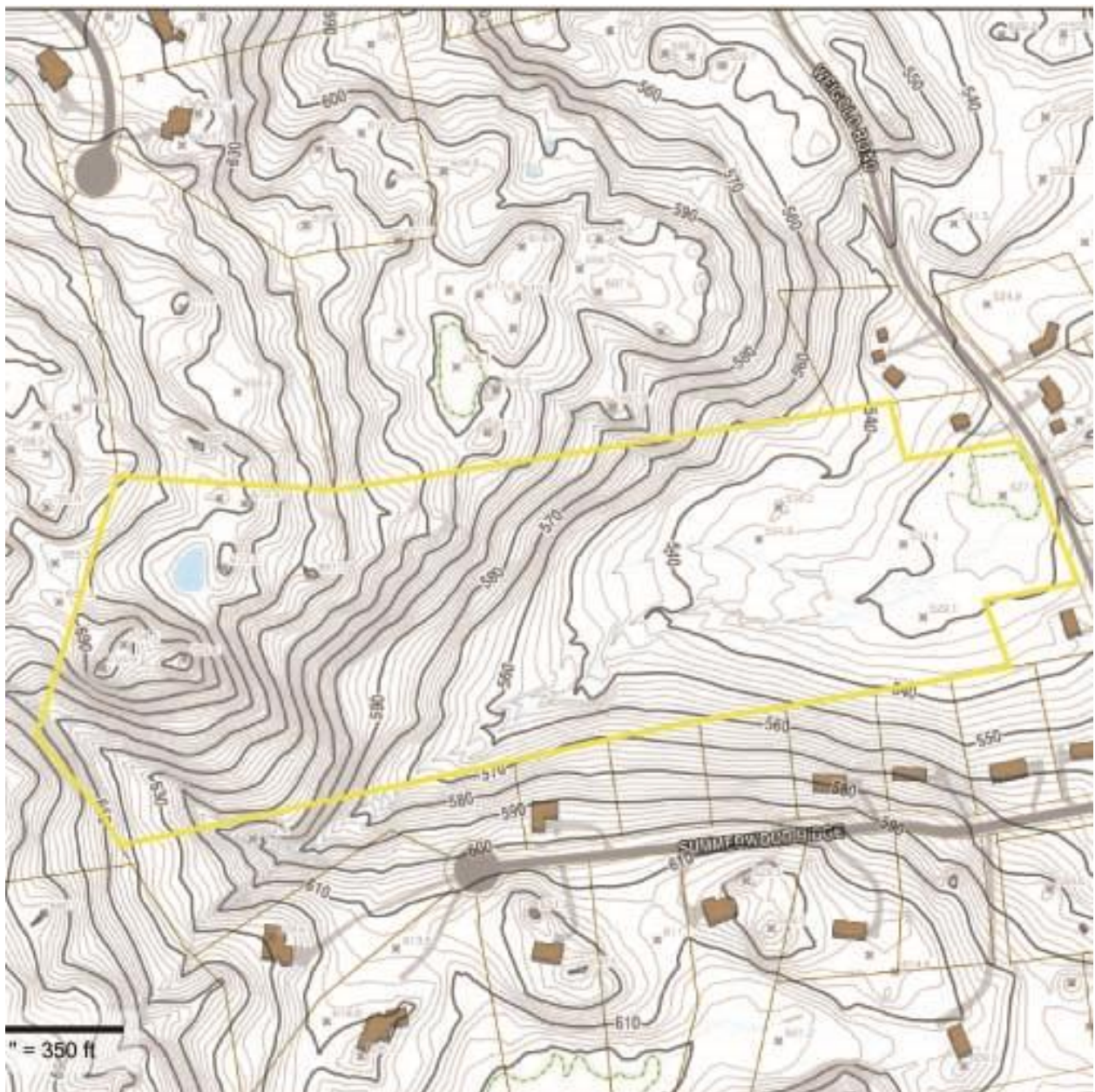
**Property Steward(s)** - The steward of the property is Bob Rubino.



## Appendix 1. 2012 Aerial Map with Location Map Insert



## Appendix 2. Topographical Map





### Appendix 3. Trail Map and Nearby Conservation Areas

