

Town of Tolland, Connecticut
Open Space Management Guideline and Process

Approved by Conservation Commission: _____

Approved by Town Council: _____

This management process is intended to recognize the responsibility of the Tolland Conservation Commission in managing open space areas at the ultimate direction of the Town Council and to define a process that assures the Town Council that when substantive changes to these management plans are made, the plans will come before them for adoption. This process allows the Conservation Commission to make decisions on changes to management plans necessary to correct emergency conditions or to address the clearly stated intent of the approved management plans. This document guides the Conservation Commission and the Town Staff in the management of the open space properties.

The Tolland Conservation Corps is the current designated organization to provide training and assistance to Property Stewards in the implementation of approved open space Management Plans, as defined by Chapter 7, Section 7-3.G.5 of the Tolland Town Code.

Initial Activities (after property acquisition)

1. Gather information and input regarding natural resources, areas of concern, property features, etc. from such sources as land rating notes, grant data, *Plan of Conservation and Development, Open Space & Conservation Plan*, and parcel map.
2. Request the Town Staff ensure that the boundaries are properly and clearly marked.
3. Walk property for general overview and existing conditions, to identify sensitive areas and highlights, and to take photos.
4. Request the Head Steward to make a preliminary map showing boundary information, notable features, potential trails and parking/access areas.
5. Request the Head Steward to start the search for a Property Steward(s).

Management Plan Development

1. Conduct natural resource inventory by compiling data from the *Plan of Conservation and Development, Open Space & Conservation Plan*, from site visits, and from other sources as appropriate to identify features such as:
 - Rare and endangered species
 - Soils and vegetation
 - Watercourses, waterbodies, and wetlands
 - Existing uses(s) and infrastructure (roads, trails, culverts, etc.)
 - Geography and topography
 - Fish and wildlife
 - Habitats
 - Proximity of buildings, roadways, driveways
 - Cultural points of interest (foundations, stone walls, roads, etc.)
 - Invasive species
2. Identify sensitive areas, potential problems, specific needs and concerns.
3. Note any deed, grant or use restrictions.
4. Identify opportunities for appropriate public use, access and activities.
5. Create photo library.
6. Develop a property brochure map delineating:
 - Trail location(s)
 - Bridges or walkways
 - Vegetation or wildlife management areas or protected zones
 - Parking area(s) or trailhead(s)
7. Approve Property Steward(s).
8. Write and adopt the Management Plan.
9. Submit Management Plan to Town Council for adoption. (Repeat steps 8 & 9 until both bodies adopt the Management Plan.)
10. Notify Property Steward(s) of their approval and supply them with information package containing at least the Management Plan, this document, and *Property Steward End-of-Year Report* form.

Management Plan Implementation

1. Along with Tolland Conservation Corps and Property Steward, prepare open space for its approved use.
2. If property is to be opened for public use, conduct a dedication (along with Tolland Conservation Corps, Property Steward, and Head Steward). Invite donors, neighbors, town officials, Conserving Tolland. Publicize the event.
3. If property is open for public use, create property brochure with map inside with help from Property Steward and Head Steward.
4. If property is open for public use, add property to *Tolland Conservation Areas* brochure and open space webpage.
5. If property is open for public use, create property webpage with description, Management Plan, property brochure, photos.

Management Plan Revisions (must be reviewed at least once every 5 years)

1. Review the natural resource inventory.
2. Reevaluate sensitive areas, problems, needs and concerns.
3. Update photo library if needed.
4. Review survey map, aerial map, and any other applicable maps.
5. Evaluate the needs of the town in respect to this property.
6. Review public uses.
7. Review use restrictions.
8. Review management objectives.
9. Review management program.
10. Review Management Plan attachments and add any new attachments needed.
11. Review publically distributed information such as webpage and property brochure.
12. Revise Management Plan based on findings from above and adopt the Management Plan.
13. Submit Management Plan to Town Council for adoption if substantive changes have been made.

Property Steward Responsibilities

1. Walk property at least quarterly and report conditions and concerns to Head Steward.
2. Keep map box filled with property brochures.
3. Identify work needed such as brush cutting, litter clean up, repairs to trails, bridges and other structures, signs, etc. Report to Head Steward.
4. Coordinate all work done on property.
5. Perform or get assistance performing safety and structural assessment of all structures. Report concerns to Head Steward.
6. Review trails for excessive erosion, motorized vehicle incursions, other problems, dangerous situations, and conditions and/or uses not in keeping with Management Plan. Report concerns to Head Steward.
7. Analyze property with an eye towards impact of current property use and Management Plan goals and objectives.
8. Consult Management Plan to make sure it is being implemented.
9. Work on needed tasks as specified in Management Plan in consultation with the Head Steward.
10. Complete and submit *Property Steward End-of-Year Report* to Conservation Commission based on Management Plan. (December)
11. If needed, recommend changes to Management Plan in *Property Steward End-of-Year Report*. (December)
12. Work with Conservation Commission on Management Plan revisions.

Property Steward Selection Process

1. Considerations for selection:
 - Access and proximity of the steward to the open space area
 - History of performance on conservation projects
 - Understands the position responsibilities
 - Willing and capable of performing duties
2. Head Steward will submit name(s) of Property Steward at the time the Conservation Commission approves the Management Plan. The Conservation Commission will approve/disapprove the steward.
3. The Head Steward may remove a Property Steward, with the approval of the Conservation Commission, for non-performance of responsibilities.

Head Steward Responsibilities

1. Provide for training of all Property Stewards.
2. Gather all information submitted by Property Stewards.
3. Coordinate all activities with the Property Stewards.
4. Prepare work plans and budgets.
5. Develop resource estimates (manpower & materials).
6. Identify project milestones (time tables & schedules).
7. Report monthly to Conservation Commission regarding properties, projects and work plan.
8. Revise projects and work plan as required by the Conservation Commission.
9. Hold work sessions and report results to Conservation Commission.
10. Review and provide recommendations to the Conservation Commission regarding the *Property Steward End-of-Year Reports* for all properties.

Head Steward Selection Process

1. Consideration for selection:
 - Must possess 3 years of demonstrated conservation lands stewardship and conservation management experience
 - History of performance on conservation projects
 - Demonstrated ability to work with people of different disciplines, backgrounds, and experience levels
 - Capable of working with Property Stewards, the Tolland Conservation Corps, the Conservation Commission, and Town Staff
 - Understands the position responsibilities
 - Willing and capable of performing duties
2. The Conservation Commission appoints the Head Steward for a two year term, starting in January of even numbered years.
3. The Conservation Commission may remove the Head Steward for non-performance of responsibilities.