

**Chestnut Hill Farm, Southborough
Management Plan –
FINAL DRAFT 5-10-06**

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Introduction

This Management Plan is intended to provide guidelines for agriculture, forestry, conservation, and recreation uses on Chestnut Hill Farm in Southborough, Massachusetts. Chestnut Hill Farm is located east of Chestnut Hill Road and north of Main Street/Route 30. The Farm is privately owned, and is subject to a conservation restriction (CR) held by the Town of Southborough, under the care and control of the Conservation Commission. The CR is recorded in the Worcester South Registry of Deeds in Book XXXX Page XXX.

The CR covers approximately 109 acres of Chestnut Hill Farm, north of Main Street/Route 30, and south of the Hultman Aqueduct (See Figure 1). An additional 14 acres of the farm, located north of the Hultman Aqueduct, is subject to a conservation restriction held by Sudbury Valley Trustees, and is not subject to the terms of this Recreation Management Plan.

This Management Plan, with its maps and appendices, is intended to comply with the goals and objectives of the Massachusetts Self-Help Program, which helped to fund the town's acquisition of the CR. The plan has been developed by representatives of the Southborough Selectmen, Recreation Department, Planning Department, Conservation Commission, Open Space Preservation Commission, the Philip C. Beals Trust (CR Grantee and landowner), and Sudbury Valley Trustees.

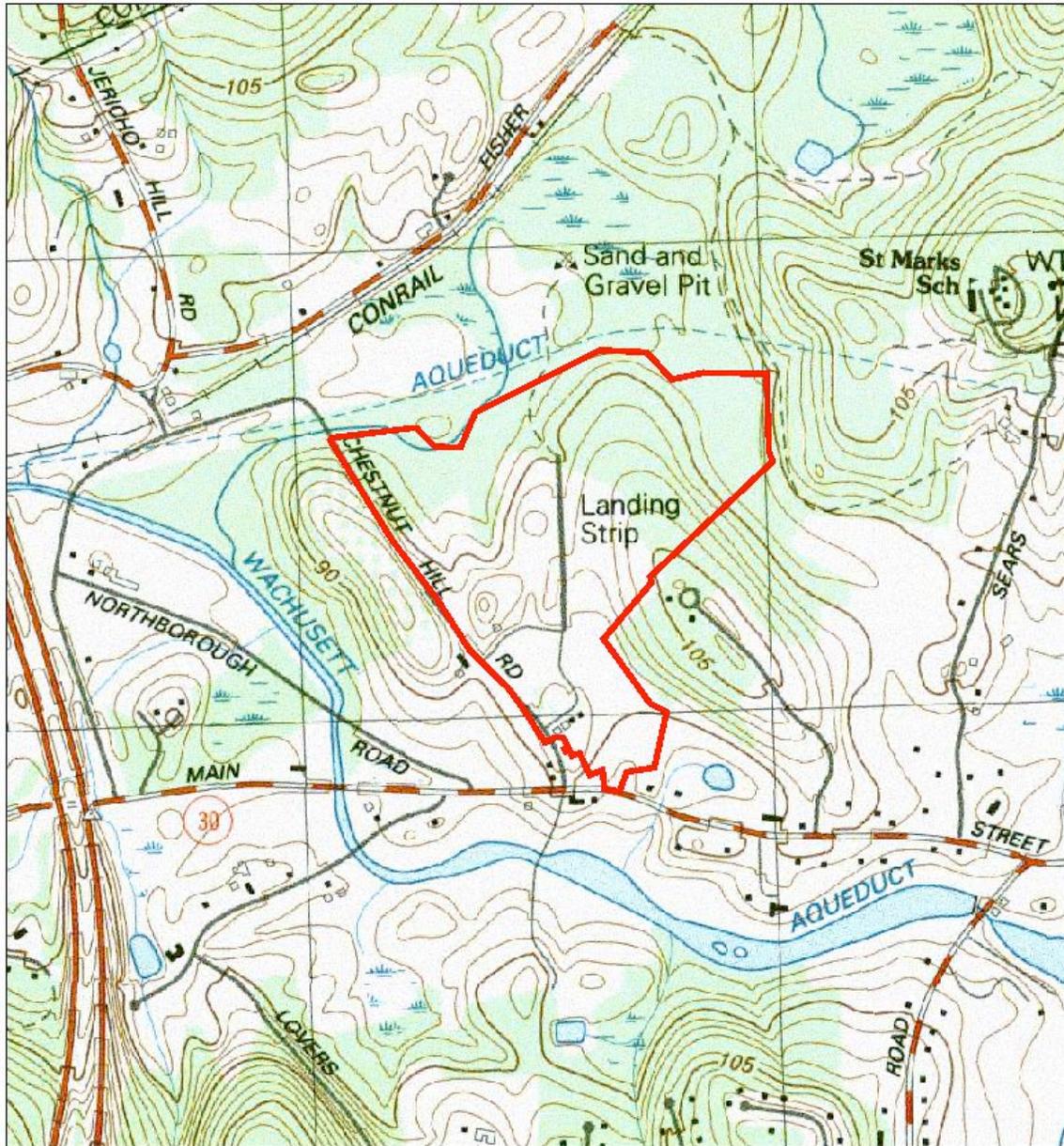
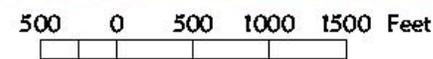


Figure 1.



Chestnut Hill Farm
 Management Plan
 May 2006

Site History and Project Background

The Philip C. Beals Trust purchased Chestnut Hill Farm in 1966 from Charles Donaldson, who had operated a dairy farm on the property. The farm has been kept in active agricultural operation since that time. At one time, an airstrip existed on the property; its location is noted on the 19XX USGS map. Approximately 50 acres of woodlands are managed for timber and firewood production. The most recent commercial timber harvest occurred in 1985.

In 1993 Mr. and Mrs. Beals donated 3.4 acres, called Triangle Meadow, on Main Street and Northboro Road to Sudbury Valley Trustees. In 1995, they donated a CR on approximately 44 acres of the farm on the west side of Chestnut Hill Road and on approximately 4 acres south of Main Street. In 2004, the Beals Trust, which owns the remaining 133 acres of the farm, approached the Town of Southborough to express an interest in permanently protecting the rest of the farm through the sale of a CR.

At a Special Town Meeting on January 21, 2006, the Southborough residents voted overwhelmingly to purchase a CR on Chestnut Hill Farm, using a combination of Community Preservation Act Funds, State Self-Help funds, bonding, and private donations. When combined with the northerly 14 acre CR, plus the donation of an additional 55-acre CR south of the Wachusett Open Channel (the “Red Gate Parcel”) the total project yield was 178 acres of permanently conserved land.

Site Description (See Figure 2.)

Chestnut Hill Farm is known for its rolling fields and pastures hugged by stone walls and dense woodland backdrop, and provides a welcome view into Southborough’s agricultural past. In addition to being one of the last working farms in Southborough, the property also provides wildlife habitat for the eastern meadowlark and the bobolink, among many other species. The conservation of the farm provides the benefits of managed woodlands, meadows, and agricultural fields, while providing quality wetlands, wildlife habitat, river and watershed protection, flood prevention, and pollution mitigation. In addition to the obvious conservation benefits, the CR also provides for general public access for the purposes of passive recreation.

Natural Resources

Chestnut Hill Farm consists of a mosaic of fields, pastures, meadows, upland woods, and wetlands. Approximately 44 acres are currently in agricultural use, including pasture, hayfield, feed corn crop, and vegetables. Approximately 9.2 acres of the property consists of wooded wetland, and includes an unnamed stream that flows northward near the northeastern boundary of the property, and dips again into the property in the northwest corner. The remainder of the property is mainly in oak-hickory woodland cover. Typical overstory species include red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*). The understory includes black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia*

baccata), maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), american hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), arrowwood viburnum (*V. dentatum*), and low-and highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium* and *V. corymbosum*). [See forest plan for more specific information on forest type.] Several acres north of the agricultural fields were used as an orchard and then as pasture, and have now grown up with mid-successional species such as paper and gray birch (*Betula papyrifera* and *B. populifolia*), trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), big-tooth aspen (*P. grandidentata*), and choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana*), as well as the older apple trees (*Malus sp.*). Some non-native shrubs, such as Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), burning bush (*Euonymus alata*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), and honeysuckle (*Lonicera sp.*) occur at woodland edges, at stone wall openings, and under the canopies of early successional stands of trees. While no biological inventory has been done on the site, teachers and students attending a state-sponsored Biodiversity Day event in May 2005 compiled a list of over 400 species of plants, animals, fungi, arthropods, and insects on the property.

Portions of the property are licensed to a farmer who grows feed corn and hay, and pastures heifers from April to October. Other crops grown on the property include small fields of pumpkins, winter squash, and sweet corn. Farm compost and manure are currently stored beyond the stone wall at the north edge of the agricultural fields.

Adjacent Conservation Land

The farm abuts several existing pieces of conservation land (See Figure 3), including:

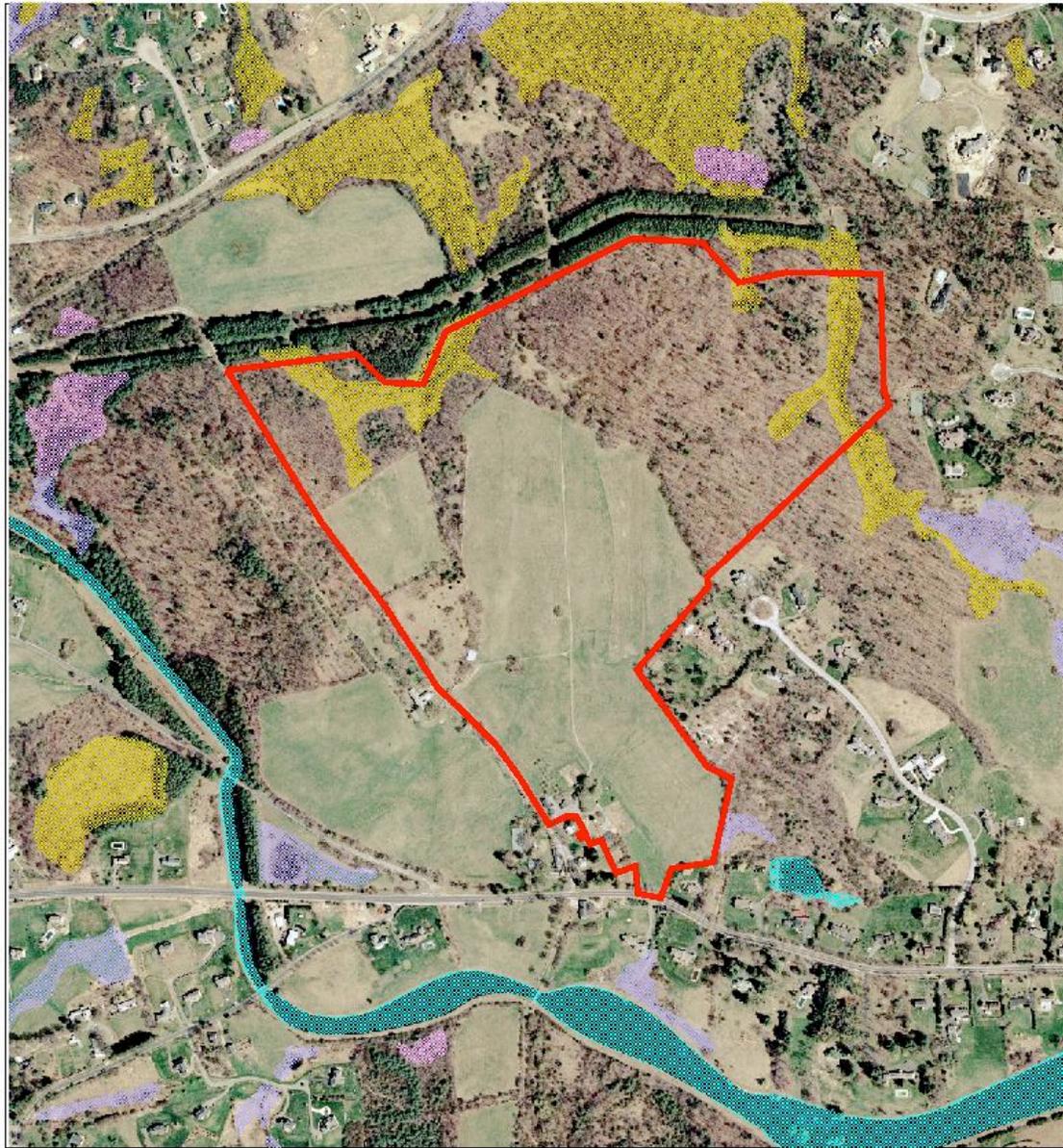
- Approximately 4.4 acres of land owned by Sudbury Valley Trustees
- Approximately 14.6 acres of land owned by the Southborough Open Land Foundation
- Approximately 48 acres of land held under a conservation restriction granted by the Beals family to Sudbury Valley Trustees; and,
- The subsurface Hultman Aqueduct and associated land owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and managed by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority as part of the Sudbury Reservoir public water supply backup system.

Via the Hultman Aqueduct, Chestnut Hill Farm also connects to hundreds of additional acres of conservation land in Northborough and Westborough.

Structures

Under the terms of the conservation restriction, a Farmstead area consisting of approximately five acres has been set aside at the southwest corner of the property (see Figure 4), within which one new home and farm buildings may be constructed. The scope and terms of such development are contained within the CR. Two cottages and several outbuildings are currently located within this envelope. The only structure existing outside the Farmstead envelope is an open-front shed, the foundation of a

former barn, which currently is used to store farm machinery. The only other farm infrastructure outside the Farmstead envelope is moveable, electric fencing used in pasturing heifers.



300 0 300 600 900 1200 Feet



Figure 2.

Chestnut Hill Farm
Management Plan
May 2006

Legal Protections against Conversions or Disposal

The Chestnut Hill Farm CR was acquired for conservation, agricultural, forestry, scenic, and passive recreational uses only. The property is protected from conversion to other uses by a combination of statutory provisions, the Constitution of the Commonwealth, and the Community Preservation Act. The CR provides permanent legal protection of the site's conservation values. Changes in the use of the property would be possible, though difficult. Such changes would require:

1. A majority vote of the Conservation Commission that the conservation purposes of Chestnut Hill Farm were no longer meaningful;
2. A two-thirds vote of Southborough Town Meeting;
3. Approval by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs;
4. A two-thirds roll-call vote of the Massachusetts General Court (state legislature) and signature by the Governor;
5. Restitution of State Self-Help funding by dedicating a property of similar utility and value, as approved by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, to the general public for conservation and recreational purposes; and,
6. Restitution of Community Preservation Act funding by reimbursement of funds to the local and state Community Preservation Act Funds.

Property Management

Roles and Responsibilities

The landowner shall have the obligation to manage and maintain the property, including but not limited to the trails as shown on Figure 4. However, should the landowner fail to maintain trails and/or scenic vistas, the Town, at its expense, has the right to maintain the open fields and meadows by mowing, and to maintain the trails by mowing, clearing downed trees, or installing erosion control devices, so long as such activities follow the Notice and Approval requirements described below.

Mowing

Fields on the property are currently being managed very successfully for grassland nesting birds such as bobolink and Eastern meadowlark. Every effort to continue practices that promote such habitat should be made. The first mowing of hay in the spring should be delayed until after July 15th when possible. Avoiding nighttime mowing will reduce the risk of injuring nesting birds. The current practice of leaving at least five acres of hayfield un-mowed until mid-August (a "reserve area") provides the opportunity for birds whose nest are destroyed by early mowing elsewhere to re-nest in the reserve area.



500 0 500 1000 1500 Feet

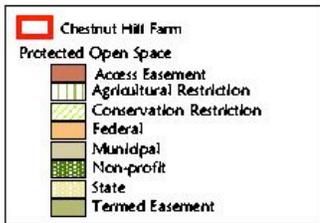


Figure 3.

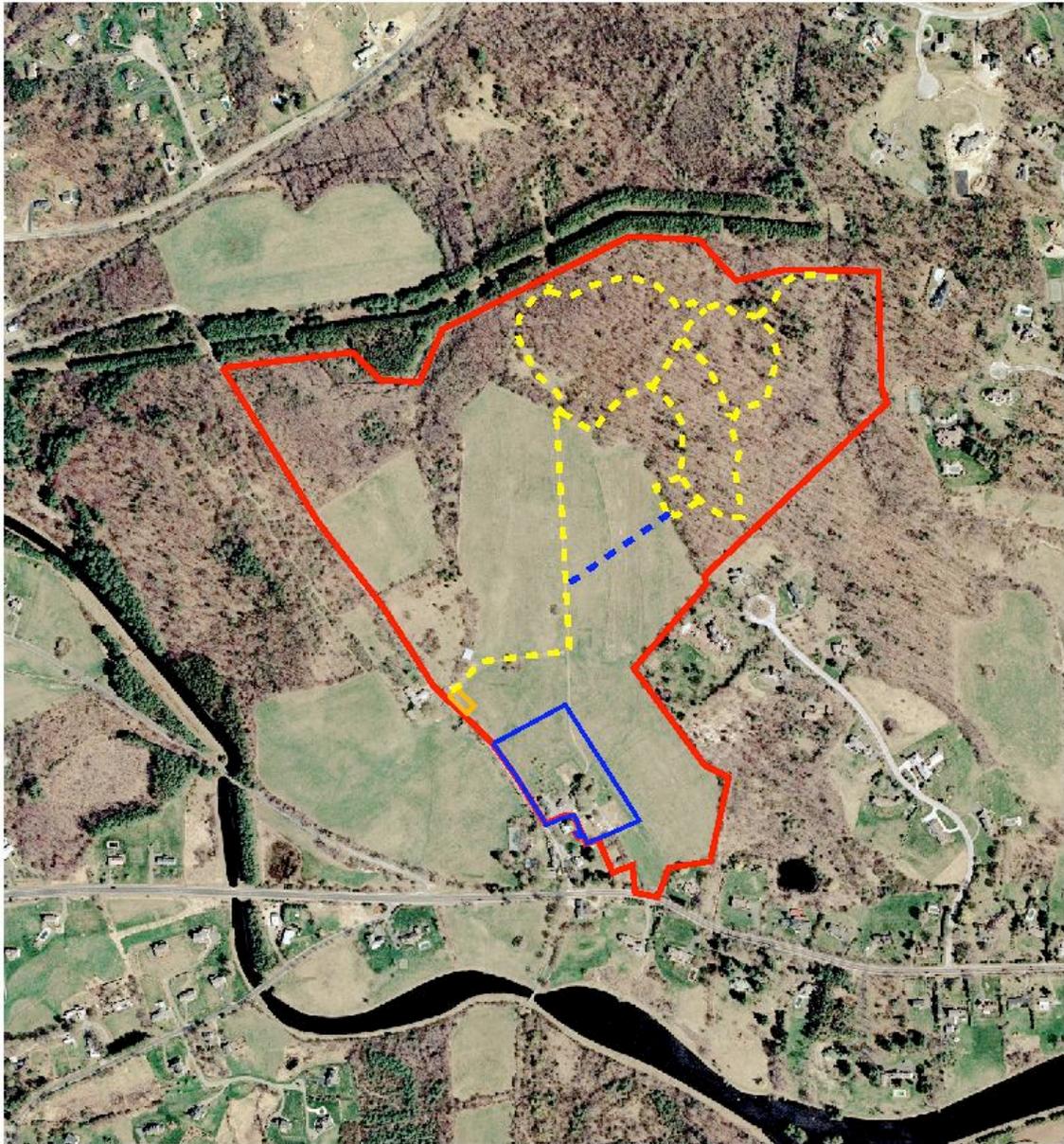
Chestnut Hill Farm
 Management Plan
 May 2006

Farm Plan

[insert]

Forestry Plan (To be in place by May 2008)

Recreation Plan



250 0 250 500 750 1000 1250 Feet



Figure 4.

Chestnut Hill Farm
Management Plan
May 2006

Property Regulations and Uses

Public access to Chestnut Hill Farm is required per the requirements of the State's Self-Help grant program. Visitors should enjoy the property with the understanding that they use the area at their own risk and that they will comply with all of the regulations below.

Permitted recreational uses on the property include, but are not limited to: walking, trail running, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, bird watching, nature study, photography, sketching, and painting.

Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to: motorized vehicle use (including dirt bikes and ATVs, but not including motorized wheelchairs); bicycling (including mountain bikes); dog walking; parking in other than the designated area; dumping and littering; disturbing, removing, cutting, or otherwise causing damage to a natural feature, sign, trail marker, poster, barrier, building, machinery, or other property; damage to crops and/or fields used for agricultural purposes; camping; organized group activities without permission; horseback riding by the general public; and all activities which conflict with the purposes of the CR.

The following activities are permitted, subject to written approval from the Conservation Commission and the landowner: educational programs; overnight camping; programs to be held outside of regular public access hours; and other appropriate group activities that do not conflict with the purposes of the conservation restriction. Horseback riding by the landowners and their guests is permitted, though it may not take place on the public trails, with the exception of trail crossings, and cannot adversely impact public access.

Both allowed and prohibited uses will be posted on signs at the parking area and within all publications associated with the site.

Access and Parking

The property will be open to the public for the purposes described above, from dawn till dusk 365 days per year. Between March 1 and November 15 of each year, pedestrian access will be limited to those trails shown in Figure 4. Between November 15 and March 1, an additional "winter use" trail as shown on Figure 4 will be available for use, and public access to the open fields for the recreational purposes outlined above will be unlimited, provided there is sufficient snow cover, to be determined by the action of the Town in plowing public roads. Access in the woodlands is limited to the trails year-round.

Parking for approximately 10 vehicles will be available in an unpaved lot off Chestnut Hill Road. Maintenance of the lot, including but not limited to occasional grading and winter plowing, shall be the responsibility of the Town Department of Public Works.

Trails

Trails shall be unpaved, and will vary in width. Woodland trails shall not exceed four feet (4') in width, except as necessary to conduct forestry operations. Trail maintenance and building shall follow practices espoused in the Appalachian Mountain Club's *The Complete Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance*, 3d Edition, or subsequent editions.

Trails shall be clearly marked with painted blazes, or with small plastic or metal markers, not to exceed 16 square inches, affixed to posts or to low-quality trees. A trail map shall be clearly posted at the trailhead/parking area and shall be replaced or updated as necessary.

Trails shall be mowed from time to time, but as a general rule, no heavy equipment shall be used in trail maintenance.

Trail Relocation

Trails may be relocated, and new trails may be added, upon mutual agreement of the landowner and the Conservation Commission. Any new or relocated trails shall avoid steep slopes, wetland areas, nesting sites, and rare species habitat. The entire trail system is shown on Figure 4 consists of approximately 1.7 miles of trail, and should not be significantly reduced in scope.

New trail locations should be mapped using a Global Positioning System device and the trail map shall be amended accordingly and posted at the trailhead.

Trail Closings

Trails may be closed from time to time as necessary to conduct agricultural and forestry operations, trail mowing or maintenance, or for reasons of threats to public safety or to wildlife or wildlife habitat, with proper notice and approval as per the Notice and Approvals section of this document.

In emergency situations, such as those that would present an immediate threat to human health or safety, the landowner may close trails without permission of the Town, but must notify the Town within 24 hours that he or she has done so.

No section of trail should be closed for longer than three days, except in the case of permanent closure or rerouting, or unless the landowner and the Town agree that a

longer trail closing is necessary for safety, for wildlife protection, for crop protection, or for maintenance purposes.

All trail closings should be posted by the landowner at all public access points as soon as is practical.

Educational or Interpretive programs

While nature observation for educational purposes is included under the passive recreation uses permitted by the CR, organized educational groups must notify the landowner and the Conservation Commission as per the section below, Special Use Notification, before conducting programs on the property.

Upon mutual agreement of both parties, the landowner or the Conservation Commission may erect interpretive signs along trails, though these should be limited to numbered posts, no greater in width than 4" on any side, and no higher than 4' tall. No concrete footings may be installed. If used, numbered posts should correspond to interpretive points shown on a map and brochure that is made available at the trailhead/parking lot.

Hunting

Hunting will be allowed solely for the purposes of predator and pest control. Notice and approval must be granted by the Conservation Commission, and trails must be closed and posted, as described in "Trail Closings" above, prior to any hunting activities. In the event that the notice and approval process would result in a delay causing damage to crops or livestock, hunting and trail closing may take place as needed, and the landowner must furnish subsequent written notice and details of the emergency pest and predator control to Conservation Commission within 48 hours after such action is taken.

Signage and maps

All signs must be posted where reasonably visible to visitors, and should be kept clear of vegetation. Signs should not be placed in wetlands or other areas of sensitive habitat. A sign must be maintained at the parking area showing the name of the property and acknowledging the Self-Help Program and other contributions to the project. Rules and regulations for use shall be clearly posted at the parking area, at a kiosk or other signboard to be constructed and erected by the Town.

A map of the property should also be posted near the parking area and/or trailhead. This map should show an up-to-date trail layout, delineation of various management

zones, and any significant natural resources. Also included should be a list of rules and regulations, hours of operation, and specific uses of the property. It may also include interpretive information. Development, updating, printing, and stocking of the map and any interpretive brochures at the trailhead will be the responsibility of the Town.

Special Use Notification

The landowner and the Conservation Commission must be notified for the following activities: for educational programs, such as organized walks, other events, or presentations, for more than twenty participants, and any programs to be held outside of regular public access hours. Such notification shall be made via the Special Use Notification form as attached.

Notice and approvals

In the event that the Conservation Commission chooses to exercise its right to maintain trails, fields, or vistas, it must notify the landowner in writing at least thirty (30) days in advance that the landowner is in default of his or her responsibility (-ies). Should the landowner fail to take corrective action, the Conservation Commission then shall notify the landowner ten (10) days in advance of performing any such maintenance activities. This notice should contain the proposed scope of the mowing, clearing, or other maintenance activities. The landowner should respond in writing or by email, and may choose to withhold permission or to suggest postponement for such activities, but may not do so unreasonably.

In the event that either the Town or the landowner must close a trail for the reasons stated above, said party shall notify the other party by phone, email, or in writing a minimum of one week prior to the closing and that party shall have two business days to respond to such notice. Failure on the either party's part to respond shall constitute approval of such action.

Update and Review of Plan

This plan shall be reviewed every five years and upon change of property ownership and updated or revised as necessary. Any group convened to review and update the plan should include representatives from at least the following parties, so long as they continue to exist: the landowner, the Conservation Commission, the Open Space Preservation Commission, the Recreation Commission, and a non-profit land trust such as the Southborough Open Land Foundation or Sudbury Valley Trustees. Updates and revisions shall be made with the mutual agreement of the Chestnut Hill Farm landowner(s) and the Southborough Conservation Commission. Any substantive changes shall require a public

hearing before the Conservation Commission. Any failure to review the plan on such a timeline shall not render it null and void.

Should the parties fail to reach agreement on any proposed changes to the Management Plan, protocol for pursuing dispute resolution as outlined in Section VII (B) of the Chestnut Hill Farm Conservation Restriction, shall be followed.