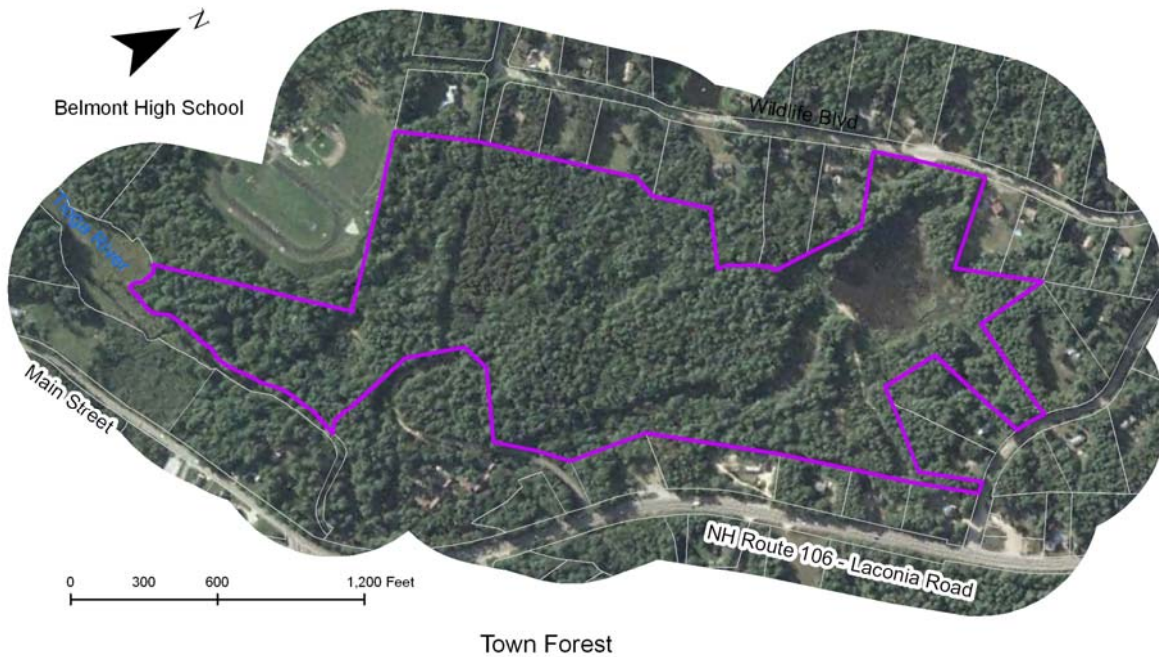




STEWARDSHIP PLAN



Belmont, NH TOWN FOREST Wildlife Boulevard Tax Lot 230/005

Owner: Town of Belmont
143 Main Street
P.O. Box 310
Belmont, NH 03220
www.belmontnh.org

Manager: Belmont Conservation Commission
143 Main Street
P.O. Box 310
Belmont, NH 03220
(603) 267-8300
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Introduction

Natural resources largely define Belmont's rural character. Rural character is "*a quality of life and place...characterized by open spaces, historic places, forest and farmlands*" (Belmont Master Plan, November 18, 2002, page 7.1).

The Town of Belmont supports the conservation of open space through the efforts of its Conservation Commission (Commission) to promote open space preservation and to successfully steward Conservation Lands under their management. Belmont voters have also adopted an Open Space Zoning Ordinance which has been successful in creating additional open space parcels and have designated all Land Use Change Tax revenues be deposited into the Belmont Conservation Fund.

The Commission has been charged with the protection and preservation of land that has been identified as a valuable and irreplaceable resource for drinking water, wildlife habitat and recreation. As part of an overall Conservation Plan, the Commission has developed an Open Space Protection Plan and utilizes a Property Evaluation & Acquisition Process in considering open space values.

NH RSA 79-A:1 also acknowledges the value of conserving open space and reads in part:

"It is hereby declared to be in the public interest to encourage the preservation of open space, thus providing a healthful and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation of the state's citizens, maintaining the character of the state's landscape, and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural and wildlife resources. Open space land imposes few if any costs on local government and is therefore an economic benefit to its citizens."

Property

The Town Forest property is located just north of the Village and is loosely defined on three sides by residential lots fronting on Wildlife Boulevard and Laconia Road, and on the fourth side by the Tioga River and the Belmont High School property.

The lot consists of 65 acres and lies within the Stratified Drift Aquifer that serves the Belmont Municipal Wells. A survey by Ronald Johnson, LLS is on file in the Land Use Office. The lot has four areas of frontage on Wildlife Boulevard.

The lot is generally forested with an impounded shallow pond, wetlands and frontage on the Tioga River. There are several trails, primarily created during an initial attempt to develop the property in the 1970s.

Purpose

The following Stewardship Plan is adopted to guide the Commission and visitors to the property in the responsible management and use of this property.

The following purposes are identified as applicable to this property:

- promote the permanent preservation of an open area which exhibits significant characteristics based on size, substance and location;
- avoid development and disturbance of a site that has a high water table and is subject to flooding;
- promote the rural characteristics of the town in close proximity to the village area;
- promote the most efficient use of land in harmony with its natural features;
- encourage the proper management of timber, firewood and other natural resources through planting, timber stand improvement, thinning, harvesting, reforestation, and other multiple use programs consistent with the forest management program, any deed restrictions and any pertinent local ordinances or regulations (RSA 31:111).

Goals

The following goals are identified:

- provide for safe access;
- promote recreational and educational uses;
- preserve the natural environment;
- provide for continuance of recreational trail systems and greenways;
- preserve undeveloped frontage and natural views along an existing developed road.

Ownership/History

Evaluation and Acquisition Results – the acquisition of this property pre-dates the implementation of a formal Evaluation process.

In the 1970s the property was intended for development as Plantation Condo Estates by then owner Lucien Dulac. Some roadways were roughed in. The development never progressed and the Town acquired the property in October of 1992 by Tax Collector's Deed recorded in the Belknap County Registry of Deeds at Book 1229, Page 44. The property is not enrolled in Current Land Use.

By vote of Town Meeting on March 12, 1994, the property was designated as a Town Forest:

“ARTICLE 23: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of RSA 31:110 to create a Town Forest to be composed of tax deeded parcels shown on the Town Tax Maps as 5-69, 5-69-17 and 8-5-28, said Town Forest to be managed by the Conservation Commission in accordance with the provisions of RSA 31:112; the property so designated shall not be sold or transferred to another purpose without a vote of Town Meeting.”

The Forest abuts tax lot 237/020, owned by the Town of Belmont and developed as the Belmont Park & Ride. The Park & Ride lot was also acquired by Tax Collector's Deed upon an agreement with the NH DES that the State would fund cleanup and continued monitoring of

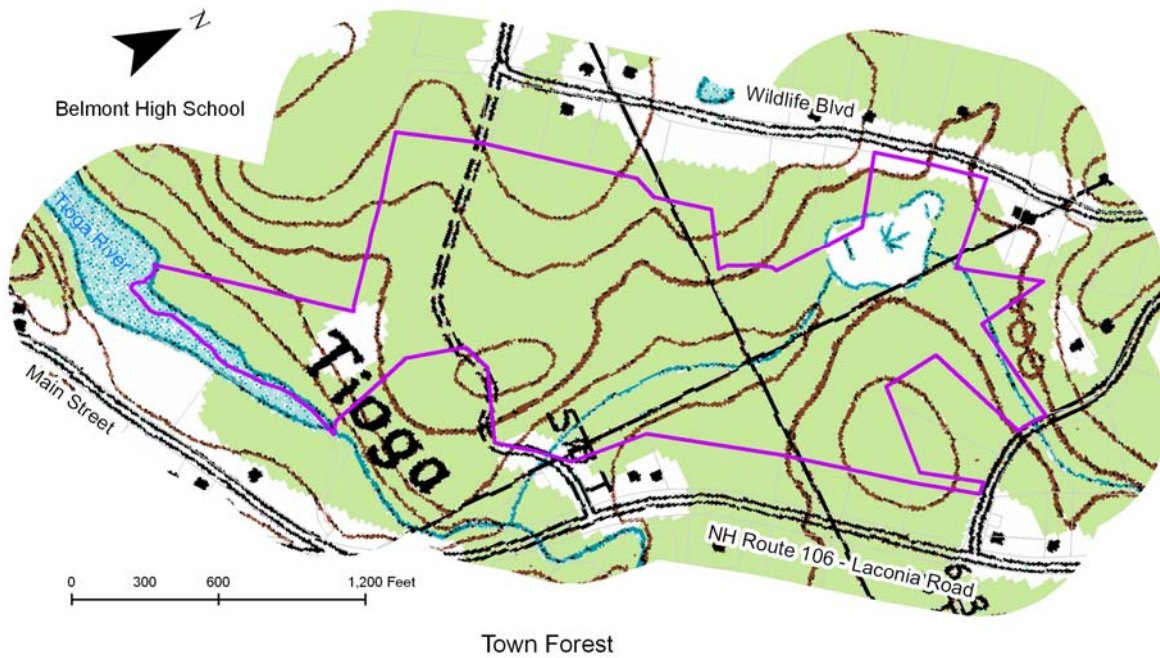
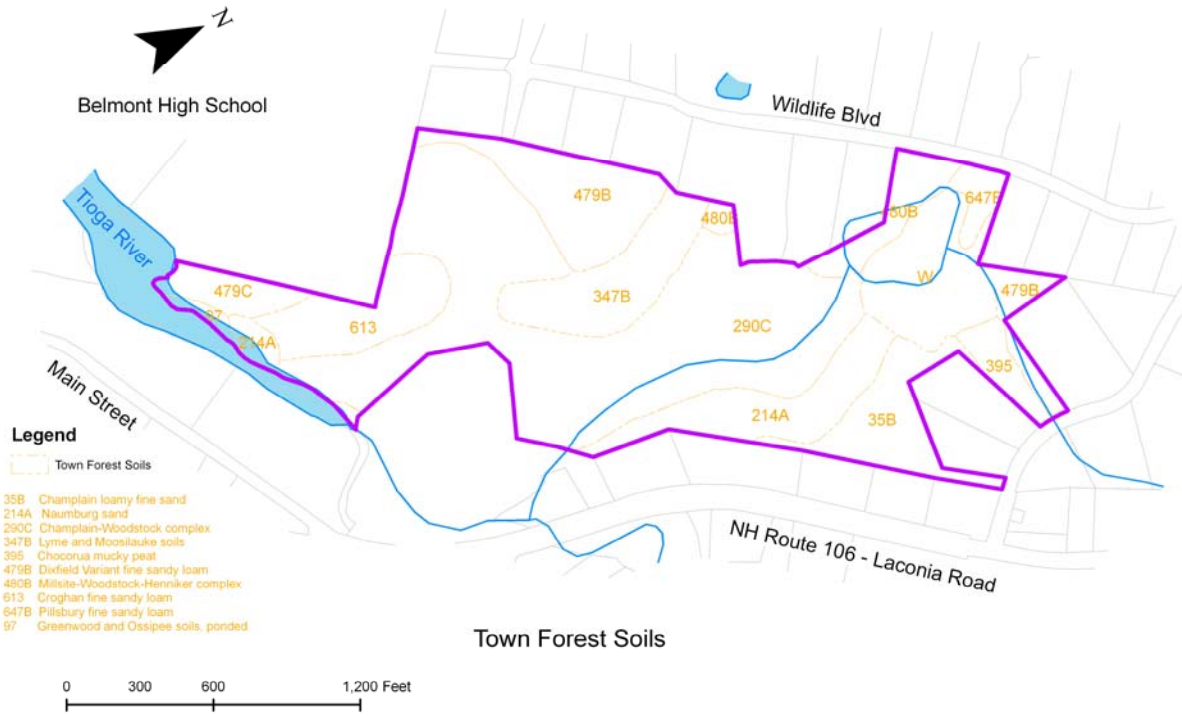
petroleum contamination from a closed gasoline station. The Town represented to DES during these negotiations that the lot would also be used as an additional access to the Town Forest.

In 2001 the trail crossing breached draining the pond and damaging the downstream driveway into Tioga Condos. In 2002 the Town obtained a grant to fund the replacement of said trail crossing and the work was completed during that year.

Property Maps



Town Forest - 2003 Color Aerial Photo



Existing Conditions

There are three points of access to the Forest - directly off the extension of Wildlife Boulevard, a paved parking area further north, and an impoundment maintenance access near the northerly end of Wildlife.

Historic uses of the property include:

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Skating
- Walking
- Local Snowmobile access to main trail
- High School Cross County training
- Motorized Recreational Vehicles
- Geocaching

Inventory

- Character - Criteria for Protection Evaluation
 - Land has outstanding natural resource conservation opportunity;
 - Land has significant public education and recreation opportunities;
 - Land has frontage on a significant water body – the Tioga River;
- Timber – (Describe as applicable)
- Fragile & Unique Areas – (Describe as applicable)
- Fish & Wildlife Habitat – (Describe as applicable)
- Water Resources – (Describe as applicable)
- Soils – (Describe as applicable)
- Recreational Resources/Aesthetics – (Describe as applicable)
- Cultural Features – (Describe as applicable)
- Endangered Species – (Describe as applicable)

The various inventories are a project to be completed in the future.

Management

- Inspections and Reports
 - Regular inspections of the Forest shall be made to identify any problem or encroachment. At least annually, in June of each year, a full site inspection shall be made and a written report placed on file in the Land Use office. Specific elements of the inspection shall include, but not be limited to:
 - Gates
 - Access ways
 - Trails
 - Pond impoundment
- Recommendations

- Install gate and/or other restriction to prohibit unauthorized vehicle entry at extension of Wildlife Blvd
- Install gate and/or other restriction to prohibit unauthorized vehicle entry at pond impoundment maintenance access
- Contact Belmont High School to establish guidelines for Forest use
- Develop timber management plan
- Undertake trail maintenance including waterbar installation
- Determine ownership/continued appropriateness of rope climb training site
- Install identification and rules signage
- Develop access from Park & Ride lot

Operational Rules

- Permitted Conduct:
 - Pedestrian uses including cross country skiing and snowshoeing;
 - Horseback riding;
 - Bow hunting in accordance with the NH law;
 - Fishing in accordance with NH law;
 - Non-motorized bicycles;
 - Non-motorized boats, canoes and kayaks to be removed at the end of each day;
 - Snowmobiles on designated trails (local traffic only);
 - Trail construction, repair and management activities approved by the Conservation Commission
 - Timber management activities approved by the Conservation Commission.
- Prohibited Conduct:
 - Dump or deposit rubbish, waste, leaves, brush, paper or other offensive or unsightly substance – use of Town Forest is “carry in/carry out” relating to personal rubbish.
 - Possess alcoholic beverages;
 - Remove or damage in any way any structure, plant or natural feature;
 - Construct or erect any permanent deer stand;
 - Overnight camping;
 - Kindling of any fire;
 - Erection of any structure;
 - Trapping;
 - Firearms, with the exception of Bow and Arrow;
 - Motorized wheeled vehicles except for designated parking areas;
 - Motorized boats;
 - Overnight parking.
- Penalty for the violation of these operational rules shall be a fine of up to \$1,000 per offense.