

# Protect Westford's East Boston Camps



Article 1, Special Town Meeting

February 7, 2005

7:30 pm

Abbot School Gymnasium

25 Depot Street



Westford Land  
Preservation  
Foundation, Inc.



Westford residents have a one-time opportunity to protect and preserve the historic East Boston Camps property. Located near Westford's town center, the 286-acre camp land includes forested uplands and small wetlands, frontage on Stony and Keyes Brooks, and scenic Burge's Pond. The land, which for decades has been home to East Boston Camps, has long been an open space protection priority for the Town. It offers an ideal setting for day and overnight environmental education programs for children, and helps to safeguard the Town's drinking water supply. In addition, the camps land provides numerous opportunities for recreation.

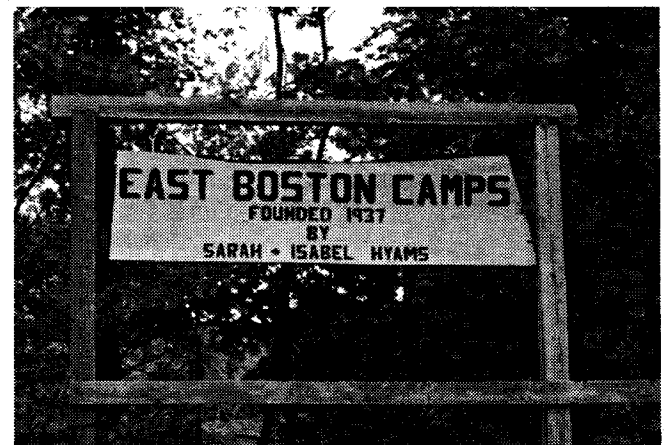
Working at the request of the Westford Board of Selectmen and the Westford Land Preservation Foundation (WLPF), the Trust for Public Land (TPL) has negotiated an agreement for the Town to purchase the property for \$13.5 million. The project must close by March 31, 2005.

A combination of state, local and private funds will be used to purchase the Camps. The Town has applied for a state Drinking Water Protection grant of \$500,000, and to further reduce the Town's cost, WLPF and TPL have launched a private fundraising campaign. The balance of the purchase price will come from the Town of Westford's Community Preservation revenues, pending voter approval at a Special Town Meeting to be held February 7, 2005.

The East Boston Camps parcel is like no other in Westford. Its natural features, large size, pristine condition and central location make it a priority for protection. Specifically, the acquisition will help to provide educational and recreational opportunities, preserve valuable wildlife habitat, protect drinking water quality, and control residential growth.

## Educational and Recreational Opportunities

With established trails, picnic areas, and camp facilities, the Camps property lends itself to a range of recreational opportunities for people of all ages. The land will continue to be open to the public for educational and recreational programs such as Westford's fifth grade camp, which for 30 years has hosted students for one week each spring. In addition, up to three recreational fields are proposed for a small portion of the parcel off Nutting Road that is separate from the main "camp" area. The Town has committed to continue to provide access to on-site programs for youth from Boston and Chelsea, including those who are currently served by the East Boston Camps.



### Preservation of Wildlife Habitat

The 286-acre property contains two brooks and pristine Burge's Pond. The land includes a certified vernal pool, and mature forests surround the water bodies. The diverse mix of wetland and upland habitat types provides an ideal home for both waterfowl and land animals. Portions of the parcel have been identified as priority habitat for rare species by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species program.



### Drinking Water Protection

Protection of the Camps land is critical to protecting the quality of the Town's drinking water. The bulk of the land is located over the high-yield portion of the Stony Brook Aquifer, which feeds the Nutting Road and Depot Street wells.

Together, on a daily basis, these wells provide nearly 1.4 million gallons of drinking water to town residents. If the Town does not acquire the property, it will likely be sold for development. Residential development, which replaces vegetation that filters rainwater with impervious surfaces that increase runoff, would negatively impact drinking water quality. Not only would the natural filtration process be compromised, but contaminants such as pesticides, fertilizers, car oils and other pollutants would be added.

### Control of Residential Growth

The Town of Westford has seen rapid growth over the past 13 years, increasing nearly 25% from a population of 16,500 in 1990 to 20,000 in 2003. This increase in residential growth has resulted in a significant loss of open space, increased municipal spending, and has required the building of three new schools, at a total cost of approximately \$59 million. The increased demand for town services, including schools, has significantly increased property taxes, placing a difficult burden on many citizens with a fixed or low income. Protection of the Camps land will help alleviate this burden, by eliminating the potential for at least 186 new residences along with the corresponding increase in demand for municipal services. At the same time, buying the land will safeguard a beautiful amenity that will be enjoyed for generations.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**What is the Town being asked to pay?** The purchase price for the property is \$13.5 million. Private contributions to date total nearly \$400,000, and the Town is hoping for approval of a \$500,000 state drinking water grant, leaving a balance of \$12.6 million, unless additional private funds are raised. Pending Town Meeting approval, the Town's balance would be paid with a combination of current CPA funds and a bond that will be paid with future CPA revenue.

**How will this expenditure affect property taxes?** If approved by the voters, the East Boston Camps land will be purchased with Community Preservation Funds, an existing source of town and state money. **No new taxes** will be required, and tax bills will not increase as a result of this purchase. The Town will need to continue to collect enough CPA revenue to service the bond until it is paid in full.

**What happens if the Town does not vote to buy the Camps land?** Under Westford's Flexible Development bylaw, this land could support at least 186 new residential units, and many more homes could be constructed under the state's 40-B (affordable housing) guidelines. If funding cannot be assembled to protect the land, it will likely be sold for development.

**What will the Camps land be used for?** The application submitted to the Community Preservation Committee proposes Parcel A (see map) be used for passive recreation, education, conservation, aquifer protection and possibly as a location for a drinking water well. These activities will have a minimal impact on the environment and are suitable for the topography and vegetation on the site. Examples of recreational and educational programs include walking, hiking, bird watching, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, nature programs and continuation of the fifth grade camp.

In order to meet the Town's need for recreational fields, Parcel B has been proposed as a site for active recreation. Preliminary estimates show that 8 of the 29 acres in Parcel B -- or enough land for three fields -- are suitable for fields. Further studies, including soil testing, wetland delineation, traffic analysis, etc., will be conducted to confirm these results. All fields built on the site would utilize the Integrated Pest Management Plan, eliminating negative impacts on the surrounding wetlands and brook, and the fields and parking areas would be designed to minimize impact on the neighbors.

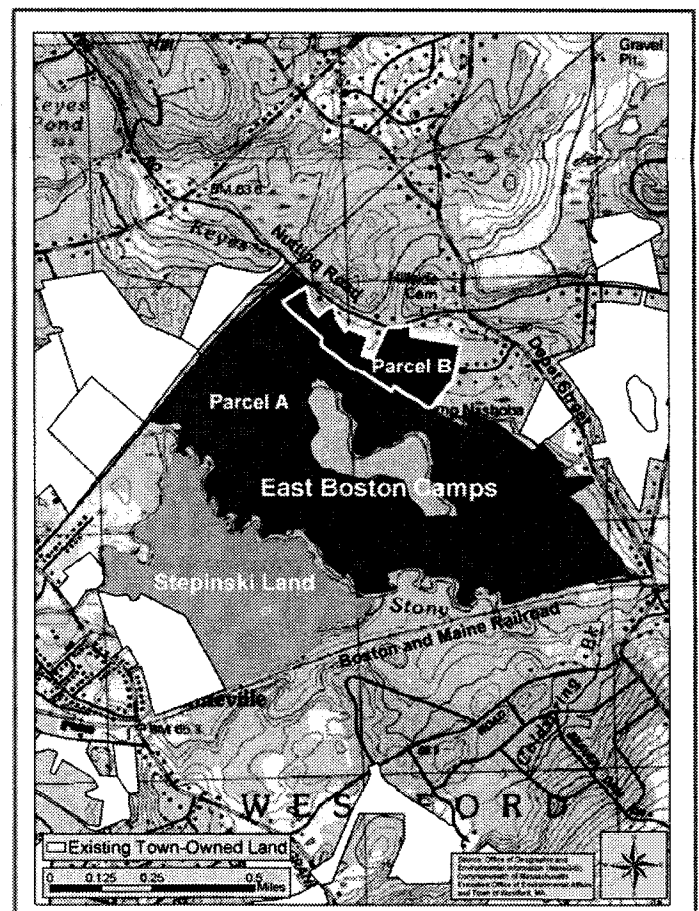
**How will specific programs and uses be determined?** If Town Meeting approves the purchase, a committee will be formed to develop recommendations about the day and week-long camp programs, the types of educational programs that should be offered, the type of recreational activities that will be allowed, how to best fund on-going maintenance expenses, and a myriad of other topics. All recommendations and proposed uses will be brought to Town Meeting for approval prior to implementation. These will be consistent with the Global Use Committee's recommendations, which were approved by the Board of Selectmen and will be allowed in the Conservation Restriction.

**What happens if Parcel B is unsuitable for recreation fields?** If this occurs, a future Town Meeting will be asked to approve an alternate use for the parcel. However, only those uses permitted under the Community Preservation Act and recommended by the Community Preservation Committee, in this case open space and recreation, will be possible.

**Who is going to have control of the land?** Initially, both parcels will be under the care and custody of the Board of Selectmen. After the plan for Parcel A is completed and approved by Town Meeting, the land will be transferred to the most suitable department. This transfer will also be brought before the voters at Town Meeting. If Parcel B is suitable for recreation fields, it will be transferred to the Parks and Recreation Department. If the parcel is unsuitable for playing fields, it will be transferred to the most appropriate department by Town Meeting once the best use of the parcel has been determined.

**What will ensure that the use of the land does not change in the future?** Since East Boston Camps is going to be purchased with CPA funds, for open space and recreation purposes, only those two uses are allowable by law. Additional protection will be provided by a Conservation Restriction (CR), a legally binding, recorded document that specifies exactly what is and is not permitted on the land, which will be placed on all of the Camps land as required by the Community Preservation Act. A qualified, independent third party will hold and monitor the CR, ensuring the terms and spirit of the CR are not violated.

**Is the East Boston Social Center going to continue to run the camps?** The agreement with the landowner (the Hyams Foundation) permits the Social Center to run the camps through the summer of 2005. After 2005, all decisions about the camp, including the involvement of the East Boston Social Center, will be determined through the planning process described in the *How will specific programs and uses be determined?* paragraph above. However, low income youth from Boston and Chelsea will continue to have access to any programming on the Camps land.



**Why should I donate to this project?** The less the town has to borrow to purchase this property, the lower the interest costs and therefore the lower the overall cost to the Town.

# HELP PROTECT WESTFORD'S EAST BOSTON CAMPS



- Provide Educational and Recreational Opportunities
- Preserve Wildlife Habitat
- Protect Westford's Drinking Water
- Control Residential Growth

Article 1, Special Town Meeting, February 7, 2005  
 7:30 pm — Abbot School Gymnasium, 25 Depot Street

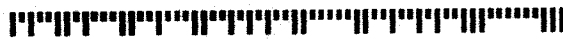
## What can I do to help save East Boston Camps?

1. **Attend the Special Town Meeting** on February 7th (7:30 p.m. at the Abbot School Gym, 25 Depot Street, Westford).
2. **Make a donation:** Private funds will play a critical role in making this important project possible. Your gift, which will go directly toward the \$13.5 million purchase price, will help reach the private fundraising goal. Please make a tax-deductible donation by visiting [www.westfordlpf.org](http://www.westfordlpf.org) or sending a check payable to the Westford Land Preservation Foundation to P.O. Box 235, Westford, MA 01886. Please note on your check that it is for East Boston Camps. To make a donation of stock or if you have questions, please call Nancy Rosinski of the Westford Land Preservation Foundation, 978-692-6202. Donations should be made prior to Town Meeting.

**Who supports the purchase of the Camps?** This purchase is supported by the Westford Board of Selectmen, Westford Conservation Trust, Westford Land Preservation Foundation, Westford Parks and Recreation Commission, The Trust for Public Land, and The League of Women Voters.


*Provided by the Westford Board of Selectmen, the Trust for Public Land and the Westford Land Preservation Foundation.  
 Paid for by The Trust for Public Land, Will Rogers, President*

\*\*\*\*\*AUTO\*\*5-DIGIT 01886  
 RESIDENT  
 32 NORTH ST  
 WESTFORD MA 01886-1247



First Class  
 US Postage  
 Paid  
 Boston Ma  
 Permit No 59949

Westford Land Preservation  
 Foundation  
 P.O. Box 235  
 Westford, MA 01886



Westford Land  
 Preservation  
 Foundation, Inc.