

Groton Long Point Vegetative Management Plan 2024

Executive Summary

Groton Long Point occupies part of the coastal zone of Southeastern Connecticut, consisting of several different environments, each with unique vegetation that has either evolved naturally over the past hundreds to thousands of years, been modified and altered through human activities or introduced as new and invasive species. There are wetlands, both tidal (saltwater intrusion) and non-tidal (freshwater, primarily around the Vernal pool) which are regulated by Connecticut General Statutes, and upland areas which include Residential areas and protected Conservation lands. Lastly, there are our beaches and shared spaces.

Each of these unique ecosystems has both natural and invasive plants that should be managed for the benefit of the residents and ecosystems. A healthy ecosystem of native plants is beneficial to GLP. These systems are more diverse and support a wide variety of flora and fauna. Invasive species are common and can outcompete and crowd out native species, decreasing diversity and overall ecosystem health and stability. The identification and control of invasive plants is a high priority.

Our marshes at GLP are facing an existential threat in the coming decades due to sea level rise. At this time, based on the most recent model predictions, our marshes will be inundated within the next one hundred years. Presently there is evidence of changes in our marsh vegetation due to the sea level rise that has occurred over the last 100 years. Past efforts to increase tidal flushing of our marshes were successful in benefiting the vegetation and may need to be addressed again to improve the health of our marshes. The short-term management of the marshes is of vital concern to our community and is being addressed by the GLPA, the Conservation Commission and the Resiliency Committee who are working with local, State, and regional agencies.

The Vernal pool on the Conservation land is a unique freshwater oasis for various species of animals dependent on the transient nature of the pool. The plants, shrubs, trees, and

vegetative litter are vital to the success of these organisms. The area surrounding the pool should be disturbed as little as possible.

Our residential areas at GLP are maintained by a combination of the GLPA and private homeowners. The GLPA maintains our common areas for the benefit of the residents. This includes lawn cutting and tree and shrub trimming in common areas and general maintenance. Any vegetation affecting views are restricted to height limits of 4 feet. Vegetation bordering the lagoons, marshes and wetlands shall not be cut to a height less than 3 feet. The use of pesticides and fertilizers should be kept to a minimum, and if used at all must follow the application directions closely. Use of these products leads to the degradation of our local water quality.

Invasive plants are prevalent at GLP. Some were purposely introduced in landscape designs. All residents need to be knowledgeable in the identification and treatment of these plants. Care should be taken for the correct disposal of any cuttings. There are extensive areas of invasive plant growth that are the result of illegal disposal of cuttings. **Dumping of any material in the Conservation lands is not allowed.**

Some of the large areas of invasive plants that have been identified at GLP are undergoing treatment, including the cutting and removal of debris and chemical treatment of residual components. In many cases this is a multi-year process.

Several other areas have extensive problems with invasive species or overgrowth of natural vegetation. The scope of these projects needs to be identified and an equitable plan determined to treat (remove and dispose), trim and replant with native plantings. A committee should be formed to evaluate and propose solutions to projects concerning vegetation at GLP. ***The Vegetative Management Plan Advisory Committee*** should consist of 3 members, one of whom is a GLPA Board member. This committee should field requests from residents and determine solutions to vegetation projects. The costs for these projects can exceed any one year's budget. A fund should be set up to which residents can donate for the purpose of removing invasive plants, replanting with native species, and beautifying GLP.

There are many beautiful gardens on GLPA property. These require significant resources in time and money. The GLPA should create a "GLP Beautification Committee" for community

members to volunteer. A few hours per season helping maintain these gardens will make GLP a more beautiful place.

The Conservation lands should be disturbed as little as possible, primarily for trail maintenance. These trails give residents an opportunity to explore more of the natural beauty of GLP, from the shores of Mumford Cove, passing through the wooded uplands, along the marshes edge where you can watch osprey fish and tend their nests. You will also observe herons, egrets, and other shore birds that utilize the marshes for both habitat and food sources as you continue towards to the Vernal pool and its unique ecosystem.

Groton Long Point is more than beaches and water. The vegetation that surrounds us is vital for our health, safety, and well-being. It protects us from storm surges and wind damage. It cleans our air and water. It pleases us aesthetically. The goals of this Vegetative Management Plan are to inform residents of the variety of habitats at GLP and their unique vegetation and stresses and to outline a path from control to management to maintenance which improves the natural resilience, diversity, and overall health of the ecosystem.

Summary and Recommendations.

1. Vegetative Management includes routine maintenance, emergency and storm response, and special projects, including, but not limited to, clearing, and trimming for non-critical purposes (sight lines and aesthetic reasons) and removal of invasive vegetation and replanting of native species.

2. The Association, with the guidance of Professional Landscape Designers, Certified Foresters and interested individuals should maintain a continuously updated list, the “**Vegetative Management Project List**” of areas that need to be addressed, for either maintenance issues or invasive species removal, or some combination of the two.

The Project List should include the scope of the work and whether a permit from either the State or City is required.

3. Most maintenance issues (grass mowing, minor trimming, road visibility issues) are performed routinely for the safety of our residents, along with recreational and aesthetic reasons. Other, more major problems, including the trimming or removal of natural and/or invasive plantings which involve larger areal extent and significant cost of remediation need to be addressed in a fair and equitable manner.

4. The GLPCC should convene a standing committee to be approved by the GLPA "***The Vegetative Management Plan Advisory Committee***" (VMPAC) whose role will be to:

A: Determine a set of criteria to rank the importance of remediation of both natural vegetation and invasive species projects that arise at GLP.

B: Maintain an up to date "Vegetative Management Project List" of major vegetative issues that need to be addressed at GLP, but that fall out of the purview of "Normal maintenance". This list should rank each issue based on the significance of the problem based on the criteria above. Estimate the costs associated with each problem.

C: Solicit and rank requests of vegetation problems from residents.

D: Propose an action plan for the fiscal year to address the problems on the "List"

The ***Vegetative Management Committee*** should consist of 3 members, one of whom is a Director of the GLPA.

Funding for these projects has typically come from the GLPA budget. The "List" of projects routinely exceeds what can be reasonably budgeted for that purpose in any particular year.

5: The GLPA Board should set up a fund "***The Auxiliary Fund for Vegetative Invasive Species Management***". This fund would be available for residents to contribute to for the **sole purpose of the removal of invasive plant species and the replanting of native plant species, based on the priority of projects on the "List"**. This fund should carry over year to year.

Recommendations for Residents

1. Refrain from planting invasive species as part of landscape designs.
2. Refrain from using fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. If needed, use minimal dosing levels. Follow all instructions carefully.
3. Consult and utilize professional landscape services to properly remove and dispose of any invasive cuttings to prevent the spread of these plants.
4. Identify and report any invasive plants or other problematic vegetation to the VMPAC.
5. DO plant or replant areas with native shrubs and grasses. These have many advantages, supporting a wider diversity of secondary flora and fauna, while trapping windblown sand and sediment.
6. DO NOT DUMP any material on Conservation Lands.
7. DO NOT alter or disturb any vegetation around the Vernal Pool.
8. Enjoy the natural beauty of our Nature Trails through the Conservation Land.
9. Volunteer to help maintain the beautiful gardens at GLP.

Submitted by:

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