

EEPAC Working Group Comments on Ecological Restoration Plan for Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills ESA

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Regarding: ‘TAGs viewing opportunity model would restore open woodland or savanna with native moist wet meadow species (grasses sedges and wildflowers) between realigned trail section and wetland edge zone (4).’ (pg 8)

Regarding: ‘Heavy equipment restricted to areas of low habitat sensitivity to limit erosion impacts.’ (pg 10)

Regarding: ‘Regions where ecological sensitive features are present (Saunders Pond or retainable native plants/communities), basal bark and manual removal with chainsaws or less intrusive methods (weed wrench) will be used’ (pg 10)

Regarding: ‘American toads – burrow beneath frost line and will not be impacted’ (pg 15)

Regarding: ‘The wetland edge is a band running 3 to 5 metres in width along the south shore of the pond’ (pg 8)

Comment: What is the size of the ‘buffer zone’ between the edge of the Pond outwards that will be restricted to hand weeding and basal bark applications and not heavy machinery?

Regarding: Figure 1

Comment: Will there be future maintenance requirements in the MEMM4 site (future Bur Oak savanna) for viewing points along the proposed path?

Regarding: ‘The wetland edge has ephemeral drainage channels’ (pg 20)’

Comment: Will the continued growth of grasses/sedges/wildflowers limit the movement of water via ephemeral streams to the pond over time?

Regarding: Funding

Comment: Are sufficient funds allocated to achieve the monitoring and adaptive management programs? What is an approximate cost breakdown?

Regarding: ‘All machinery and equipment will be inspected and cleaned in accordance with the Clean Equipment Protocol.’ (pg 16)

Comment: Will an ecologist be regularly present to ensure proper Clean Equipment Protocols are followed?

Regarding: ‘Potential Risks – Bats: no hibernacula present in restoration area or within the ESA, and will not be affected. Large trees that require management will be inspected (cavity search) by qualified personnel’ (pg. 14):

Comment: Will it be possible to add in bat boxes/hibernacula on suitable habitats after successful forest regeneration to promote the future use of this area by bats?

Regarding: Table 1 (pg 13):

Comment: Readjustment of time frame (Table 1) to reflect delays in scheduling – shift to fall/winter of 2017 instead of 2016

Regarding: ‘Use of Habitat and conditions described in the Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills ESA: Ecological Inventory & Management Zone Report Volume 1 by North South Environmental (NSE), and includes and Volume 2 reports on the Hydrological Investigation; Water Quality Monitoring and Paleolimnology Study to base planting decisions’ (pg 3)

Comment: No copy of these Volumes were given to EEPAC and we cannot provide detailed comments on the Plan

Miscellaneous comments:

Comment: A walk through beyond the restoration area showed a substantial number of mature (10+ yr.) buckthorn trees and seedlings still present in the understory. What steps will be taken to mitigate buckthorn encroachment beyond the approximate restoration area? Will there be consideration made in assessing areas south-east of the restoration zone to further remove nonnatives in the future?

Recommend: Implementation of additional signage along newly made trails and boardwalk to maintain the dogs on leash policy (owner and off-leash dog was seen during the walk-through)