

*Department of
Engineering*

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October 16, 2007

Mr. Dennis Donahue, President
The Common at Sinnott Farms
Homeowner's Association
2 Timothy Lane
Bloomfield CT 06002

**Subject: Landscape maintenance at the pond and in other areas –
The Common at Sinnott Farms**

Dear Sir,

I have received several phone calls from residents about this subject. The callers expressed some concerns about the recent brush removal around the pond and about the landscape maintenance in the development as a whole. As the Town Wetlands Agent I can only advise property owners on the Regulations and give recommendations. Your Association as the property owners must decide what is best for your land.

I will address the areas around the pond first. The dairy farm that the Commons was built on included a small pond for livestock watering. This pond was enlarged to create the present pond on the east side of Deerfield Road opposite Arrowwood Lane. It was constructed in the first phase of the Common and its primary function is a wet stormwater detention basin. The pond has one piped inlet on the west side and an outlet control structure at the southerly end. Runoff from the majority of the Sinnott Farms development eventually drains down to this pond. The pond water level is regulated by the outlet structure and low rainfall may cause the pond to stagnate.

The area south of the pond is mapped as wetlands and was formerly maintained as a wet meadow by the periodic mowing of the weeds and small brush. The areas on the north and east sides of the pond are not in mapped wetlands. The southerly half of east side of the pond was primarily wooded. The northerly part of the pond was created in the farm fields and the remaining large trees in this area lined the farm road in from Wadhams Road.

As you may know our area's natural habitat is hardwood forest. Most open areas will revert to a hardwood forest cover if the weeds and small brush are not cut. Typically this cutting is done to a height of 4-6 inches and the cuttings are not removed. Annual, or every other year, mowing of the weeds and small brush is sufficient to prevent the growth of trees in a wet meadow area.

Wet meadows are special habitats and they attract certain bird species that will only nest in open areas that provide some cover (weeds or light brush). During our region's agricultural past these ground nesting bird species proliferated in the wet meadows created in cut-over fields and other farm areas that were left fallow. With the decline of farming and conversion of farm land to development these wet meadow areas have been significantly reduced or eliminated and as a consequence the birds have also declined.

The Wetlands Regulations require that a permit be obtained prior to the removal of vegetation within any wetlands and watercourses and the upland review areas adjacent to them. The mowing or cutting of weeds and small brush to maintain a wet meadow habitat would not require a Wetlands Permit. Removal of standing trees in these areas, or other regulated activities (placement of material, construction, grading, paving, etc.) does require a Wetlands Permit.

The pond, along with the main roads and the house lot clusters, are encircled by Open Space areas created with the Common. This means that the area surrounding the pond and up to the main road right-of-ways is owned in common by the Homeowner's Association.

An overall approach to maintaining the Open Space areas should be adopted. The type of approach will depend on your needs and goals. I recommend that you adopt a landscaping/integrated pest management plan. These plans coordinate the application of lawn and other pesticides and fertilizers to minimize the pollution of wetlands and watercourses from these chemicals and the level of maintenance. In general, no chemicals should be used in close proximity of the wetlands and the pond and only the minimum should be used on lawn areas. The plan should also include specific mowing schedules for different areas. Reducing lawn areas will reduce the use of lawn chemicals, the amount of area maintained as lawn, the potential for pollution of the wetlands and watercourses and the cost of your landscape maintenance.

The Homeowner's Association will have to decide what areas will receive what level of maintenance. In my opinion, only those areas within the house lots, and several feet behind the curbs, should be mowed (weekly) and maintained as lawn. The Open Space areas should be maintained as wet or dry meadows or left alone to grow as, or to revert to, hardwood forest. These meadow areas should only be mowed once a year, in the late fall, and could be enhanced with the planting of annual wildflowers. The Open Space area between the Arrowwood and Spring Hill clusters, west of Deerfield Road, is or was also maintained as a wet meadow area.

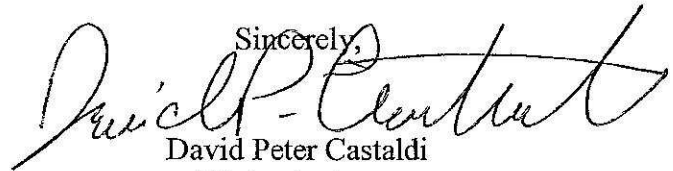
The presence of trees and shrubs around the pond is beneficial for wildlife. The trees provide shade which helps keep the water cold as well as cover, food and nesting sites and materials. I recommend keeping some brush and woods around the pond for these reasons. Maintaining a diversity of habitat types will attract more wildlife and have less impact on the wetlands and watercourses.

Wetland areas may be used for recreation as long as the use does not affect the natural state of the wetlands. Therefore, dirt walking paths could be maintained in wetland areas but paved paths or any other construction would require a permit. The pond may need periodic treatment for specific problems and these must be determined and implemented by licensed professionals. The island in the pond should be left alone and access to it is possible only with a boat.

Please refer to the enclosed plot from our GIS. The photo background is from 2002. The Deerfield Road temporary cul-de-sac is shown and the long black lines are silt fence. The differing textures indicate different types of ground cover. The lawn areas appear relatively smooth. The wet and dry meadow areas have a rougher texture. Meadows within the wetlands would be wet meadows. The wooded areas are shown from the long shadows of the trees.

I hope this letter addresses your concerns. Please call me at 860-769-3526 if you have any questions. I can also be reached by e-mail at pcastaldi@bloomfieldct.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David P. Castaldi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "D".

David Peter Castaldi
Wetlands Agent
Town of Bloomfield