

Warner's Pond Task Force:

Final Report

Concord, Massachusetts

June 2025

Executive Summary

The Concord Natural Resources Commission convened the Warner's Pond Task Force in February 2024 and the Task Force completed its work in June 2025. Pursuant to its Committee Charge, the purpose of the Task Force was to become familiar with all alternatives that have been considered to date, explore new ideas as appropriate, and recommend a course of action to the NRC to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system that reflects the community criteria identified in *Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030*.

This document constitutes the Task Force's Final Report to the Natural Resources Commission, in final fulfillment of its above duties and responsibilities. The Task Force's recommendations to the NRC include three elements:

1. Preparation and implementation of an Adaptive Management Plan for Warner's Pond, with clear and specific goals, metrics, and performance targets; an adaptive methodology; an independent study design; accountability to a defined budget; a five-year implementation timeline; and a comprehensive reevaluation/decision-making process.
2. Convening of a standing multi-stakeholder Warner's Pond Management Committee, that among other duties as listed below, would develop the Adaptive Management Plan that is to be recommended to the NRC.
3. Cooperation and support for a series of specific actions to enhance the recreational and historical value of the Warner's Pond system, detailed below.

The Task Force approved this final report on June 12 by a vote of 7 members who supported or could "live with" the recommendation to 2 members who opposed it.

Background

Since the 1990s, the town has explored various alternatives to improve ecological health and recreational capacity of the pond, and conducted ongoing efforts to remove aquatic invasives and address sediment build up with limited success. Recent historical milestones have included:

- Restoration of the dam in 2008
- The 2012 Warner’s Pond Watershed Management Plan
- The 2018 Warner’s Pond Dredging Feasibility Study
- Approval at Town Meeting of \$2.5M for dredging the pond in 2020 and 2021
- Approval of an additional \$550,000 for restoration in 2023
- A 2022 dredging project bid that came in at over \$9M
- A 2023 Alternatives Analysis Report that compared dam removal, dredging, no action alternatives

After members of the community expressed concerns about the direction of the town’s actions, the Concord Natural Resources Commission (NRC) convened the Warner’s Pond Task Force in February 2024. The Task Force completed its work in June 2025. Pursuant to its Committee Charge, the purpose of the Task Force was to become familiar with all alternatives that have been considered to date, explore new ideas as appropriate, and recommend a course of action for the Pond that reflects the community criteria identified in *Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030*, the Town’s comprehensive long-range plan.¹ These criteria include 1) History and Character, 2) Livability and Values, 3) Mobility and Accessibility, 4) Ecological Sustainability, and 5) Fiscal Sustainability.²

The charge further detailed the following Task Force duties and responsibilities:

1. To become familiar with Warner’s Pond, its three public access points, the dam, and the general environs;
2. To review prior reports, plans, and other documentation evaluating and implementing alternatives over the last few decades;
3. To explore and evaluate ecological health of the pond system under each feasible alternative;
4. To explore and evaluate future recreational opportunities under each feasible alternative with the Town’s consultant;
5. To obtain preliminary cost estimates for each feasible alternative;
6. To explore and evaluate potential funding sources for each feasible alternative;
7. To review the issues and concerns related to dam removal raised by the community;
8. To solicit input from the community through a variety of methods, including at least one public hearing early in the process;
9. To consider whether there are measures which might be taken to improve ecological health and recreational opportunities that would require additional planning and/or more time to implement;

¹ The Task Force’s complete charge is available in Appendix A.

² See Appendix E for a detailed set of questions the Task Force agreed to use to evaluate the Warner’s Pond system according to the *Envision Concord* criteria.

10. To submit a final report to the Natural Resources Commission recommending a course of action to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner’s Pond system by December 2, 2024;³
11. To perform such other duties as the Natural Resources Commission may request.

The charge specified that the Task Force was to include eleven members appointed by the Natural Resources Commission, in consultation with the Town Manager. A complete list of Task Force members is included in Appendix B below. The Task Force was also supported by a team of two professional facilitators from the Consensus Building Institute. This document constitutes the Task Force’s Final Report to the Natural Resources Commission, in final fulfillment of the above duties and responsibilities. The Task Force approved this final report on June 12 by a vote of 7 members who either supported or could “live with” the recommendation to 2 members who opposed it.⁴ In addition, on May 22, the full 11-voting-member Task Force approved a more general version of these recommendations by a vote of 8 members who either supported or could “live with” the recommendation to 1 member who opposed it, with 2 members abstaining.⁵ The full, detailed voting results are included in Appendix F. For additional details on the Task Force’s process, please see Appendix C.

Recommendations

The Task Force’s recommendations to the NRC include three elements:

1. Preparation and implementation of an Adaptive Management Plan
2. Convening of a standing multi-stakeholder Warner’s Pond Management Committee that, with the help of a pond management consultant (and/or other consultants as deemed necessary), would oversee the development and implementation of the Adaptive Management Plan, among other duties related to the pond and watershed
3. Cooperation and support for a series of specific actions to enhance the recreational and historical value of the Warner’s Pond system

Adaptive Management Plan

³ The Task Force later discussed this deadline and opted to extend it.

⁴ The final vote on this written proposal included only 9 Task Force members because one member resigned from the Task Force, pursuant to Town regulations, after joining the Select Board and before the Task Force’s final meeting, and another member was not in attendance at this final meeting.

⁵ Specifically, the Task Force voted to recommend that the town prepare and implement a new Adaptive Management Plan, as described in the Task Force’s March 2025 “Alternatives Under Consideration” report Proposal #1, subject to revisions that had been discussed and verbally agreed to during the May 22 meeting. Among the Task Force’s revisions was a change in name from “Recurring” to “Adaptive” Management, reflecting the dynamic nature of the actual implementation steps to be taken over time. The March 2025 “Alternatives Under Consideration” is available on the Task Force website, and the text of the “Preparing a New Recurring Management Plan” proposal is included below in Appendix H. The discrepancy between the May 22 and June 12 votes can be explained due to the resignation of the one Task Force member noted above, one member’s inability to attend the final meeting, as well as shifting Task Force perspectives on the recommendations when considered in broad terms (as they were on May 22) vs. as part of a final report with additional details and background information (as they were one June 12).

The Task Force recommends that the NRC create a Warner’s Pond Management Committee that would develop and implement an Adaptive Management Plan for the pond. The Adaptive Management Plan should include the following elements:

- Clear and specific goals, metrics, and performance targets related to generally accepted measures of water quality (e.g. dissolved oxygen, water temperature, nutrients), biodiversity (e.g. fish, birds, invertebrates, plant communities), percent cover and annual duration of aquatic invasive species, and recreation (e.g. use of the pond for fishing, boating). Goals, metrics, and performance targets should also include recreational and other components related to the *Envision Concord* criteria (as articulated by the Task Force and shared below in Appendix E).
- An adaptive methodology, whereby management approaches are systematically identified for implementation, measured and evaluated against agreed metrics, and then modified, eliminated, or replaced based on their performance against metrics, resulting in ongoing progress reports and updates to the plan at least every year. Management approaches may include herbicides, hand harvesting, suction harvesting, limited drawdowns, and other methods determined by the multistakeholder subcommittee.
- A five-year implementation timeline to test and evaluate management approaches, along with annual progress updates and plan refinement, which starts upon approval of the study design and ends no later than 2032.
- Independent study design, whereby the metrics are established in partnership with a qualified independent entity (i.e., a consultant), not the same entity or entities carrying out the recurring management actions. At the end of the five-year timeline, the use of the same or a similar qualified independent evaluator to offer a concrete assessment of the management actions taken. This assessment will compare the current state of the pond to a baseline established at the beginning of the project. Accountability to a clearly defined, limited budget, proposed to and approved by the NRC. For guidance, the multistakeholder subcommittee and the NRC should review the Task Force’s estimated costs from its interim “Alternatives Under Consideration” report, among other sources, and consult with the Community Preservation Committee to understand what and how much of their previously approved funding for the pond can be used for this budget.⁶
- A comprehensive reevaluation and decision-making process to determine if adaptive management is achieving its stated goals when a capital-intensive long-term approach is being considered (e.g. a fish passage, major dam repairs, a pumping system for drawdown, dredging, dam removal, etc.).

⁶ See Appendix G for the “Base Scenario A — Recurring Management Proposal” budget, as well as budget items for water access upgrades and trails from the Dam Removal Proposal, which reflect Task Force estimates for those costs. Additional sources will be needed to obtain estimates for any treatment approaches that are included in the Adaptive Management Plan but were not included in the Task Force’s “Alternatives Under Consideration Report,” such as herbicide treatment and/or other potential methods. CPA funding that has been appropriated for dredging the pond, restoration of the pond, and other improvements could be requested to be reallocated for other approaches, and the CPC could potentially approve additional funds in the future to help pay for pond management activities, subject to approval at Town Meeting.

- If Adaptive Management continues after the five-year timeline, similar periodic reevaluation and decision-making processes should take place every two years thereafter to ensure ongoing accountability to performance targets.

Warner's Pond Management Committee

The Task Force recommends that the NRC convene a multistakeholder body of five to seven members — the Warner's Pond Management Committee — tasked with reporting and making recommendations to the NRC on an annual basis regarding the preparation and implementation of the Adaptive Management Plan, among other duties. The Management Committee should be a standing subcommittee of the NRC and include the following elements:

- A clearly defined mission to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system, guided by the community criteria identified in *Envision Concord*.
- An overall charge to monitor the pond and experiment with methods to: 1) reduce invasive vegetation; 2) enhance the environment for wildlife; 3) enhance the recreational potential for the community; 4) create opportunities for wider community involvement; and 5) advance climate resilience; and 6) increase awareness and cooperation with the communities connected through the Nashoba and Fort Pond Brooks.
- An initial task to develop a detailed Adaptive Management Plan for consideration by the NRC, which the NRC would adopt or amend. Thereafter, it would be tasked with monitoring and reporting on implementation of the plan and offering specific recommendations to the NRC on pond management and other actions.
- Liaison responsibilities with any town departments involved with implementing elements of the plan (including the NRC, the Concord Recreation Commission, the Concord Public Works Commission), as well as other Concord resident groups with a specific interest in the future of the pond system (such as Friends of Warner's Pond, non-profit organization(s) with expertise on local waterways and water resource ecology, Concord Scout House and the Scouting community, and the West Concord Advisory Committee).
- A fixed and appropriate appointment term for members (e.g. five years).
- Committee meetings of sufficient frequency (e.g., every month) to ensure effective and rigorous oversight of the Adaptive Management Plan and other Management Committee tasks.
- The committee will consider the broader pond system, including ecological, recreational, historical, and other goals included in *Envision Concord*, in the way it conducts its work.
- An annual (or more frequent, if necessary) larger meeting with community stakeholders, interest groups (e.g. OARS, Friends of Warner's Pond, Concord Scout House and the Scouting community, other interested members of the public), and other town entities to

share plan progress and updates on the health and uses of the pond, listen to community concerns, answer questions, consider new ideas, and solicit feedback on future plans.

- Ongoing efforts to support and leverage community involvement with the pond, for example by recruiting volunteers to survey wildlife, monitor the water quality, and hand pull water chestnuts; and consultation with expert volunteers on other facets such as financing, engineering, and recreation.⁷

Specific actions to enhance the recreational and historical value of the Warner's Pond system

The Task Force further recommends that the NRC engage other town entities (e.g., the Recreation Commission, Historical Commission, and CPW Commission) to develop recommendations and support implementation of a series of specific actions to enhance the recreational and historical value of the Warner's Pond system. These include the following:

- Improvements to the boat launch, public access, and parking along Commonwealth Avenue to provide water access for paddle craft, wildlife viewing, and fishing
- Similar improvements at Pond Street and/or the current dam location
- Water access and improved viewing from Gerow Park
- Development of a trail network to enhance access to and enjoyment of the pond system and Nashoba Brook, e.g. around the agricultural field and at-grade bridge crossing Nashoba Brook near the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
- Investigations of and mitigation efforts regarding stormwater runoff from Route 2
- Installation of historical panels and/or artwork at the pocket park to provide information on the history of Nashoba Brook and Warner's Pond and their relationship to Indigenous residents, early industry, and the development of West Concord.

These improvements should be designed in a manner that ensures their utility regardless of the long-term future of the pond system (i.e., they should assume that both dam removal and dredging remain options in the future and be designed accordingly, unless and until there is a clear decision to pursue one or the other). Additional detail on the key considerations behind these recommendations is provided below.

Key Considerations

Warner's Pond is cherished by many Concord residents. The pond has experienced a eutrophication process due to the buildup of sediments and nutrients over time. These factors contribute to periods of poor water quality during the summer months (e.g., low dissolved oxygen and elevated temperatures) and extensive invasive vegetation, degrading the pond's ecological and recreational value. The dam itself also prevents the natural movement of fish and

⁷ The Concord Scouting America Troop 132, chartered by Concord Scout House has volunteered to actively participate in the development of a monitoring process as part of scouts earning the Sustainability Merit Badge.

other aquatic wildlife between the Assabet River and the Nashoba Brook watershed. If nothing is done, over an indeterminate time the pond will continue to experience eutrophication and likely become a vast wetland with a potential channel passing through it, while the dam continues to act as a barrier to wildlife movement. However, there is currently no imminent or catastrophic threat to the pond, the dam, or the Nashoba Brook watershed. The Task Force therefore believes there is little immediate harm in continuing to carefully assess, plan, and implement short-term, low-cost actions to make improvements to the pond, and continuing to carefully assess potential actions related to the long-term disposition of the pond, provided that these measures are undertaken in a rigorous, time-bound manner as specified above.

In addition, there are future developments/events that could have a significant impact on the pond and Nashoba Brook moving forward, but that have not yet been clarified. These include:

- 1) The further development of Gerow Park, and potential increased demand for use of the pond system
- 2) Overall development in West Concord and in particular the future uses of the MCI Concord property, and potential impacts on density, use, and demand for recreational amenities
- 3) The planned removal of the Talbot Mills dam on the Concord River, which is expected to enable migration of anadromous fish into the Assabet River and make Warner's Pond dam a barrier to their further movement into the Nashoba Brook and Fort Pond Brook watersheds,
- 4) Changes to Route 2 and the resulting landscape of nearby transportation infrastructure

There may be other key future developments/events to consider as well. The Task Force has concluded that it would be most helpful for the town to gain more clarity on these issues before deciding whether or which more capital-intensive/substantial intervention to pursue.

This recommendation does not preclude a future decision to dredge the pond, remove the dam and restore Nashoba brook, or another capital-intensive/substantial intervention. It simply suggests that before turning to such substantial and/or costly projects, recurring methods should be employed and evaluated. As noted, these methods may include herbicides, hand harvesting, suction harvesting, limited drawdowns, and other methods determined by the Management Committee.

Adaptive management decision-making timeline and triggers

The Task Force recommends that the management plan should be in effect for five years, beginning at the time of approval of the study design and ending no later than 2032, to allow sufficient time to determine if adaptive management approaches are viable, while also not perpetually open-ended in the case of delays. To promote rigor and accountability to performance targets, a comprehensive reevaluation and decision-making process should take place at the five-year mark to determine whether a different, more capital-intensive long-term management approach is needed. This comprehensive five-year decision-making milestone is an important element of this recommendation, necessary for ensuring that adaptive management does not unintentionally enable the long-term degradation of the pond system. To the Task Force, such a long-term outcome is not acceptable. If the experiment in adaptive management is

not achieving its stated objectives by the end of year five, the town should look back at this [Task Force's work](#) (including the "Alternatives Under Consideration" report, among other data sources) to help determine a more effective way to address the underlying issues.

The Task Force recommends that a similar comprehensive reevaluation and decision-making process take place any time a significant investment in dam-related infrastructure is contemplated, such as a fish passage, major dam repairs (e.g., those requiring borrowing), or a pumping system for drawdown, to ensure the investment aligns with the town's long-term plan for the pond system.⁸ These investments are not part of the Task Force's current recommendations, and they should only be pursued if it is decided for the foreseeable future Warner's Pond dam will remain based on an evaluation of all relevant alternatives.

The Task Force suggests that future decisions about the long-term future of the pond system should account for the range of lessons the Task Force has learned about the pond system and the various alternatives under consideration, as captured in the Task Force's "Alternatives Under Consideration" report and its appendices, and other Task Force work products (e.g. meeting minutes, slide decks, etc.). In particular, the town should consider:

- The various experts the Task Force consulted with (noted above) and their perspectives on the ecological, recreational, and financial costs and benefits of different alternative approaches
- The data reviewed and collected through technical reports
- The Task Force's development and analysis of specific alternative approaches designed to meet the *Envision Concord* criteria while also addressing key stakeholder goals and concerns as effectively as possible, including the detailed cost estimates for each alternative
- The range of public comments the Task Force received, both for and against each of its proposed alternatives

To facilitate future decision-making, all the information collected and reported on in the Warner's Pond Task Force website should be preserved and as noted, future decision-makers should consult the full "Alternatives Under Consideration" report when evaluating options.

Stakeholder involvement in the Warner's Pond Management Committee

Alongside the development of an Adaptive Management Plan (and key decision-making triggers), another important feature of this proposal is the development of the Warner's Pond Management Committee. In recommending the convening of a Management Committee, the Task Force intends to ensure that key town institutions and other stakeholders with responsibilities for and interests in the pond system are included in oversight of the management plan and are effectively coordinating their efforts.

⁸ This recommendation does not apply to standard dam maintenance costs.

Historical and recreational improvements

The Task Force’s recommendations for improved parking, boat launches, public access, and/or viewing at Commonwealth Ave., Gerow, Pond St. and/or the dam location could significantly improve access to recreational opportunities and wildlife viewing for a wide range of users. New trails would connect more users to more areas of the pond system for active use. The historical panels/artwork at the pocket park would raise awareness and celebrate the long and rich history of the area and its people. These reflect important recreational and historical upgrades available at a reasonable cost, and do not preclude the town from pursuing any number of long-term solutions for the pond system in the future.

Costs

This recommendation may result in some increased town expenses compared with the status quo. As noted above, CPA funding has been appropriated for dredging, restoration of the pond, and limited recreational improvements. Funding for other improvements could be applied for and granted to help pay for pond management in the name of recreation enhancement. Estimated costs from the Task Force’s “Alternatives Under Consideration” report are reported in Appendix G below. The cost figures represent the Task Force’s current best estimates of additional annual and one-time costs, fees, and staff time, based on discussions with Natural Resource Division and state agency staff. Because much of the financial cost information was compiled based on estimates from town staff, not through a formal/vetted budgeting process, these data should be understood as rough estimates only.

Ideas Considered but Not Recommended

The Task Force considered various dredging alternatives as well as dam removal and restoration of Nashoba Brook in its “Alternatives Under Consideration” report, but is not recommending either approach in this final report. The specific reasons for this vary by Task Force member, but for many members include the following factors:

- The dredging alternatives were not preferred in part due to the high costs of any and all options, based on the estimates received, and the uncertainty in funding. Members also had different opinions about the ecological sustainability of dredging compared to dam removal.
- The dam removal proposal was not preferred in part due some members’ uncertainties on the final outcome (regarding issues like channel configuration, sustainability of the deep hole, and vegetative coverage of the exposed pond substrates), the potential impact of these uncertainties on recreational opportunities and access, and its irreversibility.
- Some members were influenced by a determination that neither dam removal nor dredging appeared likely to attract an overwhelming agreement within the Task Force, reflecting a strong divide on these issues both within the Task Force and the town overall.⁹

⁹ The results of the written survey that Task Force members completed during the deliberation phase of their work provide important additional context about each member’s perspective. The complete survey results can be reviewed on the Warner’s Pond Task Force [website](#).

Additional Task Force Member Perspectives and Expectations

In offering its recommendations above, the Task Force acknowledges that different Task Force members have different perspectives and expectations regarding the likelihood of success and other issues. For details on these different perspectives please see Appendix I.

Acknowledgments

This Final Report reflects the culmination of an extensive and time-consuming deliberative process. Over the course of fifteen months, the Task Force has reviewed many hundreds of pages of documents, many of them containing detailed technical data, as well as hundreds of public comments. We have addressed a set of issues that have a deep emotional resonance for many town residents, where people have strongly held convictions and very different perspectives on their preferred course of action. Throughout it all, we have been supported by a highly dedicated and professional cohort of town staff from the Natural Resources Division, Concord Public Works, and the Planning Division. These staff have worked diligently to provide impartial technical information and guidance, identify and reach out to experts on our behalf, and ensure adequate support for Task Force decision making from professional facilitators. The overall level of resourcing and support for this Task Force has been extraordinary. We are deeply grateful to town staff for their dedication and professionalism, without which we could not have completed this work.

Appendices

Appendix A: Committee Charge

Background

Warner's Pond is an approximately 59-acre impoundment (including its three islands), with approximately 20 acres of connected wetlands. The pond's main tributaries, Fort Pond Brook and

Nashoba Brook, merge and enter Warner's Pond from the northwest, and continue flowing over the dam, eventually merging with the Assabet River to the east.

Warner's Pond has been a community resource for generations but is now in a state of eutrophication. This has resulted in a number of undesirable conditions including decreased water depths, widespread growths of aquatic invasive plants, and impaired recreational opportunities.

Warner's Pond has three public access points: Gerow Park on the northern boundary, acquired in 2018 for recreational purposes, a boat launch on Commonwealth Avenue; and a primitive boat landing at the end of Pond Street. There is also a pocket park near the dam on Commonwealth Avenue. The pond's recreational uses include boating, fishing, bird watching, ice fishing, and skating.

Warner's Pond and some of its appurtenant features are owned by the Town of Concord, under different boards and committees.

- Warner's Pond itself is under the care and custody of the Natural Resources Commission (along with the boat launch off Commonwealth Avenue and the primitive access at the end of Pond Street)
- The dam is under the care and custody of Concord Public Works
- Gerow Park is under the care and custody of the Select Board, and maintained for recreational purposes.

Scout Island, the largest island in the pond, is owned by the Concord Scout House, and used by local Scouting groups for camping and annual cross-over ceremonies.

Warner's Pond lies at the base of a 47-square mile watershed, 98% of which occurs outside of Concord. Nutrients, including nitrogen and phosphorus, and sediments enter the pond from this very large watershed, including from developed areas with inadequate stormwater management. The Natural Resources Commission, spurred by community concerns, has explored alternatives to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of Warner's Pond since the 1990s. Efforts to remove aquatic invasives and address sediment build-up have been ongoing since that time. The Town has received state and local grant funding to study the problem and implement solutions, all of which have had limited effectiveness, and the eutrophication of the pond has steadily continued.

Efforts have ranged from managing aquatic invasive plants (hand harvesting, hydroraking, herbicide treatment) to addressing the nutrient and sediment build-up (dredging). The 2012

Warner's Pond Watershed Management Plan identified limited dredging (6 acres of the 59-acre pond, or 35,000 cubic yards) as an effective, long-term solution to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system. The 2012 Plan estimated that limited hydraulic dredging would cost on the order of \$1 million, and the required studies, sampling, design, and permitting were undertaken. As part of the Dredging Feasibility Study completed in 2018, the estimated cost was upped to \$2 million. After federal, state, and local permits were obtained in 2022, the revised cost dredging estimate was \$3 million. The project was bid in 2022, and came in at over \$9 million, more than three times the allocated funding secured for the project.

In response to the cost-prohibitive dredging bid, the Division explored an additional three options: (i) a modified dredging approach that moved sediment within the pond rather than trucking it offsite, (ii) dam removal, and (iii) no action. Based on the consultant's evaluation of ecological restoration, public safety/liability, recreational opportunities, flood risk, and cost, dam removal was identified in May 2023 as the best alternative to achieve multiple goals for the Town.

Purpose

The dam removal recommendation is a change in strategy to what the Commission has worked towards for several years and has been identified by some in the community as a cause for concern. The Natural Resources Commission seeks to engage in a structured decision-making process, working with a facilitator, that includes robust community input. The purpose of the task force is to become familiar with all alternatives that have been considered to date and explore new ideas as appropriate. The Task Force will recommend a course of action for the Pond that reflects community criteria identified in *Envision Concord – Bridge to 2030*: (i) History + Character, (ii) Livability + Values, (iii) Mobility + Accessibility, (iv) Environmental Sustainability, and (v) Fiscal Sustainability.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To become familiar with Warner's Pond, its three public access points, the dam, and the general environs;
2. To review prior reports, plans, and other documentation evaluating and implementing alternatives over the last few decades;
3. To explore and evaluate ecological health of the pond system under each feasible alternative;
4. To explore and evaluate future recreational opportunities under each feasible alternative with the Town's consultant;
5. To obtain preliminary cost estimates for each feasible alternative;
6. To explore and evaluate potential funding sources for each feasible alternative;
7. To review the issues and concerns related to dam removal raised by the community;
8. To solicit input from the community through a variety of methods, including at least one public hearing early in the process;
9. To consider whether there are measures which might be taken to improve ecological health and recreational opportunities that would require additional planning and/or more time to implement;

10. To submit a final report to the Natural Resources Commission recommending a course of action to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system by December 2, 2024;
11. To perform such other duties as the Natural Resources Commission may request.

Deliverables

Prepare a draft report that recommends a prioritized list of actions for Warner's Pond while being sensitive to the historical and cultural values of the system to the Town. Present the draft report at a public hearing to solicit feedback from the community. Following the public hearing, a final report outlining a course of action will be submitted to the Natural Resources Commission by December 2, 2024.

Membership

The Task Force shall be comprised of eleven members appointed by the Natural Resources Commission, in consultation with the Town Manager, with representation as follows:

1. Friends of Warner's Pond representative
2. Upstream abutter
3. Downstream abutter
4. Select Board member
5. Natural Resources Commission member
6. Recreation Commission member
7. Public Works Commission member
8. At-large members (2)
9. Concord Scout House representative
10. OARS representative
- Ex officio (non-voting) members
 - Hassanamisco Band of Nipmuc representative
 - Public Works Director or his designee
 - Natural Resources Director or her designee
 - Senior Planner (representing historical interests)
 - Department of Corrections representative

Each member will serve until the task force completes its work and submits a written report to the NRC. Candidates should submit a Volunteer Card (available here) along with a letter of interest. When staffing the task force, preference will be given to Concord residents with the specific interests noted above and experience, knowledge, and/or professional training in ecological restoration; recreation; civil engineering; cultural and historical expertise; climate resiliency; local, state, and federal wetland permitting laws and regulations; and a strong connection with the community. The task force will determine the frequency of meetings and will be led by a chair elected by the members.

Other Considerations

The task force chair will consult with the Natural Resources Commission to discuss the need for financial support for task force activities. The task force will conduct its business in full conformance with the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, Conflict of Interest Law and other state and local rules encouraging openness and transparency in governance.

Appendix B: Task Force Members

Name	Representation
Vickie Alani	Upstream abutter
Paul Boehm	Recreation Commission
Malcolm Bryant	At-large
Jeff Collins	OARS
Christine Denaro	Downstream abutter (Co-Chair)
Keith Hannon	Friends of Warner's Pond
Mark Howell	Select Board
Bill Kemeza	Natural Resources Commission (Co-Chair)
Elizabeth Morrison-Howe	At-large
David Owen	Concord Scout House
Sven Weber	Public Works Commission
Ann Clifford (<i>ex officio</i>)	Senior Planner (Historic)
Bruce Curliss (<i>ex officio</i>)	Hassanamisco Band of Nipmuc
Delia Kaye (<i>ex officio</i>)	Natural Resources Director
Jeffrey Quick (<i>ex officio</i>)	Department of Corrections
Samiksha Poudel (<i>ex officio</i>)	Concord Public Works - Engineering

Appendix C: Task Force Process

The Task Force met 21 times from February 2024 to June 2025. It also conducted two Community Meetings specifically designed to update the public on its progress and solicit community input, one in June 2024 and another in April 2025.

In addition to these two community meetings, all Task Force meetings had at least one and in most cases two designated sessions on the agenda when members of the public were invited to offer comments on the Task Force's work. The Task Force also launched an online portal where members of the public could share written comments on its work, resulting in the receipt of close to 200 discrete written comments.

The Task Force's process for deliberation included the following elements.

Clarification of norms, roles, and process

At the outset of its work, the Task Force agreed on a set of norms and worked to clarify roles. In its February 2024 meeting, the Task Force approved a set of group protocols to clarify expectations around the group's purpose, authority, and composition; time commitment for members; decision-making; meeting planning, facilitation, and documentation; and ground rules. Among these protocols was a decision that the Task Force would seek overwhelming agreement on its final recommendation, defined as at least 75% of voting members.¹⁰ In early 2024, the Task Force appointed a pair of elected co-chairs to lead its work. The Task Force also discussed and clarified an overall process and stages for its work

Articulation of decision-making criteria

To support decision-making, the Task Force reviewed the *Envision Concord* comprehensive long-range plan and articulated how the community criteria in that document might apply to the Warner's Pond system. The Task Force identified and agreed on five key considerations that should be optimized with respect to a course of action that the group might recommend:

1. Will this alternative support and preserve the historical character and cultural heritage of the area?
2. Will this alternative enhance Concord's desirability as a place to live?
3. Will this alternative maintain/increase connectivity to Town centers and access to services by vulnerable residents?
4. Will this alternative enhance the ecology/biodiversity of the water body and adjacent land?
5. Will this alternative support fiscal sustainability?

The Task Force further agreed to consider a set of specific sub-criteria for each of these five questions, included in Appendix E below.

¹⁰ The Group Protocols are included below in Appendix D. In subsequent discussions, the Task Force clarified that while it would seek overwhelming agreement on its final recommendations, it would report fully on the specifics of its final vote, whatever they might be, to inform the NRC.

Review of documentation and expert consultations

Alongside its review of *Envision Concord* long-range plan and work to articulate how that plan's criteria apply to Warner's Pond, the Task Force conducted a systematic review of prior reports, plans, and other documentation evaluating and implementing alternatives over the last few decades. Some of these materials were developed and/or released over the course of the Task Force's work.

Documents reviewed and discussed included:

- 2011 Warner's Pond Herbicide Treatment Report
- 2012 Warner's Pond Watershed Management Plan
- 2018 Warner's Pond Dredging Feasibility Study
- 2022 Warner's Pond Restoration Project (dredging) cost estimates, contract documents and specifications, Addendum #1, 100% Design Plan Set, and bid form from Charter Contracting Company, LLC
- 2023 Alternatives Analysis Report
- 2023 Warner's Pond Dam Phase 1 Inspection Report
- 2024 30% Design Dam Removal Plans and Basis of Design Report
- Technical Memos on Sediment Sampling (2024), North Field Capacity (2024), Drawdown (2024), and Fish Passage (2025)

To supplement its review of documents, the Task Force consulted with various experts both during full Task Force meetings and, during the latter stages of its work, as individual Task Force members and/or during publicly-noticed Work Group sessions. The Task Force consulted with the following experts during official Task Force meetings:

- Joseph Gould, MA Division of Ecological Restoration
- Steven Mattocks, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- Allen Orsi, Pare Corporation
- Alex Patterson and Amy Hunt, EA Engineering
- Ben Wetherill, OARS

Keith Hannon, a Task Force member from the US Army Corps of Engineers, also offered a presentation to the group on dredging. These meetings included in-depth discussion of the relative merits of different alternatives with respect to the Warner's Pond system and its public recreational uses, with opportunities for Task Force questions and expert responses.

Individual Task Force members and/or Work Groups engaged in additional outreach and communication with a range of experts including but not limited to:

- Adam Burnett, US Army Corps of Engineers
- Management of Bare Hill Pond in Harvard, MA
- Representatives from Charter Engineering, Inc.
- Brad Chase, MA Division of Marine Fisheries
- Additional representatives from EA Engineering
- Bruce Thompson, NMI-Starmet *de maximis, inc.* Project Manager
- Representatives from the Nipmuc Elders Council
- Representatives from SumCo Eco-Contracting
- Town of Concord staff

Proposal development via Work Groups

After developing a foundational understanding of the pond system and feasible alternatives to improve its ecological health and recreational capacity, the Task Force divided into three separate Work Groups each tasked with developing a specific proposal for an alternative course of action: 1) enhanced recurring pond management,¹¹ 2) dredging, and 3) dam removal. (The dredging sub-group ultimately presented three related alternatives, reflecting three different dredge volumes.) The three proposals (or five, accounting for the three dredge options) were intended to represent the Task Force’s best efforts at articulating what enhanced recurring pond management, dredging, and dam removal could look like if optimized to meet the *Envision Concord* criteria and stakeholder goals and concerns. Each Work Group worked independently on its proposal, briefed the entire Task Force on its progress, and then shared its proposal with the full Task Force for feedback and refinement.

The proposals were then written up and shared with the public in the Task Force’s March 2025 “Alternatives Under Consideration” report. This report included detailed an overview of issues that the Task Force considered in developing its proposals (specifically the historical context, costs, wildlife habitat, and recreation), and information on each proposal’s rationale, details, costs, risks and uncertainties, relevant ideas considered but not proposed, and potential additional areas for investigation moving forward. The “Alternatives Under Consideration” report represents an important companion piece to this final report, and should be reviewed in conjunction with this report for a fuller picture of the Task Force’s thinking and considerations in developing its recommendations.

¹¹ Initially, this course of action was named “short-term actions/pathways.” During Task Force meetings, it was sometimes also referred to as the “no action alternative,” reflecting the fact that it does not include either of the major long-term management actions under consideration: dredging or dam removal.

Community meetings

As noted above, the Task Force hosted dedicated Community Meetings in June 2024 and April 2025.¹² During the June 2024 meeting, the Task Force shared its progress and then invited members of the public to break into small groups and suggest issues the Task Force might be missing and/or additional information it should consider. During the April 2025 meeting, the Task Force shared each of its three proposals, answered questions, and invited written and verbal feedback on what community members like about each proposal, what concerns they have, and what they would like further clarified. After each community meeting, the Task Force met to discuss the feedback received and implications for its work.

Final deliberations

After presenting its proposed alternatives and reviewing the public input received, the Task Force engaged in final deliberations on its recommendations. Each member reviewed the agreed criteria for decision-making, evaluated the three core proposals against this criteria, and considered additional ideas for amending or improving the proposals that could help build alignment within the Task Force.

Members' individual perspectives on these issues were captured via a written survey and then shared with the public.¹³ After completing the survey, members then met to discuss the thinking behind their responses, and potential avenues for building alignment on a single set of recommendations that could be accepted via (at least) an overwhelming agreement or 75% of voting members. This final report reflects the outcome of that effort.

¹² Recordings of these meetings are available online via the [Minuteman Media Network](#).

¹³ All the survey results and relevant data — including how different Task Force members evaluated and ranked all the alternatives under consideration and their reasoning — are available online at the Warner's Pond Task Force website, <https://concordma.gov/3520/Warners-Pond-Task-Force>.

Appendix D: Task Force Group Protocols

February 8, 2024

Purpose

The Town of Concord needs to decide what should happen to Warner's Pond to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system. Many residents and stakeholders care deeply about what happens to Warner's Pond. A decision about what is next has historic, cultural, environmental, recreational, and fiscal implications.

The Warner's Pond Task Force, appointed by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), will review, discuss, and evaluate the options of what to do with the pond system and will present its recommendations to the Natural Resources Commission. The group will learn together about and jointly consider the many implications associated with the choices for what should happen to the pond system. Members will deliberate and seek to reach agreement to the extent possible.

Authority

Members' authority is to develop a shared recommendation for the Natural Resources Commission on a course of action or actions to improve the ecological health and recreational capacity of the Warner's Pond system. The Natural Resources Commission will take recommendations under serious advisement, and act accordingly. Major actions will be brought forward by the NRC to Town Meeting for approval. Task Force members do not have the authority to directly decide what happens to the pond system.

Composition

This Task Force is appointed by the Natural Resources Commission, in consultation with the Town Manager. Its members include community members representing various perspectives, both those who serve on particular boards or committees as well as those who represent other community views. Staff from key Town departments, as well as representatives speaking on behalf of other fundamental interests, serve as ex officio, non-voting members.

Time Commitment

Task Force members will be expected to actively participate over the duration of the project (anticipated to occur from February to December 2024). This will include attending approximately 10 virtual and in-person Task Force meetings, each approximately 2-3 hours for virtual meetings and slightly longer for in-person meetings. Members will be expected to track project related communication between meetings, review materials and draft documents, come prepared to meetings, and follow the expectations described below.

Decision-making

Given the importance of the pond to the Town, Task Force members commit to listening carefully, learning from one another, and seeking to understand each other's perspectives.

The Task Force will seek overwhelming agreement on its final recommendation, defined as at least 75% of voting members. Each Task Force member will have one vote. Agreement may be on a set of options or choices with their advantages and disadvantages clearly articulated.

During final decision-making, members may vote that they 1) endorse and support the final recommendation, 2) that they can live with the recommendation, or 3) that they cannot live with the final recommendation. Members may also choose to “abstain.” Those who abstain will not be counted in the final tally. The Task Force’s final report will capture the weight of the group’s perspective on the final recommendation as needed, including capturing the key reasons why any who do not support the recommendation are not able/willing to sign on.

Should overwhelming agreement not be obtained on a recommendation, the Task Force will report out areas of agreement and disagreement. The Task Force will note if agreement was not reached due to incomplete information, and what information would be needed to reach a decision. The Task Force will issue only one report.

Meeting planning

With input from the Task Force, the facilitators will work with Town staff to design meeting agendas, work on logistics, prepare draft materials and provide appropriate technical presentations.

Expectations / Ground rules

To foster and open and collaborative discussion, we ask the following of each other:

- Take space/make space
 - Be as present as you can be
 - Contribute: your perspectives are valued
 - Share time, ask questions of each other
- Foster a safe environment for discussions
 - Be honest and respectful
 - Build on each other’s comments and integrate across ideas
 - Presume good intent and attend to the impacts of your actions
- Be an effective participant
 - Attend regularly for continuity
 - Come to meetings prepared
 - Actively participate and contribute, both at and between meetings
 - Keep collective purpose at the center, focus on solutions to bridge differences
 - Stay on track with the agenda
- Communicate thoughtfully
 - Communicate with others — both within and outside meetings — respectfully
 - “No surprises” policy — bring ideas for research to the Task Force for group discussion; be transparent about perspectives on options raised
 - Will not characterize the opinions of other Task Force members or the Task Force as a whole to others

Meeting facilitation

Impartial facilitation support will be provided by staff from the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), who will plan and run meetings, coordinate with members between sessions, and help the group work through topics in a logical way.

Note-taking and documentation

The CBI staff will document the group's progress and be responsible for helping to write up its final recommendation.

Appendix E: Community Criteria for the Warner's Pond System

1. History and Character: Will this alternative support and preserve the historical character and cultural heritage of the area by
 - a. Maintaining, reviving, or further protecting historical assets and uses of the waterbody and surrounding land (including Scout Island)?
 - b. Enhancing the natural resource values of the waterbody and surrounding land (including Scout Island)?
 - c. Improving or enhancing the natural environment by providing diverse plant communities, wildlife and aquatic habitats, or landscape features to the town's existing open space?
 - d. Enhancing the visual appeal of the existing area/landscape?

2. Livability and Values: Will this alternative enhance Concord's desirability as a place to live by
 - a. Increasing the quality and quantity of recreational assets and programs for all socio-economic groups in the community?
 - b. Increasing opportunities for public enjoyment and use of the waterbody and surrounding land, including physical and social (i.e., gathering) opportunities for the community?
 - c. Contributing to improvements to public health?
 - d. Enhancing the resilience of community infrastructure (roads, stormwater structures, wastewater/water supply facilities, fire prevention, emergency access)?

3. Mobility and Accessibility: Will this alternative maintain/increase connectivity to Town centers and access to services by vulnerable residents, by
 - a. Increasing transportation access by walking, biking, mobility devices, or waterways, etc.?
 - b. Improving access to the water body and surrounding land to people of all mobilities and ages?

4. Ecological Sustainability: Will this alternative enhance the ecology/biodiversity of the water body and adjacent land by
 - a. Enhancing and improving wildlife habitat for diverse species, including rare or threatened species?
 - b. Enhancing and improving fisheries habitat for diverse species?
 - c. Enhancing and improving habitat to support diverse native plant communities?
 - d. Improving water quality within the waterbody?
 - e. Improving connectivity between different habitats to support migrating species?
 - f. Providing a sustainable ecological condition over time (i.e., will improvements last)?
 - g. Improving the resilience of the natural resource area to flooding events?
 - h. Contributing to improved water quality in the downstream riverine system (i.e. the Assabet River)?
 - i. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or increasing carbon sequestering?
 - j. Reducing use of synthetic chemicals?

5. Fiscal sustainability: Will this alternative support fiscal sustainability by:
 - a. Using an identified and sustainable funding source?
 - b. Minimizing the need for additional resources (staffing, space, equipment, and other direct or indirect costs)?
 - c. Providing for cost recovery or cost savings?
 - d. Being feasible from technological, permitting, and engineering perspectives?

Appendix F: Final Task Force Votes on Recommendations

May 22, 2025 vote

Resolved: The Task Force recommends that the town prepare and implement a new Adaptive Management Plan for Warner’s Pond, as described in the Task Force’s March 2025 “Alternatives Under Consideration” report Proposal #1, subject to revisions discussed and verbally agreed to during the May 22 meeting.

Name	Vote
Vickie Alani	Support
Paul Boehm	Support
Malcolm Bryant	Oppose
Jeff Collins	Abstain
Christine Denaro	Support
Keith Hannon	Support
Mark Howell	Support
Bill Kemeza	Support
Elizabeth Morrison-Howe	Can live with
David Owen	Support
Sven Weber	Abstain

June 12 vote

Resolved: The Task Force approves its Final Report as written.

Name	Vote
Vickie Alani	Support
Paul Boehm	N/A (resigned from the Task Force)
Malcolm Bryant	Oppose
Jeff Collins	Oppose
Christine Denaro	Support
Keith Hannon	N/A (not in attendance)
Mark Howell	Support

Name	Vote
Bill Kemeza	Support
Elizabeth Morrison-Howe	Can live with
David Owen	Support
Sven Weber	Can live with

Appendix G: Estimated Costs

Estimated cost data comes from the Task Force’s “Alternatives for Consideration” Report.

New Management Plan	One-Time / Capital Costs	Annual Recurring / Operating Costs	5-year Total: One-Time + Annual
Pond Management Consultant / O&M Plan	\$50,000	\$20,000	\$150,000
Permits & additional analysis	\$20,000		\$20,000
Invasive plant removal methods and monitoring		\$50,000	\$250,000
Recruitment and support of the Pond Stewards		\$2,000	\$10,000
Ongoing dam maintenance		\$11,000	\$55,000
Twice a year hold a meeting with community stakeholders		\$2,000	\$10,000
New Management Plan Totals	\$70,000	\$85,000	\$495,000

Sources: Consultations with Town of Harvard staff; 2022 Charter dredging bid

Rereational & Historical Improvements	One-Time / Capital Costs	Annual Recurring / Operating Costs	5-year Total: One-Time + Annual
Boat Launch Improvements (Comm. Ave. & Gerow Park)	\$50,000		\$50,000
Viewing/Fishing Platform	\$75,000		\$75,000
Historical/Interpretive Signage	\$6,000		\$6,000
Riverfront Surface Trails - cornfields (4,500')	\$109,000		\$109,000
Wright Road connector bridge	\$50,000		\$50,000
Rereational & Historical Improvements Totals	\$290,000	\$0	\$290,000

Sources: Task Force review of publicly-available SumCo project costs; 2022 Charter dredging bid

Appendix H: Proposal #1, Preparing a New Recurring Management Plan, from the Task Force’s “Alternatives Under Consideration” Report

Under this proposal, the town would prepare a new, enhanced Recurring Management Plan for the pond with assigned responsibilities for executing needed actions, to be reviewed and reevaluated within five years. The goal would be to monitor the pond and experiment with methods to: 1) reduce invasive vegetation; 2) enhance the environment for wildlife; 3) enhance the recreational potential for the community; 4) create opportunities for wider community involvement; and 5) enhance sustainability in the face of climate change. The core of the proposal is a set of measures to improve coordination and communication among interested stakeholders and town bodies designed to enhance decision-making and adapt to evolving community needs.

This proposal does not preclude dredging, dam removal or another capital-intensive/substantial intervention in the future. It simply suggests that before turning to such substantial and/or costly projects, recurring methods (including some already recommended in the [2012 Warner’s Pond Watershed Management Plan](#), and some new ones) should be employed and evaluated. These methods may include herbicides, hand harvesting, suction harvesting, and limited drawdowns. The Task Force acknowledges that these methods may offer only limited success, but this proposal suggests there is no harm in continuing to make modest improvements to the pond.

The proposal assumes that this management plan should be in effect for at least five years with pond health assessment forecasts, dam risk assessment, and maintenance budget outlooks put in place to determine if recurring management approaches are viable. If it is decided for the foreseeable future Warner’s Pond dam will remain and the Talbot Mills Dam on the Concord River is removed, then under this proposal a fish passage could be designed and constructed.

Rationale

Warner’s Pond is cherished by many West Concord residents. The pond is undergoing eutrophication due to significant buildup of sediments and nutrients. These conditions have led to poor water quality (e.g., excess nutrients, low dissolved oxygen, elevated temperature) and extensive invasive vegetation, degrading the pond’s ecological and recreational value. If absolutely nothing is done, over an indeterminate time the pond will continue to experience eutrophication and likely become a vast wetland with a channel passing through it. However, there is currently no imminent or catastrophic threat to the pond, the dam, or the Nashoba Brook watershed. There is therefore little immediate harm in planning short-term, low-cost actions to make modest improvements to the pond, and continuing to carefully assess and plan actions related to the long-term disposition of the pond. Accordingly, this proposal is the most affordable of the options being considered.

In addition, there are future developments/events that could have a significant impact on the pond and Nashoba Brook moving forward, but that have not yet been clarified. These include 1) the further development of Gerow Park (and potential increased demand for use of the pond system), 2) the future uses of the MCI property (and potential impacts on density and use), 3) and the planned removal of the Talbot Mills dam on the Concord River (which is expected to

enable migration of anadromous fish into the Assabet River and make Warner's Pond dam a barrier to their further movement into the Nashoba Brook and Fort Pond Brook watersheds). There may be other key future developments/events to consider as well. This proposal suggests it would be most helpful for the town to gain more clarity on these issues before deciding whether or which more capital-intensive/substantial intervention to pursue.

This proposal further suggests that, for a range of reasons, interim measures to improve pond management and decision-making are important even if the Task Force recommends pursuing either dredging or dam removal. For example:

- For at least some Concord citizens, the substantial investments the Town has recently made in the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Gerow Park, and dam reconstruction have changed their awareness of and expectations for the pond, which suggests a need for more ongoing stakeholder coordination and communication.
- Given the projected financial limitations for the town, acquiring significant additional funding for dredging could be more difficult to achieve at this time. Likewise, dam removal and stream restoration would require additional design and permitting before proceeding, and could also be a challenge to fund.
- No matter what course of action is taken to combat invasive vegetation, the pond will continue to be susceptible to their rapid reappearance. This proposal aims to make targeted improvements to the pond by addressing specific existing conditions. Complete eradication of invasive species is not expected.
- The life of the existing dam is finite and even if a decision is made to remove the dam, regular inspections should be scheduled until that time.

Proposal Details

A key feature of this proposal is to recognize the specific responsibilities for relevant institutions with an interest in the pond and areas in its immediate vicinity, define points of coordination, manage intersections, and eliminate gaps, thereby enabling the community to set and meet expectations.

Stakeholders: There are multiple jurisdictional and private interests in the immediate area of Warners Pond. There are four town bodies, the Concord Scout House (who own Scout Island), and several private abutters. The town bodies include:

- The Natural Resources Commission, which has care and custody of the 77-acre pond and wetlands parcels, as well as jurisdiction over activities in and within 100 feet of the pond and its wetlands, and 200 feet where Warner's Pond exhibits riverine conditions. The Warner's Pond parcel was acquired for conservation purposes and is subject to Article 97 protections.¹⁴
- The Select Board, which has care and custody of the newly developed Gerow Property, together with the Recreation Commission.
- Concord Public Works, which has responsibility for the dam and its appurtenant structures such as the spillway and embankments.

¹⁴ See Memo from Mina S. Makarios & Olympia A. Bowker, Anderson & Krieger LLP to Delia Kaye, Natural Resources Director, Town of Concord, Re: Warner's Pond, Article 97, dated January 24, 2024.

- The Housing Authority, which has care and custody of the affordable housing unit that abuts the pond.

There are also state bodies with relevant interests, specifically the Department of Corrections, which has jurisdiction over MCI-Concord.

Specific Responsibilities: Currently, each of three major areas of responsibility related to the pond, areas in its vicinity, and the dam is assigned to existing committees supported by Town staff. The three major areas of responsibility are:

- Pond Management
- Gerow Park Recreation Activities that make use of the pond
- Dam Maintenance

This proposal details adjustments to the current approach within each of these areas of responsibility to improve coordination and decision-making moving forward.

Pond Management: The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) have jurisdiction over the pond, and they have had a long history of taking measures to protect it using recommendations from the prior and current management plans (1999 & 2012). In fact, they have taken many of the steps that this proposal reaffirms. However, given the already vast responsibilities placed upon the NRC and DNR, this proposal suggests a more concentrated approach for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the pond and its adjacent wetlands. Specifically, the proposal would involve NRC and DNR undertaking the following measures:

- Hiring a pond and lake management consultant to recommend the management of invasive and nuisance aquatic vegetation using a variety of recommended methods.
- Working with the Friends of Warner’s Pond, OARS, and other organizations to hold periodic hand pulling of invasive vegetation.
- Developing an active pond stewardship program that is aligned with the conservation goals of the Natural Resources Commission, specifically, by recruiting stewards for the pond who would:
 - Monitor the shoreline and the pond for items or events that should be reported to the DNR or NRC for further actions if necessary.
 - Monitor and care for the Pocket Park by the dam.
 - Engage in the removal of aquatic invasive species.
- Investigating enhancing the boat launch areas under the jurisdiction of the Natural Resources Commission with better parking and pedestrian access. This could include:
 - Adding new gravel and maintaining a relatively deep and weed-free boating access channel near the launch that would allow boats to more easily access open water areas of the pond.
 - Improving the Pond Street access.
- Maintaining clear communication with the Recreation Commission and Department on their ongoing plans for pond access from Gerow Park.
- If the Talbot Dam on the Concord River is removed, and there are no plans to remove the Warner’s Pond Dam, a feasibility study on the construction of a fish passage should be considered to allow passage of resident freshwater fish and migratory anadromous fish.

The Task Force's preference for fish passage is to use a stepped pool system. If after further analysis it is determined that fish would be unable to use such a system, however, then a different design would be necessary.

- Consulting with the Historical Commission about existing archaeological studies or future plans for surveying this traditional Indigenous cultural landscape to better understand all eras of its history.
- Requesting MassDOT install a stormwater management feature — an oil and gas separator — onto the existing stormwater drain that feeds into the pond.
- At least once a year, holding a meeting with community stakeholders, interest groups and other town entities to report on the health and uses of the pond, listen to community concerns, answer questions, consider new ideas, and propose future plans.

If the NRC and the DNR believe these recommendations add unrealistic burdens upon the Commission and the staff, then under this proposal the Task Force would recommend they consider the creation of a Warner's Pond Committee. That committee, comprised of membership like the Task Force and under the direction of the NRC, could provide a more concentrated approach for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the pond and its adjacent wetlands.

Gerow Park Recreation Activities: Under this proposal, the Recreation Commission would develop a plan for ongoing monitoring of public access to the pond from Gerow Park. These activities would need to be balanced with the NRC's interests in maintaining the ecological value of the pond and watershed. Specifically, the Recreation Commission would:

- Work closely with NRC as programs or activities that access the pond are being considered to ensure that they meet conservation goals and regulatory requirements.
- Develop proposals to modify recreational resources to adapt to new and emerging uses, such as land use changes resulting from a future MCI development and increased use of the Bruce Freeman Trail.
- Engage with community groups such as the Friends of Warners Pond and the Friends of the BFRT in program development and assessment.
- Collect baseline recreational usage data and include it in regular reports of the pond's recreational uses.
- Include Gerow Park in the Recreation Department's facilities planning and operations programs.
- Provide input from a recreation perspective into the MCI-Concord redevelopment planning process, and also receive input from the MCI-Concord redevelopment planning process on future recreation needs.

Dam Maintenance: The Public Works Commission through Concord Public Works (CPW) is responsible for the maintenance and operations of the dam and its appurtenant structures. Specifically, their responsibility is to:

- Maintain the dam through regular maintenance and inspection programs.
- Report on the expected life of the dam and its structures, maintaining at least a 10-year outlook on the necessary capital investment for such maintenance.

This proposal suggests CPW consider potential reclassification of the dam from significant to low-hazard, along with other potential dam maintenance, repairs and modifications to address liability and safety issues, as recommended for consideration by the Pare Corporation in its [2023 Warner's Pond Dam Inspection/Evaluation Report](#). These measures are costed out in the section below and/or the Appendices.

Costs

This proposal will result in some increased town expenses compared with the status quo. Costs are reported in a summary table below, at the end of this proposal, and in more detail in the Appendices. The cost figures represent the Task Force's current best estimates of additional annual and one-time costs, fees, and staff time, based on discussions with Natural Resource Division and state agency staff.

There are estimated costs for a base proposal, which includes expected staff time, consultant fees, and other costs associated with measures to improve recurring pond management and coordination. There are also estimated costs for three different contingencies: further dam maintenance, permitting and construction of a structure for fish passage, and drawdown of the pond. Any number of these contingencies (from zero to all three) could become part of the Task Force's final recommendations and eventually implemented. Please see the Appendices for details.

Only future costs are included in the tables and estimates. Costs for studies and analyses associated with this proposal that have already been incurred are not included because the purpose of the estimates is to inform future decision-making.

Risks and uncertainties

Task Force members have identified a number of potential risks and uncertainties associated with this proposal, which will be considered during decision-making:

- While eutrophication is ongoing and will continue absent effective management actions, the Warner's Pond system is highly complex and the Task Force cannot predict the pace of eutrophication and its impacts. The Task Force cannot predict what the pond will look like under this proposal at specific future moments in time and therefore say with certainty the relative downsides of delaying or avoiding more substantial long-term management actions such as dredging or dam removal.
- Much of the financial cost information included above was compiled based on estimates from town staff, not through a formal/vetted budgeting process. These data should be understood as rough estimates only.
- The Task Force has received a [technical memo](#) on a conceptual design and costs for two types of potential fish passage. However, the viability and costs of designing and constructing an effective fish passage have not been fully vetted and established.
- Some Task Force members have suggested the proposal could create a sense of false hope and delay difficult but necessary decision making. Members of the community have been unhappy with the state of Warner's Pond for decades, and a variety of methods have been experimented with since the dam was rebuilt. The town has invested in multiple

studies over the past 12 years that provide a good understanding of pond conditions and the strengths and weaknesses of potential actions, and the Task Force has gathered additional information in the past 12 months. These studies and experiences suggest that short-term management approaches are unlikely to meaningfully change conditions at the pond, and the town does not have effective, low-cost options for reducing invasive plants and improving water quality. Rather, the ongoing process of eutrophication will continue to degrade these conditions over time unless more substantial action is taken. Ongoing eutrophication could eventually have even more significant impacts, such as impeding access by watercraft to Scout Island and the remaining riverine channel.

Ideas considered but not proposed

The Task Force considered the following ideas related to recurring pond management, but has opted not to include them in this proposal for the reasons outlined below.

Doing nothing: Task Force members believe that doing absolutely nothing to the pond and allowing the natural processes to continue would have a significant negative impact on the resource area and the community over time. With the increase of invasive and nuisance plants, the pond would continue to experience eutrophication. Eventually, after an indeterminate time, a small 3-5 acre pond would likely exist as a deep hole near Gerow Park. A riverine channel would continue through the thick vegetation towards and over the dam. Watercraft wanting to access the riverine channel would not be able to use the present boat launches and Scout Island would not be accessible using the present boat launches. The current fish population would be depleted and there would be no accommodation for migratory fish.

Based on conversations with the Natural Resources staff and other consultants, the yearly progress of eutrophication cannot be determined due to factors including uncertainties in annual rainfall, temperature fluctuations, drought conditions, and the increasing intensity, frequency, and volume of storms linked to climate change. Additionally, future development in the upstream watershed remains unpredictable, and the overall complexity of the pond system further complicates the assessment. Even if we cannot predict its pace, however, we know eutrophication will continue absent successful management actions.

A standing committee or task force for all ponds where the town has an interest: The Task Force considered whether a standing committee or task force should become a focal point for ongoing planning and decision-making regarding all Concord ponds where the town has an interest (by virtue of ownership of all or some of the surrounding parcel). Much like the current Warner's Pond Task Force, the standing committee/task force would function as a subcommittee of the NRC and would be responsible for advising the NRC on management activities in the ponds. In the end, the Task Force concluded that there are enough differences in the various other ponds that few efficiencies would be achieved by a broader committee advising the NRC on all ponds where the town has an interest.

Areas for additional investigation

The Task Force proposes that DNR and NRC further investigate the potential impact and cost-effectiveness of two specific pond management techniques:

- **Drawdown of the pond:** Drawdown is an approach towards managing aquatic invasives that has been used with some success in other communities, such as at Bare Hill Pond in Harvard, Massachusetts. However, the Task Force’s initial investigation concluded that utilizing the dam’s present sluice gate and nearby drainpipe would reduce the pond depth, on average, by no more than 6 inches under normal winter flow conditions. This level of drawdown would be insufficient to meaningfully reduce the quantity of invasive plants. (A typical drawdown is approximately 3 feet.) More research on this issue would have to include analysis of the cost and effectiveness of widening the sluice gate and/or purchasing a pumping station.
- **Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH):** The Task Force explored this option as an inexpensive alternative for harvesting invasive and nuisance plants. The cost ranges from approximately \$15,000 to \$25,000 an acre, depending on the difficulty of the conditions and the time allotted. This option does reduce unwanted plants, but it needs to be repeated with some frequency. In some cases, it is required annually. The Task Force believes this may be a viable option in some areas of the pond, such as the canoe/kayak passage from the Commonwealth Ave. boat launch to Scout Island and the main channel of Nashoba Brook.

Appendix D from “Alternatives Under Consideration” Report: Detailed Estimated Costs for Preparing a New Recurring Pond Management Plan

Cost details

Base Plan A: New Management Plan Only	One-Time / Capital Costs	Annual Recurring / Operating Costs	5-year Total: One-Time + Annual
Pond Management Consultant / O&M Plan	\$50,000	\$20,000	\$150,000
Permits & additional analysis	\$20,000		\$20,000
Invasive plant removal methods and monitoring		\$50,000	\$250,000
Recruitment and support of the Pond Stewards		\$2,000	\$10,000
Improvements for boat launch areas	\$50,000		\$50,000
Ongoing dam maintenance		\$11,000	\$55,000
Twice a year hold a meeting with community stakeholders		\$2,000	\$10,000
Base Plan A Totals	\$120,000	\$85,000	\$545,000

Sources: Consultations with Town of Harvard staff; 2022 Charter dredging bid

Potential Additional Costs Scenario B: Dam Maintenance & Repair	One-Time / Capital Costs		Annual Recurring /		5-year Total: One-Time +	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Studies and Analyses	\$26,000	\$42,000			\$26,000	\$42,000
Yearly Recommendations			\$5,000	\$11,000	\$25,000	\$55,000
Minor Repairs Recommendations	\$10,000	\$20,000			\$10,000	\$20,000
Remedial Modification Recommendations	\$0	\$45,000			\$0	\$45,000
Potential Scenario B Totals	\$36,000	\$107,000	\$5,000	\$11,000	\$61,000	\$162,000

Source: 2023 Warner's Pond Dam Inspection/Evaluation Report, Pare Corporation, pages 3-5 to 3-6

Potential Additional Costs Scenario C: Fish Passage	One-Time / Capital Costs	Annual Recurring / Operating Costs	5-year Total: One-Time + Annual
Design & Permitting of a Naturalized Fish Passage	\$180,000		\$180,000
Construction of a fish passage	\$215,900		\$215,900
Maintenance		\$1,000	\$5,000
Potential Scenario C Totals	\$395,900	\$1,000	\$400,900

Source: 2025 Technical Memorandum on Fish Passage, EA Engineering

Potential Additional Costs Scenario D: New Drawdown Mechanism	One-Time / Capital Costs	Annual Recurring / Operating Costs	5-year Total: One-Time + Annual
Pumping Station or dam sluice gate widening	\$1,000,000	\$10,000	\$1,050,000
Permits	\$20,000		\$20,000
Potential Scenario D Totals	\$1,020,000	\$10,000	\$1,070,000

Sources: Consultations with Town of Concord staff; Town of Harvard Fact Sheet on Bare Hill Pond

Summary Table

Totals Base A and Potential Scenarios B + C + D	One-Time / Capital Costs		Annual Recurring / Operating Costs		5-year Total: One-Time + Annual	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Base Plan A: New Management Plan Only	\$120,000		\$85,000		\$545,000	
Scenario B: Dam Maintenance & Repair	\$36,000	\$107,000	\$5,000	\$11,000	\$61,000	\$162,000
Scenario C: Fish Passage	\$395,900		\$1,000		\$400,900	
Scenario D: New Drawdown Mechanism	\$1,020,000		\$10,000		\$1,070,000	
MAX TOTAL: Base Plan A + Scenarios B + C + D	\$1,571,900	\$1,642,900	\$101,000	\$107,000	\$2,076,900	\$2,177,900

Appendix I: Additional Task Force Member Perspectives and Expectations

Some members are enthusiastic about this decision and excited about what the future might bring, while others are more cautious, but still optimistic that a rigorous adaptive methodology combined with multistakeholder implementation and oversight could result in meaningful improvements to the pond system. Others are more skeptical but recognize that the town and the Task Force are highly divided on the issues of dam removal and dredging, and acknowledge that there are benefits to improving data collection and monitoring changes to the ecology of the pond system, along with changes to the surrounding human infrastructure and recreational needs, to enable more informed decision-making in the future. Some members are influenced by their expectation that the Warner's Pond dam is very likely to be removed at some point in the future (whether due to maintenance/safety issues, town decision-making, or other developments), although they recognize that the timeline is highly uncertain, and this may not take place for many decades or longer.

To some members, the recommendation represents an inability to reach agreement on a more substantial intervention that would address root causes of the pond's condition. These members feel the recommendation represents a decision to “kick the can down the road” and is unlikely to succeed. In the late stages of the Task Force's deliberations, two of these members suggested an alternative for consensus involving dam removal, stream restoration, and limited dredging to maintain a smaller Warner's Pond near Gerow Park, but this concept has not been researched or discussed by the Task Force and did not attract additional support.

Some members believe it is important for this report to highlight elements of the Task Force's information gathering and deliberation that point to the benefits of dam removal. These members point to the written survey that Task Force members completed during the deliberation phase of their work and note that recurring management was the top ranked option for seven Task Force members, dam removal was the top recommendation for four Task Force members, and dredging was not the top ranked option for any Task Force members. In addition, these members note that 1) Task Force members weighted ecological sustainability in their survey responses on average as the most important or relevant criterion for evaluating options for the pond system, and 2) the Task Force's interim report characterized dam removal and stream restoration as the most ecologically beneficial solution at Warners Pond. Specifically, the interim report noted: “A restored stream and wetland system, as would be produced by removing the dam, can claim to offer the most diversity of wildlife.”

These members also note that the Task Force heard from several environmental professionals and conservation organizations that dam removal and stream restoration would be best for the environment, specifically:

- Joe Gould, Ecological Restoration Specialist (DER), who noted that DER prioritizes dam removal — along with culverts, cranberry bogs, and saltmarshes — because it's one of the very best things we can do for biodiversity
- Steven Mattocks (DFG), Aquatic Connectivity and Fisheries Outreach Biologist
- Ben Wetherill of OARS (presentation) and OARS staff (public comment). OARS is a watershed organization representing over 300 Concord members

- Concord Land Conservation Trust trustees, direct abutter to Warner's Pond and representing 500 households (via a public comment form)
- Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council (via a public comment form and video)
- Bryan Windmiller, Director of Field Conservation, Zoo New England
- David Swain, professor of field ornithology at Southern NH University

Some other members believe it is important for this report to highlight other elements of the Task Force's information gathering and deliberation that point to the benefits of dredging. These members suggest that the full survey results — including members' written explanations — provide important context about each member's perspective. For example, some members who supported dredging over the long-term decided it was preferable to start with recurring management as a way to build alignment on a pathway forward. If future decision-makers decide to use these survey results to guide their thinking about the future of the pond, they should review the results in their entirety. Likewise, the criteria weighting exercise in the survey was approached differently by different individual members, with an explicit understanding that the Task Force would not be engaging in a formal collective "weighting" exercise when making decisions. On the contrary, these members note that the Task Force was charged with considering the full range of criteria in the *Envision Concord* long-term plan and all five of these criteria were fundamental to the Task Force's decision-making. In addition, the interim "Alternatives Under Consideration" report contains a range of data and observations about each of the different alternatives regarding their relationship to the history and character of the area, ecological impacts, recreational impacts, costs, and uncertainties, among other factors. Specific language across all sections of the report was carefully vetted and agreed to by Task Force members after substantial deliberation, and the interim report should be considered in its entirety during future decision-making.

These members also note that the Task Force did not invite a pond management company representative to a Task Force meeting to discuss opportunities for more effective management actions, and that all voices of the public should be taken into account in evaluating options for the pond, not just those of selected environmental organizations (many of whose comments were never discussed or alluded to during Task Force meetings). These members suggest that the full public deliberation suggests there is significant public opposition to dam removal, and overwhelming opposition among members of the public who regularly engage with the pond.