

Project Proposal: Restoring Access to Stone Bridge at Allen's Meadow

Location: Allen's Meadow, Wilton CT

Proposed to: Wilton Conservation Commission

Proposed by: Matt Brand

December 2021

About Matt Brand (project leader)

- Wilton resident 3 yrs
- Garden club + Wilton Land Conservation Trust member/volunteer
- Member of Aspetuck Land Trust Invasives task force
 - Trained in invasive ID and herbicide mgmt.
- Trail steward – Stonebridge waterfowl park (ALT)



Project overview

- In Allen's Meadow, about 100 ft west of the south-east corner of the community gardens, there is an old, man-made stone bridge going over Goetzen Brook
- Bridge provides access to the other side of the brook, where a trail to the south leads you towards the high school and the Goetzen pond
- Access to the stone bridge is blocked by thick invasive species. Clearing this will give visitors access to a unique wetland habitat and open up another trail for walkers and nature lovers



The bridge (view from west side of brook,
looking east towards community gardens)

This area fairly
clear of invasives



Area to clear

The plan –

part 1: invasives removal

- Remove invasives from 20' x 80' patch (1600 sq ft), which would provide access to the bridge
 - area mainly contains large winged euonymus, mature bittersweet vines, mature grape vines, olive, and multiflora rose
- Control technique will be cutting the plants and applying herbicide to the exposed cambium with an approved dauber (cut and paint)
 - “Because it is so targeted, this technique has a low probability of affecting non-target species or contaminating the environment.” (Oehler, JD. New Hampshire Fish & Game Dept)
 - Herbicide used will be 20% glyphosate in temps >40 F, or Triclopyr in temps <40F
 - “The glyphosate application is effective at temperatures as low as 40°F and the triclopyr application remains effective at temperatures at <60° F as long as the ground is not frozen” (USDA –NRCS - Brush Management)
- While natural control of invasives is ideal, assessment of this area has determined:
 1. manual/mechanical control methods are not feasible due to deep root systems
 2. continual mowing is not feasible, given available labor pool



The plan –

part 1: invasives removal

- *Timeline for part 1:* winter is ideal time to cut/paint woody invasives. Targeting early spring 2022 for complete eradication.
- *Plan for volunteers:* most of the removal can be done in 1 or 2 volunteer sessions since not an overwhelming space. Matt is part of Aspetuck's Invasives Task Force and can reach out to that network of volunteers for help. Local Eagle Scouts might be interested in getting involved and being part of the clearing team. If we need more “hands on deck”, we can get the word out via local press or Wilton 411.
- *Equipment and materials needed for part 1:*
 - Herbicide
 - Dauber applicators
 - Pruning hand saws

Budget for part 1: ~ \$100

The plan – part 2: footbridge for wet area

- Area on the way to the stone bridge is ~8' and ~1' deep. A basic 8'x3' footbridge with 1' clearance needs to be built
- I plan on reaching out to Eagle Scouts – for a project, an Eagle Scout might want to plan and build this bridge
- Matt can also build this, with consultation from his father-in-law who is a licensed carpenter

Timeline for part 2: can be built this winter

Materials needed: pressure-treated wood and screws

Budget for part 2: \$150



The plan –

part 3: clear path on west side of brook

- Stone bridge gives access to the west side of the brook; a path on that side will go south along the brook and link up to the bridge at Goetzen pond
- Several large trees are blocking trail access
- Fallen trees need chainsawing, and the path needs to be clearly marked (ie, painting trees, signage etc.)

Timeline for part 2: can be done this winter

***Budget for part 2:* ~\$300 for tree crew ½ day. Or, can town commit to clearing this path?**

The plan –

part 4: replanting

- Natives in seedbank will hopefully grow. However, a population of natives should be planted to give the area a head start
- Spicebush and clethra – good in moist soils and shade.
 - 50 spicebush bareroot x \$6 each
 - 55 clethra ‘jump starts’ x \$3.60 each (source: Bailey nurseries wholesale)
- *Planting plan:*
 - *before planting*, in May, will organize a team to identify and cut/paint any new invasives popping up which would compete against the new plants
 - After this, will organize a day for the digging and planting. This can be done through my volunteer network, or through local boy/eagle scouts who are actively involved in planting events. The bareroot and ‘starts’ do not have a large root system and will be relatively easy to plant.
- *New plant maintenance:* area has the advantage of being quite wet, so unless there is a very bad drought, there will not be a large need to keep them watered. If additional watering is needed, there is a water source at the community gardens

Timeline for part 4: target end of spring.

Budget for part 2: ~\$515

The plan – part 5: signage

- 2 signs marking entry points for the stone bridge will be made
 - 1 by the community gardens
 - 1 after the bridge at Goetzen pond pointing towards the path, which is easily missed
- Trail marking along the new path also needs to occur
- Ideally, a map of the entire Allen's trail system would be made, similar to the ones at Cherry Ln park
- This could be a good project for boy/girl/eagle scouts; otherwise, Matt can do this with volunteers

Timeline for part 5: target early summer.

Budget for part 2: ~\$150

The plan –

part 6: ongoing maintenance

- This newly restored space will be monitored and maintained to prevent encroaching invasives, especially since the area is surrounded by them
- Matt will act as steward, mobilizing the group of volunteers who were galvanized during the project development, to help with the maintenance
- There is a lot of renewed interest in Allen's Meadow, due to Joe Bear's project and the birding community.
 - Bringing all these fans and volunteers together under one banner – Friends of Allen's Meadow – to help support various project around the park, is the future vision of park stewardship that lives on beyond project leaders

Fundraising / town requests

Budget for entire project: ~\$765 - \$1065

Funding: Matt will seek funding via crowdsourcing and grants

- **GoFundMe Kiwanis**
- **Rotary club**
- **CT Invasives Plant Working Group**
- **CT Master Gardener program**

Seeking from town of Wilton:

- Permissions/oversight/guidance
- Project promotion
- Help cutting fallen trees on west side of brook

Vision for Allen's – future projects

- The galvanized volunteer corp – Friends of Allen's Meadow – will continue improving the area.

Possible projects include

- Continue cleaning/remove invasives from the western edge of the park so more people can enjoy the unique wetland/meadow habitat
- Connect the new “stone bridge” trail to the river trail that begins at Merwin's and ends at the High School
- Build a ‘bird blind’ for birders

Together with Joe's pollinator meadow, this will be a conservation success story, and will attract more visitors (in addition to more wildlife!)

References

Oehler JD, Covell DF, Capel S, et al. Managing Grasslands, Shrublands, and Young Forest Habitats for Wildlife A Guide for the Northeast: Chapter 10b: Herbiciding. *The Northeast Upland Habitat Technical Committee Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*. 2006.
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