

Community Preservation Funding Application — Fiscal Year 2026

55 Main Street, Westford, Massachusetts 01886

 jbeyer@westfordma.gov | jhealy@westfordma.gov  (978) 399-2905

1. Basic Project Information

Submission Date: January 9, 2026

Project Name: Forge Pond pilot herbicide treatment

CPA Funds Requested: \$20,000

Applicant Information:

Name: David Barr and Matthew Salem

Address: 49 Matawanakee Trl, Littleton MA

Phone: 978-201-9524

Email: barrdt@gmail.com

Sponsoring Board/Committee(s): Westford Healthy Lakes & Ponds Collaborative

Additional Responsible Parties (if applicable): Friends of Forge Pond

Project Manager/Contact Person: David Barr

2. Project Purpose

Select all that apply:

Open Space Affordable Housing Historic Preservation Recreation

3. Project Description and Goals

Provide a comprehensive project summary using the space at the top of page two or attach additional pages as necessary. Include the following information:

- **Project Purpose and Scope:** Clearly describe the objectives and scope of the project.
- **Community Benefits:** Explain how the project will benefit the residents of Westford and how those outcomes will be measured.
- **Preservation Impact:** Describe how the project preserves the town's character and aligns with the goals of the Community Preservation Act.
- **Timing Considerations:** If submitting outside the standard funding cycle, provide an explanation (example Special Town Meeting vs Annual Town Meeting). If project could be completed in multiple phases, please describe.
- **Long Term Impact:** What are the long-term maintenance or stewardship plans.

Project Description: (attach additional pages as necessary)

Project Purpose and Scope

This project will perform a pilot effort in the application of a herbicide treatment for Forge Pond. Although numerous methods have been used recently to deal with invasive aquatic plants in Forge Pond, the use of herbicides have not been tried in about fifty years. As the growth of aquatic plants has become progressively more aggressive in Forge Pond, and as other methods of dealing with this growth have had varying degrees of success, a trial use of aquatic herbicides is seen to be appropriate.

Background

The Westford Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative and the Friends of Forge Pond request funding to help preserve the quality of Forge Pond in the face of accelerating lake eutrophication. This aligns with the CPC mission of the preservation of open space.

- Forge Pond has increasingly become infested by several invasive (non-native) aquatic plant species.
 - These include fanwort, Eurasian milfoil, variable milfoil, curly-leaf pondweed, and European naiad.
 - The invasive species impair recreational uses of the lake and degrade the habitat value of the lake areas where rooted plants grow, by out-competing beneficial native species. This plant growth also represents the accelerating eutrophication of Forge Pond, in which it slowly fills with plant material and eventually ceases to be a lake.
- Since 2023, the growth of plants in Forge Pond has increased significantly, with areas that previously had some level of invasive plants now exhibiting much higher plant densities than before, and with invasive plant growth in many areas where the plants had not previously been present.
 - Life-long lake residents report that they have never seen this level of plants in the lake in all their years. We are concerned that this trend is the “new normal” and are working to address the issue.
- For more than a decade, the growth of invasive plants in Forge Pond has been countered by winter drawdowns of the lake. This has been moderately successful in limiting the growth of invasive plants by lowering the water level in the winter, which exposes shallow lakebed areas and, when the winter is cold enough, will kill the exposed invasive plants. With changing climate conditions and warmer winters, the drawdowns have recently been less effective.
- In the last few years, a mechanical plant removal process called “Eco-Harvesting” has been tried. This process collects aquatic plants and removes them to be disposed of off-site. A large-scale pilot project of the Eco-Harvesting process has been sought every summer since 2023, to evaluate whether this treatment is effective in Forge Pond in reducing the growth of invasive plants. These attempts have been stymied -- by limited funding in 2023 and in subsequent years by the declaration of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (Mass DEP) that plant removal on Forge Pond would be considered a form of dredging, which would require a dredging permit. This decision by Mass DEP resulted in a limited treatment in 2024 and no treatment in 2025. Also, both the 2023 and 2024 treatments took place too late in the summer to be fully effective, due to delays in obtaining the required WPA permits. The Littleton Clean Lakes Committee has hired an engineering firm to prepare and submit the required dredging permit, but the permit won't be in place until the summer of 2027.

Proposed work

Because there will not be a chance to test Eco-Harvesting during the summer of 2026, it is planned to perform a pilot test project to assess the effectiveness of a herbicide treatment in Forge Pond as a means of controlling invasive plants.

- Herbicide treatments can be successful in the short term. We have met with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (Mass DCR) and they strongly advocate for their use.
- We have been discouraged in the past from using herbicides in Forge Pond because of the high through-flow of water through the lake. Herbicides have not been used in Forge Pond in recent

memory (at least 50 years). In discussions with Mass DCR, they report that sites with much higher levels of through-flow have successfully used herbicides to treat invasive plants.

- The planned pilot test program will allow evaluation of the extent to which different types of herbicides are effective in Forge Pond. Both fast-acting “contact herbicides” and slower-acting but longer-lasting “systemic herbicides” will be tested in different areas of the lake.
- The pilot treatment can also help determine how herbicide treatments might be useful in tandem with Eco-Harvesting, to improve the effectiveness of subsequent Eco-Harvesting treatments.

Community Benefits

Reducing the level of invasive plants in Forge Pond, through the pilot test herbicide treatment, will benefit the community through:

- **Improved recreational experience**
Reducing the invasive plant growth in Forge Pond will provide better recreational, sporting, and leisure-time activities on Forge Pond. High levels of invasive plant growth make swimming, fishing and boating less enjoyable and, in some cases, less feasible. Some areas of the lake have become unavailable for these activities because the thick stands of invasive plants are unpleasant or hard to swim and paddle through, can preclude casting for fishing, and can choke the propulsion systems of motorized boats, sometimes requiring repair. Crew boats must avoid these areas of the lake because they are not passable. Heavy, though less thick, plant growth in other areas of Forge Pond have similar limiting effects.
- **Reducing lake eutrophication**
See discussion under Preservation Impact
- **Restored natural ecology**
See discussion under Preservation Impact

These benefits will be observed through reduced growth of invasive plants, the increase in recreational uses of the lake and a returning to more a sustainable, natural ecology of Forge Pond.

Surveys of the plant growth in Forge Pond would be performed prior to the herbicide treatment, shortly after the treatment, and again later in the summer, to assess the effectiveness of the treatment. In addition, plant surveys will be performed in 2027 to assess the longer-term effects on invasive plant growth in the areas treated with contact and systemic herbicides.

Preservation Impact

This project will evaluate the effectiveness in Forge Pond of using both short-acting (contact) and long-acting (systemic) herbicides in limiting the invasive plant growth in the lake, reducing the rate of eutrophication.

As such, this project is one of several being undertaken on Forge Pond with the overall goal of preserving the quality of our local lakes in the face of accelerating eutrophication. This aligns with the CPC mission of open space preservation.

Westford’s lakes are a treasured natural resource, but when lakes are surrounded by developed communities, they are prone to accelerated eutrophication and deterioration. If we fail to halt the spread of invasive plants, the ecology of Forge Pond will continue to deteriorate and the lake will fill in, eventually becoming a wetland and, later, a meadow.

The eutrophication process takes thousands of years under natural conditions. But it occurs in hundreds of years or even decades when stimulated by human habitation. Intensive human activity has been fostering eutrophication in Forge Pond for nearly 100 years now, and the process is advancing rapidly. This

accelerated eutrophication has been exemplified locally at Mill Pond in Littleton, which over just a few decades changed from being a vibrant lake with a 12-foot depth to a degraded pond with a 3-foot depth. Managing the ecology of the lakes is important for preserving their vitality.

Also, the ecology of our lakes declines as invasive plant species – which grow more aggressively than native plants – increasingly crowd out the native plants. The originally-diverse ecology becomes a near-monoculture of just a few plant types, which provide less support for the diversity of other life in the lake. Fish, turtles, frogs, mussels, and the entire array of life in the lake narrows to the few that can survive in the limited environment.

Community Preservation funds aim to preserve open space; that is our primary goal here. Lakes are unique resources which cannot be replaced if they deteriorate.

Timing Considerations

This project is submitted within the standard funding cycle.

A survey of the plant growth in Forge Pond would be carried out in late spring (late May or early June) to determine the extent and locations of the invasive plants to be treated. A herbicide treatment would be performed in June. Additional plant surveys will be made shortly after the herbicide treatments and again later in the summer, to assess the effectiveness of the treatment.

Long Term Impact

A lake preservation review and plan, which are being funded by the Littleton Clean Lakes Committee in FY2027 is anticipated to provide guidance on options for retarding the rate of eutrophication experienced by Forge Pond. These options could include plant treatments using herbicides and/or physical harvesting, effective drawdowns, benthic barriers, management of nutrients entering the lake from the watershed, dredging of lake-bottom siltation, or other potential approaches. Continuing efforts to reduce the growth of invasive aquatic plants in Forge Pond will be needed until it is possible to reduce the eutrophication pace. Some lakes have had good success in dramatically cutting the level of invasive plant growth and thereafter maintaining a more natural lake ecology.

The efforts to determine appropriate methods to be used at Forge Pond to mitigate eutrophication and the implementation of these methods are all targeted at preserving the natural resource of Forge Pond's open space. To reiterate the statement above, lakes are unique resources which cannot be replaced if they deteriorate.

CPA funding may be sought in 2027 for a significant Eco-Harvesting pilot treatment on the Westford portion of Forge Pond, to assess the effectiveness of this process, once the required dredging permit is obtained from Mass DEP.

4. Project Location and Ownership

Project Address: Forge Pond

Assessor Information (Map/Block/Lot ID): N/A -- Assessor Location ID: F_659586_3035034

Ownership/Care and Custody Information: Forge Pond is classified as a Massachusetts Great Pond and as such is owned by Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Most CPA-funded projects require legal protections to ensure long-term preservation:

Open Space / Conservation: Land or conservation restrictions must remain permanently protected (e.g., Conservation Restriction under M.G.L. Chapter 184).

Historic Preservation: Properties must include a preservation restriction or covenant to maintain historical integrity.

Affordable Housing: Long-term affordability must be secured through a restriction or covenant.

Recreation: Restrictions may be required if the project secures permanent public recreational access.

Applicants should check all that apply and attach supporting documentation or proof of restriction. The Community Preservation Committee/Town of Westford may require deed restrictions or covenants to be obtained as a condition of funding, if not already in place.

All activities in pursuit of preserving the ecology of Forge Pond have been and will continue to be permitted under the Wetlands Protection Act, working through the Westford and Littleton Conservation Commissions.

Deed Restrictions Required (check all that apply):

Conservation Housing Historic Preservation

5. Budget

Attach a complete project budget, including estimates or quotes as needed.

Percent of Total Budget Requested from CPA Funds: 50%

Other Funding Sources (committed/applied/planned): \$20,000 allocated by Littleton CPC in 2025 cycle

Anticipated Annual Income/Expenses: _____

Recurring Expenses (maintenance, etc.): _____

Taxpayer Impact: _____

Total project cost: \$40,000

Forge Pond is in both Westford and Littleton. The Littleton Community Preservation Committee has already provided matching funding for this project.

Planned cost breakdown:

Westford Community Preservation Committee: \$20,000

Littleton Community Preservation Committee: \$20,000

Matching funding for this project has been allocated by the Littleton Community Preservation Committee as part of their 2025 funding cycle, and approved by Littleton Town Meeting.

Basis for the budget:

Discussions with the SOLitude lake management company last summer, regarding a potential herbicide treatment at that time, provided costing guidance that can be applied to a prospective herbicide treatment

this summer. The treatment ultimately performed this summer will depend on the results of the spring plant survey and the balance between the contact and systemic herbicides used. Systemic herbicides, while generally having a longer-lasting effect, are typically five to eight times more expensive per acre than contact herbicides. We will work with the application contractor to determine an appropriate treatment plan to meet the project objectives and stay within the allocated budget.

6. Procurement

Projects exceeding \$10,000 must comply with applicable public procurement laws.

- **Town Departments:** Follow MGL Chapter 30B procedures.
- **Non-Town Department applicants:** Describe your proposed compliance plan to ensure procurement procedures are followed. Applicants may be directed to the Town Manager’s office for additional follow-up and guidance.

Note: Non-Town Department applicants must sign a grant agreement before CPA funds are released. The Town Manager’s office will assist with this process as needed.

Procurement Plan: Westford Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative, in conjunction with the Town of Littleton, will coordinate the contracting for this project.

7. Project Timeline

Proposed Start Date: May 2026

Expected Completion Date: August 2027

Include key milestones or phases of the project if applicable: _____

Expected Milestones

May – June 2026 – Perform a survey of the plant growth in Forge Pond, with mapping of invasive plant coverage, to determine the extent of the invasive plants to be treated.

June 2026 – Plan for the herbicide treatment. Depending on the chemicals planned for use, may need to seek approval from the Conservation Commission for one of the herbicides. Contract for the pilot herbicide treatment and perform treatment.

July 2026 – Perform a plant surveys at locations on Forge Pond where Friends of Forge Pond has historically made annual assessments. In addition, carry out visual assessments of the treatment effectiveness.

August 2026 – Perform a follow-up survey of the plant growth in Forge Pond, with mapping of invasive plant coverage, to further assess the effectiveness of the herbicide treatment.

June 2027– Perform a survey of the plant growth in Forge Pond, with mapping of invasive plant coverage

August 2027 – Report provided describing the pilot herbicide treatment and its effectiveness, both during summer 2026 and spring/summer 2027.

8. Endorsements by Applicable Boards/Commissions

Check all that apply and attach letters of support to the application:

- Affordable Housing Committee and/or Housing Authority
- Cemetery Commission
- Conservation Commission – Possible (Discussions underway for endorsement)
- Historic Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission – Possible (Discussions underway for endorsement)
- Planning Board
- Water Commission
- Other: Westford Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative

9. List of Attachments

Include all supporting materials relevant to your application:

- Site maps, photographs, or plans
- Cost estimates or contractor quotes
- Letters of support or endorsements
- Ownership documentation or legal agreements
- Deed restrictions

10. Applicant Signatures

Signature: David Barr Date: January 9, 2026

Printed Name: David Barr Title: Member, Westford Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative
President, Friends of Forge Pond

Signature: Matthew Salem Date: January 9, 2026

Printed Name: Matthew Salem Title: Co-chair, Westford Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative
Conservation Resource Planner

For Community Preservation Committee Use Only

Date Received:

Year:

Is Sufficient Data/Detail Provided?

Is Timeliness an Issue?

Is Additional Information Required?

Project Interview Date:

Public Hearing Date:

Committee Vote: Yes No Abstain

Date:

Recommendation for Town Meeting Consideration: Spring Fall Special