

**MANAGEMENT PLAN
CASERTANO PROPERTY
AS ADOPTED JUNE 8, 2010**

I. General Property Description

The Casertano Property is an approximately 127.48 acre open space parcel located in northwest Cheshire along the intersections of Jarvis Street and Marion Road, and Huckins Street and Marion Road. The property consists of two distinct lots that are identified as lots 12 and 16 on Tax Assessor Maps 16, 17, 25, and 26. Lot 12 is an 89-acre lot bordered by Marion Road just northwest of the intersection of Marion Road and Jarvis Street and Huckins Road to the south. Lot 16 is 38.3 acres in the northeast intersection of Marion Road and Jarvis Street. For the purposes of this management plan, lot 12 will be referred to as the upland portion and lot 16 will be referred to as the lowland portion.

General open space features include:

1. Close proximity and indirect adjacency to agricultural farms, existing open space, including Town owned Mixville Hills to the south, Ten Mile Lowlands to the east and Cheshire Land Trust property to the north, composing a ‘western green belt’ extending to the western ridgeline.
2. Situated within an R-40 residential zone.
3. Remnants of soil and gravel excavation, with altered topography and densely populated non-native invasive plant species in previously disturbed areas.
4. Consists of two separate lots on either side of Marion Road, which have distinct open space features including an agricultural area and forested lowlands that border Cuff Brook and the Ten Mile River.
5. Steep slopes, mature forest vegetation, unimproved trails and Cuff Brook characterize the upland portion to the west of Marion Road.
6. Flat agricultural land, wetlands, forested wetlands, and a meandering section of the Ten Mile River characterize the lowlands portion to the east of Marion Road.
7. Incorporation into the Ten Mile drainage basin, which serves approximately eleven public drinking wells within a one-mile radius and contains important wetlands associated with the Ten Mile Watershed.
8. Containment of a 1,350 linear foot, 75’ wide Algonquin Gas Transmission Company easement (Volume 83 at Page 141 of the Cheshire Land Records) in the upland portion of the property, referred to in the property records as lot 12.
9. Containment of a permanent easement to the Water Pollution Control Authority for the Ten Mile River Interceptor sewer line (Volume 855 at Page 2 of the Cheshire Land Records) in the lowland portion of the property, referred to in the property records as lot 16.

A general map of the property is attached as “*Casertano Property and Vicinity*”; Detailed descriptions of the property’s history and natural & historic features are detailed in Appendix A & B of this management plan.

II. Management Goals

General Statement: The Town of Cheshire acquired the Casertano property through public purchase. Management goals shall include public access/public recreation, agricultural use, wetland and upland habitat conservation and watershed protection.

Therefore, the following management goals shall be recognized by this plan:

1. The Casertano Property shall be managed for a combination of public access, passive recreation, agricultural use, wetland and upland habitat conservation, and water supply protection purposes.
2. As to public access and passive recreation, this plan recognizes that a major goal and purpose of open space acquisition is for use by the public. Therefore, significant portions of the property shall be available to the public for passive recreation.
3. As to wetland and upland habitat conservation, this plan recognizes that inland wetlands and watercourses are an indispensable and irreplaceable but fragile natural resource with which the citizens of the Town of Cheshire have been endowed. Further, preservation of upland habitats helps to ensure a continuance of native upland biological diversity, and provides a balance to wetland preservation. Therefore, efforts shall be made to preserve/maintain existing wetland and watercourse areas.
4. As to forest resource management, this plan recognizes that forested landscapes provide a variety of valuable functions within the community including wildlife habitat watershed protection, and timber resource production. Therefore, efforts shall be made to manage and maintain the property's forests in a manner that balances ecosystem protection and biodiversity with proper timber resource utilization.

III. Permitted Uses

General statement: Permitted uses shall be as described in *Section 11-30 Open Space of the Town of Cheshire Code of Ordinances*.

1. Existing woods roads or a portion thereof, once improved for public use, shall be posted by the Steward as public trail(s) for passive recreation, as described in *Section 11-30 Open Space of the Town of Cheshire Code of Ordinances*.
2. Trails available for passive recreation in the upland portion of the property will be identified and posted by the Steward, and the Steward may close trails during seasonally wet or otherwise inappropriate times and/or conditions.
3. Wetlands, watercourses and watershed areas shall be maintained in a natural state.
4. Access to the wetlands, watercourses, vernal pools and watershed areas of the lowland portion of this property will be limited to Town sponsored guided tours.
5. The existing forested wetland buffer in the lowlands portion of the property will be maintained with the allowance to remove invasive plant species and restore native plant diversity to this important and vital habitat.
6. A certified forester may prepare a forest management plan. The forest management plan shall emphasize goals of, at least, habitat diversity, uneven aged forest structure, invasive species removal, and sustainable forestry practices while maintaining agricultural use. The plan shall specifically call for a segment of the property to be managed in such a way as to encourage development of structural old growth characteristics. Specific proposals shall

be solicited by the Steward of such terms as are acceptable to the Steward, presented for Town Council approval, and subsequently monitored by the Steward.

7. The Steward shall facilitate arrangement of parking facilities, access and signage appropriate for carrying out the above-stated goals.

IV. Prohibited Uses

Prohibited uses shall be as described in *Section 11-30 Open Space of the Town of Cheshire Code of Ordinances*.

Appendix A: History of the Casertano Property

The current Casertano Property was initially part of a much larger parcel of land obtained by James and Salvatore Casertano in 1956. The original parcel of land was known to the local farmers as the “Elliot Doolittle Farm” and was historically surrounded by agricultural properties.

Due to its relatively flat topography and fertile land, the lowlands portion (lot 16) has been cultivated almost continuously since 1900. In the past century, there have been at least five individuals that have farmed the property and they have cultivated a large variety of crops including vegetables, hay and corn for silage. There were originally two barns that were situated close to Marion Rd. but these structures apparently burned down in the late 1960s.

The upland portion (lot 12) is significant in that it contains several large sand pits on the eastern portion close to Marion Rd. During the 1930s and the 1940s a large amount of sand and gravel was removed from this area. According to nearby residents much of the sand was used for winter sanding during snowstorms. There was also a three-car garage that was built on the eastern portion of the property in the 1940s and 1950s. This garage was apparently used for building racecars and restoring old cars as well as for a variety of other automotive repair functions. This building was demolished prior to the transfer of the property to the town. The upland portion of the property is currently heavily forested, although old aerial photographs prior to 1965 indicate that northeastern and central portions of the property may have been clear cut or possibly cultivated. In the early 1990s the Meriden Rod and Gun Club leased the central and western portions of the property for shooting and hunting. Also during the 1990s, a forest management company removed some trees, in an effort to enhance the health of the forest. However, there is currently no evidence that clear cutting was conducted at that time.

In January 1998, the Town of Cheshire purchased the 127.48 acres from James Casertano and the estate of Salvatore Casertano for \$2,046,222. Prior to the purchase of this property an environmental assessment was obtained in July 1997 through Soil Science and Environmental Services.

Appendix B: Natural/Historical Resources & Terrain

Forest Resources

The upland portion (west of Marion Road) of the property contains mature forests and healthy understories. The forests are primarily composed of birch (*Betula spp.*), red, black and white oak (*Quercus spp.*), tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), maples (*Acer spp.*), hickory (*Carya spp.*), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and chokecherry (*Aronia spp.*). The higher elevations are characterized by stands of hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*). The understory is characterized by mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) and blueberry (*Vaccinium spp.*). Dense ground and vine vegetation in the northeastern portion of the upland property includes poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), blackberry (*Rubus spp.*), grapes (*Vitis spp.*), jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*), aster (*Aster spp.*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), and hay scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*).

Non-native invasive species are predominant in the lower elevations near Marion Rd., where the soil and forest indicate previous disturbance. These species include: bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellate*), japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), winged euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*) and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). It is likely that many other non-native invasive plant species also exist in the previous cleared areas of the upland property. Further investigation is needed.

In the higher elevations of the Northwest portion of the property there are old cedar stumps, which indicates previous intentional removal of cedar trees but there is otherwise no evidence of recent logging or forest management on the property.

The lowland portion of this property consists of cleared acreage for agricultural use. The eastern portion of this lot, adjacent to the Ten Mile River, is at a low elevation and consists of forested wetlands that are associated with the Ten Mile Watershed. This forested buffer serves to protect wetlands and the watercourse contained the subject property and the large contiguous wetland system to the north of the subject property. The wetland forests are consistent with those in other areas of the Ten Mile watershed and consist of red, black and white oak (*Quercus spp.*), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), birch (*Betula spp.*) and red maple (*Acer rubrum*). The abundant understory contains poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) and jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*). The border between the agricultural clearing and the forested wetlands contain many non-native invasive plant species including; bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellate*), Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*).

Habitat

The Casertano Property consists of dense woodlands, creating an habitat for a large variety of plant and animal species. In addition, both the uplands and lowlands of this property are contiguous or in close geographic proximity with other large undeveloped properties, including the Town owned properties designated as open space; Mixville Hills to the west and Ten Mile Lowlands to the east; agricultural land and Cheshire Land Trust property to the

north of the lowland portion of the property. There are no known occurrences of the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Natural Diversity Database species within the property, but the Casertano Property is located near the Ten Mile Lowland property, which is documented to have at least one species from the database list. The lack of Natural Diversity Database species does not indicate that no rare, threatened, endangered, or listed species exist on the property, but rather indicates that a species inventory has not been conducted to determine the type and location of species.

The upland portion has a combination of upland woodlands and streams and is an excellent habitat for plant, animal, insect and bird species. Deer droppings and raccoon footprints are easily visible along the trails and would indicate a healthy population of those species. Chipmunks, squirrels and a juvenile woodchuck were spotted on the June 15, 2007 field inspection. American dog ticks and numerous bird species are abundant on the property. Scarlett Tanager, as well as a wide variety of other birdcalls, could be heard coming from the dense tree and shrub vegetation during a short walk through the property.

The lowland portion provides an interesting habitat with a combination of a meadow habitat and forested wetlands. The dense wooded swamps of the Ten Mile River watershed are also home to a large variety of reptile and amphibian species including various species of frogs, salamanders and turtles.

Water and Wetland Resources

The Casertano property is located within the Ten Mile drainage basin and there are significant wetlands located on the property. The upland portion contains 35,000 square feet of wetlands on the northeast border of the property, along Marion Road, which equates to three-quarter of one acre of wetland soil. Approximately 500 linear feet of an unnamed tributary is contained in this area of wetland soil. Additionally, 800 linear feet of the Cuff Brook follows the southern property border along Huckins Road. Cuff Brook flows in an easterly direction and feeds into the Ten Mile River off site.

The wooded lowlands portion is bordered to the east by 1,400 linear feet of the Ten Mile River with 62,500 square feet, approximately one and one-half acre, of wetland soils. This area has characteristics indicative of vernal pools, though seasonal site inspections are needed to verify location and quality. As a part of the Ten Mile Watershed, the Casertano property serves important wetland functions such as groundwater recharge and discharge, filtering pollutants from surface waters and providing storm water retention during periods of heavy rain. These wetlands also serve to provide an important habitat for many species of plants and animals. The Ten Mile River, in particular, is dense with riparian plant life. It is important to remember that these wetlands are particularly sensitive and are vulnerable to environmental hazards. The Ten Mile River and Cuff Brook may contain fish, but their potentially small size and lack of water depth on this property make them less than ideal for most water-based forms of recreation.

Terrain

The two lots of the Casertano property offer a wide variety of terrain. The elevation of the upland portion of the property ranges from 135 to 480 feet above sea level. The topography of this lot increases from the east, crests in the north to south line following the 1,350 linear

feet of the 75' wide utility easement, and gently slopes down to the west. The property is currently accessed from the existing house on the property. The trails in the eastern portion of the upland property consist of animal trails and erosion gullies. The trails to the northwest and south have been created by all terrain vehicle use. Trail improvements are necessary to allow public access to the property. The gentle inclines on the trails make it an interesting spot for hiking and there are some scenic vistas of Prospect ridge from the highest elevations. However, a significant amount of erosion was noted, particularly on those trails with the steepest inclines. The lower portions of the lot closest to Marion Road are significant for the remains of 'sand pits', or depressions where sand and gravel were removed in the past. In addition, many interesting glacial boulders can be seen alongside the trails in the upper elevations on this lot.

The lowland portion is notable for gentle rolling terrain throughout the agricultural area closest to Marion Road and also for the low elevation wetlands adjacent to the Ten Mile River. The trails along the Ten Mile River are not well established, as they are subject to flooding and deposition of soil and plant materials.