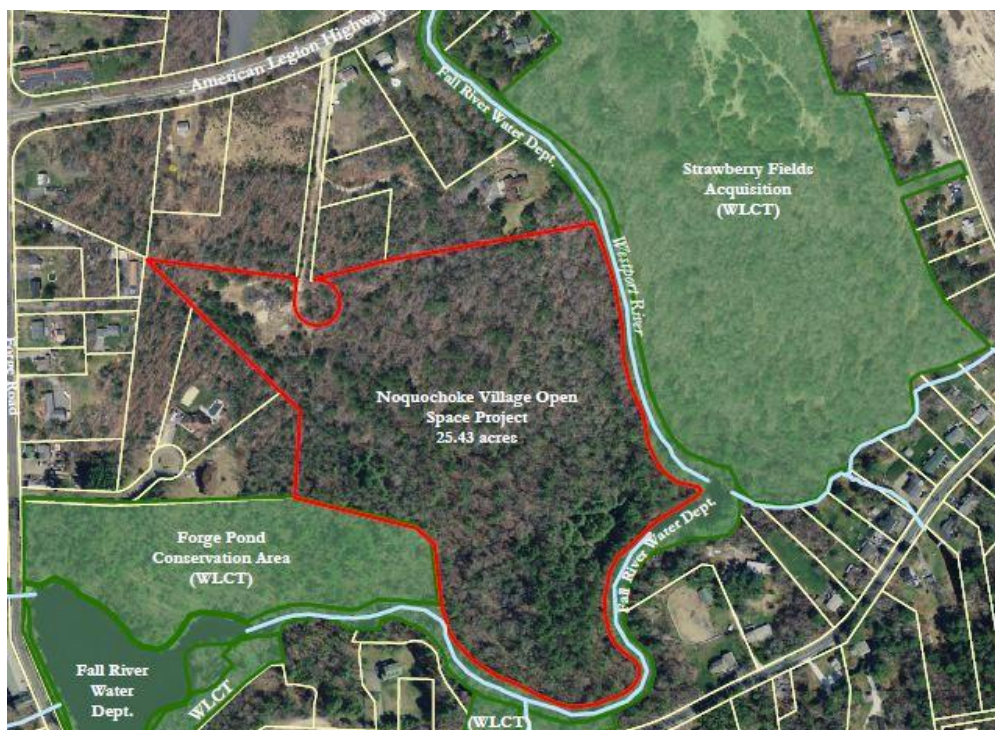




## Press Release

Date: 11/7/19

**For Release:** IMMEDIATE  
**Contact:** Ross Moran, Executive Director  
ross@westportlandtrust.org  
Westport Land Conservation Trust  
☎ days: (508) 636-9228



### *Protecting The Missing Link*

*Westport, Massachusetts* – The Westport Land Conservation Trust (WLCT) is very pleased to announce the protection of 25-acres along the upper east branch of the Westport River north of Forge Pond; made possible by a collaborative effort between the Town of Westport Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and the Westport Affordable Housing Trust spanning more than a decade. The 25-acre Noquochoke Village Open Space Parcel is held by the Town of Westport Conservation Commission and subject to a Conservation Restriction in perpetuity held by the WLCT. The conservation of this parcel adds to a corridor of over 80 acres of protected land between Reed Rd. and Rte. 177.

“This project permanently protects 25-acres of important habitat and expands public access to one of our most visited hiking areas: Forge Pond Conservation Area,” said Ross Moran, WLCT Executive Director. “This is a great example of the Town and the land trust working together strategically to improve the quality of life for local residents.”

After the acquisition of the property by the Town of Westport’s Affordable Housing Trust with support from the Community Preservation Committee, the land trust and the planning board worked jointly to ensure a portion of the future development would be set aside for conservation. All parties worked in tandem, while WLCT provided technical and on-the-ground assistance in addressing environmental concerns onsite. This work was completed in 2018 and the 25-acre riverfront landscape is now indistinguishable from any other white-pine forest in Westport.

“The combination of the new Noquochoke Village development and a corridor of publicly accessible conserved land is an example of the Town getting it right. The Conservation Commission was thrilled to be a part of the project,” said Chairman Paul Joncas. “The commission works hard to ensure a balance of development and preservation of Westport’s vital natural resources.”

Local historian and Chairwoman of the Community Preservation Committee, Betty Slade notes the parcels historic significance, “the property was known as the machine lot for the various mills and factories operating along the river. Several famous historical Southcoast figures held interest in the surrounding area including William Rotch Jr. and the estate of Paul Cuffe.” Today, the remnants of the old mills and river crossings can still be found on the property.

There is a great deal of work ahead to open up the area for future use. WLCT intends to work with the various stakeholders to develop a Forge Pond Conservation Area Master Plan that identifies funding for improved trailhead access and parking. 33-acres owned by WLCT on the opposite bank of the Westport River has also been identified for trail access from Forge Pond Conservation Area—but would require an expensive pedestrian bridge.

“WLCT’s partnership with the Westport Conservation Commission has never been stronger. We share a vision for a premier natural area serving hikers, kayakers, and sportsmen,” said Moran. “If our public/private partnership with the Town is successful at Forge Pond Conservation Area, we are talking about a 70+ acre natural area in a densely populated neighborhood of Town that is underserved in terms of access to open space. There is more work still to be done, but we are on our way. A special thank you to the many Town officials who worked on this project.”

WLCT has partnered with the Town and Commonwealth of Massachusetts to protect natural areas since 1972. For more information about these projects or the Westport Land Conservation Trust, please contact Ross Moran, Executive Director at (508) 636-9228 x 5021 or [ross@westportlandtrust.org](mailto:ross@westportlandtrust.org)

### About the Westport Land Conservation Trust

Since its founding in 1972, the Westport Land Conservation Trust has assisted landowners in protecting more than 4,500 acres in Westport, Massachusetts. WLCT is a private non-governmental organization dedicated to local land conservation on behalf of the Westport community. The organization accepts gifts of land and conservation restrictions on land, and assists farm owners in preserving farmland with agricultural preservation restrictions.