

**Outline for the Hoppers - Birge Pond
Committee's Long Term Plan
March 14, 2002**

(revised April 10, 2003)

- 1) The Mayor's Hoppers – Birge Pond committee fully supports the legally binding referendum (1988) in which the people of Bristol, Ct. overwhelmingly voted (by a margin of 15,252 to 2,736) to preserve the Hoppers – Birge Pond area in a natural, undeveloped state. In keeping with the express intentions of the referendum, the committee strongly recommends against the construction of a golf course or the mining of sand and gravel on the site. The committee also suggests the area should be officially renamed the *Hoppers – Birge Pond Nature Preserve*, and should be granted permanent protection by the City of Bristol.
- 2) The committee recommends the City of Bristol request a free environmental review and inventory of the Hoppers – Birge Pond area by King's Mark (State of CT.). Written proposals for specific studies of the unique geological formations should also be made to the U.S. Geological Survey and to the Geology and Geophysics Dept. at UCONN.
- 3) The committee strongly urges the strict preservation of all historic, geologic, and archaeological sites located within the preserve. The area of the Hoppers is historically significant in that it is crossed by numerous old logging roads, Indian trails, and an old colonial road (Hartford to Litchfield).
- 4) A comprehensive management plan should be developed and implemented through the cooperation of the Park Dept., the Mayor's Hoppers – Birge Pond Committee, and a special conservation committee to be formed for the purpose. Similar sites, such as the Barnes Nature Center, Sessions Woods in Burlington, and the Ledyard Glacial Park, might be studied as effective examples of land management.
- 5) The committee fully supports the recent acquisition of the former Roberts property located next to James P. Casey Road, and encourages its development for active recreational use. Suggestions include: baseball and soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts, a walking trail, dog run, sledding hill, and cross-country skiing trail. Additionally, the committee recommends the following: A) That special care and planning be exercised to ensure the protection and adequate buffering of the Roberts Kettle. B) The former link between the Glacier Trail and Shady Dell Road should be restored so that hikers can complete the trail circuit. C) Access for hikers should be provided from James P. Casey Road. D) A small, educational and interpretive station should be constructed at the main trailhead. E) The possibilities of installing a drinking fountain similar to the one formerly located in Rockwell Park should be explored.
- 6) Other properties adjacent to that owned by the city should be identified and considered for purchase. Of primary importance is the acquisition of the Schaffrick property. The

purchase of this parcel was first recommended in the 1977 Hoppers study and contains the largest kettle-hole, a glacial esker, and one of the most scenic sections of the trail.

- 7) Because of the increasingly heavy use of the preserve by hikers, the committee suggests that all trails be re-marked and a color-coded map printed and made available to the general public. Additionally, specific areas of the trail need to be graded and erosion controls implemented. Information stations similar to those used at Sessions Woods (identifying flora, historical, and geological sites) might also be installed.
- 8) The educational potential of the nature preserve should be further explored and developed. Its use as an “outdoor classroom” (environmental studies, local history, geology, biology, etc.) is perfectly suited to the needs of school children and scouting groups. Local schools and teachers should participate in devising a learning program (to include field trips) for the above studies. Participation by the Board of Education, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other local community groups should also be encouraged.
- 9) Protection of the aquifer underlying the Hoppers should be of prime consideration in any future plans for the area. To help insure a safe and adequate future water supply, it is recommended that the city adopt strict zoning regulations protecting the wooded area and prohibiting mining or the construction of a golf course within the preserve.
- 10) It is recommended that the dredging of Birge Pond be completed as soon as possible and that a final siltation trap on the west side of the pond be installed. Regularly scheduled maintenance of all siltation traps should be strictly adhered to.
- 11) Fishing, including the stocking of the pond with game fish, organized fishing derbies, ice skating, and the use of non-motorized boats or canoes in the pond are all encouraged. A small launching ramp or area should also be built.
- 12) The area at the southern end of the pond should include more picnic tables and be made handicap accessible. Regrading of the parking lot should be carried out as necessary and a regular trash pick-up and cleaning schedule implemented.
- 13) A nature walkway with interpretive stations around the pond should be completed and maintained on an annual basis. Portions of the walkway should be made handicap accessible.
- 14) Security and maintenance issues need to be addressed and evaluated on a regular basis. Stricter enforcement of existing park laws, increased police presence, improved lighting, and measures denying illegal vehicular use of trails are all recommended.
- 15) Promotion of the nature preserve as a place for both active and passive recreation for area families should be encouraged. Of the thousands of visitors to the Hoppers in recent years, nearly all have been favorably impressed by the preserve’s unique beauty and historic significance. Maps of the nature trails, brochures, and other promotional

materials should be made readily available to the general public in order to draw wider attention to the natural wonders Bristol has to offer.

- 16) Placement of a bolder near where the Old Gate House stood. Plaque on the bolder should say something like “Site of the New Departure Mfg. Company Gate House. It controlled 20 million gallons of water used for fire protection and manufacturing”.
- 2) Possible winter use could be a Cross-Country Ski Center. Winding Trails in Farmington, Connecticut is using their area as such. The funds from this could support the Center and other programs.