

# Area of Independence Park listed among top three rare plant sites in state

by C.I. Mahoney

According to Massachusetts Heritage Program botanists, the area surrounding a cluster of ponds in the town's industrial park contains more than 15 rare plant species, making the site one of the top three areas for concern in the state.

Bruce Sorrie and Henry Woolsey, botanists for the Massachusetts Heritage Program, came to Barnstable last week to meet with the Conservation Commission and discuss their research findings. The MNHP was established in 1978 by the Department of Environmental Management and the Nature Conservancy, a national non-profit land conservation organization. The purpose of the organization, according to their literature, is to "create within state government a systematic and cost-effective method for conserving Massachusetts' most underprotected biological resources. Areas of interest include rare plants, animals, plant communities, and aquatic habitats.

Town conservation officials invited the two botanists to speak at their meeting last week as part of their effort to pinpoint which land in Barnstable should be protected from development. Petery Ryner and David Rouse, planning coordinator and conservation officer for the town, are now working on mapping areas of utmost concern. They say within

six to eight weeks they should know which land they would want to see kept for open space.

The issue of preserving open space in the town is a primary goal of town planners and conservationists alike, and has been given high priority in a proposed master plan for the town prepared by Lozano, White and Associates.

Botanists Sorrie and Woolsey said that the work they have done in Barnstable is "preliminary." They presented a map of the town to the ConCom which showed twelve primary sites where they had found rare plant or animal life. "We can be quite confident that the areas designated on the map are certainly the areas of prime interest," they told the commission.

The area which concerned them most out of the eleven sites on the map has already been the cause of controversy between Independence Park and town officials. The pondshores of Little Israel, Mary Dunn, Lamson and Israel Ponds, which includes about 200 acres of park land, is considered by the state group to be environmentally sensitive.

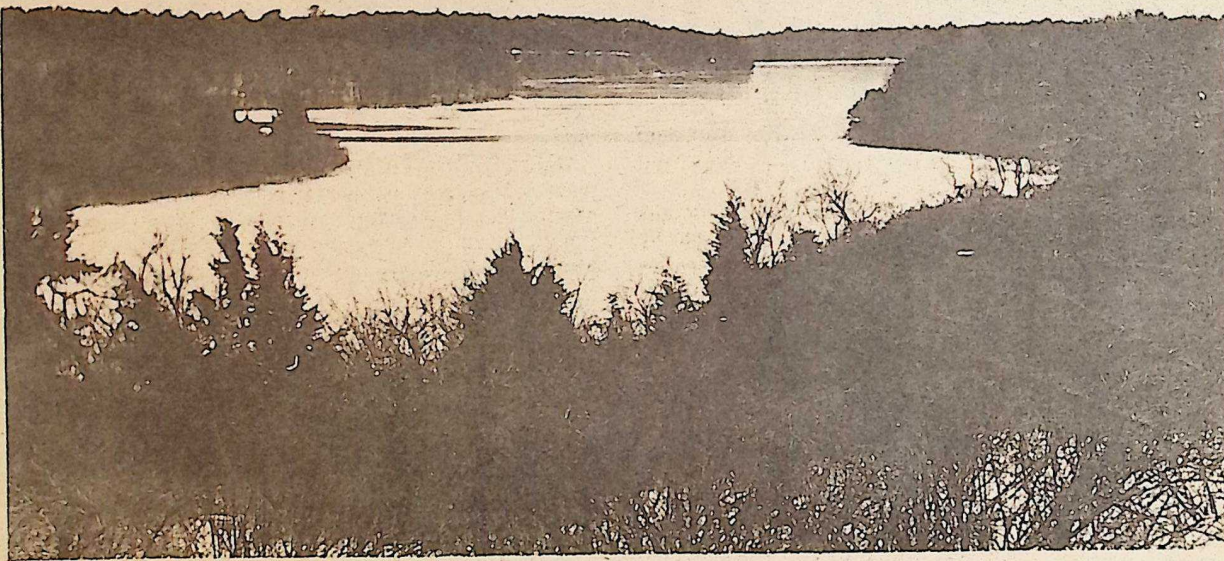
One pond, Little Israel, is in the section of the park west of Mary Dunn Road targeted for more stringent zoning regulations recently proposed by town water officials in an effort to

protect a sensitive well-recharge area. The other three ponds, plus two unnamed ponds with similar plant life are in an area east of Mary Dunn Road.

This entire area is just south of the proposed route for the extension of Independence Drive. David Chase, vice president in charge of development for the park, describes the pond area as being "considerably south of the proposed route." But both Tom Mullen, head of the village of Barnstable's water company, and David Rouse, conservation agent for the town, say they would like to see the road extension constructed farther north, running parallel to Route 6. Although Rouse says land within 100 feet from the ponds is protected from development by the Wetlands Protection Act, if the road were constructed farther to the north, drainage from the road could be directed away from the ponds, and the road would be that much farther away from the wells.

Tom Mullen concurred. He commented, "They think it's great to run a road through scenic land, but once the road is in, it won't be scenic anymore." He said that for aesthetic, botanical, water conservation, and general environmental

Continued on page 2



Mystic Lake in Marstons Mills, formed by glaciers at the end of the Ice Age, is one of the environmentally

sensitive areas outlined by the Mass. Natural Heritage Program. (Photo by Pat Germani)

## ... Rare plant sites

Continued from page 1

reasons, the road should go to the north, where, he added, the land is more developable.

Mr. Chase said that although he had not seen the map, he had been contacted by the Natural Heritage people about a year ago by letter, and later a representative of that organization visited him and suggested that the land be set aside as a conservation area. Chase said that as a representative of a development corporation that had invested huge amounts of money, listening to the woman's suggestion that they not develop one to two hundred acres of land because of "what she called 'rare weeds'" was incredible. "It's ridiculous," he said. He added that "This stuff pops up over and over," and he wishes that those who are concerned about the park's environment would read the park's research report from 1964, which Chase says was well thought out. "There are large areas of land set aside here for conservation purposes," he said.

Chase added that his plan for the Independence Road extension would subdivide park property. The first set of preliminary plans that the park submitted to the planning board for review were now being redrawn by his engineer to comply with planning board suggestions. The road, he said, will be narrowed from 100 feet to 80 feet, and there will be "different bends" in the road, to protect wetlands. The new preliminary plans should be submitted to the planning board within the next week or two, he said.

Marstons Mills, which according to the proposed master plan, will be heavily developed in the next few years, also had

several sites targeted for ecological concern because of rare plants and unique ecological conditions. The Cape Cod Airport at the corner of Route 149 and Race Lane, and the Moraine Outwash, a plane area south of the moraine, a high ridge area created by glaciers at the end of the Ice Age, were both on the map, as was Hamblin Pond.

Many Marstons Mills residents have been upset by master plan predictions that the village was in for heavy development, and object to a suggestion that a new "village center" be created at the corner of Route 149 and Race Lane. Lifelong resident of Marstons Mills Esther Williams, a member of the newly formed Village Association, commented that although there is no oceanfront property in Marstons Mills, there are many ponds which must be protected.

According to David Rouse, the area in Marstons Mills south of the moraine known as the Danforth property is "very developable" because of the flat terrain, but the town sees this as a unique ecological community, with potential for recreational use. "Ideally," Rouse said, "it would be great to add that to the Barnstable Conservation Area (just north of the Danforth property)."

Rouse said at last week's meeting that "Plant and animal communities will . . . be destroyed by unplanned development. Open space is not a plan to stop development; it's a plan to guide development away from environmentally sensitive areas." The Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program has helped by providing valuable information about the town's native flora and fauna, he said.