

Metcalf-Franklin Farm

Conservation and Management Plan

2022



Town of Cumberland
Jeffrey Mutter, Mayor

Cumberland Planning Department
Cumberland Water Department
The Historic Metcalf-Franklin Farm Preservation Association

June 9, 2022

Executive Summary

The Metcalf/Franklin Farm is an important legacy of Cumberland and Rhode Island's history. The site was saved from being developed as house lots when the Town of Cumberland (with financial assistance from the RI Department of Environmental Management and RI Water Resources Board Water Quality Protection Fund) purchased the fields and Barns in 1994 to protect the quality of the Town's water supply, and the Farmhouse and garage in 2005. The Town's Conservation Commission spearheaded this effort.

The Historic Metcalf-Franklin Farm Preservation Association (HMFFPA), the successor to the Friends of the Franklin Farm Management Committee established in the 2006 Conservation and Management Plan, is a volunteer-based 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and oversees day to day operations. The land on which it resides is community open space.

Located on 67.38 acres on both sides of Abbott Run Valley Road and west of Rawson (historically known as Bowens) Pond, Franklin Farm includes a 19th century barn, 20th century farmhouse and garage, 21st century community garden, and existing stone walls, open fields and pastures, and woodland. The farm core where the buildings are located contains most of the historic farming activities and buildings and the outer acreage contains hayfields, woodlands and hiking trails.

Franklin Farm preserves an agricultural heritage that spans several centuries, including New England farming technologies and organizational patterns of farm design that have evolved from organic and scattered to designed and formalized. This significant historical site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

The Town intends to work closely with HMFFPA to preserve and farm the land, provide educational and celebratory programs and events, and restore and adaptively reuse its structures so that present and future generations can appreciate Cumberland's agricultural heritage.

This plan updates the 2017 Conservation and Management Plan. The purpose of this Plan is to confirm the Farm is to be used to promote historic preservation, education, passive recreation, agriculture, conservation and community involvement. The Plan specifies ten Objectives/Action Items:

1. Allowed and Prohibited Land Uses
2. Restoration and Adaptive reuse of the Farm House
3. Garden/cultivation
4. Restoration and Adaptive reuse of the Barns
5. Water Service Facility
6. Signage
7. Parking
8. Property Maintenance
9. The Town of Cumberland Will Continue its Support of Franklin Farm
10. The Historic Metcalf/Franklin Farm Preservation Association Will Continue its Excellent Work

Introduction



This plan updates the 2017-22 Conservation and Management Plan. Since 2006, much happened:

- * In 2007, the Historic Metcalf-Franklin Farm Preservation Association (HMFFPA) was founded for the purpose of protecting and enhancing this historic site and to continue its agricultural tradition. Partnering with the Town, HMFFPA has established a strong volunteer base, educational programming and celebratory events for children and adults alike, produced thousands of pounds of produce annually donated to area food banks and soup kitchens, and helped plan, fund and execute important historic restoration projects.
- * In 2008, the Farmhouse was re-roofed and in 2010 the original Barn and Dairy Barn addition were re-roofed, a \$96,000 project funded by HMFFPA and the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC)
- * In 2015 the Cumberland Water Department (CWD), under a consent decree with the RI Department of Environmental Management, started the process of siting two new wells in the East Field. This new source of drinking water became operational in 2021 with HMFFPA's input on the well facility location and design.
- * In July 2015, the Town adopted a Master Plan for the Farmhouse, which was funded with an \$8000 grant from RIHPHC, matched by the Cumberland Historic District Commission (\$6000), HMFFPA (\$4500) and in-kind services from the Town. This plan focuses on the restoration and rehabilitation specifications for the adaptive re-use of the Farmhouse.
- * In January 2016, the Town was awarded an RIHPHC State Preservation Grant of \$150,000, matched by \$150,000 from the Town, which enabled the completion the architectural specifications for the restoration and adaptive reuse of the Farmhouse and complete Phase I restoration (exterior, weatherproofing, carpentry, thermal and moisture protection, doors and windows).
- * Cumberland's 2016 Comprehensive Plan cites the historical importance of Franklin Farm, recognizes the conservation and management partnership between the Town and HMFFPA, and references the Farmhouse restoration initiative (see Appendix B).
- * In 2022, a \$75,000 RIHPHC grant, with a \$75,000 Town match will further bring the Farmhouse into ADA compliance, along with adding restrooms on the first floor and associated plumbing, electrical and fire code updates.

Objectives/Action Items

1. Allowed and Prohibited Land Uses

Allowed Uses

*Agriculture	Community non-profit gardening, haying fields, farm animals
*Recreation	Walking, hiking, jogging; snow shoeing, cross-country skiing, bird watching, picnicking, pets on leash, metal detecting, geocaching
*Farmhouse	meetings, museum exhibition, education, support of agricultural activities, historic curator apartment
*Events/rentals	HMFFPA events. Social events, weddings, fundraisers, film/photo shoots subject to approval by Town and HMFFPA
*Water supply	Cumberland Water Department is to ensure a quality water supply

Prohibited Uses

- *Active recreation: mountain bikes, dirt bikes/ATV's
- *Free range pets
- *Any uses not listed are prohibited unless approved by the Town and HMFPPA
- * Per RI Department of Health, within 400 feet of wellheads no building or Fertilizers. The use of lime is permitted

2. Restoration and Adaptive Reuse of the Farm House



Phase 1 improvements. (exterior, weatherproofing, carpentry, thermal and moisture protection, doors and windows) were scheduled completed in 2018. Phase 2 improvements will include HVAC, electric, mechanical, interior repairs and finish work. The Town intends to proceed with this work with a Champlin Foundation grant secured in late 2021.

Interior restoration and rehabilitation of the Farm House is based on the following adaptive reuse objectives:

The first floor is to be: a museum of Town and agricultural history; accessible by the public during hours of operation; ADA compliant; and available for meetings of Town boards and local organizations with an interest in Franklin Farm. The display and interpretation of historic artifacts, papers and exhibits shall be included.

An apartment for a historic caretaker shall be created on the building's second floor. A small kitchen shall be added and compliance with all building and fire codes shall be met. In consideration of historic preservation expertise, agricultural knowledge and management services, the caretaker's rent shall reflect the value of and agreed-upon scope of ongoing management, maintenance and repair services provided, and the application of rent to the cost of heat, water and electrical service. Preserve Rhode Island runs a historic curator program that works to restore the state's historic structures. Preserve Rhode Island should be consulted in determining the optimal program for Franklin Farm. Working with HMFFPA, the Town will develop the terms and conditions of a rental agreement, advertise the opportunity, and select a successful candidate through an interview process.

The Farmhouse garage shall be used for HUMFFPA storage.

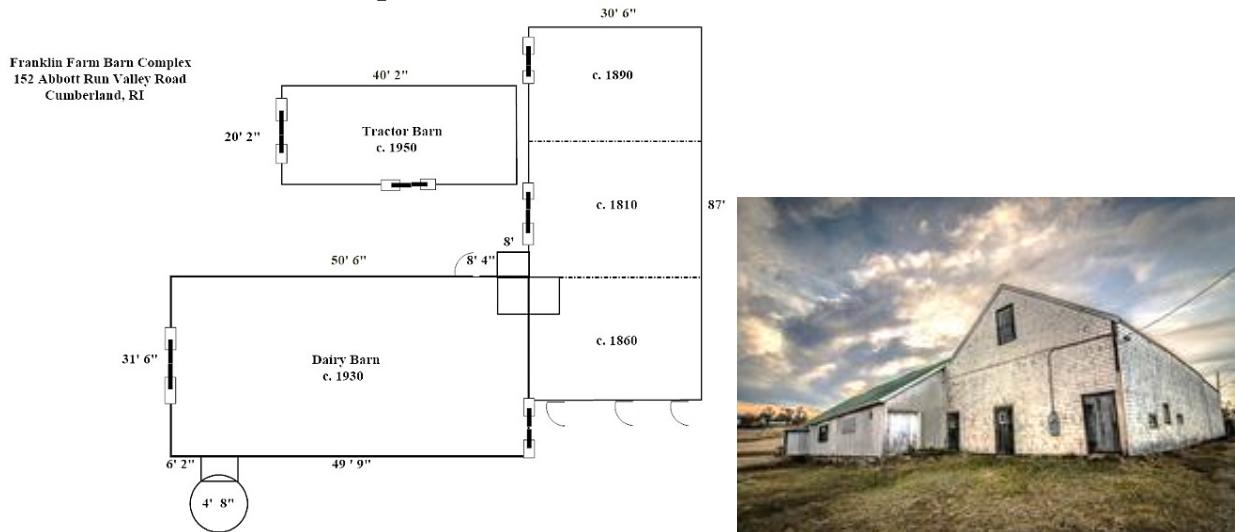
3. Garden/cultivation



Photo: Franklin Farm Facebook page

Agriculture. HMFFPA shall continue to cultivate the garden areas as a community using natural gardening methods to produce vegetables and other products to distribute to local food banks and to sell at the farm stand to contribute to the sustainability of the Farm. Agricultural best practices shall be employed. In addition to having volunteers work on the community garden, the garden shall be incorporated into educational programs. There shall be no commercial use of the garden. However, subject to Town approval, HMFFPA may partner with other community garden non-profit organizations to increase agricultural productivity. The present 1.7 acres of garden areas may be expanded to up to three acres within the west field area. The remainder of the farmland will be used for hayfields and the protection and production of drinking water. Community-supported agriculture (CSA) may be considered, subject to Town and HMFFPA approval.

4. Restoration and Adaptive Reuse of the Barns



Barn dimensions, photo: Franklin Farm Facebook page

Barn Use. The original barn (ca. 1810, 1860, 1890), and dairy extension (ca. 1930) is a remarkably intact historically significant structure. It shall be restored subject to RIHPHC approval and adaptively reused to support HMFFPA's agricultural activities, storage of farm/field maintenance equipment, a farm repair workshop, to display artifacts and exhibitions related to farming and local history, and to provide educational opportunities and meeting space for children and adults alike. The architectural firm Haynes DeBoer Associates just completed a Master Plan for the preservation and restoration of the barn, their costs assumed by HMFFPA.

The tractor barn (ca. 1950) is very much less historically significant. Depending on an agreement between the Town, HMFFPA and RIHPHC this structure could be relocated to a new site or demolished and a new structure built, so as to restore the original integrity of the Barn layout around 1930.



Original Barn interior: dairy extension (l) (ca. 1950); original section (center) (ca 1810); second floor/rafters (r)

5. Water Service Building Consistent with its mandate to protect water quality and ensure adequate supply, and consistent with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the Cumberland Water Department broke ground on the new Franklin Farm Water Facility in August of 2020 and was put into service on January 19, 2022. The facility is located in the east field of the Metcalf-Franklin Farm. The facility consists of a, 28' x 58' Treatment Plant that provides disinfection, PH adjustment for corrosion control, and fluoride for healthy teeth. Well #2 produces 250 gallons per minute, (365,000 gallons per day) and Well #3 produces 500 gallons per minute, (730,000 gallons per day), for a total of 1,095,000 gallons per day.

6. Signage. Signs already installed by HMFFPA are of appropriate size and design quality for this historic site. Upon completion of the exterior restoration of the Farmhouse, a historic plaque was installed on that structure noting it is the “Metcalf/Franklin Farmhouse (ca. 1857)” and “National Historic Register Site”. Small scale signs for directions, parking and exhibit labels shall be designed in the same style as the present signs. A Blackstone Valley National Corridor sign should be installed at the appropriate time.

As there is evidence of ATV usage and apparent erosion of the trail access to the fields, signs prohibiting motorized vehicles should be installed. Signs specifying legal “no dumping” as well as allowed and prohibited activities should be installed. All other permanent signage shall be for educational/interpretation purposes, and are subject approval by the Town, along with flags and monuments are subject to approval by the Town.

7. Parking The present parking configuration seems to be working well. Additional parking areas shall be provided in the barn area and in designated areas as necessary and during the annual Harvest Festival event. Small scale directional and parking signs are allowed. The strategic installation of crushed gravel may be desirable if parking and circulation areas become excessively rutted or eroded. Under no circumstances will asphalt pavement be allowed.

8. Property Maintenance Working cooperatively, the Town is responsible for the general maintenance of the Franklin Farm Farmhouse, Garage and Barn complex. HMFFPA may be authorized by the Town to perform minor repairs. HMFFPA will continue to manage alien invasive vegetation species. Stone walls on the entire Farm shall be preserved. The Town will respond promptly to remediate any property violations such as dumping, removing stones from historic stone walls, and cutting down trees on Town property.

9. The Town of Cumberland Will Continue its Support of Franklin Farm



As the owner of Franklin Farm, the Town's role in the conservation and management of the Farm is to serve as the fiduciary interest. The Town will support HMFFPA by applying for and managing grants; drafting and promulgating plans and authorizations/appropriations of Town funds; managing capital projects specified in this Plan; performing occasional repairs and improvements, authorizing contractual agreements such as required; supporting involvement in HMFFPA activities and policy-making; and enforcement of this Plan's action items. The Town will not install incompatible uses such as cell towers or a composting facility at the Farm.

10. The Historic Metcalf/Franklin Farm Preservation Association will Continue to Restore, Preserve and Protect the Site's Homestead and Agricultural Heritage

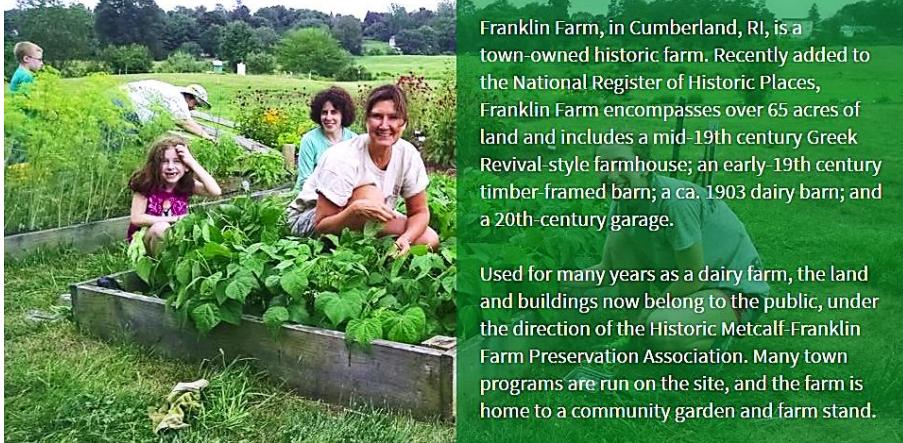


Franklin Farm Association Facebook page



Partnerships and Programs. The Town and HMFFPA have been working together since 2006 to protect and enhance this important historic site. HMFFPA issues an annual report to the Town Council on its activities.

HMFFPA (<http://www.franklinfarmri.org/>) oversees several activities throughout the year that promote hands-on experience in farming and agricultural science, educational programs to promote understanding of the local flora and fauna, and a historical understanding of the importance of the agricultural lifestyle in Rhode Island's history.



Franklin Farm Association website

The goal of the Association and the Town of Cumberland is to restore the property into a working farm and education center for the community to study agriculture, animal husbandry, environmental science, wildlife conservation and historic preservation.

The garden has become a gathering place for people who support locally grown agriculture. Led by the HMFFPA Volunteer Garden Committee, each year volunteers of all ages from Cumberland and across southern New England come together to prepare the soil, plant, tend, harvest and transport farm fresh, naturally grown vegetables to the RI Food Bank and local food pantries. Activities begin in the winter months with the Garden Committee planning meetings. In late April, a Clean Up and Garden Preparations Day is offered. Seeds are planted by the local school children. The garden provides the community with opportunities for learning, promotes the social health, community engagement and enjoyment of beautiful vistas.

Each year HMFFPA members along with the Garden Committee Coordinators and Tractor Team lay out the garden, prepare the beds, install the irrigation system and plant seedlings. Clean up and garden prep takes place the last two weekends in April. Annual Planting Day takes place in May. Schoolchildren help plant zucchini, butternut squash and cucumber seeds. In addition to planting rows and rows of crops, they experience the wonders of farm life, including baby chicks, rabbits and goats. They are also treated to a hike and a hands-on history lesson in the historic barn.

Tasks in May and June include preparation for the new seeds and seedlings for the summer to come. Walking rows are laid, tomato cages put in place, and some TLC for any plants that need it. Tending Nights begin in late May and run through the end of September.

A 900 Sq Ft No-till Garden pilot program was installed in 2021 to explore maximizing vegetable production while minimizing environmental risks such as carbon emissions along with the reduction of maintenance requirements consistent with more traditional gardening practices. Due to the initial success, the footprint was doubled to 1800 sq ft for the 2022 season.

Visitors and groups that otherwise would never have the opportunity to take part in a worthy cause like the garden have included students and staff from the San Miguel School, Woonsocket Youth Resource Center, the Spurwink School; college students from Brown, Johnson and Wales, Providence College, Community College of Rhode Island, Bryant University and RIC; children and adults from the Boys and Girls Clubs, scouting organizations and Senior Citizens. The HMFFPA has also hosted church organizations from Pennsylvania, Illinois and Connecticut, as well as business and fraternal organizations.

Seasonal Harvest. The HMFFPA has developed Franklin Farm into the Rhode Island Community Food Bank's largest volunteer organization contributor of vegetables. As of September, 2021 HMFFPA has grown and donated 440,000 pounds of fresh vegetables for the RI Community Food Bank and local food pantries since 2005.



Franklin Farm Facebook Page

Food banks and local agencies assisting Rhode Island's neediest have come to depend on Franklin Farm's produce. So continues a chapter in Franklin Farm's agricultural tradition first begun on the site generations ago.

Programs and activities. Franklin Farm plays host to fields trips and various educational programs structured around teaching students the basic understandings of gardening, environmental science, agricultural history, and ecology. The elementary school field trips to the farm have averaged over 300 students per year since 2010. The HMFFPA has led the "Outdoor Learning Plant Day" program since 2005. This event allows students to become familiar with the vegetation of Franklin Farm and how farming relates to the history of the Town they live in. For over a decade now, students have been involved in Franklin Farm educational programs, allowing for real world learning outside of the classroom.

Educational Partnerships

HMFFPA has partnered with staff and students of the Johnson & Wales University College of Food Innovation & Technology to provide space for their Sustainable Food Systems program. This college course is an educational and practical hands-on instruction program in growing, harvesting, and preparing farm fresh vegetables for consumption.

HMFFPA has initiated collaborations with the Cumberland library, Woonsocket Career and Technical Center, and Bryant University, developing partnerships expanding Franklin Farm's programming and volunteer projects assisting with the restoration and adaptive reuse of the historic structures. HMFFPA intends to pursue additional partnerships which provide opportunities to teach future generations the benefits of stewardship of historical resources. HMFFPA programs and activities include but are not limited to:

Farm Program. Children aged 5-12 explore the Farm and meet some of our new residents and old friends. Each day explorers discover a different area of farm life: agriculture, chicken biology and care, pollination, vermicomposting and wildlife found at the farm. Children journal their experiences, do an art project and enjoy games.

Pond Program. Children learn about the organisms that live in and around a summer pond system, encountering dozens of species as they explore the pond and the surrounding meadow. They will observe animal behaviors and have the opportunity to gather and record data, form opinions, test their theories, listen to each other, re-test their theories, and draw new conclusions about life near a pond. This is a novel experience in playing outside, making new friends, and building background knowledge in the life sciences.

Historic Barn Tours.



HMFFPA website

The historic barn tours allow visitors to experience the skills necessary for different periods of barn design and construction (early 1800's to early 1900's) as well as appreciate the various tasks and chores - for both adults and children - necessary for the self-sufficient raising and caring of vegetables, animals and livestock. Children especially learn about the range of tasks and responsibilities necessary to support a farming family and community.

Farm Festival and Tractor Show

The Annual Harvest Festival and Tractor Show gives the community a chance to experience the beauty and history of this unique property. The Festival promotes opportunities to see what agricultural life in 1900's Rhode Island was like, support local vendors, and sample food from local food trucks.



Eagle Scout and Gold Award Projects

Scouting troops and packs have been supporters of the farm since the HMFFPA's inception. Scouts have provided assistance with historic preservation projects, and created walking paths, river crossings and informational hiking trails. Scouts have also helped expand our outdoor community experiences with picnic benches, fences, and a Little Lending Library.

Colonial Garden.

The Colonial Garden consists of various herbs, fruits and vegetables that were characteristic of the Colonial period. The educational programs focus on the growing conditions as well as the medicinal, culinary, and household uses of these plants.

Artifact documentation, protection, display and interpretation

HMFFPA staff will provide supervision, documentation and proper care of any artifact found on the Franklin Farm property. These will be available for display in the future Franklin Farm Farmhouse museum as necessary and appropriate.

Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7mEHoE5HfY>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cu2OGVkQeTg>

HMFFPA Grants and Donations since 2005. Between 2005 and 2022, HMFFPA has received over \$813,000 dollars in grants/donations and in-kind services (source: HMFFPA)

11. Land Conservation As the Franklin Farm land is zoned Agricultural and may not have any formal land preservation protection, the Town should take action such as rezoning it Open Space and/or enacting an easement which precludes uses that would be inconsistent with farming, passive recreation and water supply best practices.

Appendix A: Metcalf-Franklin Farm National Register Nomination:

http://www.preservation.ri.gov/pdfs_zips_downloads/national_pdfs/cumberland/cumb_abbott-run-valley-road-142_metcalf-franklin-farm.pdf

Appendix B: 2016 Comprehensive Plan

Action Item C14. “The Town should continue to work toward the preservation and rehabilitation of the barn and farmhouse at Franklin Farm as well as Town Hall. These are two vitally important Town owned historic properties that have received RIHPHC grant funding over the years and should continue to be a priority for town historic preservation efforts.”

Text Reference. “The Franklin Farm is a multi-century surviving farm that is important to the history of Cumberland and also to the State of Rhode Island. The Town of Cumberland owns Franklin Farm and the Historic Metcalf-Franklin Farm Preservation Association (HMFFPA) oversees day to day operations on site with volunteers and the land which it resides on is community open space. This site is located on Abbott Run Valley Road, east of Route 114, and just west of Rawson Pond. It retains agricultural heritage and human activity over several centuries including a 19th century barn, 20th century farmhouse and garage, 21st century community garden, and existing stone walls, open fields and pastures, and woodland. The site is approximately 65 acres in size and the historic farm core where the buildings are located contains most of the historic farming activities and buildings and the outer acreage contains the woodland and hiking trails.

This farm represents a continuum of farming activities and farming lifestyle that coincides with the growth and development of Cumberland, farming technologies in New England, and the organizational patterns of farm design and its evolution – from organic and scattered to designed and formalized. This is a significant historical site and the Town of Cumberland wishes to preserve it for the public so that future generations will appreciate the heritage of agriculture

In 2016 the Town received a State Preservation grant from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission in the amount of \$150,000 for phase 1 of the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Franklin Farm farmhouse. The Town is matching this grant with \$150,000 for a total project balance of \$300,000 for phase 1 of the project which entails the architecture and engineering of the exterior and interior work to make the farmhouse a town museum and meeting space as well as the completion of all the exterior work. Phase 2 will consist of the final interior work to finish the project. Phase 1 of the Franklin Farm farmhouse rehabilitation project began in June of 2016 and is scheduled to be complete by June 2018. Phase 2 of the project will then commence. It is expected that by 2020 the farmhouse will be completely rehabilitated and open as a Town museum and meeting space as described in the 2006 Management Plan for the property as well as the 2015 Master Plan for Franklin Farm.”

Appendix C: Natural Land Conditions

Wetlands & Streams. The property contains a significant portion of pasture which is not suitable for tillage as well as a portion of the stream that runs from A.P 24, Lot 409 across the homestead property and under Abbott Run Valley Road into Rawson Pond.

Soils. The Soil Survey of Rhode Island (1981) shows the following soils as present on the Franklin Farm property: Paxton Fine Sandy Loam (PaB); Merrimac Sandy Loam (MmA and MmB); Sudbury Sandy Loam (Ss); a small area of Hinckley Gravelly Sandy Loam, rolling (HkC); and a small area of Hinckley Gravelly Sandy Loam, hilly (HkD).

Rare Species. There are no species or natural communities listed by the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program as endangered, threatened, or of special concern on the Franklin Farm Property.

Efforts should be made to encourage those species which, after such extensive surrounding suburban development, now are even more dependent on this property for their survival. However, Rawson Pond, directly east and in close proximity to Franklin Farm, is home to a population of the Spatterdock Darner (*Aeshna mutata*), a dragonfly listed as Special Concern. This species uses the fields at Franklin Farm for foraging, particularly in the first week after emergence.

Bird Habitat. The Farm's open fields are appropriate for the declining populations of grassland birds such as Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) and Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*). These habitats are being preserved by adjusting the mowing schedule in the designated area to once per year, eliminating the spring mowing, to accommodate the nesting and young-rearing timeframe.

Vernal Pool. A vernal pool in the wooded section of the east field hosts Wood Frogs (*Rana sylvatica*) and Spotted Salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*).

Scenic Integrity. The rural character of this historic property should be maintained by allowing the growth of quality native trees on the periphery of the property. Invasive species that negatively impact native vegetation should be removed.

Appendix D: RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission Easements

Barn Easement 11/6/2008. In consideration of a \$48,000 RIHPHC grant toward the cost of replacing the Barn's roof, the Town agreed to a 25-year easement which precludes the demolition of the Barn, and states that the interior and exterior of the Barn and grounds cannot be altered in any way without RIHPHC consent. The Barn is to be publicly accessible at least 12 days per year.

Farmhouse Easement 5/26/16. In consideration of a \$150,000 RIHPHC grant toward the cost of restoring the exterior of the Farmhouse and drafting of architectural and engineering restoration plans, the Town agreed to a 25-year easement which precludes the demolition of the Farmhouse, and states that the interior and exterior of the Farmhouse and grounds cannot be altered in any way without RIHPHC consent. Materials used in the restoration require RIHPHC approval. The Farmhouse is to have public access at least 12 days per year.