

FACT SHEET

CENTER FOR ACTIVE LIVING PROJECT

Bare Cove Park History & Site Process

Bare Cove Park History

- The Federal Lands to Parks Program (“FLP Land”) is a portion of the former Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot and training station, which operated from 1903 to 1961. The Ammunition Depot included additional land that was conveyed by the United States to the Town for other purposes and to private developers. The full Ammunition Depot included over 200 structures and a system of railroad tracks and roads.
- The town of Hingham acquired Bare Cove Park in 1972 from the Federal Lands to Parks Program. The town of Hingham has been the steward of this property for over 50 years.
- The deed to the town designated the use as “public park and public recreation”. Approximately 421 acres (90%) of the FLP Land is the public park known as Bare Cove Park. Approximately 46 acres (10%) of the FLP Land is used for active and passive public recreation, including Lynch Field, Carlson Fields, the Bare Cove Fire Museum and the South Shore Model Railway Club.
- Bare Cove Park is the “public park” use between the gates at Sheltry Path and the end of Bare Cove Park Drive. The “public recreation” area is the land outside the gates, including Lynch Field, Carlson Fields, the Bare Cove Fire Museum and the South Shore Model Railway Club and the land surrounding those uses.
- The areas outside the Park, including baseball and soccer fields, skate park, the fire and model train buildings, AND the proposed space for the New Center for Active Living, are the “public recreation” areas of the property.
- The HCAL Site constitutes only 1.2% of Hingham’s FLP Land in the public recreation area, and even less when factoring in the other 33± acres of contiguous open space. Approximately 0.5 acre of the HCAL Site is previously disturbed by a pre-existing Naval Ammunition Depot building (Building #41) and its surroundings. Building #41 contains hazardous materials, such as asbestos and lead paint. This project will result in the demolition and clean-up of that site and replacement of the existing building.

Article 97

- Article 97 of the Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution establishes a right to a clean environment for the citizens of the Commonwealth. Land subject to Article 97 cannot be used for other purposes or disposed of without a two-thirds roll call vote of the Legislature. The Commonwealth has also adopted a statute (MGL c. 3, §5A – the “Act”) which codifies the requirements and process for submission to the legislature of petitions to authorize uses on Article 97 land. Under the Act, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) must review alternatives analyses and other environmental information about the project site and any proposed replacement land. Then EOEEA reviews and makes a determination regarding the natural resource value of the Article 97 land and replacement land. The Secretary of EOEEA oversees all of the Commonwealth’s environmental and natural resource agencies and departments.
- The 2025 Town Meeting authorized the designation of approximately 6.847 acres near Plymouth River School directly abutting 53.48 acres of existing conservation land currently held by the Hingham Conservation Commission. This land is currently under the custody of the School Committee and therefore is not protected land. If the HCAL project proceeds, then care, custody and control of this parcel will be transferred to the Conservation Commission and will be protected as Article 97 land.

Article 97

- The 2025 Town Meeting voted by a two-thirds majority to authorize the Select Board to file a petition for Article 97 approval. The Town has submitted to EOEEA and the Massachusetts legislature all information required under the Act. Materials can be found at Article 97 Submission Tracker (File No. A97_017_131). The legislature's Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government reviewed the Town's petition and public comment and voted the petition favorably out of Committee. The legislation passed through both the House and Senate and was signed by the Lt. Governor on February 6, 2026.

Area of Critical Environmental Concerns (ACEC)

- The site is located near the outside perimeter, and is less than 0.5%, of a 950 acre ACEC designated in 1982 to recognize the coastal resource area along the Back River. Construction of the HCAL is permitted in the ACEC. An ACEC designation requires a look at how a project may impact the ACEC, not if it can be constructed.
- A professional wetlands scientist reviewed the HCAL's potential impact on the ACEC. The findings include a determination that the proposed HCAL site activity is located along the outside perimeter of the ACEC, the project will impact less than 0.5% of the 950-acre ACEC area, the proposed work area is not located in an area of tidal influence, and the closest tidal mean high-water line is located more than 0.27-miles from the proposed limit of disturbance.
- The wetland scientist concluded that the HCAL project ***“does not demonstrate the potential to adversely affect”*** the ACEC. In the EOEEA letter, dated October 3, 2025, referenced above, the Secretary noted that the EEA has reviewed and accepted the wetlands scientist's analysis.

Is the site a wildlife Sanctuary?

- No. In the 1980s Town Meeting voted to authorize the selectmen to seek wildlife sanctuary designation for the FLP Land. This must be established pursuant to a state statute. However, the land never received that designation from the state. This was confirmed in 2016 by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game (which includes the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife who oversees such designations). The FLP Land has been referred to in recent years with this designation (including a sign installed in 2004) based on the mis-belief that it had been designated when in fact it had not.
- Notably, while all forested areas support some wildlife, the Natural Resource Site Analysis Report for the HCAL site generated through EOEEA reports that none of the HCAL site acreage includes Aquatic Core Habitat, Wetland Core Habitat, Forest Core Habitat, or Vernal Pool Core Habitat. In addition, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation Service issued a determination that the project site would have no effect on endangered species or any threatened species.

Summary

The HCAL site sits on the FLP Land known as Bare Cove Park in the area which is designated for “public park and public recreation”. The HCAL site constitutes only 1.2% of Hingham's FLP Land in the public recreation area. A professional wetlands scientist reviewed the HCAL's potential impact on the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and concluded the HCAL project “does not demonstrate the potential to adversely affect” the ACEC. In the EOEEA letter, dated October 3, 2025, the Secretary notes that the EEA has reviewed and accepted the wetland scientist's analysis. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation Service issued a determination that the project site would have no effect on endangered species or any threatened species.

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