



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®**  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
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# SAVE SLOPER POND



## YMCA MISSION

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

## YMCA CAMP SLOPER CREDO

Welcome to YMCA Camp Sloper. Here, new experiences are introduced and lasting memories are never forgotten. We reach out to the child in everyone and build character in the leaders of tomorrow. We change lives, build smiles and provide an environment for people to grow. Welcome to YMCA Camp Sloper; love it, share it and preserve it for the next generation.

## MASTER PLAN VISION

### Day Camp Program

YMCA Camp Sloper's vision for the Day Camp program is to provide the highest quality programs and services for 800-1000 children in the greater Southington-Cheshire service area. The Day Camp program shall remain the focal point and feature program of YMCA Camp Sloper.

### Outdoor Center Programs

YMCA Camp Sloper's vision is to have the local school systems, community organizations, businesses and corporations take advantage of the Facility Rental, Teambuilding and Environmental Education programs offered at YMCA Camp Sloper.



### YMCA Membership and Community Enhancements

YMCA Camp Sloper's vision for YMCA Membership and Community Enhancements is to provide both our YMCA members and community members with unique programming opportunities and options to utilize the outdoor resources of the YMCA Camp Sloper Outdoor Center.

### Volunteer Programs

YMCA Camp Sloper's vision for a comprehensive Volunteer Program is to provide the community with multiple volunteer opportunities for all ages and ability levels and to continue enhancements to the facility and programs through the efforts of our volunteers.



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## **Thank you!**

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to YMCA Camp Sloper Outdoor Center, a program center of the Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs utilized by members, guests, families, companies, churches, civic organizations, schools and of course campers. Our Day Camp program stands proud as our flag ship program and serves approximately 4,600 campers each summer, providing them with the opportunity to build self confidence, develop leadership skills, learn values, be active, make new friends and learn an appreciation for nature and the great outdoors. In addition, YMCA Camp Sloper reaches thousands of other children, teens and adults through our environmental education programs, team building, facility rentals and special events each year.

This beautiful facility consists of 143 acres of forests, fields and streams. The centerpiece of the property is the 19-acre Sloper Pond which is used for swimming, boating and fishing. Surrounding the pond are miles of marked trails and carefully placed pavilions, program amenities and other structures that help us fulfill our mission.





Unfortunately Sloper Pond, like many ponds, has its challenges. It has been shrinking in size and depth over time, which is the natural progression of a pond. Our campers, members and guests would all agree Sloper Pond is a valuable component of YMCA Camp Sloper Outdoor Center! It is our responsibility to maintain this beautiful asset and secure it for generations to come. We hope that you will take the time to read this valuable informational booklet to learn more about the history of the YMCA Camp Sloper Outdoor Center and what can be done to Save Sloper Pond.



## CHAPTER ONE

# AN INVALUABLE GIFT

*"For almost as long as I can remember Sloper Pond has been the crown jewel of the YMCA Camp Sloper property....We as a YMCA and a community are so fortunate to have this beautiful property....Sloper Pond must be preserved as the focal point of the Sloper property, so that further generations can enjoy its beauty."*

**-Ralph Mann**





How did the Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs come by such a wonderful piece of property? It was received as a gift through the generosity of Cornelia Sloper Neal upon her death in 1949. It was specified in her Last Will and Testament that the family farm be preserved and used for the purpose of *"promoting healthy outdoor activities for the largest number of young men and women"*. Over the last 60 plus years, the Sloper property has been under the stewardship of the YMCA which is dedicated to its development and preservation. In keeping with Cornelia's last request, we are committed to sharing this valuable community resource with as many people as possible for generations to come. To do this we must be good stewards and protectors of the property. The time has now come that the preservation of Sloper Pond must be the focus of our efforts. We owe that to Cornelia and the thousands and thousands of children who will benefit from our work in the years to come.



## CHAPTER TWO

# ABOUT SLOPER POND

Sloper Pond, the centerpiece of YMCA Camp Sloper, covers 19 acres of the property and has two waterfront locations along with a hiking trail that encircles the pond. This habitat is equally important to the wildlife as well as the people who enjoy it.

### WILDLIFE

Sloper Pond is home to a variety of wildlife species that rely on it for their habitat and life cycle. Here are just a sample of some of the wildlife you would find in Sloper Pond:

- Largemouth bass, perch, and bluegill fish live in the pond.
- Painted and snapping turtles can be spotted sunning themselves on the logs or shore.
- Muskrats are seen in and around the pond.
- Ducks, geese, great blue heron, and swans swim and feed in the waters.
- Thousands of insects & microscopic animals call Sloper Pond home and play a critical role in the food chain for larger animals.
- Sloper Pond is a vital part of an eco-system that is home to a variety of plants.
- "Mama Cass", the official mascot of YMCA Camp Sloper who is a giant legendary turtle seen by campers every summer.







## PEOPLE

The pond is a source of recreation, renewal, and reconnection to nature for many. Here is just a sample of some of the opportunities people use Sloper Pond for:

- Fishing is a favorite pastime along the shores of the pond.
- The pond is a highlight of the day camp program and where thousands of children have learned to swim.
- Paddling around the pond on fun yaks, paddleboats or canoes is an opportunity to explore the waters of the pond.
- Sloper Pond is home to Turtle's Paradise, a location at the Northeast end of the pond where many campers have seen their first real turtle.
- Environmental Education programs are conducted for local schools at Sloper Pond and its surrounding wetlands. Students explore the waters to learn about this natural habitat and the creatures that live there, getting some first-hand experience in nature.
- Taking the hiking trail along the shore offers the intimate opportunity to enjoy the pond by stopping at Sunset Point, McKenzie's Point, and Pirate's Point.
- Two assembly areas overlook Sloper Pond, our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Amphitheater and our Sloper Chapel; a perfect setting for entertainment or special ceremonies

Sloper Pond is a natural resource in our community that deserves to be protected and preserved for generations to come.

## CHAPTER THREE

# LIFE OF THE POND

Like all living things, a pond has a life cycle. The normal life cycle of a pond is to go from a pond to a swamp to a marsh to a prairie. Eventually it gets covered with trees and vegetation where it reaches its final stage as a forest. These changes of course happen over a very long period of time.

A young pond has plants that grow and float in the water. Over time plants take root in the bottom of the pond. When a plant dies in a pond, it falls to the bottom and decays, turning into sediment. In addition, incoming silt, sediment and pollution cause deposits of matter on the pond floor. This creates layers and layers of soil build up over time and the depth of the pond decreases.

As the bottom of the pond gets higher, the water becomes shallower. The edges start to fill in with plants and other vegetation. As this transformation continues over time, the pond becomes a swamp and then a marsh. As the water recedes and solid ground creeps in from the edges, the forest starts to take over. This type of succession occurs in all ponds over time if nothing prevents it from happening.

That is where we, the stewards of the property, need to step in with preventative plans and measures to ensure this beautiful resource does not become a swamp!



*"Sloper Pond – This beautiful jewel of an asset that has been a centerpiece not only to YMCA Camp Sloper but to the entire Southington community needs our love and attention to assure that it is around for our children and the generations to follow. This pond has many fond memories to our family, we have swam in it, fished in it, boated on it and most of all had it as a wonderful backdrop to our times out at camp, let's make sure it survives to fulfill that for all to come."*

**- Lance Kilburn**





## CHAPTER FOUR

# IT IS THE TIME to ACT

Although Sloper Pond is still a healthy pond today, it is gradually beginning to decline into the next phase of its life cycle and has the potential to turn into a swamp in years to come. The sooner that process is interrupted and reversed the better the health of the pond will be for future generations of people and wildlife.

These are the problems we are dealing with:

### DEPTH

Over time the depth of the pond has decreased due to run off, erosion, and most of all nature taking its course. The continual build-up of silt and sediment in Sloper Pond has formed a delta at the northeast inlet and other areas of the pond. This has caused an overall decrease in the depth and will eventually lead to the pond becoming a swamp.

### WATER QUALITY

In the last five plus years the pond has been more susceptible to a condition called "Swimmer's Itch" which is directly related to geese/waterfowl, snails, and hot weather conditions. The shallow and stagnant water is a significant contributor to this situation.

*"We love to take family walks and "around the pond" are a favorite. We are bird watchers; scoping the pond for migrant ducks and grebes is always fun and the pond is important to the local wildlife and birds as a water source....The reflection of tiny spring buds, summer greens and autumn blazing colors is always a treat. I hope it can be preserved for future generations."*

*-Shari Guarino*



## VEGETATION CONTROL

The pond is overtaken by curly leaf and other aquatic vegetation every spring. Currently the vegetation is being treated with copper sulfate and other chemicals. Adding chemicals to the pond on an annual basis is not healthy for the long term water quality issues. The cost of these treatments is \$5,000+ annually. In addition, all of the vegetation that is treated by chemical control falls to the bottom of the pond and decays, once again contributing to the more shallow conditions.

## PERCEPTION

The reputation of the pond has continually become mixed over the last several years by our camp families. While some still appreciate the beauty and benefit of Sloper Pond, many feel it is a less favorable swimming option and some dislike swimming in the water. Also, the development of the "swimmer's itch" condition has been a contributor to the concerns of Sloper Pond. Many potential campers do not come to camp because of the pond. This has been the number one complaint of campers in the past ten years.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE PLAN

Our staff and volunteers have been diligently working to set specific goals and action steps to address the issues with Sloper Pond. The Long Term Goals are as follows:

**GOAL ONE** Ensure the long-term health of Sloper Pond for generations to come as requested by Cornelia Sloper Neal when she willed the property to the YMCA in 1949.

**ACTION STEP** Develop and implement a preservation plan to dredge Sloper Pond to ensure this valuable resource is healthy for future generations.

- Removal of up to 125 thousand cubic yards of silt and sediment.

**GOAL TWO** Improve the overall water quality and reputation of Sloper Pond.

**ACTION STEP** Once dredging the pond is complete, we would then re-educate the community about the positive results including:

- Removal of many snails to reduce the swimmer's itch condition for campers.
- Increase the depth to create conditions that are not conducive to aquatic vegetation growth, thereby eliminating the need to chemically treat the pond.
- Construct several program amenities and improvements, making it more attractive for swimming and more ecologically balanced, which in turn will improve the reputation of Sloper Pond. These include: re-grading of the swim areas, floating logs for turtles and other wildlife, sunken trees and rock clusters for fish habitat, a handicap accessible fishing pier, rope-tow glass bottom boat and a permanent rope swing...just for fun!

**GOAL THREE** Install preventive measures to ensure Sloper Pond can be routinely maintained in the future.

**ACTION STEP** Installation of a Sediment Bay detention area and Draw-down Valve:

- A detention pond at the northeast part of the pond would allow the staff/volunteers of YMCA Camp Sloper to clean out the pond as needed to reduce silt run off entering Sloper Pond.
- The Draw-down Valve would allow an underwater maintenance road to be accessed and excavation of silt and sediment to be managed. The draw-down valve will also assist with the management/reduction of vegetation growth.



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PROP. DRAWDOWN STRUCTURE  
WITH ACCESS BOARDWALK

Ex. Concrete Spillway

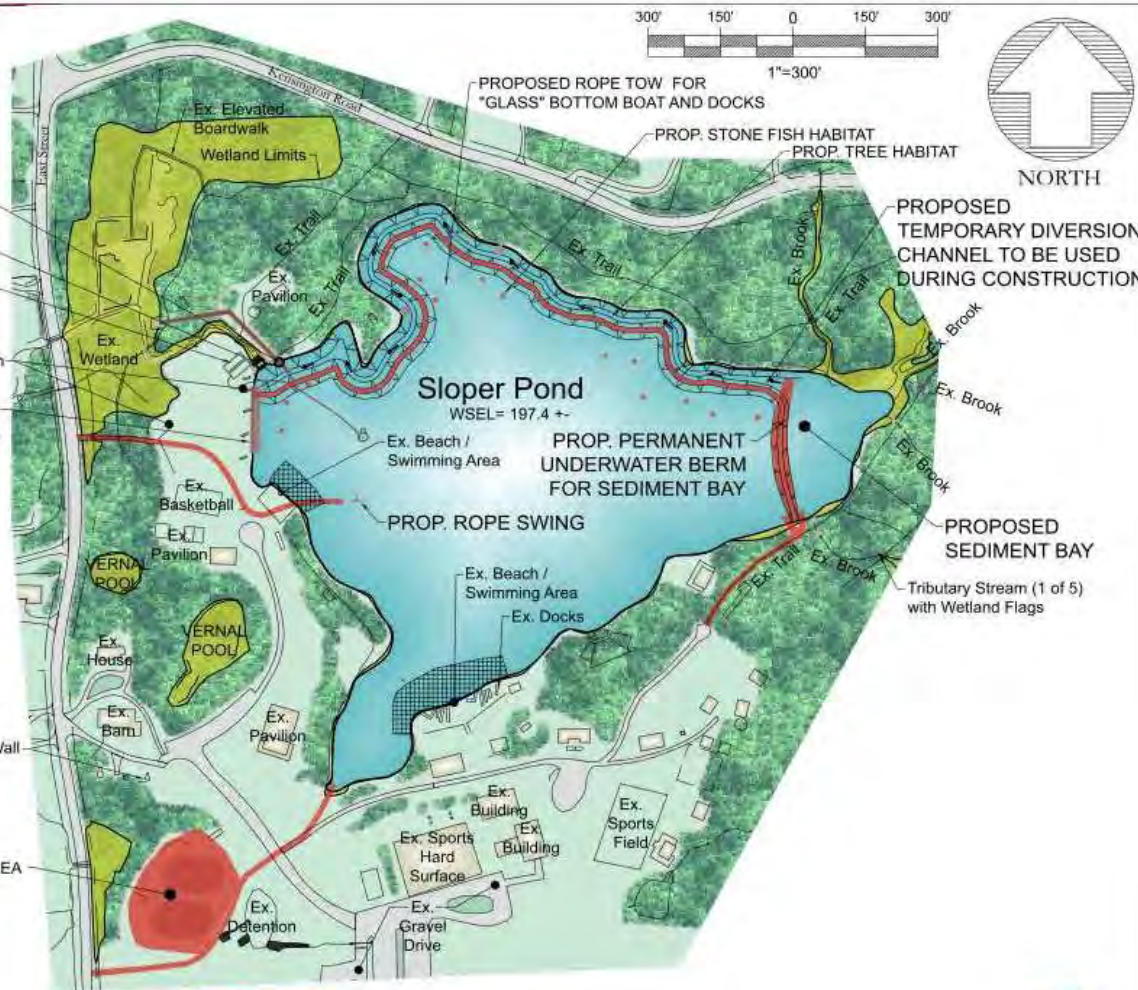
PROP. TEMPORARY  
PUMP DISCHARGE LOCATION

Ex. Dam

PROP. HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE  
BOARDWALK

Ex. Climbing Wall

PROPOSED DEWATERING AREA



SLOPER POND



**YMCA Camp Sloper  
Outdoor Center**

1000 East Street  
Southington, CT 06489  
860-621-8194



## CHAPTER SIX

# WHAT ABOUT the WILDLIFE

We at YMCA Camp Sloper have the utmost respect for all the wildlife that call Sloper Pond home. While there will be some temporary interruptions for the animals in and on Sloper Pond, rest assured that when the plan is complete, this will be a much better and stable environment for all. During the process of improving our pond, the animals will have to move away naturally from the disturbed areas. Our research and talks with the Department of Environmental Protection and other wildlife organizations have reassured us they will be just fine.

Ducks, geese, swan and other birds will fly to other bodies of water in the interim. Muskrats, turtles, frogs and many other animals will also find their way to other nearby ponds, lakes and streams, but some animals, like the fish will need help. Our staff and volunteers are committed to saving and caring for as much of the wildlife as possible.

With our hybrid method of dredging, the water will stay in Sloper Pond. As construction begins in one area of the pond, the wildlife will move to other areas of the pond that are not being disturbed. At the end of the project, the wildlife will have a much healthier habitat to thrive in.

Our friends from Winding Trails Recreation Center in Farmington, CT have gone through a similar effort as they dredged Waldon Pond several years ago. They experienced the same type of rejuvenation of the wildlife in their pond within a couple of seasons. Much of our project has been models after their great work, THANKS Winding Trails!





*"Sloper Pond - The gift that keeps on giving....teaching campers to swim, a father and son bonding during a fishing trip....I can't imagine YMCA Camp Sloper or the town of Southington without Sloper Pond. Thank you Cornelia Sloper Neal for this wonderful gift."*      **- John Myers, Former YMCA Executive Director**



CHAPTER SEVEN

# MOVING THE MUCK





We are using a hydraulic/hybrid method for the dredging, which means the water will remain in the pond and we will float a large excavator on the water to scoop up and remove the sediment. This is a much less disruptive method for our day camp and wildlife. Safety precautions will be put into place for the campers and wildlife as we plan to dredge the pond in the spring, summer and fall for roughly two years.

Our task is to move up to 125 thousand cubic yards of silt and sediment to an approved location in the area. This will be done by first excavating the silt and sediments into large piles in designated dewatering areas; this allows the remaining water and mud to drain out. Once the piles are dry, we plan to move them off site. When the main area of the pond is completed and we have excavated to our desired depths, we will take down the temporary berm holding the inlet water and let the pond fill back up. We are told that it may take 1 to 2 years for the pond to reach its full water capacity again.

When the work is done, Sloper Pond will be a much healthier place for animals to live. We will be sure that the water is healthy and then we will restock the fish and bring the mussels back. Frogs, turtles and other wildlife will find their way back home through the stream that feeds the pond. The new Sloper Pond will be better than ever for the animals that call it home, and for the people who use it for recreation.

*"I often tell people that the Red Barn is the cornerstone to the property and that Sloper Pond is the centerpiece! You cannot help but be drawn in by its beauty upon your arrival to YMCA Camp Sloper. It has been a tool for the YMCA to teach thousands of kids to swim, fish, canoe, or catch turtles. Many others have spent countless hours walking the trail around the pond, taking pictures, or just simply sitting back and enjoying its beauty. Sloper Pond has given so much to so many for all these years, it is now time that we give back and keep the pond healthy for future generations."*

***-Mark Pooler, Chief Executive Officer, Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs***

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# JOIN THE TEAM

While scientists, engineers and other professionals will do much of the work, there will be plenty of opportunities for volunteers to help out. As a community that values this priceless natural resource, we can come together to save Sloper Pond. Here are some ways you can help:

**VOLUNTEER** We will need many volunteers to help with the following tasks:

- Help educate the community
- Connect us to potential supporters and donors
- Assist with related fundraising efforts
- Assisting in monitoring of the pond during the dredging process.





**DONATE** Preserving Sloper Pond for generations to come is going to cost some money; approximately \$3.5 million is the current price tag. So we will obviously need some help with the fundraising efforts:

- Personal donations by you and others would be appreciated
- Connecting us with local, state-wide and national businesses that would donate to the cause
- Researching, applying for and securing grants is going to be a must
- Participating or helping out with special events and fundraisers

**ADVOCATE** We are going to need help spreading the word about the importance of this project:

- Word of mouth is always best – tell a friend about our intentions for Sloper Pond
- Bring a prospective donor or volunteer by to see the Sloper Pond first hand
- Connect us to legislators and other people or organizations that can help our cause
- Share the story of – Saving Sloper Pond





**This project would not be possible without all of your support! Our thanks goes out to our members, campers and families, volunteers, donors and staff, who have helped shape YMCA Camp Sloper into a magical place for kids to grow!**

#### **YMCA CAMP SLOPER**

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YMCA Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.  
The YMCA is a not-for-profit 501c(3) organization. The YMCA provides financial assistance for qualifying individuals and

