

Special Permit Application  
Inland Wetlands License Application  
Seasonal Aerial Forest Ropes Course  
Kueffner/Stoddard, Route 195, Storrs, CT

September 2012

## STATEMENT OF USE

The proposed use is a seasonal recreational and educational high ropes challenge course on approximately 10 acres of forest land with frontage on Route 195. This aerial forest park will provide a range of ropes courses running from tree to tree that challenge visitors physically and mentally. It is an engaging, outdoor, friend-and-family-centered recreational activity that builds self-esteem and health.

The park will be designed to connect people with nature and teach and model good forest stewardship. The park layout and design will be very low impact, informed by the natural landscape and topography, preserving native trees and vegetation and existing stone walls. The tree-to-tree aerial bridges, or elements, will be raised and placed without heavy machinery and then secured without drilling into the trees. There will be interpretive signs to teach visitors about forest ecology and there will be no permanent buildings.

Our goals are to provide a wholesome healthy outdoor recreational experience, promote an appreciation for the forest while helping preserve it, and offer a community amenity that highlights Mansfield's natural landscape and community vision. The gravel parking area that will support the ropes course will be as low impact as possible. It has been designed to minimize grading and site disturbance and preserve notable healthy trees. The parking area will be surfaced with permeable gravel to foster stormwater infiltration. Bio-swales will accommodate heavier rains and flow.

The proposed seasonal aerial forest park use is consistent with the *Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development* in that it will help "conserve and preserve Mansfield's natural, historic, agricultural and scenic resources..." At the same time, we are seeking to actively engage people with the forest by climbing and playing in the trees, fostering a "hands on" understanding and appreciation of nature. As such, this part of the forest will evolve from a passive, scenic community landscape to a vibrant community amenity that directly connects people with nature and models forest stewardship, while preserving the scenic value.

In addition, the proposed seasonal aerial forest park aligns well with the community values and vision, specifically, the strategic plan for *Mansfield 2020: A Unified Vision*. The aerial park embodies the following elements of the Unified Vision Statement by:

- Creating a design and use that embodies principles of sustainability and provides a unique attraction for residents and visitors, contributing to vibrant economic development for Mansfield: "*Principles of sustainability guide zoning and development, preserving the town's historic character and providing for economic vitality.*"
- Offering "*residents and the region unique cultural, recreational and educational opportunities.*" The ropes course and trails will feature educational signage and help children and adults learn about forest ecology.
- Maintaining and contributing to Mansfield's reputation and rural character: "*known for its excellent public schools, community-wide events, inclusive and efficient government, working farms and protected open spaces...*" This recreational use will enable the preservation of a productive, healthy forest.
- Creating a family-oriented, healthy playground in the trees that makes Mansfield "*a great place to live, work, and play.*"
- The park will *promote health, fitness, and well-being and enhance the quality of life*, in keeping with the Priority Vision Point for Recreation, Health, and Wellness.

## INLAND WETLANDS LICENSE APPLICATION

Inland wetlands have been mapped on the accompanying Site Plan. This application serves as both the special permit application and the concurrent inland wetlands license application. Wetlands and watercourses were delineated on December 14, 2011 at the site by Joshua Wilson, PWS (#1992) of Fuss & O'Neill, Inc. Wetlands and watercourses were delineated (identified, classified, and flagged at approximately 50-foot intervals) in accordance with State of Connecticut Inland Wetland and Watercourses Act (CGS §§ 22a-36 to 22a-42 inclusive). In addition, Federal jurisdictional wetlands and watercourses were delineated in accordance with the prescribed methodology of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers'

1987 Wetland Delineation Manual (Technical Report Y-87-1) and the *Interim Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Northcentral and Northeast Region* (ERDC/EL TR-09-19). The Wetlands Delineation Report is attached.

As stated in the Wetlands Delineation Report, the wetlands on site provide low to moderate functions and values. All three wetlands are groundwater fed. The northwestern most wetland has formed in the remnants of borrow pit and receives a steady flow of groundwater. The wetlands along Route 195 receive seasonal groundwater discharge from the southern uplands as well as runoff from Route 195. In the Spring of 2012, Fuss & O'Neill inspected all three wetlands areas to determine if they supported obligate vernal pool species. Direct observations and dip netting of the wetlands yielded no evidence that they support obligate vernal pool species. Therefore, it was determined that these wetlands are not classified as vernal pools. In addition to groundwater discharge, the wetlands also provide some sediment and toxicant retention (from Route 195) as well as nutrient removal/renovation and production export (from upland and wetland forested) areas.

The proposed gravel parking lot will alter the existing condition at the site. However, this impact is minimized to the maximum extent by the relatively low impact natural design, the use of permeable surface materials, and the construction of the bioswales for stormwater treatment. Because of these design factors and the preservation the majority of the forest cover across the site, the alterations to the site will not adversely impact or diminish the quality or quantity of water that is necessary to support and maintain existing functions and values of the wetlands or watercourses on or adjacent to the site.

#### FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN AND STEWARDSHIP

Our goal is preservation and sustainable use of this forest land. In 2011, through assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mark Tremblay of Land Management Services worked with us to develop a Forest Management Plan for this nearly 119-acre parcel. The forest cover is predominantly mixed upland oaks, with scarlet, black, Northern red, and white oaks. As stated in our Forest Management Plan, our primary goals and objectives for the parcel include:

- Protection of natural resources, wildlife habitats, and aesthetic values of the property
- Improvement of the agricultural and forest health values of the land
- Improvement of access in portions of the property to facilitate management and recreational activities
- Utilization of the land for educational purposes
- Management of the oak timber resource to provide a sustainable supply of firewood

Our Forest Management Plan conservation practices for this northern portion of the site, which is mixed hardwood/pine and mixed oaks, calls for forest stand improvement and brush management to protect native plant health, improve habitat values, and improve forest health. A copy of the Conservation Practices aerial photo/map is attached. The proposed use is consistent with and will help implement our Plan through forest stand thinning, brush management and removal of invasives. We have surveyed and mapped healthy trees that will be preserved and showcased in the parking area, trails, and ropes courses.

#### DETAILS OF THE NATURE AND INTENSITY OF THE PROPOSED USE

Since our goal is preservation and sustainable use of this forest land, the aerial park will be designed, constructed, and operated to preserve high quality trees, maintain the natural environment, blend the park features into the natural contours and forest landscape, and provide a model for forest stewardship that invites people to actively and respectfully interact with the forest. From the low impact design of the parking area to staff training to the design of the ropes courses themselves, we will stress appreciation for, and preservation of, the forest.

The major components of the proposed seasonal recreational use include the following, all of which are detailed below: aerial park location and design, low-impact entrance driveway and parking area, support amenities, and public education and health features. The park will provide unique experiences for all visitors. The more active visitor will enjoy the challenge of an aerial trek through ropes courses and glide along zip lines high up in the trees. Other visitors may enjoy observing the climbers and walk the paths beneath, learning about forests and enjoying time in the open outdoors.

### Aerial Park Location and Design

The Site Plan shows the general area of the ropes courses. Typical plans for a ropes course, tree platform, and starting platform are attached. These plans illustrate the conceptual design. The exact placement of the courses and platforms within this area will be based on further analysis of individual tree health and vigor.

As our priorities include forest health along side visitor enjoyment and safety, the course design, installation, and operation demand numerous considerations.

- Arborists and foresters will be consulted on the removal of dead and dying trees and limbs and advise on the design of the courses, with goals of preserving and promoting the health and integrity of the forest and visitor safety.
- The aerial park will meet the standards for Challenge Course and Aerial Adventure Course installation, operation, and inspection, as set by the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT).
- The starting platform is the starting point for all of the courses. It is a wooden platform accessed by a broad entry ladder. The entry ladder is raised when the park is closed to restrict access to the courses.
- A number of courses, each consisting of approximately 10 tree-to-tree bridges or “elements,” are accessed from the starting platform. An element is typically a kind of obstacle constructed of logs, planks, barrels, swings, nets, etc. suspended between trees. Once leaving the starting platform, climbers traverse from one element to the next by way of 4 foot by 4 foot tree platforms.
- Courses are rated like ski trails and range from yellow (easiest) to double black diamond (most difficult). Visitors must prove themselves able before attempting a more difficult course.
- To protect the trees, no holes are drilled. Instead, platforms are secured with wedges and the elements are attached with cables wrapped around protective blocking surrounding the trunks.
- To minimize impact on the tree root systems and soils, as well as the understory generally, the construction and installation of the elements and platforms is done manually, without heavy equipment.
- While on the course, each climber wears a safety harness equipped with two lanyard clips and a zip-line pulley. Climbers must keep the two lanyards clipped onto the lines at all times--except when transferring between an element and a platform. State-of-the-art lanyard clips will make it impossible for both clips to be detached at the same time, ensuring safety; climbers will always be clipped in.
- There will be benches and wood-chip-covered walking paths beneath parts of the ropes course area, enabling staff and visitors to access the courses from below and watch the climbers. With the exception of the removal of invasive plants, the natural understory will be preserved.
- Our partners have extensive experience and have designed and constructed 8 aerial forest parks in the past four years.

### Low Impact Entrance Driveway and Parking Area

Parking lots can be jarring and unattractive. Against that stereotype, we wish to set a different tone as soon as people arrive--a sense of being in the woods. The entrance driveway and parking area have been designed in a way that respects the natural contours of the land and minimize grading and fill. The parking area enjoys a natural, non-engineered look and feel that sets the tone for a nature experience and preserves and showcases large trees.

- The entrance driveway and parking area use low impact design principles and occupy only 1.25 areas of the site at full build-out.
- The wetland crossing occurs at the area of least possible impact in order to minimize necessary fill and to maintain the existing conditions as much as possible given road-width requirements.
- The parking surface will be gravel, allowing for infiltration of rainwater while providing durability. Bioswales will be created to absorb and filter stormwater.
- The entrance driveway has been sited and designed to minimize wetlands impact and will result in 580 square feet of direct wetland disturbance.
- The full parking area has been designed for up to 85 cars, including required handicapped-accessible spaces.
- To further minimize environmental impact, we will construct the parking area in phases. As this is an entirely new use in this area, the ability to phase in--or not--will reduce possibly unnecessary site disturbance. The first phase will accommodate approximately 50 parking spaces, including accessible parking spaces to meet state code requirements. The Site Plan shows a total of 85 spaces, which will only be built if needed.

### Support Amenities

The aerial forest park will require temporary seasonal facilities for ticket sales, storage, and visitor convenience.

- The Site Plan shows areas for temporary seasonal ticket shed and office. These will be temporary sheds placed on a leveled pad with no footings in the ground.
- Utilities (electricity and cable/phone) will be installed to service the leveled pad.
- Simple benches and picnic tables will be situated in the ropes course area; some of which may be built with wood from the site.
- Site Plan indicates the location of portable toilets. They will be on-site seasonally.
- Recycling and refuse containers will be located in the most active areas of the park.
- Bike racks will be provided and we plan to work with the town and community members to develop safe bike-ways from UConn and other areas to the park.
- Staff will be required to complete CPR training and a 3-day on-site training course that enables them to perform assists and rescues when needed, provide safety briefings, and teach visitors how to properly traverse the courses and use the equipment.

### Public Education and Health Features

*Public Education is part of our mission. Most visitors will come to challenge themselves on the courses. However, some visitors will not be able to climb or won't be interested in it. We see this as an additional opportunity.*

- The proposed use will engage people in activities within the forest and will build an appreciation for Connecticut's forest land and the natural world.
- Interpretive/educational signs will teach visitors about tree identification, forest ecology, and forest management, for example.
- Forest tours--led by professionals and DEEP extension staff--based on showing forest management practices, have been hosted or are scheduled on the entire 118-acre parcel to help neighbors and others learn about sound forest management practices and opportunities.
- Ropes courses help build self-esteem and promote physical fitness. This aerial forest park will offer our community healthy fun exercise--an important tool in the fight against obesity.
- The park will provide a family-focused activity for all ages and abilities – from walking paths and observing others to high ropes courses of increasing levels of difficulty.
- We will explore the potential to connect the park and trails on this forestland with Mansfield's extensive hiking trail network.

### SITE PLAN

The attached Site Plans, which shows the locations for the proposed parking area, the temporary ticket and equipment storage sheds, portable sanitary facilities, and the general location of the ropes courses.

### SANITATION REPORT

The proposed seasonal recreational use does not include any permanent buildings and there will be no drilled well or water service. Consequently, there is no need for water supply and waste disposal or a sanitation report. We will contract with a vendor to provide portable sanitary toilets for use by staff and visitors. The portable toilets will be serviced routinely and removed when the park is not open (winter). Over the first season, we project approximately 100 visitors/day. Based on recommendations from industry experts, we will contract for the appropriate number of portable toilets to comfortably service 100 visitors for a 10-hour "event." We will adjust the number of toilets as required as visitation changes. As part of our contract, we will require the portable toilet vendor to comply with all local and state Health Department requirements and require routine servicing to ensure cleanliness and a positive visitor experience.

### EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL PLAN

The Erosion and Sediment Control Plan that will minimize erosion during the construction of the parking area. An erosion and sediment control plan has been developed in accordance with the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion

and Sediment Control (see Sheet CE101 of the site plans).

#### CONSISTENCY OF PROPOSED USE WITH SITE PLAN AND SPECIAL PERMIT CRITERIA

1. Complete Application: All necessary information has been provided for the commission to determine compliance with the Mansfield Zoning Regulations, including: Statement of Use and application narrative, site plan map, wetlands delineation, grading plan, sediment and erosion control plan, etc.
2. Permitted Use: Proposed use is consistent with the Mansfield Zoning Regulations.
  - a. The proposed seasonal aerial forest ropes course is a “recreational use” which is allowed in this RAR-90 zone by special permit. In further compliance with Article VII, Section G.10, the subject property is on an arterial street, Route 195.
  - b. The proposed use is consistent with all other applicable sections of the Mansfield Zoning Regulations and meets the requirements for parking, landscaping and buffering, set back requirements, and signs.
  - c. The proposed use does not include any prohibited uses listed in Article VI, Section A. We have discussed the proposed use with the following relevant staff and incorporated their input into the planning and design of the facility: Director of Planning, Director of the Department of Building and Housing Inspection, Eastern Highlands Health District Sanitarian, Assistant Chief Fire Marshal, Mansfield Resident State Trooper’s office, and the CT Department of Transportation.
3. Air/Noise Pollution: The proposed use is seasonal, recreational, and very low impact. It will not generate any air pollution, odor, noise, vibrations, electrical disturbances, radiation/radio-activity, fire or explosive hazards, or other activities listed in Article VI, B.4
4. Waste: There will be no generation or storage of hazardous materials and no liquid or solid discharges. The proposed use does not involve food preparation operations, water supply or waste disposal systems. Almost no waste will be generated on site. Containers for recyclables and refuse will be provided and serviced regularly.
5. Flooding: The site is not subject to flooding and there will be no permanent buildings. The proposed activity is not on or within 500 feet of an identified aquifer area and the proposed seasonal recreational use and low-impact parking area with accompanying bioswales are designed to protect and preserve the forestland.
6. Energy Use: Energy use will be minimal. Computers and task lighting in the temporary seasonal ticket and equipment storage shed will be highly efficient and meet or exceed EPA’s Energy Star standards.
7. Parking: The parking area has been adequately sized, based on visitor projections. The parking area will provide 84 parking spaces, including 4 handicap-accessible spaces at full build out.
8. Road and Drainage: The driveway and parking area have been designed to promote vehicular and pedestrian safety and maximize stormwater infiltration. In addition, bioswales have been designed to provide stormwater treatment of excess runoff from the gravel lot.
9. Landscaping: Our intention is to leave things as nature would have them without us. Apart from the removal of non-native invasives, the the removal of some dead or unsound branches and trees for safety (both standing and fallen) within the area of the aerial park, and establishing some wood chip paths to and within the park, there will minimal landscaping. Wherever possible, the recreational use of the site will preserve and maintain the existing natural vegetation of the forest to a significant degree and will not require formal landscaping and buffers. We have surveyed and marked the “medium” and larger existing healthy trees in the proposed parking area and designed the parking area around them. In the ropes course area, trees will also be preserved and integrated into the courses, focusing on the removal of dead and dying trees and limbs. We will also preserve existing stone wall remnants on the site and highlight one that will form a “natural” boundary between the ticketing area and the active ropes course area.
10. Erosion and Sediment Control: As provided on Sheet CE 101 of the site plans, the proposed work complies with the erosion and sedimentation control/site development principles listed in Article VI, Section B.4.r and B.4.s . Specifically, an erosion and sediment control plan has been developed in accordance with the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control.
11. Signs: As noted on the site plan, there will be one 4’ X 8’ or smaller identity sign, per town regulations, south of the driveway entrance on Route 195. A proposed sign location has been identified that will not block visibility and sight lines for motorists. The sign placement will require CT DOT approval for placement in the Route 195 Right of Way (which will be part of the DOT Encroachment Permit application) and subsequent approval by Mansfield Planning & Zoning Commission. The exact location for the sign will be determined as we work with DOT to optimize sight lines and safety. The sign will be made from a tree cross-section and/or natural-edged planks, in keeping with the character of the forestland and the forest aerial ropes course. The attached Identity Sign Plan shows the conceptual design and dimensions of the sign. The final name of the ropes course is to be determined.
12. Setbacks: The site lot frontage on Route 195 is approximately 678 feet, well in excess of the 200 foot minimum lot frontage. The parking area meets the minimum front setback of 60 feet. The aerial ropes course will be set back some 300 feet or more, and will be within the side setback of 35 feet from neighboring property lines.

13. Bonding requirements: We anticipate no bonding requirements for this proposed seasonal recreational use and limited development of the gravel parking area.
14. Sand and gravel: There is no plan to remove sand or gravel, except if necessary to accomplish any minimal grading required to construct the parking area as shown on the Grading Plan in the attached site plans.
15. Sale of Alcohol: There will be no sale of alcoholic liquor.
16. Designated Development District: The site is not in a Designated Development District.
17. Local, State, and Federal Requirements: We have complied with all applicable local, state, and federal requirements:
  - a. This application serves as a concurrent application for Inland Wetland Agency (IWA) license and Planning & Zoning Commission special permit. The entrance drive and parking area include direct disturbance to wetlands and activity within the 100-foot upland review area. The entrance will have 580 square feet of direct wetland impacts. The proposed parking area includes 41,900 square feet of activity within the regulated upland review area. Beyond these regulatory activities, the proposed recreation use is entirely within upland areas of the site, involves no fill or excavation, and, therefore, is exempt from wetland regulations.
  - b. After all local approvals and prior to commencing work, we will submit a "Category 1 Certification Form" to the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and comply with all state and federal wetlands requirements.
  - c. After obtaining local approvals, we will submit an Encroachment Permit application to the Connecticut Department of Transportation and comply with all requirements for the proposed entrance driveway. An intersection and site distance analysis (attached) was conducted for the proposed entrance by Fuss & O'Neill in September 2011. It was determined that the proposed location of the entrance will provide more than adequate sight distances, safe egress for vehicles turning left, and better visibility for drivers approaching the site.
18. Water Supply, Safety, etc: The proposed seasonal use does not require water supply and will rely on sanitary portable toilets when the course is open. The site provides for fire and emergency access and has been designed to protect the natural environment and foster a broader understanding and appreciation for environmental stewardship. We have discussed safety and security measures with professionals in the Fire Marshall's office and the Mansfield Resident Trooper's Office. As a result of these meetings and conversations, we have already or will take the following precautionary actions to enhance security:
  - a. Post "No Trespassing" signs when the park is not open to justify police action if needed.
  - b. Ensure the parking lot design and layout sufficiently accommodates safety vehicles.
  - c. Install a heavy-duty lockable gate at the driveway entrance to prevent vehicle access when the park is closed.
  - d. Minimize "attractive nuisances" (i.e., things that can be broken or stolen) within the park, by using heavy-duty materials.
  - e. Establish strong communications with the Mansfield Resident Trooper's Office to prevent and immediately act upon any criminal mischief.
19. Vehicle, Pedestrian, Handicapped Access: Vehicular and pedestrian access to and from the property and internal traffic patterns have been designed to maximize safety and avoid hazards and congestion. The parking area is curved to respect the natural contours of the site, provide a more aesthetic look that sets the tone for an experience in nature, allow for the preservation of significant and beautiful trees around the parking area, and promote traffic calming. In addition, we will minimize impact by building only 53 parking spaces initially (phase 1) and expand up to 84 spaces (phase 2), if needed, to avoid congestion and maximize safety. In accordance with state code, four (4) handicapped accessible spaces will be provided during phase 1. Bicycle racks will be provided to encourage biking to the course as a healthy and environmentally sustainable transportation mode. We are eager to work with the Town and UConn to develop safe bicycle access along Route 195 and connect with other bikeways in town.
20. Grading and Storm Drainage: By utilizing the least sloped areas of the site for parking and by surfacing the parking and travel areas with pervious gravel, we seek to minimize storm runoff and maximize natural infiltration and storm-water filtering. As recommended by town staff, we will be creating bioswales adjacent to the lower (northern) side of the parking area to further minimize storm runoff and provide treatment. See attached Stormwater Management Report.
21. Nuisances: The proposed recreational use will not create noise other than the sounds of people laughing and having fun during daylight hours seasonally. The park will be open seasonally during daylight hours so there will be no outdoor lighting.
22. Construction Traffic: There will be very minimal construction traffic and neighborhood impact. Construction vehicles will be needed to grade and install gravel for the entrance driveway and parking area. These vehicles will enter from Route 195 and traffic will be insignificant. Construction of the ropes course will be done manually -- using no vehicles or cranes in the forest area, just ladders and hand tools.
23. Harmony with Surrounding Character: From the entrance drive and parking area to the ropes course, the focus of this recreational area is on the forest and trees and has been designed to be in harmony with this beautiful forest and natural area. The non-invasive parking area curves around trees, in deference to nature, setting the tone for the forest park

experience. Whether the visitor observes ropes course climbers from the ground, or participates actively on the ropes course up in the trees, there is an engaging outdoor activity for each visitor--young and old--and of all physical abilities. Our intent is to create and provide a healthy, wholesome, well-loved community amenity that compliments the character of our rural landscape and draws visitors to Mansfield as a recreational destination while visiting our university and patronizing businesses in our new downtown.

24. Neighborhood Notification: We will notify in writing all property owners within 500 feet of the perimeter of the property boundaries of this site of this special permit application. We will send such notice on the Neighborhood Notification Form by certified mail at least 10 days prior to the date of the public hearing scheduled by the Commission. We will provide a copy of this notice and a listing of property owners notified to the Mansfield Planning Office at least 5 days prior to the public hearing.
25. Compatibility with Mansfield's Plan of Development and Article I of the Mansfield Zoning Regulations: This project aligns significantly with Mansfield's Plan of Conservation and Development. In terms of the first policy goal, it represents a balancing force in terms of development. As agritourism, it represents a potentially economically viable way to support open space. It's success will help preserve open space, forestland, and agriculture. It will not draw on the town's infrastructure to any significant degree, and yet it could help support it by providing a bicycling, and possibly even a public transportation, destination. It also moves the town toward its second policy goal. This project is in and of itself an effort to preserve and conserve. Its success will help preserve Mansfield's natural resources, it's surface and groundwater quality, interior forest areas, and at least one undeveloped hilltop. While it may do little with respect to housing (goal three), we envision that it will further the fourth goal, that of strengthening and encouraging a further sense of neighborhood and community throughout Mansfield. We believe that this proposed use concurs in numerous ways with the statutory responsibilities and purposes noted in Article I of the Mansfield Zoning Regulations. (Notes and excerpts follow regarding each of the purposes as listed in Article 1 of the Mansfield Zoning Regulations.)
  - a. As it will be accessible to the general public and it gets people outdoors and is an activity that calls for mental and physical engagement, it will necessarily "promote and protect the overall health, ... and welfare of the residents of Mansfield, Connecticut and the general public;"
  - b. By helping to preserve and conserve a large tract of forested land, it will "... provide for and facilitate the orderly growth and expansion of the municipality, thereby preventing an undue concentration of population and an overcrowding of the land...;"
  - c. Given that one of our the goals is to--in every extent possible--maintain the aesthetic and natural values of the site, we have specifically sought "To protect the character" of the property and thus "... maintain the stability and property values of residential, business and industrial areas within the Town, including areas and properties of historic value;" In fact, we believe that this new community amenity has the potential to *increase* property values.
  - d. Once again, our own goals match the purpose stated as: "To provide for the protection of the physical environment, including air quality, potential surface and ground drinking water supplies, and specific environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and watercourses and areas subject to flooding and/or erosion and sedimentation problems;" and we have done what seems prudent and necessary to accomplish this joint objective by designing thoughtfully and in accordance with sustainability principles.
  - e. With the help of traffic consultants, we have proposed an access point to Route 195 that provides both a very safe entry and exit for cars and bicycle traffic. Further, within the site, we have pursued a non-linear parking area design that we believe will calm traffic and "...encourage safe and efficient vehicular and pedestrian facilities and circulation patterns and thereby avoid traffic hazards and congestion;"
  - f. With the exception of being considered a protection against flooding, (it being undeveloped forest land),--our use, including our porous parking lot, may not specifically "... provide protection against fire, flood, explosion, hazardous materials and other, potential dangers ..." but we are confident that it will only very insignificantly increase the regional or local threat of any of these.
  - g. Because this proposed use is all about trees, it is necessarily all about solar power. While we may at some point endeavor to power our temporary ticket and storage shed with solar panels, we intend let the trees get the best light first. The activity and use we are proposing gets people away from electronics and devices and into an environment that is naturally solar powered (photo-synthesis); so, indeed, the very enterprise itself is made possible by nothing other than "... the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy...;"
  - h. The "...aesthetic considerations in designing..." our parking area was our first preoccupation on the site. Even as providing parking is an unfortunate concession to current transportation realities, we have sought to fashion the parking area so as to consider the topography, the existing trees, the small area of wetland soils, all the while accommodating safety vehicles, and our desire to have it preserve and introduce an atmosphere of the woods and forest while attempting to make it as modest as possible. We have carried the same values with us when considering the color of the temporary ticket and storage shed, and even the placement and color of the portable toilets. We want nothing more than a project that is intimately "... compatible with the character of

the site and subject neighborhood, and promote[s] the value of properties in the neighborhood and the Town;" In fact, we would like our aesthetic to spill outwards into the neighborhood.

- i. Even as the zoning regulations already permit recreational uses in this zone, by its very nature, this proposed use--in part because of it's minimal on-site changes--comes very close to its current use, that of productive Connecticut forestland. But at the same time it increases its public value. Where purpose 9 of Article I suggests that the board should regulate "... with a view toward conserving the value of properties, encouraging a variety of housing and economic development opportunities, and encouraging compatible and appropriate uses of land within the various zones and throughout the town;" it would appear that this proposal is a perfect opportunity to act on that purpose.
- j. With a buffer of land and trees along what is already a busy and sometimes noisy road, the significant distance from neighboring residences, and considering the character of the proposed use, goal 10, "To protect residents from nuisances from sight and/or sound;" is both met and moot.

26. Location and size of the proposed use and the nature and intensity of use in relation to the size of the lot will be in harmony with the orderly development of the town and compatible with other existing uses: With the exception of the parking area, and the addition of people and some obstacles in the trees, the role of this piece of Mansfield will not change. The site location is noted on an accompanying map, but to be honest, it's along a nondescript and generally unnoticed stretch of route 195. It is represented by some 670 feet of frontage on the south side of 195, about a half-mile south of route 32. The property is forested, and excepting a meandering gravel parking lot in the woods and access to it, under the proposed use the site will remain forested. The site of the project itself is approximately 10 acres, or barely more than 8% of the entire parcel, which totals about 118 acres and extends about half-a-mile south to Forest Road.

The proposed use is for a seasonal recreational activity: an aerial forest challenge course. This will entail suspending "elements" or uniquely configured and challenging "bridges" between trees. Adventurous people will then seek to successfully traverse the aerial courses among and through the trees. The use will include a minimum network of paths below the aerial courses so that people not inclined to the challenge may vicariously enjoy the course, observe climbers, and simply experience the out of doors.

Is it compatible with other existing uses? Yes. In terms of the land and the forest itself, by and large, the proposed use is really the current use: a healthy, growing, Connecticut forest. It will simply now include people and some wire and wooden and rope bridges between trees. Were there no sign at the entrance, it would look about as it does today and you wouldn't know it was there.

27. Aesthetic Quality: Proper consideration to aesthetic quality, landscaping, natural features: Overall, we are seeking to maintain the existing aesthetic of the site and the property. For reasons of visitor safety, however, we will remove or fell dead branches and trees within the area of the courses. We have laid out a parking area that curves around and among trees we wanted to preserve and did our best not to fight the topography with fills or cuts. Our intention is to leave intact the small remnants of stone walls that exist and where we have paths, we will cover them with wood-chips harvested on-site. One feature we will include is interpretive signs so that visitors may benefit not just from being there and being out of doors, but learn about the natural features that surround them. The temporary ticket and storage shed will be painted to blend in and complement the surroundings and the discretely-placed portable toilets will be of a compatible color and likely shielded either by natural vegetation or other aesthetically appropriate means.

# Proposed Aerial Forest Ropes Course



*Promoting health, fitness, and well being, enhancing the quality of life*



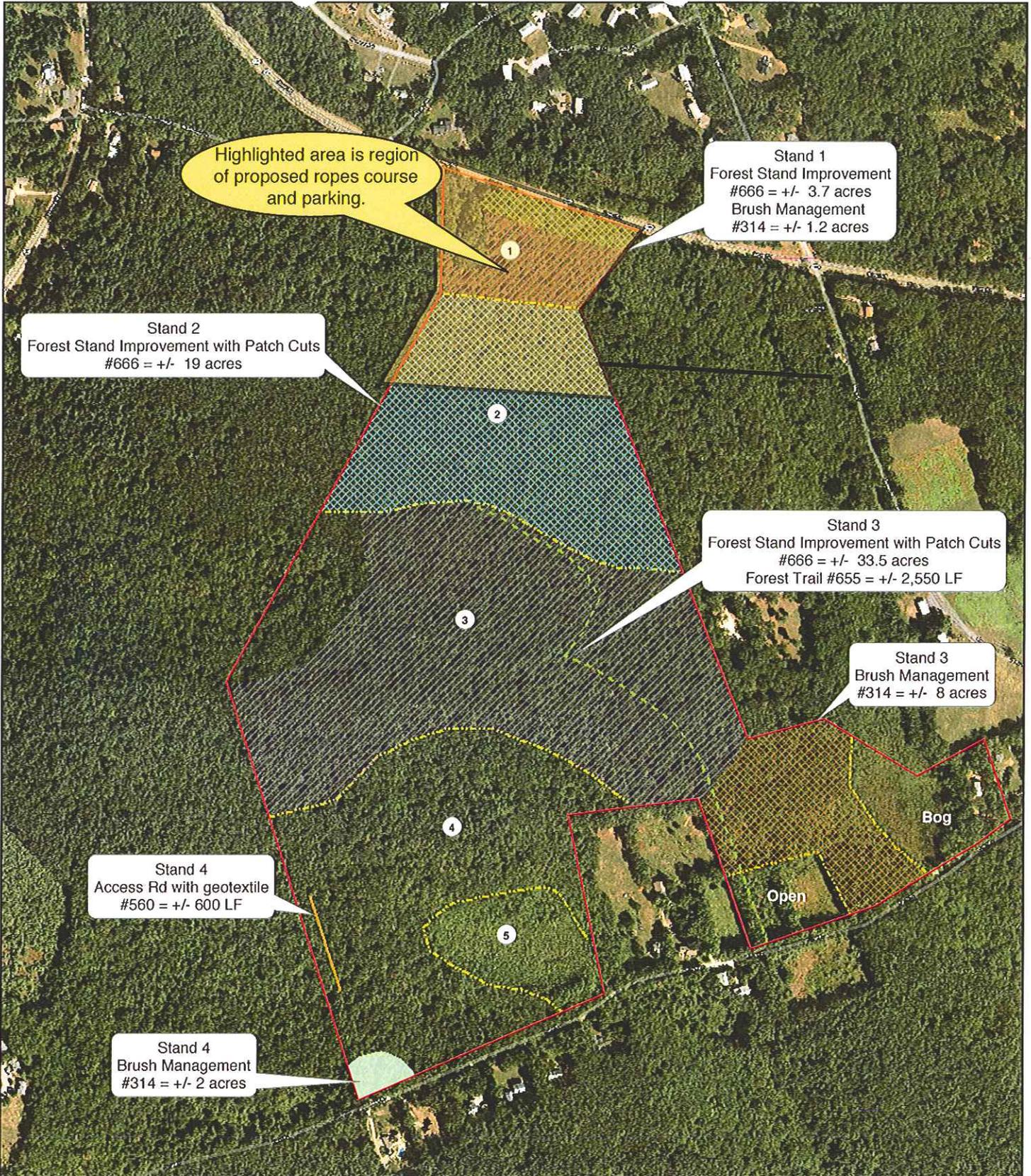
*Preserving Mansfield's natural and scenic resources, protecting open spaces*



*Providing for economic vitality... a great place to live, work, and play!*



*Designed according to principles of sustainability*



Highlighted area is region of proposed ropes course and parking.

Stand 1  
Forest Stand Improvement  
#666 = +/- 3.7 acres  
Brush Management  
#314 = +/- 1.2 acres

Stand 2  
Forest Stand Improvement with Patch Cuts  
#666 = +/- 19 acres

Stand 3  
Forest Stand Improvement with Patch Cuts  
#666 = +/- 33.5 acres  
Forest Trail #655 = +/- 2,550 LF

Stand 3  
Brush Management  
#314 = +/- 8 acres

Stand 4  
Access Rd with geotextile  
#560 = +/- 600 LF

Stand 4  
Brush Management  
#314 = +/- 2 acres

Bog

Open

**Conservation Practices Map  
Property of Christopher Kueffner**

Forest Road, Mansfield, Connecticut

Prepared for: Land Management Services

— Approximate Site Location

1" = 585'

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