

Re: Pink House -- first article

Shannon, Keith <Keith_Shannon@fws.gov>

Wed 11/1/2023 2:41 PM

To: Hillman, Matthew D <matthew_hillman@fws.gov>; Taylor, Graham <graham_taylor@fws.gov>; Miner, Meta L <meta_miner@fws.gov>
Cc: Weber, Ella M <ella_weber@fws.gov>; Ware, Sharon <sharon_ware@fws.gov>; Joseph, Jennifer A <jennifer_joseph@fws.gov>

Part of me is waiting for 'On Wednesdays we tear down pink' but I guess that's more New York Post...

Will be interested to see what this article reads like if/when STPH gets quoted as it already reads a little negative to me even though your quotes are on pont. Thanks for sharing

From: Hillman, Matthew D <matthew_hillman@fws.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, November 1, 2023 1:53 PM

To: Taylor, Graham <graham_taylor@fws.gov>; Shannon, Keith <Keith_Shannon@fws.gov>; Miner, Meta L <meta_miner@fws.gov>

Cc: Weber, Ella M <ella_weber@fws.gov>; Ware, Sharon <sharon_ware@fws.gov>; Joseph, Jennifer A <jennifer_joseph@fws.gov>

Subject: Pink House -- first article

Newburyport Daily published an article on the Pink House about an hour ago. It's sure to get plenty of attention with the headline and first sentence alone!

https://www.newburyportnews.com/news/local_news/refuge-plans-to-tear-down-the-pink-house/article_e0281df8-78c8-11ee-9d01-fba6d3f666c6.html

Refuge plans to tear down the Pink House

By Jim Sullivan | jsullivan@newburyportnews.com Nov 1, 2023 Updated 1 hr ago



The Pink House on the Plum Island Turnpike in Newbury.
STAFF FILE PHOTO

NEWBURYPORT — Arguably the region's most photographed and well-known home is in danger of being torn down after the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge announced Wednesday morning it intends to demolish the Pink House.

To get the process started, the Refuge has begun a 30-day public comment period on a draft environmental assessment which includes a proposal to tear down the building.

"The clock is ticking right now," Refuge manager Matt Hillman said.

The federal agency which owns the land where the Pink House rests says it has worked diligently with local partners to find a suitable land exchange parcel to save the house from demolition. But after an almost eight-year search, no viable exchange parcels have been found.

"We followed a lot of leads but, unfortunately none of them have panned out," Hillman said. "The house is currently a hazard to people who might want to go near it and there's a whole host of

reasons why it would have to be closed. There has been vandalism, people have broken into the house. If we were to remove it, and if the community supports this, we will be very interested in opening that area up for the first time and putting in a highly accessible observation platform that would be able to get people elevated and have a really good vantage point of the Great Marsh."

Built in 1925, (and according to local legend, out of spite by a husband taking revenge on his soon-to-be ex-wife,) the Pink House and its 9.2-acre property of salt marsh habitat was purchased by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for \$375,000 in 2011.

"Our hope was to use the house as staff housing, in addition to the salt marsh acreage, when we purchased it," Hillman said. "It was supposed to be a place we could put interns and technicians who were here for maybe three or four months. But it became apparent pretty quickly it really wasn't going to work out, just because of the state of the house and the presence of contaminants including asbestos."

After hearing the refuge planned to tear the house down, the non-profit organization, Support The Pink House Inc. was formed in 2015 and successfully staved off demolition in 2016, after receiving confirmation the house was structurally sound.

But Hillman said the nearly century-old house requires frequent, taxpayer-funded maintenance to prevent catastrophic damage.

"We have been working really hard with everyone from Support The Pink House to local landowners to try to find a solution where we could exchange refuge lands for the Pink House," he said. "For a whole host of reasons, there wasn't much interest from members or community members who hold lands to own the house."

The property also floods routinely during storm events, according to Hillman who added sea level rise projections show increased frequency and intensity of roadway flooding in the area.

"I'm confident we've left no stone unturned and we've done all that we can not to go the route of demolishing the house," he said. "But, if you look at our sea level rise future and climate change, this is not a resilient area. So, even if this were to be exchanged and become a single-family house, we're looking at the Plum Island Turnpike projections that are saying it's going to flood at every king tide by the year 2030."

Hillman added he knows there will be plenty of people who will be upset if the Pink House is demolished but said the refuge has exhausted all of its options.

"We don't take this lightly," he said. "But this is only just a proposal at this point. I want the public to realize that they have their opportunity to make comments and make this the best proposal that it can be."

The Refuge's environmental assessment proposes opening the property to the public for wildlife observation and interpretation for the first time, if The Pink House is removed, and an accessible observation platform would be constructed to provide an elevated position where all visitors can appreciate the natural beauty and learn about the ecology of the Great Marsh.

"We want to make sure the public has access to an area that has long since been closed," Hillman said. "That building is not the safest place to be around, so we've not been able to open up that area for public viewing and wildlife observation."

Hillman added the refuge will analyze all of the public comments before drafting its final plan.

"Any decision that is made will only come after we draft that final plan," he said. "I've seen environmental assessments change considerably after a comment period and I have seen others not change. I know there's many people who will not support the plan to demolish the house. But I also know there's several who have a different opinion. So we'll just have to weigh all of those and see where the data takes us."

The Environmental Assessment can be viewed at the refuge's visitor Center at 6 Plum Island Turnpike or on its website at: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/parker-river>. Comments can also be sent by email to parkerriver@fws.gov, and the public comment session will be open until Nov. 30.

The Daily News reached out to two representatives from Support The Pink House Inc. for comment. This story will be updated with any new information.

Matt Hillman

Refuge Manager

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