

Pink House -- removal plan and next steps

Hillman, Matthew D <matthew_hillman@fws.gov>

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To:jsullivan@newburyportnews.com <jsullivan@newburyportnews.com>

Cc:Weber, Ella M <ella_weber@fws.gov>

 1 attachments (178 KB)

PR_Pink House EA_11.01.2023.pdf;

Hi Jim,

I hope you had a great Halloween.

Please find the attached press release and below FAQs which describe the refuge's proposal to remove the Pink House. I am available by cell (774-303-9090) to discuss. If I don't get back to you right away, it's likely because I'm in the field. Send me a text and I'll move to my office land line.

Note that the document will not be available on our website until sometime after 09:30 this morning.

Thanks and hope to talk soon,

Matt

FAQs – Pink House

What is the Pink House?

Constructed in 1925, the Pink House is a 3-bedroom, two story former private residence situated along Plum Island Turnpike in Newbury, MA. It is surrounded by the turnpike to the north and salt marsh and tidal creek in all other directions.

Why and when did the Service acquire the Pink House?

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (hereafter, 'Service') purchased the Pink House — along with more than nine acres of upland, salt marsh and tidal creek habitat — in 2011 to permanently protect the property and its sensitive habitats from development and to evaluate whether the house could be used for seasonal staff housing.

Why does the Service propose to remove the Pink House?

In 2014, a preliminary environmental survey of the building found that it contains asbestos, a serious human health risk. The property was also in a state of disrepair when purchased, and deterioration has continued since. Given these health and safety hazards, the Service determined that the building is not suitable as housing for seasonal staff, nor does it have any other feasible use for the refuge.

Further, the property has become an attractive nuisance, requiring frequent law enforcement patrols and repair work due to vandalism. Service maintenance staff and funds are increasingly required to maintain structural stability and safety. The house has a permanently flooded basement, is within an active flood zone, and recent sea level rise predictions indicate flooding will be even more severe in the years to come. Demolition and

removal are therefore in the best interest of public safety, taxpayer money, and the environmental health of the area.

Could the Service sell or dispose of the Pink House as surplus property?

The Service has limited authority to sell or dispose of the land it administers as defined in the [Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976](#). Because the surrounding habitat is of high ecological value and supports the refuge's mission, only an equal-value land exchange is applicable in this case.

What has the Service done to save the house from demolition?

In response to community members, the Service has worked diligently with landowners, elected officials, and local advocacy groups for more than seven years to find an equal-value land exchange. While several promising leads were pursued, none were ultimately successful. In the interest of safety, and to ensure the house remained intact to affect an exchange, staff maintained the house to prevent catastrophic damage. For reasons outlined above, this approach is no longer feasible.

Is the Pink House listed on the National Register of Historic Places?

No. In 2011, the Massachusetts Historical Commission determined that the house does not meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and is therefore ineligible.

What will happen to the property if the Pink House is removed?

Removal of the Pink House would create an opportunity to enhance both the future resiliency and public access opportunities of this area. This would include repurposing the existing driveway into a small parking area and constructing an accessible observation platform. An area that has long been closed to public access would afford a unique opportunity for people of all abilities to experience and learn about the Great Marsh ecosystem from a unique vantage point.

Where and when can I read the draft environmental assessment and submit comments?

The draft document is linked below on the refuge's website. Several hard copies will also be printed for review at the Refuge Visitor Center (6 Plum Island Turnpike, Newburyport, MA). The proposal will be open for public comment between November 1 through November 30, 2023. Comments must be emailed to parkerriver@fws.gov.

Matt Hillman

Refuge Manager

[Parker River](#), [Thacher Island](#)

[Great Bay](#) and [Wapack](#) NWRs

6 Plum Island Turnpike

Newburyport, MA 01950

O: 978-572-5613

C: 774-303-9090



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