

The impact one man can have on the land.....

- At sometime around 1983 Richard Saulnier acquired a piece of land from his uncle, Dexter Layne. This piece of land was bordered on it's north easterly side by Two Mile Rd., and had frontage on Stepping Stones Rd. in Barrington.
- Mr. Saulnier told the Town of Barrington that his father (who had been the Road Agent for the Town of Lee many years earlier, and was Dexter Layne's brother-in-law) had taken sand and gravel from that piece of land to use on roads in Lee during the winter.
- Mr. Saulnier also had friends who submitted letters to the Town of Barrington stating that they had been taking sand and gravel from that same land on a regular basis in more recent years. In actuality, Mr. Saulnier and his friends had cut some trees, and scraped off the top soil to make it appear that the small area that had supplied sand and gravel to the Town of Lee Road Agent had gotten bigger.
- Without any real investigation the Town of Barrington agreed to allow Mr. Saulnier to remove sand and gravel from that piece of land as a 'Grandfathered' sand pit. As a grandfathered pit, Mr. Saulnier did not have to post a bond, nor have a plan for restoring the land after he had sold the sand and gravel.
- Mr. Saulnier had obtained a contract to supply sand and gravel to the massive project of expanding the runways at Logan Airport in Boston, MA. He immediately set about having the timber cut on this piece of land, selling the top soil, and opening the pit to the 18 wheel gravel dump trucks and trailers hauling sand and gravel to Boston.
- Finally, after a couple of years Mr. Saulnier, who was now facing litigation from the Town of Barrington for ignoring their orders, as well as action from the IRS for non-payment of taxes, abandoned the pit and filed for bankruptcy. The IRS seized the land and sold it at auction.

The next seven slides are aerial photographs (taken by the USDA) of the land on either side of Two Mile Road between Stepping Stones Road and US Route 4 in Barrington, NH.

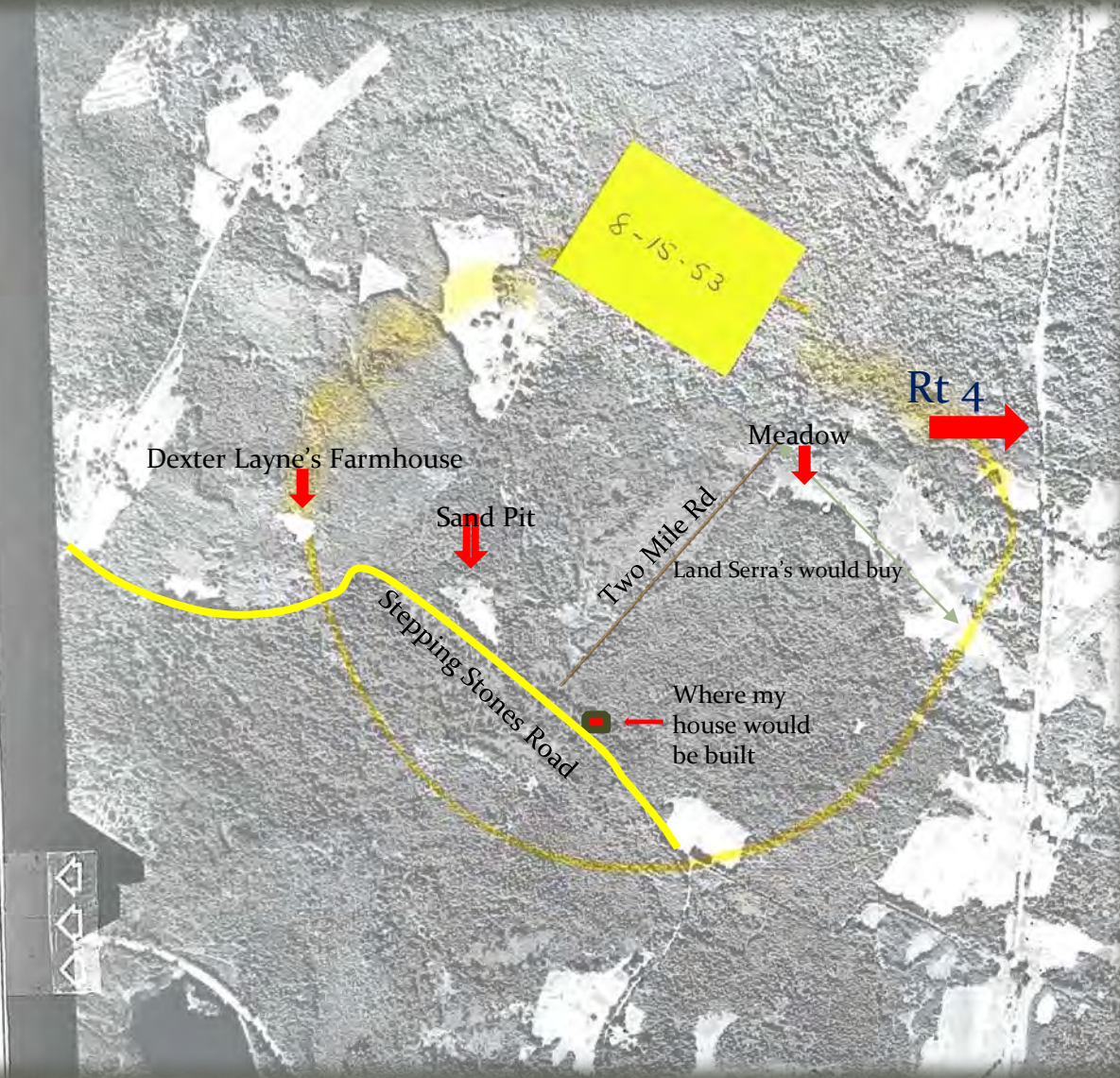
The rest of the slides are aerial photos I had taken, and photos from Google Earth archives. I have used these slides as a presentation to the UNH Environmental Education Summer Institute, to show what one man can do on his land to negatively impact the abutting lands, ecology, and wildlife.

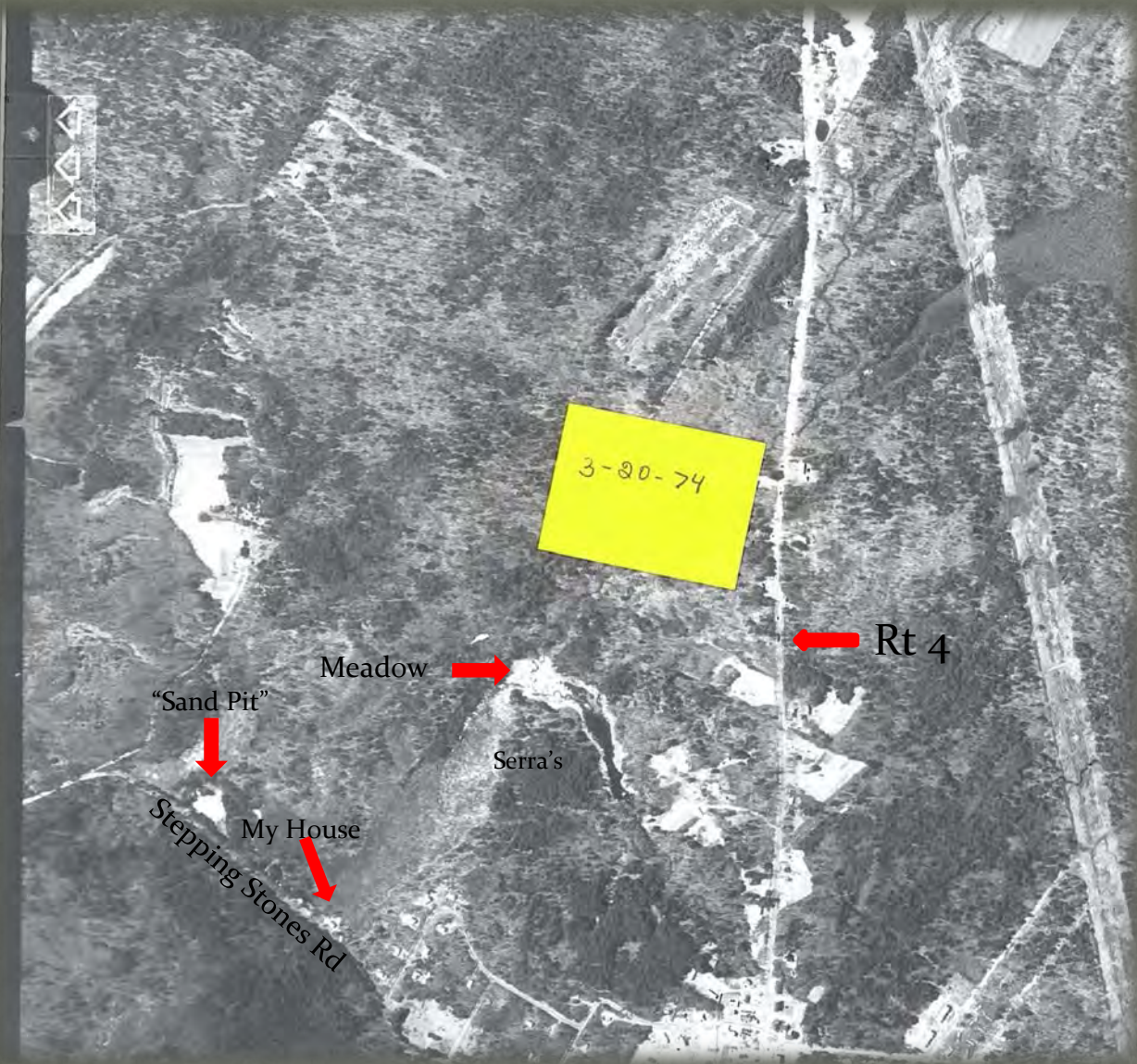
The orientation of the slides changes, so I have labeled the landmarks to make it easier to follow the history of the land from 1953 until 2009.

August 1953

The area circled in yellow shows the land that has been impacted.

Note Route 4 on the right.



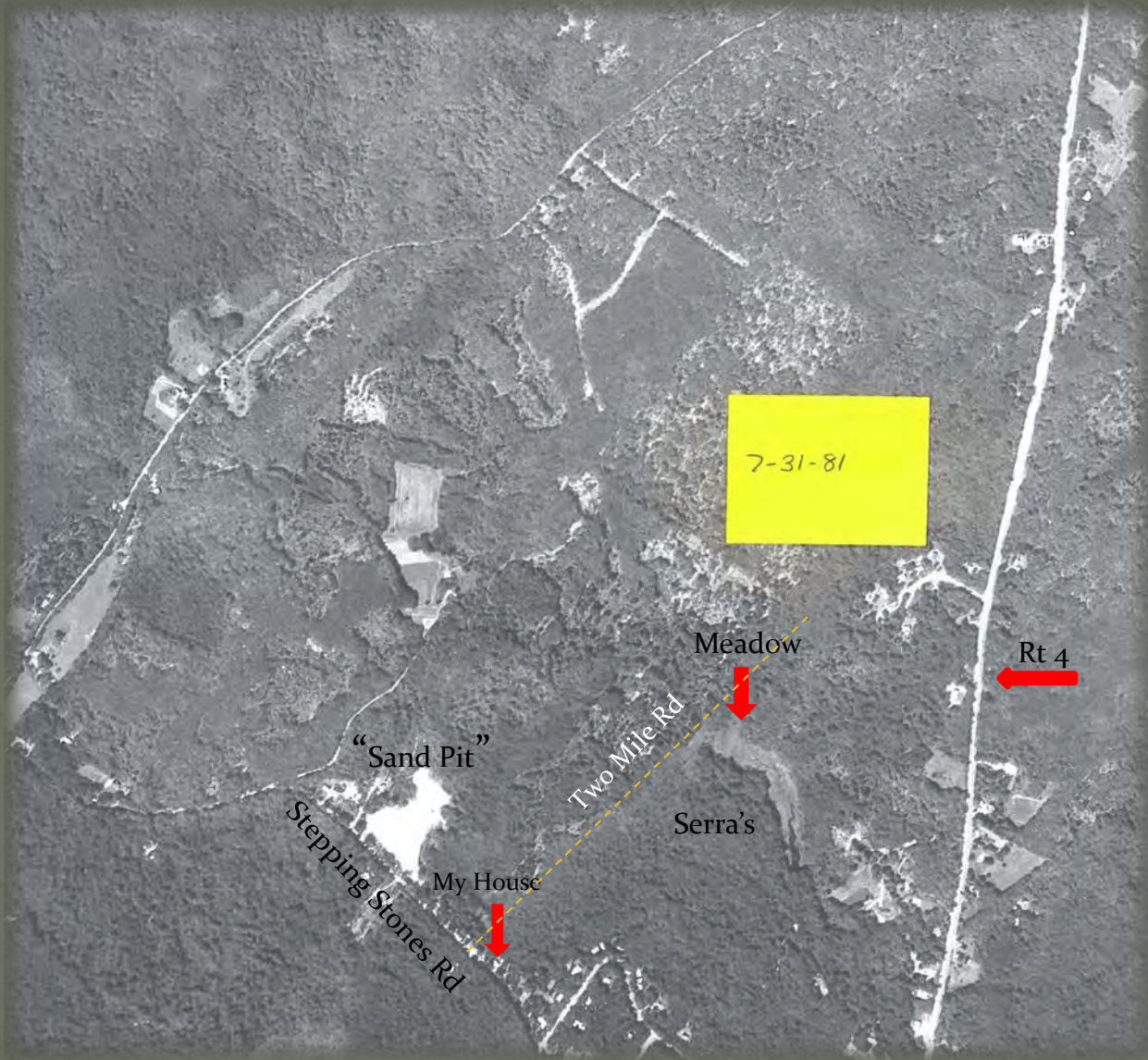


March 1974

Note that there is snow on the ground.

The difference in the appearance of the vegetation in this photo is because at this time of year the deciduous trees do not have leaves. Beaver feed on deciduous trees. There is also a lot of pine on what would become Serra's land.

Also note that the shape of the 'sand pit' hasn't really changed in 21 years.



July 1981

Note the size of the beaver pond in the meadow and the shape of the 'sand pit'.

Route 4 is visible on the right.



August
1984

Sand pit in
upper
center of
slide.

August, 1984 another view



Showing meadow.
Notice tip of sand pit
along the lower edge of
the photo.

You could hike the
historic Two Mile Road
between Stepping Stone
Rd and Route 4. It is
important to note that
at the time my land was
surrounded on three
sides by land owned by
the Town.

August 1985



Meadow

“Sand Pit”

Sand pit is in center. Note the meadow with the brook flowing through in the upper right, and the shape/size of the sand pit, which hasn't changed compared to the 1984 slides. Hopefully you are familiar with the landmarks by now, as the visual impact of this slide and the next one is important.

Keep in mind that the sand, gravel, and mature trees & vegetation on the land that was becoming the sand pit, absorbed a huge amount of water from rain and snow. The same amount of rain and snow will continue to fall on the area, and where will it go with nothing to absorb and use it?

September 1986



Note the expansion of the sand pit, and the flooding of the meadow.

Water has backed up and impacted the trees in the area below the meadow, the land owned by the town - and flooded my back yard.

Arial photos I hired to have taken

- The next three slides are aerial photos I had taken to show more clearly the extent of flooding. Because the land between my house lot and the Serra's land belonged to the Town of Barrington, I went to the Town to ask them to investigate the Sand Pit. I was told that the Town didn't care if their land (which was acquired for nonpayment of taxes) was flooded, and to take up my concerns with the Serra's to see if they would do something about the beaver dam, since the Town believed the beaver were the cause of the flooding.
- The beaver, which had been damming up Caldwell Brook since before 1953 (see the first slide), had no choice but to build their dam higher as more and more water began flowing through Caldwell Brook. This was due to the Sand Pit owner mining below the water table, and bulldozing two trenches across Two Mile Rd to drain his pit into the brook. When the town tried to get the pit owner to fill in the trenches, he simply installed large metal culverts, then filled over them. One culvert remains, as well as a ditch where the second culvert was removed.



The flooded meadow and land behind my house



Sand Pit

My House



Stepping Stones Road



Rt 4

Beaver Dam

Beaver Lodge

Flooded Meadow

My House

Stepping Stones Rd

Two Mile Rd

Culvert



What factors contributed to the formation of a small lake on what had been the 'meadow', and the land between the ridge of Golden Crest Estates and Two Mile Road?

Are beavers to blame?

There were two small, man made rock culverts (approximately 6 inches in diameter) dating back to the 1700's, along the whole of Two Mile Road to handle spring run-off. One of these culverts was destroyed when the owner of the sand pit bulldozed across Two Mile Road to allow water to drain into Caldwell Brook. The resulting ditch was 6 feet deep and at least 12 feet wide (this is where the Town ordered the pit owner to fill in the ditch, but he then just installed a metal culvert and filled over it. The other small rock culvert had been destroyed earlier by heavy machinery when the trees were cut and the sand removed (a ditch across Two Mile Rd. remains).

An untold amount of board feet of lumber was harvested from the trees that were cut down to expand the sand pit. No 'intent to cut' permit was ever applied for, nor issued.

While there is no accurate record of how much sand and gravel was removed, the material was being sent to Boston to fill out into the harbor in order to expand runways for Logan Airport. Eighteen wheel gravel dumps ran in and out of the pit in a constant stream from 6:00am - 7:00pm six days a week for more than a year.



April 23, 1992

This is a photo from the Google Earth archives.

Six years later and the meadow is still a pond, and all trees on the land below have died. I had purchased the Town-owned land at Tax Sale, so that I would be an abutter to anyone on the sides and back of my home. The sand pit was no longer in operation.

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April 10,
1998

Photo from Google
Earth archives.

Twelve years later: A Fish & Game officer had helped me install a beaver box in the dam, out of fear the dam would break and wash out Route 4. The dam was so immense that we could only get down a couple of feet into the dam, but it helped relieve the amount of standing water on the land, and by now the beaver were gone, due to lack of food.



September
21, 2003

Photo from Google
Earth archives.

Seventeen years later.
Note the beaver are
back, and have repaired
the dam. The wooden
beaver box had
deteriorated, so very
little, if any, water
flowed through it.

Vegetation is wetlands
types. Still lots of small
dead trees sticking out
of the muck.

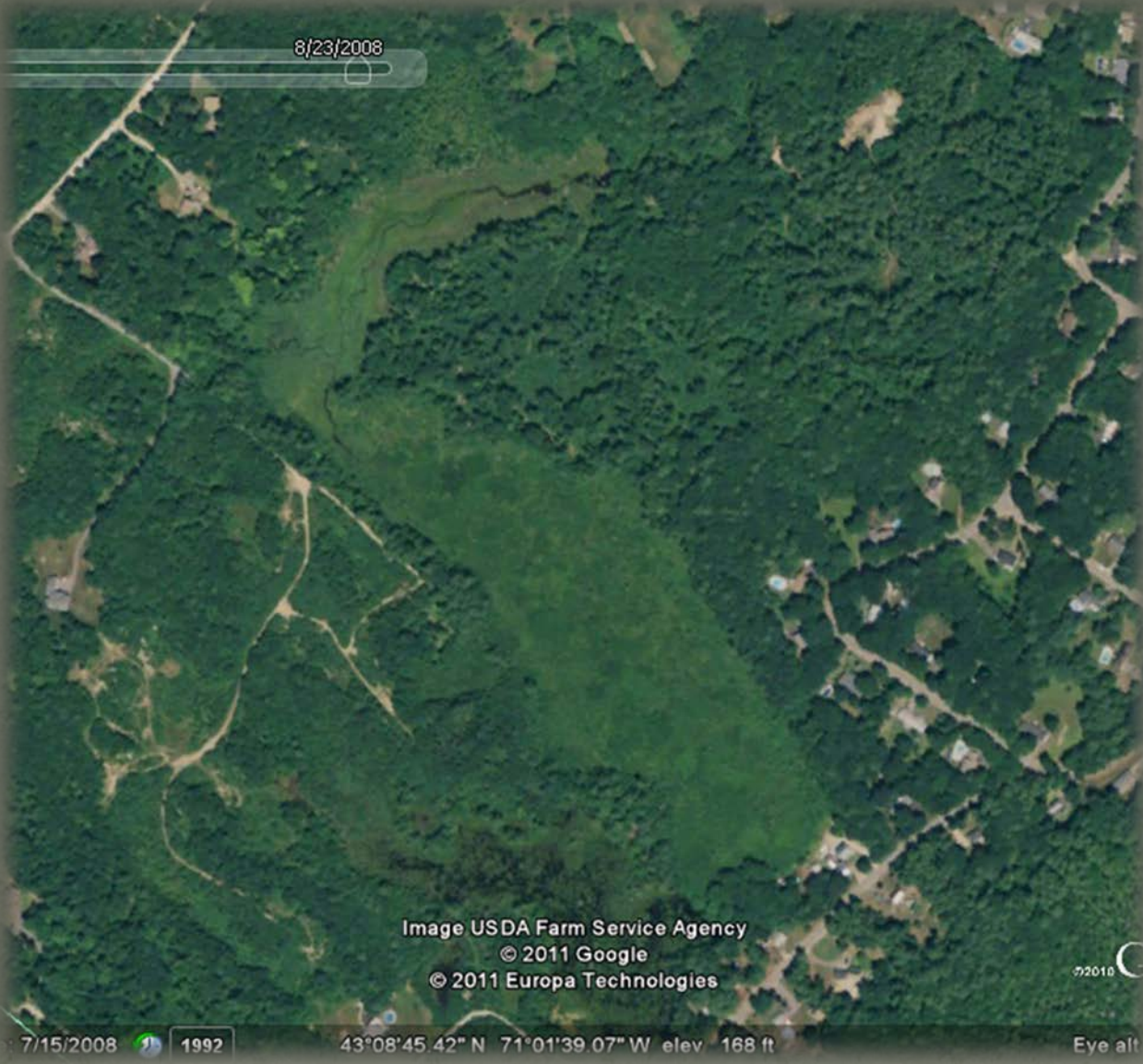


October 6, 2006

From Google Earth archives.

Twenty years later: The beaver have used up their food supply, and left, and the dam is gone, but the alteration to the land is still very much apparent. It had been declared Prime Wetlands some years earlier.

Note the vegetation covering the sand pit is returning. This new growth uses only a small percentage of the water that falls on that area compared to the mature trees that had been cut down.



August 23,
2008

Google Earth
archive photo.

Even 22 years later
water still drains
across Two Mile
Road, and the land
behind my house
remains wet.



September 19,
2009

Google Earth archive
photo.

The improved
resolution of this
photo shows even
more clearly the land
that remains an
unusable, man-made
swamp.

The historic Two Mile
Road remains ruined
in many places and is
impassable off
Stepping Stones Road.

In conclusion

- I want the Serra's and the developer to know that I am not opposed to the plans they have for this land. They, too, have lost a good chunk of what had been useable land – which now is being limited by the laws and regulations that protect wetlands.
- I do want assurances from the Town of Barrington and the owner of the development that the drainage system for the development of that land, currently before the Board, will include a stipulation that no damming of Caldwell Brook by man nor beast will be permitted, and that whatever entity oversees the designated common area will be responsible for removing any beaver dam that may be built, so that the flooding of my land will not be increased.
- I am happy to answer any questions.