



## NORCO SPORTSMAN'S CLUB HISTORY

(Written circa May 1995, word smithed August 2021)

The Norco Sportsman's Club was founded in 1938 by a group of Norton Company employees who counted among their members the Jeppson and Higgins families, the founders of the Norton Company. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norton\\_Abrasives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norton_Abrasives) The Club's main goal was to provide a social club for the sporting employees of Norton Company. It was established as a private Club, in as much as one had to be a Norton Company employee in order to join. One could retain their membership as long as they were an employee or left the company under good standing.

In 1946 the members purchased a large parcel of land in Princeton, MA, which is now where the Club is located. The initial acquisition was 350 acres for \$5000. Contained on the property is a historical homestead on Houghton Road that is the site of the first settlement in Princeton by Joshua Wilder. This site is a destination with the Princeton Historical Society discovery programs. The original club house which was situated on the Wilder foundation burnt down. In 1953 the engineering shack used to build the Norton Company Machine Division Building on Pullman Street was donated to the Club. A mortgage was taken out for the move and construction of the new foundation and location, which was paid off in 1978.

The Club facilities:

- the clubhouse includes:
  - a large hall upstairs on the upper level;
  - a full licensed bar with pool table on the lower level;
  - a juke box and pinball machine on the lower level;
  - and kitchen facilities on the lower level.
- outdoor facilities include:
  - marked hiking trails,
  - large pine picnic grove with firepits,
  - a volley ball court on the lawn,
  - horseshoe pits on the lawn,
  - a large barbecue pit,
  - rifle/pistol range,
  - trap range,
  - 13 station 1 mile long 3D archery range.
- the land is mostly wooded with several fields and a year-round running brook.

Among the Club events held each year are:

- a 7 week ice fishing derby,
- annual one day ice fishing derby,
- annual spring freshwater one day derby,
- periodic salt water fishing trips,



- 4 main meal functions throughout the year:
  - clam bake, steakout, game supper, and Swedish meatballs.
- monthly we serve a meal on the regular club meeting night.
- a Halloween party and Christmas party are regularly scheduled events.
- a special meal is put on for all those members who have met a volunteer work requirement throughout the year, to thank them for their efforts.
- for the hunter and shooters a yearly turkey shoot is conducted, a trap shoot for those that have participated during the year.
- the club is involved in the Worcester County Pheasant program, in which we release approximately 225 pheasants over six weeks.
  - one Saturday during the 6 week period is picked for a longest tail feather competition.

In 1965 the club was incorporated under President Charles Bucko, who is still an active and contributing member. Charlie serves well as the guru to consult and is our Worcester County League delegate. In 1977 the first tree cutting, land management program was undertaken. The Norco Sportsman's Club's property management goal is to develop and manage a forest that will support various types of wildlife with a focus on the deer population. This goal will also provide a sanctuary for the non-sporting member in the off-hunting seasons. The portion of the property set aside for recreation will be used to support the shooting sports, archery, target, and shotgun.

In 1990 due to the downsizing of Norton Company, the club recognized it no longer had a sizeable membership to support the club's many activities. Therefore, sportsmen who never worked at Norton Company were allowed to join as Associate Members, thus removing the Norton-only private member status. In 1994 the first six of these Associated members were upgraded to full voting membership status. The Norco Board of Directors reviews the status of each Associate Member on an annual basis to determine if this Member should be recommended to be upgraded. The main criteria is that this Associate Member become involved with the club activities and show a desired interest in becoming a full voting member. The upgrade is not an automatic process, one must display a serious effort in getting involved with the club to be considered.

Up to 1994 the club was subsidized by Norton Company as was all the company's employee social clubs. As a result of the French Saint Gobain buyout of Norton Company, the club annual subsidies had come to an end. The club must now find the revenue and volunteer workforce to maintain the functions for the club members. There are always club projects going on. For example, in progress is the construction of a Sporting Clays range, a new barbecue pit, and the removal of the underground oil tank. Future projects include an outside pavilion, an upper level kitchen, and rebuilding of the trap house. The club is open every Thursday evening for socializing and trap shooting. The regular club meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month and the Board of Directors meeting is held on the 4th Thursday of each month. Saturdays are typical volunteer work days except during hunting season, of course.