

REPORT FROM THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

The Natural Resources Commission consists of five elected members, with staggered terms of either two years or three years. Current commissioners are Heidi Kost-Gross, Chair; Stephen Murphy, Vice Chair; Joan Gaughan; Raina McManus; and Lise Olney. Neal Seaborn retiring after 3 terms and Dr. Sarah Little who served pro-tem in FY 14.

The NRC strives to provide environmental leadership, and to protect and improve the Town's outdoor recreational resources. The NRC is charged with the statutory responsibilities of *Park Commissions, Conservation Commissions, Tree Wardens, Shade Tree and Pest Control Officers, and Town Forest Committees* under Massachusetts General Laws Chapters 40, 45, 87, 131 and 132. The NRC appoints and oversees the Wetlands Protection Committee and the Trails Committee. In FY14, the NRC held 12 public meetings, 3 Public Shade Tree Removal Hearings, and issued 26 Permits for the use of Park or Conservation Land.

To find out more about the NRC, please visit: wellesleyma.gov/nrc. You will find links to many resources related to the work of the NRC; agendas for upcoming NRC meetings; and minutes of past NRC meetings. Through the web page, you can also sign up for the NRC quarterly email newsletter and “like” the NRC Facebook page.

Noteworthy Developments of FY 14

Fuller Brook Park Preservation Project Funded: A \$5.4 million park improvement project was approved by the Annual Town Meeting, with 4.5 million coming from the Community Preservation Act Fund and the remainder of 1.0 million coming from the Town’s capital budget. Construction will begin in July 2014.

Rain Garden Installed at Town Hall Duck Pond: A rain garden and other low impact development features (LED), including pervious sidewalk pavers, a pervious stone dust path surface and native plantings, were installed adjacent to the Town Hall Duck Pond to improve water quality in the pond and to serve as a potential model for residents. The Wellesley Garden Study Group generously contributed funding for the plantings. For information on rain gardens and low-impact development techniques, please visit wellesleyma.gov/nrc.

NRC Supported Park and Playground Improvements: In FY 14, the NRC approved the restoration of the Hunnewell Field basketball courts and the use of the courts for winter ice-skating. A plan for new playground equipment was approved for Perrin Park with funding from both the Community Preservation Act Fund and private donations.

Massachusetts Honored Wellesley with 30th Year Tree City USA Award: In May 2014, Wellesley was the first municipality in the state to earn a 30th Year Tree City USA designation in recognition of the Town's exemplary tree management program.

Winter Moth State Biological Control Project Continued at Centennial Reservation: For the fifth year, scientists from the State Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) released parasitic flies in Centennial Reservation to control the invasion of the winter moth. The DPW reported that the pilot program appears to have been successful in discouraging the proliferation of this insect resulting in the reduction in the use of pesticides to control proliferation.

Morses Pond Restoration Continued: The NRC continued to work with Pond Manager Dr. Ken Wagner, the DPW, and the Recreation Commission in restoring and maintaining the Pond's health. The phosphorus inactivation system is substantially improving water quality and weed harvesting is reducing invasive aquatic plants.

NRC Members Joined New Town Committees:

- New Outdoor Lighting and Noise Committee: In Spring 2014, NRC Commissioner Raina McManus began serving on this new committee formed by the Planning Board to evaluate issues related to outdoor lighting and noise, and to make recommendations for possible bylaw changes.
- North 40 Steering Committee: In Spring 2014, NRC Chair Heidi Kost-Gross and Vice Chair Stephen Murphy began serving on the Town's North 40 Steering Committee, which was formed to evaluate the possible acquisition and potential uses for the Wellesley College property known as the "North 40."

NRC Members Continued to Serve as Liaisons on Town Committees: NRC members served on Community Preservation Committee, Trails Committee, 900 Worcester St. Committee, Playing Fields Task Force, and High School Stadium Task Force.

Thanks and Appreciation

The NRC wishes to thank the many volunteers who help protect and maintain Wellesley's open space, especially the members of the **Wetlands Protection Committee** and **Trails Committee**, **both** worked tirelessly throughout the year on behalf of our Town.

Former NRC Commissioner **Neal Seaborn** stepped down after completing three 3-year terms, having made incalculable contributions to the Town as a guardian of the local environment. NRC Commissioner **Dr. Sarah Little** stepped down after completing a 9-months appointment to the Board. Her service is also recognized with gratitude.

The NRC gratefully acknowledges the gift of three parcels of land on Seaver Street received from **the heirs of Mildred and Melvin Morse** and from **Babson College**. These valuable parcels will become part of Fuller Brook Park.

The NRC extends thanks to the **Wellesley Garden Study Group** and the **Wellesley Hills Junior Women's Club** for their generous financial gifts received this year.

Thanks also to Wellesley resident **Laura Fragasso**, who in May 2014 organized the "Arts in the Park" program in liaison with the Wellesley Women Artisans, local art students and the Wellesley Community Art Project.

REPORT FROM THE WETLANDS PROTECTION COMMITTEE

In FY 14, the WPC members were Bob Collins, Chair; Carl Sciple, Vice Chair; Richard Howell; Jay Hammerness; and J. Stanley Waugh. A new Wetlands Administrator, Pam Helinek, joined the department in June 2014.

The WPC has the power and authority to administer and enforce the Wetlands Protection Act and the Wellesley Wetlands Protection Bylaw. In FY 14, the WPC held 23 public meetings and issued 40 Orders of Conditions, 16 Determinations of Applicability, 14 Certificates of Compliance, and 2 Enforcement Orders. None of the decisions of the WPC were appealed in FY 14. Wetland fees received in FY 14 totaled \$15,315.

REPORT FROM THE TRAILS COMMITTEE

In FY 14, the Trails Committee members were Miguel Lessing, Chairman, Bob Brown, Joan Gaughan (NRC Board Representative), Diane Hall, Denny Nackoney, Jared Parker, John Schuler, and Bob White

During FY 14, the Trails Committee maintained and improved Wellesley's trail network and continued its community outreach programs. Total town trail mileage is now 43 miles, with 26 miles of marked trails.

Trail Maintenance and Expansion

Posts, directional arrows, medallions, 20 map houses, and 4 doggie bag stations are maintained. The Department of Public Works assists on larger projects and keeps paths mowed in the summer. Graffiti cleanup is a constant activity.

The following projects were completed in FY 14: completed Crosstown Trail Extension to Natick; widened Sudbury Trail access on west side of Dover Road; added MWRA trail markers on the Sudbury Aqueduct; installed fencing to provide safer passage around the Fuller Brook gate house; installed steps at the Rosemary Brook Siphon House through an Eagle Scout project; created an alternate path around Wellesley Country Club pool construction.

Community Outreach

The Committee led 3 walks in the fall and 5 in the spring with 245 participants -- the best year ever. We led a walk through the North 40 the first time. Kids' Trails Day attracted 106 attendees.

Including maintenance work and special request walks, total program participants reached 408, which was a 21% increase over the previous year. A web page and Facebook page are kept fresh and updated. The Committee participates in the Bike Safety Committee, the Sustainable Energy Committee's Green Collaborative, the Wellesley Day of Service, and supports the Earth Day cleanup along the Charles River.

Other News

The Wellesley Network and Information Systems Department produced updated trail maps utilizing new GPS data, which were installed in the map houses and incorporated into our publications and web page. We continue to appreciate the cooperation we receive from Mass Bay Community College, Babson College, Wellesley College, Olin College, the Town of Needham, the DCR, and the MWRA, which allow the trails network to cross their properties.

The Committee is grateful for the help received from Town boards and Town staff, the Wellesley Boy and Girl Scout Troops, Haynes Management Inc., Nelson Properties, National Development LLC, and the Beard Way Homeowners Association.