

REPORT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

It is the mission of the Natural Resources Commission to provide stewardship, education and advocacy of the Town of Wellesley's park, conservation, outdoor recreation and open space resources so that the full value of the Town's natural assets can be passed on to future generations.

The Natural Resources Commission provides the Town with the highest quality of environmental leadership, establishes sound environmental policy, improves environmental planning and management, and protects and enhances the Town's natural and outdoor recreational resources. To achieve these goals, 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 Commission appoints the Wetlands Protection Committee, the Trails Committee, and oversees special committees such as the Morses Pond Management Committee, Pesticide Awareness Committee and the Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee. A representative from the Commission serves on the Community Preservation Committee ("CPC"), the High School Land Use Committee, the Playing Fields Task Force, the Sprague Field Task Force, the 27 Washington Street Town Development Review Team, and in addition, the NRC works closely with the Wellesley Cancer Prevention Project and the Wellesley Conservation Council.

The NRC's website contains the agendas, meeting minutes, goals, priorities and projects of the NRC, the Wetlands Protection Committee, and the Trails Committee. The NRC web site also contains extensive information on the Town's parks, playgrounds, recreational resources and natural resources including the Town-wide trail system, as well as pesticide use reduction information, climate change protection information and provides links to related fields. For more information about the NRC, Trails Committee and the Wetlands Protection Committee please visit our website at www.wellesleyma.gov/nrc.

The NRC continues to implement a very ambitious and well-planned agenda. In FY08, the NRC held 27 public meetings and 4 Public Shade Tree Removal Hearings and attended 22 additional public meetings with the School Committee, School Building Committee, Advisory Committee, Board of Selectman and other Town boards to discuss the NRC's open space protection efforts and related Town business.

In 2008, the NRC was successful in securing funding from the Advisory Committee, Community Preservation Committee and Town Meeting for its FY08 initiatives that included continued funding for the implementation of the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan, the NRC's Public Shade Tree Replacement Program, Town-wide trail network improvements and playground and parkland improvements. The NRC successfully secured several conservation restrictions protecting extensive open space and wildlife habitat. In partnership with the Department of Public Works (DPW), the NRC continued to implement its Pond Restoration Master Plan, and this year the NRC focused on the second year of implementing the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan. In addition, the NRC's program to reduce the use of pesticides continues to be recognized by the State as

the leading local pesticide use reduction and education effort in Massachusetts. The NRC was also awarded the first in the state 25-Year Tree City USA designation in recognition of its tree management and replacement program.

The NRC meets regularly on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the NRC's office at Town Hall. All Town residents are encouraged to attend.

NRC'S OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION EFFORTS

Implementation of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan

As part of the Commission's efforts to ensure that Wellesley's natural resources and recreational areas are preserved and protected, the NRC continued its efforts to implement and update the Town's *Comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan*. An Open Space and Recreation Plan is required for a town to apply for state funds for open space acquisition. This plan makes an inventory of existing resources; evaluates the interests of the community; and attempts to prioritize open space and recreational needs. In turn, the plan assists town officials in making land acquisition decisions. In a developed suburban community such as Wellesley, issues concerning the acquisition and management of our remaining open space have become important and controversial. This year, the NRC has focused on implementing the following Open Space and Recreation Plan goals: pond restoration with emphasis on Morses Pond; open space acquisition; trail network improvements; playgrounds and playing fields improvements; enforcement of the Town Wetlands Protection Bylaw; protection of the Town's trees; and pesticide education and reduction efforts.

Educating the Public Regarding the Need to Preserve and Acquire Open Space

The Commission continues to focus on educating the public regarding the advantages of open space preservation and acquisition. For Wellesley, there are many advantages to open space preservation and acquisition, all of which culminate in making our community more livable. The trend towards larger and newer housing has resulted in more conversion of open spaces into development. Consequently, the Town is faced with both a challenge and an opportunity; indeed, the challenge is to preserve existing open spaces and avidly look for opportunities to acquire much-needed open space. Justification for preserving open space at a time of high-profile development fall into three interdependent benefits -- social, environmental and economic.

Social: From a societal point of view, open space affords passive recreation, density control, environmental education, and the ability to enjoy healthful walks, beautiful views, and opportunities for quiet relaxation and closeness to nature. Most importantly, balanced open spaces become part of a community's character and identity.

Environmental: The environmental richness of conserved open space, i.e., the wetlands and floodplains, insures the continued operation of vital natural functions that prevent altering or damaging Wellesley's water supply, aquifer zones and watershed districts. Open space preserves and protects the wide diversity of plant and wildlife species and the continued operation of those natural processes necessary for survival, i.e., air and water purification, flood control, water storage and climate control.

Economic: Open space preservation is most often a less expensive alternative to

development. The case for open space protection, based on a cost vs. revenue concept, indicates that development of land does not usually pay its own way and property tax revenues levied do not cover the costs a community incurs in providing essential services -- schools, water, sewer, utilities (i.e., annual property tax revenues for the median priced home in Wellesley are \$4,660, whereas the annual school expenditure per student is \$9,241). In addition, open space increases the value of all property while saving public funds by preventing development of areas of critical concern.

Although Wellesley is generally considered a "built-out" town, a Community preservation Build-Out Analysis of the Town by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council concluded that an additional **851 acres (out of a total land acreage of 6,338) of privately owned open space could be developed under existing zoning regulations, which could result in an additional 2,229 dwelling units with 8,094 additional residents.** This increased development would irreparably alter the Town's open space and would dramatically increase demands on the town's infrastructure, including its school system, water supply, and solid waste capacity (see "Metropolitan Area Planning Council Build-Out Analysis of the Town of Wellesley," November 2000).

Many residents are deeply concerned about the "mansionization" of Wellesley. Wellesley is currently faced with an increasing loss of open space, and the Commission will continue to make the preservation and acquisition of open space a priority for the benefit of all residents.

NRC Advocates for Open Space Protection at 27 Washington Street Redevelopment Project

In FY08, National Development, Inc. purchased 27 Washington Street, the former Grossman's site, and proposed a mixed-use redevelopment that includes a two-story office and retail building adjacent to Washington Street and 2 four-story residential apartment buildings, which will provide 150-units of housing, 30 of which will be affordable units under Wellesley's Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw. The existing site is almost entirely developed, and currently 83 percent of the site is covered with impervious surface, including 75,000 sq. ft. of impervious surface within the Wetlands Protection Act riverfront area. The site comprises 5.3 acres and the proposed redevelopment of the site will result in a significant reduction in the amount of the impervious area on the site, which will create a total increase in open space on the site from 16.8 percent to 37.5 percent.

Throughout FY08, the NRC met with National Development and participated in the Town Development Review Team on the project. The NRC worked with the developer and negotiated a conservation restriction on the land fronting the Charles River that will permanently protect this area from develop and will allow for public access and a pedestrian pathway as well as provide landscape and natural vegetation improvements. In addition, the NRC continues to work with National Development, the Town of Newton, the Charles River Watershed Association, the Town's State Legislators and the Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation ("DCR") to improve the Charles River Greenway in this area and the old rail road bridge abutting 27 Washington Street on DCR land that provides a connection over the Charles River to Newton.

NRC Evaluates State-Owned Cochituate Aqueduct for Town Acquisition

In FY08, the NRC continued its effort to evaluate the remaining 5 acres of the Cochituate Aqueduct that is owned by the State. At the 2002 Annual Town Meeting, the Town voted to pursue the acquisition of this open space land bordering Natick for municipal purposes. In FY07 the State completed its appraisal of the land and has offered to sell the land to the Town. The NRC continues to work with the Board of Selectmen, Housing Development Corporation and the State to evaluate this property for possible acquisition by the Town for open space and other potential municipal purposes.

NRC's Eighth Annual Earth Day Clean-Up, April 26, 2008

The NRC's eighth annual Earth Day clean-up along the Charles River was held on Saturday, April 26, 2008, and was co-sponsored by the Charles River Watershed Association. This annual event is a rite of spring for many volunteers from Town Boards, community organizations and the Town's colleges and scout troops. This year, over 40 volunteers helped clean-up along the banks of the Charles River, which is one of our most precious water resources. This year marked the 38th anniversary of Earth Day and the NRC thanks all those who participated.

NRC Completes Nomination Application to Place the Fuller Brook Park on the National Historic Registry

In FY08, Ms. Shary Berg, the NRC's Landscape Historian on the Fuller Brook Park, completed the nomination application for listing the Park on the National Registry. The Mass. Historical Commission has confirmed that the Fuller Brook Park is eligible for listing on the National Historic Registry, including the entire park, running from Maugus Avenue in the east to Dover Road in the west. This project was funded by the Community Preservation Commission and is being spearheaded by the NRC in cooperation with the Wellesley Historical Commission. The application will now be presented to the mass. Historical Commission for a final recommendation before being presented for listing on the National Historic Registry.

NRC Efforts to Preserve Open Space at MassBay Community College

In FY08, the NRC continued its efforts to preserve and explore the possibility of acquiring open space that is State-owned and under the control of MassBay Community College. The College owns approximately 43-acres of environmentally significant open space, which encompasses extensive wetlands, forest land, and is located in the Town's Water Supply Protection District. This state-owned land includes extensive wildlife habitat and a public trail system that is maintained by the Town of Wellesley. Based on the Town's past partnership with MassBay Community College as stewards of this important conservation land, the NRC has made a concerted effort towards continuing this partnership in order to protect this land as open space in perpetuity. The NRC has held several meetings with MassBay's new College President, Dr. Carole M. Berotte Joseph, in an effort to unite the college community and the Town in protecting this open space for future generations and allowing Town residents to continue to take walks through this important natural resource and discover the beauty of this land.

The NRC was granted funding by the Community Preservation Committee to develop an acquisition feasibility study that is the first step towards protecting this open space. The potential for the Town to acquire this land as open space was identified in the "Wellesley Community Preservation 2008 Plan."

Fuller Brook Park Preservation Master Plan

In FY08, the NRC continued its work in developing a master plan to preserve and maintain the Fuller Brook Park, a 23-acre parcel that encompasses Wellesley's most popular walking, biking and running trail. The master plan will assist the NRC in preserving and maintaining this valuable resource, and, most significantly, ensure its historical integrity. Fuller Brook Park runs from Dover Road, across from Wellesley College's Nehoiden Golf Course, and follows the Fuller Brook about two miles to Hunnewell Field near the Wellesley High School. A second nearby portion of the Park, called the Caroline Brook Path, runs from Paine to Maugus Street. Heavy use and minimal maintenance has left Fuller Brook Park in a deteriorated and vulnerable state. The Master Plan will address competing uses for its trail – which often sees walkers and families guiding baby strollers, making way for runners and bicyclist of all ages – and will also develop a plan to maintain trees, develop a cohesive planting system that includes eradication of invasive plants that have taken over areas along the Fuller Brook. Much of the Park's infrastructure also suffers from years of erosion and needs repair.

Fuller Brook serves as the stormwater drainage system for more than half of Wellesley before flowing into the Charles River. In the early 1900's, Wellesley began acquiring land around the brook, seeking a pedestrian and horse path that avoided the then heavy traffic of horse drawn vehicles on Washington Street. The formal 23-acre Fuller Brook Park – with its footbridges, stone bridges for vehicles and the linear path system – was completed during the Depression. The NRC continues to work with the Halvorson Design Team, the Town's consultant on this project, to complete the Master Plan.

NRC Participation on the Wellesley High School Land Use Committee

The NRC and its Wetlands Protection Committee were invited by the School Committee to participate on a High School Land Use Committee, which evaluated the natural resource areas around the high school land to determine any site constraints and issues related to the proposed renovation and expansion of the high school. After extensive discussions and meetings, there was a conclusion that the School Committee would not pursue the use of any parkland in the expansion or renovation of the high school. During the discussions, it was confirmed with Town Counsel that the process to convert parkland to any other use would involve an extensive 3-step Town and legislative approval process, should any conversion be proposed. The NRC continues to work with the School Committee to evaluate issues related to NRC land use at the high school site.

Collaboration with the School Committee and the School Building Committee to Evaluate Interim Off-Site Parking During the High School Construction Project

Throughout FY08, the NRC worked with a subcommittee of the School Building Committee to evaluate options for temporary and permanent interim off-site parking on parkland during the construction of the new Wellesley High School Project. It was a particular concern of the NRC to ensure that any temporary or permanent offsite parking on parkland would not have a significant impact on the natural resources of the area, park user groups or the neighborhood.

NRC Director Testifies at State House in Support of Conservation Legislation

In FY08, NRC Director Janet Bowser testified at the State House in support of the following legislation that is critical to helping protect and preserve the Town's open space and natural resources:

- For "No Net Loss of Conservation Lands," raising public disclosure requirements for Art. 97 votes permitting change of use of public lands.
- For conservation tax incentives, which would offer a Massachusetts income tax credit to landowners who make qualified gifts of conservation land or restrictions.
- For the "Community Planning Act" (CPA II), which would reform the Commonwealth's land use statutes to enable municipalities to bring their zoning and subdivision bylaws into line with their master plans and to determine the direction of their own growth and development.

NRC Attends Conservation Commission Day and Meets with State Legislators

The NRC Chair and the Director attended the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the establishment of Mass. Conservation Commissions on September 19, 2007 at the State House, and were able to meet with the entire legislative delegation for Wellesley including State Rep. Alice Peisch and representatives from Senator Creem's and Senator Brown's Offices to discuss a number of legislative bills and issues including environmental issues related to the redevelopment at 27 Washington Street.

NRC Endorses Mass. Climate Change Policy Position Statement

In September 2007, the NRC endorsed the Position Statement on the Massachusetts Climate Change Policy encouraging the State to reduce green house gas emissions through conservation, increased efficiencies, and renewable energy sources. The NRC, along with the major Massachusetts environmental organizations, have endorsed the position statement in order to urge Massachusetts State policy makers to support a goal of 80 percent mandatory emission reductions from current levels by 2050.

The NRC Advocates for Sustainable Practices and Green Building Design and LEED Standards for the Wellesley High School Project

The NRC is committed to working with all Town Officials, departments and residents to create a sustainable community. In FY08, the NRC continued to educate residents about what they can do to make their homes and lifestyles more environmentally friendly and advocated for the construction of "Green" municipal buildings in collaboration with the citizen environmental "SMART" group. NRC Members and staff attended a "Green Building Design Program" for the High School in January 2008 and advocated for maximizing green building design elements in the High School Project.

The NRC adopted the following statement urging the Town to support Green Building and "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design" (LEED) Standards for the design and construction of the High School:

"The Natural Resources Commission strongly recommends that the Town of Wellesley take action to seriously address the very real threats posed to our

Town and our world by global warming. Towards this end, the NRC urges Town officials to take all steps available to improve our energy efficiency and reduce our carbon emissions including the adoption of Green Building LEED Standards in the design of the renovation and expansion of the High School. Taking action now will improve our quality of life, save money, and make our Town a healthier, cleaner place to live and set a good example for future generations.”

NRC Participation on the Community Preservation Committee

In FY08, NRC member Joan Gaughan continued to served as the Commission’s representative on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). The Committee is charged with making recommendations for the use of CPA funds. The NRC worked with the CPC in writing and updating the open space section of the CPC’s 2008 “Community Preservation Plan,” which outlines the need for open space acquisition to help the Town protect its drinking water supply, wetlands, floodplains, wildlife habitat and scenic vistas, as well as expand recreational resources. This Plan also identifies goals and current and projected capital projects that may be eligible for CPA funding, including restoration of Moses Pond, Longfellow Pond, State Street Pond, and Abbotts Pond, the restoration of the historic Fuller Brook Park, and the Town Hall Park, as well as park, playground and recreational improvements. To read the full text of the CPC’s Community Preservation Plan, visit the CPC website: www.wellesley.ma.gov/cpc.

NRC Encroachment Correction Policy

Correction of encroachments onto public land is a Commission responsibility. Because the NRC has jurisdiction over the Town’s natural resources, including its park and conservation land, the NRC has encountered an increasing number of encroachments on NRC land by private parties. In most cases, a tactful reminder to the homeowner corrects the problem, but often the boundary line has become obscured and it is necessary to call upon the Public Works Engineering Division to survey the line and to place permanent bound markers. In order to have a uniform policy regarding the correction of encroachments, the NRC adopted a formal Encroachment Correction Policy in February 2006, which is based on the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Land Disposition Policy dated 1998. In general, the new policy states that the NRC will seek to correct all encroachments on land under its jurisdiction and require that the encroaching party restore the land to its original condition at their cost. The policy states that in exceptional circumstances, the NRC will consider encroachment corrections that involve a land exchange, but only if such an exchange results in a net gain of public open space and provides a substantial benefit to the Town as determined by the NRC. Occasionally, residents offer to pay for landscaping Town land next to their yards. These offers have to be considered carefully. While the Town welcomes help in cleaning up and enhancing our parks, some of these offers are denied if they discourage public use of public land.

NRC Assists with Development of Town-Wide Naming of Public Assets Town Bylaw

In FY08, NRC Chair Heidi Gross participated in the Naming of Public Assets Town Bylaw Committee formed by Town Meeting in FY07. Ms. Gross and NRC Director Janet Bowser worked with the committee in drafting a bylaw to govern the naming of public assets and gift acceptances. The NRC worked with the committee to build upon a policy that was inclusive of the NRC’s existing Gift Acceptance Policy. In February of 2008, the

NRC approved the proposed Naming of Public Assets Town Bylaw as drafted by the Committee and determined that the proposed bylaw was general enough to allow the NRC to continue to implement its longstanding memorial and gift policy and acceptance procedure, but provided enough oversight by Town Meeting to assure Town-wide consistency in the naming of public assets.

NRC'S RECREATIONAL LAND USE, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

NRC Playground Master Plan Improvements

Over the past several years, the NRC has worked with the DPW to implement an ambitious and successful Playground Master Plan for improvements at the parks, playgrounds and playing fields under its jurisdiction. Recently, new playgrounds and playing fields were installed at Ouellet Park, Warren Park, Phillips Park, Hunnewell Field Tot Lot.

New Playground Installed at Brown Park

A new playground was installed at Brown Park in June 2008 with tremendous support and an extensive fundraising effort from the neighborhood. The NRC would like to extend its appreciation to all donors and to neighborhood residents Susan Maggioni, Kristen Weiss and Carol Mungovan who worked on the fundraising effort for this new playground.

NRC Attends Rededication of Reidy Field Baseball Field and Improvements

In May 2008, the NRC attended the rededication of Reidy Baseball Field, which underwent a series of improvements paid for and organized by the Wellesley Little League. The improvements included a lighting system, a limited sound system, brick dugouts, new perimeter and dugout fencing and new bleachers and landscaping. Over the course of a year and a half, the NRC conducted a series of meetings and held two public hearings to present the improvements and gain feedback from all impacted constituencies, including the field user groups, the neighborhood residents, and other Town boards and interested parties. Over the course of the approval process, a number of compromises were made in order to address the concerns of all parties, resulting in the NRC's approval of improvements to Reidy Field that will expand recreational usage of the site that will not substantially affect the character of the site and its surrounding area and neighborhood. The Wellesley Little League paid for all improvements through private funds and the NRC applauds the League for taking the initiative and responsibility for making these improvements.

Morses Pond Parkland Improvements and Off-Season Beach Access

In FY08, the NRC worked with the Recreation Commission, DPW and its Trails Committee to allow for off-season pedestrian access to the Morses Pond parkland and beach. This off-season access will encourage residents to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of this area when the Town beach is not open. Access. In order to address Town liability issues, signs were posted indicating that anyone using the beach or swimming does so at their own risk.

The DPW made continued landscape improvements to the Morse Pond Beach area by removing approximately 200 feet of old chain link fencing and invasive vegetation was removed in order to encourage growth of beneficial native vegetation. The area was pruned back to improve public access and provide pleasant vistas and five new trees were planted along the pathway as part of the Town's Arbor Day Program.

Playing Fields Task Force and Improvements to Athletic Fields

In FY08, NRC Members Richard Bashian and Paul Cramer and Director Janet Bowser continued to represent the NRC on the Playing Fields Task Force. The Task Force, comprised of representatives from the NRC, DPW, Rec. Department, School Department, Wellesley Little League, Wellesley Lacrosse, and the Wellesley Soccer Club, continues to focus on identifying the most urgently needed improvements and developing a long-term plan for improvements to the Town's athletic playing fields. Improvements to NRC land in FY08 involved the installation of a new irrigation system and sod at Reidy Field in coordination with the Wellesley Little League's improvements. The NRC continues to work with the Playing Fields Task Force to improve the Town's playing fields and to obtain the maximum space with minimum wear.

NRC Participation in the Development of the Sprague Athletic Field Master Plan

In FY08, the Wellesley School Committee formed the Sprague Field Task Force, which included participation by several Boards including the NRC. NRC member Richard Bashian represented the NRC on the task force, which held extensive meetings and public hearings. The Task Force was charged with evaluating options and making recommendations for the remediation and improvement of the Sprague Field, which was the site of a former Town land fill, where glass and metal objects were identified as a potential public safety risk. The former landfill area is subject to a Mitigation Order by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. After extensive review, research and neighborhood involvement, the NRC voted to support the Sprague Field Task Force recommendation to install two natural fields and two synthetic fields at this location. There was extensive discussion about the type of material to be used on this field and the NRC concluded that the material identified as Thermoplastic Elastomer (TPE) would be the safest product available to use on the field.

NRC Issues Permit for Beach Boys Concert on Hunnewell Field

In May 2008, the NRC issued a permit with extensive conditions for the Wellesley Celebrations Committee May 18th large-scale concert and accompanying fireworks event on the Hunnewell Athletic Field parkland. This event included a large-scale concert by the Beach Boys Band and a fireworks display. Due to the fact that an event of this scale had never before been held on parkland, the NRC worked extensively with other Town departments and the sponsor to ensure that all precautions were taken to prevent damage to the parkland, athletic fields and natural resources.

NRC's TRAILS COMMITTEE

During FY08, the Trails Committee maintained, improved and expanded Wellesley's trail network, and continued our community outreach programs with the support of many organizations within Wellesley and the surrounding area. There are 25 miles of marked trails throughout the Town.

Trail Maintenance

Throughout the year, the Committee repaired or replaced posts, directional arrows, medallions and map houses. Members regularly monitor and maintain assigned sections of the trails network. The Department of Public Works provides assistance for larger projects such as removing major blowdowns. The DPW also keeps paths mowed in the summer. A major cleanup, with help from neighbors and the Selectmen, was conducted on the Crosstown Trail near the Warren Building. The Committee also supported the NRC's Earth Day cleanup along the Charles River.

Trail Improvement

The following projects were completed improving trail access:

- a) A new footbridge was installed near the Bates School.
- b) A section of trail in Boulder Brook Reservation was rerouted to avoid a wet area.

Trail Network Expansion

The Morses Pond Trail was lengthened by adding a section around the ice pond and removing the overlap with the Crosstown trail. The Recreation Department, the DPW and the NRC all gave approval for the reroute. The Guernsey Trail was rerouted through the Wellesley Collage campus, eliminating from the Trail 0.5 miles of town sidewalk and replacing it with a more scenic route. The Sudbury Path was rerouted through the Olin College Campus eliminating a section that traversed a parking lot. The Committee also provided input to the developers of the 27 Washington St. property in anticipation of extending the Charles River Path through their property and onto DCR land near Boulevard Rd.

Community Outreach

The following activities increased public awareness and encouraged trail use:

The Committee led three walks in the fall and four walks in the spring. There were 49 participants in the fall and 66 walkers in the spring. In the fall we had our first Kids' Trail Day in Centennial Reservation with 35 children and 15 adults visiting five nature related stations set up along the trail.

Bob White gave a presentation on the Trails Network to the Sprague/Hardy Cub Scout Troop. Miguel Lessing manned an informational booth at the Bates School.

The Web site, now in its fifth year, continues to provide on-line access to information about the trails network and Trail Committee sponsored events. The web site is updated on a regular basis and improvements are made to keep the site relevant and user friendly.

Trail Mapping

The Town's Network and Information Systems Department has been very cooperative in providing data for the maps. We will be using the Town's data for all future map printings. We appreciate their help with two projects this year:

- Morses Pond: Updated Morses Pond Trail Map and published new trails pamphlet.

- Centennial Reservation: Updated Centennial Reservation Trails map and published new trails pamphlet.
- Town-Wide Trails Map: To help residents locate the trails in town, updated the large trails map that is available through the Town Clerk's Office, designed a new trails map for the map houses and designed a new map for the network.

Trails Support

The Committee continues to appreciate the cooperation it receives from MassBay Community College, Babson College, Wellesley College, Olin College, the Town of Needham and the MWRA to allow the trails network to cross their properties.

As always the Committee is grateful for the tremendous help received from the Natural Resource Commission, Selectmen, Dept. of Public Works, Municipal Light Plant, Wetlands Protection Committee, Wellesley Boy and Girl Scout Troops, Wellesley High School Senior Class, Wellesley College Print Shop, Haynes Management Inc and Nelson Properties. Additional thanks also goes to Wellesley College, Babson College and Olin College for letting us reroute sections of the network through their campuses.

NRC'S TREE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

Public Shade Tree Replacement Program

The NRC, which acts as the Town's Tree Wardens, works with the DPW in developing and implementing the Town's Tree Management Program, and its goal is to preserve and maintain the Town's 3,150 shade trees for the enjoyment of the public and the enhancement of Wellesley's environment. Routine maintenance is conducted on a four-year cycle to provide adequate safety pruning to all of these trees. The care includes: vandalism repairs as needed; storm damage repairs; shade and park tree planting; management of new trees for one or two years; tree and stump removals as necessary; and other tree care according to need.

Trees are essential to Wellesley's character as a green, shady, residential town. Tree planting maintains Wellesley's property values and quality of life, reduces sound and glare, improves air quality, replenishes groundwater, reduces erosion, buffers weather changes, adds beauty, inspires tranquility, screens unsightly areas, and separates incompatible uses. This year, 106 new trees were planted by the DPW, primarily on public land. At Town Meeting this year, \$25,000 was appropriated for new tree plantings throughout Town and for shade tree replacement of trees lost due to age, disease, storms and road reconstruction projects.

NRC Works With DPW and the State To Develop A Tree Inventory Program

In FY08, the NRC continued to work with the Massachusetts Urban Forestry Division and the Parks Division of the Dept. of Public Works in the development of a State Tree Inventory Program tailored for the Town of Wellesley. The State has developed a database computer system entitled "Tree Keeper" that will assist the Town in developing an effective database system to track the health, location, and other information on the Town's trees. The State is initially providing the software free to the Town in order to help it develop an inventory listing of Town trees. The NRC is working with the Town GIS Department and the DPW to further develop this important database system.

Massachusetts Honors Wellesley with 25-Year Tree City USA Award

In May 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) presented a 25-Year Tree City USA Award to the NRC and DPW at a ceremony at the Elm Bank DCR Reservation. The event was co-sponsored by the NRC and DCR Commissioner Richard Sullivan presented the award to the Town of Wellesley in recognition of its significant commitment to community and urban forestry.

Wellesley was awarded the Tree City USA "Annual Award" for excellence in the management and nurturing of public shade trees for the 25th consecutive year. Only 80 of the 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts have ever received this award, and Wellesley has received it longer than any other. The NRC serves as the Town's Park Commission and Tree Warden and together with the Department of Public Works, promotes a "Shade Trees Make the Difference" campaign to encourage support for shade trees throughout the Town. To be eligible for the Tree City Award, Wellesley had to spend at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry, enforce laws that protect public trees and hold an Arbor Day celebration and meet other standards.

This award is a testament to the Town's long tradition of valuing trees and open spaces. Wellesley founded a Park Commission in 1888 to landscape avenues and parks, and it was one of the first boards established in the Town.

Urban and community forests are visible signs that our community has a sense of pride and that it has been highly valued by residents for a long time. The environmental benefits of urban and community forests are many but they can be summarized as follows:

- Our forested streets and parks help define the character of our community and offer the functional human benefits of noise reduction, cooling shade, visual screening, enhanced property values, economic growth, community pride, reduction of crime and more rapid recovery from illnesses;
- Our forests reduce levels of pollutants such as solid particles, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and others that seriously impact human physical, mental and emotional health negatively;
- Trees are the Town's most important natural infrastructure; and
- Our forests reduce heating and cooling needs for residential buildings thereby reducing costs, reduce the "urban heat island effect" (localized heating due to the preponderance of black topped surfaces) to provide a more human friendly living environment, reduce rainfall runoff and erosion thereby improving water quality and quicker re-charge of local aquifers, function as habitat for wildlife to enrich human enjoyment and reduce global warming for the long term security of the Earth.

Winter Moth Caterpillar Control Town Tree Protection Program

In FY08, in response to a significant increase in damage to Town trees by the invasive insect known as the "winter moth caterpillar," the NRC worked with the DPW to implement

its second year of a proactive program to address this problem and protect the Town's trees. Last year, the DPW proposed, and the NRC approved, a program to spray approx. 800 public trees with an environmentally safe spinosad product called "Conserve" to control damage from the winter moth caterpillar.

Winter Moth State Biological Control Project at Centennial Reservation

In May 2008, a team of scientists from the State Department of Conservation and Recreation released approximately 1,000 parasitic flies at Centennial Reservation in an effort to control the invasion of the winter moth, which is stripping trees of their foliage throughout the State, but particularly in Eastern Massachusetts. The NRC approved this project, which is the largest release of the flies in the State, which were also released in Hingham, Falmouth and Wenham. Professor Joseph Elkinton, a professor of entomology at UMASS Amherst, organized this joint project between UMASS, the Federal Government, and the State Department of Conservation and Recreation. The specie of fly released, which is the "cyzenis albicans," is a natural enemy of the winter moth and has been released in other areas to help eradicate the winter moth invasions. The scientists believe that the fly will only attack the winter moth and not other species, and that it will likely take years for the flies have a significant impact on the large number of winter moths.

Scenic Roads Tree Protection Enforcement

Pursuant to its authority as Town Tree Warden and under M.G.L. Chapter 40, sec. 15c, the NRC protects all public shade trees along the six scenic roads in Wellesley that have been designated by vote of Town Meeting as scenic roads: Benvenue Street, Cartwright Road, Cheney Drive, Pond Road, Squirrel Road, and the Waterway/Brookway. Under the statutory requirements of this law, the NRC is required to hold a public hearing to review proposed removal of trees along any designated scenic road. One public shade tree removal hearing on a scenic road was held in FY08.

NRC's EFFORTS TO PROTECT TOWN LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

Lawns, Buffers and Water Quality

Maintenance of the Town's half-dozen major and minor ponds is essential to Wellesley's quality of life. Under modern circumstances that means periodic dredging. Wellesley's ponds were largely weed-free up to the end of World War II. That was when retooling wartime industries and suburban developers sold the parents of the baby boomers on evergreen lawns. Sweeping green lawns symbolized English estates, where cool, damp weather and grazing sheep made them easy to maintain. But in America, grass is supposed to go to seed and become hay in July. Currently, Americans pour priceless water, fertilizer and herbicides onto their lawns, and the nutrients from these unnatural lawns pour into our streams, lakes and ponds. That is why ponds need dredging. In the words of the Town's Morses Pond consultant Dr. Ken Wagner, "Green lawns mean green lakes."

The quality of Wellesley's water supply and the cost of maintaining our ponds are directly related to the amount of pesticides and fertilizers used by Town residents. Perfectly manicured lawns need to be made socially unacceptable. Buffers as wide as possible need to be planted between overfed lawns and golf courses and storm drains and ponds.

NRC Pond Restoration Master Plan Implementation

The Commission continues to implement its *Pond Restoration Master Plan*, which sets priorities for restoring the Town's beautiful ponds. The NRC's Master Plan was developed in conjunction with the DPW and was endorsed in a resolution approved unanimously by Town Meeting in March 1998. As a capital budget priority, the NRC supports an alternating schedule of dredging feasibility studies and actual dredging for the next several years. Dredging studies are required because the method of dredging must be determined, the quality of the dredged material must be tested, and suitable disposal sites must be found. There are contracts to be written and issues of truck access, hours of operation, and the like to be resolved before work starts. To date, Reeds Pond, Bezanson Pond, Rockridge Pond and the Town Hall Duck Pond have all been successfully restored. A long-term, \$2 million comprehensive management plan has been developed for Morses Pond and is currently being implemented (see below). Next up are feasibility studies for State Street Pond (aka Skating Pond), and Abbotts Pond. The NRC would like to thank Town Engineer Steve Fader for his hard work and dedication in assisting the NRC with the restoration of Wellesley's ponds.

The NRC asks every resident to take personal action to prevent pesticides, fertilizer and herbicides from contaminating Wellesley's natural resources including the Town's drinking water supply.

Development of the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan

Morses Pond is Wellesley's preeminent natural, recreational and scenic resource. Approximately 40% of the Town's water supply is pumped from municipal wells located at the Pond, and the public beach and the open space bordering the pond have been used by many generations of Town residents. But Morse's Pond is facing a wide range of problems due to the fact that it provides drainage for an 8.8 square mile watershed, including commercial industry and several miles of heavily traveled Route 9. These problems, which include eutrophication and the increasing and dramatic spread of aquatic invasive plants and algae, support the immediate need for a comprehensive management plan that will examine the options available to address these problems. Over 300 residents from throughout the Town signed a Citizens Petition in support of the development of this action plan, which documents the community's broad-based support and concern for the health of the Pond.

In recognition of the need to address the health of Morses Pond, the CPC, Advisory Committee and Town Meeting supported funding for the development of a Comprehensive Management Plan for the pond at a cost of \$150,000, with CPC and Advisory sharing the costs evenly. The Board of Public Works, NRC and Recreation Commission formed the Morses Pond Ad Hoc Committee (MPAHC) to work with the Town's Pond Consultant, Dr. Ken Wagner, of ENSR, for a year and a half in evaluating options for the pond's preservation and restoration. As part of this evaluation process, the NRC voted to affirm its adherence to its Integrated Pest Management Policy that prohibits the use of all pesticides, including fluridone, in Morses Pond. As a result of this vote, fluridone was not considered as a management technique to be used in Morses Pond and other safer and non-toxic management alternatives form the Comprehensive Management Plan for the Pond. The plan, completed and approved by the three boards in Nov. 2005, outlines the options evaluated, makes recommendations for implementation, identifies a 5-year timeline for

implementation, and costs for the implementation of the identified options. The three boards, spearheaded by the NRC, work collaboratively in managing the pond and implementing the Plan.

Implementation of the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan

Over the past several years, the NRC has been successful in requesting and securing \$969,500 in funding from the Advisory Committee, the Community Preservation Committee, Town Meeting and Town Voters for the implementation of the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan. NRC Commissioned Neal Seaborn and the Town's Morses Pond Consultant, Dr. Ken Wagner, made a presentation to the 2007 Annual Town Meeting, which approved funding that included \$153,000 in capital funds from the Community Preservation Act Fund for a phosphorus and sediment inactivation station that will reduce the amount of phosphorus and sedimentation coming into the pond. In addition, \$650,000 was approved by Town Meeting and Town Voters in a debt exclusion vote for funding the design, permitting, construction and monitoring for the dredging of the northern portion of Morses Pond, which currently acts as a sediment and nutrient detention basin, but which has become more and more shallow over the years.

In FY08, Town meeting appropriated to the NRC \$166,500 in operating costs related to the Morses Pond Plan, including funds for operating the new weed harvester, which was approved for funding in FY06 and purchased in FY07, and is operated through a program with the DPW. Additional operating expenses for FY08 included: operation of the new phosphorus and sediment inactivation station that was installed in the spring of 2008; funding to hire a professional pond manager; funds for the design and permitting for placement of benthic barriers to prevent invasive weed growth and planting of selective beneficial plants; and organizing manual harvesting throughout the pond to complement the Town's weed harvesting efforts.

The NRC is the lead board for the implementation of this project and works collaboratively with the Board of Public Works and the Recreation Commission to implement the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan, and these three boards have formed the Morses Pond Management Committee, which oversees the implementation and management of the Plan.

Development of a Morses Pond Watershed Education Website Prototype

In FY08, the NRC and the Director worked with Dr. Wagner and his staff to develop a Morses Pond Watershed Education Website Prototype that will help educate residents regarding action steps that they can take to help protect the watershed and improve the pond's water quality.

NRC Town-Wide Residential Lawn Care Questionnaire and Education Effort

In FY08, the NRC Director worked with Dr. Wagner and his staff to develop a Town-wide Residential Lawn Care Questionnaire to evaluate the present state of lawn care practices as reported by homeowners in Wellesley, and portions of Natick and Weston in the Morses Pond Watershed.. The survey responses indicated that a majority of Wellesley residents are interested in "going green" and using environmentally friendly lawn care practices. It is also clear that a majority of Wellesley residents have a lack of knowledge about the type and quantities of pesticides and fertilizers applied to their lawns, due to the fact that a

significant number of residents outsource their lawn care management. The questionnaire, which residents could respond to on-line or by mail, had a tremendous response rate and will help the NRC better understanding the Town's watershed management needs and in developing an educational program to protect the town's land and water resources

NRC's EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROTECT WELLESLEY'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Protection of Wellesley's Water Resources Educational Program

In May 2008, the NRC co-sponsored, along with the Wellesley Conservation Council, a program outlining how residents can help protect Wellesley's water resources. A speaker from the Charles River Watershed outlined a number of recommendations for residents regarding how they can best protect the Town's water resources.

NRC's Educational Program on Rachel Carson's Centennial

NRC Director Janet Bowser and NRC Commissioner Heidi Gross organized a November 2007 public program on Rachel Carson's Centennial Year, which included a film on her Conservation Legacy as part of the NRC's environmental education effort.

NRC's Vernal Pool Education Project

In FY08, the NRC continued its efforts to protect Wellesley's vernal pools by sponsoring an annual vernal pool program to educate the public about vernal pools and the many species that inhabit them. Although Wellesley's Wetlands Protection Bylaw protects all State "certifiable" vernal pools, including their associated upland habitats (areas within 100 feet of the pools), finding vernal pools is the first step in protecting them. Approximately 50 children and their parents attended this year's program, held on May 3, 2008.

Presentation at Bates School Eco-Connection Program

In FY08, NRC Director Janet Bowser was involved in a yearlong program at the Bates Elementary School entitled "Bates Goes Green," and the culmination of this program was an "Eco- Connection" Day in May 2008, which included hands-on demonstrations on ways that students can help protect the Town's natural resources.

NRC's Pesticide Awareness and Organic Land Care Educational Campaign

The mission of the NRC's Wellesley Pesticide Awareness Campaign (WPAC) is to reduce the exposure of children and adults to pesticides and pesticide breakdown products which are known or probable health hazards, to protect Wellesley's water supply, and to restore Wellesley's land use style to healthier and less toxic land care practices.

Eight years ago, the NRC was instrumental in hiring Dr. Sarah Little as Wellesley's first Pesticide Awareness Coordinator, the first such local position in the state. Dr. Little resigned from her position with the Town in order to pursue her work on a more regional level, and the NRC thanks Dr. Little for her continuing efforts to help residents reduce pesticide use and educate residents about the harmful effects of toxics.

This year, the NRC continued to implement grants from both the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection and from the Mass. Toxics Use Reduction Network, to develop a local and regional Pesticide Use Reduction and Education Program. The NRC's Pesticide Awareness Campaign continued to focus on educating Town residents about reducing pesticide use in and out of the home, growing and caring for an environmentally safe lawn and garden, and on learning about the health risks posed by pesticides. For more information on alternatives to pesticides, and for a listing of organic lawn care companies, please visit the NRC's pesticide use reduction website at www.wellesleyma.gov/nrc/pesticide.

There is an increasing body of scientific evidence that synthetic pesticides in extremely small amounts can disrupt hormones, particularly in the fetus and in young children. Around the world deformed or absent amphibians—frogs, salamanders, toads—are signaling that something pervasive is terribly wrong. Please contact the NRC office for more information, and we encourage residents to take the NRC "Pledge to Learn About Alternatives to Pesticides" and receive a "Safe and Pesticide-Free Lawn" sign for your yard. Poison is bad for people as well as pets. Talk with your veterinarian if you want to know what lawn chemicals are doing to dogs and cats. Under no circumstances allow your children to play on recently treated lawns. If you are thinking about lightening your workload by reducing the size of your lawn, your family and all of us will be healthier.

This year, the Pesticide Awareness Campaign included extensive public education efforts including producing numerous fact sheets and brochures. Five years ago, the NRC and the School Committee approved an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy for land under their respective control, and the NRC continues to work with the DPW, the Board of Health and the School Committee to implement the policy. The NRC continues to work with the Department of Public Works, the Health Department and the School Department to track the Town's annual pesticide purchases and work towards reducing and eventually eliminating the use of pesticides on Town property.

NRC Sponsors Two Environmental Education and Organic Lawn Care Workshops

In FY08, the NRC sponsored two Town-wide Environmental Education and Organic Lawn Care Workshops in October 2007 and in May 2008. Each of the workshops was attended by over 100 residents and was led by environmental expert Jackson Madnick. The NRC continues to be concerned with the amount of pesticides and fertilizers used within the Town on private residences, and one of its top priorities is to continue its education program aimed at reducing the amount of pesticides and fertilizers used in Town in order to protect our natural resources and drinking water supply.

NRC Works With the Wellesley Country Club Regarding Pesticide Use and Development of an Integrated Pest Management Plan

In FY08, the NRC continued to meet with representatives of the Wellesley Country Club regarding their pesticide use and the development of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan. In May 2007, the Country Club and its consultant developed a "Turfgrass Management Plan Using an Integrated Pest Management Approach" in order to formalize its current turf and pest management practices with an effort to reduce the amount of pesticides it uses on the golf course, which is located in a Water Supply

Protection District. The NRC looks forward to continuing to work with the Country Club to reduce the amount of pesticides and fertilizer use on their property.

NRC Encourages Organic Lawn Care Services in Wellesley

As part of the NRC's Pesticide Awareness and Organic Land Care Educational Campaign, the NRC has reached out to lawn care and landscape service companies doing business in Wellesley to encourage and educate them on the need to reduce and eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers in order to protect public health, our natural resources and the Town's drinking water supply.

NRC Collaboration with the Board of Health on Healthy Living Grant

In FY08, the NRC continued working with the Health Department on a Wellesley Healthy Living Grant that is being funded through the West Suburban Community Health Network. The NRC continues to work with the Board of Health on this project to incorporate the use of the Town's Trail Systems and natural resources, as well as integrating a range of healthy living approaches in the home and encouraging the use of non-toxic alternatives. The NRC Director and the Animal Control Officer led a "Tots and Tails on Trails" walk to help educate residents about the Town's trail system and natural resources.

NRC's Pesticide-Free Gardening Education Effort

The NRC continues to educate and encourage residents to garden with perennials and foliage grasses that require no fertilizer or pesticides and only rainwater to flourish. The NRC has created three brochures towards this goal: *A Guide to the Demo Garden*; *Buffers Are Beautiful—Protecting Water and Wildlife*; and *Plants for Landscaping Ponds, Banks, Buffer Areas and Wet Areas while Encouraging Wildlife*. The three brochures are available in the NRC office in Town Hall.

NRC Administrative Oversight of the Brookside Community Garden

The Brookside Community Garden at Oakland Street and Brookside Road had another successful year. The NRC provides administrative oversight of the community garden for the DPW, which owns the land. The Town requires that all gardeners at Brookside Garden manage their gardens organically with no use of pesticides. This year, the DPW installed a new raised garden plot to accommodate a handicapped gardener and completed other garden landscape improvements to improve the area and accessibility. There were many new gardeners who created beautiful gardens and added to the sense of community at Brookside.

NRC Collaboration with Wellesley Cancer Prevention Project

The NRC continues to support the work of the Wellesley Cancer Prevention Project (WCPP), which focuses on assessing the relationship between environmental issues and the incidence of cancer. The NRC looks forward to continuing to work with and support the WCPP's educational efforts aimed at cancer reduction and awareness.

NRC'S WETLANDS PROTECTION COMMITTEE

The NRC, having the powers and duties of Conservation Commissions, appoints the five volunteer members, and two associates, of its Wetlands Protection Committee (WPC). The NRC delegates to the WPC the power and authority to administer and enforce the Wetlands Protection Act (G.L. Chapter 131, Section 40) and Wellesley's Wetlands Protection Bylaw (Article 44).

Wetlands Permits

In FY08, the WPC held 12 public meetings, reviewing 49 proposed projects under the State Wetlands Protection Act and the Wellesley Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Hearings included the review of 26 new Notices of Intent (NOI) and 23 Requests for Determination of Applicability were reviewed. Fifty-five permits were issued in FY08, including 20 Orders of Conditions (wetland permits); one Amended Order of Conditions, 11 Certificates of Compliance (for completed projects), 23 Determinations and two Enforcement Orders. Two of the WPC's decisions were appealed. Wetland fees received totaled \$16,655. During FY08, the WPC addressed two wetland violations.

Wetlands Protection Bylaw

The Wellesley Wetlands Protection Bylaw (Article 44) was approved by Town Meeting on April 2, 2002 and became effective on September 12, 2002. The WPC adopted application Filing Fees on October 9, 2003; Regulations, including Performance Standards in October 2003 (revised on June 24, 2004); and Rules for Hiring Outside Consultants on April 22, 2004.

Bylaw Resource Areas. The following areas (referred to as "resource areas") are protected by Wellesley's Wetlands Protection Bylaw:

Wetlands *marshes, wet meadows, bogs, swamps, banks, reservoirs, Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, creeks*

<u>Isolated wetlands</u>	containing at least 2,500 square feet of surface area;
<u>Upland areas</u>	land within 100 feet of the above resource areas;
<u>Vernal pool habitats</u>	that include the upland areas within 100 feet of vernal pools;
<u>200 foot Riverfront</u>	land within 200 feet of perennial streams/rivers; and
<u>Lands that flood</u>	bordering land subject to flooding (i.e., abutting wetlands)
and;	isolated land subject to flooding (i.e., upland area depressions)
	<i>(the above floodplains do not have buffer zones)</i>

The Wetlands Permitting Process

Anyone proposing to alter any areas that are located within 100 feet of a wetland or within 200 feet of a perennial stream must file a NOI under State and Town wetland protection laws prior to commencing any activities. If the applicant is in any doubt as to whether an activity is subject to wetland regulation (i.e. whether a wetland permit would be required), they should file a Request for a Determination of Applicability (an informal process to ask the WPC to determine whether a NOI needs to be filed for the proposed project).

The WPC regularly processes several kinds of applications under the State Act and Town Bylaw. The following applications are the most commonly filed with the Committee:

1. Request for Determination of Applicability (RFD) – to determine whether the law applies to a particular area and project.
2. Notice of Intent (NOI) – for projects that propose to alter a State or town resource

area.

3. Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) – for the review of wetland and/or upland resource area boundary lines, or for “simplified review” certification.

The response to an RFD is a Determination of Applicability (DOA). The DOA establishes which portions of a property are subject to the law and which are not. A positive DOA would be issued for proposed work that requires the filing of a NOI. The WPC’s response to an NOI is an Order of Conditions (OoC) to do the work. This can include either a denial of the project, or an approval that can spell out in detail the terms under which the proposed work can be performed. An ANRAD can be filed prior to a NOI, as it allows an applicant to receive certification for the exact boundaries and status of their property’s resource areas before designing a project and filing a NOI. An Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD) is the response to an ANRAD, and addresses resource area and boundary delineations, as well as “simplified reviews.” The above Orders and Determinations are valid for three years. The wetlands administrator is available to help guide residents or their representatives through the wetland permitting process.

Significant Wetlands Protection Projects and Concerns:

Protecting Wellesley’s rivers, streams and ponds: Most of the permit applications that are received by the WPC involve proposed projects that are located in riverfront areas or near streams or ponds. Filings often propose the expansion of an existing building, the replacement of an existing building with a larger building, or the removal of natural vegetation (often mature trees) for the creation of grassed lawns. Protecting our streams and their receiving water bodies from the cumulative adverse effects of resource area alterations, while accommodating reasonable expectations of property owners, is an on-going concern.

Buffer Zone Landscaping Protection. The WPC endeavors to protect our lakes and streams by requiring natural buffer zones between manicured lawns and wetland areas. This, unfortunately, only provides minimal protection to Wellesley’s natural assets, since runoff from manicured lawns will still end up running into streets, street drains, and eventually into our lakes, ponds and streams. Therefore, the WPC encourages homeowners and developers to use native plants in their landscaping plans. Native plants are beautiful, have excellent wildlife habitat value, are drought resistant, and are low/no-maintenance. Realizing that modern civilization requires certain tradeoffs, the WPC, in collaboration with the NRC’s Pesticides Awareness Campaign, seeks to educate residents about the adverse effects of their modern ways, such as:

- Purchasing fertilizers and chemicals for the sole purpose of creating greener lawns. These chemicals will eventually end up in our lakes and ponds, playing a major role in their accelerated rate of eutrophication.
- Applying herbicides and chemicals for the sole purpose of killing non-grass species. Herbicides and chemicals can have serious side effects to wildlife, to neighboring and downstream vegetation, and to human health.
- Misuse/Overuse of precious water resources. Installing irrigation systems and freely using limited water resources for the perfect lawn threatens our water supply. New England was blessed with an abundant supply of pure groundwater, but over the years, that supply has been threatened by overuse and misuse. The Committee endeavors to protect our water, which is our most precious natural

asset.

NRC AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

In FY08, Heidi K. Gross was elected NRC Chairman, Paul A. Cramer was elected NRC Vice Chair and Joan Gaughan was elected Secretary. NRC members Neal Seaborn and Joan Gaughan were re-elected by Town voters to 3-year terms. Bob White was reelected Chairman of the Trails Committee. The NRC appointed Eric Seaborn, Carlos Gimeno and Laurel Landers as new members of the Wetlands Protection Committee replacing Robert McDonnell and Rebecca Weisman, and Debra Takacs was appointed as an associate member. In FY08, Mary Jane O'Donnell served as Chair and Rhonda Ryznar served as Vice-Chair of the Wetlands Committee. The NRC thanks all its volunteers for their time and considerable effort towards protecting our natural resources.

NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT STAFF

The NRC staff consists of a full-time NRC director, a full-time conservation administrator, a full-time secretary, and a part-time environmental education coordinator. Adam Bossi, who had previously worked as the conservation administrator in the Town of Lexington, was hired by the NRC in May 2008. The NRC thanks its summer college intern, Amanda Savitt, who returned this year and provided outstanding assistance on the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

NRC Director Janet Hartke Bowser was reappointed this year to serve on the Massachusetts Municipal Association's Environmental Policy Committee. In addition, Ms. Bowser provides extensive professional oversight and management assistance to the Morses Pond Management Committee, Pesticide Awareness Committee, Trails Committee, Wetlands Protection Committee, Playing Fields Task Force, and the Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee.

Citizen Inquiries and Educational Outreach

The Natural Resources Department is committed to providing the highest level of service to the Town's citizens. The Department averages over 120 citizen inquiries per week, and many of these inquiries involve walk-in office visits after citizens are referred to the NRC by other Town Departments. The NRC staff assists citizens with a wide range of questions concerning the use and improvement of park, playground, forest, conservation and recreational land, acquisition and protection of open space, public shade tree regulations, wetlands protection requirements, vernal pool protection, toxics and pesticide reduction, encroachment corrections, and the process of project approval and scheduling of meetings with the NRC and the Wetlands Protection Committee.

Wildlife Notes

Wellesley is fortunate to have a wide diversity of wildlife throughout its open space, and wildlife habitat protection is one of the NRC's top land protection priorities in order to preserve and protect this diversity. Several red-tailed and broad-winged hawks were seen in Centennial Reservation, the Town Forest, and near the Town Hall Duck Pond. Recently, a moose was seen on the loose on Wellesley's residential streets, and wild turkeys were once again sighted throughout Town. Many residents enjoy fishing for bass, pike, pickerel and

the occasional trout in the Town's ponds and streams. Deer, coyotes, foxes, possums, opossums, rabbits, porcupines, weasels, fishers, woodchucks, skunks and turtles were among the wildlife spotted throughout the NRC's conservation reservations. Great blue herons, ducks including several wood ducks and hooded mergansers, ring-necked pheasants, northern bobwhites, great horned owls, woodpeckers, eastern bluebirds, warblers, finches, sparrows and many other species of birds continued to be in abundance throughout the Town's open space this year.

Volunteers and Donors

Volunteers make Wellesley. The Town needs volunteers for its appointed boards. We need Friends groups for every park and pond in Town. We need trail monitors. We need wildlife inventory compilers. We need people willing to take the initiative. Waiting for you is work, friendship and the old-fashioned sense of a job well done. Please call the NRC, the Selectmen's office or the department that interests you.

Many thanks to all the volunteers, especially the NRC's Trails Committee and the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, who help keep Wellesley's open space clean! Generous gifts were received this year from the Wellesley House and Garden Club and the Wellesley Garden Study Group. *Thank you!*

Many of the benches, trees and landscape in Wellesley are gifts to the Town in memory of someone dear. The Commission needs gifts to make additional improvements throughout Town and especially along the Fuller Brook Park. Will you help? Donors of \$400 or more will have their names and gifts recorded for posterity in the Charles B. Steward ledger on display in the Town Hall foyer. Please contact the NRC office if you would like more information.

Respectfully Submitted,

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Heidi K. Gross, Chairman
Paul A. Cramer, Vice Chairman
Joan E. Gaughan, Secretary
Richard H. Bashian
Neal Seaborn

Janet Hartke Bowser, Director

