

- 3,146 people in attendance at 164 general interest programs
- 82,206 visits to the library website www.wellesleyfreelibrary.org

The following chart describes total collection holdings followed by circulation information for fiscal years '04 and '05 in all locations and by books vs. non-print materials.

	BOOK HOLDINGS		NON-PRINT HOLDINGS		CIRCULATION	
	FY '04	FY '05	FY '04	FY '05	FY '04	FY '05
MAIN LIBRARY	220,684	232,165	18,552	19,389	497,079	527,433
HILLS BRANCH	11,037	10,916	596	724	14,102	13,867
FELLS BRANCH	8,322	7,665	230	391	14,065	16,102
TOTALS	240,043	250,746	19,378	20,504	525,246	557,402

Respectfully Submitted,
 Marla Robinson
 Chair, Board of Library Trustees

REPORT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005

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

The Commission's goals are to provide the Town with the highest quality of environmental leadership, to establish sound environmental policy, to improve environmental planning and management, and to protect and enhance the Town's natural and recreational resources. To accomplish 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 Pesticide Awareness Committee. A representative from the Commission serves on the Community Preservation Committee ("CPC"), the Morses Pond Ad Hoc Committee, the Playing Fields Task Force, the Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee, the 27 Washington Street Study Committee, the Post

Office Square Task Force, and the NRC works closely with the Wellesley Cancer Prevention Project and the Wellesley Conservation Council.

The Commission has established a web site that publishes 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, and provides links to related fields. For more information please visit the NRC Web site at www.wellesleyma.gov/nrc.

The NRC continues to implement a very ambitious and well-planned agenda. In FY05, the NRC held 26 public meetings that included public hearings on the NRC's Open Space and Recreation Plan, Fuller Brook Park Restoration Master Plan, Reidy Field Little League Improvement Plan and the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan. In addition, the NRC held three Public Shade Tree Removal Hearings and met several times with the Board of Selectman to discuss the NRC's open space protection efforts.

In April 2005, Town Meeting approved the NRC's FY05 initiatives including CPC funding for placement of the Fuller Brook Park on the National Historic Register, funding for playground improvements at Brown Park, as well as continued funding for the NRC's Public Shade Tree Replacement Program and for Town-wide trail network improvements. Town meeting also approved funding for additional improvements at the Warren Park and Playground and for development of an Integrated Pest Management Turf Plan for the Town's playing fields. The NRC successfully secured several permanent 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 development of a Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan. In addition, the NRC's program to reduce the use of pesticides was 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 22-Year Tree City USA designation.

The NRC's regular meetings are scheduled for the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the NRC's office at Town Hall. Residents are encouraged to attend.

NRC's FY05 Open Space Preservation Efforts

NRC Efforts to Preserve State-Owned Open Space at MassBay Community College

In FY05, the NRC has undertaken a concerted effort to preserve and explore the possibility of acquiring open space 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 abuts the Town-owned Centennial Reservation, the Town's largest parcel of open space. This state-owned land includes extensive wildlife habitat and a public trail system that is maintained by the Town of Wellesley is located in the Town's Water Supply Protection District. 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 land for future generations and continuing to enable Town residents to take walks through this important natural resource and discover the beauty of this land.

In FY05, 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 Plan,” June 2003, and updated in June 2005.

NRC Develops Fuller Brook Park Restoration Master Plan

In FY05, the NRC continued its work in developing a master plan to restore 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 restoring and maintaining this valuable resource, and, significantly, ensure its historical integrity. The NRC was successful in securing funding from the Community Preservation Committee and Town Meeting in FY05 to apply for placement of the Park on the National Register of Historic Places.

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, which is slated for completion by the end of 2005.

Conservation Restriction at 866 Washington Street Will Preserve Open Space

A high point for open space preservation this year came from the placement of a new conservation restriction that will add to the permanently protected 8.7 acres of open space at 866 Washington Street. The NRC worked with the Trustees of Reservations to protect this additional 5-acre parcel through a conservation restriction that will: 1) expand contiguous protected open space in the Hunnewell Family Protected Land Trust; and 2) significantly add to open space already protected in the immediate vicinity, thereby enhancing not only Wellesley's scenic landscape, but also protecting the area's habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the Lake Waban/ Upper Charles River area. The net effect will be not only to enhance Wellesley's scenic landscape, but also to protect the variety of wildlife and wildlife habitat in this area. This conservation restriction will also contribute to the protection of

water quality in the Charles River watershed by limiting development of the property. By protecting the open space and the scenic qualities of this property, both its historic landscape and natural resources will be permanently preserved. The NRC is deeply grateful to Mr. Francis Williams, the owner of this property, for his generosity and foresight in protecting this important historic and natural resource, in addition to the 8.7-acres of land that he has already protected at this location.

NRC Acquires Conservation Restriction at 144 Glen Street

In February 2005, the NRC acquired a conservation restriction at 144 Glen Street, which permanently protects approximately 11,000 sq. ft. of land. The conservation restriction area encompasses a stream and wetland area and adjoins a wooded conservation parcel owned by the Wellesley Conservation Council. This conservation restriction also preserves a wildlife corridor between White Pond and Carisbrooke Reservation. The NRC is grateful to the property owners of 144 Glen Street, for their generosity and foresight in granting this conservation restriction to the NRC, which will permanently protect this open space.

NRC Acquires Conservation Restriction at 27 Livingston Road to Protect Open Space

In September of 2004, the NRC acquired a conservation restriction that will permanently protect 1.2-acres of land at 27 Livingston Road. This conservation restriction will protect in perpetuity an area that includes wetlands, dense forest, and contains a newly created vernal pool near the Sudbury River Aqueduct. This conservation restriction is of particular benefit to the Town in that it will protect wildlife habitat, will help preserve wetlands and mature forest, as well as provide for continued scenic enjoyment from the Sudbury River Aqueduct Trail. This conservation restriction was offered by the owner of the property, who received a wetlands permit for the construction of a new house. The NRC is grateful to the owner of this property for granting this conservation restriction to protect valuable open space.

NRC Participation on the Community Preservation Committee

Throughout the past year, NRC member Joan Gaughan 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 June 2005 "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 Morses Pond, Longfellow Pond, State Street Pond, and Abbott 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: <http://www.wellesleyma.gov/cpc>.

Protecting Wellesley's Natural Resources

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 Plan goals: pond restoration; open space acquisition; trail network improvements; playgrounds and playing fields improvements; enforcement of the new Town Wetlands Protection Bylaw; 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 falls into three interdependent benefits -- social, environmental and economic.

Social: From a societal point of view, open space affords passive recreation, density control, environmental education, 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. They preserve and protect 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 recent study 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 it’s 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’s Sixth Annual Earth Day Clean-Up, April 30, 2005

NRC members Joan Gaughan and Heidi Gross organized this year’s annual Earth Day clean-up along the Charles River on Saturday, April 30, 2005, which was co-sponsored by the Charles River Watershed Association. Over 20 volunteers helped clean up along the banks of the Charles River, which is one of our most precious water resources. This year marked the 35th anniversary of Earth Day and the NRC’s sixth annual clean-up, and the NRC thanks all those who participated.

Vernal Pool Certification Project

The Commission's Wetlands Protection Committee continues to make efforts to protect vernal pools in Town, and a Vernal Pool Workshop was held on May 7, 2005 to educate residents about these important seasonal natural resources. Please call the NRC office if you know of any land that may contain a vernal pool so that it can be inspected, certified and protected from any alteration or development in the future.

Recreational Land Use, Planning and Management

NRC Playground Master Plan Improvements

Over the past several years, the NRC has implemented an ambitious and very successful Playground Master Plan for improvements at its park’s playgrounds and playing fields. Recently, new playgrounds and playing fields were installed at Ouellet Park, Warren Park, Phillips Park, Hunnewell Field Tot Lot, and funding has been secured for improvements at Brown Park.

Warren Park Playground Improvements

In FY05, playground and playing field improvements continued to be made at Warren Park. Funding for the Warren Park improvements came from the NRC and over \$112,000 was contributed by the Friends of Warren Park who raised funds from families, local businesses, and associations for the project that encompasses a tot lot, a play structure designed for older children and improvements to the park’s playing fields. The Friends of Warren Park was the

neighborhood-based group that brought in donations from more than 300 Wellesley families for the project, which also garnered an additional \$49,000 from a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant. The Warren Park playground improvements is a successful example of how funds from the community, the CPA, and the Town came together to build a project that is enjoyed by so many. The NRC thanks Sandy Joseph and Peter Mongeau, two neighborhood volunteers who spearheaded the community effort that brought the Warren project to fruition. The NRC also thanks the DPW for its assistance in making the improvements to the Park.

Specific improvements in FY05 at Warren included new playing fields and an irrigation system at the upper and lower fields and a new ADA pathway to the new lower field playground structure. The Warren playground came under NRC stewardship in the late 1980's, following earlier closure of the elementary school on site. The old play equipment at Warren – new home for the Town's Recreation Department – failed to meet safety and handicap accessibility codes and was removed.

Hunnewell Field Tot Lot Playground Improvements

In FY05, the playground equipment at this location adjacent to the tennis courts was replaced with new playground equipment, new fencing and landscaping, and provisions to make the area handicapped accessible. This project was approved by Town Meeting as an FY05 Capital Budget Request, with additional funding of \$25,000 coming from a generous gift from the Albert Indresano Memorial Gift Fund.

NRC Approves Little League's Reidy Field Improvements

In June 2005, the NRC approved the Wellesley Little League's Reidy Field Improvement Plan. The Plan proposed a series of improvements to the baseball field, which is a public field that is used primarily by the Wellesley Little League, as well as by the Wellesley High School Freshman Softball team. The improvements include 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 has committed to paying for all improvements through private funds and the NRC applauds the League for taking the initiative and responsibility for making these improvements.

Playing Fields Task Force and Improvements to Athletic Fields

The Playing Fields Task Force, comprised of representatives from the NRC, DPW, Recreation 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 in FY05 included the completion of the NRC's improvements to the Hunnewell Field Tot Lot Playground and to the Warren Park playing fields and the renovation of the Hunnewell Field J.V. baseball infield and backstop area along with a new ADA pathway from Rice Street. In addition, improvements at Schofield School included renovation of the baseball field, soccer field and basketball court and the planting of 8 new trees. 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.

Improvements and Illumination of the Clock Tower at Clock Tower/Elm Park

In September of 2004, the NRC approved a proposal by the Rotary Club to illuminate the historic Clock Tower structure. This project was funded by the Community Preservation Committee, as well as from donations from the Rotary Club in celebration of its 100th anniversary. The NRC appreciates the dedicated effort by the Rotary Club to initiate this important project.

Efforts to Place the Clock Tower Park on the National Historic Register

In November 2004, the NRC voted to support the Historical Commission's effort to nominate the Clock Tower /Elm Park for placement on the National Register of Historic Places, which was funded by the Community Preservation Committee. This will allow Clock Tower Park to be nominated for placement on the National Register, giving it additional prominence.

Implementation of the Clock Tower Park Phase II Improvement Plan

In October of 2004, the NRC approved the Phase II Landscape and Hardscape Improvements to Clock Tower /Elm Park, which include the installation of extensive plantings and ornamental ironwork to further define the parkland boundary and to relate the west end landscaping improvements to the east end of the park. This project is a joint effort between the Hills Garden Club of Wellesley and the DPW, and this project received funding from the Community Preservation Act. The NRC greatly appreciates the efforts by Town Horticulturist Cricket Vlass in preparing and implementing the site design work for this project.

NRC Works with Planning Board to Improve Town Land/Commercial Areas

During FY05, the NRC Director, NRC Commissioners and Trails Committee Members worked with Planning Board consultants to examine potential improvements to the following areas: Post Office Square; Linden Street; and the former railroad right-of-way trail behind 27 Washington Street in the Lower Falls.

NRC Serves on Post Office Square Improvement Task Force

In FY05, the Board of Selectmen created a task force with the goal of examining implementation options contained in the Post Office Square 2003 study prepared by consultants StoSS Associates for the Planning Board, which included extensive involvement by the NRC. The task force included representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Natural Resources Commission, DPW, Planning Board, Police Department, BETA Group (the

Town's traffic engineering consultant) and interested private citizens. The Task Force continues to meet to examine implementation options for Post Office Square.

NRC Participates in Development of the Town's Comprehensive Plan

NRC members, the NRC Director and Trails Committee members participated in the Comprehensive Plan Phase I workshops held by the Planning Board's consultant, and the NRC continues to be involved as the Plan's Phase II begins that includes examining the Town's open space and recreational needs.

Trails Committee and the Town-wide Trail Network

During the 2004–2005 fiscal year the Trails Committee maintained and enhanced Wellesley's trail network, improved linkage, upgraded trail signage, and expanded our community outreach activities.

Trail Maintenance and Signage

Throughout the year damaged marker posts, directional arrows, and Trails logo medallions were repaired or replaced on an ongoing basis. Trails Committee members regularly monitor and perform clean up on assigned sections of the trail network. The Department of Public Works handles larger maintenance projects.

New tamper-resistant, weatherproof map dispensers were constructed and installed on all 17 map houses. In addition to distributing copies of the overall network, the new dispensers distribute relevant trail-specific pamphlets, which contain information on the geology and natural features of individual trails. A new map house was installed along the Crosstown Trail at the Warren Building.

Trail Betterment

The following capital projects were completed, significantly improving not only access to the trails, but also user safety:

- *Boulder Brook and Rocky Ledges*: a new bog bridge was constructed, and a section of trail was rerouted around a muddy spot. The work was completed in June '05 by Ricky Horan and members of Troop 185 as an Eagle Scout project.
- *Guernsey Sanctuary Trail*: a new bog bridge was constructed and a section of trail was rerouted around a muddy spot. The work was completed in December '04 by Robbie Littlefield and members of Troop 185 as an Eagle Scout project.
- *Beard Trail / Centennial Park Trail*: In May '05 the Girl Scouts, under the leadership of Felicia Richter, cleared and spread wood chips along both paths as their annual trail improvement project.
- *Sudbury Aqueduct at Fuller Brook*: New steps were constructed and installed in August '04 by Andrew McCauley and members of Troop 185 as an Eagle Scout project.

Trails Network Expansion

- The proposed 16-mile Charles River Link – connecting the regional Bay Circuit Trail to the Wellesley Trails – is close to completion and awaiting access permission from the last two landowners. In October 2004 an important segment of the regional path system was completed through the George & Alice Mumford Wildlife Forest in Natick. Trails Committee members participated in building the trail and in the dedication of the forest. The project represents the cooperation of Natick, Andover, Dover, Medfield, and Wellesley.
- The Crosstown Trail was rerouted to improve linkage with other trails and to eliminate the overlap with the Brook path.
- A number of meetings with representatives at the state and town level have been held regarding development of the Lower Falls Greenway, which traverses the railroad bridge at the rear of the Grossman property. The committee considers this an important initiative, and we will continue our ongoing efforts to move the project forward.

Community Outreach

The following activities effectively increased public awareness and encouraged more widespread use of the Town’s recreational opportunities.

- *Guided walks.* Our fall and spring walks continue to draw participants from Wellesley and nearby towns. A new route through Carisbrooke Reservation was introduced in the spring, bringing to seven the number of routes offered. Our fall series drew 45 walkers; the spring series drew a record 56 walkers.

We distilled some metrics from our “How did you hear about us?” survey of participants, initiated last year to help direct our public relations efforts. The highest percentage, 36%, learned about the walks through the *Townsmen*. More interesting and very encouraging were the findings that 28% had learned about the walks from our Web site and notices posted at the map houses along the trails. In addition to publicizing our walks in the aforementioned locations, the committee promotes each upcoming event via notices at the Library and Recreation Departments, flyers sent home with elementary school children, and with sandwich boards at key traffic intersections.

- *Trails Committee Web site.* Our Web site, now in its third year, continues to provide 24/7 access to information about the trail network, Trails Committee-sponsored events, and open space issues and initiatives. A Trails Committee member serves as Web master, keeping the information up to date on an ongoing basis and introducing enhancements to the usability and effectiveness of the site.
- *Maps and flyers.* Two of our series of individual trail pamphlets are now completed and available in PDF format on our Web site: Boulder Brook-Rocky Ledges and Centennial Reservation. Black and white copies are available in the map dispensers on the map houses. The Longfellow Pond-Town Forest pamphlet is nearing completion. These attractive full-color pamphlets comprise trail descriptions and a Geographic Information System (GIS) map produced by the Network & Information Systems (NIS) Department.
At the request of the Wellesley Health Department, a warning statement about ticks and rabid animals is being inserted into each of these pamphlets.

- *Public relations.* The committee is proactive in communicating with and engaging the support of landowners whose property is contiguous with the trails. During this fiscal year we have initiated discussions and established or strengthened relationships with

Mass Bay, Wellesley College, The Wellesley Country Club, Babson and Olin Colleges, the Town of Needham, and the MWRA.

- *Town events.* The Trails Committee scheduled a guided trail walk to coordinate with the 7th annual Wellesley's Wonderful Weekend in May.
- On Earth Day, April 30, 2005, the Trails Committee was an active co-sponsor and working participant in the NRC's clean-up of the Chares River banks in Lower Falls.

The Trails Committee as always is grateful for the tremendous help it has received from the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the Wellesley Selectmen, the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Light Plant, and the Natural Resources Commission, all of whose ongoing and ready support throughout the year made our work possible.

Public Shade Tree Replacement Program

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, 98 new trees were planted, 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.

The NRC's Tree Management program is implemented by the DPW, and its goal is to preserve and maintain 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.

Wellesley Becomes First Massachusetts Town To Receive 22-Year Tree City USA Award

This past year Wellesley became the first town in Massachusetts to be awarded a 22-Year Tree City USA Award. The NRC received the award from the National Arbor Day Foundation, which each year recognizes towns and cities committed to community trees and forests. 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. Wellesley is the only town in the state to claim a 22-year Tree City USA Award.

Encroachments

Correction of encroachments onto public land is a Commission responsibility. 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. 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 and Town Meeting Approve Land Exchange to Correct Parkland Encroachment

At the 2005 Annual Town Meeting, Town Meeting Members approved the NRC's request for a land exchange at 12 Marvin Road to correct an encroachment onto Town parkland. The NRC supported this proposed land exchange since it presented the most advantageous solution to an encroachment and allowed the Town to secure a net gain of 37 sq. ft. of parkland and secured public access to Fuller Brook from Marvin Road via an existing trail. As a result of this land exchange, the Town gained additional parkland and gained control over a well-used trail.

Brookside Community Garden.

The Brookside Community Garden at Oakland St. and Brookside Rd. had another successful year. There were many new gardeners who created some beautiful gardens and added to the sense of community at Brookside.

Water Quality and Storm Damage Prevention

Wetlands Protection Committee

In FY05, Rhonda Ryznar replaced Alison Barlow on the Committee, and Rebecca Weissman was appointed as an Associate Member. Robert McDonnell served as chairman and Mary Jane O'Donnell as vice-chairman.

Wetlands Permits

In FY05 the Committee reviewed a total of 89 projects under the state Wetlands Protection Act and the Wellesley Wetland Protection Bylaw, including 22 Requests for Determinations of Applicability, 27 Notices of Intent, 5 Amended Notices of Intent, 18 Certificates of Compliance, 4 Enforcement Orders, and 13 approvals of project change. Seventeen of these projects involved more than one hearing or meeting. No Committee decision this year was appealed. In the preceding year, FY04, the Committee reviewed 95 projects. About two-thirds of the new project filings were for additions or other improvements to existing residences, and about 18% were for new houses, usually replacing older houses. The remainder, about 20 % of new filings, were for municipal, state and commercial projects.

During FY05, the Committee obtained satisfactory resolution for four violations of the wetlands protection laws, and three other violations were in process of resolution at the end

of the year. Four violators received Enforcement Orders requiring restoration or wetland protection plans to be produced, approved and implemented. In three cases, violators were fined under the Wetlands Protection Bylaw.

Wetlands Protection Bylaw

The Wellesley Wetland Protection Bylaw became effective in September 2002, and FY05 was the second full year of implementation. All project applications received this year have been subject to both the Bylaw and the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

The Wetlands Permitting Process

Any person proposing activities within a wetland resource area must first receive from the Wetlands Protection Committee (WPC) either an Order of Conditions (a wetlands permit) or a negative Determination of Applicability. Resource areas include ponds, rivers, streams, banks, swamps, marshes, vernal pools, land subject to flooding, and land within 100 feet of these areas, as well as the 200-foot riverfront areas established under the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act.

Three types of project filings are possible. A Request for Determination of Applicability asks the WPC to state whether a project is likely to adversely affect a wetland, or to determine whether a specified site is within a wetland resource area. After a public meeting, the WPC will issue a positive or negative Determination of Applicability, stating that the project or site does or does not fall under the Wetlands Protection Act and whether or not a Notice of Intent is needed. A Request for Determination is optional, and an applicant may choose instead to file a Notice of Intent.

The second and most comprehensive filing is the Notice of Intent. After receiving a Notice of Intent and following a public hearing, the WPC will issue an Order of Conditions, or permit, specifying the conditions under which the project may proceed; the project will be denied if no conditions would adequately protect wetlands or if the applicant provides insufficient information.

The third type of filing is a Notice of Resource Area Delineation and results in an Order of Resource Area Delineation from the WPC following a public hearing. Like the Request for Determination, this is an optional preliminary step. It allows an applicant to receive certification for the exact boundaries of a wetland area before designing a project and filing the Notice of Intent. Orders and Determinations are valid for three years.

Significant Wetlands Projects and Concerns:

- Protecting rivers, streams, and ponds. Most of the permit applications before the Committee concern work in riverfront areas or near streams or ponds, and they typically proposed the expansion of an existing buildings or its replacement with a larger building. Protecting our streams and their receiving water bodies from the cumulative adverse effects of these projects, while accommodating reasonable expectations of property owners, remains a continuing concern.
- Vernal Pools. In May, the Committee sponsored a vernal pool workshop for the second

consecutive year. The workshops are intended to increase public awareness of the unique wildlife habitats provided by these pools and to awaken the sense of fascination with the natural world that these local treasures offer. These threatened natural resources now have, in Wellesley, the added protection of the Wetlands Protection Bylaw.

- The Perfect Lawn. The Committee attempts to protect our lakes and streams by requiring natural buffer zones between manicured lawns and bodies of water. This of course can give only limited protection since runoff from the lawn also goes into the street, then into the street drain, and finally into the lakes and streams. Therefore the committee also tries to influence homeowners and developers to landscape their sites in a low-maintenance fashion. We realize that modern civilization requires certain tradeoffs but are troubled to find so many humans engaged in such harmful activities as:
 - Purchasing chemicals for the sole purpose of making their grass grow greener. These chemicals then end up in our lakes and are a major contributor to their accelerated rate of eutrophication.
 - Applying chemicals to their lawns for the sole purpose of killing non-grass species, with no control of the side effects to wildlife, to surrounding and downstream vegetation, and to human health.
 - Installing irrigation systems and freely using limited water resources for the perfect lawn. New England was blessed with an abundant supply of pure groundwater. Over the years that supply has been threatened with overuse and misuse. But water is still our most precious resource.

Protecting Wellesley's 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. So modern Americans pour priceless water, fertilizer and herbicides developed for war purposes onto their lawns. From these unnatural lawns nutrients pour into our streams, lakes and ponds. That is why ponds need dredging. In the words of ENSR's 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. Take a look at the NRC's popular *Demonstration Garden* at State Street Pond and read the literature found there.

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. This 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 and Rockridge Pond have all been successfully restored. A feasibility study, including a wildlife management study of the Town Hall Duck Pond is nearing completion, and next up are feasibility studies for Morses Pond (see below), State Street Pond (aka Skating Pond), and Abbott Pond. The NRC would like to thank Town Engineer Steve Fader, for his hard work and dedication to restoring Wellesley's ponds.

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

Development of a Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan

In 2004, 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 consultant, Dr. Ken Wagner, of ENSR, over the past year in evaluating options for the pond's preservation and restoration. The plan, expected to be completed by the end of 2005, outlines the options evaluated, makes recommendations for implementation, identifies a 5-year timeline for implementation, and specifies costs for the implementation of the identified options.

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 Morses 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.

NRC's Pesticide Awareness and 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.

Five 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. Last year, Dr. Little resigned from her position with the Town in order to pursue her work on a more regional

level. The NRC thanks Dr. Little for her significant and dedicated efforts to reduce pesticide use and educate residents about the harmful effects of toxics.

In FY05, Jenna Ringelheim was hired to replace Dr. Little in the NRC's newly expanded position of Environmental Education Coordinator. This year, the NRC continued to implement grants from both the State Department of Environmental Protection and from the State Toxics Use Reduction Network, to develop a 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.

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. Two years ago, the NRC and the School Committee approved an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy for land under their respective control, and the NRC is working 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.

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 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 and support the WCPP's educational efforts aimed at cancer reduction and awareness.

Wildlife Notes

Several red tailed hawks were seen in Centennial Park , the Town Forest, and near the Town Hall Duck Pond. Wild turkeys were once again sited throughout town. Deer, coyotes, foxes, possums, woodchucks, great blue herons and skunks continued to be abundance this year.

Commission Membership and Elections

In FY05, the NRC welcomed new member Neal Seaborn, who was elected to the Commission in March 2005 to serve a three-year term, replacing Maureen Febiger who declined to run for another term. Joan Gaughan served as NRC Chairman from September 2004 through September 2005, succeeding Heidi Gross. Robert McDonnell was reelected Chairman of the Wetlands Protection Committee. Peter Diana served his seventh year as Chairman of the Trails Committee.

Natural Resources Department Staff

The NRC staff consists of a full-time secretary/technical assistant, a full-time wetlands administrator and a full-time NRC director. Jenna Ringelheim joined the NRC staff in 2004 as the Department's Environmental Education Coordinator. The NRC's Wetlands Protection Committee and the appointed Trails Committee and Pesticide Awareness Committee receive professional assistance from the Natural Resources Department staff..

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 assistance to the Morses Pond Ad Hoc Committee, the Pesticide Awareness Committee, the Playing Fields Task Force, and the Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee.

Citizen Inquiries

The Natural Resources Department is committed to providing the highest level of service to the Town's citizens. The Natural Resources 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, 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.

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 and students, especially the NRC's Trails Committee and the

Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, who help keep Wellesley's open space clean! Another generous gift was received this year from the Wellesley Garden Study Group. The NRC is grateful to the House and Garden Club of Wellesley for their continued efforts to beautify Central Park, and to the Hills Garden Club of Wellesley for their continued efforts to beautify Clock Tower Park .
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 \$200 or more will have their names and gifts recorded for posterity in the Charles B. Steward ledger on display in the Town Hall foyer.

Respectfully Submitted,

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
October 2005**

**Richard Bashian, Chairman
Neal Seaborn, Vice Chairman
Heidi K. Gross, Secretary
Joan E. Gaughan
Janet Hartke Bowser, Director**

REPORT OF THE PLANNING BOARD

Membership

On March 1, 2005, Frank S. DeMasi was elected to a five-year term.. On May 10, 2005, the Board reorganized for the upcoming year by electing Rose Mary Donahue as Chair, Thomas Frisardi as Vice Chair and Sue Wright as Secretary. The other Planning Board members are Edward H. Chazen. and Frank S. DeMasi.

On June 12, 2005 Chris Chan was appointed to fill the Associate Member position for a two-year term. The Associate Member is authorized to vote as a full member of the Board on special permit cases if for any reason one of the elected members cannot participate.

Comprehensive Plan

The Planning Board completed Phase I of the Comprehensive Plan Update for Wellesley and distributed compact disks to Town Meeting members and other Town officials at the Annual Town Meeting. The Board expects to complete Phase II of the Plan by the time of the 2006 Annual Town Meeting. The Comprehensive Plan contains recommendations and priorities for municipal planning, including zoning, land use, transportation, housing, open space, recreation and Town services. Maintaining an up-to-date Comprehensive Plan is a