

REPORT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006

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 systems so that the full value of the Town's natural assets can be passed on to future generations.

The 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 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 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 in addition, the NRC works closely with the Wellesley Cancer Prevention Project and the Wellesley Conservation Council.

The Commission has created 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's new web site at www.wellesleyma.gov/nrc.

The NRC continues to implement a very ambitious and well-planned agenda. In FY06, the NRC held 26 public meetings that included public hearings on the Reidy Field Little League Improvement Plan and the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan. In addition, the NRC held 7 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 2006, Town Meeting approved the NRC's FY06 initiatives including CPC funding for a new weed harvester for Morses Pond, as well as continued funding for the NRC's Public Shade Tree Replacement Program and for Town-wide trail network improvements. The NRC successfully facilitated 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 development of a Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan and the restoration of the Town Hall Duck Pond. 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 23-Year Tree City USA designation.

The NRC's 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 FY06 OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION EFFORTS

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

In FY06, 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.

Last year, 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," dated in June 2005.

NRC Rededicates Centennial Reservation as Conservation Land in Celebration of the Town's 25th Anniversary Celebration

In May 2006, the NRC sponsored a ceremony rededicating Centennial Reservation as conservation land, following Town Meeting's vote to protect this land for passive recreation only. Many Town officials who were involved in the original acquisition of Centennial Park in 1980, as well as representatives from the Sisters of Charity, whom the land was purchased from, spoke at the event. In addition, an award was presented to former Trails Committee Member Jane Osler, recognizing her commitment and work toward improving the Town's Trail System.

Fuller Brook Park Restoration Master Plan

In FY06, 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.

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 Receives Recommendation from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to Place the Fuller Brook Park on the National Historic Registry

In FY06, the Massachusetts Historical Commission 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 confirmation of eligibility was based on a site visit in April, 2006, conducted by the NRC, a representative from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Ms. Shary Berg, the NRC’s Landscape Historian on Fuller Brook, and representatives from the Wellesley Historical Commission. The NRC will be completing the next step in the registry process, which is to complete the nomination papers for submittal for a listing on the National Registry. This project was funded by the Community Preservation Commission and is being spearheaded by the NRC in conjunction with the Wellesley Historical Commission.

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 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.wellesleyma.gov/cpc.

NRC’S EFFORTS TO PROTECT 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*. In FY06, the NRC hired Open Space Consultant Nina Danforth to assist the Commission in completing the 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, 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 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, 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 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's Seventh Annual Earth Day Clean-Up, April 29, 2006

The NRC's annual Earth Day clean-up along the Charles River was held on Saturday, April 29, 2006, and was co-sponsored by the Charles River Watershed Association. Over 35 volunteers helped clean-up along the banks of the Charles River, which is one of our most precious water

resources. This year marked the 36th anniversary of Earth Day and the NRC's seventh 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 6, 2006 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.

NRC'S 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.

NRC Approves Wellesley Little League's Reidy Field Improvements

This past year, 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. The NRC continues to work with the Little League in seeking approval for this project by the Board of Selectmen, ZBA, and DRB.

Playing Fields Task Force and Improvements to Athletic Fields

The Playing Fields 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 in FY06 included completion of renovations of the Kelly Baseball Fields #1 and #3 infield and backstop areas. In FY06 the NRC worked with the Rec. Commission in revising and updating the Town's Athletic Field Use and Fee Policy. 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 Changes Name Designation of Elm Park to Clock Tower Park

In September 2005, the NRC voted to officially change the name of “Elm Park” to “Clock Tower Park.” Ms. Cricket Vlass, the Town’s Landscape Planner, recommended this name change, noting that for 75 years, the Clock Tower has stood as the park’s major focus, giving the park its unofficial, but well-known nickname.

Placement of the Clock Tower Park on the National Historic Register

The NRC continues to support the Historical Commission’s effort to nominate the Clock Tower Park for placement on the National Register of Historic Places, which was funded by the Community Preservation Act 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 III Improvement Plan

The NRC approved the Phase III Landscape and Hardscape Improvements to Clock Tower Park, which include the installation of fencing, pillars and lights at the west end of the park. This project is a joint effort between the NRC, 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 of Town Landscape Planner Cricket Vlass in preparing and implementing the site design work for this project.

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 II workshops held by the Planning Board’s consultant, and offered extensive written recommendations on the sections related to Open Space Protection and Natural and Recreational Resources.

TRAILS COMMITTEE PROJECTS AND IMPROVEMENTS

During the 2005-2006 fiscal year the Trails Committee maintained, improved and expanded Wellesley’s trail network, and continued their community outreach programs.

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.

Trail Improvement

The following projects were completed improving trail access:

- Sudbury Path: A new bridge was constructed and steps installed on a short, steep hill. The work was completed in May by Scouts led by Zach Secret.
- Boulder Brook Reservation Trail: A bog bridge was constructed and the trail was rerouted around a muddy area. The work was completed in November by Scouts led by Tom McCauley.

- Morses Pond Trail: Invasive plants were removed and benches were installed near Morses Pond in April and May. Boy Scouts led by Alex Hoffman and Girl Scouts led by Hannah Smith completed the project.
- Rockridge Pond Trail: The DPW installed a new fence on an access path to the Pond.
- Carisbrooke Reservation: Bates 3rd Grade Brownie Troop spread wood chips and cleaned up entrance to Reservation.

Trail Network Expansion

With permission from Babson College and the MWRA, the Sudbury Path was added to the trail network. The Path follows the Sudbury Aqueduct from the Needham Town line near Hunnewell Street through the Town Forest, along Wellesley Avenue, through Babson College, through Beebe Meadow and across the Waban Arches, and ends at the Wellesley Research Center.

The Centennial Reservation Trail was extended, with permission, into land owned by Mass Bay Community College.

The Guernsey Path was extended, with permission, under the Waban Arches, through Wellesley College property and along Dover Road, Washington St. and Weston Road to Linden St.

A new path, the Esker Trail, was developed in the Town Forest. This trail highlights the esker in the Forest and will reduce confusion in the many pathed Forest. The Charles River Path was also rerouted in the Town Forest in order to avoid a steep hill and to increase the length of the trail in the Town Forest.

There are now 25 miles of marked trails throughout the Town.

Trails Committee Community Outreach

The following activities increased public awareness and encouraged more use of the trail network.

The Committee led four walks in the fall and four walks in the spring including the first Grand Tour of Wellesley, a 10-mile walk around the Town. There were 28 participants in the fall and 53 walkers in the spring.

The Trails Committee Web site, now in its fourth 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. The website was moved to the new Town of Wellesley website and additional information was added.

Along with the newly revised system map, location specific maps for Boulder Brook Reservation, Centennial Reservation and the Town Forest are available both on-line and in the map houses. The trail descriptions on the back of the maps, available at all map houses and in the NRC Office, have also been updated. The Town's Network and Information Systems Department has been very cooperative in providing data for the maps.

During the year our relationships with MassBay Community College, Babson College, Wellesley College, Olin College, the Town of Needham and the MWRA have allowed the Committee to expand and improve the trail network.

As always the Committee is grateful for the tremendous help received from the Selectmen, the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Light Plant, the Natural Resources Commission, the Wetlands Protection Committee and the Boy and Girl Scout Troops in Wellesley.

NRC'S TREE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

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, 110 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.

NRC Develops New Public Shade Tree Removal Process

In January 2006, the NRC created a new Public Shade Tree Removal Review Process involving the development of a NRC Subcommittee to review proposed Public Shade Tree Removals in conjunction with the Town Arborist. In an effort to streamline the increasing number of Public Shade Tree Removal Hearings, the subcommittee will conduct site visits make final recommendations to the NRC prior to a Public Shade Tree Removal Hearing.

NRC Works With The State To Develop A Tree Inventory Program

NRC Commissioner Neal Seaborn worked extensively this past year with the Massachusetts Urban Forestry Division in conjunction with the development of a State Tree Inventory Program tailored for the Town of Wellesley. The State has developed a database computer system entitled "TreeKeeper" 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. Mr. Seaborn is working with the Town GIS Department and the DPW to further develop this important database system.

Massachusetts Honors Wellesley with Two Tree City USA Awards

In April 2006, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs presented two Tree City USA awards to the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission and Board of Public Works. DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington presented the awards to the Town of Wellesley in recognition of its significant commitment to community and urban forestry.

The first award was the Tree City USA “Annual Award” for excellence in the management and nurturing of public shade trees. Wellesley received this award for the 23rd 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.

The second award was a Tree City USA “Growth Award” in recognition of Wellesley’s demonstrated, innovative improvements to its urban and community forestry program over the past year. Only four Massachusetts municipalities received the award this year.

These two awards are 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.
- 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.

Scenic Roads Tree Protection and Removals

Pursuit to its authority as Town Tree Warden and under M.G.L. Chapter 40, sec. 15 c, 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. This year only one public shade tree removal hearing on a scenic road was held. This concerned the site of a new home construction on Benvenue Street and Cartwright Road, and the hearing was held in conjunction with the Planning Board.

ENCROACHMENT ISSUES AND POLICIES

New 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 Approves Land Exchange to Correct Long-Standing Encroachment onto Parkland at 19 Clovelly Road

In November 2005, the NRC reviewed and approved a proposed land exchange at 19 Clovelly Road. This proposed land exchange to rectify a long-standing encroachment was proposed, but not adopted at the 2005 Annual Town Meeting. The owner of the property, Dr. James Broderick, subsequently modified his proposed land exchange plan in order to satisfy concerns of the NRC, Town Meeting Members, and abutters. Dr. Broderick met several times with the NRC to discuss the plan, and the NRC approved the plan based on their conclusion that the proposed land exchange results in a net gain of public open space and provides a substantial benefit to the Town. The NRC concluded that the land exchange proposal is consistent with all existing NRC policies and regulations, as well as with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Article 97 Land Disposition Policy dated 1998. Mr. Broderick agreed to pay all expenses associated with the land exchange proposal. Subsequently at the 2006 Annual Town Meeting under Article 32, Town Meeting approved Dr. Broderick's citizen's petition land exchange proposal, which will now need to be approved by the State Legislature.

WATER QUALITY AND STORMWATER DAMAGE PREVENTION

The NRC's Wetlands Protection Committee

The NRC appoints the five members of its Wetlands Protection Committee, which is charged with administering and enforcing the State Wetlands Protection Act and regulations and the Wellesley Wetlands Protection Bylaw and regulations. During FY06, Mary Jane O'Donnell served as chairman and Rhonda Ryznar as vice-chairman. The Committee met 17 times.

Wetlands Permits

In FY06 the Committee reviewed a total of 77 projects under the state Wetlands Protection Act and the Wellesley Wetlands Protection Bylaw, including 18 Requests for Determination of Applicability, 33 Notices of Intent, 2 Amended Notices of Intent, 17 Certificates of Compliance, 5 Enforcement Orders, and 4 project changes. Seventeen of the new project filings required more than one hearing or meeting with applicants. No Committee decisions were appealed.

During FY06, the Committee addressed a total of 11 violations of the wetlands protection laws, 4 of which were carried over from FY05. By the end of FY06, three violations had been satisfactorily resolved, five more had approved restoration plans being implemented, and three were still unresolved. Three of these enforcement cases in particular demanded extensive attention of the Committee and staff.

Wetlands Protection Bylaw

The Wellesley Wetland Protection Bylaw became effective in September 2002, and FY06 was the third full year of implementation. Only one of the permits issued this year was subject to only the Bylaw and not the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. However, many projects were subject to the stricter performance standards of the Bylaw.

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 Mass. 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 chose 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 and status of wetland areas 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.
- 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.

NRC'S EFFORTS TO PROTECT 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. 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 ENSR's 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. 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. 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 and Rockridge Pond have all been successfully restored. A management plan has been developed for Morses Pond (see below), and the Town Hall Duck Pond is currently being restored. This project includes the dewatering of the duck pond, installation of a 36" by-pass pipe, installation of a weir and a new outlet structure to improve drainage and water quality. 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 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 drinking water supply.

Development of a Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan

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, over the past year and a half in evaluating options for the pond's preservation and restoration. 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, will be requesting funding for implementing the plan at the next Town Meeting.

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.

Purchase of New Weed Harvester for Morses Pond Approved at 2006 Annual Town Meeting

As part of the Comprehensive Management Plan for Morses Pond, the NRC in conjunction with the Board of Public Works and the Recreation Commission, applied for funding to the Community Preservation Act Committee for \$250,000 to purchase a new weed harvester for Morses Pond. The NRC's Pond Consultant, Dr. Ken Wagner, made a presentation to the 2006 Town Meeting, which approved the funding for the weed harvester. The NRC will be working with the Board of Public Works and Dr. Wagner to develop specifications for the weed harvester, which is expected to be purchased and available for use in the spring of 2007.

NRC Votes to Prohibit the Use of the Herbicide Fluridone In Morses Pond

Throughout the development of the Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan, the NRC discussed in detail, both in regular meetings and in several public meetings, the potential use of the herbicide fluridone in Morses Pond to combat the invasive weed problem. The NRC discussed the use of this herbicide in the context of its Integrated Pest Management Policy (IPM), which prohibits the use of all pesticides, including fluridone, unless there is a public health or environmental health emergency and no other alternatives are available. The NRC discussed this issue at five public meetings, including a formal public hearing on June 16, 2005 regarding this topic. The NRC made every effort to ensure that there was ample opportunity for residents to voice their concerns as to how the Pond is managed, and in particular, with regard to the use of an herbicide in Morses Pond, which is a public drinking water supply. Since the NRC shares joint jurisdiction over the Pond and its surrounding environment with the Board of Public Works, which has jurisdiction over public water supplies, both Boards were involved in the public decision making process for the use of fluridone in Morses Pond. The NRC's existing IPM Policy, which was approved by the NRC, the School Committee, and the Board of Health with strong public support in October of 2002, prohibits the use of fluridone, because nuisance weeds do not pose an immediate threat to human or environmental health and there exists viable alternatives consistent with the IPM Policy, thereby prohibiting the use of fluridone. The NRC voted to affirm its adherence to its IPM Policy, prohibiting 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.

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.

Six 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. Last year, 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/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. Three 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.

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

Beginning in April 2006, the NRC met with representatives of the Wellesley Country Club regarding their pesticide use and the development of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan. The NRC members toured the golf course and viewed a number of drainage areas and ponds that have been enlarged to handle increased drainage and to improve water quality on site. As a result of these meetings, the Country Club committed to developing an Integrated Pest Management Plan within the next several months 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.

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 Department of Public Works (DPW), which owns the land. The Town requires that all gardeners at Brookside garden organically with no use of pesticides. In cooperation with the NRC and the community gardeners, the DPW completed garden landscape improvements in FY06. 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 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. Recently, a moose was seen on the loose on Wellesley's residential streets, and wild turkeys were once again sited throughout town. Deer, coyotes, foxes, possums, woodchucks, great blue herons and skunks continued to be in abundance this year.

NRC MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

In FY06, the NRC welcomed new member Paul Cramer, who was appointed by the Selectmen in December to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of Peter DeNatale. Mr. Cramer was officially elected to the Commission in March 2006 to serve a three-year term, and Heidi Gross was re-elected to a three-year term. Richard Bashin served as NRC Chairman from September 2005 through September 2006, succeeding Joan Gaughan, and Neal Seaborn served as Vice Chairman and Heidi Gross served as secretary during that period. Mary Jane O'Donnell was elected Chairman of the Wetlands Protection Committee. Bob White was elected as Chairman of the Trails Committee.

NRC Sponsors Annual Town Meeting 2006 Resolution in Memory of Former NRC Member Richard J. Gleason

In recognition and memory of former NRC Member Richard J. Gleason, who passed away on September 4, 2005, the NRC submitted a resolution in honor of his dedicated service to the Town as an NRC member for 9 years, as a Board of Public Works Commissioner for 10 years, for a Town Meeting Member for over 30 years, and as an Advisory Committee Member for over 3 years. Mr. Gleason was a long-time dedicated environmentalist who worked hard to secure the protection of Wellesley's open space, and in particular for the acquisition of 119 Cliff Road. In addition, the NRC will honor Mr. Gleason's dedication to open space with the installation of a bench and landscaping at Rockridge Pond Park.

NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT STAFF

The NRC staff consists of a full-time NRC director, a full-time wetlands administrator, a full-time secretary/technical assistant, and a part-time environmental education coordinator.

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 Wetlands Protection Committee, the Morses Pond Ad Hoc Committee, the Pesticide Awareness Committee, the 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 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! 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 \$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. Please contact the NRC office if you would like more information.

Respectfully Submitted,

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

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

Janet Hartke Bowser, Director