

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Jay McHale, Chair
Steve Park, Vice Chair
Bea Bezmalinovic
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Tom Hammond

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MEMORANDUM

In September 2025, the Town of Wellesley received confirmation from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs that the Wellesley 2022-29 Open Space and Recreation Plan is extended through 2032.

The extension approval required submission of an updated Action Plan for the ten year period through 2032. The extension approval letter and the updated Action Plan are attached here.

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September 5, 2025

Dear Ms. Cryan,

Thank you for alerting our office of updates to the Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook and expanded 10-year Action plans.

Please see the attached updated Action Plan that reflects three additional years through 2032. These action items were developed by the Natural Resources Commission at public meetings on and at the NRC's Annual Retreat. The Action plan was shared in the April May and June editions of the NRC's newsletter with opportunities for feedback from the community, and approved at the NRC's September 4th meeting.

We hope this satisfies the requirements and are happy to answer any questions or provide additional information if needed.

On behalf of the Town of Wellesley and its Natural Resources Commission,

Brandon Schmitt, Director

8. Ten-Year Action Plan

This Ten-Year Action Plan, extended in 2025, is based on the Goals and Objectives set forth in the preceding section, and feedback received from the public survey and forum, and Land Conservation Charrette in November of 2024. New Actions included in the extension are highlighted in the table and represent more recent initiatives in the Community since the initial approval of the 2022-2029 Plan. The success of this plan will depend upon active support from a variety of parties, including many outside of Wellesley government. Nevertheless, because this is a Town plan, the Seven-Year Action Plan identifies only Town boards, commissions, committees or departments to which responsibility is assigned for initiating or monitoring progress on individual action items. The Plan also identifies target dates for the accomplishment of action items. Many action items will require continuing attention and will be ongoing until the next Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. Priorities indicate what priority was given to each goal and subsequent action step from the survey. For instance, “Protecting trees, limiting tree removal during development, and ensuring proactive vegetation management” was the second highest importance for Goal one, which was considered the most important goal (shown as 1-2, below).

Table 1: Wellesley 10-Year Action Plan

| Action Plan | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------|----------|------------|-------------------------|
| Goal | Objectives | Actions | Responsible Party | Priority | Time Frame | Cost/ Funding Source |
| 1: Restore, preserve, and enhance open space | A. Provide and maintain sufficient natural areas so that important plant and wildlife species can be sustained. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting trees, limiting tree removal during development, and ensuring proactive vegetation management. | NRC/Building Department | 1-2 | ASAP | 50K/year |
| | B. Continue to protect, enhance, and seek to increase open space in Wellesley. Maintain and improve the quality and health of the natural infrastructure of Wellesley. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging densification in appropriate areas. Develop Land Conservation Plan, priority list of property acquisitions and funding mechanism. | Planning Board/NRC | 1-3 | 5 years | |
| | C. Preserve scenic, historic, geologic and ecological features of the Town. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limiting development and/or the effect of development near wetlands, surface water features, and wildlife habitat areas. | Wetlands Protection Committee | 1-1 | ASAP | |
| | D. Encourage and enforce protection of wetlands buffers along all streams, rivers and ponds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting existing protected lands by enforcing leash laws and minimizing harmful human practices | NRC/SB/Schools/Library | 1-4 | 3 years | |

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| | <p>E. Plan for flooding and severe weather events.</p> <p>F. Participate in regional initiatives such as Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Charles River Climate Compact to support and amplify efforts to mitigate climate change.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete analysis and determine whether NRC should pursue acquisition of Wight Pond | NRC, WCLT | 1-5 | ASAP | CPC funds |
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| 2: Protect, enhance, and restore Wellesley's sensitive land, water, and wetland resources | <p>A. Minimize the impact of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemical lawn and landscape treatments on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education or awareness initiatives to engage residents and encourage environmentally friendly behaviors. | NRC/Climate Action Committee | 2-2 | FY23 | New Staff Operating Budgets |
| | <p>B. Protect Morses Pond, Lake Waban, and Longfellow Pond as primary water supply areas and as passive recreational resources.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Morses Pond Management Program | NRC | 2-6 | FY26 | NRC Operating Budget |
| | <p>C. Enforce laws, bylaws, and regulations to protect groundwater, wetlands, and surface water bodies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening enforcement of existing regulations. | Permitting Boards | 2-3 | ASAP | Staff Operating, consulting budgets |
| | <p>D. Protect open space and wetlands from encroachment, illegal use, and dumping. Minimize the impact of wastewater disposal on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Encroachment policy as needed, develop protocol for encroachment notification | NRC, SB, DPW, Schools, Library | 2-5 | | Staff Operating, consulting budgets |
| | <p>E. Carefully manage floodplain development to protect and maintain water quality and to prevent flooding.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing on Lake Waban, Morses Pond, and Longfellow Pond and/or drinking water resources.. | DPW/Water DEPARTMENT, Recreation | 2-1 | ASAP | Grants for PFAS, CPC |
| | <p>F. Continue to restore and manage ponds to avoid eutrophication. Engage in regional efforts to protect water resources.</p> | | | | | |
| | <p>G. Minimize the impact of salt on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging more environment-friendly lawn care practices with most favorable toward the idea of limiting harmful applications. | NRC | 2-4 | ASAP | CPC funds, MVP grants |

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| | H. Continue to promote awareness of the environmental damage caused by storm water runoff and increased impervious surfaces and regulate development to minimize pollution impacts. | | | | | |
| | I. Enact new bylaws and regulations where necessary. | | | | | |

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| 3: Expand and protect the tree canopy. | A. Protect and enhance tree canopy on conservation and private lands. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger enforcement of existing tree regulations to prevent existing trees from being removed. Comments also focused on pairing enforcement with stricter penalties for illegal tree removals. | Building Dept. | 7-1 | ASAP | Building Operating Budget |
| | B. Enforce existing Town and state tree protection regulations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness of tree canopy benefits and educating residents to encourage more tree plantings (especially on private property). | NRC/Planning | 7-2 | FY26-27 | NRC Operating Budget |
| | C. Educate residents on the importance and benefits of trees and the tree canopy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree planting days and tree giveaways for residents. | NRC | 7-4 | Ongoing | Capital Budget |
| | D. Build capacity and set numeric targets to protect the Town's tree canopy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More actions to protect the tree canopy by mapping, quantifying benefits, and establishing metrics and removing invasive species and planting native species. | NRC | 7-3 | FY26-27 | Tree Bylaw Funds |
| | E. Use data, information and technology to understand the Town tree canopy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Tree Nursery to supplement tree procurement. | NRC | 7-5 | FY26-27 | Capital funds ~50K |

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| 4: Prevent damage to natural resources and human health from hazardous materials and environmentally harmful practices. | A. Assist residents to manage household hazardous materials in environmentally responsible ways. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms to encourage environmentally friendly behaviors. Education and incentives were frequently mentioned. Respondents also mentioned increasing the number of hazardous waste disposal days to facilitate safe disposal. | Zoning, DPW Board of Health, NRC | 7-2 | 5 years | NRC Operating Budget, MVP grants |
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| <p>B. Encourage the use of organic lawn care by private property owners and local academic institutions and promote the Town's Integrated Pest Management Policy.</p> <p>C. Be proactive on the campaign to fix gas leaks and plant new trees away from gas leaks. Encourage native plantings and pollinator gardens.</p> <p>D. Continue plastic reduction efforts. Promote awareness of the environmental damage caused by storm water runoff and increased impervious surfaces and regulate development to minimize pollution impacts.</p> <p>E. Discourage excessive leaf blowing and promote leaving the leaves.</p> <p>F. Encourage the use of electric lawn care equipment.</p> <p>G. Discourage uplighting trees on private property to protect dark skies and Wellesley's nocturnal flora and fauna.</p> <p>H. Encourage the use of rain barrels and discourage overwatering lawns.</p> <p>I. Encourage citizen science projects to identify and record species to measure our Town's biodiversity.</p> <p>J. Install wildlife cameras.</p> <p>K. Maintain map of residents practicing organic lawn care.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on more environment-friendly lawn care practices. Comments proposed limiting and/or banning the use of loud, gas-powered lawn equipment (especially leaf blowers). Other comments focused on discouraging environmental harmful chemicals and encouraging native plantings. | NRC,DPW | 7-1 | 2-3 Years | NRC Operating Budget, MVP grants |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of hazardous waste disposal days to facilitate safe disposal, as well as educating residents about the environmental impacts of hazardous materials. | NRC, DPW | 7-4 | 3 years | DPW Operating Budget, Board Of Health |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger enforcement and consequences for residents who violate Town regulations and by-laws. | NRC, Zoning, Building, Planning, Police | 7-3 | 3 years | Building Department |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider Town Bylaw regulating leaf blowers | NRC, Selectboard, ATM | | 4 years | NRC, Selectboard, Board of Health. |
| | | NRC, Climate Action Committee | | ASAP | |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue iNaturalist science program | | | Annually | NRC |
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| 5: Take action to address the accelerating climate change crisis by encouraging sustainable policy and practice within Town government and throughout the community. | <p>A. Ensure that all new projects employ green infrastructure systems.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging environmentally responsible behaviors through incentives, education, and/or assistance. Composting, recycling, and trash was mentioned by multiple respondents. | <p>NRC, DPW, 3R Working Group</p> | <p>5-2</p> | <p>3 years</p> | <p>NRC, DPW budgets</p> |
| | <p>B. Continue and expand existing Town efforts to reduce the waste stream and expand materials reuse and recycling (including food and yard waste composting) through Wellesley's 3R Working Group.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute new regulations or focusing on enforcement of existing regulations,. | <p>NRC, Building, Zoning Planning</p> | <p>5-4</p> | <p>3 years</p> | <p>Building Department, Zoning and WPC</p> |
| | <p>C. Encourage the planting of native species to enhance biodiversity.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing sustainable practices within the Town's departments or on Town-owned land, in part to lead by example. | <p>DPW, NRC</p> | <p>5-1</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>DPW Field Maintenance budget</p> |
| | <p>D. Explore and implement efforts to conserve water resources.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More electric vehicle infrastructure/adoption and addressing idling issues with school parent-student drop-offs. | <p>Residents</p> | <p>5-3</p> | <p>5 years</p> | <p>Green Community grants, Capital</p> |
| | <p>E. Encourage Town efforts to electrify vehicle and landscaping equipment and create "Green Zones." Utilize the Sustainable Building Guidelines when constructing facilities on parkland.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use demonstration sites and education outreach to raise awareness of benefits of native species. | <p>NRC, Residents, Community Groups</p> | <p>5-5</p> | <p>2-3 Years</p> | <p>NRC Capital, CPC</p> |
| | <p>F. Participate in the Town's Climate Action Planning process.</p> | | | | | |
| | <p>G. Work across town departments to implement Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) recommendations.</p> | | | | | |

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| 6: Promote stewardship through environmental education outreach and programs. | A. Protect woodlands, contiguous lands, and waterbodies. Provide residents with opportunities to learn about and employ sustainable efforts. Encourage community volunteer projects to promote stewardship of natural resources. Partner with local and regional conservation groups to amplify messaging and efforts. Protect wellheads and develop a wellhead protection plan as it relates to open space and recreation. Establish a tree nursey. Expand budget for environmental education. Create naturalist award. Protect woodlands, contiguous lands, and waterbodies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on actions and engagement that would change Wellesley residents' behavior. Recommendations include incentivizing environmental protection by private actors, community education, community stewardship events, and better enforcement. | NRC, DPW, Select Board | 10-1 | Ongoing/ ASAP | NRC Operating Budget |
| | B. Establish a tree nursey. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support increased environmental programming in K-12. Many recommended that environmental programming include younger grades to foster stewardship from an early age. | NRC, Schools | 10-3 | 2-3 years | NRC /Schools Operating budgets |
| | C. Expand budget for environmental education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting more trees and plant species that provide benefits to local pollinators and protecting existing natural resources. Changing Town mowing policies to protect pond buffers and collaboration with local institutions was also mentioned. | NRC | 10-2 | 3-5 years | NRC Capital Budget |
| | D. Create naturalist award. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for regional or institutional partnerships and increasing technical capacity to support the goal and/or its objectives | Select Board, NRC, Planning | 10-4 | 3-5 years | Select Board Operating budget |
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| 7: Create resource management strategies to protect and increase open space and environmental resources. | A. Expand and protect sensitive environmental resources through land acquisition and other approaches. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land acquisition and/or preventing development from destroying natural habitat. Partner with local private land trusts to pursue land acquisition. | NRC, Planning | 9-1 | 3-5 years | EEOAA grants, Capital Budget |

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| | B. Optimize management of open space and recreation facilities through improved systems, records, and communication. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation and enforcement, including changes to existing zoning regulations to encourage more natural space. | Zoning, Building, NRC, Planning | 9-2 | 3-5 years | Building, Zoning, WPC budgets |
| | C. Classify public and private open space according to availability for use, appropriate intensity of use. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive communication strategies and existing methods to engage community members | Town wide | 9-3 | ASAP/On going | Select Board, NRC Operating Budgets |
| | D. Continue to update the Natural Resource Commission website with information about management objectives, resources, wetland protection, pesticide awareness, and trails. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate and address planning gaps and use existing studies, if any, to inform actions. | Planning, NRC, Select Board | 9-4 | 2-3 years | Planning Department budget |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access restrictions at Lake Waban and Wellesley College's role. | NRC, Select Board | 9-5 | 2-3 years | NRC/ Select Board |

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| 8: Promote the awareness and use of Wellesley's parks, recreation facilities, and open space resources for the use and enjoyment of the public. | A. Work with institutional partners to protect open space and provide additional recreational facilities where appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing community engagement, encouraging use of active and passive recreation spaces through events and education, and increasing outreach to solicit diverse community input on OSRP topics. Fund capital improvements identified in the Field Use study. Investigate replacement of hardcourt and other improvements to Ouellette Investigate replacement of hardcourt at Schofield. | NRC, Select Board, local Sustainability groups | 8-2 | 2-3 years | NRC, Recreation Dept. Budget |
| | B. Encourage use of natural open space areas and recreation facilities, consistent with their carrying capacity and intended functions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding recreation facilities, specifically a Town pool and dog park. Work with Police Department and Town partners to increase education and enforcement of leash laws in parklands. | Recreation Department, NRC, School Committee NRC, Police | 8-3 | 2-3 years | NRC Capital Budgets |
| | C. Publicize the Town's open space resources and recreation facilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a decision about athletic field lighting | NRC, Schools, PFTF | 8-4 | 1-2 years | Private Money |

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| | D. Sponsor Town events to promote utilization and appreciation of open space resources to foster resident's sense of identification and ownership of the land. E. Develop permitting parameters. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance active and passive recreational needs and land use. | NRC | 8-1 | 1-2 years | N/A |
| | | | NRC | 8-5 | 1-2 years | Staff resources |
| | F. Dark Sky compliance for buildings and lights on NRC land | Investigate and consider a Dark Sky policy as new facilities come online (Hunnewell Team Room, Morses Pond, etc.) | NRC | 8-6 | 3-5 years | Staff resources |

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| 9: Ensure that open space and recreational programs continue to meet the needs of the Town. | A. Preserve and enhance the quality of existing recreational facilities through careful maintenance and planning practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and/or defining “needs” more clearly. Proposed action included continued engagement with community members to solicit feedback and assessing current recreation facilities to identify areas for improvement. | Recreation, NRC, PFTF | 6-2 | 1-2 years | NRC Operating, CPC funds |
| | B. Optimize passive and active recreational opportunities and protect sensitive environmental resources through land acquisition and other approaches. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the Town's current roster of recreational facilities, specifically playground spaces, bike and walking trails, pools, recreational fields, and bathrooms. | Recreation, NRC | 6-7 | 3-6 years | CPC, Town Capital Budgets |
| | C. Balance to meet as many needs as possible while preserving and maintaining town resources for future use. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance Active and passive recreational resources | NRC, Planning | 6-1 | 3-6 years | EOEAA grant funds |
| | D. Seek management options that will allow uses of town-owned, as well as private active recreational space, to fit and meet the changing needs of Wellesley's changing population. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a walking path around Lake Waban. | NRC, Trails, Wellesley College | 6-3 | 3-5 years | Trails Operating Budget |
| | E. Create a recreational vision that will reflect collaboration between the Town's various landowners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with Wellesley College. | NRC, Selectboard, Wellesley College | 6-5 | ASAP | N/A |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make decision about field lighting | NRC, Schools, PFTF | 6-6 | 3-5 years | N/A |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing the Natural Resource Commission's activities on non-recreation spaces | NRC | 6-4 | 2-3 years | N/A |

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| 10: Provide opportunities for safe and enjoyable walking and bicycle access throughout the Town. | A. Expand and enhance the Town-wide trails network that interconnects and traverses open space. | Coordinate E-bike education program | Wellesley Police, School Department, Mobility Committee, NRC | 3-6 | ASAP | Operating Buidgets |
| | B. Maintain the trails network and existing trails through park and woodlands. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing dedicated cyclist and pedestrian pathways (especially bike lanes that are separated from vehicular traffic). | Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning | 3-1 | 1-5 years | Capital Budget, regional Planning grants |
| | C. Promote the development of bicycle routes through the Town, as part of the regional transportation system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding and/or improving bike lanes and sidewalks on specific roads/paths (Weston Rd, Route 9, Brook Path, Wellesley Ave at Wellesley Country Club, Elm Bank Reservation to Wellesley Square, near Morses Pond Rd, Oakland Ave, Wellesley Ave near Fiske School, Washington St, and Central St). | Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning | 3-2 | 1-5 years | |
| | D. Pursue greater connectivity of open spaces on a local and regional level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcing traffic rules for both vehicular traffic and cyclists on shared roads | Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning, Wellesley Police | 3-3 | ASAP | Police Public safety budget |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the Town's existing trails and bike routes system in town as well as connecting to regional trail and bike networks | Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning | 3-4 | 3-6 years | NRC, Trails Operating budget |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Mobility Committee work on complete streets and enhanced multi-modal transportation | Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning | 3-5 | ASAP | NRC, Trails Operating budget |



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September 10, 2025

Brandon Schmitt, Director
Natural Resources Commission
888 Worcester Street, Suite 160
Wellesley, MA 02482

Re: Open Space and Recreation Plan

Dear Mr. Schmitt:

Thank you for submitting the updated Action Plan for the Town of Wellesley's Open Space and Recreation Plan extending the goals and objectives over 10 years. I'm pleased to write that the plan has received an additional three years of approval, and the town is eligible to apply for DCS grants through October 2032. Please contact me at melissa.cryan@mass.gov if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Melissa Cryan

Melissa Cryan
Grant Programs Supervisor