Town of Wellesley NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

LAND USE PLAN FOR CENTENNIAL PARK

<u>1997</u>

IN REMEMBRANCE

— of Dorothy S. Brownlee, a member of the Natural Resources Commission from 1979 to 1984, who, through her perseverance and special talents, made the acquisition of Centennial Park possible.

PREFACE TO THE 1997 PLAN

This document was originally developed in the spring of 1984 by the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) as a guide for land use of Wellesley's 42-acre Centennial Park. The updated plan was prepared in consultation with the Friends of Centennial Park, an affiliate of the Wellesley Conservation Council, Inc., and with the Department of Public Works Park & Tree Division, which maintains the park according to the Centennial Park Land Use Plan.

In developing this document the Long Range Planning Committee solicited broad input from citizens and Town agencies on the best use and care for the property, which was purchased from the Sisters of Charity for Wellesley's first Centennial as a heritage for the Town's second century: 1981–2181.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
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Mission Statement

IT IS THE MISSION OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION to provide stewardship, education and advocacy of the Town of Wellesley park, conservation, and open space system.

The STEWARDSHIP imperative is reflected in Commission policies and regulations. Management decisions are structured with long term stewardship in mind, as are the levels of maintenance and development specified for active or passive recreational uses.

EDUCATION is a fundamental component of the NRC mission. Stewardship can only be achieved by building long term public understanding, support and enjoyment of open space as an integral part of Wellesley's quality of life. The high level of public demand for information on Wellesley's park and conservation lands, recreational opportunities, and natural and historical resources is a hopeful indication for the future.

Providing access to open space for suitable recreational opportunities for all members of the public is an important part of NRC's mission. Prudence in planning new or expanded active recreation programs or facilities is needed in order to assure preservation of Wellesley's natural and cultural resources, native wildlife, and the healthful and aesthetic qualities essential to an outstanding residential community.

ADVOCACY of environmentally-sensitive management practices by public and private agencies and individuals alike is fundamental to the stewardship mission. Emphasis on the 3Rs—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—is basic. Reducing pesticide, fertilizer and sediment-loading of Wellesley's waters is crucial to Wellesley's water supply and water-contact sports. Planting trees is critical to Wellesley's aesthetics and real estate values but even more to fresh air, climate control, noise reduction, and pollution abatement.

Cooperation and coordination with the private sector—neighborhood groups, private land trusts, watershed associations, horticultural interests and the business sector—are integral to accomplishing this mission. Volunteer efforts and contributions have been and will continue to be vital to maintaining and improving Wellesley's quality of life.

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- 2. The cutting of trees or shrubs is prohibited except by the Department of Public Works in conformance with the park's maintenance plan.
- 3. The picking or removal of wildflowers is prohibited.
- 4. The meadows, paths and parking areas shall be maintained according to their level of use.
- 5. The use of all motorized vehicles except for DPW maintenance vehicles is prohibited.
- 6. Bezanson Pond and the park brooks shall be maintained without disturbance to the banks or shrubbery.

The conservation of special habitats is essential. Such habitats may be enhanced with native plants to provide food, shelter and nesting habitat for birds and wildlife. Native trees, shrubs, berries and wildflowers providing wildlife values shall be encouraged.

Recreational Uses

Passive recreation, including but not limited to hiking, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, sledding, photography, painting, berrypicking, picnicking, kite-flying, and fishing, is strongly encouraged. Community garden plots are provided at the Brookside Road Community Gardens; gardening in the park is not permitted.

Educational and Cultural Uses

Centennial Park and Bezanson Pond offer Wellesley's students a close-to-home outdoor educational opportunity. The Environmental Aides and selected elementary classes use the park with safety, convenience and economy. Wellesley's elementary, middle school and high school teachers are encouraged to use the park for field discovery and research. The Park is also available to Dana Hall, Mass. Bay Community College, Babson College, and Wellesley College teachers and students.

Wellesley's religious congregations are encouraged to use the park for special occasions, such as sunrise services.

IV LONG RANGE PLANNING

The 1984 Plan called for the accomplishment of the following objectives by the year 2000:

- ▶ To maintain the balance of meadows and woodland
- ► To complete the boundary planting.
- ► To improve the sitting area at the knoll
- ► To provide off-street parking
- ► To mark the entrance clearly in order to prevent use of the Mount St. Vincent parking lot by Centennial Park visitors
- ► To install permanent boundary markers
- ► To encourage the Country Club to mark its boundary with plantings, boulders or rough area
- ► To establish and foster the "Friends of Centennial Park"

- ▶ To encourage suggestions from neighbors and park users
- ► To encourage passive recreational activities and use of the park by schools and civic bodies
- ► To provide a descriptive park brochure and map showing connections to points of interest and the trail system
- ► To clear the trails and mark them inconspicuously
- ► To ask Mass. Bay Community College to secure the future use of the traditional paths to and from Maugus Hill and the surrounding open space
- ▶ To mow Meadow #5 (the upper meadow) occasionally to preserve the vista
- ▶ To evaluate the potential for a woodlot management program
- ► To discuss with property owners a right-of-way for pedestrian access from Abbott Road and Windsor Roads
- ► To discourage encroachments and dumping
- ► To install a freshwater well and pitcher pump
- ► To encourage birdwalks and bluebird nesting boxes

Most of these objectives have been attained. A few, such as bluebird boxes, were attempted but did not succeed at the time. Dodie Brownlee's pitcher pump, intended to give residents a source of untreated water, was found to be impractical due to health regulations.

V ANNUAL MAINTENANCE PLAN

Maintenance Goal

The goal of Centennial Park maintenance is to protect, preserve and enhance the park's native New England ecology for the education and enjoyment of park users.

Maintenance Objectives

The following objectives for Centennial Park maintenance are adopted:

- 1. To preserve and enhance native vegetation that provides food and shelter to the wildlife of the park
- 2. To provide pedestrian access by maintaining its unpaved footpaths and trails
- 3. To maintain the balance of meadow to woods by mowing the meadows in alternate years
- 4. To discourage noxious or invasive vegetation such as poison ivy, crown vetch and catbrier ___
- 5. To protect berry patches, grapevines, and other native food species for the use of wildlife and visitors
- 6. To encourage native wildflowers for aesthetic and educational purposes
- 7. To avoid over-maintenance and to reduce maintenance costs to a minimum concomitant with public enjoyment of the park
- 8. To prevent park use by mountain bikes and unauthorized motor vehicles
- 9. To discourage off-road travel by Town maintenance vehicles
- 10. To remove dangers to human life or property
- 11. To maintain a welcoming entrance to the park (sign, gate, driveway, knoll, parking area)
- 12. To follow the Natural Resources Commission's "Basic Annual Maintenance Standard for Conservation Properties" (see Appendix).

Specific needs

Entrance Maintenance

Entrance means the driveway, gate and sign; the knoll; and the gravel parking area.

The driveway shall be kept in repair, the gate painted, and the driveway shoulders and sign be cleared of overgrowth and poison ivy.

The knoll shall be mowed when the meadows are mowed. The bench shall be kept clear and in good repair.

Parking shall be restricted to the gravel parking area. Passage into the park for maintenance vehicles shall be limited as most practical.

Entrance areas shall be kept free of litter and debris.

Footpath and Trail Maintenance

Existing footpaths shall be mowed regularly but not widened. Chipped brush may be used to suppress regrowth. Special views shall be kept open but not enlarged. The Nature Trail – markers are to be kept legible and clear of vegetation. The Nature Trail pamphlet is to be kept stocked in weather-protected facilities except during the winter months.

Removal of Brush and Debris

Brush and debris shall be removed at the park entrance, along footpaths, and where hazards to human life or property may develop.

Litter Control

Litter and trash shall be removed as needed, with emphasis on the entrance and pond areas.

Vegetation Control

Poison ivy and catbrier shall be discouraged at the park entrance and controlled along footpaths and trails by mowing or use of a plant-specific herbicide. Crown vetch shall be controlled on Meadow #1.

Removal of Dangerous Limbs or Trees

Dead or fallen trees and branches shall be removed only where they threaten human safety and property, block footpaths or streams, or create a fire hazard.

Boundary Planting

The boundary planting shall be evaluated annually and kept free of crown vetch. Dead plants shall be replaced promptly.

Brook Channel

The brook channel downstream from Bezanson Pond shall be kept clear of debris.

Meadow mowing

In New England most meadows require mowing so they won't revert to forest, but they vary enormously in their need for mowing. Mowing alters the ecology of the meadow to some extent; whether this is good or bad depends on the intended use or value of the meadow.

According to Mass. Audubon Naturalist Charles E. Roth, mowing the meadows annually will destroy all biennial and perennial wildflowers. Mowing every two years will preserve some of the biennials, but the perennials will die or persist without ripening seed. Therefore, while paths should be mowed regularly to keep them open and free of poison ivy, the meadows should be mowed in alternate years <u>only</u> in late August or early September after seed has ripened and when an inspection shows that woody species are moving in.

To protect ground-nesting birds and to allow wildflower seed to set, the meadows at Centennial Park shall be moved every other year on an alternating schedule, preferably after September 1. They shall *not* be moved prior to August 15.

Leasing of the meadows for haying shall be considered only if the prospective lessee will agree to the above restrictions.

The Five Meadows

Centennial Park has five meadows identified by numbers on the park plan (see Appendix). Their primary values are as follows:

Meadows #1 and #2

These major meadows north and south of the park entrance set the park tone as seen from Oakland Street. They are the center of a sweeping panorama from the top of Maugus Hill through the Mount St. Vincent overlook, over the meadows, and on down past the clipped green fairways of the Country Club golf course to Rosemary Brook and Longfellow Pond. The tall grasses of Meadows 1 and 2 are a primary foraging area for ground-nesting birds. Control of crown vetch is essential here.

Meadow #3

This small meadow forms an open space along the woods trail behind the homes on Windsor Road. It provides a change of pace and scenery. The woods trail needs to be maintained so that users have no difficulty in following the route.

Meadow #4

This meadow is particularly rich in wildflowers which will be destroyed by too-frequent mowing. It is also a prime nesting area for ground-nesting birds. The paths need regular mowing to keep them free of poison ivy.

Meadow #5

This steep, narrow meadow shared with Mass. Bay Community College is high on the side of Maugus Hill. The view from it extends to the Great Blue Hill in Canton. It needs annual mowing to prevent trees from taking over.

VI ANNUAL INSPECTION BY FRIENDS OF CENTENNIAL PARK

It is requested that the Friends of Centennial Park walk the property at least once during the growing season and that they report maintenance needs to the Natural Resources Commission.

to

VII APPENDIX

CENTENNIAL PARK DEED RESTRICTIONS

The land herein conveyed shall be devoted solely to park, recreational, playground and conservation uses, as the Natural Resources Commission of the Town of Wellesley shall determine, including such structures, improvements and facilities as are deemed necessary or appropriate by the Town of Wellesley in connection therewith, but subject to the following restrictions:

- 1. The premises shall not be lighted by any artificial exterior lighting to illuminate active recreational uses between the hours of 11:00 PM and 7:00 AM
- 2. Within the area shown as "Passive Recreation Buffer" on the plan voted by Town Meeting, permitted uses shall be limited to passive park, recreational and conservation uses, including by way of example and not limitation informal play, walking, birding, skiing, sledding, and nature study.
- 3. The foregoing restriction numbers 1 and 2 shall run with the land and be in full force and effect for a period of 30 years from the date of recording this deed, and shall be subject to a notice of renewal thereafter according to law.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary hereinbefore provided, the foregoing restrictions benefit the land shown as Parcel B on said Plan and all of the foregoing restrictions shall be terminated and shall be of no further force or effect at such time as the buildings now existing on Parcel B as shown on said Plan, now owned by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc., are no longer principally used as a convent, a rectory, a residential complex, or a nursing home or elderly care facility for members of the congregation of Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul or any similar order of religious men and/or women. Said area shown as "Passive Recreation Buffer" contains 4.101 acres according to said Plan.

CENTENNIAL PARK Policy Guidelines

It is the policy of the Natural Resources Commission:

To maintain Centennial Park as conservation land and to enhance it as a natural area featuring flora and fauna native to New England, with emphasis on native plants which provide food and/or shelter to meadow and forest life.

OBJECTIVES

- ➤ To be consistent with the Basic Standards for Park and Conservation Lands
- > To be consistent with the 1984 Land Use Plan for Centennial Park
- ➤ To emphasize field monitoring by the Friends of Centennial Park
- > To be reviewed jointly by the Friends of Centennial Park and the NRC

A. The Entrance (includes driveway, gate, sign, knoll and parking area)

Make entrance and turnoff from Oakland Street more visible
Repair drive, parking area, memorial bench and sign as needed
Repaint letters of sign for greater visibility
Paint gate as needed
Keep park sign and driveway shoulders clear of overgrowth and poison ivy
Mow knoll as often as needed to keep entrance open and inviting
Remove litter and debris

B. Footpaths and Trails

Keep open by mowing, especially to control poison ivy
Restore Nature Trail markers, woodchips and *Trail Guides* as necessary
Keep views open but not enlarged
Maintain passage along the Windsor Road boundary

C. Brush and Debris

Remove brush and debris at entrance, along paths and trails, and from brook and pond Remove where fallen trees or branches present a danger to life, limb or property Remind abutters in the fall to remove non-composted garden refuse

D. Vegetation Control

Control by mowing whenever possible; minimize use of herbicides

Poison ivy to be controlled, preferably by mowing, at the park entrance, along trails,
and where it invades the meadows

Control brush only where essential, by manual means if possible

Control crown vetch as necessary; discuss herbicide with NRC

Herbicides may not be used within 100 feet of water

E. Broken Limbs and Trees

To be removed only where blocking footpaths or streams or threatening life, limb or property

Centennial Park Maintenance Plan (continued)

Litter Control

No trash barrels Encourage visitors to remove everything they bring

G. Boundary Planting Monitor and report to NRC annually on crown vetch invasiveness

H. Brook and Pond

Keep channel free-flowing

Meadow Mowing

Meadows to be mowed every other year in rotation Meadows to be mowed after August 1 to avoid ground-nesting birds Paths and poison ivy to be mowed at any time Blackberry tangles to be preserved except where interfering with passage

Meadow #1 (off Oakland St.): Mow back half alternately with front Meadow #2 (next to golf course):

Meadow #3 (gardens): Clear passage around gardens

Meadow #4 (wildflowers):

Meadow #5 (Mass. Bay): Mow vigorously and thoroughly to remove woody material

Evaluation of Maintenance and Amendments to Maintenance Plan

Friends of Centennial Park to monitor maintenance throughout summer Friends to report problems to the Natural Resources Commission. Friends to make recommendations by September 15 for capital improvements Friends to meet with the NRC in October to evaluate results and to plan for maintenance improvements.

PARK AND CONSERVATION LANDS General Regulations

THESE REGULATIONS ARE ADOPTED by the Natural Resources Commission pursuant to the authority of MGL Chapter 45 §5 to protect Wellesley's park and conservation lands and to enhance public enjoyment of open space recreational and educational opportunities.

Wellesley's parks and conservation lands are Town property administered by the Natural Resources Commission for the benefit of all. Visitors are required to abide by these regulations so that the rights of all are respected. Persons who violate any of these regulations shall be required to leave and shall be subject to all penalties prescribed by law.

1. Hours

Parks and conservation lands are open to the public from sunup to sundown throughout the year. Nighttime use is prohibited except for scheduled use on lighted playing fields.

2. Motor Vehicles Prohibited

Motor vehicles are prohibited except on paved roads and in designated parking areas between sunup and sundown. No overnight parking is permitted. Motorcycles, motor scooters, motor campers, trail bikes, snowmobiles, and any other motor-powered vehicles, except for those used for public maintenance, are prohibited from unpaved areas.

3. Firearms and Traps

Firearms, hunting and trapping are prohibited. Molesting, harassing or injuring wildlife in any way is prohibited. Fishing is permitted in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth.

4. Drugs and Alcoholic Beverages

Possession of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances is prohibited.

5. Dumping and Littering Prohibited

Littering or dumping of grass clippings, leaves, brush, debris or any other material is prohibited. When leaving park or conservation lands, visitors are requested to remove any materials they brought in with them. Voluntary clean-ups are encouraged and appreciated.

6. Pets

Pets must at all times be under the immediate control of the owner or on a leash in order to protect plants, wildlife, and the enjoyment of other visitors.

7. Trees and Plants Protected

Cutting or removing trees or other vegetation is prohibited because trees, shrubs, flowers and groundcovers are essential to wildlife and to the beauty and enjoyment of parks and conservation lands.

8. Firewood

On penalty of law, no wood may be removed for firewood or other purposes from park or conservation lands except with written permission from the Natural Resources office. Stacked firewood from trees taken down by the Department of Public Works may be removed by residents for personal use.

9. Vandalism

Disturbing, removing, defacing, cutting or otherwise damaging a natural feature, sign, barrier, building or other property in park and conservation land is prohibited.

10. Noise

Conduct which disturbs the tranquility of park or conservation lands or which interferes with the enjoyment of others is prohibited. Disturbing conduct includes, but is not limited to, making loud noise audible beyond the immediate area of the source.

11. Camping

Camping is permitted only by permit from the Natural Resources Commission.

12. Open Fires

Open fires are allowed only by permit from the Wellesley Fire Department and from the Natural Resources Commission.

13. Violations

Violations of these regulations shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$25 or more than \$200, as provided by MGL Chapter 45 Section 24. Damages for tree cutting or removal are additional.

PARK AND CONSERVATION LANDS

Basic Annual Maintenance Standard for Conservation Lands

The Natural Resources Commission sets policy for improving the maintenance and accessibility of conservation lands so that residents may enjoy them for passive recreation, photography and educational purposes. This requires opening and marking entrances to the properties, clearing and marking trails and paths, discouraging cathrier and poison ivy, removing debris and litter, and placement of stepping stones or logs or simple footbridges at strategic locations. NRC standards for Public Works maintenance of conservation land are:

1. Entrance Maintenance

Pedestrian entrances shall be cleared of overgrowth and poison ivy. Litter and dumped material shall be removed. Trash barrels and signage shall be discussed with Natural Resources staff prior to installation.

2. Path and Trail Maintenance

Footpaths shall be kept open but not widened. Chipped brush may be used to suppress regrowth. Special views shall be kept open but not enlarged except in consultation with the Natural Resources office.

3. Brush and Debris Removal

Effort is to be concentrated at entrances, along paths, and where hazards (fire, flood, safety) may occur.

4. Selective Poison Ivy Control

Poison ivy control is to be used at entrances and along paths where human contact may occur. Massachusetts-approved herbicides may be used in minimal quantities.

5. Removal of Dangerous Limbs or Trees

Dead or fallen trees or branches shall be removed *only* where they threaten safety or property or block paths or streams.

6. Litter Control

Litter and dumping shall be removed. Trash barrels and signs may be utilized in consultation with Natural Resources staff to discourage litter. If used, trash barrels must be emptied regularly.

7. Slash Disposal

In remote areas clean large limbs may be stacked as wildlife shelter. Slash may not be left where it would create a fire hazard. Slash may not be piled within 25 feet of any pond or stream.

PARK AND CONSERVATION LANDS Maintenance of Conservation Lands Explained

CONSERVATION LAND MAINTENANCE IS DIFFERENT FROM PARK MAINTENANCE

Wellesley's parks and conservation lands are managed under different Massachusetts laws. The Natural Resources Commission sets policy for both. Under Town bylaw the Department of Public Works Park & Tree Division carries out NRC policy for maintenance of park and conservation lands.

Generally speaking, parks have different purposes from conservation lands. Parks tend to be more open, "manicured," and suitable for active sports and group activities. Conservation lands are more natural and informal, intended to protect water quality and recharge, plantlife and wildlife. Conservation lands are used for passive recreation, nature study, and other educational purposes. In Wellesley, large conservation areas are called *Reservations*.

Conservation land is less expensive to maintain than park land because less work is needed. There are no ornamental plants to care for and mowing of turf is not required. But "low care" is not "no care."

Why Conservation Land is Maintained

If no work is done on conservation land, brooks become clogged, footpaths are blocked, and hazardous conditions may develop. Littering and dumping become problems.

The Right Kind of Maintenance

All maintenance work is to be done according to the Natural Resources policy called "Basic Maintenance of Conservation Lands" included in this handbook.

Natural Resources policies guide the maintenance of all conservation lands in Wellesley. If there is any question as to what is wanted, the NRC office should be consulted before work is started.

Policy Guidelines

In conservation lands, narrow, winding footpaths are wanted, not wide, smooth, level paths. These paths may be bumpy, steep or damp in places, so long as they are passable by one or two people. Conservation footpaths are only for walking, not for bicycles or vehicles.

Although in parkland wide vistas are enjoyable, in conservation areas most vistas are small and close-up, such as a patch of spring flowers or a quick glimpse around a bend in the trail. Special vistas from a lookout point or across a pond should be identified and maintained. Man-made structures such as bridges and signs should blend with their surroundings. Natural materials such as logs or stones should be used as much as possible.

Maintenance of Conservation Lands Explained (continued)

Litter and Dumping

Grass clippings, leaves and branches are often dumped on public land. Small amounts soon turn into mulch, but large piles become eyesores which block trails and streams and attract more dumping. Litter is a problem wherever people congregate.

High priority should be given to cleanup of dumping and litter on conservation land. If dumpers can be identified, the Natural Resources office should be notified so that action can be taken. Trash cans and "No Dumping" signs should be requested. When trashcans are used, they must be emptied regularly. When possible, composting procedures should be explained to abutters.

Three Mistakes to Avoid

The three mistakes listed below create most problems but they can usually be avoided:

1. Clearing of roads in conservation areas

Wide, straight access roads spoil the natural look of conservation lands and invite vehicle trespass, which is destructive. Essential roads should be no wider than the equipment and should curve around trees or boulders. Entrances should be inconspicuous. Conservation roads should *never* be paved without consulting the Natural Resources office. If necessary, entry by unauthorized vehicles should be blocked.

2. Turning brooks into ditches

If heavy equipment is used to clear a brook of fallen branches or sediment, the natural banks must not be changed. In conservation lands it is good for the brooks to spread out and for water to sink into the ground. This supplies groundwater and reduces fire hazard and flooding. Natural brooks must not be changed into drainage ditches or canals. Brook maintenance is done under a permit from the Wetlands Protection Committee called "Brook Maintenance Standards."

3. Tree removals

On conservation land, trees should be removed only where necessary to keep paths open and safe. Dead trees which are not dangerous should be left in place for their nesting and denning value. Undergrowth should not be cleared but catbrier and poison ivy should be removed at entrances and along trails. Viewpoints should be cleared just enough to restore the view.

Use of Clean Wood Chips

Branches and twigs should be chipped and spread along footpaths to give a springy walking surface and to slow down regrowth. Mulch contaminated with litter and weeds should not be used.

LIST OF CONSERVATION LANDS AND OTHER LANDS MAINTAINED FOR CONSERVATION PURPOSES*

Abbott's Pond

Baird Marsh (Guiney Swamp)

Beebe Meadow

Bird Island (in Morses Pond)

Bogle Brook Park and Reeds Pond

Carisbrooke Reservation (Glen Brook Road at the Weston line)

Centennial Park

Colburn Road Reservation

Coowate Meadow (field mowing; Hillside Road and Springdale Avenue)

Devil's Slide (off Greenwood behind 44 Bradford)

Hardy Land (0.5A at #5 Great Plain Avenue)

Indian Springs Park and the Brookway/Waterway (scenic road, vernal pool), including conservation lands off Squirrel Road (scenic road)

"Ollie Turner" Park (field mowing; adjacent to Town Forest)

Overbrook Reservation (Weston Road off Route 9)

Pine Point (Morses Pond off Cochituate Aqueduct)

Problem Rock (puddingstone at Dover Road and Grove Street)

Sawyer Park

The following three properties form a unit with Kelly Field and Bates School:

Annanian Land (south of Elmwood Road across from Kelly Pond) Boulder Brook Reservation (includes Lilly Rich Meadow) Rocky Ledges (north of Boulder Brook Reservation)

Town Forest is also maintained as conservation land.

* Planting on conservation lands and on lands maintained as conservation land is restricted to native plant species of value to wildlife for food and cover (see Chapter 9, *Wildlife Management*).

