

Town of Wilmington Land Stewardship Program

**Wilmington Planning and Conservation Department
121 Glen Road
Wilmington, MA 01887**

Introduction

Wilmington is a town that is constantly growing and ever expanding. While this development makes Wilmington a dynamic and exciting place to live, it also creates a need for intentionality when caring for the town's conservation land and open space. Wilmington has over 930 acres of conservation land, protected for the well-being of the community, wildlife, vegetation, and the ecosystem. One of the primary functions of the Conservation Department is the administration and enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 131, Section 40). Protecting the conservation lands is another important responsibility.

While it is intended that Wilmington's conservation land provide a safe and healthy environmental habitat, the land also provides an opportunity for citizens of the Town to engage in all that the natural surroundings have to offer. Conservation land has the potential to provide environmental, educational, aesthetic, social, and recreational benefits for the community if the land is properly utilized and managed.

This is where land stewardship begins!

What is land stewardship?

Land stewardship is the thoughtful and responsible involvement of citizens in managing the municipality's natural resources. The ultimate goal of land stewardship is to ensure that conservation land will be sustained for future generations. Thus, the Land Stewardship Program encourages and fosters the active participation of residents in the maintenance and protection of open space and promotion of responsible use of the land. As Wilmington has a substantial amount of conservation land, it is important to encourage residents to assist with its management.

What do volunteers of the Land Stewardship Program do?

Wilmington's Land Stewardship Program operates primarily on an "adoption" system. The steward volunteers and adopts a certain area of land and becomes a caretaker, a watchman, and an advocate for the space. A steward commits to walk the space and the trails within the parcel regularly, taking special notice of any developing problems or possibilities. Stewards are involved in litter pick-up, general trail maintenance, and promotion of responsible space use. They can also become involved in sign maintenance, helping to improve trail maps, leading community walks through the land, or recommending improvements to the Conservation Department. A steward is not an enforcement agent. Stewards work in conjunction with the Conservation Agent, reporting periodically on the state of the land, and meeting together annually to share ideas and discuss solutions to problems.

Specific Responsibilities of a Land Steward

In Wilmington, the specific responsibilities of a land steward fall under three categories: monitoring, maintaining, and increasing awareness.

- *Monitoring*

Land stewards commit to walking their assigned land on a regular basis (i.e. weekly or, at the very least, quarterly). They check the land and take note of both natural and man-made disturbances. They check trail and land conditions, note the level of use and report problems, e.g. erosion, litter, graffiti. Tasks can include inventorying animals, plants and/or natural features. The Monitoring and Maintenance Checklist (Appendix A) can be a useful tool for effective monitoring. Stewards are encouraged to carry a notebook and a pencil (and even a digital camera) as observations are easily forgotten.

Land stewards are asked to fill out and turn in a Land Steward Report (Appendix B) to the Conservation Department twice a year. This provides a means for active and open communication between the steward and the Conservation Agent. In this manner, the Agent will be able to address questions, needs, or issues that arise. It will also keep the Department actively informed as to the state of the land.

If a serious issue occurs on the land, such as a fire, a crime, significant land misuse/abuse, etc., the Conservation Agent should be notified immediately so that the necessary action can be taken. The land stewards are volunteers and not enforcers. The monitoring responsibility of the steward is one that is inherently linked to the partnership of the steward with the Conservation Department.

- *Maintaining*

The maintenance responsibility is the responsive and preventative action that takes place as a result of monitoring. For most stewards, the greatest components of maintaining the land will be picking up litter, keeping the trails open and safe, and keeping conservation/trail signs visible. Natural debris such as fallen branches and trees should be moved off the trails but otherwise be left to provide habitat for creatures. It is vital that stewards get permission from the Conservation Department before undertaking projects or making any permanent modifications to the open space.

- *Increasing awareness*

Stewards are encouraged to consider their stewardship commitment not only as service to the community, but also as a way to build community. Stewards may consider leading trail walks, facilitating outdoor educational/recreational events, or having neighborhood work days on the land. They are encouraged to invite others, especially those in the neighborhood of the site, to responsibly enjoy the natural beauty the land has to offer. Stewards are asked to keep the Conservation Department informed through the Land Steward Reports. Land stewards are encouraged to attend the annual Land Stewards Meeting to share experiences and ideas with other stewards.

Problems and Solutions

It is important to remember that a steward is a volunteer who helps with monitoring but is not an enforcement agent. If serious issues arise, the steward should contact the Conservation Department and attempt to identify violators (names, address, vehicle description and license #, etc.).

Potential Problems That May Arise	Solution
Irresponsible visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Politely explain why their actions have a negative effect on the open space.• Do not argue with them.• Do not approach anyone who may be dangerous or threatening.• If necessary, alert the Conservation Department and the Police Department.
Fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call the Fire Department immediately.
Large items or hazardous items in need of disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call Conservation to arrange for pick up by Department of Public Works
Destruction of land or removal of plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the Conservation Department or, in extreme cases, the Police Department.
Illegal activity such as use of firearms, drinking, drug use, rowdiness, use of unauthorized motor vehicles, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the Conservation Department and the Police Department.

If you are uncertain how to handle an issue, you should not hesitate to contact the Conservation Agent. It is always better to be too cautious than too lenient.

Conservation Land Rules

The Town of Wilmington wants people to enjoy conservation land, but protecting the well-being of the land, the plants and animals that live there is important. Visitors are invited to enjoy walking on and discovering the land and are asked to be respectful of the following rules:

1. Conservation land is open daily from dawn until dusk.
2. All public safety bylaws of the Town apply in the conservation land.
3. Pets must be on a leash. Any animal waste must be promptly picked up and disposed of properly by the owner.
4. The space operates on a carry in, carry out system. Picnics and passive recreational items are allowed, but all items must be taken out when exiting the land. No dumping or littering of any kind is permitted.
5. Fires are prohibited.
6. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
7. Discharge of firearms is prohibited.
8. Feeding or harassing wildlife is prohibited.
9. Fishing is allowed where posted, however hunting and trapping is prohibited.
10. Removing, breaking, defacing, cutting down, tampering with, or damaging the natural or man-made features, such as trees, flowers, shrubs, wildlife, signs, or fences, is prohibited.
11. Unless authorized in writing by the Conservation Commission, no alteration such as cutting of trails, digging holes, or building structures is allowed.
12. Only Town or authorized maintenance vehicles are allowed.

Wilmington's Conservation Areas

The following conservation areas are some of the open spaces in Wilmington that the Land Stewardship Program hopes to match with stewards.

- *Wilmington Town Forest - Andover Street*
Size: 154 acres (about 2.3 mi. of trails, several connecting to trails on Camp 40 Acres)
Town Forest is the largest parcel of conservation land in Wilmington. It is also one of the few large upland areas protected for passive recreation. The Forest contains the highest point in Wilmington, with sweeping views of Boston and surrounding communities. There is a water tower at the top of the hill and an access road that can be used in conjunction with surrounding trails for walking, jogging, bicycling, cross-county skiing, snow shoeing, and horseback riding. The hilltop is an excellent site for observing bird migrations, and a variety of small mammals and birds inhabit the mixed hardwood forest. The Forest abuts Camp 40 Acres, owned by Wilmington Junior Camps, and is often used by Scouts and other groups based at Camp 40 Acres. Links to the Bay Circuit and other trails owned by the Andover Village Improvement Society (A.V.I.S.) just across the Andover town line may be developed. Parking is available for 6-8 cars on Andover Street with additional parking in the new parking area within the Forest near Camp 40 Acres entrance. The Forest parking area is open spring through fall and is best used by four-wheel drive vehicles.
- *Brookfield Estates – Ashwood Avenue*
Size: 5.6 acres (about .2 mi. of trail)
Trail starts at the parking area off Ashwood Avenue, crosses a small stream, and continues along the sewer easement ending at a stream. The open space was donated as part of the conservation subdivision. It is a wooded parcel with wetlands and small stream.
- *Hathaway Acres – Draper and Evans Drive*
Size: 22 acres (about .4 mi. of trail with a number of spurs)
Trails from Charlotte Road and Draper Drive lead back towards Martin's Brook and "the Black Lagoon," once a popular ice skating pond for the neighborhood. Paths also connect to Salem Street, where canoeists and kayakers can put into the Brook for a beautiful paddle past the former J.T. Berry Rehabilitation Center and on into North Reading. Gowing Brook flows up from the south at the easterly extent of the conservation land to join Martin's Brook. Signs have been placed at Evans Drive to deter individuals from dumping landscape debris and cuttings at this location. Unfortunately, this area is prone to illegal ATV use which is taking a toll on the land. Parking off Salem Street is dangerous due to oncoming traffic. Street parking is available on Draper and Evans Drives for visitors.

After acquiring this area with Self-Help funding in 1969, the town undertook several conservation initiatives to mitigate damage caused by sand and gravel operations, including grading and planting hundreds of trees. Additional trails, including one or more made accessible for wheelchairs, and interpretive signs would allow today's residents to take advantage of the successful reclamation of this mined out area.

- *Beeching Ave*
 Size: 4.6 acres (about .1 mi. of trail)
 A path skirts the edge of mostly wet wooded area and connects two streets for a short walk.
- *Glen Road Berry Bog – Glen Road*
 Size: 13 acres (about .6 mi. of trail, including a wooden bridge)
 Lubbers Brook flows through this former cranberry bog, which is in transition from an open bog to a maple and shrub swamp. Because of the changing habitat in these wetland types, the area offers an excellent opportunity to examine a mix of wetland communities. Trails are well established, and are connected to the 19 acre Town Hall complex, with the 8-acre Robert Palmer Park with its playground, ball fields, and picnic area. Paths lead from the playing field/picnic area toward the Berry Bog and surrounding woodlands. The current popularity of the Park for active recreation, the transitional state of the wetlands, and convenient parking make this a good candidate for an interpretive nature trail that is wheelchair accessible. This site is excellent for walking, jogging, cross-country skiing, nature observation, etc.
- *Corum Meadows – Pilcher Drive*
 Size: 20 acres
 Donated by JayDee Builders when the Biggar Avenue neighborhood was developed in 1973, this area is named after Mr. and Mrs. Fred Corum whose farm formerly occupied the northerly side of Salem Street opposite the neighborhood. At the northern end of Pilcher Drive is a short path to a small pond that drains to Lubbers Brook. The pond has a small “beach” and provides opportunities for non-motorized boating, fishing, and skating. Much of the open space on the southern end of Pilcher Drive is floodplain and wetlands associated with Lubbers Brook. Street parking is available to visitors.
- *Fisherman’s Access/Shawsheen Pines – Grace Drive*
 Size: 2.5 acres (about .1 mi. of trail)
 Located on the Shawsheen River, Fisherman’s Access was the first parcel of land donated into the care, custody, and control of the Wilmington Conservation Commission shortly after the Commission was established in 1964. The site is popular with canoeists and kayakers as a “put-in.” A short trail provides views of the old canal works and a variety of riparian and wetland vegetation for the casual hiker. Fishing is also allowed at this space. The parcel abuts land owned by the Billerica Historical Commission and the remnants of the Middlesex Canal Aqueduct just downstream at Shawsheen Avenue (Route 129). A plaque indicates the Canal is designated as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. A United States Geological Survey’s stream flow gauging facility is nearby. Parking is available at the end of Grace Drive.
- *Blanchard Road/Cormier Park*
 Size: 26 acres
 This site along Lubbers Brook and former cranberry bogs has a marked trail used for hiking and jogging. The woods are dominated by stands of white pines and red swamp maples that flank the brook and are especially attractive during the fall foliage season. An esker running parallel to Lubbers Brook and the earthen dams used to control flow in and out of the cranberry bogs provide views over the marsh. There is potential for historic markers describing 19th century cranberry production and the nearby Middlesex

Canal. The esker also provides dry ground for a potential handicapped accessible trail. The trail is accessible from the end of Blanchard Road where visitors can park at the side of the road. This space has great potential, but the sign and trail are in need of clean-up.

- *Leonard Estates – Leonard Lane*
Size: 11.6 (about .3 mi. of trail connecting to Heritage Pines)
The walking trail and open space were created as part of Leonard Estates, which is located off Hopkins Street. The trail loops around the subdivision, passing by some wetland areas and connecting to the path at Heritage Pines. Trail has access points on both sides of the Lane. Parking is provided off the road. Parcel also abuts Wilton Drive and Cormier Park at Lubbers Brook.
- *Heritage Pines – Lt. Buck Drive*
Size: 4 acres (about .4 mi. of trail being built, to connect to Leonard Estates)
Heritage Pines, which is off Shawsheen Avenue, will have a path that loops around the subdivision through the 4 acres of open space and connects to the path at Leonard Estates. The open space includes wetlands and an intermittent stream. Access is off both sides of Lt. Buck Drive. Parking is beside the road.
- *Patch's Pond – Towpath Drive*
Size: 3.1 acres
Much of the land is a wooded wetland. The short trail starts at Towpath Drive and connects to the historic Middlesex Canal towpath (owned by Middlesex Canal Commission), a longer trail which can be followed past Butters Row all the way to Town Park Aqueduct. In addition to the Pond, this parcel has little streams that run both through the path and under makeshift bridges. Parking is on Towpath Drive.
- *Maple Meadows - Allenhurst Way, Wildwood Street, Parker Street*
Size: 112 acres
Much of this area is wetland associated with Maple Meadow Brook that is largely inaccessible. It includes donations from Larry Doo and Anna Low, land on Wildwood Street purchased with Self-Help funds, and many tax title lots transferred to Conservation. There is no public boat launch area, but small boats can use the brook. People can look into the meadows or fish from the Wildwood Street sidewalk. It may be possible to create trails in the upland between wetlands. Parking is on Allenhurst Way
- *Alderwood Acres – Kenwood Avenue*
Size: 23 acres
This site was acquired in 1973 with the assistance of a grant from the state Self-Help program to provide active and passive recreation. Hiking, skating, nature observation, and cross-county skiing are all encouraged. There is a small pond, which dries out in summer, and a short trail loop with wooden bridges for hikes. This area has great potential, but needs some trail maintenance. Parking is at the end of Kenwood Avenue.
- *Wilmington Gardens Wildlife Preserve – off Rollins Road, Byron Street*
Size: 53 acres
This undeveloped woodland is split by the Ipswich River and contains both upland and wetlands. It lies close to conservation land in Burlington.

- *Kylie Estates – Mill Road*
Size: 17.3 acres (about .4 mi. of trail connecting to other trails)
When Kylie Estates was developed at the end of Mill Road, the new trail expanded an existing trail network. The trail connects to trails going to Saw Mill Brook and to the Saw Mill Brook Conservation Area in Burlington which is accessible from Fox Hill School in Burlington. The trail also connects to a trail on the utility line north of the subdivision. Stewards for this parcel should be aware that the boundary ends at the town line. Access is from Mill Road with a parking area off Mill Road.

How do I get involved?

To see which areas are in need of “adoption” or to ask any questions, contact the Wilmington Planning and Conservation Department. There are smaller and larger parcels available in addition to those listed above. If you are interested in being a steward, please fill out the Volunteer Registration Form (Appendix C) and return it to the Town Manager’s Office.

You can also get involved in Wilmington’s conservation efforts by aiding a land steward with the upkeep of his/her area on an as needed basis, by aiding in the oversight of scouting projects, or by offering outdoor/environmental educational events. The Conservation Department is always in need of volunteers willing to lend time, so please contact the Department for information concerning volunteer opportunities.

The Conservation Department thanks you for your interest in the Land Stewardship Program!

Conservation Department Contact Information

Carole Hamilton or Winifred McGowan
Planning and Conservation Department
121 Glen Road
Wilmington, MA 01887

Email Address:
plan-cons@town.wilmington.ma.us or
wmcgowan@town.wilmington.ma.us
Phone: 978-658-8238

Town Manager’s office

manager@town.wilmington.ma.us

Appendix A
Town of Wilmington
Land Stewardship Program

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Monitoring & Maintenance Checklist

Suggestions of things to observe and consider when you are on monitoring/maintenance visits to your conservation area. Stewards are welcome to undertake as many of these activities as they choose, keeping in mind that the Conservation Agent should be notified if any urgent questions or issues arise. Stewards should always act in a manner where their safety is the first priority.

- ✓ Condition of trails, erosion, muddy spots which users go around
- ✓ Large fallen tree blocking trail, hazardous broken, hanging branches (for DPW to cut)
- ✓ Brush needing to be trimmed back to keep trail open
- ✓ Any recommended repairs to trails
- ✓ Condition and visibility of signs/markers, need for sign repairs or additional markers
- ✓ Trash, litter, landscape debris and other dumping, large debris (for DPW to pick up)
- ✓ Unique wildlife and plant sightings
- ✓ Condition of plant life and wildlife taking special note of any major changes
- ✓ Signs of unauthorized motorized vehicle use or damage by trail bikes
- ✓ Evidence of vandalism, cutting vegetation, illegal activity, misuse/abuse of the area, fire pits, unleashed dogs, or rule breaking by irresponsible visitors
- ✓ Party sites, tree houses or other structures
- ✓ Concerns with adjacent property owners, encroachment issues, blocking trail access
- ✓ Natural events such as flooding and fires
- ✓ Estimated number of users/visitors

Quick Contact Information

Department	Phone Number
Planning and Conservation Department	(978) 658-8238
Police Department	(978) 658-5071
Fire Department	(978) 658-3346
Recreation Department	(978) 658-4270
Department of Public Works (DPW)	(978) 658-4481

In the event of an emergency, dial 911.

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Land Steward Report

Please fill out the following report to communicate any highlights, observations, developments, or problems that have occurred in the last 6 months. Photographs are a welcome addition to this report. Please contact the Conservation Agent at (978) 658-8238 with any questions. Thank you for your dedication to Wilmington's Conservation efforts!

Date: _____

Name: _____

Conservation area: _____

Suggestion: submit a parcel map with this report to pinpoint any problem areas, otherwise try to provide good directions so the problem areas can be found.

Highlights or improvements:

(EX: Unique wildlife or plant sightings, positive interaction with visitors, improvements you have made to the area, etc.)

Current sign, fence, and trail condition:

(EX: Maintenance needs, misuse and abuse problems, defacing, blockages, overgrowth, overly muddy trails, etc.)

Issues or problems to be addressed:

(EX: Litter, erosion, unauthorized vehicle use, dumping, evidence of illegal activity, concerns with adjacent property owners, etc.)

Suggestions for improvements or maintenance projects:

(EX: a new link trail, posting boundary tags, maintaining a meadow)

Estimated number of visitors to the land on a weekly basis:

Other comments/suggestions/questions the Conservation Department should be aware of:

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Volunteer Registration Form

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with the Land Stewardship Program in Wilmington! This form should be returned to the Town Manager or Conservation Department. If you have questions, please contact the Department at 978-658-8238 or plan-cons@town.wilmington.ma.us.

Date: _____ **Year(s) you are volunteering to serve:** 1 2 3 (circle number)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number(s) #1: _____ **#2:** _____
Phone is: home cell work home cell work (circle which one)

Email Address: _____

What is the best way to contact you? _____

Is there a specific conservation area that you're interested in working on?

Are you willing to help on special projects on other conservation land?

What skills or interests do you bring as a Land Steward?

When and how often do you anticipate undertaking your stewardship responsibilities?
(general responsibilities: walking the parcel, monitoring, maintenance, outreach)

How did you hear about the Land Stewardship Program?

Other comments: